MEASURING THE INFLUENCE OF CORPORATE IMAGE ON COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IMAGE. THE CASE OF SPAIN

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ABSTRACT

Place branding scholars and practitioners have increasingly highlighted the influence that corporate image can exert on the image of the country of origin (COI). Yet, there is remarkably little theoretical and empirical research on this influence. Filling this gap is important in relation to both theory and practice. The aim of the proposed study is to measure the influence of the image of Spanish corporate brands on the image that British people have of Spain. The three specific objectives of our research are as follows: (1) to analyse whether corporate image affects COI; (2) to examine the influence of corporate image- (net valence, consistency, corporate brand image strength and corporate brand image stature) and corporate-related factors (number of corporate brands and accessibility) on COI; and (3) to investigate the moderating effects of corporate familiarity, business familiarity and consumer ethnocentrism on the influence of corporate image- and corporate-related factors on COI.

This study is based on empirical evidence provided by undertaking a face-to-face survey of 300 British people aged 18 and over living in London or Greater London, selected using a multi-stage area sampling technique. Findings reveal (1) the statistically significant impact of corporate image on two dimensions of COI (political beliefs and positive affect); (2) that corporate image- and corporate-related factors explain over 10 per cent of variance in the affective dimensions of COI and a relatively small proportion of variance in the cognitive dimensions of COI; and (3) that business familiarity is the moderator that has the most significant effect on the influence of corporate image- and corporate-related factors on COI, followed by consumer ethnocentrism and country familiarity. This study extends the place branding literature by proposing a conceptual framework that attempts to open the black box of a long-neglected element of the relationship between corporate image and COI. Furthermore, this is the first study that empirically tests the influence of corporate image on COI.