



Kaunas University of Technology
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Influence of Geographical Aspects on Product Group Branding in the Lithuanian Market

Master's Final Degree Project

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Declaration of Academic Integrity

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Summary

The geographical aspects such as country-of-origin is an extremely important factor, which can influence potential product or brand evaluations and purchasing behavior of the customers. Geographic aspects mainly can be understood as geographic aspects and it is common term in branding subject. By focusing on the brand or product origin, most of the time, it can provide a clear and strong competitive advantage, by creating an image, which is favorable in the eyes of the customer. In the Lithuanian market globalization processes can also be seen, however there was noticed a lack of research in this particular field in the Lithuanian market. There was found that the influence and effects of geographical aspects such as country-of-origin can vary according to different places and product groups. Even more perceptions of consumers can affect these variations of influence on branding of geographical aspects. For this reason, influence of geographic aspects can differentiate a lot depending on different factors and aspects.

The aim of the thesis is to find the influence of geographical aspects on branding products group in the Lithuanian market. To reach the main aim, there is a need to present and follow four main objectives:

- To analyze the overall situation of how geographical aspects can influence international brands and how customers perceive geographical aspects of brands in markets.
- To find how brands are being positioned in markets and what role does geographical aspects play in constructing brands.
- To present the methodology of the research.
- To find if geographical aspects have a positive effect on branding a group of products in Lithuania market and if these aspects have influence

Research method. As the research method quantitative research is used. The form of it is chosen – panel survey. Total of 92 respondents were surveyed.

Research results. After completing the analysis of research results there was found that 55.4% of respondents have purchased particular products, because of geographic aspects such as country-of-origin influence. In addition to this 54.3% of respondents find that country, where product is being produced is more important factor during product purchase process than country, where product were created or developed. Moreover, there was found that in Lithuanian market consumer values country-

of-origin of brand and its products because of its presents supply chain, presents the quality of a product and provides the assurance for the consumers that the brand or product will fit their needs. Respondents believe that Northern Europe provides associations to brands, which are high quality, reliability and longevity. It is worth to mention high standards of manufacturing processes as well. It should be pointed out that these associations are positive ones, as particular situations shows positive influence of Northern European region on brands in Lithuanian market.

There was found that country-of-origin of a brand and brand awareness plays an equally important role in the consumer decision-making process when choosing and purchasing a particular product group such as baby strollers.

At last, there was found if particular country-of-origin of Northern Europe has a positive influence on branding of a products group.. There was found that 64.1% of respondents would choose the brand, because it is originated in Northern Europe, rather than if it would be made in region of Asia. Moreover, 76.1% of respondents would choose brand and its product, when all features and specifications are the same, if its country-of-origin would be Northern European region rather than other regions such as Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia.

In conclusion, there could be mentioned that for particular group of branded “Noordi” products geographic aspects such as country-of-origin have positive influence on branding. There was found that consumer in Lithuania will be more likely to choose brand and its products if it is being originated from trusted and well-known place such as Northern Europe.

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Santrauka

Geografiniai aspektai, tokie kaip kilmės šalis, yra labai svarbus faktorius, galintis turėti įtakos potencialiam pirkėjų produkto ar prekės ženklo vertinimui bei pirkimo įpročiams. Geografinio aspekto įtaka rinkodaroje pastaruosius kelis metus yra itin aktuali. Koncentruojantis į produkto ar prekės ženklo kilmės vietą dažnai sukuriama teigiamas įspūdis, kuris suteikia produktui ar prekės ženklui stiprų konkurencinį pranašumą. Globalizacijos procesams stipriai veikiant rinką, geografiniams aspektams tenka reikšmingas vaidmuo prekės ženklų ir produktų rinkodaros procesuose. Ši tendencija stebima ir Lietuvos rinkoje, tačiau sritis yra mažai ištirta. Buvo nustatyta, jog geografinių aspektų, tokių kaip kilmės šalis, įtaka gali varijuoti priklausomai nuo skirtingų vietovių bei produktų grupių. Taip pat šių aspektų įtaka gali priklausyti nuo pirkėjų išvalgų. Dėl šių priežasčių, geografinių aspektų įtaka gali ženkliai varijuoti.

Šios tezės tikslas - nustatyti, kokią įtaką produktų prekės ženklo kūrimui turi geografiniai aspektai Lietuvos rinkoje. Siekiant tyrimo tikslo, iškelti 4 pagrindiniai tyrimo uždaviniai:

- Išanalizuoti geografinių aspektų įtaką prekės ženklo kūrime tarptautinėse rinkose ir pirkėjų išvalgas apie geografinius prekės ženklų aspektus rinkose.
- Nustatyti, kaip prekės ženklai pozicionuoja save rinkose ir kokią įtaką geografiniai aspektai turi prekės ženklo vystyme.
- Pristatyti tyrimo metodiką
- Nustatyti, ar geografiniai aspektai turi įtakos prekės ženklo kūrimui Lietuvos rinkoje ir ar įtaka yra teigiama.

Tyrimo metodika. Kaip tyrimo metodas, pasirinktas kiekybinis tyrimas. Pasirinkta panelinės apklausos forma. Iš viso apklausti 92 respondentai.

Tyrimo rezultatai. Atlikus analizę, nustatyta, jog 55.4% respondentų yra pirkę produktą dėl jo geografinių aspektų, tokių kaip kilmės šalis, įtakos. Papildomai, 54.3% respondentų teigia manantys, jog šalis, kurioje pagamintas produktas, yra svarbesnis faktorius nei šalis, kurioje produktas sukurtas. Buvo nustatyta, kad Lietuvos rinkoje pirkėjai vertina prekės ženklo produktų pagaminimo šalį dėl to, kad galima spręsti apie tiekimo grandinę, pagaminimo šalis atspindi produkto kokybę ir suteikia patvirtinimą, kad produktas atitiks kliento poreikius. Respondentų nuomone, Šiaurės Europa kaip kilmės regionas siejamas su aukšta kokybe, patikimumu ir produkto ilgaamžiškumu bei aukštais gamybos standartais. Sietinos asociacijos yra teigiamos, kaip ir Šiaurės Europos, kaip kilmės regiono, pozicionavimo įtaka pirkėjams Lietuvos rinkoje. Nustatyta, jog renkantis produktą iš specifinės

produktų grupės – vaikišką vežimėlį, prekės ženklo kilmės šalis ir prekės ženklo žinomumas turi vienodą įtaką pirkėjų pirkimo sprendimui.

Galiausiai, buvo nustatyta, ar specifinė kilmės šalis iš Šiaurės Europos regiono turi teigiamos įtakos prekės ženklo kūrimui ir ar tuo turėtų būti pasinaujama rinkodaros tikslais. Nustatyta, kad 64.1% respondentų rinktųsi prekės ženklą, kilusį iš Šiaurės Europos nei iš Azijos regiono. Be to, jei produkto charakteristikos būtų vienodos, skirtųsi tik kilmės šalis, 76.1% respondentų rinktųsi to prekės ženklo produktus, kurie pagaminti Šiaurės Europoje, o ne Pietų Europoje, Rytų Europoje ar Azijoje.

Specifinei prekės ženklo „Noordi“ produktų grupei geografiniai aspektai, tokie kaip kilmės šalis, turi teigiamos įtakos prekės ženklo kūrimui. Nustatyta, kad pirkėjai Lietuvoje yra labiau linkę rinktis prekės ženklą, kurio produktų kilmės vieta yra patikima ir gerai žinoma, pavyzdžiui, Šiaurės Europa.

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List of abbreviations and terms

Abbreviations:

Assoc. prof. – associate professor;

Lect. – lecturer;

Prof. – professor;

Dr. – doctor.

Terms:

Country – of – origin – country of manufacturing, creation, development from where product or brand is coming from. This kind of labelling is also known as place-based branding.

Introduction

The report presents an analysis of how geographic aspects such as country-of-origin effects branding a group of products. The real case analysis is being based on UAB Tututis situation, which presents branding of the company's group of products and marketing in the Lithuanian market, using a brand "Noordi".

The geographical aspects such as country-of-origin is an extremely important factor, which can influence potential product or brand evaluations and purchasing behavior of the customers. Moreover, the geographic aspect such as country-of-origin sometimes could be valued as an extremely valuable competitive advantage (Cristea, Capatina, Stoenescu, 2015). By focusing on the brand or product origin, most of the time, it can provide a clear and strong competitive advantage, by creating an image, which is favorable in the eyes of the customer. In other words, a brand image starts to correlate with the image of the country, from where the brand is coming from. Many studies have shown the multidimensional nature of the effect of country-of-origin, which is the main geographical aspect of branding processes (Chrysochoidis et al., 2007). It is being explained by differences in country-related technological, political, historical, socio-cultural, and economic factors. Moreover, country-of-origin could be called as the most used aspect for branding, from the range of geographical aspects. This particular aspect could be easily adopted, scanned, and understood by the potential customers, targeted audience of the group of products or, so-called, brand. Thakor and Kohli (1996) define the country-of-origin concept as "the place, region or the country to which the brand is perceived to come from by its potential and current customers". Even though the country-of-origin aspect provides a lot of positive effects for the brands in concrete situations, in some cases, it was found that it can also bring some damaging ones for the brand and its products or organization as well. The key concern of the research is to find how and in what effects country-of-origin is perceived when branding a group of products in the Lithuanian market. Situation analysis of UAB Tututis company will be used to evaluate how branded products group is being positioned in the Lithuanian market, using Northern Europe country-of-origin guidelines, and how geographic aspects affect the brand.

All in all, it was found that additional attention on the brand positioning is needed and the analysis of the country-of-origin effect is necessary to evaluate the current situation about the brand positioning in the Lithuanian market. As a result, the research problem can be stated: What are the main effects that geographical aspects bring to products' group branding in the Lithuanian market?

The research question leads to the main goal of the research, which is to find the influence of geographical aspects on branding products group in the Lithuanian market. To reach the main aim, there is a need to present and follow four main objectives:

- To analyze the overall situation of how geographical aspects can influence international brands and how customers perceive geographical aspects of brands in markets.
- To find how brands are being positioned in markets and what role does geographical aspects play in constructing brands.
- To present the methodology of the research.
- To find if geographical aspects have a positive effect on branding a group of products in Lithuania market and if these aspects have influence on consumer purchasing behavior of particular products group.

In the research, there will be used a quantitative research method, to collect needed data for the research study. Completed surveys gathered from the possible or potential customers (B2C) of brand "Noordi" products and users of baby strollers in the Lithuanian market are going to be used as the primary data in this paper. The respondents will be surveyed to get the additional insights in how

geographic aspects such as country-of-origin affect consumer decision making, how the brand “Noordi” is perceived, what is the influence and position of geographical aspects on a brand and if it influenced choosing particular products. The structure of the report is foreseen to start with the analysis of the problem. The second part includes findings from the literature on geographical aspects, which include country-of-origin, brand equity, and brand development. The third part presents the methodology of the research, which presents the aim of the research, objectives, structure, and instruments. Also it shows and introduces into real case situation, which have occurred in Lithuanian market. The fourth part presents quantitative research, involving the data that was collected using a survey research method. For the last, conclusions and fully prepared answers to the main research question and results will be presented.

1. Problem analysis of overall situations on how geographic aspects can influence brand and their groups of products

This part presents the analysis of the problem and how a problem occurs in the literature findings. The problem is based on what effects are being brought by geographical aspects while branding a product group in the Lithuanian market. Analysis part will provide the information on how brands are being formed globally, which geographical aspects are currently widely used in branding processes, what effects are possible, how these geographical aspects occur in branding processes, how branding is being affected by various geographic aspects such as country-of-origin. Mainly this part will present the flow of branding processes, from establishing and maintaining global brand to how the influence of geographic aspects is changing, and which is the situation of global brands and various geographic perspectives at this time.

Geographic aspects and their influence for the branding, brands, and their positioning in the markets, is being extremely discussed subject for many years. The importance of this topic could be influenced by the fact that nowadays the world and different markets are being highly globalized. The trade of various product groups is occurring over the world and to reach the recognizability in the overcrowded market, brands are trying to find the factors or aspects, which would bring positive effects in such range or even more, would bring competitive advantage for the companies and their brands. However, as it was found in the literature, not always geographic aspects can bring only the positive effects, but in some cases, the aspects of geography can bring negative effects as well, for the brand and the company. Moreover, these effects may vary a lot, depending on the origin of a brand or a product or even a group/category of products. For this reason, while analyzing the company's real situation case, there was noticed a need to complete the research and answer the main question: What are the main effects that geographical aspects bring to products' group branding in the Lithuanian market?

The first part of the problem analysis is based on presenting the processes of constructing global brands and how these brands are being affected by globalization and changes in international markets, for example, as entering new markets or trying to compete at the current ones against international competitors. The second part will be based on how geographical perspectives, their types, and how these aspects can be found in the subject of branding. Also, the part will include the possible changes in the sphere of geographic perspectives, in the change of country-of-origin aspect to a new and broader set of geographic aspects. It presents clear changes of importance in types of geographic aspects. The third part presents how these changes occur in the brand-building process and why these changes are important for the brand building or branding processes of various products' groups. Also, it includes clear effects, which can influence global or local brands and which include these geographical assets in the brands.

1.1. Global branding

Nowadays brands are facing a lot of challenges, as the markets are becoming more globalized. The process of globalization is pushing forward organizations to develop new strategies to brand their groups of products. According to Ismail, Masood, Tawab (2012) globalization is a process is leading all world markets to become one, so-called "global village". Not only the process of the globalizing world has changed the movement of goods, information, services, and knowledge by using the reduction of barriers through nations, but this process led the world to become a single market, where the supply of products is uncountable. The world has shrunk, say Ismail, Masood and Tawab (2012).

Also, competition across the markets and rival between brands has increased during the past decade. Global and local brands are being affected by various internal and external factors, which influence the process of building a brand image in the eyes of consumers. As more and more nations integrated themselves into the world economy, cross-border tourism, mobility of labor, and movement of goods rose rapidly, say Holt, Quelch, and Taylor (2004). To analyze the changes in branding and what are the new factors that influence brand nowadays, there is a need to find even more information on branding and global branding as well.

Looking from geographic perspectives mainly there are two types of brands that were found in the literature. These types are: global (transnational) brands and local brands. According to Quelch (1999), global brands can be distinguished by seven commonly known features:

- Global brands are strong in their home markets. Cash flows that are being generated in these brands' domestic markets help to fund global expansion (Quelch, 1999).
- Geographic balance in sales. There are very few brands that are strong only in one market, for example, Europe. By definition, the global brand has to have at least a minimum level of brand awareness, recognition, and sales in most of the markets in the world (Quelch, 1999).
- Addresses similar customers' needs in each market in the world. Products and services that the brand is offering in each market are almost identical, to meet basic, universal needs, which are widely-held. However, in some cases, physical or intangible services may vary because of differences in local reasons, while still fitting the same widely-held needs, - says Quelch (1999).
- Consistent positioning. Presents the same values, brand identity in each market, with a little number of adaptations, when necessary. The best examples are Disney, Coca-Cola, or McDonald's, - says Quelch (1999).
- Focus on the category of product. It shows that global brands in most of the cases do present their category of products. With well-known expertise of a brand, these are associated, together with a brand name, with those products that present, category. For example, as consumers think about the product of TV, they probably first think about the Samsung brand.
- Corporate name. In most cases, the corporate name is used the same as the brand name. It favors companies to put their most valuable assets – brands into a single brand-name basket. In this way, a company can choose a strategy, on which could work on, to have one strong brand, or to have a brand, which is known and covers smaller brands under itself (such examples are Unilever, P&G, and Pfizer).
- Customers value the country-of-origin of a brand or a product. Looking at most of the global brands, consumers value the origin of these brands, from which country they are coming from. Associations of a country, which are being attached to a brand help customers create a more promising brand image. Moreover, often there can be found associations between brand, also loyalty to that brand and the information that the brand is coming from a particular country says Quelch (1999). Also, it was noticed that consumers associates countries with expertise in particular categories of products (Quelch, 1999), (Pappu, Quester, Cooksey, 2006).

In addition to this, Quelch (1999) provides what benefits are being generated by global branding. These benefits are:

- Added value for consumers;
- Lower costs;
- Cross border learning;
- Cultural benefits.

To have a better understanding of how global brands are being conducted, the additional literature analysis was prepared. It was found in the literature that lots of papers treat the global brand as a unitary group or category, which can not be divided into separate categories. However, according to Steenkamp (2014), it is useful to differentiate and understand that global brands are having their own, categorized specifications. Categorization is based on the most fundamental subjects of marketing, which are the price of the brand and the differentiative benefits that the brand is delivering, - says Steenkamp (2014). It shows the two most popular motivations to purchase the brand, which are functional (mind) and emotional (heart). Crossing these two dimensions leads to get four different types of global brands, which are prestige brands, premium brands, value brands, and fun brands. These four brands are presented in the following figure (see Figure 1).

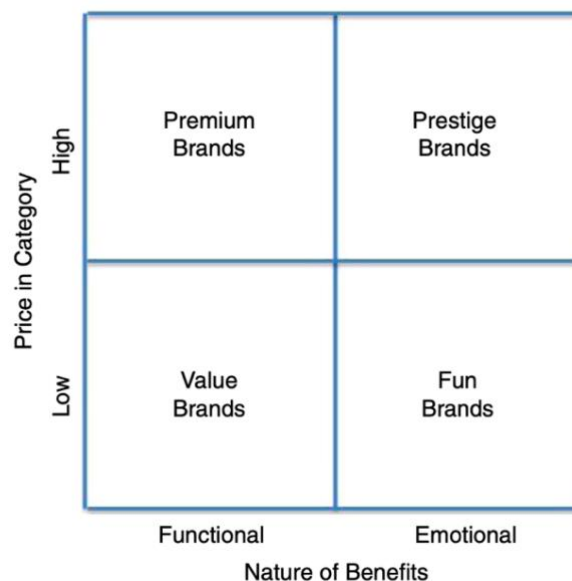


Fig. 1. Four types of global brands. *Source: Steenkamp (2014).*

To understand each group and how these categories of global brands are formulated, a brief description of each category is being conducted. Each description is based on Steenkamp's (2014) literature review.

- **Prestige brands.** This category of brands provides a unique emotional experience and also is highly-priced. As all brand have a functional side, however this category of brands bring emotional pay off says Steenkamp (2014). Mostly prestige brands are being related to some-kind myths, which are associated with country-of-origin effects. For example, Italian sports cars, French wines, Swiss watches. These brands also provide high aspirational value and are selective (Baker et al., 2004).

- Premium brands. This category of brands is highly-priced as well, but its key function to excel in other brands on quality, which preferred to be functional. This category is being oriented to consumers for whom quality weights more than price when making a purchasing decision, - says Steenkamp (2014). While most of the brands selling proposition is on an emotional level, premium brands are focusing also on functional, superior product performance.
- Value brands. This category of brands aims to become the leader in providing value-for-money. That is the so-called “universal” need of the consumers, which could be named as the most mainstream. These brands are striving to become leaders in the mainstream category of brands and their products. Moreover, they excel in delivering the best price-quality combination for customers or possible customers. One of the best representative examples can be named Carrefour, Tesco, or Aldi supermarket chains, which at the start were local players, but increasing and expanding their market into a new, global market, became well-known international players. Also, they established their private labels (brands) to the international level. There are even more great examples, from other industries as well, such as the automobile industry, with their car brand Dacia, which is owned by Renault, or Seat, which is owned by the VW group. The importance of this type of brands was notified, when Dacia automobiles become extremely popular in the Germany market, the most car-loving market in the world (Foy et al, 2013).
- Fun brands. These brands provide consumers with more emotional benefits, almost the same as prestige brands. However, this category of brands is more accessible, mostly because of the pricing of this type of branded products or services. The quality is not the key point of these brands says Steenkamp (2014). Fun brands have these features: low to average price, medium quality, and may be substituted easily when consumers are bored with the products of these brands. The best example of global fun brands is H&M, Zara, IKEA, or Swatch, which do present disposable products and popularized these trends in the younger segment of society.

It is worth to mention that categorizing global brands and creating clear types, helps to segment potential consumers in the markets and set preferable brand positioning guidelines. Also, it helps to deepen the knowledge and find new perspectives, of the brand, has to be presented in global markets. Moreover, prestige brands are more likely to presents associations and symbols around their commodities and present it to the customers. As Steenkamp (2014) mentions that for consumers of prestige and premium brands, country-of-origin of a brand is an important factor, which is being considered during decision making process of a purchase.

Moving on, Ozsomer (et al. 2012) adds about global brands, that these brands using the same set of branding tools, same name, logo, has an acceptance in multiple regions of the world, and most importantly, creates at least 5% of sales outside its domestic market. This definition does not include similar brand positioning or its image since the market is differentiated by their manners and culture Ozsomer (et al. 2012). The export market can vary a lot from the domestic brand market and for this reason adaptations would be needed for the brand in the markets that are outside home. In addition to this, as adaptations are needed for global brands, these occur in different components of a brand such as brand name, logo, slogan, which are tangible, and also intangible assets influenced as well. These intangible brand assets are brand positioning, brand associations, perception of quality, etc. When brands are active in the markets, the key issue for them is to understand and perceive local mentality, culture, and language. With completing this step, the adaptations can be developed and applied

effectively to the brand, which would lead to a better response rate or to say better results in acceptance by consumers in these abroad markets.

By analyzing global brands, it was found that cultural benefits have a lot of importance for the brands, in this way the decision making of consumers. These cultural benefits can be related to global brands' key feature – country-of-origin of a brand as a value for consumers. This geographic aspect can be an influential factor for consumer decision to choose the brand. Moreover, according to Clifton (2014), most global brands originate from particular geographic places that have a brand image of its own. In addition to this, brands' products are usually strongly linked with that place, region, country image, whether it is French fashion clothes, Swiss watches, or Italian sports cars. This statement adds a point to the idea, that country-of-origin plays a significant role in branding processes.

1.2. Country-of-origin as a basis of geographic aspects

As it was mentioned, the globalization process is converting world markets into a single market, where all different players are competing to reach consumers. It leads that differentiation of brands and products is being achieved harder each year and brand development costs are skyrocketed. For this reason, many brands were started to use country-of-origin as their commodities' differentiation factor. It shows that country-of-origin as geographic aspect has brought a lot of attention in the marketing sphere, at the same time generating a lot of practical uncertainty around this subject. According to Andéhn, Gloukhovtsev, Schouten (2016) country-of-origin, as geographical aspect in branding, was even referred to as one of the most researched subjects in marketing and generating more than 800 scholarly articles to date (Usunier et al., 2006). However, the country-of-origin aspect often is claimed to be undertheorized (Andéhn, Gloukhovtsev, Schouten, 2016), also, its practical relevance is sometimes being described as uncertain (Sammie et al., 2011). It means that is very hard to predict the effects, which country-of-origin can provide for the brand, branding, and consumer decision making. Although to find certain effects that country-of-origin can provide, each case is defined as an individual. It is mentioned, that the country-of-origin effect can be influenced by many different external factors and features, which are being set by the markets. These factors can be related to the image of the country, from where the brand or product is being originated, to the product category-country aspect, which presents the country's identity based on categories of products and others. These are the main reasons, which influence and create the uncertainty around this particular aspect – country-of-origin effects on branding. To present the problem and how it does occur in literature and in practice, a definition of the problem will be presented in three short paragraphs.

1.2.1. Source of the country-of-origin effect on branding

To understand how country-of-origin effect branding processes and brands, there is a need to find from what perspectives these effects are arising. According to Andéhn, Gloukhovtsev, Schouten (2016) there was found that two different sources influence country-of-origin effects. These sources have to be briefly described to create more clarity regarding how they encourage country-of-origin effects.

- Product categories. This is a crucial source, which creates additional problems when there is a need to understand country-of-origin effects. Product categories that are well-known in a specific country affect this country's image. The effect is being evoked by a general image of the country versus the effect, which is being related to the irrelation between country image

and categories of products. It concludes that product categories usually play a central role, in influencing country-of-origin effects according to Andéhn, Gloukhovtsev, Schouten (2016).

- Image of the country. It can be called one of the most important if not the most important sources of the country-of-origin effect. However, this source can be named as quite nimble. It can influence consumer decisions based not only widely available beliefs or information but also on personal evaluations, beliefs, and experience. It enables evaluation at hand and influences customers or potential customers' judgments by using specific context for evaluations say Andéhn, Gloukhovtsev, Schouten (2016). This can be described as a very feasible explanation of how the image of the country can influence consumers' evaluations. Nevertheless, according to Andéhn, Gloukhovtsev, Schouten (2016), there were completed several studies that shows can be sourced not specifically from images of countries, but more likely from images of regions (such as Northern Europe, Western Europe and so on). Some authors mention that not just countries, but places forms and establishes the country-of-origin effect.

1.2.2. Origin in the context of country-of-origin effects

The “place” as a term flows into the origin of a brand or product. Origin can be called as an association, which brings cues for the customers about the brand and product, and the part of it is the country-of-origin effect (Magnusson et al., 2011). The key issue is how well all aspect of country-of-origin can be introduced to consumer and perceived by them when he/she is in a decision making process to purchase a brand or a product. Since every consumer's understanding, knowledge, and assumptions about a particular country can be strong influencers on consumer's perception of country-of-origin. According to Liu and Johnson (2005), associations of country-of-origin in most of the time are activated in the mind of the consumer by using the mere presence of information of country-of-origin. The basic idea that origin of a brand or a product and this concept can influence the judgment and manner of consumers. Moreover, the origin of a brand or a product can have different meanings for different consumers and this can lead to a positive or negative influence on a brand or a product. It is worth to mention, it was found that most of the research is based on country-of-origin effects on group of products and not only brands, says Clifton (2016).

1.2.3. Country-of-origin influence on consumer decision making

As the brands are usually trying to differentiate their commodities by using the country-of-origin effect, consumers often are guided by these sources. It was mentioned in the previous part that country-of-origin is an influential factor, which can and does influence consumer behavior and decision making during the purchasing process.

The subject of human decision making is processing has been one of the most essential concerns of psychologists for an age. By looking from an economical perspective consumer decision making is based on a rational point of view as utility maximizations and seeking to cover the basic needs of consumers say Andéhn, Gloukhovtsev, Schouten (2016). However, consumers not always can be rational and trust in their minds. Most of the times emotions can lead the consumers in their decision making processes. In addition to this, the emotions of the consumers can be influenced by the variety of internal and external factors that can be found in the environment of decision making. By having this influential set on their decision-making process, consumers usually try to lay on this emotional set of factors. It leads to an unconscious analysis of a commodity that consumer is willing to purchase and usually makes consumers heuristics “so-called”. It even develops logical shortcuts like halo

effects, which is well-presented by country-of-origin effect (Andéhn, Gloukhovtsev, Schouten, 2016). According to Smaiziene and Vaitkiene (2013), country-of-origin can be named as an extrinsic cue for a product, which influences consumers' perceptions about the product and their decisions to purchase a branded product. That is the reason, for which country-of-origin is important in branding processes, it shows how associations about the place, from where product or brand is coming from, helps consumers make a faster decision, by presenting trust and certainty about the brand and a product.

1.3. Country-of-origin effects on a group of products in Lithuania market

It is needed to be mentioned that there is a lack of research based on how geographic aspects as country-of-origin affects branded groups of products such as baby strollers in the Lithuanian market. Lithuania market was chosen as this market can be named as a developing market and it is based on real case analysis of a brand's "Noordi" product group. Moreover, Lithuanian market can be called an economy of Easter Europe and post-soviet market (Smaiziene, Vaitkiene, 2013), where the strong and well-known brand or image of country of Lithuania is still not present in world markets.

A huge variety of country-of-origin effects across different categories of products shows that country-of-origin effect is not only regional-specific but also it can be named as product group-specific subject (Chattalas et al., 2008; Tseng and Balabanis et al, 2011). This statement shows that country-of-origin effects can strongly vary depending not only on geographic aspects but especially the effects can be based on the category of products. Also, it was noticed by the company UAB Tututis that consumers are more likely to choose and purchase products such as baby strollers, which are developed and produced in foreign countries. In conclusion, as there was not found research, which is based on this particular category of products, the problem of this paper can be called as valid.

1.4. Country-of-origin influence on branding

As there was found and mentioned in previous parts, country-of-origin is an influential factor in branding processes nowadays. From attaching associations of the country to a brand to leading customers in the purchasing process. However, as it was found, according to Magnusson (et al., 2011), a country-of-origin factor can be beneficial or negative for brands, since the effect of country-of-origin is based on consumer perceptions and knowledge, in most of the times. For example, if a consumer believes that Renault automotive brand is being originated from Germany, it is possible that consumer's judgments of Renault brand will be influenced to relate it with the feelings and knowledge about Germany. Associations of reliability, high quality, state-of-the-art technological solutions will be attached to Renault brand. This example perfectly explains the idea that Magnusson (et al., 2011) wants to show and which is presented by Andéhn, Gloukhovtsev, Schouten (2016). It focuses on meaning that country-of-origin is strongly supported by the perceptual world of consumers and each case of how brands are being influenced by country-of-origin factors is different. This view relates to the original country-of-origin view, which is presenting focused geographical locations and their clear relevance to the brands and products (product, brand developing country, country where the product is being produced, country, where company's main headquarters are located, etc.).

To conclude, it was found that the positive and negative effects of country-of-origin can arise and affect brands and their products. Also, it was clearly stated that these effects can be supported by different components, such as origin, consumers' perceptions, and product categories with a country image. These three components are the main factors, which have to be considered to find what effects

geographic aspects such as country-of-origin can provide for the branded group of products in the Lithuanian market.

2. Role of geographic aspects in branding group of products

Branded groups of products could be conceived as consisting of a bunch of information cues, the intrinsic ones (such as taste, the design, fit, etc.) and extrinsic (price, brand name, warranties, after-sales service, a location where it is bought, etc.). Each cue, which is mentioned, provides customers with the basic information for the primary evaluation of the product (Bilkey, Nes, 1982). All the studies of informational cues have put the ground for basic research in the subject of marketing. According to Papadopoulos (2018), several authors are saying that “country-of-origin” or in other words, geographical aspect effect on branding, is the most researched aspect in international marketing, over the years (Jaffe, Nebenzahl, 2006). The author points out that the databases that team of researches maintain find over 2400 publications by the year 2015 in the subjects of geographical aspects in branding. This means that the topics associated with geographical aspects in branding could be named one of the most researched subjects, with clear connections with broader domains of marketing, international business, and consumer behavior says Papadopoulos (2018). To find the reasons for which the subject is this broadly popular, need to find the elements, on which the topic is mainly being based on. Moreover, to prove how geographic aspects vary across the time, as the most of the research are based on and covers only country-of-origin factor, there is a need to underline and find what effect are the most being seen nowadays.

The conceptual framework of the literature analysis was conducted, by using the information from the source: Yasin, Noor, and Mohamad (2007). The framework is based on geographical aspects, which is focusing on influence on four dimensions of equity of a brand. By analyzing how geographical aspects occur in brand equity, the relevance of brand equity in branding processes was found. Following figure (see Figure 2) presents a conceptual framework, which was used to complete a literature review, guide in finding and conducting theoretical findings.

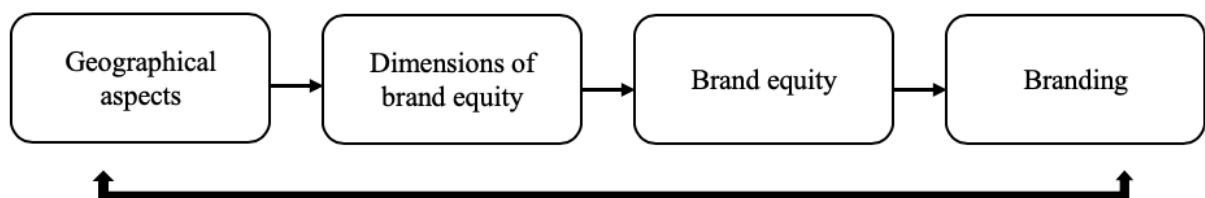


Fig. 2. Conceptual model of literature findings.

2.1. Effects of geographic aspects

The geographic perspectives in branding is a wide subject and a sphere, which have to be focused on key layers. These layers are the main geographical aspects, which are being used widely in creating brands, promoting them in the markets, and used for branding various groups of products. Geographical aspects are widely used in branding for many years, as it describes and includes the place from which brand is coming from and formulates the associations about the brand for the potential customers, of how, where and what were participants, which was creating and managing a particular brand or a group of products. As the markets become even more globalized nowadays, the changes in geographic aspects in branding processes have changed as well, moving the importance

of only country-of-origin aspects to more complete and at the same time more complicated aspects of economic geography aspect. However, to understand and research the topic more precisely, geographical aspects have to be presented clearly and the difference and complete definition should be found. Besides, case examples will be presented, which were found in the literature. This tool will help more actively introduce the theoretical findings and it should be a beneficial tool to relate the theory findings with short cases of global companies that were presented in the literature findings.

2.1.1. Country-of-origin (COO) aspect

At the time when international trade has taken place in the world's markets, for many years various manufacturers have been using country-of-origin (COO) effect to gain a type of competitive advantage, and gain price premium for their product says Agrawal (2004). Country-of-origin (COO) plays a significant role in branding for many years, according to Pike (2009) brands historically typically represented various aspects of space using crests, emblems, hallmarks and images of distinctive folklore, people and landmark, as well as the products' producer or its brand creators. These primary symbols or signs have been presenting the locations, from where the products were coming from, brands and locations were intertwined to let the customer or potential customers understand the identity of a brand and location. Even more, these signs and particular symbols based on a group of products brought associations to potential customers. The customers were able to make expectations about the brand and products while knowing and having a positive mind about the place or location from where the brand was originated. As Han (1989) has mentioned, images and various beliefs about the country affect products that are made in a particular country. Moreover, Lampert and Jaffe (1998) say that country image can be viewed as a valuable asset for the brand, when it has a very positive connotation in the particular field, however, if it has negative connotations it can be valued as a liability for the brand. During the last decades, the intensity of globalization processes has been increasing rapidly every year and for this reason, the importance of country-of-origin effects has been an interesting subject to research (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). With global market emergence, a huge variety of differentiated products were flowing into the markets, from different locations and countries. However, this has provided extremely limited information about the production of new-coming brands and the choice of products was wide enough to not get the information needed for product evaluation in the expected time. For this reason one of the most important source to be able to receive some information, was to enable expectations about the already-known country, in other words – country-of-origin (COO), says (Dissanayake and Wegapitiya, 2018). According to Agrawal (2004), country-of-origin favors not only manufacturers, since also customers receive benefits in evaluations of brand leading to perceptual judgments.

Country-of-origin effects the branding process as well. As most of the brands are trying to build their image from various factors, internal and external ones. Internal factors still can be controlled to help to create effective brand positioning and communications, however, these subjects can and are affected by external associations and factors, which country-of-origin (COO) is one of them. Especially as in the global context international positioning set new challenges of positioning, which is managing country-of-origin effect says Adina, Gabriela, Roxana-Denisa (2015). Country-of-origin (COO) provides a variety of effects for the brands and branding processes. However, key effects have to be defined to understand the level of impact of country-of-origin (COO) effect on branding. According to Han (1989), the country-of-origin effect can be used and served as the index that can or will reduce the sum of information, which is needed for the buying decision. In other words, country-of-origin can lead that customer will be affected mainly by the fact about a product or brand origin

and it will bring positive associations about the product's quality, reliability, and image in total. For example, according to Deshpandé (2010), consumers associate certain geographical locations or places with premium products such as French wine, Italian sports cars, German reliable cars, or Swiss watches and chocolates. It shows, that if the customers understand from which geography product or a brand is coming from, and if he or she has positive associations with that particular place, they will be more likely to trust a product or a brand. Michaelis (2008) says that consumers use country-of-origin as an important cue to evaluate new products or services and not focusing on important product attributes of one specific product. According to Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey (2006), country-of-origin is perceived as being a valuable factor in marketing, which can influence customers' perceptions and behavior as well.

Moreover, to understand how country-of-origin can effect brand and branding processes, there was found that according to Adina, Gabriela, and Roxana-Denisa (2015), country-of-origin effects can be defined by three different aspects, which are cognitive, affective and normative. These aspects have to be clearly defined to bring theoretical importance for the research:

- *Cognitive aspects* of country-of-origin effects. Most of the time, on a cognitive level country-of-origin effects can be named as a cue for product quality, - say Adina, Gabriela and Roxana-Denisa (2015). This perceived quality can relate to consumers' cognitive and mental mechanisms, which assists when a customer is evaluating a product or a service. In total, the concept of perceived quality has to different dimensions: design quality and manufacturing quality. Moreover, „made in“ and „designed in“ labels offer direct information regarding quality dimensions of a service or a product. Quality cues can be intrinsic, based on a product or extrinsic, such as brand, price, or country-of-origin, - say Adina, Gabriela and Roxana-Denisa (2015). Furthermore, as it was mentioned, country-of-origin is a quality cue, based on reliability, safety, durability, reducing possible or perceived product or service purchase risks for the customers. It is worth mentioning that quality cues mainly increase importance when there is a lack of information about the product (Lobb *et al*, 2007). Country-of-origin is a highly more important factor for those brands, which are not well-known in the markets, and less important for those brands, which are already known in the markets (Schaefer *et al*, 1997), but it still can easily reinforce brand's attributes. Brand associations and associations of country-of-origin are often mixed-up and linked with each other, in customers' minds, sharing and leveraging attributes to each other. For many years, origin and a brand act together holistically, - say Adina, Gabriela, and Roxana-Denisa (2015).
- *Affective aspect* of country-of-origin effects. According to Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) effective level of country-of-origin, emotional connotations can be created or formed through direct experiences such as art, media, word-of-mouth (WOM), and also stereotypes. In addition to this, consumers most of the time use brand to express their style of life, which comes from self-expression (Munteanu, Pagalea *et al*, 2014). It means that consumers link can connect various brands with feelings that represent their social status, power, their chosen lifestyle, country-of-origin can acct as self-expression attribute, - say Adina, Gabriela and Roxana-Denisa (2015). The personality of the country can be compared or equalized to consumers' personality, in addition to that, it can be used as an attribute of self-expression to fulfill the self-esteem. Aaker (1999) mentions the importance of congruence comparing and equalizing the brand's personality and consumer actual or willing-to-be personality. It means that the personality of a country, in this case, can be matched with the targeted consumers'

persona. According to Adina, Gabriela, and Roxana-Denisa (2015), highlighting the similarities between consumer's personality internal traits and targeted country's personality traits, this can lead to affinity feeling towards the particular brand or a country. Moreover, the connections between country-of-origin and consumers' willingness to purchase a product can be modified by affinity and/or animosity. A good example is based in the Chinese market, as Chinese consumers' were rejecting to purchase products that were made in Japan, due to Japanese economic expansion, and perceived dominance in economic development say Maher and Carter (2011). Feelings of affinity and animosity are deeply stored in the set of values of a consumer, which are dictated by social and personal beliefs, - say Adina, Gabriela and Roxana-Denisa (2015).

- *The normative aspect* of country-of-origin effects. According to Adina, Gabriela, and Roxana-Denisa (2015), consumers' ethnocentrism is an extremely normative factor, which develops and modifies the relationship between country-of-origin and products' purchase by encouraging consumers to associate the feelings, which were mentioned in affective aspect part, towards particular countries. Disidentification and ethnocentrism may lead to attraction or repulsion reactions towards products that are made in the domestic market or are coming from foreign markets. As it was mentioned, these reactions can relate to personal and social values, also to the normative level, which is influenced by aspects of cognitive and affective processes, - say Adina, Gabriela, and Roxana-Denisa (2015). Ethnocentrism is based on an idea or perspective that focuses on positive biases related to domestic products' origin country, or the same country from which consumer is being originated (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004). Watson and Wright (2000) highlighted that consumers that come from developed countries willing or tend to prefer products made in their home country and that a similar culture can be an influential factor in their buying decision. However, disidentification is different from ethnocentrism. It presents the opposition. The disidentification perspective is based on negative bias towards products or brands that were produced locally. Also, this perspective shows that consumers are willing to disidentify themselves from typical domestic consumers, - say Adina, Gabriela and Roxana-Denisa (2015).

Following figure (see Figure 3) presents how the country-of-origin aspect effects branding and products' positioning through three layers: cognitive, affective, and normative aspects.

Cognitive aspect	Country – of – origin (COO)
Affective aspect	
Normative aspect	

Fig. 3. Aspects of country-of-origin effects. *Source Adina, Gabriela, and Roxana-Denisa (2015).*

Mentioned in this part was the key effect of what effects country-of-origin bring for branding, according to Adina, Gabriela and Roxana-Denisa (2015), the three aspects of possible effects are possible: cognitive, affective and normative aspects.

Moving on, an additional view of how country-of-origin can be perceived was found in the literature. According to Pike (2015), nowadays as the world becomes globalized as much as never before, country-of-origin as a primary geographic aspect in branding had to be reranked. The idea is that processes of a business, by establishing brands and maintaining these brands are changing rapidly. In addition to this, business processes have been scattered around various markets, their value chains currently do not contain only one of few markets or places from where a brand is being originated. Country-of-origin as a term can be split to four different cues or components, these cues are: “country of design”, “country of assembly”, “country of manufacture” and “country of the brand” (Yasin, Noor, Mohamad, 2007). The idea also comes from Jaffe and Nebenzahl (2001) and country-of-origin (CoO) can be divided into different components or types. Key type, which is mentioned by Jaffe and Nebenzahl (2001) is country-of-design (CoD), which is the country where the product was designed and developed. Shimp and Sharma (2005) added that more additional types of country-of-origin can be added, such as country-of-manufacture (CoM), where the product is produced originally, and country-of-brand (CoB), it is where the brand was created and being developed.

For this reason, it is beneficial to highlight that Pike (2015) mentions that all in all the creation process of branding and developing a brand is a value-adding activity, which is based on globally distributed value chains. The brand itself includes not only the name of a group of products, but it covers a meaning of a product, how it was manufactured, in which place, in what way it was built, who was building a brand, and values that it represents. The brand and branding itself it is a highly complex process, which processes are distributed and covered not only in one geographical location, but distributed across different markets and geographical locations.

According to Pike (2015) there are three types of how geographic aspects could be related to branding. Mainly according to the author there are three relations of how brands and branding can relate to economic geographic. First one is conceptualized and identifiable kind of good or possible service commodity the connections between different locations can be identified in the brand positioning and in its identity. It does show that over the time, the brand creates the story around it and presents the key values, which are related to the brand and from space, where it came from. According to Roth and Romeo (1992), several dimensions, which were used for country image, affect various brand aspects such as brand attributes, primary evaluation, innovativeness, design and prestige.

The second relation is the connections of the brand from where it comes from and from where its products are made. It mainly demonstrates the country-of-origin effect and this factor. This includes “Made in ...” or “Designed in ...” tags, says author Pike (2015).

The third relation shows the dependency on the social and economic factors and differentiation processes, which influences brand development. Brand owners are investing much effort and differentiated costs to create the brand and develop the meaning and identity of the brand in spatial circuits of the economy and society (Pike, 2015). The research in the marketing field has set up the factor of country-of-origin as a very specific field, which shows how countries are associated with attributes, competencies, and probable representations that help to create relevant value for the brand, its products, or not (Kapferer, 2008). This effect can vary according to the sector, to the consumers, to the level of perceived risk attaching to the decision (Kapferer, 2008). Pike's (2015) view shows that globalization factors encourage to review of country-of-origin aspects and enable it to become an equal term to geographic aspects, as country-of-origin should and includes more perspectives that only product origin country.

In addition to Pike (2015) ideas, there is a need to mention that geographic aspects can occur in branding and influence business decisions as well. Geographical aspects may in various ways represent different opportunities for developing countries to move into global nichemarkets, by concentrating more on value chains of global players (Mancini, 2013). For lower income players, or “so called” developing countries such as India, Pakistan, Vietnam it is a huge opportunity to participate in global value chains of global brands and organizations. This provides knowledge, income and know-how in particular field. A great example is China, how using geographic aspects and global value chains of well-known player, it was able to build up its economy and locally based, strong, global players. This shows that geographic aspects in branding can play a superbly important role in geographic economies, as global brands are spreading their value chains through different geographies.

In the research, there is a need to mention that term geographic aspects are equal to country-of-origin term, as both of terms are being widely used in the parts of literature review, methodology and explanation of results, for this reason, the country-of-origin term will be used to express the meaning of geographic aspects in branding.

2.2 Geographic aspects in brand's equity

To start with the subject of how geographic aspects do occur in branding processes and how these aspects are perceived on the global, regional brands and branding, there is a need to find the theory about the branding and how it is being focused on the customer-based view. Moreover, to understand how brands are being constructed and what are key factors of a successful brand, brand equity will be analyzed in this part.

The key literature review helped to find that building a strong, competitive brand helps to get better financial results and additional benefits (Keller, 2001). According to Davies and Ward (2005), nowadays there remain just a very small amount of unbranded products, most of the companies and firms are trying and focusing to associate their brand name with clear values and characteristics that are unique from competitors and understandable for the customers and possible customers. Even more, according to Business Standard (2013), currently, economies are in the times, when differentiation of products is reducing, which means the way to create the differentiation is being based on the development of brands and giving them a personality, which could be differentiated widely and can relate with the customers. For this reason, creating a brand, which is recognizable as fast as possible, has a value in customer's eyes and is strong and well-know all over global markets is one of the main priorities for companies when building their success in the business. Moreover, to gain competitive advantage and price premium in this way, companies usually start differentiating their products and brands and trying to build as more identifiable brands as possible (Pike, 2015). Particular characteristics such as brand place from, which brand is being originated, differentiate products from competitors' to gain these benefits. Figure 4 presents price and image/product differentiation in branded markets. According to Pike (2015) differentiation of a brand or a group of products is a valuable activity for the company, which leads to the possibility to put higher margins on offerings in the market. It shows, that nowadays, for the companies branding and brand building, by knowing its core values and essence is a superbly important and value-adding activity, in the daily routines of various organizations.

Furthermore, as it is already clear that brand building processes bring, in some cases, immeasurable value, to understand how the core brand equity is being created is an important task, as it could be

called the essence of a brand and branding processes. According to Aaker (2016), brand equity is a set of various assets and/or liabilities, which can be noticed or found in different forms. In most cases, these forms are understood as brand associations, customer loyalty, brand visibility, and others. Brand equity is a base not only marketing processes but also strategy building of an organization processes says Aaker (2016). Brand equity focuses not only on short term effects for the business (short-term sales, etc.), but mainly orientates into the long-term strategy of companies or organizations. It is called strategic support for a business to gain and encourage the growth of the value of a brand, company itself in the long-term.

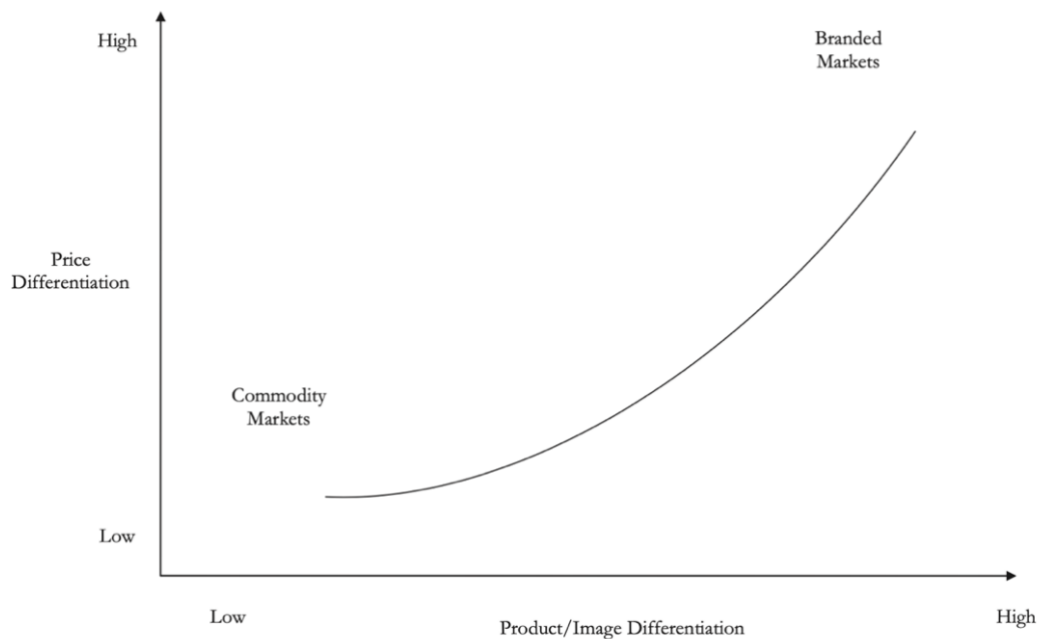


Fig. 4. Price and image/product differentiation in branded markets. *Source: Pike (2015).*

To build a strong and solid brand is an important task for each organization. Brand equity in total is a very complex concept, which includes various dimensions. The models, which would help grip the equity of a brand and gain additional insights into relations between different brand's components. Keller (2002) has differentiated brand equity into two concepts, which are: brand awareness and associations. However, to understand the meaning of brand equity to brands and branding processes, there is a need to find a more precise model of brand equity. Such more deeply established models are helpful to get more knowledge or project the future performance of a brand says Aaker (2009). Moreover, such a brand equity development model is a helpful tool to understand, how different factors relate to a brand and how those factors can influence a brand from various perspectives. There was found in the literature that one of the most popular and well-known conceptual models is the Aaker Brand Equity Model (Aaker, 2009). The model is based on the creation and development of the equity of a brand. Aaker (2009) presents brand equity in total can be concluded not only on brand awareness as a ground, but the equity of a brand is a total sum of brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations including other proprietary assets. These all components have an aim to support the strategy of a company, by seeking not only short-term goals, but also achieve long-term strategic goals of an organization and not only a brand. Mentioned components and full Aaker Brand Equity Model (Aaker, 2009) are shown in Figure 5.

There was noticed that the most important components from brand equity, which mentions authors Keller (2002) and Aaker (2009) are brand awareness and brand associations. To find if these two components of brand equity are extremely important for brand building process and branding itself, there was found even more sources based on brand equity subject. Additional literature sources help to find more clarity in the relation of brand equity and brand-building processes. Moreover, it enables us to get the view of how geographical aspects occur in brand equity and how these aspects can influence brand equity and branding of a group of products in total.

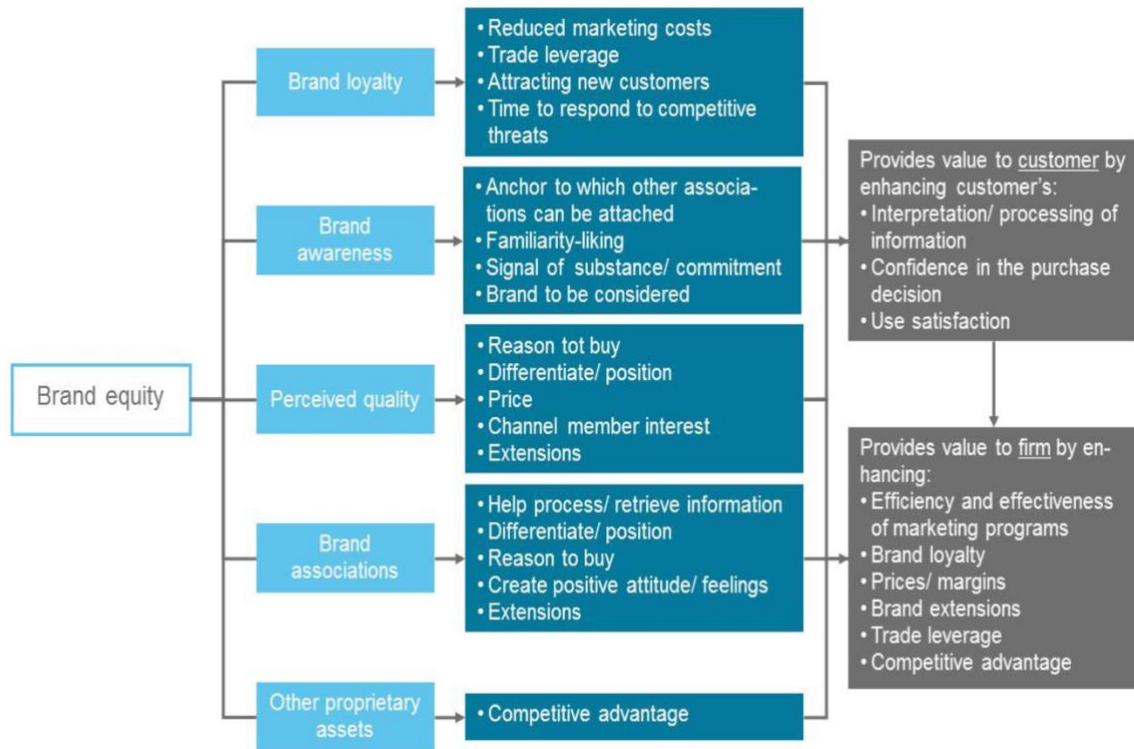


Fig. 5. Aaker’s Brand Equity model (2009).

There are many different tools, of how the brands could be built and also different theoretical views, of how brands have to be focused, oriented, maintained, and differentiated during the development process. These models assist management in their brand-building efforts. However, there was found that the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, which was being outlined by Keller (2001) is one of the most broadly used as a blueprint, to establish a strong, recognizable brand. According to Feldwick (1996), there are a variety of conceptual approaches, but customer-based brand equity can be named as a measure of the strength of consumers’ attachment to a brand. This model perfectly guides management during brand development and maintenance processes and outlines each stage and factor, which are most important during brand development and maintenance stages. In recent years, the emerging importance of brand equity has increased the influence of it on companies marketing ‘strategies. Brand equity is being defined as a “multidimensional” concept and very complex, as for this reason many different measures are required for a proper evaluation (Keller, 2003). Moreover, according to Ford (2005), recently brand equity was used to measure how consumers evaluate brands overall. All statements, mentioned, builds the view, that customer-based brand equity and focusing on this kind of model is becoming highly important. It is stated and accepted that customer-based brand equity encompasses four main dimensions: brand image, brand

awareness, brand quality, and loyalty (of consumers) (Barnes, 2014). Originally, Keller (2001) created the Customer-Based Brand Equity Pyramid, which could be seen in Figure 6.

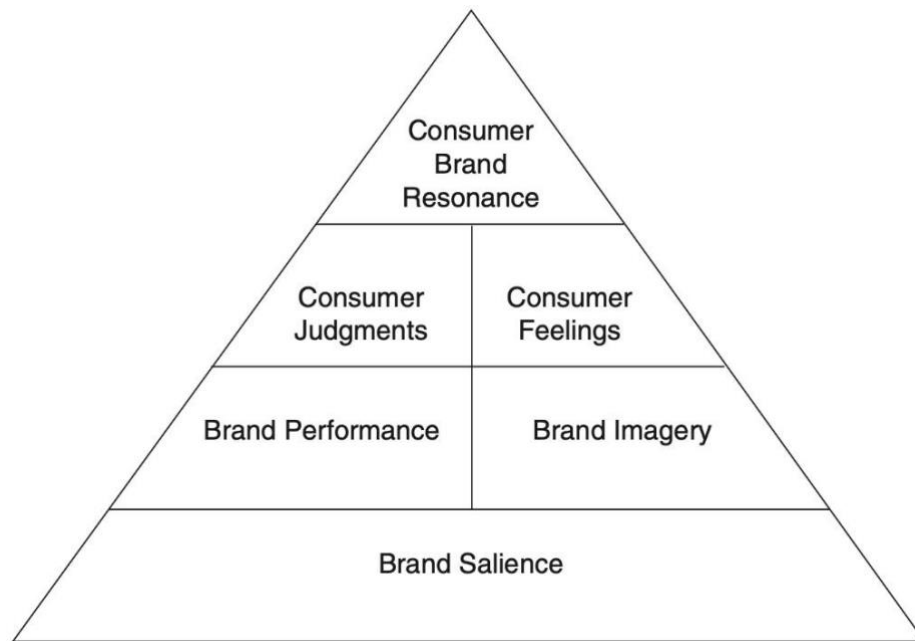


Fig. 6. Customer-Based Equity pyramid. *Source Keller (2001).*

However, both authors Keller (2001) and Aaker (2009) conceptualize and present brand equity in different ways. To provide the most significant information for the research, both Keller's (2001) and Aaker's (2009) models were used to complete a set of components and define them with the relation of brand equity. The following points define four main components of brand equity (Pappu, Quester, Cooksey, 2005):

- *Brand awareness.* This component, as it was mentioned before, is one of the most important components for a brand and its equity. Component refers to the strength of a brand presence in the customers' minds (Pappu, Quester, Cooksey, 2005). According to Keller (1993) presents that brand awareness comes from brand recognition and brand recall.
- *Brand associations.* According to Pappu, Quester, Cooksey (2005), this is one more highly important component in the brand equity set. Mainly it is believed that brand associations present the core meaning for the consumers (Keller, 1993). Associations to the brand can flow from different sources that can be internal or external, brand personality and organizational associations, - say Keller (1993). Brand personality is the main factor, which forms brand associations about the particular brand, it is defined as a human's set of characteristics, which are associated with a particular brand (Aaker, 1991). Also, the author mentions that brand associations are becoming even stronger when these are associated with even more experiences related to the customers (Aaker, 1991).
- *Perceived quality.* This is quite similar to brand associations, as this component presents key-value and provides customers with the reason to purchase. At the same component differentiates a brand from the offering of competing brands in the market (Pappu, Quester, Cooksey, 2005).
- *Brand loyalty.* This is a major component of brand equity. Aaker (1991) defined brand loyalty as some attachment that customers have to a brand. It demonstrates customers' favor to repeat the purchase of the brand's products and choose the brand's products as a primary choice

when looking for products at the same range, where brands products are located in. Hence, the brand loyalty component is conceptualized and based on customers' perceptions and attitudinal perspectives, - say Pappu, Quester, Cooksey (2005).

As the focus is being based on the effects of geographic aspects on branding, key components of brand equity have to be pointed out from the full list, on which the effect of geographic aspects can be found most often. It was mentioned before, brand awareness and brand associations are called one of the most important factors for brand equity. Moreover, according to Keller (1993) and Aaker (1991), these components strongly related to the decision making of customers. For this reason, additional attention is needed for components of brand awareness and brand associations.

Brand awareness – brand salience according to Keller (2001), refers to consumers or possible customers' ability to 'recognize and recall a particular brand, in various situations. This is the base level for the CBBE pyramid, which was presented by Keller (2001). Brand awareness can be thought of as the potential customers' ability to understand, perceive or analyze the brand, especially identify it, during the purchase process says Percy and Rossiter (1992). The statement signs the correlation of branding to the customer purchasing decision and that branding influences customers' decision to purchase a particular group of products or a specific product and a brand as well. As Gustafson and Chabot (2007) mention that if the company has a quite successful brand and awareness of a particular brand, then it means that brand's product or service, which is being offered by an organization, have a possibly good reputation in particular markets and is simply acceptable for the customers to purchase the product or service. For this reason, the relation between brand awareness and customers purchasing decisions is extremely understandable in today's brand building processes, as the brand is becoming oriented into customers' purchasing behavior. According to Malik, Ghafoor, Hafiz, Riaz, Hassan, Mustafa, and Shahbaz (2013), purchasing decisions are mainly based on brand awareness and loyalty to the brand. In the mind of the customers, the importance of brand awareness can be evaluated at different stages such as the top of mind, brand dominance, recognition, recall, brand knowledge (what is the brand's importance for the customer) says Aaker (1996). Brand awareness itself is a highly important factor since if there will be no process of brand awareness, no communication with the customers from the brand's side will occur and no transaction will be seen (Percy, 1987). According to Keller (2008), brand awareness provides a clear and understanding learning advantage for the brand and at the same time influences the decision making of the consumers. Brands that are known, most of the time are more likely to be chosen and included in consumers' purchase consideration process says MacDonald and Sharp (2000). In total, brand awareness often can increase the market performance of a brand, during its activities in the marketplace (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2014). It shows that brand awareness is an important factor for customers, as it is the base layer, when customers and brands start to know each other and when customers have a first sight or first details about the brand and the idea or products that it presents.

The second component, which was highlighted by Keller (1993) and Aaker (1991) and named as a key component of brand equity is brand associations. As was found in the literature, brand image usually perceived as being brand associations would attach to all associations for the details that are known about the brand (Aaker, 1996). The statement includes consumers' experiences about the brand and relevant to its factors. Brand imagery could be divided into user profiles, usage situations, personality and values, heritage, history and experiences according to Keller (2001). The product or services are the main structure of brand equity, as its primary influences, the experience of the customer says Keller (2001). The importance of brand identity was discussed for many years and this factor plays an important role, while marketing brands' products in various markets. According to

Ghodeswar (2008), brand identity is very based on unique sets of brand associations, which help to present the promise of values to customers. Brand associations or, in other words, brand image is completed from core identity and extended identity (Ghodeswar, 2008). The core identity does not change over time, even when the brand establishes new products or enters new markets, over time. Core identity mainly focuses on product/service attributes, product performance, user profile, etc. Ghodeswar (2008). Extended identity is more customizable and could weave around brand identity elements and focus on brand personality, relationship and strong symbol associations say Ghodeswar (2008). To be as effective as possible, brand identity has to resonate with the customers, differentiate the main brand from possible or current competitors and be active with these processes over time (Aaker and Joachimshaler, 2000). Companies that present a cohesive and relevant brand identity can create a preference, for their product group, in the marketplace, add value to their product or services says Schmit and Simonson (1997). Even more, when there is an exceptional need in the market, to be seen or differentiated from the other players, while the market is highly competitive, brand personality and reputation can distinguish a group of products, from other offerings. According to Ghodeswar (2008) a brand identity, which is clear and understandable and could be experienced, helps in developing trust in the eyes of the possible customers, which also helps to differentiate the brand. As it was mentioned that strong interest has been seen in the subject of brand equity, however, little research has been conducted to find which brand associations are the most important and has the strongest effect on consumer behavior (Del Rio, Vazquez, Iglesias, 2001). According to Keller (1998) and Aaker (1996) consumers' associations of the brands can be named as crucial elements of brand equity formation and management. Keller (1998) classified brand associations components into three clear categories: attitudes, benefits, and attributes. To understand what is the importance of each category, there is a need to clearly describe these groups. Category of attributes is descriptive features that create a particular character for the brand such as what is involved in a brand's or product's purchase or consumption and what customers think about the brand and its personality. Brand's attitudes are how consumers evaluate the brand overall, what are their evaluations of a brand. Benefits are what personal values customers attach to the brand, this represents customers' expectations of what brand can do for them says Keller (1998).

Moving on, according to Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993), geographical aspects such as country-of-origin can effect and effects brand equity in total, by generating secondary associations in the eyes of customers of possible customers. Moreover, even a foreign-sounding name of a brand can affect and is know that affects brand equity, which means it affects customers purchasing behavior (Leclerc *et al*, 1994). According to Shimp and Sharma (2005), the brand's country-of-origin underlying the essence of a brand – brand equity.

To present, how and where country-of-origin influences brand equity, a model created by Pappu, Quester, Cooksey (2006) is used. Figure 7 presents how country-of-origin effects customer-based brand equity. As Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) mention, country-of-origin creates and leads to associations in the minds of customers. For example, potential customers can associate specific countries, in this case, France and Germany, with intangible attributes, such as “reliability” and “durability”. These countries, based on origin associations of consumers, can influence customer-based equity dimensions of a particular brand or specific country Yasin, Noor, and Mohamad (2007). It means that country-of-origin mainly affects brand association components of brand equity, which according to Keller (1998), has a category of brand's attitudes. Consumers have specific associations toward various known entities, which are products, places, brands, and countries-of-origin as well. Product category-country refers to customers' ability to name and

remember a specific country when one of the categories of a product is mentioned. The product category-country is at interest when there is a need to examine the relation between country-of-origin and consumer-based brand equity, - say Yasin, Noor, and Mohamad (2007).

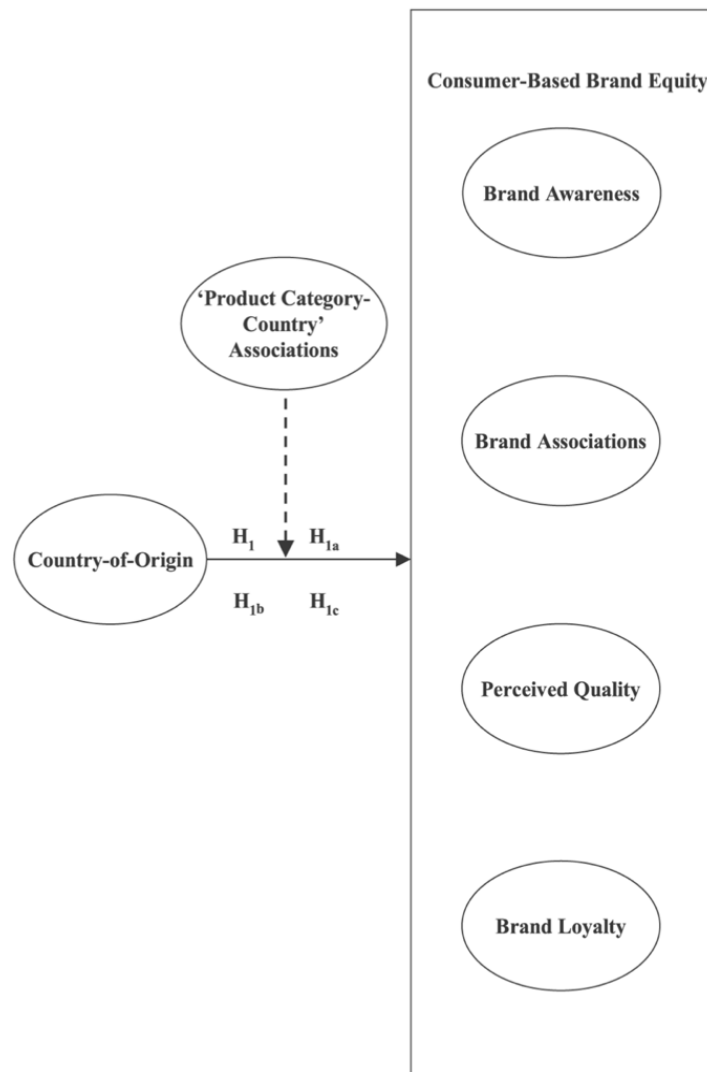


Fig. 7. Model of how country-of-origin effects Customer-Based brand Equity pyramid. *Source Pappu, Quester, Cooksey (2006).*

As it was little research can be found on how brand equity is being affected by geographical aspects, Figure 3 can be named as a primary source of information on how brand equity is being affected by geographical aspects of country-of-origin. During the research Pappu, Quester, Cooksey (2006) found that consumer-based brand equity varied significantly depending on country-of-origin. These significant variations have been noticed in situations where consumers were perceived and seen significant differences between different countries, by taking into account product category-country associations say Pappu, Quester, Cooksey (2006). The study, which was prepared by Pappu, Quester, Cooksey (2006), confirmed that country-of-origin, which includes such tags as “country of design”, “country of manufacture”, “country of the brand”, has positive effects on consumers’ perceived quality. Moreover, by taking into account Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) that country-of-origin associations are secondary associations to brand associations, it was noticed that customers’ and potential customers’ associations varied significantly according to country-of-origin. The study also

presents that the effects of country-of-origin from one product category can easily transfer to new categories of products from the same country (Agarwal and Sikiri, 1996). It can be stated that the component of Brand Loyalty from the CBBE model (Keller, 1993) is influenced by the country-of-origin effect as well. According to Pappu, Quester, Cooksey's (2006) study, it was found that consumers were more likely to become loyal to a brand, which is created or made in a certain country with a strong association in the product category, comparing to other brands which are from countries with weaker associations. Besides, the study shows that brand awareness can vary significantly according to the country-of-origin of a brand. Also, the study presented that consumers' country-of-origin associations do influence their associations of brands.

2.3. Geographical aspects in branding

As it was found that geographical aspects can influence brand equity, however, there is an additional need to find how geographical aspects can influence brands and branding overall. To achieve this aim, the clear relations of brands and branding processes with brand equity have been found. This part helps clearly define how geographical aspects can affect brands and branding.

To start with, according to Keller (2003) brand is a sign, name, symbol, design and even can be a combination of all components mentioned before, which have a purpose to help the consumer identify the services or products of a seller and differentiate it from the competition. However, many managers can argue the statement, adding that a brand is having created a specific amount of awareness, prominence, reputation and more additional components in the marketplace, - says Keller (2003). It can be understood that the brand is not only simply structured of a symbol and covers a complete set of products that it represents, but brands are also much more complicated in their structure and meaning. Transforming the statement that Keller (2003) mentions, means that brands are including valuable essence of brand equity.

There is a lot of literature based on brand and branding subjects such as group of products, which includes the statements of a brand's purpose and importance for the brand owners. Since there was found how Keller (2003) describes the importance and influence of brands, there is a need to mention this, to create a better picture of brands and branding processes and their daily building and maintenance activities. Here is the list of what brands do provide for the consumers:

- Primary help and important factor in identifying a product or a service;
- Reducing a risk;
- Reducing the costs of searching a product or a service;
- Attaching responsibility to a product or a service maker, creator, producer;
- Signaling the quality of the product or service;
- Bond and promise with service maker, creator, producer;
- Symbolic component.

And it is important to mention, the list of what brands do provide for business organizations, firms (owners of brands):

- Importance of legally protecting features which are unique for brand, its products or services;

- Noticeable signal of a quality level to already satisfied customers;
- An important source of competitive advantage against competing brands in the marketplace;
- Source of financial returns;
- Creating significant and unique associations to products or services of a brand;
- Simplifying identification of products or services of a brand.

As it can be noted, brands are an extremely valuable tool in creating associations, which are attached to group of products or services, and building trust in the eyes of possible customers about the activities of a business organization, brands' products and services that they provide. Moreover, it is important to highlight the disagreements on how a brand is perceived, structured, and built. Most of these disagreements are based on branding principles and guidelines (Keller, 2003). According to Keller (2003), branding itself is a process, which involves creating mental structures and helping customers and potential customers construct and organize their knowledge about services and products of a particular brand. This process usually clarifies customers or potential customers' decision making and provides additional value for the organization says Keller (2003). To have a powerful and successful strategy and brand equity, customers or potential customers have to think that not all products or services in the same category are the same, which means differentiation should be applied. As Keller (2003) says brand differences are usually attached to attributes and/or benefits of the product or services, that brand represents. However, as it was mentioned before, there is a need to find a clear relation of brand equity in branding. According to Keller (2003), brand equity in branding plays an important role, which is showing for the marketers an essential strategic so-called 'bridge', between the past of a brand and its services and products, with brands future and the road or direction which leads to that future. Moreover, as the brand building process is complicated and has a lot of components when building a strong brand its ground has to be the correct linkage of feelings, images, thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions between brand and consumer says Keller (2003). All these factors build consumer knowledge and it is what drives key differences of brands in terms of brand equity (Keller, 2003). This statement presents, how brand equity is being placed in brands and branding processes and it shows that key brand differentiation is being based on its essence – brand equity.

To connect parts of the literature review, relations of brand equity and branding were found, by using Keller's (2003) literature source. However, to understand how the branding process and brands are built, and most importantly in this way understand how geographic aspects occur in branding, additional literature research has to be completed. As it was mentioned in the previous part, a set of associations enables brands to develop a clear, rich, and transparent brand identity. Model of global branding process presented by Quelch (1999) in the following figure (see Figure 8). There should be highlighted that important component, which could be also found in brand equity and user imagery, quality, and roots, which is covered by brand meaning according to Quelch (1999).

Building Global Brands

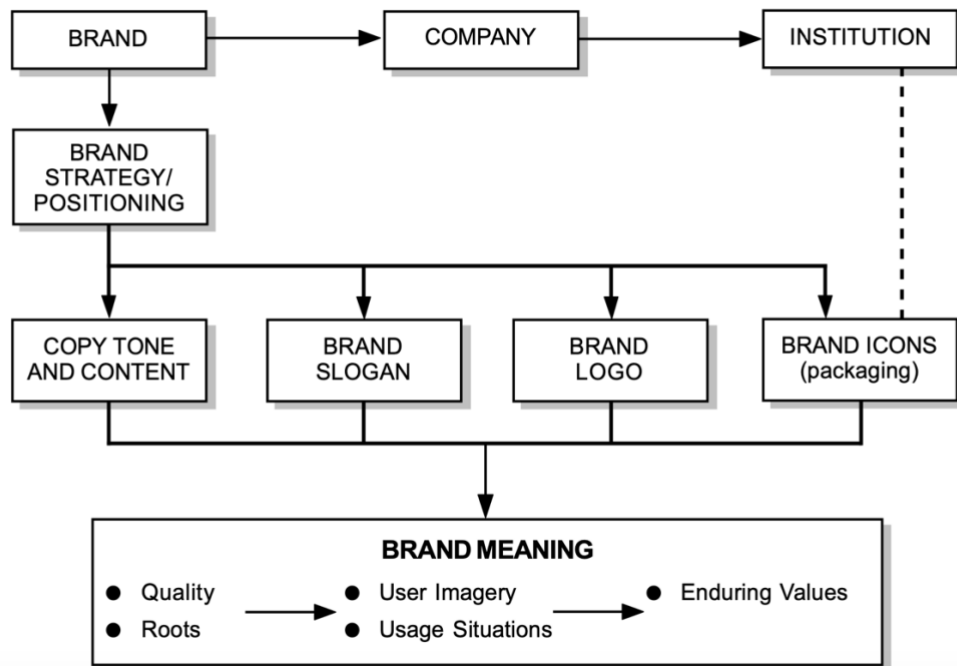


Fig. 8. Global brand building process. *Source: Quelch (1999).*

Moving on, in the literature there was found an update in the brand development process. As the importance to get a better view of how the brand is constructed, how brand equity occurs in the branding process, and how geographic aspects such as country-of-origin bring influence on branding, additional tools of brand building models were found in the literature. The tool is used to create the identity for the brands and prepare branding strategy and it is named as the PCDL model, which was created by Ghodeswar (2008). It is being created from four elements, which are: positioning the brand, communicating the brand message, delivering the brand performance, and leveraging the brand equity. The most important part is positioning the brand, where the brand identity is being formulated. The following figure (see Figure 9) presents the model.

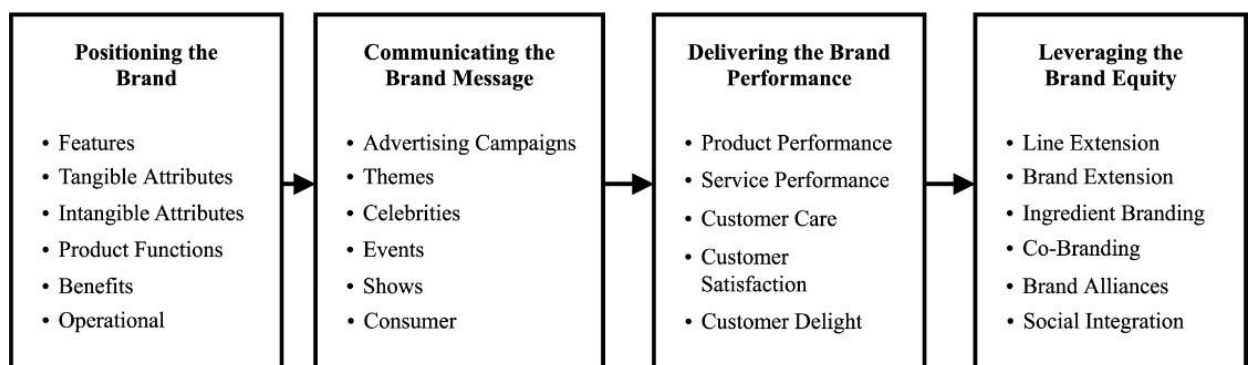


Fig. 9. PCDL model. *Source Ghodeswar (2008).*

While building brand associations, first of all, the company needs to understand its brand as well as the competitors' brands, using customer research says Ghodeswar (2008). While understanding its brands' values, identity, and personality, the associations to the brand can be attached. Section of positioning the brand can be named as an important component, in other words, the ground for all brand-building process. Moreover, brand associations can be understood as intangible attributes.

Using the essence of brand positioning and bringing all PCDL model aspects together to create the brand image, which is the perception in the mind of a customer, about the brand values. According to Temporal (2000), branding itself is being based on adding psychological value to the product, in the form of intangible benefits such as emotional associations, beliefs, and feelings that people tend to relate to the brand. These associations are leading to the ones, that brand values correlate with, such as from where the brand and product are coming from, this shows geographic associations. According to Pike (2009), brands are entangled in inescapable spatial associations. Aaker (1995) says that brands are constituted of values, such as associations, awareness, loyalty, and others, which do represent spatial connections between each other and external sources. As the process connects and represents various cues embodied in brands in various ways, branding itself cannot rid itself of the geographical associations and contexts, says Pike (2009). The author says that the brands are being understood in a way, that the customers based on their values and meanings, or even the associations, in which customers believe in, evaluates the brand identity and other aspects related to branding. This means that the brand's geographic aspects bring an effect on how people react to the brands and how they understand brands' ideas, values, and screens the identity.

As already the relations of branding, brand-equity, and customers' purchasing behavior was presented, there is a need to better understand, at which level geographical aspects enter the process and has an influence on the customer purchasing behavior and brand, the concept developed by Andéhn and Decosta (2018) was used. Figure 10 presents the main components of the country-of-origin effect and what is the relationship between place, associations with a particular location or place, commodity, and consumption of a particular commodity. As according to the authors - Andéhn and Decosta (2018), in the literature there is a huge lack of conceptualization techniques in the field of country-of-origin influence on branding, products, and marketing of these products in total, this particular conceptual model is a great tool to show how geographical aspects occur and how these aspects affect customers' purchasing behavior and branding. To understand the conceptual model, which was developed by Andéhn and Decosta (2018), even more effectively, Table 1 was completed, to present and describe each element of the model, as well as the relations that can be noticed in this particular model. Besides, to clarify the meanings, commodity means – a brand, service, or a consumable product. According to Table 1 and Figure 10, there could be noticed that associations influence commodity-place component.

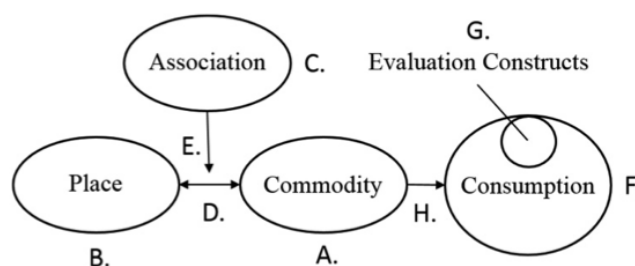


Fig. 10. Main components of country-of-origin effect and what is the relationship between place, associations with a particular location or place, commodity, and consumption. *Source: Andéhn and Decosta (2018)*

Table 1. Summary table of the main components of country-of-origin effect and what is the relationship between place, associations with a particular location or place, commodity, and consumption.

Country-of-origin effects

Components (based on Figure 5)	Properties of components
Commodity	It can be a clear, consumable object, including those which are intangible such as services. Also, which can influence symbolic meanings according to Thakor and Kohli (1996).
Place	Andéhn and Decosta (2018) that according to McCracken (1988), places can be understood like symbols, through meaning specific experiences or sets of information around a particular place. Moreover, these symbols can rise from other commodities such as cocoa, coffee, or wine and being expressed in the geography of a product say Andéhn and Decosta (2018).
Perceived associations	Association is a base of brand equity says Keller (1993), which is variable by a degree (Andéhn and Decosta et al, 2016) and strengthened by re-occurrence or weakened by occurrence. Associations can arise from relations or sets of information about a specific country or a place.
Commodity-place	Provenance as a specific form of association is potentially particular for inferring meaning. Provenance itself is completely decoupled from any criterion that is specially created in determining the origin of a product, brand, or service (Magnusson et al, 2011). In other words, a place can have specific meanings for the consumers and they can relate their values, with values that specific location is presenting and focusing on. Even more, specific attitudes about the place can affect the product, service of brand (commodity) evaluations, even when the consumers understand and are aware of their attitude towards the subject (Herz and Diamantopoulos, 2013).
Association moderator	From the beginning, associations should be treated as moderators. Associations predict the level by which perception of specific location affects the perception of a commodity (Andéhn and Decosta et al, 2016).
Consumption	This word has a far broader meaning than it looks and its typical meaning. Consumption that can be or is influenced by geographical aspects includes engagement with commodities in the much broader sense say Andéhn and Decosta (2018). It means that the consumption of a product, service, or brand can be encouraged by various associations, (geographical aspects in this situation), which brings stronger and more attachable relationships between consumers and commodities.
Evaluation constructs	Evaluation constructs can be: clear actions, taken by most of the time by a consumer. These actions can be purchase intention, quality perceptions, and/or brand equity (Keller, 1993).
Commodity-to-consumption	It is a multifaceted influence that can increase or promote consumption in a variety of ways. It is a complex set of relations of symbols, instead of a simple initiative to purchase of a product according to Andéhn and Decosta (2018).

Source: Andéhn and Decosta (2018), a table was recreated according to the source.

2.4. Conclusions of literature findings

To complete empirical research and find the most appropriate conceptual model for the study, a literature analysis has been conducted. However, the most fitting conceptual model on the influence of country-of-origin has not been found. As it was mentioned, that there is a lack of conceptualization on country-of-origin effects on branding. For this reason, Andéhn and Decosta (2018) conceptual model, Pappu, Quester, Cooksey (2006) conceptual model and Keller (1993) model were used as a beneficial tool to conduct the concept for the empirical research study, on which effect of geographic aspects can be found for the research. The following figure (see Figure 11) presents a conceptual framework of the research. To provide a conceptual framework even more clarity, an additional table (see Table 2) was created. It briefly describes each element, which is being mentioned in the conceptual framework.

Model is being based on four key components to show how geographical aspects can influence the brands and in this way consumer decision making. These components are associations, place, commodity, consumers. Consumers mostly represent the decision making of consumers. This element was chosen to include in the model since it can present what effects of geographic aspects, such as the origin of a brand or product, can be done on branding. Besides, this element can be measured during an empirical research study. Due to the analysis of literature sources, it is assumed that the effects of country-of-origin on the decision making of consumers correlate with effects on brands.

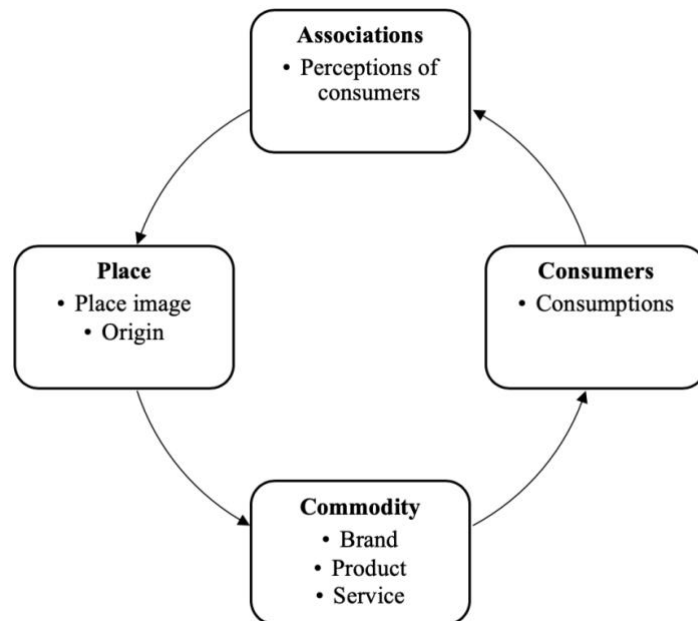


Fig. 11. A cycle of effects of geographical aspects.

Table 2. Summary table of effects of geographic aspects.

Effects of geographic aspects	
Components (based on Figure 6)	Properties of components
Associations	<p>Associations about a particular place or location, most of the time, arises from perceptions of consumers. Also, associations can arise from relations or sets of information about a specific country or a place. According to Liu and Johnson (2005), associations of country-of-origin in most of the time are activated in the mind of the consumer by using the mere presence of information of country-of-origin.</p> <p>From the beginning, associations should be treated as moderators. Associations predict the level by which perception of specific location affects the perception of a commodity (Andéhn and Decosta et al, 2016). Moreover, by taking into account Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) ideas that country-of-origin associations are secondary associations to brand associations, it was noticed that customers' and potential customers' associations varied significantly according to a place from where a brand is coming from. These significant variations have been noticed in situations where consumers were perceived and seen significant differences between different countries, by taking into account product category-country associations say Pappu, Quester, Cooksey (2006).</p>
Place	<p>Places are being affected by the associations built around the places. These associations are mainly based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image of the country; • Origin. <p>In the literature, country-of-origin was found as being the most used term, which presents a place component.</p> <p>Andéhn and Decosta (2018) mention that according to McCracken (1988), places can be understood like symbols, through meaning specific experiences or sets of information around a particular place. Moreover, these symbols can rise from other commodities and categories of products, for example, such as cocoa, coffee, or wine, and are expressed in the geography of a product say Andéhn and Decosta (2018). Moreover, Lampert and Jaffe (1998) say that country image can be viewed as a valuable asset for the brand, when it has a very positive connotation in the particular field, however, if it has negative connotations it can be valued as a liability for the brand. Connections of the brand from where it comes from and from where its products are made. It mainly demonstrates the country-of-origin effect and this factor. This includes “Made in ...” or “Designed in ... “ tags, says author Pike (2015). Most of the time, place symbolizes the origin of a brand or a product. According to Pike (2015), a place can also represent not just the origin of a brand or a product, but also a full supply chain country of development, country of a brand, country of production, etc.</p> <p>Provenance as a specific form of association is potentially particular for inferring meaning. Provenance itself is completely decoupled from any criterion that is specially created in determining the origin of a product, brand, or service (Magnusson et al, 2011). In other words, a place can have specific meanings for the consumers and they can relate their values, with values that specific location is presenting and focusing on. Even more, specific attitudes about the place can affect the product, service of brand (commodity) evaluations, even when the consumers understand and are aware of their attitude towards the subject (Herz and Diamantopoulos, 2013).</p> <p>According to Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) effective level of country-of-origin, emotional connotations can be created or formed through direct experiences such as art, media, word-of-mouth (WOM), and also stereotypes. Origin can be called as an association, which brings cues for the customers about the brand and product, and the part of it is a country-of-origin effect (Magnusson et al., 2011). Moreover, according</p>

	<p>to Clifton (2014), most global brands originate from particular geographic places that have a brand image of its own. In addition to this, brands' products are usually strongly linked with that place, region, country image, whether it is French fashion clothes, Swiss watches, or Italian sports cars.</p>
Commodity	<p>Commodities such as brands, products, and services are being affected by the geographic aspects such as places.</p> <p>Commodities can be brands or products that in most cases are branded. According to Investopedia (2020) commodity is a basic service or good, it is mostly used as an input in processes of production, sales, and development. However, for this particular model of the effects of geographic aspects, commodities are related to a broader meaning, which also covers brands and branded, differentiated products. As a brand, it is built from brand equity.</p>
Consumers	<p>Commodities influencing consumers, to purchase or choose brands, products, or services, by presenting information about it. Consumers are being affected by a set of factors, starting from associations and perceptions, including places, products, and brands.</p> <p>Consumers' decision making while purchasing a brand or a product can be named as the most effective factor to evaluate how brands are being affected by the geographical aspects.</p> <p>Besides, consumers create perceptions, stereotypes, and use their knowledge to create associations about commodities and particular countries, from where brands and products are being originated.</p>

In conclusion, there was found that the influence and effects of geographical aspects such as country-of-origin can vary according to different places and product groups. For this reason, influence of geographic aspects can differentiate a lot depending on different factors and aspects. The findings of the literature shows that research of each market and different categories of products are needed, when there is a need to find influence of geographic aspects on branding.

3. Methodology of the research

The structured questionnaires' will be used to collect primary data from the respondents. This type of data gathering is widely spread and used across various empirical research studies and one of the most popular tools for gathering quantitative data. According to Rowley (2014), tools such as questionnaires are used as a form of collecting needed data from the end customers the most frequently. Multiple choice, structured questionnaires helps to collect fast enough and process the large sum of data, this type of data can be easily used for analysis. Empirical research is used to find how geographical aspects can affect brands and their products, to conduct the research quantitative method is used – structured online questionnaires.

The structured questionnaire helps easily process large scale data, which is being gathered from respondents. Clear benefits are that it does not consume as much time as interviews and is more cost-effective. To get even more efficiency, structured questionnaires are uploaded online. During the research online-based panel survey was used as a method to collect the needed data from respondents. As Eurostat (2020) presents internet usage, 94% of females, who are at the age of 25 to 54, were using internet daily in Lithuania in 2019. It shows the factor that online surveys for the needed segment can be extremely successful and valid. Moreover, according to Pecakova (2016), online questionnaires are undoubtedly more efficient tool to gather data, while offering various opportunities concerning navigation, formulation of the questions, graphic tools, and media. Due to language differences questions were formed in Lithuanian language, which is more applicable in geographical location, where the research was being conducted. The process of collecting the data took from 27/04/2020 until 05/05/2020.

The goal of this research is to gather data, which is representative and could be processed by statistical techniques.

The “Methodology of the research” section is combined from four different parts:

- The first part focuses on the aim and objectives of the research;
- The second part presents the theoretical background of the research;
- The third section is dedicated to the research sample and sampling procedures. It presents sample size and sampling frame;
- The fourth section represents research instruments, which were used to gather necessary data;

3.1. Cases problem analysis

To clearly understand the situation on how the problem occurs in real situations, case problem analysis, and background is presented. Case, which is being based on UAB Tututis situation, while branding products group in Lithuanian market. This part will clearly show how the mentioned theoretical problems occur in a real case situation, which is being based in Lithuanian market, also it will let ensure to presents that mentioned theoretical problematic cases are being faced more often than a local business can expect, especially when entering the domestic market, with new brands, or starting to enter to new, foreign markets with a well-known local brand. The case analysis is a clear example of how globalization is being seen in the business processes and how this aspect can be turned into a clear and strong presence of the brand in foreseen new markets.

3.1.1. Background of the company

The company UAB Tututis was established in the year of 2002, in Kaunas, Lithuania. The company mainly operates in the market of baby products, the key products in the portfolio are baby prams

and strollers. Moreover, the company not only controls and maintains its brands of the products but also has its manufacturing facility for baby prams and strollers in the same place, where main headquarters are located – Kaunas, Lithuania. Its strategy is based on full process control and their covering, which includes building the idea of a product and a brand, maintenance and development of these aspects, R&D of new products and strategic goals formation, manufacturing products and ensuring/controlling supply chains, managing distribution, and marketing processes not only domestically, but also globally and at last controlling logistics of portfolio products in different markets. The following figure (see Figure 12) presents, what is the internal full process control scheme developed in the company.

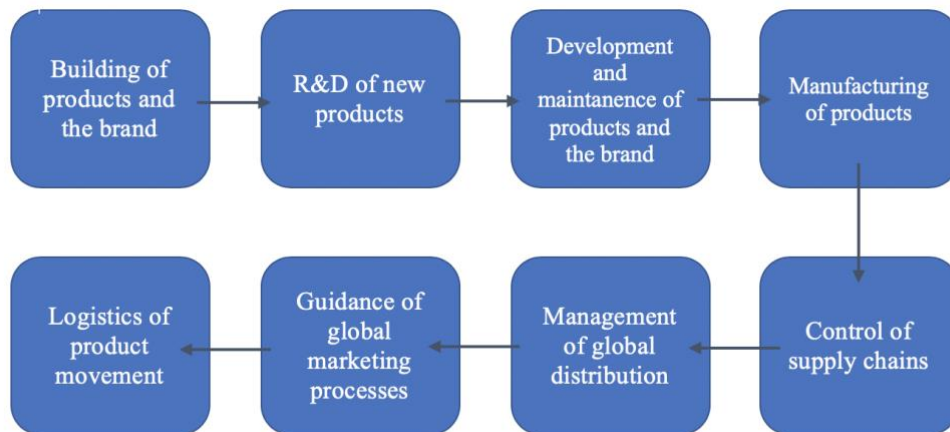


Fig. 12. Full process control scheme of UAB Tututis company

This strategy has been followed by the establishment of the company and is being reviewed every five years. It shows that the company seeks to control each process of brand building and the distribution and maintenance of their products. Especially this strategy and flow of this strategy show the position of the company, which is first to find a clear way to build trust in the eyes of their stakeholders (shareholders, employees, customers, society, suppliers, and others). Key values and ideas to seek to gain trust are to create clear processes and build the products, which are being known as high quality, reliable, and solid. All these aspects have been also transferred to the tools, which are used to introduce and gain differentiation in the market. These tools were chosen as the introduction of the brand and branding company’s products. The statement can be validated by the fact that the company closely and precisely develops and maintains its brands while reviewing each element of the brand construction process and the final results. UAB Tututis currently controls two main brands in baby prams’ and strollers’ group of product portfolio – “Tutis” and “Noordi” brands of baby strollers. Branded products are being exported to eighteen countries in Europe such as the United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Russia, Finland, and others, also distributed in the domestic market, where products are produced – Lithuanian market. The long-run strategy for the company is to increase the width of markets, where the company’s products are distributed in and find the growth possibilities in the current markets, where the company’s brands are actively distributed in. However, one of the priorities for the company UAB Tututis is to hold the market leader title in baby prams and strollers’ sector in their domestic market and increase the percentage in market share there. The statement can be validated by the fact that till 2016 company distributed its products only with the brand “Tutis” in the Lithuanian market, however in the mid-2016 brand

“Noordi” was introduced to the local market. The long-run strategy of this brand was to present a newly prepared design of products and show Northern Europe values for the local market, in which Northern Europe is being trusted and is highly appreciated, to set the value package of the particular region and present to Lithuanian market, but also foreign markets, to which brand was planned to be introduced in. This shows factor that the brand was focused to be launched not only in the Lithuanian market, but in the upcoming future, it has to enter new European and Western European markets as well. The case analysis of the Lithuanian market is a perfect projection, how can neighboring markets of the Lithuania and markets based in Western Europe react to the brand values and its essence of geographical aspects.

In 2016, the brand “Noordi” was launched by company UAB Tututis in the Lithuanian market, and the distribution of branded products was started. The reason, why the company has launched the “Noordi” brand in their domestic market was to increase company’s products market share, by offering a new brand for the market, which was orientated into additional segments, those varied from the currently targeted segments that other brand “Tutis” of a company was focused into. Without focusing on product design differences or price increases, the brand was based on a country-of-origin factor, while inserting the brand into the market. The brand was positioned as it was created in Northern Europe region, the brand idea, designs of products were based on this area and using country-of-origin factors. This strategy was based on differentiating the current company’s brand portfolio when one of the oldest company’s brands was already being positioned as a brand, fully based in Lithuania. For this reason, the company's key concern was adding additional value to their brand as focusing that the whole brand comes from Northern Europe and not concentrating on manufacturing and brand maintenance places – Lithuania. This was a factor can be related to the meaning of building a global, international brand and adding this valuable option to the company’s brand portfolio. This strategy was assumed that it can bring the values that the chosen geographic location can assure. The chosen place, where the brand could be originated from was Northern Europe as it has the brand of the region identification (clear identification factors), with clearly understandable values such as clear, minimalistic design, high quality of life, a new way of thinking, reliability, state-of-the-art technically advanced solutions, communications of the brand message, etc. Moreover, the name of the brand was based on the word North as the first part of a brand name “Noordi” bring associations to the North for most of the B2B and B2C customers, according to a presentation of the company UAB Tututis (2020). Also, from the beginning, the company has assumed that the Lithuanian market will be more likely to accept a new-coming brand, which is being originated from Northern Europe, as Lithuanian customers well-know the qualities and values that Northern European countries and the region in total presents.

3.1.2. Problem analysis of the company

As the Lithuanian market was entered by company UAB Tututis with its brand “Noordi” in 2016, the sales of products were started in this domestic market. The market size of baby prams’ and strollers’ market is valued as very small in Lithuania, as the total number of live births was around 28,149 in 2018 and it takes 21st place in the EU (Eurostat, 2019). The assumption can be made that the total number of live births in the country correlates to the total number of possible potential customers in the market for products of UAB Tututis company, which are baby prams and strollers. Moreover, the market is strongly competitive, it is concentrated by various well-established international and regional baby prams and strollers’ brands. In the past few years brand strategy to focus on the country of origin was not followed wisely and the sales of “Noordi” products were not

increasing. For this reason, clear brand position and its presentation in the market is a crucial factor to vary it from the competitive brands that are in the market and reach more success in sales there. The information and clear understanding of the country-of-origin factor brings the effect on the company's chosen marketing and branding strategy and if these effects are more positive than negative in Lithuania market. Targeting the market, the assumptions about the geographical aspect effect could be also applied to closely related countries with Lithuania, neighboring – Latvia, and Poland. The results would be very beneficial for the company, for their branding and marketing strategy redevelopment. Problem question is formulated: What are the main effects that geographical aspect brings to the company's products' group branding in Lithuania market?

3.2. Aim of the research and objectives

This part presents the main aim and key objectives of the research. It describes the essence of prepared research and develops specific boundaries. The most important aim of the research is to gain insights from a particular segment of a market, is to find if geographical aspects have a positive effect on branding a group of products in Lithuania market and if these aspects have influence on consumer purchasing behavior of particular products group. It would help to gain additional insights about what kind of effects do bring geographic aspects to a brand. To achieve an aim, four objectives of the research were conducted:

1. To find demographics and psychographics of respondents;
2. To get insights on what is the level of importance of geographic aspects of a brand for customers, while preparing to purchase a brand's product;
3. To evaluate what associations are brought by a country-of-origin for the respondents;
4. To find if country-of-origin affects a brand.

Hypotheses for the research, which have to be checked:

H₁ – geographical aspects have a positive influence on consumer purchasing behavior;

H₂ – a country of development is more important than country of product manufacture;

3.3. The theoretical background of the research

The following parts present theoretical findings of geographical aspects, which is the primary and ground layer to construct a structured questionnaire for the research. The questionnaire is based on the developed conceptual framework of the effects of geographic aspects. It presents, how associations of place occur in branding and what are relations of these situations with customers' decisions to purchase a commodity (product, service, or a particular brand). For the grouping of the questions, four main components from the model were taken, as core parts for the research: Associations, Place, Commodity, and Consumers component were taken. Questions grouped by the conceptual framework and are presented in section *Research instruments*.

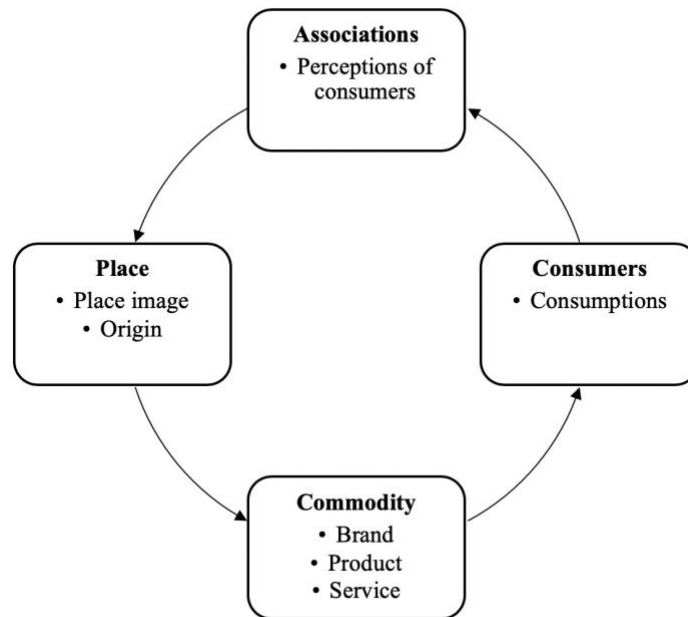


Fig. 13. Cycle of effects of geographical aspects.

3.4. Research sample and sampling process

The correct, representative, and adequate sample size is required to be set when conducting research, especially in quantitative studies says Rahman (2013). To research as validly as possible, the correct sample size is required to be found. The sampling frame is women from 18 to 45 years old, having children or planning to have children in the upcoming five years, living in Lithuania. Furthermore, there is a need to clearly define the sampling population, which would bring more clarity for the sampling procedure. The sampling population was designed following demographical statistics and data to Lithuania. Data, which was used is the total number of newborns of the past three years, adding projections of a total number of live births for the upcoming three years in Lithuania. According to Lithuania Statistics Department (2020), the total number of live births in 2018 was 28 149 newborns, 2017 - 28 696, 2016 – 30 623. There is no data of 2019 included, data from the year 2018 will be taken as the projection, also same projection will be applied for the year 2020 and 2021. The total number of live births in Lithuania, from 2016 to 2021 can correlate with the total number of the target segment of respondents. To calculate the total sampling population, 1% loss ratio was applied. For this reason, the total sampling population is 170 463. After the sampling population was found, there is a need to find a key factor of the research – sample size. In the following paragraph, the finding process of the sample size is described and briefly presented.

$$\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2} \div 1 + \left(\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2 N} \right)$$

Meanings of formula, to determine the sample size:
 N – Population size
 e – Margin of error (percentage in decimal form)
 z – Z-score

In the research, a confidence level of 95% (z-score is 1,96) is used to find the sample size. In addition to this 18% is used to apply a margin of error (e). Overall, after calculations, the sample size was

found, which is 108. Respondents were selected by using segmented Facebook® groups, which are applied for mothers' or mothers'-to-be, also respondents were reached by directly sending questionnaires to their email addresses. The online Lithuanian survey platform was used: www.apklausk.lt. Sampling technique is non-probability sampling, since the large scale of a social network, grouped users are possible respondents.

3.5. Research instruments

As was mentioned before, the research survey is based on a structured online questionnaire. The structure of the questionnaire is based on the conceptual framework of the effects of geographic aspects, which was conducted by the author. The optimal number of questions was chosen – 23, to conduct the survey of the research. A lower number, a tight questionnaire is more convenient for respondents, it enables to receive a better response rate and maximize it says Rowley (2014). All in all, the survey includes closed type questions, rating questions, and one question uses the Likert Scale, to get more in-depth responses in a particular field. As Rowley (2014), closed type of questions can be easily coded, also these type of questions can be answered fast enough by the respondents. Furthermore, to get a better response rate, questions were transformed into the Lithuanian language, as this is a cross-cultural factor in this situation. In the following table, questions are grouped according to the conceptual framework – the effects of geographic aspects. The table presents five groups of questions: screening, associations, place, commodity, and consumers. Screening questions were inserted to the grouping of questions to set the audience of respondents on the needed sampling frame. Fully prepared questions and answers, both in Lithuanian and English, can be found in the appendixes part (see *Appendix A* and *Appendix B*).

Table 3. Summary table of questions for the survey.

Name of a group	Definition of a group	Questions
Screening questions	Screening questions are based on a goal to check if respondents do comply with the requirements of the segmented group of respondents.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your gender? 2. Your age? 3. What is average monthly income of your household? 4. Have you purchased or are you planning to purchase the baby stroller in a period of 5 years?
Place questions	This group questions are mainly focused to find, what is the importance of place, origin, and country where products are produced. Moreover, these questions also help to find the differences in consumer perceptions on geographical origin where the product was manufactured and where the brand was developed. Questions were conducted according to Andėhn and Decosta (2018) model. Also, while completing questions for this group, Lin, Chen (2006) concept was used for the guidance.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. How important do you find the geographical origin of development of the brand? 6. How important do you find the geographical origin of manufacture of the product? 7. Have you ever purchased a product because of its development or manufacturing country of origin? 8. Do you agree with the following: the location of the development of product is more important than the location of manufacturing?

		<p>9. Why, in your opinion, the customer finds important the country of origin of the product?</p> <p>10. Do you appreciate the product more if its region of origin is Northern Europe, instead of Eastern Europe or Asia?</p> <p>11. Do you appreciate the product more if its country of origin is not Lithuania, instead of Lithuania?</p> <p>12. Do you agree the brand is appreciated in Lithuania more, if its region of origin is Northern Europe?</p> <p>13. Do you appreciate the products developed in foreign countries more than those, developed in Lithuania?</p>
Associations questions	<p>This group of questions was conducted to find what associations for consumers bring a particular place, in this case – The Northern European region. Moreover, questions help to find perceptions of the consumers about a particular place. Questions were conducted according to Andéhn and Decosta (2018) model.</p>	<p>14. What qualities of the product would you distinguish considering the Northern European origin of development of the product? (5 the most important, 1 – least important):</p> <p>15. What qualities of the product would you distinguish considering the Northern European origin of manufacturing of the product? (5 - the most important, 1– least important)</p>
Commodity questions	<p>This group of questions helps to define the knowledge of consumers about particular brands and products, in this case, brand “Noordi” and products of baby strollers. Also, this group of questions helps to find how consumers value the brand, what associations about the brand they have, and what are the most important factors about the product, during the decision making process.</p>	<p>16. Are you familiar with “Noordi” brand, creating and manufacturing baby strollers?</p> <p>17. Have you noticed the Northern Europe is indicated as region of origin of “Noordi” brand?</p> <p>18. What aspects give the certain impression?</p> <p>19. What qualities of “Noordi” brand, in your opinion the region of origin – Northern Europe determines? Pick three.</p> <p>20. Rank the qualities of “Noordi” brand and the product according to the importance before purchase (5 - the most important, 1 - least important).</p> <p>21. Rank the criteria of choices of baby stroller based on importance (5 the most important, 1 – least important).</p>
Consumers questions	<p>The last questions are focused to find how decisions, as well as purchasing decisions, are made by the consumers. Questions were conducted according to Andéhn and Decosta (2018) model.</p>	<p>22. Are you tend to purchase the products, developed or manufactured in Northern Europe more than those, developed or manufactured in Asia?</p> <p>23. If you were choosing the baby stroller and notice any difference in price, quality and design of all products, yet</p>

		the only difference would be the region of origin, which one would you choose?
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3.6. Research limitations

In total 110 respondents completed the survey. The sample size of the research, which was targeted in the beginning was 108 respondents. However, due to time and accessibility limitations, 92 respondents, who fit the sampling frame have filled questionnaires.

4. Results of empirical research

This part represents the results of empirical research, which are based on the analysis of gathered primary data from the respondents, which completed an online survey. The target sample size was 108, however, only 92 respondents fit the requirements of a sampling frame. A total number of 110 respondents were surveyed.

4.1. Reliability of the research questionnaire

For each research questionnaire, there is a need to find the reliability of a particular questionnaire. By using Cronbach alfa, there was calculated that for 64 statements result of 0.935 is found. As it is known, this shows the consistency of statements in the questionnaire by analyzing the phenomena.

4.2. Demographics and psychographics of respondents

Data on demographics and psychographics of respondents is used as base data, which helps to analyze gathered data and find tendencies for particular research aim.

In total 110 respondents have filled questionnaires. As the sampling technique was chosen non-probability sampling and segmented social network Facebook® groups were used to reach potential respondents, which might fit the sampling frame, the results present that most of the respondents are women. As groups of social network were based in Lithuania, there was found that respondents are from Lithuania market.

By filtering gathered data from a questionnaire there was found that 92 respondents fit the sampling frame requirements, which are:

- Gender – female;
- Age – from 18 to 45 years old;
- Use of commodity – already purchased a baby stroller or planning to purchase one in 5 years time.

This gathered data was analyzed.

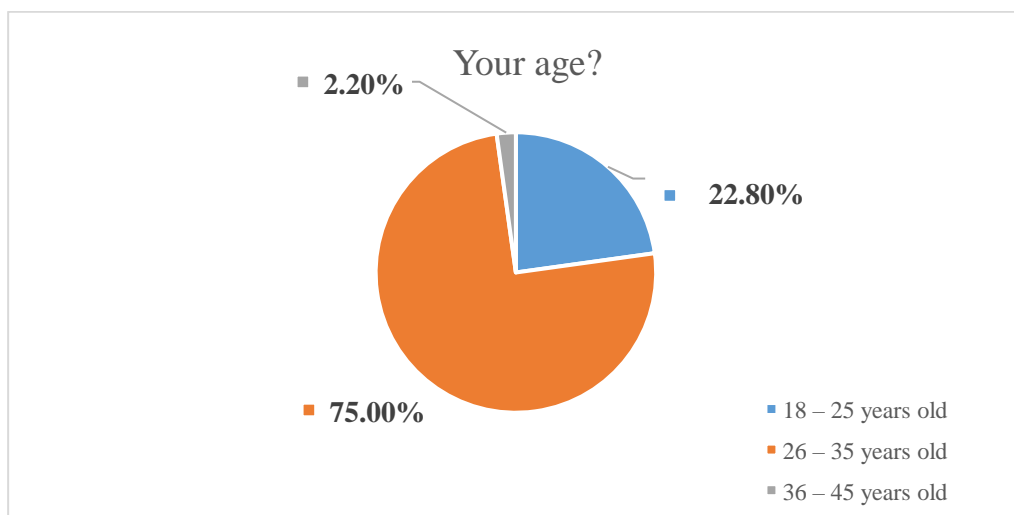


Fig. 14. Percentages of respondents age, which completed the survey.

The online survey was based to check the respondents' age (*Your age?*). It was necessary to find the age of respondents since the sampling frame was focused on respondents who are from 18 to 45 years old women. The previous figure (see Figure 14) represents the age of respondents (the total number of respondents is 92). As can be seen in the figure, from 18 to 25 years old are 22.8% of respondents, from 26 to 35 years old are 75% of respondents and from 36 to 45 years old are 2.2% of respondents. It can be noticed that most of the respondents that were participating in an online survey were from age 26 to 35 (75%).

According to the Official Statistics Portal of Lithuania (2019), in 2019 the average monthly household income in Lithuania, an after-tax deduction was 1051.9 euros. The assumption can be made that above this amount households are earning a higher income.

Moving on, to gather data of respondents' psychographics, the third question was inserted to survey (*What is the average monthly income of your household?*). It is based on the average earnings of respondents' households per month. As seen in the following figure (see Figure 15), it can be noticed that most of the respondents' households are having average monthly income from 1001 euros to 2000 euros. There were 38% of such respondents. The second group of respondents, by amount, are having their households' average monthly income from 2001 euros to 5000 euros. This group takes 30.4% in total. The third group, by amount, of respondents, are having average monthly income from 500 euros to 1000 euros and completes 28.3% of respondents. At last, the least amount of respondents are having an average monthly income of their households, which is more than 5001 euros. This group of respondents completes a total of 3.3% of the total number of respondents.

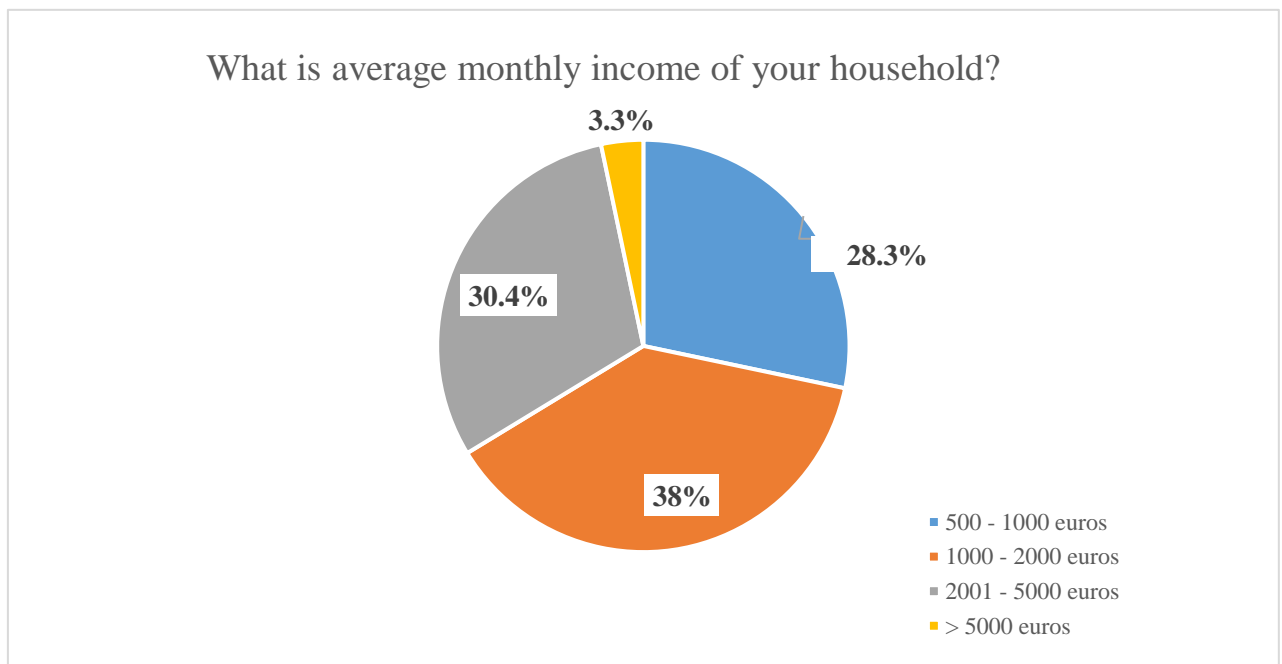


Fig. 15. Percentages of respondents household average monthly income, which completed the survey.

To check how respondents fit the chosen sampling frame, fourth question (*Have you purchased or are you planning to purchase the baby stroller in 5 years?*) was based to find if respondents have ever purchased a baby stroller product or planning to purchase one in upcoming five years. It is necessary to find this information since research is based on evaluating the effect of geographic aspects on brand “Noordi” groups of baby stroller products. It was found that the majority of

respondents, which is 70.7%, have already purchased a baby stroller in five years. 29.3% of respondents in five years still have not purchased a baby stroller, however, in the upcoming five years, they are planning to purchase it.

The following table (see Table 4) presents the primary structured findings of the research. Data findings show information about respondents' demographics and psychographics.

Table 4. Summary table of respondents demographics and psychographics.

Respondents age (years old)	From 18 to 25	From 26 to 35	From 36 to 45	
	22.8%	75%	2.2%	
Average monthly income	From 500 to 1000 euros	From 1001 to 2000 euros	From 2001 to 5000 euros	More than 5000 euros
	28.3%	38%	30.4%	3.3%
Use of a commodity	Already have baby stroller	Planning to purchase		
	70.7%	29.3%		

4.3. Importance of geographic aspects of a brand for consumers

This section is based on finding how customers perceive geographic aspects in brands and their products and what is the role of these aspects in the eyes of a customer or potential customer. Also, this section helps to distribute differences in how respondents react and differences from where the brand is created and where its products are being manufactured.

Question (*How important do you find the geographical origin of the development of the brand?*) is focused to find how important for customers is from what country development of a brand (brand originated) is coming from. Moreover, question (*How important do you find the geographical origin of manufacture of the product?*) focused respondents to provide information, if they are noticing the importance of country of product manufacturing. The following figure (see Figure 12) presents gathered combined data, which helps to notice the differences in how customers have different insights on the origin of a brand and origin of product manufacturing.

Only 12% of respondents mention that brand development location is a highly important factor when choosing a brand or its products. For 31.5% of respondents location of brand development is an important factor in their decision making for a purchase process. Most of the respondents mention that they do not matter and it is not an important factor from which place brand is being originated. There is 56.5% of such respondents. Moreover, 41.3% of respondents present the importance of where the products of a brand are manufactured. Most of the respondents (43.5%) mention that they do not matter about the geographical location of product manufacturing. For 15.3% of respondents, the origin of a product is a highly important factor, when choosing a brand or a product.

The following figure (see Figure 16) shows significant changes in the importance of product manufacturing country versus brand development country. For 41,3% of respondents origin of where products are being manufactured in important, compared to only 31,5%, for whom brand development origin is an important factor. Moreover, it shows that more consumers find a country of brand development less important factor that influences their purchasing behavior than the country where products are being produced.

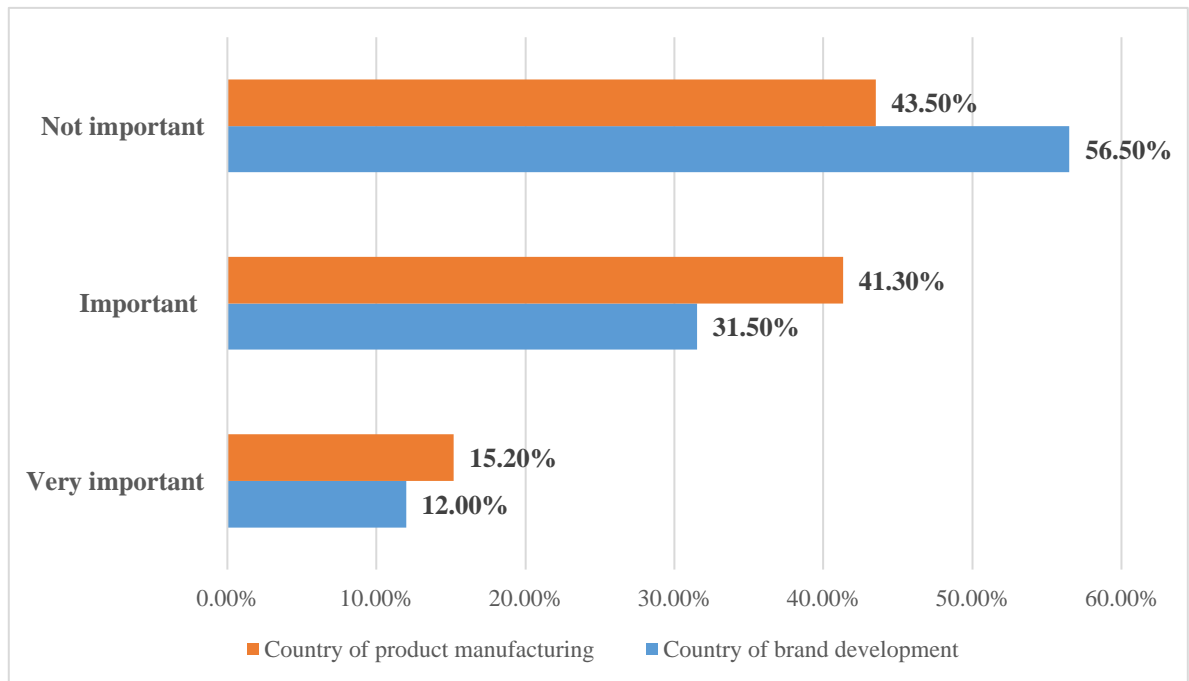


Fig. 16. Importance of geographical origin of a brand comparing to importance of country of product manufacturing.

It can be understood that such insights can have influence on branding component such as brand associations. Consumers prefer to focus on more importance of where the brand's products are being manufactured rather than on the country where the brand is being developed and created. For this reason, organizations should more focus on position brand's products country of manufacturing. It can be understood, that in Lithuania brand can be valued better, when there is enough clarity regarding country of manufacturing and this particular country is appreciated by consumers or has a positive image.

H2 hypothesis should be refected as there was found clear results that consumers shows that country where product is being manufactured is more important that country, where brand is being developed.

The analysis was prepared, which is based on the correlation of importance of brand development place and product manufacturing place was completed, to find if these two variables correlate with each other. It will show the impact if there is a meaning of that change in one variable can affect the change in another. The analysis was completed by using IBM® SPSS® Statistics tool. The following table (see Table 5) presents the findings. It shows that there is a positive correlation between two variables, which can be described as that when the brand origin is important for the consumer, the origin of the product will be important for consumers also. It was found that positive correlation is significant at the level of Sig. 0.01 and Pearson correlation is 0.688. This means that most of the times, consumers country of production and country of brand understand and appreciates it as an important factor during purchase decision making.

Table 5. Pearson correlation of variables: importance of brand development place and product manufacturing place.

Correlations			
		Brand origin importance for consumers	Origin of product importance for consumers
Brand origin importance for consumers	Pearson Correlation	1	.688**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	92	92
Origin of product importance for consumers	Pearson Correlation	.688**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	92	92

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Analysis, which is based on data of the importance of brand development place and respondents' household average monthly income, was completed. The analysis was completed by using IBM® SPSS® Statistics tool. There was found that the Pearson correlation is -0.381, which shows a negative correlation between these variables. As the amount of household monthly earnings is increasing, not the importance of where the brand is being developed is decreased as well. In other words, when household monthly earnings are increasing, the importance of where the brand is developed also increases.

Table 6. Pearson correlation of variables: importance of brand development place and monthly income of household.

Correlations			
		Brand origin importance for consumers	Monthly income of household
Brand origin importance for consumers	Pearson Correlation	1	-.381**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	92	92
Monthly income of household	Pearson Correlation	-.381**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	92	92

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

An almost similar situation is with the correlation between variables of the importance of product manufacturing place and respondents' households' average monthly income. Pearson correlation shows -0.267, which shows a negative correlation between these variables. In other words, when household monthly earnings are increasing, the importance of where the product is manufactured also increases.

To find how respondents perceive the country-of-origin of a brand or a product and find it the influence of customers' decision making, there was found that 55.4% of respondents have chosen and purchased a particular brand or product because of its country-of-origin. 44.6% have never chosen and purchased a product and were not influenced by the country-of-origin factor.

The Pearson correlation test using IBM® SPSS® Statistics tool was completed. Two variables were taken, as first is mentioned before and second is an average monthly income of a household.

To find if higher-income consumers are more likely to purchase a product, when are being influenced by the country-of-origin effect, the analysis has been conducted. Pearson correlation test was applied. Pearson correlation for the two variables is -0.196, which means that the influence of the variable for each other is not significant. For this reason, it can be said that higher-income consumers are not being affected by the choosing product when a decision is based on the country-of-origin effect.

To test, which groups of people (by monthly income) were influenced by country-of-origin of a brand or a product the most during the purchasing decision process. The following table (see Table 7) presents the data. The table presents two variables: the average monthly income of households and purchasing decisions influenced by country-of-origin (COO).

Table 7. Crosstable of two variables and distribution of responses.

	Purchased, because of COO	Has not purchased, because of COO
From 500 to 1000 euros	38.5%	61.5%
From 1001 to 2000 euros	62.9%	37.1%
From 2001 to 5000 euros	57.1%	42.9%
More than 5001 euros	100%	0%

As it can be seen in a table (see Table 7), by comparing data, assumption can be made that members of higher income households are more likely to purchase a product because of country-of-origin effects rather than members of lower income households.

Moving on, gathered data have shown that 54.3% of respondents think that product development place is less important to the origin where the product is being produced. 45.7% thinks that product development place is more important than the place where the product is being produced. Product development place present intellectual resources that were used to create and develop the product and 46.4% of people believes it is the essence of a brand or a product of that brand.

It was found that 30.7% of respondents believe that country-of-origin is important for the consumers since it represents the supply chain of a brand, how its products were developed, with what resources, guarantees certificates and standards. 28.8% of respondents believe that country-of-origin describes product quality. 26.4% of respondents think that country-of-origin provides assurance for consumers, that brand or product will fit the need and will not disappoint consumers. Only 14.1% of respondents believe that country-of-origin provides an additional value for the brand and its product. The following figure (see Figure 17) presents data gathered on a particular question (*Why, in your opinion, the customer finds important the country of origin of the product?*).

Why, in your opinion, the customer finds important the country-of-origin of the product?

- The country of origin grant addition value to the brand and the product
- The country of origin grants certainty in satisfaction and compliance the needs of the customer
- The country of origin demonstrates possible supply chain
- Based on the country of origin, the quality of the product may be determined

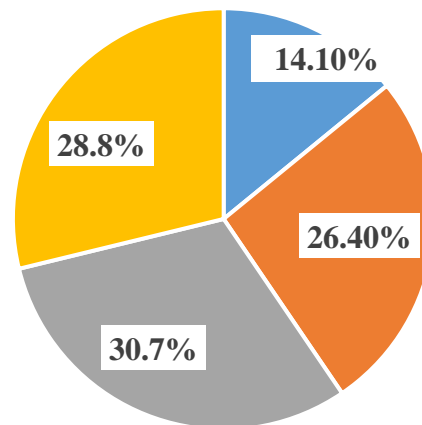


Fig. 17. Importance of country-of-origin of the product.

Also, it was found that respondents have valued the Northern Europe region as country-of-origin of a brand more favorable compared to the Eastern Europe region or Asia. 63% of respondents mention that product or brand, which is developed or manufactured in Northern Europe would appreciate more that product or brand, which is developed or manufactured in Eastern Europe or Asia. 37% of respondents have mentioned that they appreciate brands and products, without taking into account the country-of-origin of a particular brand or a product. It shows that associations around the brand influences consumer decision making and particular associations of origin of a brand has an influence also.

To check the correlation between two variables: the value of a particular country-of-origin and purchase decision, which was influenced by country-of-origin, the Pearson correlation test was completed. It was found that the Pearson correlation is 0.310 and the significance score is 0.003, which shows a positive significant correlation. It means respondents, which value country-of-origin of Northern Europe exceptionally, also are more likely to purchase a product according to its country-of-origin and *vice versa*. The following table (see Table 8) represents the data.

Table 8. Pearson correlation test of two variables.

Correlations			
		Purchase decision, which was influenced by country-of-origin	Value of a particular country-of-origin
Purchase decision, which was influenced by country-of-origin	Pearson Correlation	1	.310**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	92	92
Value of a particular country-of- origin	Pearson Correlation	.310**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	92	92

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Also, there was found that 55.3% of respondents appreciate foreign-made products rather than those that are made in the domestic market, Lithuania. 46.7% of values locally produced products rather than foreign-produced goods. Moreover, 65% of respondents value branded products that are developed and manufactured in Lithuania, rather than those, which are developed and produced outside the domestic market. To check the relation between variables of valuation of product manufacturing place and valuation of product development and manufacturing place, Pearson correlation test. The following table (see Table 9) presents the results. There was found a strong positive significant correlation between two variables, which shows that for consumers' importance of production place influences development place, it can be mentioned that these variables relate to each other.

Table 9. Pearson correlation test of two variables.

Correlations			
		Valuation of product development and manufacturing place	Valuation of product manufacturing place
Valuation of product development and manufacturing place	Pearson Correlation	1	.708**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	92	92
Valuation of product manufacturing place	Pearson Correlation	.708**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	92	92

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

However, 72.8% of respondents think that the brand is valued more in the Lithuania market if its country-of-region is Northern Europe. 27.2% points out that the Northern Europe region as a country-of-origin of the products does not influence brand valuations in the Lithuania market.

4.4. Associations that country-of-origin provides

This section aimed to find what additional associations country-of-origin provide for the brand's consumers. It presents what are the main associations that country-of-origin, in this case, Northern Europe region, that is attached to a brand, in the eyes of consumers. The following figure (see Figure 18) presents ranked means of associations and perception that consumers have created around products, which are being developed and created in Northern Europe. Also, Kendall's W test was completed, data from the test can be seen in Table 10.

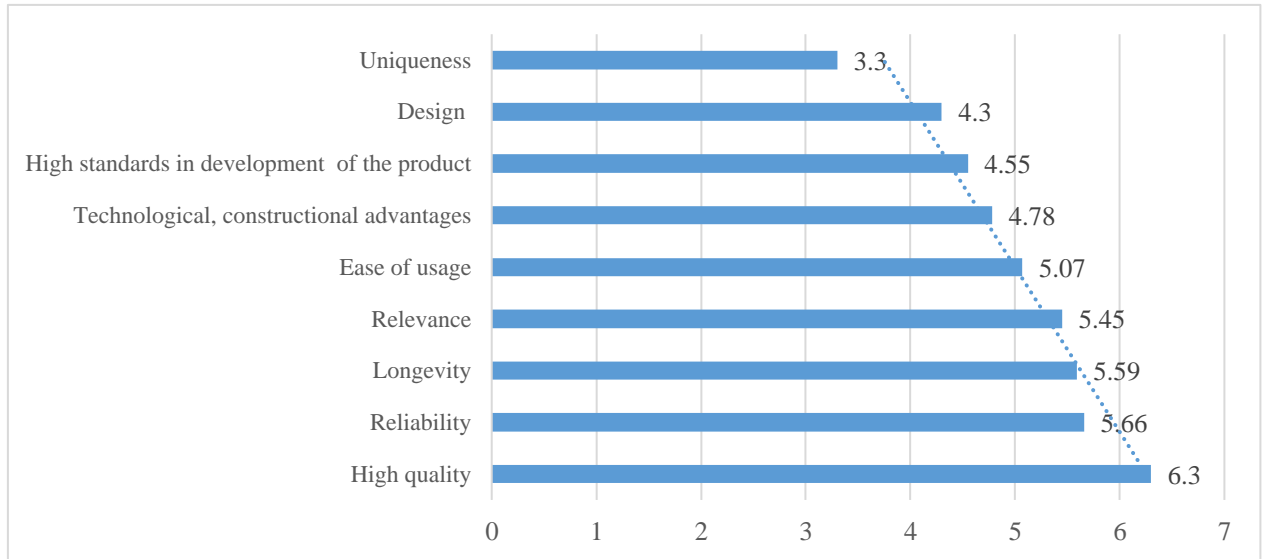


Fig. 18. Rank of means of associations about the products that are being developed and created in Northern Europe.

Table 10. Test statistics table of associations about the products that are being developed and created in Northern Europe.

Test Statistics	
N	92
Kendall's W ^a	.156
Chi-Square	114.631
df	8
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

Respondents commonly agree for the statements mentioned in the list. However, Kendall W 0.156 concordance coefficient presents a weak relation between statements, but it is statistically significant Asymp. Sig. = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$).

It is presented in the previous figure that the most common association about the products that are developed in Northern Europe is high quality (6.3). Consumers perceive that products, which are being developed and created in Northern Europe distinguish in high quality. Also, it was found in the literature that Northern Europe's image is being based on high quality. Also, consumers believe that such products are reliable (5.66) and longevity (5.59).

Moving on, the following figure (see Figure 19) presents ranked means of associations and perception that consumers have created around products, which are being produced in Northern Europe. Also, Kendall's W test was completed, data from the test can be seen in Table 8.

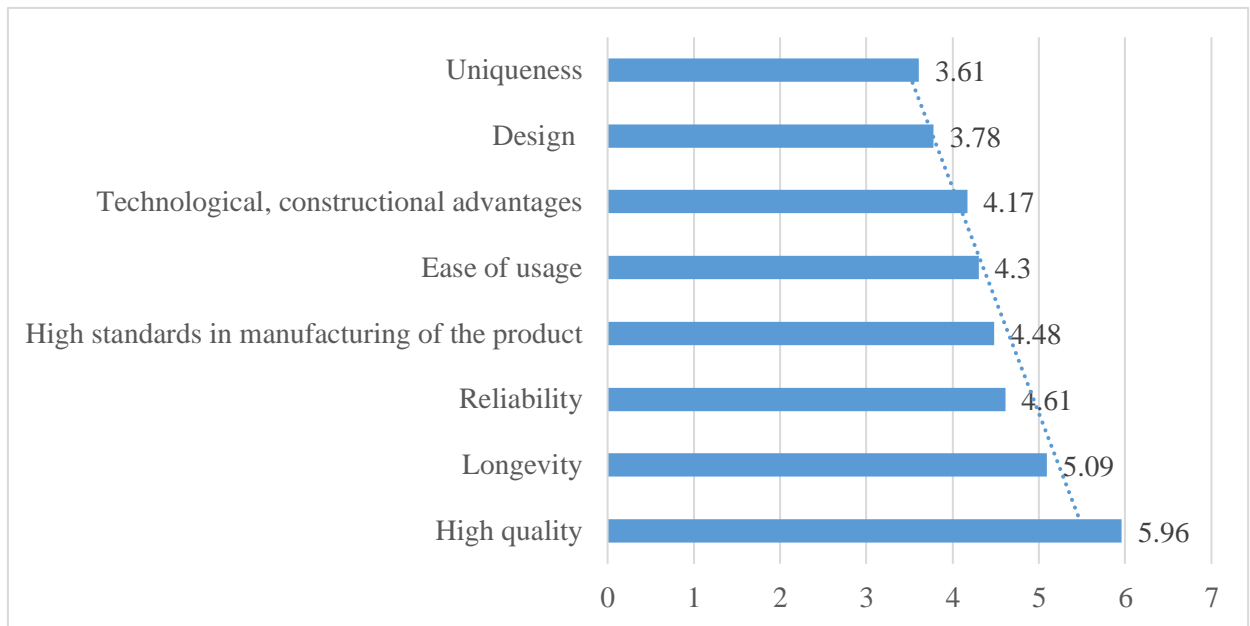


Fig. 19. Rank of means of associations about the products that are being produced in Northern Europe.

Table 11. Test statistics table of associations about the products that are being produced in Northern Europe.

Test Statistics	
N	92
Kendall's Wa	.131
Chi-Square	84.406
df	7
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

Respondents commonly agree for the statements mentioned in the list. However, Kendall W 0.131 concordance coefficient presents weak relation between statements, since it is statistically significant Asymp. Sig. = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$).

It is presented in the previous figure (see Figure 19) that the most common association about the products that are produced in Northern Europe is high quality (5.96). Consumers perceive that products, which are being produced in Northern Europe distinguish in high quality Also, consumers believe that such products are longevity (5.09) and reliable (4.61).

4.5. Importance of a brand and country-of-origin influence for consumer purchasing process

To find how consumers value particular brand and its products, in this situation brand “Noordi” and product of baby strollers, there was a need to gather more data about it.

There was found that 73.9% of respondents know the brand name “Noordi” and its product portfolio. This can be named as good results of brand awareness as this large part of the audience is familiar with the brand. However, only 37% of respondents relate with and finds this brand as originated from the Northern European region. 63% of respondents have not noticed that the brand and its products are being originated from Northern Europe. Also, there was found that respondents relate brand “Noordi” with its country-of-origin for a few main reasons. Most of the respondents (29.5%) find that brand “Noordi” comes from Northern Europe since the country-of-origin of a brand can be understood from its brand name and the way it sounds. 17.9% find that brand “Noordi” comes from Northern Europe because respondents find clear information on social media channels of a brand and its official website. 14.3% states that the design of branded products is similar to the one that the Northern Europe region is associated with clear, minimalistic, pale-colored designs.

Also, there were found, which qualities of brand “Noordi” help to determine that its country-of-origin is Northern Europe. The following figure (see Figure 20) and table (see Table 12) present data. It can be noticed that respondents (21%) mostly associate a brand with the Northern Europe region, because of Scandinavian, minimalistic brand’s products’ designs. Also, as the brand is originated from Northern Europe, respondents (19.9%) provide their perception that brand “Noordi” and its products have to be reliable since its being developed and products manufactured in Northern Europe. 17% of respondents have ranked factor that quality is ensurance that the quality of the brand’s product will be high, in the third place. The assumption can be made that consumers trust brands, which are originated from Northern Europe, and perceive that those brands’ products will ensure quality.

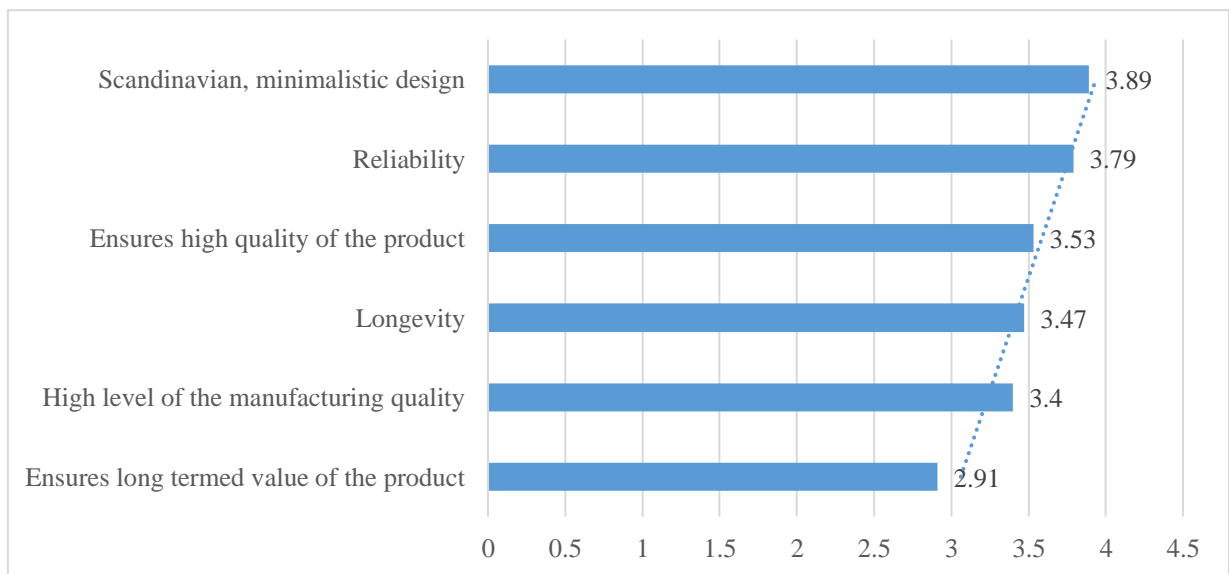


Fig. 20. Qualities of a brand that relates to associations of Northern European region.

Table 12. Test statistics table of associations about the products that are being produced in Northern Europe.

Frequencies				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Qualities	Reliability	55	19.9%	59.8%
	Longevity	45	16.3%	48.9%
	Ensures high quality of the product	47	17.0%	51.1%
	Scandinavian, minimalistic design	58	21.0%	63.0%
	High level of the manufacturing quality	43	15.6%	46.7%
	Ensures long termed value of the product	28	10.1%	30.4%
Total		276	100.0%	300.0%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Also, to check the correlation of the variable of consumer perception of quality about the brand “Noordi” and variable of consumers' perception about brands' quality that is developed in Northern Europe, Pearson correlation was completed. The following table (see Table 13) presents test results.

Table 13. Pearson correlation test of two variables.

Correlations			
		Consumer perception of quality about the brand “Noordi”	Consumers perception about brands' quality that are developed in Northern Europe
Consumer perception of quality about the brand “Noordi”	Pearson Correlation	1	.233*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.025
	N	92	92
Consumers perception about brands' quality that are developed in Northern Europe	Pearson Correlation	.233*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	
	N	92	92

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

There was found a weak positive, significant correlation between two variables, which shows that consumers apply associations of Northern Europe to the “Noordi” brand, in the range of high-quality factor.

To find, what is the level of importance of country-of-origin during consumer purchasing decision-making process, the data was gathered. Respondents have ranked the most important criteria during their choosing and decision-making process of purchasing a baby stroller. There was found that as the most important criteria when choosing a baby stroller was found technical characteristics of the

product (7.3), high quality of materials, and the product itself (6.89), good price (6.51). Criteria, which are top 3, all are related to the product as a commodity, it means that when consumers choosing a product such as a baby stroller, they usually prioritize components of a preferable product. Also, as the additional criteria, product around factors are attached to the decision making process, when purchasing a product. These additional criteria are recommendations (6.03), quick warranty service (5.55), country-of-origin (4.47), and product's brand awareness (4.4). The assumption can be made that country-of-origin of a brand and brand awareness plays an equally important role in the consumer decision-making process when choosing and purchasing a baby stroller. The following figure (see Figure 21) shows the results. The following table (see Table 14) presents the Kendall Coefficient of Concordance test statistics.

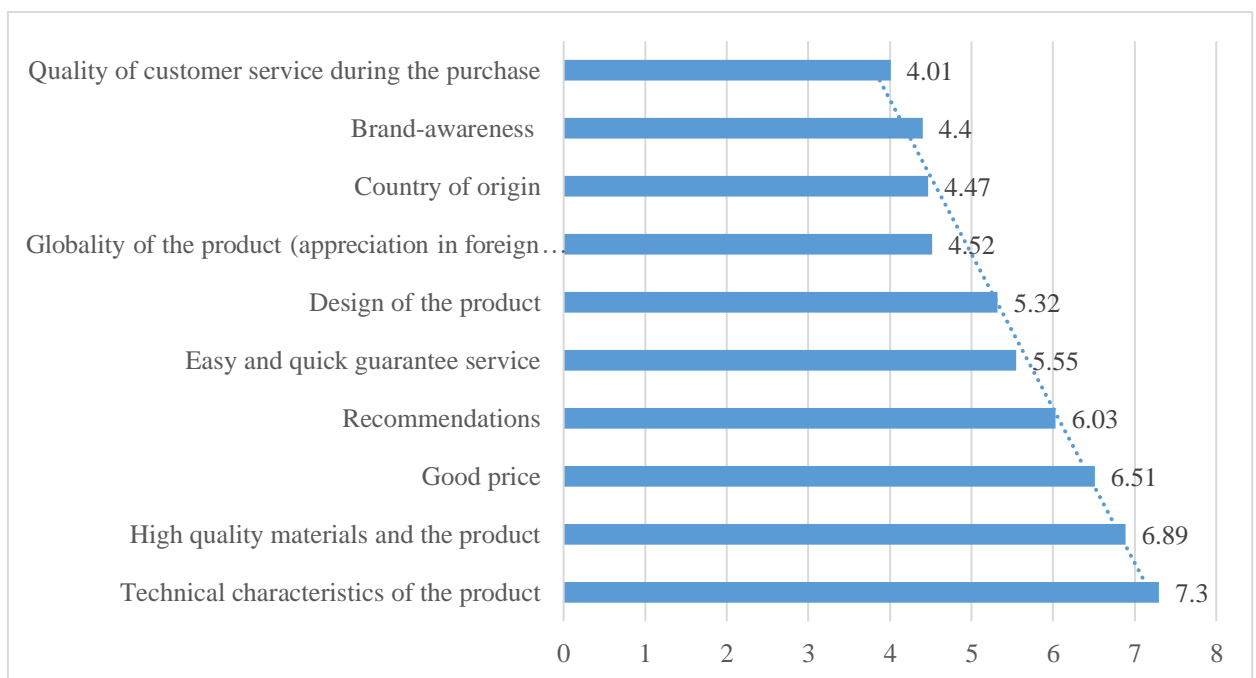


Fig. 21. Criterias during choosing and product purchasing process

Table 14. Tests statistics table purcashing criterias evaluation.

Test Statistics	
N	92
Kendall's W _a	.175
Chi-Square	145.262
df	9
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

To check if different country-of-origin influences consumers' purchasing decisions data was gathered from a comparison of two geographic regions.

There was found 64.1% of respondents would choose the brand and product, which is developed and manufactured in Northern Europe rather than the one, which is developed and manufactured in Asia.

35.9% of respondents would choose a brand and its product by not taking into account a country from where a brand and a product is being originated from.

At last, there was found country-of-origin influence. The goal was to find if in total non-differentiated conditions country-of-origin may determine consumer decision. Questions for respondents was based on equal product specification, characteristics, price, quality offering, by only differentiating one variable – country-of-origin of a branded product. There was found that in such conditions most of the consumers would choose the branded product, which is being originated from Northern Europe. There were 76.1% of respondents, who would choose exactly this combination of factors. Only 2.2% would choose Asia as a country-of-origin of a branded product. Also, 2.2% would choose the Western Africa region, 5.4% would choose the Eastern Europe region and 7.6% would choose the Southern Europe region as a country-of-origin for chosen branded products.

It can be seen that country-of-origin has a lot of impact on consumer purchase decision making, as the Northern European region, which has the most acceptable “country image” from the choices group, was selected as the most preferable option. This means that consumer decision making is influenced by the factor of country-of-origin.

H1 hypothesis can be accepted as there was found that geographic aspects such as country-of-origin have positive effect on consumer decision making. However, there should be mentioned that these positive effects varies according to the perceptions of consumers about the particular country.

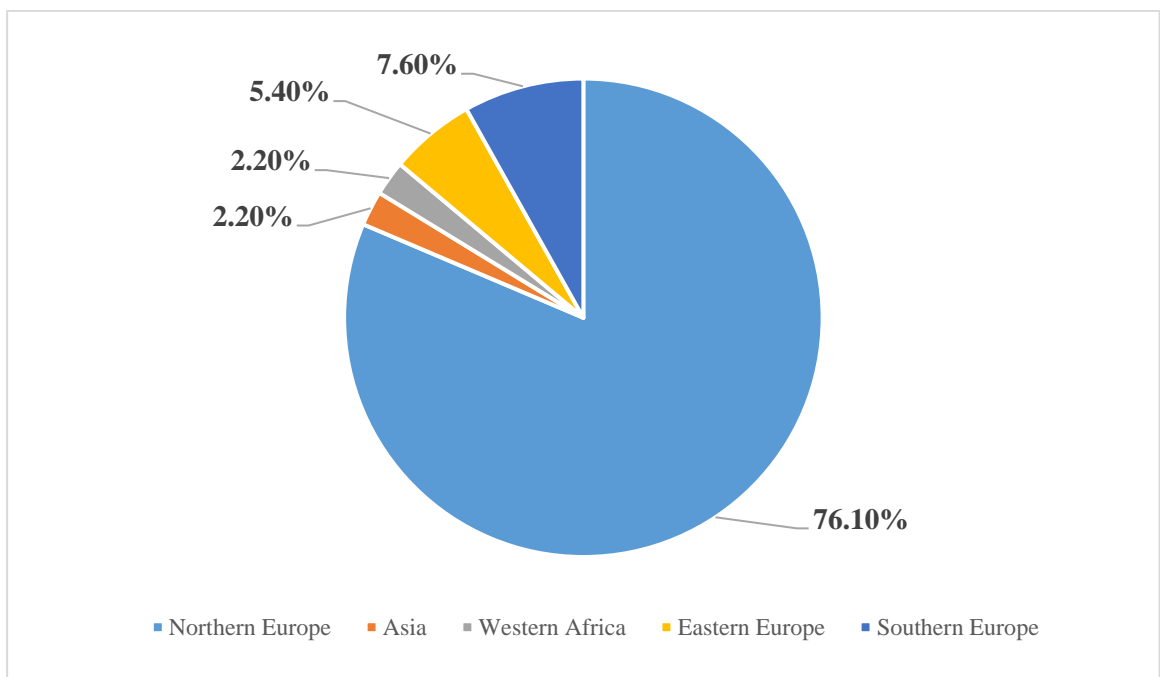


Fig. 22. Shares of country-of-origin distribution.

In conclusion, there could be mentioned that for particular group of branded “Noordi” products geographic aspects such as country-of-origin have positive influence on branding in the Lithuanian market. There was found that consumer in Lithuania will be more likely to choose brand and its products if it is being originated from trusted and well-known place such as Northern Europe. These geographical aspects attaches additional associations to a brand, which are considered as positive associations by consumers in the Lithuanian market. For this reason, it is safe to say that in Lithuanian market, geographic aspects such as country-of-origin have positive influence on branding group of products, which in this case are baby strollers branded by name “Noordi”. Moreover,

recommendations for the company can be provided. Most important, is to provide clear points in the brand positioning strategy that brand “Noordi” is originated from Northern European region. This would provide positive perceptions about the region and it can be linked with the brand. It is recommended for the company to use the clear indications of brand’s country-of-origin. All in all, it can be stated that country-of-origin has a positive influence on branding group of products in the Lithuanian market.

Conclusions

This part present conclusions of problem analysis and theoretical findings, in addition it concludes most significant empirical research findings.

1. By conducting problem analysis, there was found that the country-of-origin can be understood as primary geographic aspect in branding subject. In addition to this, effect on branding strongly depends on perceptions of consumers about particular country or region. Andéhn, Gloukhovtsev, Schouten (2016) there was found that two different sources have an influence on country-of-origin effects. These influential factors are product categories and image of the country. Image of the country can be called one of the most important if not the most important sources of the country-of-origin effect. However, this source can be named as quite nimble one. It can influence consumer decision based not only widely available beliefs or information, but also on personal evaluations, beliefs and experience. It enables evaluation at hand and influences customers or potential customers judgments by using specific context for evaluations say Andéhn, Gloukhovtsev, Schouten (2016). Moreover, there was found that depending on perceptios of consumers and country image, inlcuding associations on which country or region is building its image, judgment of a brand or its products is being influenced.
2. By summarizing theoretical findings of the research it can be told that country-of-origin can be called as primary geographic aspect in branding. This perspective enable to present how geographic aspects can influence and what role does it play when branding group of products. In addition, country-of-origin can be understood as set of three aspects, which are: cognitive aspect, affective aspect and normative aspect. Each of these aspects presents how country-of-origin effects occur in branding group of products. Even more, it shows strong relations between branding, building perceptions and associaitons around the brand and consumer decision making. Cognitive aspects in country-of-origin effects present that this factor is a cue for product quality and consumers can decode it. Affective aspect presents emotional cannnotations between the brand, location of a brand and consumers. This aspect most of all presents consumers' created steoretypes about the brand or origin. Normative aspect is based on consumer ethnocentrism as consumers accosiating their feelings towards particular countries. This aspect leads to affective, as the perceptions and stereotypes are being created by consumers.
3. There was found that country-of-origin can be as more wider term. Country-of-origin term can be understood not only as the origin of branded products' group, but also as country of a brand, country of production, country of design and etc. This shows that geographical aspects such as country-of-origin can present economic geographies in terms that brand and their value chains are being distributed across different geographic markets.
4. Theoretical findings have shown that geographic aspects influences dimensions of brand equity such as brand associaitons, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty. However, there was found that two components of brand equity are being affected at most by geographical aspects such as country-of-origin effect. These two components are brand associaitions and brand awareness. For this reason, it can be mentioned that country-of-origin affects most important branding component – brand equity.
5. As the brand equity plays significant role in building strong, global brand and branding group of products, it was found that geographic aspects have an impact on these brand building and forming processes. Geographic aspects as additional associations can be called as intangible aspects in brand positioning process. As associations and perceptions are being created by consumers, these associations and perceptions influences place and its image (origin). Image of

the place or origin attaches to the intangible aspects of brand building and positioning processes, which is being applied to branded group of products. Consumer during decision making process evaluates brand and its branded products group, including geographic aspects of particular brand.

6. Research methodology part was based to help to research the real case problem that occurred in company's UAB Tututis situation, while branding "Noordi" group of products. Primary aim of the research was to gain insights from a particular segment of a market, if geographic aspects do have an impact on their purchasing of a brand or a product, in this specific case on baby strollers' brand "Noordi". Quantitative research. Total number of 92 respondents have completed the survey.
7. After completing the analysis of empirical research results there was found that most of respondents, who have completed the survey are women and from 26 to 35 years old (75% of total number of respondents). In addition there was found that 70.7% have already have a baby stroller and only 29.3% are planning to purchase one. This shows that major part of respondents have already made purchasing decision of particular branded product group, in this case baby strollers.

In addition, there was found that for decision making of consumers, country where product is produced is more than country, where the brand is being developed. Moreover, there was found significant positive correlation between importance of consumers on country where product is being produced and importance of consumers on country where brand is being developed. It shows that when consumers shows the importance on country of production, importance where brand is being developed also increases and *vice versa*. This means that most of the times, consumers country of production and country of brand understand and appreciate it as an important factor during purchase decision making.

Respondents (55.4%) have already purchased a product, because of its country-of-origin (it includes country of brand, country of production, country of design). In addition to this, there was not found strong correlation of consumers' average monthly household and purchasing decision based on country-of-origin. However, results have shown that most of purchase decisions, which were based on country-of-origin, were made by consumers, who are living in households with average monthly earnings from 1001 to 2000 euros (62.9%), from 2001 to 5000 euros (57.1%) and more than 5001 euros (100%).

Consumers find country-of-origin important, since 30.7% thinks that country-of-origin represents value chains of a brand and its group of products (how product were developed, with what resources, standards, guarantees certificates and etc.). 28.8% of respondents believes that country-of-origin factor presents quality of branded products, country-of-origin aspect helps consumers to create perception about branded group of products. In addition, there was found that 26.4% of respondents believes that country-of-origin provides the assurance that brand's products will fit the need of consumers and will not disappoint them.

Survey results have shown that in Lithuania market if brands country-of-origin is region of Northern Europe, then the brand is valued positively. As 72.8% of respondents mentions this positive effect of Northern Europe in Lithuanian market. In addition to this, products and their groups that are being developed and created in Northern Europe has already built consumers' associations such as high quality, reliability, longevity. Products and their groups that are being manufactured in Northern Europe provides consumers with cues such as high quality, longevity, reliability, also high standards in manufacturing of products processes and ease-of-use.

There was found that group of products, in this particular researched case are baby strollers, are having some significant factors, which are considered by consumers during decision making process of purchase. The most important criteria during decision making process, when purchasing baby

stroller are high quality of materials, high quality of product, price. These criteria are all directly related and represent product as a commodity sphere. Additional criteria, which are considered by consumers are recommendations, quick warranty services and country-of-origin and product's brand awareness. There was found that respondents have pointed out that country-of-origin factor is more important during decision making process than the awareness of a brand. It shows that country-of-origin can have influence on consumers' decision making process. In addition, there was found that 64.1% of respondents would choose product produced and developed in Northern Europe region rather than produced and developed in Asia region. This finding can help to assume that Northern Europe region is positively valued by possible consumers and those who have already purchased particular group of products – baby strollers. At last there was found that geographic aspects play significant role in branding as decision making processes of consumer are based on country-of-origin factors.

8. All in all, there could be mentioned that for particular group of branded “Noordi” products geographic aspects such as country-of-origin have positive influence on branding in the Lithuanian market. There was found that consumer in Lithuania will be more likely to choose brand and its products if it is being originated from trusted and well-known place such as Northern Europe. These geographical aspects attach additional associations to a brand, which are considered as positive associations by consumers. For this reason, it is safe to say that in Lithuanian market, geographic aspects such as country-of-origin have positive influence on branding group of products.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Research questionnaire in English

It will take around 4 minutes for you to fill in the survey, thank you for your time in advance. The aim of this investigation is to find out how the origin of the product influences purchase behaviour of consumers.

The survey is being conducted for the final work of Master Studies in Kaunas Technology University.

The data will be collected anonymously and will be kept for 3 months after the investigation is finished in the archives of the investigator and destroyed later on.

1. Your gender?

Male

Female

2. Your age?

18 – 25 years old

26 – 35 years old

36 – 45 years old

> 46 years old

3. What is average monthly income of your household?

500 - 1000 euros

1000 - 2000 euros

2001 - 5000 euros

> 5000 euros

4. Have you purchased or are you planning to purchase the baby stroller in a period of 5 years?

Yes, I have already purchased

Yes, I am planning to purchase

No, I have not purchased yet, but planning to purchase one

No, I am not planning

5. How important do you find the geographical origin of development of the product?

Very important

Important

Not important

6. How important do you find the geographical origin of manufacture of the product?

Very important

Important

Not important

7. Have you ever purchased a product because of its development or manufacturing country of origin?

Yes, I have

No, I haven't

8. Do you agree with the following: the location of the development of product is more important than the location of manufacturing?

Yes, the location of development of product is more important than location of manufacturing

No, the location of manufacturing is more important than the location of the development

9. Why, in your opinion, the customer finds important the country of origin of the product?

Based on the country of origin, the quality of the product may be determined
The country of origin grant addition value to the brand and the product
The country of origin grants certainty in satisfaction and compliance the needs of the customer
The country of origin demonstrates possible supply chain and allows concluding that during the development and manufacturing the standards are maintained (ecology, human rights, fair trade)

10. Do you appreciate the product more if its region of origin is Northern Europe, instead of Eastern Europe or Asia?

Yes, I appreciate the product, made or developed in Northern Europe more

No, I appreciate the products the same, despite their region of origin

11. Do you appreciate the product more if its country of origin is not Lithuania, instead of Lithuania?

Yes, I appreciate the product made or developed in Lithuania more

No, I appreciate the products the same, despite their country of origin

12. Do you agree the brand is appreciated in Lithuania more, if its region of origin is Northern Europe?

Yes, I believe it has positive effect on brand appreciation in Lithuania

No, I believe it doesn't have an effect on brand appreciation in Lithuania

13. Do you appreciate the products developed in foreign countries more than those, developed in Lithuania?

Yes, I appreciate the products, developed in foreign countries more than those, developed in Lithuania

No, I appreciate the products, developed in Lithuania more than those, developed in foreign countries

14. What qualities of the product would you distinguish considering the Northern European origin of development of the product? (5 the most important, 1 – least important):

High quality

Longevity

Technological, constructional advantages

Uniqueness

Ease of usage

Reliability

Design

High standards in development of the product

Relevance

15. What qualities of the product would you distinguish considering the Northern European origin of manufacturing of the product? (5 the most important, 1 – least important):

High quality

Longevity

Technological, constructional advantages

Uniqueness

Ease of usage

Reliability

Design

High standards in manufacturing of the product

16. Are you familiar with "Noordi" brand, creating and manufacturing baby strollers?

Yes, I am familiar with the brand

No, I have never heard of this brand before

...įdėta nuotrauka, logotipas...

17. Have you noticed the Northern Europe is indicated as region of origin of “Noordi” brand?

Yes

No

...jei taip:

18. What aspects give the certain impression?

Design seems to be Northern European

The information of country of origin is mentioned in the title website of the brand

The name of the brand sounds associative with region of Northern Europe

No, I haven't noticed the brand originates from Northern Europe

19. What qualities of “Noordi” brand, in your opinion the region of origin – Northern Europe determines? Pick three.

Reliability

Longevity

Ensures high quality of the product

Scandinavian, minimalistic design

High level of the manufacturing quality

Ensures long termed value of the product

20. Rank the qualities of “Noordi” brand and the product according to the importance before purchase (5 the most important, 1 – least important):

Acceptable price

High quality of the product

Positive recommendations

Region of origin – Northern Europe

Widely known brand

Design of the product

21. Rank the criteria of choices of baby stroller based on importance (5 the most important, 1 – least important):

Recommendations

Country of origin

Brand-awareness

Good price

High quality materials and the product

Globality of the product (appreciation in foreign markets, certificates...)

Easy and quick guarantee service

Design of the product

Quality of customer service during the purchase

Technical characteristics of the product

22. Are you tend to purchase the products, developed or manufactured in Northern Europe more than those, developed or manufactured in Asia?

Yes, I would choose the product developed or manufactured in Northern Europe

No, I would more likely choose the product, developed or manufactured in Asia, than product, developed or manufactured in Northern Europe

I would not pay attention to where the product is developed or manufactured.

23. If you were choosing the baby stroller and notice any difference in price, quality and design of all products, yet the only difference would be the region of origin, which one would you choose?

The one, developed or manufactured in Northern Europe

The one, developed or manufactured in Asia

The one, developed or manufactured in West Africa

The one, developed or manufactured in Eastern Europe

The one, developed or manufactured in Southern Europe

Appendix 2. Research questionnaire in Lithuanian

Apklausa užtruks iki 4 min, iš anksto dėkoju už jūsų skirtą laiką šiam moksliniam tyrimui.

Tyrimo tikslas: išsiaiškinti produkto sukūrimo ir pagaminimo vietos įtaką produkto pasirinkimui bei prekės ženklo vertinimui.

Apklausa atliekama Kauno Technologijos Universiteto magistrantūros studijų baigiamojo darbo tyrimui. Duomenys renkami anonimiškai ir bus saugomi 3 mėnesius po tyrimo pabaigos tyrėjo archyvuose, vėliau – sunaikinti.

1. Jūsų lytis?
Vyras
Moteris
2. Jūsų amžius?
18 – 25 metai
26 – 35 metai
36 – 45 metai
46 metai ir daugiau
3. Kokios yra jūsų namų ūkio (šeimos) vid. pajamos per mėnesį?
Nuo 500 iki 1000 eurų
Nuo 1001 iki 2000 eurų
Nuo 2001 iki 5000 eurų
Nuo 5001 ir daugiau
4. Ar 5 metų laikotarpyje įsigijote/įsigysite kūdikiams skirtą vežimėlį?
Taip, jau įsigijau
Taip, planuoju įsigyti ateityje
Ne, dar neįsigijau
Ne, neplanuoju įsigyti
5. Kaip jums yra svarbu, kurioje geografinėje vietoje buvo sukurtas prekės ženklas?
Labai svarbu
Svarbu
Nesvarbu, nėra skirtumo iš kur yra kilęs prekės ženklas

6. Kaip jums yra svarbu, kurioje geografinėje vietoje yra gaminamas produktas?
 Labai svarbu
 Svarbu
 Nesvarbu, nėra skirtumo, kur produktas yra gaminamas
7. Ar esate įsigyjęs/usi produktą ar prekės ženklą dėl jo pagaminimo ar kilmės šalies?
 Taip, esu
 Ne, nesu
8. Ar sutinkate, jog produkto sukūrimo vieta yra svarbiau nei produkto pagaminimo vieta?
 Taip, produkto sukūrimo vieta yra daug svarbesnė.
 Ne, nesutinku. Produkto pagaminimo vieta yra svarbesnis faktorius.
9. Kodėl, jūsų manymu, pirkėjui yra svarbi prekės ženklo kilmės vieta ar šalis?
 Kilmės vieta nusako produkto kokybę
 Kilmės vieta suteikia papildomos vertės prekės ženklui ir produktui
 Kilmės vieta suteikia užtikrintumo, jog prekės ženklo produktas nenuvils ir atitiks poreikius
 Kilmės vieta parodo galimą tiekimo grandinę ir leidžia nuspėti, jog gaminant ar kuriant produktą laikomasi standartų (nepažeidžiamos žmonių teisės, tausojama gamta ir kt.)
10. Ar vertinate produktą palankiau, jei produkto kilmės šalis yra Šiaurės Europos regionas, o ne Rytų Europa ar Azija?
 Taip, produktą, pagamintą ar sukurtą Šiaurės Europos regione, vertinu palankiau
 Ne, produktus vertinu vienodai, nepriklausomai nuo kilmės šalies
11. Ar produktą, kuris yra pagamintas ne Lietuvoje vertinate geriau nei tą, kuris yra pagamintas Lietuvoje?
 Taip, vertinu geriau
 Ne, Lietuvoje pagamintą produktą vertinu labiau nei užsienyje pagamintą produktą.
12. Ar manote, jog prekės ženklas yra gerai vertinamas Lietuvoje, jeigu jo kilmės vieta yra nurodoma Šiaurės Europa?
 Taip, manau, kad tai turi teigiamos įtakos prekės ženklo vertinimui Lietuvoje
 Ne, manau, kad tai neturi įtakos prekės ženklo vertinimui Lietuvoje.
13. Ar produktus, kurie yra sukurti ne Lietuvoje vertinate geriau nei tuos, kurie yra pagaminti Lietuvoje?
 Taip, vertinu geriau
 Ne, vertinu Lietuvoje pagamintus produktus vertinu labiau nei užsienyje pagamintus produktus.
14. Kokias produkto vertybes išskirtumėte, atsižvelgdami į tai, kad produktas yra sukurtas Šiaurės Europoje (1 svarbiausias, 5 - mažiausiai svarbus):
 Aukšta kokybė
 Ilgaamžiškumas

- Technologiniai, konstrukciniai pranašumai
- Išskirtinumas
- Lengvas naudojimas
- Patikimumas
- Dizainas
- Aktualumas
- Aukšti standartai gamyboje, produkto sukūrimo
15. Kokias produkto vertybes išskirtumėte, atsižvelgdami į tai, kad produktas yra pagamintas Šiaurės Europoje? Pasirinkite tris.
- Aukšta kokybė
- Ilgamžiškumas
- Technologiniai, konstrukciniai pranašumai
- Išskirtinumas
- Lengvas naudojimas
- Patikimumas
- Dizainas
- Aukšti standartai gamyboje, produkto sukūrimo
16. Ar žinote prekės ženklą “Noordi”, kuriantį ir gaminantį kūdikiams skirtus vežimėlius?
- Taip, žinau
- Ne, neteko girdėti
- ...įdėta nuotrauka, logotipas...
17. Ar atkreipėte dėmesį, jog kaip prekės ženklo “Noordi” kilmės vieta yra nuorodomas Šiaurės Europos regionas?
- Taip
- Ne
- ...jei taip:
18. Iš kokių aspektų tai sprendžiate?
- Dizainas yra panašus į Šiaurės Europos
- Tokia informacija minima oficialiame puslapyje
- Prekės ženklo pavadinimo skambesys asocijuojasi su Šiaurės Europos regionu
- Ne, nepastebėjau, jog prekės ženklas yra kilęs iš Šiaurės Europos
19. Kokias, jūsų manymu, prekės ženklo “Noordi” vertybes atskleidžia kilmės vieta – Šiaurės Europa? Pasirinkite tris.
- Patikimumą
- Ilgamžiškumą
- Užtikriną aukštą produkto kokybę

- Skandinavišką, minimalistinį dizainą
 - Aukštą gamybos kokybės lygį
 - Užikrina ilgalaikę aukštą produkto vertę
20. Sureitinguokite “Noordi” prekės ženklo ir produkto ypatybes pagal svarbą prieš įsigyjamą (1 svarbiausias, 5 mažiausiai svarbus):
- Priimtina kaina
 - Aukšta produkto kokybė
 - Geros rekomendacijos
 - Kilmės šalis – Šiaurės Europa
 - Plačiai žinomas prekės ženklas
 - Produkto dizainas
21. Pagal svarbą sureitinguokite kūdikiams skirto vežimėlio pasirinkimo kriterijus (1 svarbiausias, 5 - mažiausiai svarbus):
- Rekomendacijos
 - Kilmės vieta
 - Gerai žinomas prekės ženklas
 - Palanki kaina
 - Aukštos kokybės medžiagos ir produktas
 - Produkto globalumas (įvertinimai užsienio rinkose, sertifikatai ir kt.)
 - Lengvas ir greitas garantinis aptarnavimas
 - Produkto dizainas
 - Aptarnavimo kokybė įsigyjant prekę
 - Produkto techninės savybės
22. Ar esate linkęs/linkusi įsigyti produktus, kurie yra pagaminti ar sukurti Šiaurės Europoje labiau nei tuos, kurie yra pagaminti ar sukurti Azijoje?
- Taip, rinkčiausi produktą sukurtą ir pagamintą Šiaurės Europoje
 - Ne, rinkčiausi produktą nepriklausomai nuo to, kur jis yra sukurtas ar pagamintas
23. Jeigu besirenkant kūdikiams skirtą vežimėlį pastebite, jog visų galimų variantų kaina, produkto kokybė, dizainas ir kitos specifikacijos yra vienodos, vienintelis skirtumas - sukūrimo ir pagaminimo šalis. Kurį produktą pasirinktumėte?
- Sukurtą ar pagamintą Šiaurės Europoje
 - Sukurtą ar pagamintą Azijoje
 - Sukurtą ar pagamintą Vakarų Afrikos regione
 - Sukurtą ar pagamintą Rytų Europos regione
 - Sukurtą ar pagamintą Pietų Europoje