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Reverse Country of Origin Effect – A Structured Literature Review

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Zusammenfassung

Die Masterarbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem so genannten "Reverse Country of Origin" Effekt. Dieser Terminus beschreibt den Effekt, den ein Marken- oder Produktimage auf das Image eines Landes bzw. eines Ortes ausübt. Das Konzept ist der reziproke Zwilling zum so genannten "Country of Origin" Effekt. Dieser Ausdruck wiederum beschreibt die Auswirkung, die das Image eines Landes oder eines Ortes auf das Image einer Marke oder eines Produktes hat, das (im weitesten Sinne) aus besagtem Land kommt. Während letzterer in der Literatur ausgiebig diskutiert wurde, blieb ersterer in der Wissenschaft noch relativ unbeachtet, obwohl er sowohl für die akademische Welt als auch für die Praxis großes Potenzial birgt. Mit dem Ziel den aktuellen Stand der Forschung zum "Reverse Country of Origin" Effekt abzubilden, wird im Rahmen dieser Arbeit eine strukturierte Literaturrecherche durchgeführt, die neben einer eingehenden qualitativen Analyse des Textkorpus auch Krippendorfs Alpha als statistisches Instrument nutzt. Die Literatur, die den Textkorpus stellt, wird mithilfe einer genau dokumentierten Key-Word-Recherche gesammelt, was zu einer besseren Reproduzierbarkeit der Methodik beiträgt. In der Diskussion werden schließlich künftige Forschungstrends aufgezeigt. Es wird ersichtlich, dass der aktuelle Wissensstand noch weiterer Forschung benötigt, um gesichert als generalisierbar gewertet werden zu können. Zudem soll durch zukünftige Untersuchungen ein besseres Verständnis der zugrundeliegenden psychologischen Konzepte und ein ganzheitlicheres Verständnis des Themas durch methodische Vielfalt erreicht werden. Die Ergebnisse dieser Masterthesis zeigen, dass diverse Arten von Marken und Produkten als potenzielle Quellen für den „Reverse Country of Origin“ Effekt dienen können. Dies bietet viel Raum für zusätzliche Forschung und auch praktische Anwendungen des Untersuchungsgegenstandes, die aufgrund der Komplexität des Themas nur gut vorbereitet durchgeführt werden sollten, um so möglichen Fallstricken bei der Anwendung oder daraus erwachsenden negativen Konsequenzen bestmöglich vorbeugen zu können.

Abstract

The thesis investigates the “reverse country of origin effect”, which describes the effect a brand or product image imposes on a country’s and/or place’s image respectively. The concept is the counterpart to the “country of origin effect”, which describes the effect the image of a country or place imposes on a brand’s or product’s image originating (in a broad sense) from the respective country or place. While the latter has been discussed extensively in the literature, the former remains relatively disregarded by the academia, although it bears great potential for future research and intensified practical implementation. In order to depict the current state of the research regarding the “reverse country of origin effect” a structured literature review is conducted within the thesis, utilizing Krippendorff’s Alpha as a statistical tool alongside an in-depth review of the text corpus for analysis. The literature formulating the text corpus is sampled via a well-documented key word research, contributing to a sound methodology. In the analysis, future research trends are identified, showing that the current literature still requires corroboration, so the results can confidently be assumed to be generalizable. Additionally, a better understanding of the underlying psychological concepts and a more holistic understanding of the topic through methodological plurality shall be gained through future studies. Concluding, the results reveal that all kinds of brands and products are potential sources for the reverse country of origin effect, which leaves great potential for additional research and strategic options for practitioners. However, the phenomenon is highly complex, calling for sound study designs and well-planned marketing endeavors, mitigating the consequences of potential pitfalls when dealing with the topic.

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List of Abbreviations

AJG – Academic Journal Guide 2021

CI – Total Citations

COO – Country of Origin

CPY – Citations per Year

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

DMOs – Destination Management Organizations

JQL – Journal Quality List 2022

MNCs – Multinational Corporations

PHC – Product Harm Crisis

RCO – Reverse Country of Origin

SLR – Structured Literature Review

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1. Introduction

The master thesis aims at creating a comprehensive overview of the current state of the literature concerning the so-called “reverse country of origin (RCO) effect”, which describes the influence a certain product has on the image of its country of origin (COO). The COO, however, is a widely discussed concept in the field of marketing, which is also heavily made use of in marketing practice. The term refers to the impact a certain country’s image imposes on products and brands originating in that particular country. In order to depict an overview of the implications of the RCO effect, the thesis further touches upon the area of place or destination branding (PB), a process which is undertaken with the attempt to shape the image of a certain place. Consequently, a comparative advantage can be gained in a globalized world, in which not only tourists but also customers, workforce and companies want to be addressed in the process of choosing the places to which they travel, and in which they shop, live or work (Kotler & Gertner, 2002, p. 258). Moreover, a brief introduction will be provided on brand and place perception. This dichotomous approach (from product to place and from place to product) aims at establishing a sound theoretical basis, which then is integrated in a brief introductory chapter about the RCO.

So far, the concept of RCO has been acknowledged by several different research disciplines such as marketing, public diplomacy and tourism. Although, several attempts from distinct perspectives have already been conducted to understand the phenomenon in more depth, no deeper integration between the findings of the different disciplines is established in the academia up to this point, making it a promising field for the thesis and future research. Only in the second decade of the 21st century the debate about the RCO begins to become more profound, which is why a relatively low but staggering number of articles have so far been published in top ranking journals. Therefore, conference papers, book chapters and articles from not ranked peer reviewed and “free” journals are added to the research in order to obtain a large enough sample size for this structured literature review (SLR).

The introduction and the following chapter provide the theoretical framework of the thesis. A brief overview of the underlying concepts is eclectically provided, visiting in principle the three areas of the COO effect, place branding and their common ground (chapter 2). The third chapter describes the methodology of the paper alongside the research protocol, the study design, the sample composition, the results and the discussion of the findings. In the fourth section limitations of this research are presented besides recommendations for future research about how to overcome them. In the final chapter the thesis is concluded with a summary of the findings and their meanings for the academic world, its managerial implications and its impacts on the body of literature concerned with the research topic.

2. Theoretical Framework

The term RCO was firstly introduced by Larry & Lockshin (2012, pp. 502-503) alongside White (2012) who called the phenomenon the “inverse country of origin effect”, both claiming that only more recent literature has started to recognize a potential connection between the two concepts of PB and COO images, whereas previous literature generally discussed the COO and its effect and the process of PB separately from each other. The present chapter outlines the theoretical development of the two slowly converging fields of research. This gives a better understanding of each concept while simultaneously the overlapping areas are demonstrated, paving the way for a brief theoretical introduction to the RCO effect.

The COO effect is a widely discussed topic in marketing research ever since it was introduced by Schooler (1965). It connects a country's image to its brands and, therefore, it partly explains why consumers favor the one over the other. In previous stages of the ever-developing research body, the COO was commonly defined as the country in which goods had been manufactured, which was and still is famously signaled by the “Made in” label. More recent literature usually links the concept to the so-called country of association, meaning the country from which the brand originates rather than where the assembling takes place. This also corresponds with the fundamental theory about how value can be added to products through proper branding, systematically discriminating manufacturing in the value creation process. Josiassen & Harzing (2008, p. 266) summarize on this matter and state that in an ever-globalizing world “COO research focusing on the country of association would be more appropriate than focusing on an increasingly irrelevant country of manufacture.” Yet, a firm conducting business in this globalized economy commonly encompasses more than two countries in its supply chains, possibly creating products with a country of manufacture, a country of assembly and a country of association. This provides new perspectives for more differentiated and less unidimensional theories about the COO effect alongside a variety of strategic options for the exploitation of it (Johnson, Tian, & Lee, 2016, pp. 405-406).

The implications of the COO effect on marketing strategy are multiple. For example, Zhou, Yang & Hui (2010, p. 215) suggest that fostering misbeliefs of consumers about the real COO imposes positive effects on the perception of products while Balabanis & Diamantopoulos (2011, pp. 110-112) see vastly detrimental consequences for a brand, when its true COO is hidden away from the consumer. The COO effect, however, even demonstrates its power when consumers refuse to place importance to a product's COO,

as they are potentially still subconsciously influenced by COO cues on products, even when actively ignoring them (Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2017, pp. 62-63).

Further literature suggests that the COO effect should be utilized under certain circumstances, depending on the image a brand and its products and services carry. In principle, it is argued that when the image of a brand along with its products and services and the perception of its COO match, the COO effect should be made use of (Roth & Romeo, 1992, p. 488). Additionally, the COO effect is potentially moderated by consumer traits, such as expertise or the cultural background (Chattalas, Kramer, & Takada, 2008, pp. 57-60). That is why determining whether the COO image and the brand image are either synergistic or incompatible might not always be a straightforward task (Liu & Johnson, 2005, p. 95). Hence, a thorough analysis beforehand the exploitation of the COO as a marketing tool is recommendable, preventing strategic pitfalls stemming from a unidimensional assessment of the COO effect.

The procedure of branding a specific country or region was commonly referred to as destination branding. More recent academic literature, however, also introduce the term PB. The most salient differences between destination and place branding come from their origin and their scope. While destination branding has a clear touristic connotation (stemming from tourism research), PB addresses a broader concept (stemming from marketing research). The PB perspective shifts the focus from a mere touristic competition to a competition between places for (global) investors, customers, products, companies, skilled workforce and additionally tourists (Suter et al., 2021, p. 417). PB is simultaneously an umbrella term, which can be scaled from macro areas, such as the EU, down to small regions and cities, which desire to enhance their (international) reputation and image (Foroudi et al., 2016, p. 243).

PB just like any other branding activity attempts to create leverage for a certain product (the place). The task itself is unisonous described as highly complex, since a place commonly comprises of a multitude of stakeholders. Those stakeholders co-create, co-consume, shape and administer the place often based on historically grown structures which “may not represent the ideal product” (Hankinson, 2007, p. 241). Another aspect, which increases the complexity of PB, is the dynamic context in which a place exists. In that sense, the context changes the perception of a place depending on the situation in which a place is consumed. Boisen, Terlouw, & van Gorp (2011, p. 140) elaborate on that matter:

“The reputation or image of a place holds positive and negative aspects, and whether they are positive or negative is highly context specific. [...] Paris carries an air of romance and delicate candlelight dinners, whereas London often is associated with

hardcore business such as investment banking. Even though, it is perfectly possible to enjoy a romantic candlelight dinner in a [sic] extraordinary restaurant in London and likewise to become an investment banker in Paris, the strength of the associations that cling to these well-known places influences how people perceive them.”

From a management perspective, PB is traditionally rooted in the political agenda, but has developed into a multi-disciplinary assignment for both official bodies and private stakeholders, which share a common interest in the redirection of international resources towards them. Simultaneously, a new branch arose as a direct result of an increasingly competitive environment in the global race about the most attractive place brand, consisting of agencies, which specialize in PB (Boisen, Terlouw, & van Gorp, 2011, pp. 135-136). Those are not identical with classical destination management organizations (DMOs), which typically specialize in boosting inbound tourism through the promotion of events by establishing a close-knit network with local tourism contractors which provide relevant services and connecting them with international clients (Shin et al., 2017, pp. 135-136).

In classical marketing theory, brand perception is determined through demographic, psychographic and behavioral characteristics of the customer. Therefore, the perception of a brand is influenced by the age, income, interests, activities, opinions as well as on occasion or the benefit a customer gains from a purchase, providing companies with a wide selection of touching points to effectively market their products. A brand, in that sense, aims at establishing a competitive advantage through the creation of an emotional universe to which the customer can relate or with which the customer can identify. Consequently, a brand shapes the perception on a certain product, influencing the customer's willingness to favor one over another from the same or a substitutable kind. Various strategies can be applied to build on a brand's influence depending on the target group(s) but also on the product type, which are, on a macro level, frequently distinguished on a hedonic and a utilitarian dimension (Kervyn, Fiske, & Malone, 2012, p. 166). One of these strategies is the COO effect, which, as described, influences a customer's attitude towards a product based on the associations this customer has with the product's COO. The COO in marketing is therefore treated as an external factor, which can or cannot be utilized as a strategic component in marketing.

The PB perspective shifts the COO from being an external factor to a being a shapeable and administrable variable, as any COO is also a place which can be marketed almost like any other product. As a consequence, companies could decide to engage in the task of PB, co-creating a favorable COO image for their purposes. This could be done in a conventional fashion by reaching out to official bodies and other active players in the task of PB for the respective COO, therefore fostering an institutionalized PB strategy (Zhao, Sun, & Kakuda,

2017, p. 262). As PB is not a classical branding activity, a multitude of stakeholders are at work at the same time, all shaping a place's image at once. Also, a place cannot be owned by a single entity, leaving space for alternative narratives about the place and thus a competition over the prevailing image a place's brand conveys. The image can opportunistically be modeled by a single company for its own purposes, by utilizing its own resources and the halo of its products and service as ambassadors for the place brand (Lee & Lockshin, 2012, pp. 503-504). Reversely, the COO is in a first step not linked to the products, but the products are linked to the place and only in a second step the COO will in return play a reinforced role to the perception of a product. The phenomenon at work in this logic is called the "reverse or inverse country of origin effect", which is the main subject of the thesis.

Accordingly, (non-touristic) companies commonly treat their COO's image and the connected country brand as an external force, potentially constraining their level of influence. The RCO effect should encourage companies to direct resources towards an active COO image management through their brands, products and services, especially when being a multinational firm with corresponding market power or when producing products iconic to a place. Using the RCO effect is moreover a logical first step towards the direction of PB, when PB is considered a strategic option for a strengthened COO effect. Additionally, nations and thus places benefit from an RCO effect. For example, IKEA in the case of Sweden and Red Bull in the case of Austria have already left their imprint on the international reputation of the two nations although following an association strategy in the case of IKEA and Sweden and a disassociation strategy in the case of Red Bull and Austria (White, 2012, pp. 116-117).

Up to this point no comprehensive overview of the development of the RCO effect in the academic literature has been provided, which is why after ten years since its introduction, it seems timely to screen the literature with a systematic approach to identify the current strings of debate, the focuses, and critiques as well as potential future research trends.

3. Methodology

The method of choice will be a SLR, the aim of which is to "identify all empirical evidence that fits the pre-specified inclusion criteria to answer a particular research question or hypotheses" in order to mitigate bias through the application of a "explicit and systematic" research regime (Snyder, 2019, p. 334).

3.1. Systematic Literature Review in International Business Research

As the body of literature is ever-growing in almost all scientific disciplines, including business research, techniques need to be applied to manage this increasingly convoluted landscape of knowledge with the aim of implementing elements of structure to it. Therefore, the literature is reviewed, or in other words: research on the existing research is conducted with the aim of assembling knowledge nexuses from which further investigations can expand and grow (Snyder, 2019, p. 333). However, a literature review not only helps to structure and categorize by assessing the past, it also helps uncovering potential blind spots, single-sided debates and thus preamps fields of research to become hampered or, even worse, endangered in their development (Webster & Watson, 2002, p. xiii). Therefore, literature reviews spark theory development, uncover dissonant perspectives or inconsistencies, synthesize overviews, evaluate methodological approaches and broaden the horizon of any research field they are conducted in through pin-pointing current trends while simultaneously providing new ideas of what and how to address in the future. However, it is not only the academia that profits from those evaluation steps, but practitioners can also benefit substantially from comprehensive overviews of their fields of profession, as current insights from within and especially from outside their expertise are addressed in a manner that is easier to digest (Palmatier, Houston, & Hulland, 2018, p. 2).

A common critique concerning literature reviews is that they are not necessarily conducted with the required rigor in order to fulfill the abovementioned expectations. As a result, biased sampling, false assumptions or ideological motivated agendas of the researcher, possibly ignoring literature based on idiosyncratic preferences, impose threats on the reliability of these studies. Such points of critique are often issued in relation to qualitative methods, given that many times qualitatively approached studies are difficult or even impossible to imitate, as the objective elements of such studies are the researchers themselves and not universally applicable mathematical or statistical tools. In order to overcome those methodological deficiencies, it is thus recommended using more rigorous methods. This can be done by applying systematic research designs, which ensure higher rates of replicability and objectivity through the establishment of thorough research protocols and the usage of more quantitative techniques (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003, p. 209).

As scientific competition intensifies on a global level, SLRs are becoming increasingly important in a multitude of disciplines, successfully corroborating trust amongst scholars by seizing essentializations alongside scientific chauvinisms of all kinds (e.g., Eurocentrism, androcentrism etc.). SLRs aim at depicting the entire picture of a certain concept through sampling processes based on objective criteria, such as the internationally recognized peer-reviewing process as the highest standard for scientific publications and keywords as in- or

exclusion markers for literature relevant to the selected research topic. In the analysis, SLRs rely on algebraic or statistical methods in order to depict frequencies and distributions in a standardized, thorough and reproducible form, making them an appropriate research technique for international business research (Palmatier, Houston, & Hulland, 2018, p. 3).

Although being a powerful methodology, SLRs need to surmount certain pitfalls in order to become useful to the scientific community. Thus, “a successful literature review constructively informs the reader about what has been learned” (Webster & Watson, 2002, p. xviii). In the discussion of an SLR, the gaps and hints towards new fields of research should saliently be presented by including graphs, tables and figures. It is necessary to present the findings in an understandable way, comprising explanations to the theories presented alongside each other (Massaro, Dumay, & Guthrie, 2016, pp. 792-794). Moreover, an SLR aims to categorize and provide a chronological overview not only of the concepts discussed in the literature but of the authors as well. In that way, the reader is empowered to understand the links between the concepts as well as their historically and socially embedded development (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003, pp. 218-219).

3.2. Research Protocol

A ten-step approach as defined by Massaro, Dumay & Guthrie (2016, pp. 771-772) is thus applied as the research protocol:

- “(1) write a literature review protocol;
- (2) define the questions that the literature review is setting out to answer;
- (3) determine the type of studies and carry out a comprehensive literature search;
- (4) measure article impact;
- (5) define an analytical framework;
- (6) establish literature review reliability;
- (7) test literature review validity;
- (8) code data using the developed framework;
- (9) develop insights and critique through analysing the dataset; and
- (10) develop future research paths and questions.”

Figure 1 depicts the process of an SLR in more detail. For this research, these general recommendations are translated into a concrete methodology as outlined in the following chapters. Table 2 shows the data set. The data for this research is sourced from articles generally listed in the Academic Journal Guide 2021 (AJG) issued by the Chartered Association of Business Schools, or the Journal Quality List 2022 (JQL) published by the Australian Business Deans Council. The following Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the AJG quality standards.

Table 1: Definition of AJG Quality Standards

Quality Rating	Meaning of Quality Rating
4*	Journals with global elite ranking within business, management and economics
4	Publication of the best research conducted with low acceptances rates
3	Highly regarded and selective journals
2	Publication of original research with an accepted standard in the referee process
1	Modest standard journals within their fields with a recognized standard.

Source: Adapted from Harvey et al. (2010, p. 5)

The JQL recognizes four different qualities for journals. The highest ranked quality is marked with A*, ranging down to C, which is the lowest acknowledged quality. Journals are only included if they “contain a substantive business element”, which is reached when in a time span over three years more than 50% of the articles are either written by a business faculty or of business nature. The categorization of the journals is undertaken by panel chairs, which may consult experts for quality assessment (Australian Business Deans Council, 2023, pp. 18-20).

Moreover, articles are used from conferences and books. Journals that are not on either of these lists are either categorized as “Peer-reviewed Journal”, if such a process is integrated in their statute, or as “Free Journal”, if a peer-review process is not applied. The following table provides a frequency distribution of the articles according to their source.

Table 2: Frequency Table of Sources

Journal/Conference Paper/Book	AJG/JQL Rank	Number of Papers	% of Total in Data Set
Tourism Management	4	4	3,96%
Journal of Travel Research	4	3	2,97%
Annals of Tourism Research	4	1	0,99%
Public Relations Review	4	1	0,99%
International Marketing Review	3	5	4,95%
European Journal of Marketing	3	3	2,97%
Journal of International Marketing	3	2	1,98%
Journal of Business Research	3	2	1,98%
International Business Review	3	2	1,98%
Food Policy	3	1	0,99%
European Sport Management Quarterly	3	1	0,99%
Place Branding and Public Diplomacy	3	3	2,97%
Journal of International Consumer Marketing	3	2	1,98%
International Journal of Strategic Communication	3	1	0,99%

Sport in Society	3	1	0,99%
Journal of Place Management and Development	2	4	3,96%
International Journal of Tourism Research	2	2	1,98%
Journal of Brand Management	2	2	1,98%
Tourism Analysis	2	2	1,98%
Journal of Marketing Education	2	1	0,99%
Journal of Strategic Marketing	2	1	0,99%
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	2	1	0,99%
Town Planning Review	2	1	0,99%
Tourism Management Perspectives	2	1	0,99%
Cities	2	1	0,99%
Management Decision	2	1	0,99%
Current Issues in Tourism	2	1	0,99%
Tourism Review International formerly published as Pacific Tourism Review	2	1	0,99%
Journal of Vacation Marketing	1	3	2,97%
Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	1	3	2,97%
Marketing Intelligence and Planning	1	1	0,99%
Journal of Product and Brand Management	1	2	1,98%
Journal of Destination Marketing and Management	1	2	1,98%
International Review on Public and Non - Profit Marketing	1	1	0,99%
Tourism	1	1	0,99%
EuroMed Journal of Business	1	1	0,99%
Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and Tourism	1	1	0,99%
Journal of International Studies	1	1	0,99%
Measuring Business Excellence	1	1	0,99%
Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	1	1	0,99%
Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management	1	1	0,99%
Journal of Global Marketing	1	1	0,99%
Tourism Review of Aiest - International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
International Journal of Tourism Policy	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
Global Journal of Business Research	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
International Journal of Management Studies	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
International Journal of Organizational Innovation (Online)	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
Journal of Economic and Social Studies	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
International Journal of Services Technology and Management	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Science	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
Journal of Consumer Behavior	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%

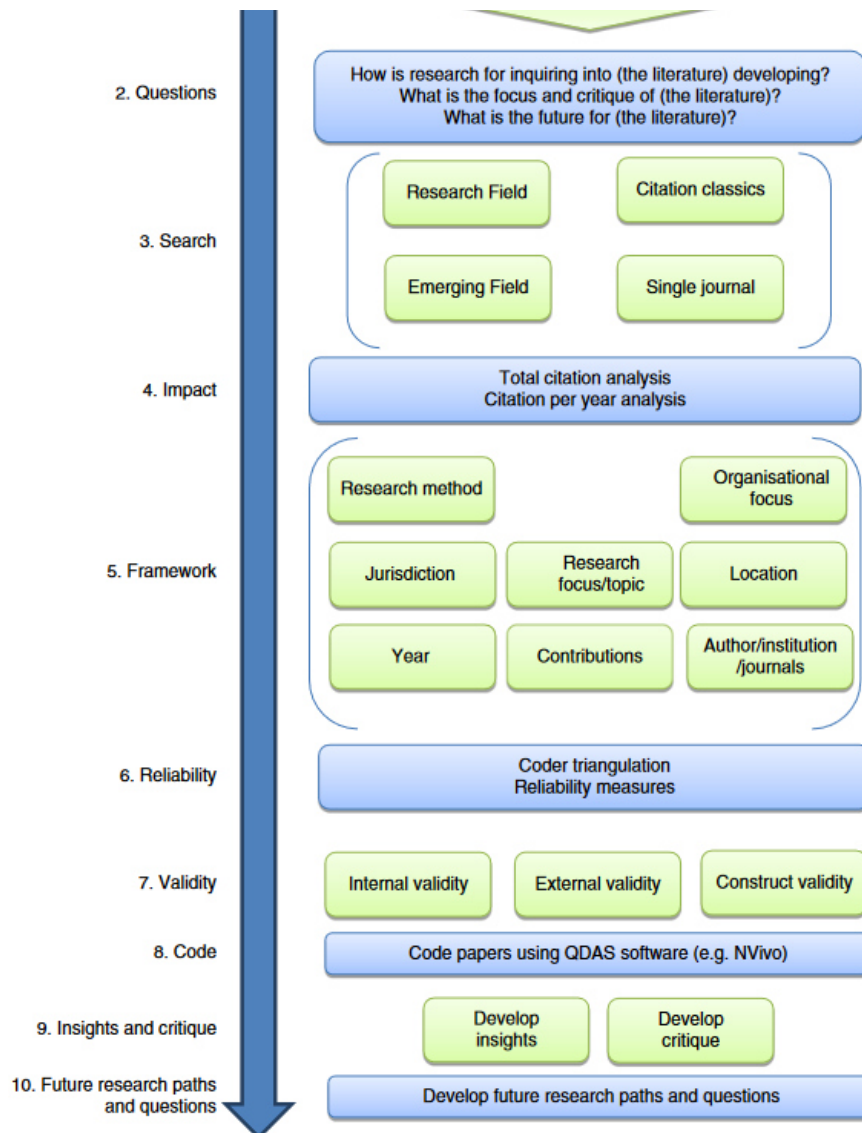
Journal of Tourism, Heritage and Services Marketing	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
International Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
Geographica Pannonica	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
Journal of Contemporary Marketing Science	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
Saudi Journal of Business and Management Studies	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
Brazilian Administration Review	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
Tourism and Hospitality Management	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
Frontiers in Psychology	Peer-reviewed Journal	1	0,99%
Town and Country Planning	Free Journal	1	0,99%
St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University Journal. Economics	Free Journal	1	0,99%
Malaysian Journal of Consumer and Family Economics	Free Journal	1	0,99%
Proceedings of the 2007 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference	Conference Paper	1	0,99%
13th Wuhan International Conference on E-Business, WHICEB 2014	Conference Paper	1	0,99%
Proceedings of the Tourism Outlook Conference 2015	Conference Paper	1	0,99%
Proceedings of the 2011 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference	Conference Paper	1	0,99%
Proceedings of the 2012 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference	Conference Paper	1	0,99%
Proceedings of the 2013 World Marketing Congress	Conference Paper	1	0,99%
Theory and Practice in Hospitality and Tourism Research	Book Chapter	1	0,99%
Bridging Disciplinary Perspectives of Country Image Reputation, Brand, and Identity	Book Chapter	1	0,99%
Urban Events, Place Branding and Promotion: Place Event Marketing	Book Chapter	1	0,99%
Marketing Countries, Places, and Place-associated Brands: Identity and Image	Book Chapter	1	0,99%
Total		101	100,00%

3.3. Aim of Research & Research Questions

The aim of the SLR is to establish a knowledge structure in which the development of the literature concerning the RCO effect is critically assessed. In order to do so, the following standardized research questions for an SLR will be addressed (Massaro, Dumay, & Guthrie, 2016, pp. 774-777):

- RQ1. What are the current major research trends and topics in relation to the reverse country of origin effect?
- RQ2. What is the focus and critique of the key identified research topics?
- RQ3. What are future research trends related to the reverse country of origin effect?

Figure 1: Research Process of an SLR

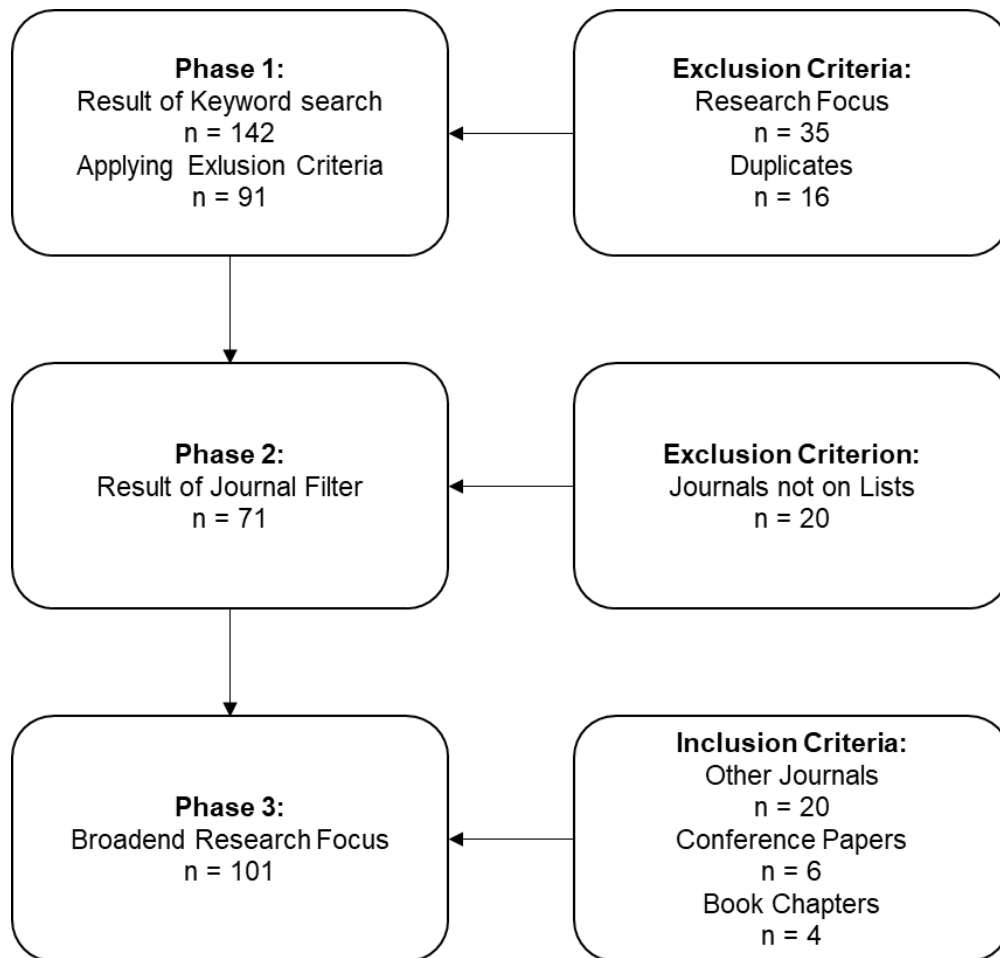


Source: Massaro, Dumay, & Guthrie (2016, p. 773)

3.4. Comprehensive Literature Search

To obtain an unbiased and comprehensive text corpus for the analysis, a keyword search is undertaken as instructed by Massaro, Dumay, & Guthrie (2016, p. 777). Therefore, a three step process is followed as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Literature Search



Phase 1: Articles concerning the topic are identified with the following list of keywords:

- “destination image” AND “brand”,
- “destination image” AND “product”,
- “nation image” AND “brand”,
- “nation image” AND “product”,
- “country image” AND “brand”,
- “country image” AND “product”,
- “place image” AND “brand” or
- “place image” AND “product”.

For this purpose, the scientific databases Google Scholar, ProQuest, Science Direct and Scopus are used to identify the articles. Thereafter, the abstracts are screened, assessing

whether the paper discusses either an effect of a product or brand image on a place image or a bidirectional effect (inclusion criterion). If so, the paper is considered relevant and therefore included into the search. Papers focusing only on an effect of a country image on the image of a brand or a product are excluded (COO only, not bidirectional), also duplicate articles (exclusion criteria), leaving a total of 91 articles.

Phase 2: A register of relevant articles is established based on their source from this list. Papers in journals which are either listed in the AJG or the JQL remain part of the selection, reducing the number of articles to 72.

Phase 3: An ideal set of articles for a structured literature review comprises of 100 to 150 articles. If only a lower number of articles could be identified due to novelty or the niche of the research topic, the boundaries of the research may be broadened to other sources like conference papers, chapters from scientific books or open-source publishing platforms, which may provide additional insights into the discussions related to the topic (Massaro, Dumay, & Guthrie, 2016, p. 780). Thus, papers from other journals not listed in the AJG or JQL are re-included to the register, moreover sources from conferences and books are included, totaling in a set of 101 articles. This also results from the interdisciplinary nature of the research topic, creating difficulties in narrowing down a specific set of relevant journals from only one relevant field, such as marketing for example (ibid, 2016, pp. 777-778). Furthermore, Rafols et al. (2012, p. 1280) advise that interdisciplinary research gains from deviating from journal rankings, as “multidimensional qualities [...] cannot be intrinsically reduced to a single indicator”.

3.5. Measurement of Article Impact

Whether a piece of literature has left an impact on the academic world can be assessed by conducting a citation analysis with the help of *Harzing's Publish or Perish Software* and *Google Scholar*, citations “measure the impact of an article within the literature” (Massaro, Dumay, & Guthrie, 2016, pp. 780-781). Therefore, the total citations (CI) and the citations per year (CPY) are determined to measure the impact, counteracting on the fact that “older articles can accumulate more citations” with the help of time (Dumay & Cai, 2014, p. 270). The presented numbers are derived on the 6th and 7th of May 2023, depicting a ranking at this moment, as citations numbers are naturally subject to constant changes. The following Table 3 provides an overview of the top ten articles according to their CI, whereas Table 4 ranks the literature according to the CPY ratio, which is calculated automatically by the applied software.

Table 3: Top 10 Publications according to their CI

CI Rank	Reference	Year	Article	Publishing Journal	AJG/ JQL Rank	Google Scholar Citations
1	Qu, Kim & Im	2011	A model of destination branding: Integrating the concepts of the branding and destination image	Tourism Management	4	1839
2	And��hn, Nordin & Nilsson	2016	Facets of country image and brand equity: Revisiting the role of product categories in country-of-origin effect research	Journal of Consumer Behavior	1	1311
3	Hankinson & Graham	2004	Relational network brands: Towards a conceptual model of place brands	Journal of Vacation Marketing	1	1300
4	Tasci	2006	Destination brands vs destination images: Do we know what we mean?	Journal of Vacation Marketing	1	646
5	Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Paliawadana	2011	The relationship between country-of-origin image and brand image as drivers of purchase intentions - A test of alternative perspectives	International Marketing Review	3	449
6	Lee & Ganesh	1999	Effects of partitioned country image in the context of brand image and familiarity. A categorization theory perspective	International Marketing Review	3	413
7	Zenker	2011	How to catch a city? The concept and measurement of place brands	Journal of Place Management and Development	2	399
8	Elliot et al.	2011	An Integrative Model of Place Image: Exploring Relationships between Destination, Product, and Country Images	Journal of Travel Research	4	396
9	Nebenzahl & Jaffe	1996	Measuring the joint effect of brand and country image in consumer evaluation of global products	International Marketing Review	3	325

10	Költringer & Dickinger	2015	Analyzing destination branding and image from online sources: A web content mining approach	Journal of Business Research	3	318
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Table 4: Top 10 Publications according to their CPY

CPY Rank	Reference	Year	Article	Publishing Journal	AJG/ JQL Rank	Google Scholar Citations
1	Qu, Kim & Im	2011	A model of destination branding: Integrating the concepts of the branding and destination image	Tourism Management	4	153,25
2	Hankinson & Graham	2004	Relational network brands: Towards a conceptual model of place brands	Journal of Vacation Marketing	1	68,42
3	Költringer & Dickinger	2015	Analyzing destination branding and image from online sources: A web content mining approach	Journal of Business Research	3	39,75
4	Tasci	2006	Destination brands vs destination images: Do we know what we mean?	Journal of Vacation Marketing	1	38
5	Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Paliawadana	2011	The relationship between country-of-origin image and brand image as drivers of purchase intentions – A test of alternative perspectives	International Marketing Review	3	37,42
6	Marques, da Silva & Antova	2021	Image, satisfaction, destination and product post-visit behaviours: How do they relate in emerging destinations?	Tourism Management	4	36
7	Zenker	2011	How to catch a city? The concept and measurement of place brands	Journal of Place Management and Development	2	33,25

8	Elliot et al.	2011	An Integrative Model of Place Image: Exploring Relationships between Destination, Product, and Country Images	Journal of Travel Research	4	33
9	Parikshat et al.	2016	Role of tourist destination development in building its brand image: A conceptual model	Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Science	1	27
10	Lai, Khoo-Lattimore & Wang	2018	A perception gap investigation into food and cuisine image attributes for destination branding from the host perspective: The case of Australia	Tourism Management	4	21,6

3.6. Article Panel and Historical Development of Articles

This paragraph analyses the panel data of the text corpus. It develops a timeline, which shows that although the term RCO was coined only in 2012, the research concerning the actual topic started 20 years earlier, though with rather limited attention from the academic world. Moreover, the topic has not yet gained a strong momentum, which is also reflected by the limited number of articles concerning the RCO effect in high-ranking business journals. It can be seen that the two main subject areas in which the discussion is led are Marketing and Sector Studies. The area of Sector Studies concentrates on very focused topics, such as tourism or public diplomacy. Tourism, however, remains to be the most important single source for literature concerning the process of shaping a country's image or having a country's image shaped by an externally driven force. So far, some researchers started to acknowledge that there should be some sort of integrative process recombining the rather dispersed discussions from the marketing, tourism and public diplomacy perspective into one, as all three groups of scholars strive for ideas to enhance the position of countries in the international competition through a well steered process of image creation.

Table 5: Panel Data of Articles

Panel A: by Year		Panel B: by AJG ranking		Panel C: by AJG Subject Area	
1992	1	4	9	General Management, Ethics Gender and Social Responsibility	4
1993	1	3	23	International Business and Area Studies	3
					16

1996	2	2	19	Management Development and Education	1
1997	1	1	20	Marketing	22
1999	2	Peer-reviewed Journal	17	Social Science	1
2004	3	Free Journal	3	Regional Studies, Planning and Environment	6
2005	2	Conference Paper	6	Sector Studies	25
2006	1	Book Chapter	4	Not Applicable	39
2010	1				
2011	8				
2012	8				
2013	6				
2014	6				
2015	6				
2016	10				
2017	7				
2018	6				
2019	7				
2020	3				
2021	10				
2022	8				
2023	2				

3.7. Defining an Analytical Framework

An analytical framework is deductively established and inspired by Massaro, Dumay, & Guthrie (2016, p. 783). The framework defines how to code the articles by categorizing them based on their topical and geographical research focus, their institute of origin of the first author, the authors' gender, the research method, and their sample composition and their data origin respectively. The following table provides an overview of the categories and the corresponding frequencies within each of the six categories.

Table 6: Analytical Framework

A. Origin of RCO Effect			Frequency	B. Region of COO			Frequency
A.1	Corporate brand		30	B.1	Africa & Middle East		4
A.2	Corporate crisis		3	B.2	Australia & New Zealand		4
A.3	Product category		3	B.3	China, Taiwan South Korea & Japan		18
A.4	Destination brand		22	B.4	Europe		17
A.5	Tourism products		6	B.5	North America		7
A.6	Food & wine		7	B.6	Subcontinent India & Indochina		11
A.7	Hallmark events		8	B.7	Multinational		26
A.8	Place brand		15	B.8	Not applicable		14
A.9	Organic origin		4				
A.10	Media		3				
Total			101	Total			101

C. Region of Institute of First Author		Frequency	D. Gender of Author(s)		Frequency
C.1	Africa & Middle East	6	D.1	Female	24
C.2	Australia & New Zealand	8	D.2	Female led	22
C.3	China, Taiwan South Korea & Japan	12	D.3	Male	30
C.4	Europe	33	D.4	Male led	25
C.5	North America	26			
C.6	South America	3			
C.7	Subcontinent India & Indochina	13			
Total		101	Total		101

E. Research Method		Frequency	F. Sample Composition / Origin of Data		Frequency
E.1	Quantitative methods	73	F.1	Domestic clients	6
E.2	Qualitative methods	14	F.2	Foreign clients	16
E.3	Literature review	14	F.3	International clients	28
			F.4	Stakeholders & experts	14
			F.5	Students	11
			F.6	Literature	14
			F.7	Other	12
Total		101	Total		101

In order to enhance the understanding of each category, the following brief verbal definitions are provided, further detailing the meaning of the category titles and the rationale behind the usage:

- **Origin of RCO Effect** tackles the topical focus of the conducted research. Thus, there is an examination which kind of product or brand examines the effect of an RCO on its COO, potentially revealing whether a certain type provokes a special interest in the academia. Studies focusing on an “Organic origin” commonly try to measure in what way the naturally occurring resources (environmental, economic, cultural etc.) of a specific place impact its image.
- **Region of COO** defines where the COO lies, the image of which is potentially influenced by a certain product or brand. The item “Multinational” refers to a study design with which several countries from different regions are compared to each other, while the item “Not applicable” means that the phenomenon is discussed rather theoretically.
- **Region of Institute of First Author** establishes where the main researcher’s university is located, which potentially helps to understand why a certain COO or a certain area of the COO is chosen.

- **Gender of Authors** acknowledges whether a paper is written by a male or female author or if the study is led by a male or female author, so potential biases due to, for instance, androcentrism can be detected. Any third gender was neglected due to the lack of cues.
- In the category of the **Research Method** the papers are classified based on whether a quantitative, qualitative or purely literature-based methodology was put into practice, so a better understanding of how the topic is researched on can be developed and of whether multiple approaches have already been tested, so future research seems to be worthwhile.
- The **Sample Composition / Origin of Data** is of interest to establish whether the results are generated based on a rather heterogeneous or homogeneous perspective on the topic. Within this last category, it is distinguished between domestic, foreign and international clients, as their relationship to the “Region of COO” potentially matters to the results of a study. Domestic clients are people either visiting or browsing within their own country while foreign clients are explicitly visiting another country or evaluate brands or products from another country. The prefix international is used when the respondents’ relation to the product is not clearly indicated.

3.8. Establish Literature Review Reliability

In order to establish reliability of the results a statistical tool for analysis called Krippendorff’s Alpha (K-Alpha) is utilized for this thesis. K-Alpha is a well-established control mechanism for SLRs, as it can be used for an unlimited number of items (Massaro, Dumay, & Guthrie, 2016, p. 785). It measures variances in the categorization process called coding. Coding is a procedure to standardize the analysis of any content through a pre-defined analytical framework. To do so researchers meticulously go through the content attributing whether a certain passage can be classified as the one or the other. Naturally, it is impossible to define all categories in a way that no room for interpretation is left for the individual performing the coding task. Consequently, differences between the results of the raters will occur, which need to be controlled for, as “reproducibility arguably is the strongest and most feasible kind to test” the reliability of a study (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007, p. 78). Krippendorff (2013, p. 241) states that relying only on variables with reliabilities above $K\text{-Alpha} = 0.800$ leads to good research practice. Table 6 shows the results for each category after a two-round (May and June 2023) coding process performed by a fellow student and the author. Each category shows a K-Alpha value of at least 0.856 or above producing an average of 0.948 over all categories, indicating that the results are generally trustworthy. The most

disagreements could be detected in the category A. Origin of influence on COO, while all other categories produce only minor or no disagreements.

Table 7: Analysis of Coding with Krippendorff's Alpha (K-Alpha)

N columns:	12
N variables:	6
N coders per variable:	2

Variable	N Agreements	N Dis-agreements	N Cases	N Decisions	Percent Agreement	K-Alpha
A. Origin of Influence on COO	89	12	101	202	88,1	0.856
B. Region of COO	98	3	101	202	97	0.965
C. Region of Institute of first Author	99	2	101	202	98	0.975
D. Gender of Author(s)	101	0	101	202	100	1
E. Research Method	101	0	101	202	100	0.978
F. Sample Composition / Origin of Data	96	5	101	202	95	0.916
Average for K-Alpha						0.948

3.9. Test Literature Review Validity

Massaro, Dumay, & Guthrie (2016, pp. 785-787) highlight that SLRs must fulfill academic standards by showing internal, external and construct validity. They further propose three different strategies to ensure internal validity: applying a pattern matching logic, applying rival theories and establishing a time series alongside a chronological sequence analysis. For the purpose of this thesis, the latter option will be applied, so a clearly defined time span can be scrutinized, beginning in 1992 when the topic firstly emerged as a reciprocal concept to the COO effect. Further reference is provided in Table 5. In order to ensure external validity, it is important that findings can be generalized, which is why the articles must represent a comprehensive sample that is ensured through the three-phased selection process. Finally, construct validity can be obtained by triangulating the results, which is why the methodology consists of a citation analysis followed by the coding process followed by the K-Alpha-Analysis corroborating the results of the coding process. Finally, the articles are revisited manually, crosschecking the findings of the structured process through a qualitative assessment.

3.10. Coding the Data

In a next step, the text corpus is coded in accordance with the categories of the analytical framework. Therefore, the articles are downloaded and saved in PDF format. The articles are then examined and coded twice by a fellow student and the author in May and June 2023, so potential misclassifications can be detected. A spreadsheet is elaborated using Microsoft's Excel for the coding process. The spreadsheet is first coded verbally. In a second step, the verbal codes are translated to numbers in accordance with the analytical framework for further processing. To ensure transparency, both versions are saved in independent documents establishing a close knit and easy to validate documentation of this critical step in the research process.

3.11. Insight and Critique

This chapter focuses on answering the first and second research questions by an in-depth discussion of each category of the analytical framework. During the analytical process insights and critique are developed, paving the way for the identification of future research trends and questions in the following chapter and the conclusion thereafter.

3.11.1. Origin of RCO Effect

The research revealed that the RCO effect emanates from a rather wide array of potential origins. It can derive from an organic composition of a place (4 articles), from its gastronomic resources (7 articles), from touristic products (6 articles), the media (3 articles), an iconic brand or an important industry of a country (30 articles), from a branding strategy of the place and consequently the place brand (15 articles) or the destination brand (22 articles), from hallmark events like the Olympic games or the inauguration of important buildings (8 articles) and it can be influenced by the variety of the product categories (3 articles) offered within the complex economic landscape of a country. Equally, crises can be the source for an RCO effect (3). Consequently, the origin of the RCO effect may be perceived as the independent and/or moderating and mediating variable respectively shaping the country image. The relationship is, moreover, tendentially bidirectional, meaning that the image of a country and an "origin of RCO effect" influence each other reciprocally, but not necessarily equally strong.

3.11.1.1. Corporate brand

The relationship between corporate brands and products and a country's image is many times dynamic, as described in the following 30 articles of item "A.1 Corporate brand". For example, Tse & Lee (1993, pp. 43-45) emphasize the role of a deconstructed "made in" branding in mitigating negative country images, proposing that the branding of products can effectively counteract unfavorable perceptions of the COO, using an experimental approach for their research. After exposing consumers to stereo sound systems alongside their

production cues, perceptions of the products could be enhanced by creating awareness for the assembling quality of a certain country. Such spillover effects may even be reinforced by a single robust corporate brand, establishing valuable synergies for both the country and the corporation. Accordingly, the gained advantage ultimately leads to enhanced evaluations of other products and brands originating from that country, imposing a positive RCO effect (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1996, p. 20).

Similar insights could be established by various other studies in a multitude of contexts. Li, Fu, & Murray (1997, p. 131) conduct research on the complex interplay between a corporate image and the country image in the context of the People's Republic of China. They even propose a more direct and less compound relationship between the country image and its products and brands than vice versa:

“Our results suggest that product is an important determinant for country image, while the impact of country image on product image is subject to the moderating effects of consumers' with the reference country: The effects of country image on product image are more likely to occur are more familiar with the country than when they are less familiar with it. Hence, the relationship between is not simply a reciprocal one and is more complex than one may have assumed.”

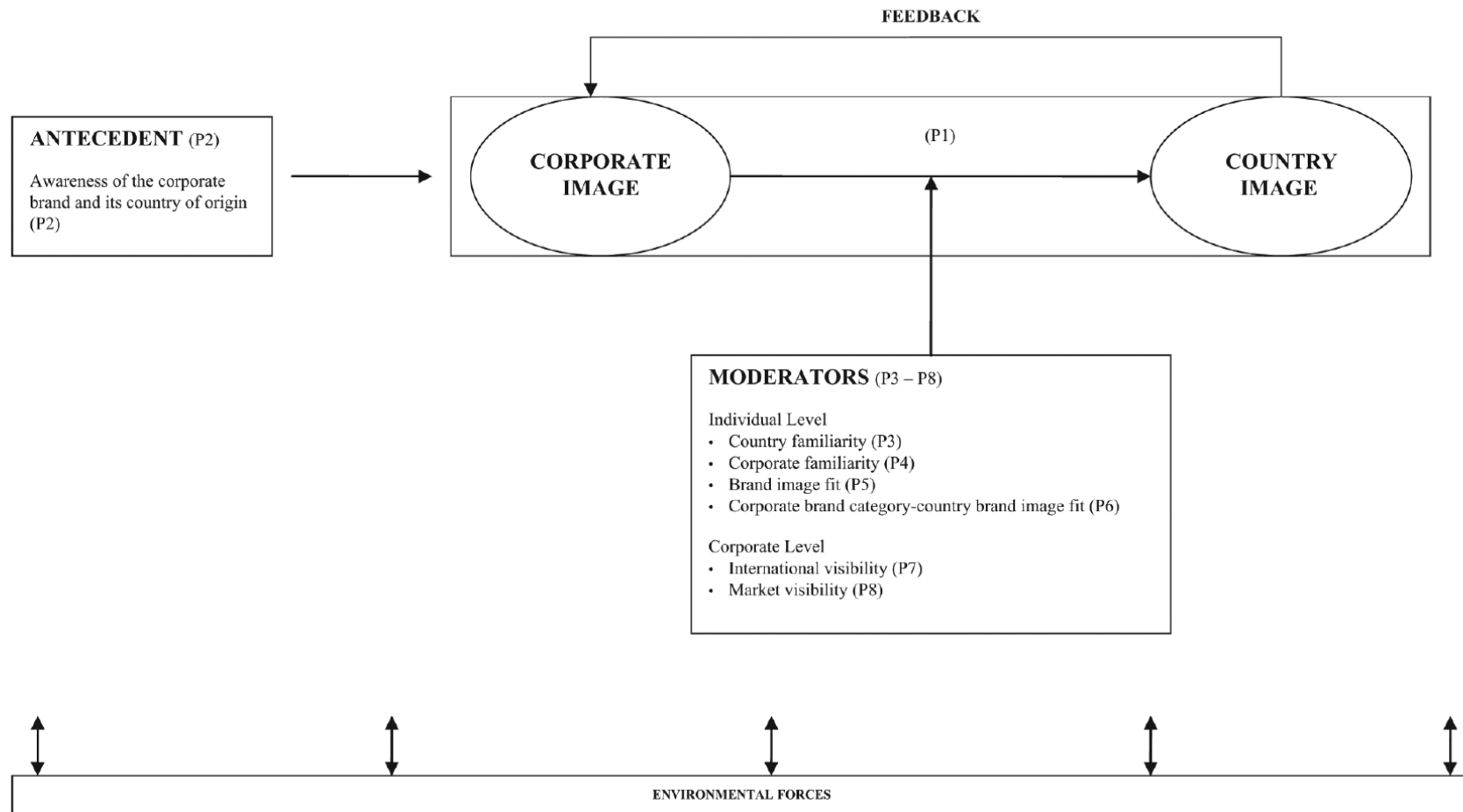
Echoing the idea, multinational corporations (MNCs) should influence a country's image by launching campaigns, which link a certain country to a certain category of products by highlighting the origin of brands of those products being that specific country. In order to create the desired connection between a positive product image and an enhanced country image, a wide array of marketing activities is suitable, such as providing relevant information in advertisements or sponsoring events (Lee & Ganesh, 1999, p. 35). Corporate brands are also acknowledged as powerful drivers of technological competence and innovation in the country image, meaning that technological corporate brands may play a substantial role in shaping perceptions of a country's technological ability and innovation (Ahmed, d'Astous, & Champagne, 2005, pp. 63-64). Furthermore, Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Paliawadana (2011, p. 520) argue that a country image can be shaped by products and brands independently, stating that, for example, “Austria manages to develop strong brands [...] but is not at all well-known for its expertise in the respective categories”. Consequently, Austria's brands impose a stronger impact on its image than its products do. On the other hand, Turkey gains from a strong reputation in textiles, stemming from its high-quality carpets, without having established a bandwagon brand for carpets or textiles.

In the second decade of the 21st century, the phenomenon of the RCO begins to be discussed in broader and more theoretical approaches, showing that the discourse gains momentum. A conceptual framework is introduced by Lopez, Gotsi, & Adriopoulos (2011, pp. 1628-1630), introducing four individual and two corporate level variables, which act as moderators between the corporate image and the thereof resulting country image (see also

Figure 3), providing also a practical framework about how companies could align their corporate branding strategy, so a country image could be altered. Additionally, Lopez, & Andriopoulos (2011, pp. 265-268) provide ten propositions how such a branding strategy may be put into place. Generally speaking, the more a consumer is familiar with a brand and its origin, the better known a brand is, the closer this brand is tied to its COO and the more well-known brands exist within a country, the easier its image can be changed with a strategy based on these products.

Building upon this foundation, White (2012, pp. 110-111) coins another term for the discussed phenomenon, naming it the “inverse country of origin effect”. In her paper (p. 117), partnerships between the public and the private sector are recommended, as both sides have potential gains from a well-executed country (re-)branding strategy, calling for intensified efforts in the field of public and corporate diplomacy. Other research places its focus on the private sector, acknowledging “a reciprocal relationship between a country image and a brand image” (Guercini, Rangfagni, & Melewar, 2013, p. 509). It showcases the importance of integrating the country-of-origin image and brand image in a company’s marketing efforts, so that optimal results can be obtained on the market by mutual reinforcement (ibid, pp. 517-519). In order to do so, marketers should understand whether their brand is factually associated with a certain country (Papadopoulos, 2014, p. 227). Also, responsibility from the corporations is demanded, as their brands and products may impose negative effects on a country image and subsequently other brands and products from this country. This holds especially for so-called prototype brands, which are iconic to a certain product type or industry (IKEA, Samsung etc.) (Jin, Yang, & Kim, 2019, p. 3169; 2021, p. 393).

Figure 3: Conceptual model on the influence of corporate image on country image



Source: Lopez, Gotsi, & Andriopoulos (2011, p. 1629)

Han & Wang (2015, pp. 71-73) research the “Made in China” label, by comparing the effects of products carrying the label and news reports of the label on the country image of China. Their findings show that a two tailed strategy utilizing both channels eventually imposes direct and indirect effects on the image of a country, adding PR as another suitable tactic for MNCs and official bodies to boost the RCO effect. Aiello, Donvito, & Ewing (2015, p. 235) expand the discourse with an international investigation into the “Made in Italy” concept, illustrating that the “Made in Italy” largely stimulates congruent associations as the country image of Italy does. This echoes the idea that products/brand and country image influence each other reciprocally, largely independently from the geographical or cultural context (Fan, 2019, p. 46). Kasuma et al. (2022, pp. 370-372) similarly investigate on the interplay between COO, brand image, and their effect on purchase intention in the case of East Malaysian consumers. Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado (2019, pp. 15-16), show that products being bought in one country excel a positive influence on the product’s COO image, while consumed in another, such an effect could not be measured, leaving space for future research to overcome this contradiction.

Corporate brands also play a significant role in shaping the destination image, which often serves as a mediator for the country image, as also shown in a later chapter of this thesis, discussing the relationship of a destination (the product) and its COO. Apart from that, Ryu, L'Espeir Decosta, & Andéhn (2016, p. 305) state that the destination and the country image are interchangeable concepts, stating that “with globalization, products travel around the world in form of imports and exports, and the country image attached to them travels along with them.” Consequently, a co-branding strategy between the public sectors, manufacturing industries and the tourism industry is suggested. Even featuring or co-creating certain products or product categories to boost a place’s image is proposed in the literature (Lee, Khan, & Bellman, 2021, pp. 10-11). Xiao et al. (2016, pp. 25-28) research on the purchase intentions of Chinese consumers when buying Korean cosmetic products, introducing online reviews as a further mediator on the behavior of consumers. They elaborate on how a specific country image can be utilized to further sales.

Lopez & Balabanis (2016, p. 480) introduce a model that links corporate brand image, industry image, and the COO image. According to their research, it is the presence of a brand in the consumers memories and secondly the image of the brand’s industry which shape the COO image. Thus, the stronger the brand, the stronger the halo effect on its COO image and other brands even from non-related industries (Woo, 2019, p. 785; Woo, Jin, & Ramkumar, 2017, p. 938). In another study, Lopez & Balabanis (2021, pp. 52-54),

corroborate the effect of brand and industry image imposed onto their COO image in an empirical study.

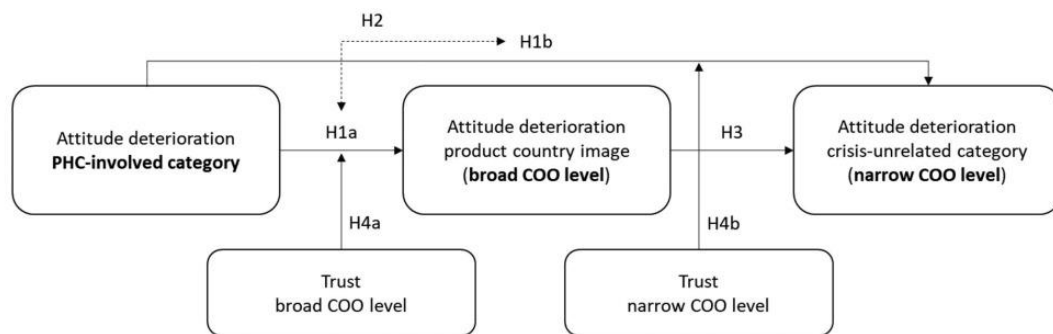
Magnusson et al. (2014, p. 24 & 32) note that only a limited number of studies have so far been dedicated to the bidirectional relationship of a country's image and brands and products. Moreover, other literature suggests that the connections between the image of a brand, an industry and its country are not so simple as abovementioned models indicate, pointing at the fact that for a consistent theory, consistent underlying concepts need to be established, while simultaneously recognizing that some sort of multifaceted interconnectedness exists between a place and its products and brands in this globalized world (Papadopoulos, 2018, pp. 12-21). Balabanis & Lopez (2022, pp. 12-13) also propose further research in order to understand the formation of a specific country image in the consumer's mind, highlighting the circumstance that such images are subject to constant changes. Singh & Mittal (2017, p. 18) similarly argue that "consumers are continuously confronted" with product information such as the COO image, constantly shaping place and product evaluations. Additionally, consumers may apply COO images differently when buying a certain product. One may choose to buy the product of a certain country because their COO image reassures them in their choice for a certain quality, while another consumer satisfies a need for diversity by buying a product from a country with a certain COO image. In conclusion, the ever-evolving and consequently unstable nature of COO images is measured by Magnusson, Zdravkovic, & Westjohn (2022, pp. 926-927), generally linking economic growth and thus developing brands and companies to a favorable COO image.

3.11.1.2. Corporate Crisis

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a widely acknowledged concept in the literature, describing that a corporation, a firm, a company bear greater responsibility to society than mere economic results. This includes working conditions, ecological aspects and in relation to topic of this thesis the impact on a country's image, both positively and negatively. Positive associations usually find their origin in good governance alongside a high-quality production. As shown in the chapter above a tendency exists to transfer a positive trait from one product (or brand) of a country to another product (or brand) of the same country through the RCO effect. In that case, it can be argued, that the company producing/managing the first favorable product/brand lives up to sufficient CSR standards in the image dimension. As shown in the 3 articles of item "A.2 Corporate crisis", companies sometimes fail that target by introducing ill managed products to the market, causing a so-called product-harm crisis (PHC) in which a product appears defective or even harmful to the consumer (Huber, Meyer, & Weihrauch, 2015, p. 493).

In worst case scenarios (e.g. involvement of prototype brands), such crises develop into situations with severe consequences for the company itself, its COO and consequently other companies, brands and products from that country. Aichner, Wilken, & Coletti (2021, pp. 85-86) corroborate this postulate with an experiment, in which a crisis is simulated on product category level (namely French wine & Japanese electronics), arguing that “companies operating in key national industries have a special responsibility, as their actions can influence the national image of the country and its reputation as a place of production” (see also Figure 4). However, according to their paper, a crisis which is not caused but only “transported” by a company does not unleash such effects. An example could be a recall executed by a supermarket chain but caused by a producer. Crouch et al. (2021, p. 917) strongly advise organizations of all kinds with an interest in their respective COO image to develop contingency plans as a preparation for such events, independent from whether they have or have not caused the PHC. This includes general strategies like excelling transparency or highlighting (other) CSR efforts.

Figure 4: Research model and hypothesis on PHCs



Source: Aichner, Wilken, & Coletti (2021, p. 75)

3.11.1.3. Product Category

In addition to single brands and products, a product category may stand out from a certain place, providing a substantial contribution to the image of this place, as depicted in the 3 articles of item “A.3 Product category”. An example for this could be the red wine from Bordeaux. In the research of Agarwal & Sikri (1996, pp. 27-34), the product categories are narrowed down even further, distinguishing between Japanese small cars and German luxury cars as the initial categories. In the course of their research, they show that both abovementioned categories create a favorable country image, which generally reciprocates to new products from both countries. Andéhn, Nordin, & Nilsson (2005, p. 232), however on the one hand, depict a more differentiated situation, in which product categories and their consequential country image may influence the perceptions of brands and products from the same category and the same country positively, while effects on products and brands from other product categories are rather “limited in scope”. On the other hand, the existence

of a broader concept, a general country image with effects on a variety of product (categories) is not only not neglected but endorsed in further research. Closer scrutiny is also demanded by Costa, Carneiro, & Goldszmidt (2016, p. 1072), who state that:

- a) For a given product class, the effect of country-of-origin on quality evaluation is not homogeneous, but rather varies across facets of country image; and
- b) For a given facet of country image, product class moderates the impact of (facet of) country image on quality evaluation."

This means that a certain country image does not automatically transfer to a certain product (category) and that one product (class) imposes a greater impact on a place image than another.

3.11.1.4. Destination Brand

Another way to exert an influence on the image of a specific country is to brand the country or parts of it as a destination, as shown in the 22 articles of item "A.4 Destination brand". The destination brand itself may be perceived as a product, which is charged with specific features to attract tourists in a highly competitive tourism market. In this constellation, the destination brand serves as a proxy for the place/country image, as it only partly relies on the nature of the country/place it is promoting. Subsequently, the destination brand, the destination image and the image of the country/place are commonly not congruent as destination branding efforts aim at conveying a specific favorable image (Konecnik, 2004, pp. 313-314). Consequently, the marketer creates a specific destination brand, which is intended to convey a specific destination image.

Tasci & Kozak (2006, p. 313) describe the dangers of the confusing task of destination branding by stating: "However, the potential and current visitor might receive [...] the projected image of the destination differently due to several factors [...] coming from independent sources." . In order to mitigate external factors, it is crucial for destination marketers to create a destination brand that is internally and externally coherent. The destination brand and the intended image are potentially an essentialized version of a country's/place's assets, as they focus on positive and/or iconic features, while neglecting negative, unfavorable or contradicting facets, somewhat ignoring the complex composition of a country/place (Hakala & Lemmetyinen, 2011, p. 22; Ivanov, Illum, & Liang, 2010, pp. 341-342). Therefore, if a country intends to use destination branding as a vehicle for shaping its image, a clear understanding of the projected and perceived image should be established and closely monitored, otherwise the campaigns possibly miss their targets (Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrin, 2012, p. 56; Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011, p. 474). One way of controlling the strategic fit is to use online reviews as a valuable source for unfiltered and direct feedback (Revilla Hernández, Santana Talavera, & Parra López, 2016, pp. 4-5).

Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim (2011, pp. 530-531) develop a model with which the country image, the destination image and the image of products can be examined simultaneously in an empirical study, so a better understanding of the interplay of the various concepts can be established with the aim of a better integration amongst each other. Lee & Lockshin (2012, pp. 503-505) coined the term RCO effect, measuring the phenomenon in an experiment for Chile and Australia as a destination and a producer of copper artifacts and wine. They show, with certain limitations, that positive beliefs towards products from a destination tendentially provoke positive images towards that destination, proposing an alignment strategy for the promotion of a place and its products for a reciprocal benefit. Lim & Weaver (2014, pp. 230-231) propose a so called brand extension strategy for destinations, meaning that a positively perceived destination brand can be utilized to promote products under the same brand umbrella, which (the products) in return satisfy tourists during their visit, reinforcing the positive image of the destination and thus the place through a destination brand and additionally the destination's products. Pereira, Correia, & Schutz (2012, pp. 96-97) introduce the concept of brand personality to destination branding, however, they conclude that the debate still lacks rigor, as no universal understanding of the underlying concepts could be established so far.

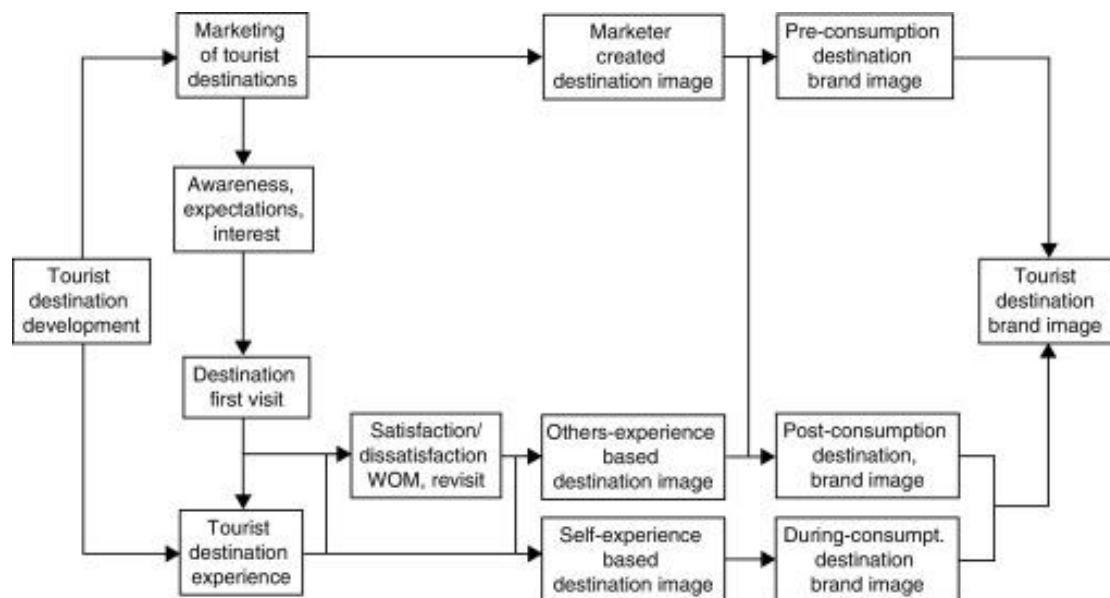
Emphasizing the multi-dimensional nature of a destination, Ashton (2014, pp. 284-287) focuses on a collaborative approach to assess strategies for destination branding. Local stakeholder interviews are conducted, bringing a multitude of different perceptions into the branding process of Southland, New Zealand. The main theme under scrutiny in their article may be summarized as "authenticity".

Költringer & Dickinger (2015, pp. 1839-1841), examine the opposing stakeholder group, namely the recipients, the tourists, by analyzing user generated web content about Vienna. In their study, they show "that different online sources reveal and communicate different place images." Further, they argue that those images are not necessarily congruent with images communicated by DMOs or other tourism providers, showing that not only the tourist themselves shapes the image of a destination, but also the context in which the image is discussed. This adds to the complexity of managing a specific destination brand, as online and offline sources are numerous, international and many times out of the marketer's direct control. However, Taecharungroj (2019, pp. 56-58) echoes this but also emphasizes on the power of user generated content, as it depicts the what (tangible and intangible products) and how (context of presentation) of the points of interest for the consumers.

Manhas, Manrai, & Manrai (2016, pp. 26-27) focus on the development of touristic activity in a place, arguing that a destination commonly experiences a two phased process in which

the destination image is created. In a first step, visitors come to the destination with motives of visiting friends and family or doing business. In this phase, the image of the destination and the place are largely “untouched” from marketing activities. Only in the second phase, when enough interest was created by the pioneers, tourists arrive. Subsequently, their behaviour is studied by professionals working in the field, so the experienced and the image of the destination may be enhanced, as depicted in Figure 5. Comperebaly, Matiza (2022, p. 521) presents a “stereotypical country image” and a “RCO country image” as two sources for the overall image of place.

Figure 5: Tourist [sic] destination development



Source: Manhas, Manrai, & Manrai (2016, p. 27)

The effectiveness of destination branding is studied by Vinh & Phuong (2017, p. 367), showing that it imposes a direct impact on tourist satisfaction but not on tourist loyalty. While this is not favorable for the tourism provider, it is tendentially good news for the place marketer, who uses destination branding as another vehicle for furthering the overall image of a place internationally through the RCO effect. This is done by perceiving the destination brand as a “product” which shapes the overall place image. Marques, Vinhas da Silva, & Antova (2021, pp. 5-10), however, conceptualize tourist satisfaction as a mediator between the destination image and the intention to recommend the destination and additionally products originating from this destination.

In the case of Chinese consumers being potential tourists in Japan Qiu et al. (2017, pp. 242-243) conclude that destination branding is also influenced by exports. On the one hand, the destination image of Japan is enhanced through its tech products, which are perceived by the consumers as high quality. On the other hand, historical and cultural animosities

between the countries limit this effect, corroborating the impression that the RCO effect and the COO effect are at work at the same time. Currie (2020, pp. 4-6) utilizes a comparative approach to theorize on this dualistic nature of the phenomena at work by exposing survey respondents to the organic and the induced image of Timor-Leste and East Timor. While the first exposure provoked an impression of a land being struck by conflict and poverty, the latter created an impression of being worth to be visited, highlighting the effectiveness of destination branding as a suitable tool for shaping a country's image. Çifci et al. (2022, pp. 517-525) explored brand concept mapping as a beneficial tool to determine destination brand associations and image, illustrating the systematic mapping of brand concepts that influence destination image.

Finally, the paper of Zheng et al. (2021) explores the relationship between tourism destination image and product country image in the case of China and Taiwan. In principle, it echoes many of the already mentioned ideas concerning the reciprocity of the image transfer between products and their origin, strengthening the findings from other studies through its volatile and complex geopolitical context.

3.11.1.5. Tourism Products

Tourism products form an integral part of the experience of the tourist while travelling. Thus, the interaction and quality of the tourism products substantially influence the satisfaction with a vacation and consequently the evaluation of the visited place, contributing to the overall place image as discussed in the 6 articles of item "A.5 Tourism products". Tourism products are either related to accommodation, gastronomy, leisure time activities, transportation and fast-moving consumer goods, serving as souvenirs in a broad sense.

Walansendow & Lagarene (2017, pp. 98-101) conduct research in North Sulawesi, Indonesia, developing a strategy of how to boost souvenir sales by making the products more appealing to the tourists. At the time of the investigation, the souvenirs could not meet the requirements of the visitors leaving both sides with unmet expectations and potentially negative effects on the place image. Mody et al. (2017, pp. 145-146) focus on offers from so-called responsible tourism operators, introducing the idea of (social & ecological) sustainability as a driving force for a positive destination image which potentially leads to loyal, revisiting and new customers through word of mouth about trustworthy high quality experiences. Moreover, Zahari, Ahmad, & Hannafiah (2017, p. 266) theorize on shaping a place image through tourism, distinguishing between the tourism core products, thus the product which provides the travel motivation, and tourism by-products, thus products which are consumed along the way, which substantially contribute to the experience of the tourist, when being perceived as authentic and fitting to the place.

Managiuli, Sinulingga, & Sibarani (2019, p. 479) call for coordinated action in a destination to sustain and maintain a good quality standard in tourism products, so a favorable destination image can be upheld over time. Furthermore, Zhang, Qi, & Qi, (2021, pp. 7-8) show in the example of Beijing that the projected and perceived image reciprocally reinforce themselves, when being congruent with each other. Beijing, therefore, positions itself as an advanced city, which is also reflected in the public transportation system connecting the whole metropolitan area with high-speed trains, leaving the tourist with a modern perception of the place behind. Lastly, Jawahar & Muhamed M. K. (2022, pp. 257-258) underscore the necessity of the strategic fit of the transported and the experienced image of a destination, in order to establish a meaningful vacation time for the tourist and consequently a favorable reputation of the place.

3.11.1.6. Food & Wine

Although food & wine may be considered as touristic products and/or organic origins and could thus be categorized differently, the topic stands out as it has attracted significant scholarly attention, as shown in the 7 articles of item “A.6 Food 6 wine”. For example, Knight, Mather, & Holdsworth (2005, p. 397) research the influence of genetic modification on food products and its implications for the image of the respective country from the angle of European consumers. It is concluded that countries which produce for the European market should be considerate before introducing a genetically modified crop to their production, especially when the same type of crop being produced with conventional or organic methods is already exported to Europe.

Bruwer & Lesschaeve (2012, pp. 619-621) focus on the wine tourist which is pulled towards a destination because of its promising *winescape*, which is the mix of wine offerings that contributes to place image. Their approach considers sensory experiences, visual elements, and emotional connections, nurturing certain expectations towards the place and the hedonic pleasures to be discovered there. Similarly, Wu & Liang (2021, pp. 10-11) perceive wine as a suitable vehicle for transporting a positive destination image. Next, Rubini, Motta, & Di Tommaso (2013, pp. 43-44) explore how beverage-based place marketing can make a difference to a region, comparing the wine producing *Chianti classico* region to the tea producing Guangdong province, China. The *Chianti classico* region is presented as a benchmark example for building a strong micro-regional brand, which not only manages to sell its products with a premium but additionally lures tourists to the place. The Guangdong province, however, has not yet reached a comparable level of quality associations, leading to a decrease in international tea sales. The authors recommend deepened collaborations amongst the stakeholders involved in or related to the tea

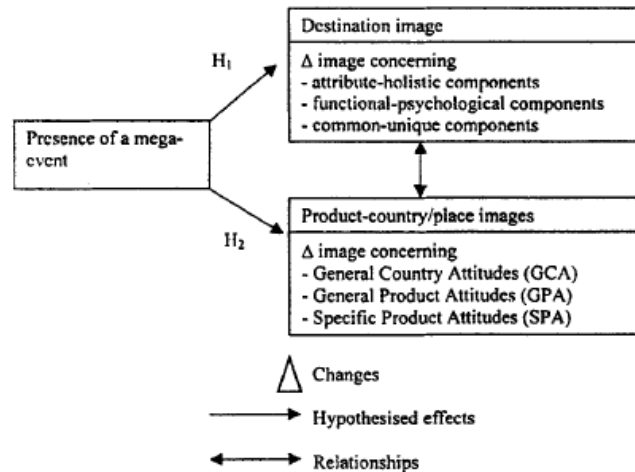
production, so regional brands based on high quality tea can be efficiently positioned on the international market, evolving a RCO effect on other (tea) brands from Guangdong via a favorable place production place image. A comparable study was conducted by Wu, Kuo, & Yang (2014, p. 24), researching on coffee drinkers, whose COO image can be enhanced utilizing their recreation specialization on drinking (a certain type of) coffee, provoking positive feelings towards a place through experiencing one of its products.

Adilah, Zahari, & Emaria (2015, p. 486) deal with destination branding for the region Sabah in Malaysia, raising the unanswered questions whether and how the local gastronomic offer could contribute to the destination image, giving way for the conclusion that food and gastronomy based place marketing is by far no success guarantee and demands good understanding of what is worthy to the tourist/consumer. Gaining such understanding requires a great number of resources, which is why providers of gastronomic offers usually lack the capacity to efficiently build a contributing position. Therefore, further literature suggests that umbrella organizations, such as DMOs, should be in charge of the “examination and communication of brand consistency” when it comes to gastronomy based strategies (Lai, Khoo-Lattimore, & Wang, 2018, p. 593).

3.11.1.7. Hallmark Events

Hallmark events like the Olympic Games, the Eurovision Song Contest or international expos have emerged as powerful tools in shaping a place's image on the global stage, as presented in the 8 articles of item “A.7 Hallmark events”. The event itself thus serves as the product which imposes an influence on the presence and future perception of its venue, making it another potential source for the RCO effect. The first study in the text corpus dealing with hallmark events was published by Mossberg & Hallberg (1999, pp. 216-217), pioneering into the direction of an integrative perspective of country images by stating “that the lack of tourist items in research on product-country images is clearly a major deficiency” in COO and thus RCO research. They further present a conceptual model, which depicts the relationships between a major event, the destination image and the place image. The effects, to their own surprise, could not be detected their study, potentially due to existence of “contextual factors” which are not controlled for in the research (Mossberg & Hallberg, 1999, p. 223). Results from other studies as presented in the following paragraphs corroborate this idea.

Figure 6: Hypothesized effects of the presence of a mega-event on foreigners' images: a conceptual model



Source: Mossberg & Hallberg (Mossberg & Hallberg, 1999, p. 217)

Chen (2012, p. 743) investigates the effects of hallmark events hosted in mainland China in a sample of Chinese students differentiated in three groups: being from China mainland, Macao or Hong Kong. The results reveal that mega events are a suitable tool for provoking positive associations with the hosting country and potentially its government. It is thus argued that authoritarian regimes utilize hallmark events to boost their own images on national and international level. Furthermore, it is claimed that effect is additionally positively correlated with consumers who actively engage in the media consumption about such an event or the consumption of the event itself.

Zenker & Beckmann (2013, pp. 649-651) broaden the definitional scope of the term hallmark events by claiming that so-called flagship projects deem to have a comparable character and possibly similar effects. Their research, which concentrates on the construction of the Elbphilharmonie, the bid for Olympic Games and the hosting of the international construction exhibition in Hamburg, explores how such flagship projects contribute to a city's brand image by using the brand concept mapping, a method with aims at identifying the core associations with a (place) brand, reporting a favorable perceptual change due to the three projects. Additionally, Ye (2020, pp. 173-174) further deepens our understanding by focusing on cultural festivals as means to alter and simultaneously enhance Macao's tourist destination brand image and consequently the place image from being a gambling paradise to being a multifaceted venue. Consequently, this study demonstrates how cultural events play a crucial role in shaping a destination's image, stating that "when visitors participate in these events, they can learn about local cultural customs. When people are more aware of the festival events in a tourist city, tourists will naturally show better perception to the city image."

Dubinsky (2023, pp. 261-262) claims that hallmark events are an ancient technique to promote the image of a place, evaluating whether and how such events can excel their effects even in times of crises (Super Bowl LV during the COVID-19 pandemic). As a result, a model is presented for further testing, which depicts the complex mix in which such an event can contribute to shape a country's image even in difficult circumstances. Also, Jeon et al. (2022, p. 10) conduct an investigation of a sports event during the COVID-19 pandemic, concluding that the positive effects on the image of a place through such an event are even furthered through the provision of good service quality, but not necessarily through the results of the competition. Finally, An & Yamashita (2022, pp. 15-16) show that comparable results are achieved when the visitor is not only spectator but participant of the event, opening another dimension for the strategic exploitation of the RCO effect.

3.11.1.8. Place Brand

In a very early stage of place branding research, Denton (1992, p. 78) concludes:

“Positioning will occur regardless of the desires, or even awareness of nations. Positioning allows people to manage information and use that information to make decisions. Because positioning is of utmost importance, nations should use it as a foundation of international strategies rather than as a by-product”.

This statement urges decision makers of nations to create a place brand, as shown in the 15 articles of item “A.8 Place brand”. A place brand similarly to a destination brand is a perceptual entity which serves to promote a specific place (image) by appealing the “consumer's sense, reason and emotion” (Hankinson, 2004, p. 110). The distinction between the terms can be drawn upon their purpose. While a destination brand intends to attract tourists and visitors, a place brand aims at a far wider approach, attracting a multitude of different stakeholders to a place with an interest in it (ibid, p. 114-115).

With regards to the place branding literature, one group of researchers focuses heavily on providing practical advisory for the task of place branding. On the one hand, Zenker (2011, pp. 42-43) specifies on the features which form the so-called place identity, identifying *place physics* (the architecture, the offerings and the behavior of a place), *place communication* (public relation from official side) and *place word-of-mouth* (how the place is talked about by its residents and the media) as the inherent set of resources for any place marketer when creating a place brand. On the other hand, Mariutti & de Moura Engracia Giraldi (2020, p. 14) conceptualize a seven-dimensional model of how to measure country brand equity, which deems to be another road towards an effective place branding strategy, rather relying on classical marketing theory than on the features of a place.

Hanna & Rowley (2012, pp. 201-203; 2013, pp. 477-479) outline the difficulties for practitioners when implementing an effective place brand management, building upon

marketing theory about branding, stakeholder management and close-knit evaluation strategies. Peighambari et al. (2016, pp. 321-322) show how stakeholder engagement and evaluation contribute to an integrative place brand, elaborating on the risk that place marketers eventually create a brand, which contradicts the place image of its residents, potentially leading to disassociation attempts within this important stakeholder group from the created place brand. Conversely, Braun et al. (2018, pp. 27-28) show that too much stakeholder involvement can lead to conflicts with detrimental effects on the place branding process. Another aspect potentially hindering place branding efforts are limited economic resources. This especially influences the capabilities of regions in the periphery of the global interest (Kulibanova & Teor, 2017, p. 124).

Other groups of researchers are rather involved in the academic progress, such as Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim (2011, p. 524) and Elliot & Papadopoulos (2016, p. 1161), presenting an integrative model which describes the complex interconnectedness between the product image, place image and destination image, also theorizing that all three concepts influence each other on an affective and cognitive level. Handayani & Rashid (2013, pp. 169-174) focus on the dialectic nature of the place image and the place brand, also shedding light on the fact that any place can be a destination with a branding strategy distinct from the place, which in return further contributes to the place image. Papadopoulos et al. (2018, pp. 743-746) provide in their paper a list of potential sources, which influence to the image of a place, saying:

“In forming place images, consumers draw upon a large variety of informational cues from their environment. This includes cues provided in or through:

- education (e.g. world maps shown to young pupils to highlight differences among places);
- the news media, which convey positive, negative and neutral information about places;
- cultural products such as books, movies, TV shows; magazines, music, etc.
- family, friends, co-workers and other acquaintances;
- personal experiences through tourism or business travel or longer sojourns abroad;
- cultural interactions at one's own place including with inward tourists, migrants, or ethnic minorities;
- and of course, products in the marketplace, including their brand names, labelling and packaging, advertising, distribution channels, or the ethnicity of service providers.”

Papadopoulos et al. (2018, pp. 743-746) further focus on dispositions of individuals towards a place, which are shaped through the abovementioned inputs alongside their personality, beliefs, and attitudes as well as the socio-economic situation (including culture, neighborhood, peer group(s) etc.) they find themselves in and their role (producer or consumer of offers), showcasing that there can never be one universal place image. Moreover, a place is experienced when visited, exposing the visitor to a multitude of

individual sensorial impressions, which should be managed as effectively as possible in order to promote a stringent place image (Rodrigues et al., 2020, pp. 287-288). According to Shoukat, Shah, Ali, & Ramkissoon (2023, p. 40) one effective way to manage the interpretational possibilities is through an active engagement of stakeholders in the branding process.

3.11.1.9. Organic Origin

Any place consists of a set of unique features, which differentiates it from other places. These features originate from a multitude of resources, which can be found in that place, such as landscape, topography and natural resources, but also anthropological traits such as society, culture, customs, language, local brands and traditional crafts that are recognized as a heritage from former times, as described in the 4 articles of item “A.9 Organic origin”. Arguably, those features are rather cumbersome to be changed, but they can be used in order to alter, enhance or further the place image. For example, Zevedo (2004, pp. 108-109) illustrates the case of Marinha Grande, which is a region with one of the oldest glass and crystalware producing traditions in Europe. In this region, the inherited products are fabricated into a co-branding strategy for the stagnating glassware sector and the local tourism sector at the same time.

Poznan intended to create a city brand based on brands which operate within their area of influence. The aim was to depict “elements such as dynamism, modernity, activity, innovations”, which failed as the selection of the partnering brands did not reflect those elements according to relevant stakeholders (Florek, 2013, pp. 19-20). Donner & Fort (2018, p. 814) therefore argue “that place brands are not just a promotional activity” but need “a brand community with shared common values” which may serve as suitable organic origin for a place image which is transported via an effective place brand. White (2021, pp. 294-295) focuses on pop-culture as a source of influence on the image of a country, stating that popular culture, although being heavily commercialized, generally reflects contemporary topics being elaborated in a place and is thus a natural source for a place’s image.

3.11.1.10. Media

A special type of products suitable for shaping a countries image are mass media channels such as TV and newspapers, which exploit the various kinds of resources (e.g. landscape, culture, language, politics etc.) a country offers in order to tell real or fictional stories, as presented in the 3 articles of item “A.10 Media”. Novcic, Damnjanovic, & Popesku (2012, p. 259) designed a study, which fundamentally relies on the mass media representation of Serbia, comparing the perspectives of Serbians living in Serbia and Serbians residing

outside of Serbia. The study is concerned with Serbia's country image, uncovering differences in the perceptions about Serbia depending on the place of residence. Both groups, in principle, agree upon the fact the Serbia is a recommendable destination to visit. However, residents tendentially believe that Serbia is a great place to visit due its people, as "Serbian sportsmen, scientist and young talented people [being in the media] make often Serbian public proud". Serbians residing outside Serbia consume media representations about "their" country with a sentiment of nostalgia and thus tendentially project positive connotations onto Serbia's country image independently from its people. Interestingly, both groups agree on the fact that media representation of Serbia is nevertheless negative for its country image, due to a perceived negative media bias (ibid., p. 264).

A entirely different story is told by Li et al. (2014, p. 329), reporting that Korea's country image in the eyes of Chinese consumers is positively influenced through the advent of Korean film and drama in China. Likewise, Kösal & Gjana (2015, p. 230) investigate the "Soap Opera Effect" through Turkish TV serials in the Albanian market, illustrating "that many Albanian consumers have developed positive attitudes towards Turkish products after watching Turkish TV serials".

3.11.2. Region of COO

Another dimension of interest was the region in which the COO is situated. The results reveal that the debate is not limited to a specific geographical region. However, 46 articles focus on regions which may be considered as industrialized (Australia & New Zealand, China, Taiwan, South Korea & Japan, Europe & North America), which appears to be a logic consequence of an uneven distribution of resources. Industrialized countries bear an advantage in creating brands and products which impose an impact important enough to be recognized on a national, multinational and global level alongside greater funds for research. The most recognized research places special eyesight on strategy development of how to improve an established place's image through effective (place) branding (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Paliawadana, 2011; Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011; Költringer & Dickinger, 2015).

In contrast, lesser industrialized regions (Africa & Middle East, Subcontinent India & Indochina) and countries eventually carry a greater interest to create a positive image about themselves, in order to tackle their comparative disadvantage in the global competition. Hence, tactics including the creation of place or destination brands are also researched on in lesser industrialized regions in a set of 15 articles by, for example, evaluating the success of such endeavors. Also, the literature from those regions is many times focused on their tourism industry, as tourism seemingly is seen by the literature as an appropriate tool to

convince individuals and the general public of the quality of a place, when executed with good governance. A total of eight of those papers are published in sources which are neither ranked in the AJG nor the JQL. With a maximum CPY rate of 11, the paper of Taecharungroj (2019) has provoked the most interest in this group of papers. However, the study of Lee, Khan, & Bellman (2021) is published in the “Annals of Tourism Research” journal, which is in the fourth rank of the AJG, providing a tendency towards high-quality research beyond the fixation on industrialized regions, shifting resources to the periphery of the global economy.

No paper of the sample focuses on a single country or place in South America only, but two studies recognize South American places are carried out in the third group consisting of 26 articles, which focuses on a multiregional approach (Costa, Carneiro, & Goldszmidt, 2016; Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado, 2019). This third group in principle compares places to each other, creating a better understanding of how COO and RCO are influenced by different geographic and socio-economic environments (e.g. Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1996; Tasci & Kozak, 2006; Elliot, Papadopoulos, & Kim, 2011). While a fourth group of 14 papers is involved in theory building, discussing the phenomenon without specific geographical context. The three most cited articles in this category are from Hankinson (2004), Zenker (2011) and Manhas, Manrai, & Manrai (2016).

3.11.3. Region of Institute of First Author

With an overwhelming number of 79 institutes the universities in industrialized regions contribute the majority of the papers to the text corpus, which likely correlates with a tendency towards research focusing on Australia & New Zealand, China, Taiwan South Korea & Japan, Europe and North America. Among those institutes, 59 are from Europe or North America, which amounts to 58% of the total set of articles, tendentially creating a “Western” view on the phenomenon. Conversely, only 22 articles are published by authors dwelling in the lesser industrialized regions of Africa & Middle East, South America and Subcontinent India & Indochina.

Europe as a region being the origin for COO/RCO effects is researched in 17 articles of which 15 are written by authors from European universities. Similarly, the region of Subcontinent China & Indochina is in the center of the research in a total of 11 articles which focus on this very region being the origin for COO/RCO effects. Out of these 11 articles, 9 are published by authors from institutes in this region. Also, in the areas of Africa & Middle East and Australia & New Zealand the absolute majority of papers focusing on these regions originate from an institute from there. In the case of China, Taiwan, South Korea & Japan and North America still a relative majority of papers focusing on these regions is written by

authors residing in these regions. This shows that researchers in that field are mainly busy with researching their direct geographic and socio-economic sphere, potentially creating biases through one-dimensional perceptions based on location discrimination.

3.11.4. Gender of Authors

In the course of the analysis, the gender of the author (groups) were identified based on their first names revealing that 55 of 101 articles were either written by men or by a research team which decided to name a man as the leading author. 46 of 101 articles were either written by women or name a female leading author. Moreover, none of the articles argues that either a male or a female perspective dominates the discourse on the research subject, which is why a salient gender specific bias could not be detected, neither through the qualitative nor the quantitative analysis of the text corpus. Also, the vast majority of the papers do not distinguish between male and female respondents but researches on a general level on consumers, tourists, stakeholder, students etc. Any third gender was not considered due to the lack of cues.

3.11.5. Research Method

The vast majority of the papers (73) uses a quantitative method, which opposes the sometimes-bemoaned anecdotic character of place branding literature. A far smaller degree (14) uses qualitative methods or reviews the literature (14) for in-depth insights. This corroborates that an RCO effect likewise a COO effect is measurable and not merely a theoretical concept, which generally should contribute to a sound fundament for future research in the field.

3.11.6. Sample Composition / Origin of Data

The final category places the focus on the origin of the data. A total of 50 papers uses clients (consumers and/or tourists) as their population of choice. Six articles research on domestic clients, thus how they perceive the image of their place of residence. A total of 16 papers research foreign clients, thus how they perceive the image of a place in which they do not reside in and 28 papers do not make this differentiation, simply focusing on how a place image is formed in the minds of consumers or tourists. Another group of 14 papers uses a purposive sampling approach, generating data from stakeholders or experts, while 11 articles use a convenience sample by questioning students. Finally, 14 articles rely on literature as a source, while another 12 articles rely on other sources like online content or rely on various sources. According to various sampling and data mining approaches, a broad range of different angles is reflected in the text corpus, laying a sound fundament for future research.

3.12. Directions for Future Research

In order to answer the third research question RQ3: “What are future research trends related to the reverse country of origin effect?”, only articles from the last ten years of research are considered, so an outlook based on recent literature can be developed. This approach encompasses 71, thus 70.3% of the 101 articles, incorporating the various inherent perspectives of marketing, public diplomacy and tourism, which formulate a common future in the field(s) of research concerned with shaping a country’s image through the various kinds of products and brands. On a macro level three major research trends could be identified:

1. the often still pioneering studies suggest to research on better generalizability,
2. it is proposed to gain a better understanding of the psychological workings of RCO effects, thus developing better insights into the minds of the consumers and
3. the literature argues to corroborate, deepen, enrich and test the existing findings by using other methodologies and study designs, replacing quantitative with qualitative methods and vice versa, by changing the methodological environment or by using new technology to source data from various (still) unexploited origins.

This macro trends show several derivations which are presented in the following paragraphs.

In the search for better generalizability, a group of researchers advises to replicate their studies in different and more diverse populations and in different geographies, implicitly theorizing that their findings although limited in scope, at least partly, carry a universal character (Andéhn, Nordin, & Nilsson, 2016, p. 232; Ashton, 2014, p. 289; Dubinsky, 2023, p. 262; Jawahar & Muhamed M. K., 2022, p. 259; Jeon, Byon, Song, & Park, 2022, p. 12; Jin, Yang, & Kim, 2019, p. 3171; Lai, Khoo-Lattimore, & Wang, 2018, p. 594; Revilla Hernández, Santana Talavera, & Parra López, 2016, p. 8; Shoukat et al., 2023, p. 42; Woo, 2019, p. 944). Another group of scholars consequently proposes to reproduce their studies with larger populations, underlining the somewhat pioneering stadium of the RCO topic (Guercini, Rangfagni, & Melewar, 2013, p. 519; Köksal & Gjana, 2015, pp. 231-232; Mody et al., 2017, p. 146; Peighambari et al., 2016, p. 323; Qiu et al., 2017, p. 242; Zheng et al., 2021, p. 868). Again others recommend to use different products in the same populations, approaching the call for better generalizability from the product and not the people perspective (Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criardo, 2019, p. 18; Jawahar & Muhamed M. K., 2022, p. 259; Lim & Weaver, 2014, p. 230; Ryu, L'Espoir Decosta, & Andéhn, 2016, p. 305; Woo, Jin, & Ramkumar, 2017, p. 944; Zhang, Qi, & Qi, 2021, p. 9; Çifci et al., 2022, p. 526).

Köksal & Gjana (2015, p. 232) generally call for more research on TV as a source for country branding. Likewise, it is proposed to simply use other product categories, for instance

replacing touristic offers by tangible product groups to measure effects on a place image; (An & Yamashita, 2022, p. 16; Lee, Khan, & Bellman, 2021, p. 11). Furthermore, replacing a single product by a whole product category could additionally bring the literature to a more aggregate level of understanding (Andéhn, Nordin, & Nilsson, 2016, p. 232). Taecharungroj (2019, pp. 62-63), besides, proposes to use different combinations of perspectives by researching the effects of the same product in domestic and foreign populations or from the angle of the provider and consumer and so on.

Analogous, it is suggested to research on different types of crises (Crouch, et al., 2021, pp. 917-918); or to gain better understanding of a specific type like the COVID19-pandemic (Dubinsky, 2023, p. 262; Matiza, 2022, p. 534). Magnusson et al. (2014, p. 34) question whether negative effects of crisis endure over time. Similarly, Balabanis & Lopez (2022, p. 13) root for more research on the stability of country images. Ryu, L'Espeir Decosta, & Andéhn (2016, p. 305) explicitly call for a better integration of the various sub-disciplines, which in principle conduct research on the same matter, thus an RCO effect, but in the different scientific branches of marketing, sector studies in tourism and public diplomacy and with different perspectives, contributing to the current picture of the phenomenon under investigation.

A rather large group of scholars indicates a trend towards an increased scrutiny in relation to the consumers themselves, whose minds ultimately are the “spots” where a place image is created. Therefore, studies should be conducted with a variety of recombination of different individual propositions, dispositions, inputs or types of image holders with various socio-economic or political backgrounds, dwelling in different environments (Crouch et al., 2021, pp. 917-918; Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado, 2019, p. 18; Han & Wang, 2015, p. 74; Magnusson, Zdravkovic, & Westjohn, 2022, p. 927; Mody et al., 2017, p. 146-147; Papadopoulos et al., 2018, p. 747; Peighambari et al., 2016, p. 323; Qiu et al., 2017, p. 242; Ryu, L'Espeir Decosta, & Andéhn, 2016, p. 305; Çifci et al., 2022, p. 526).

Lim & Weaver (2014, p. 230) emphasize the multidimensionality of customer-based brand equity in PB. This research trend, consequently, objects to develop a better understanding of the psychological process of building a place image. So, qualitative experiences with a product can be created, fostering a positive attitude towards a place in the pre-, during and post-phase of the consumption with the help of positive involvement with a product or brand by a meaningful consideration of the individual needs of the consumers (Manhas, Manrai, & Manrai, 2016, pp. 28-29).

In a related approach, the literature advocates to delve into the relation of a consumer with a certain product or brand by researching on the effects of favorite brands and products, the effects of deteriorations from brands or brand loyalty on their COO image (Aichner, Wilken, & Coletti, 2021, p. 86; Magnusson et al., 2014, p. 34; Mody et al., 2017, p. 146-147). It is also suggested to lay an increased focus on product and place familiarity or proximity (Fan, 2019, p. 46; Lee, Khan, & Bellman, 2021, p. 11; Woo, Jin, & Ramkumar, 2017, p. 944; Wu & Liang, 2021, p. 11). Likewise, some researchers propose to investigate on the exposure of consumers to certain products and brands, considering the effects of priming (Zenker & Beckmann, 2013, p. 652); or the effects of induced vs. natural images (Zhang, Qi, & Qi, 2021, p. 9); or the effects of the usage of abstract versus concrete words in advertising (Lee, Khan, & Bellman, 2021, p. 11). Also, the usage of specific country or brand cues, the role of stereotypes and the utilization of more nuanced dimensions of product and country indications shall be explored (Elliot & Papadopoulos, 2016, p. 1164; Jin, Yang, & Kim, 2021, p. 402; Lopez & Balabanis, 2021, p. 55; Magnusson et al., 2014, p. 34; Magnusson, Zdravkovic, & Westjohn, 2022, p. 926).

The third big trend intends to increase the methodological plurality, so already existing results can be corroborated and/or understood in more depth. Therefore, it is suggested to bring research from experimental to natural circumstances (Aichner, Wilken, & Coletti, 2021, p. 86; Jeon et al., 2022, p. 12; Zenker & Beckmann, 2013, p. 653). Adding more exogenous factors as mediators or moderators to measure their impact could additionally be a future approach (Braun et al., 2018, p. 28; Costa, Carneiro, & Goldszmidt, 2016, p. 1074; Magnusson, Zdravkovic, & Westjohn, 2022, p. 926; Shoukat et al., 2023, p. 42). Moreover, the literature indicates that bringing some of the research from theoretical to empirical circumstances could be fruitful for the discussion (Donner & Fort, 2018, p. 816; Handayani & Rashid, 2013, p. 180; Rodrigues, et al., 2020, p. 275). For example, this could be done by measuring outcomes of (collaborative) place branding strategies when put into practice (Hanna & Rowley, 2013, p. 488); or by evaluating the effects of involvement of the public sector (Mariutti & de Moura Engracia Giraldi, 2020, p. 20); or researching on managerial behavior (Magnusson, Zdravkovic, & Westjohn, 2022, p. 927).

When it comes to data sources, an intensified usage of online content to measure or compare place images is suggested (Marques, Vinhas da Silva, & Antova, 2021, p. 10; Revilla Hernández, Santana Talavera, & Parra López, 2016, p. 8). More longitudinal research should be undertaken in order to measure the stability or to gain a better understanding about changes of place images, (Currie, 2020, p. 7; Jeon et al., 2022, p. 12; Költringer & Dickinger, 2015, p. 1842; Zheng et al., 2021, p. 868). Finally, recommendations are issued to evaluate findings from qualitative research with quantitative research (Florek,

2013, p. 20; Mariutti & de Moura Engracia Giraldi, 2020, p. 20). Respectively, to deepen insights from quantitative research more qualitative research should be conducted (Kim, Li, & Nauright, 2018, p. 1202; Wu, Kuo, & Yang, 2014, p. 25).

4. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

One limitation of this thesis is the sample composition, which has included articles from journals which dedicate themselves to a rigorous scientific quality management via a double peer-review process alongside articles from journals with lower quality standards or books and conference papers. This approach intends to provide a broad overview of the discussion about the RCO effect, which has gained momentum only in more recent years. Secondly, the sample size is sufficient but on the lower end of the recommended spectrum. Therefore, including more articles could help to gain a more extensive view on the phenomenon. Thirdly, it is possible that other sources for origins of the RCO effect are not detected, as literature on them is categorically excluded due to the study design.

In order to overcome these limitations, a different set of keywords could be chosen, so other articles may be included to the text corpus. Furthermore, a repetition of the study after some years would potentially contribute to overcome these limitations, as more research is expected to be conducted, likely being progressively published in more qualitative journals. Finally, Massaro, Dumay, & Guthrie (2016, p. 794) shall be revisited here, stating that “SLRs are not a panacea” for reviewing the literature, as more in-depth insights may be gained by less rigorous and more qualitative approaches, which leave larger space for interpretation and creativity in the research process.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the master thesis seeks to contribute to the existing body of literature by conducting a SLR focusing on the RCO effect. This term is introduced by Lee & Lockshin (2012) with only limited attention so far. It describes a mechanism in which a brand or a product (tangible or intangible) excels an impact on the image of a country or, bringing it to a broader understanding, a place in general. Intuitively, one would think of iconic brands like IKEA for Sweden, Samsung for South Korea or Etihad Airways for the United Arab Emirates or of entire product categories like cars in the case of Germany or Japan. However, the thesis demonstrates that a multitude of origins can be the source for such an effect and not exclusively brands, products and product categories from multinational industries and corporations.

For instance, a major tool for influencing a place's image is the creation of a so-called place brand, which is generally constructed to attribute positive features to a place and to provide hints for all kinds of (potential) stakeholders, so they can identify with a place more easily.

A subdivision of place branding is the activity of destination branding, which follows a narrower approach, specifically attracting tourists to visit the advertised place. However, the effects of destination brands must not be neglected, as any destination is simultaneously a place for other socio-economic activities and vice versa, which naturally is experienced by any tourist visiting a destination and coming home with an altered image of the visited place. Consequently, it can be argued that any place or destination brand serves as a suitable proxy between an “existing” place image and a “desired” place image. For the creation of such a place brand, various resources may be exploited, which occur “naturally” in a specific place, this explicitly includes culture, events, companies and corporations, products, services and brands but also landscape, climate or other natural resources etc. Nevertheless, it is important to understand, that any place brand is not the image a place carries. Thus, all abovementioned resources carry the potential to directly influence a place’s image, eventually bypassing or even omitting place branding activities.

Unlike a place brand, a place image is not tangible. It only exists in the minds of the recipients consisting of any cue which for the recipient is associable with a specific place. Therefore, the existence of a universal place image can be neglected. In contrast, an endless number of different place images exist, depending on an almost endless number of variables, which co-influence each other. Future research should therefore concentrate on the main factors influencing a place’s image, from both the product and the people perspective.

Furthermore, practical and managerial implications could be gained in the course of this research, showing that influencing a place’s image, is highly complex. Endeavors in this direction should aim at providing a possible framework for obvious associations for its recipients, mitigating the effects of interfering, potentially detrimental alternative interpretations. Since a place is hardly owned by a single entity, a multitude of different interests collide, calling for well-accorded collaborative actions among stakeholders, collectively defining and managing the ideal scenario(s) of “their” place’s image(s).

Ultimately, as already indicated, the place image is created in the minds of the recipients. It is, therefore, possible that an individual carries various images of a place depending on the context of association. So, the abovementioned resources excel effects with different severity on a place’s image(s), an automatism in any direction should not be assumed by the marketer. Poor management could even lead to negative effects including quality related issues of place associated products as much as mistakes in place branding activities. The positive aspect is that the success or failure of these endeavors can be measured through frequent evaluations in form of surveys or content analysis. The rationale

behind these evaluations is to check whether the intended associations are or are not provoked on the recipients' minds, which is in accordance with general marketing theory. Within these evaluations, it is advisable to control for as many exogenous factors, mediators and moderators as possible, so the complex nature of the phenomenon is reflected in the research design, potentially enhancing the results.

Thus, using a certain product or brand to influence a place's image may provide promising strategic options for marketing activities. A company could, for instance, invest in a place branding strategy in order to boost sales via an enhanced country image or governments could elaborate communication strategies with corporations to boost a nation's image via its products, so its whole economy benefits from the gained comparative advantage. A car manufacturer could create desirable tourism offers, so the image of their country of origin gains from positive vacation experiences. The imaginable combinations are countless, as each brand, product or product category could potentially serve as a proxy for an enhanced country image. However, these strategies may be cumbersome or even burdensome, possibly overtaxing the capabilities of any organization, which is why such a step should not be taken carelessly. More research should be conducted about concrete executions of the presented ideas in order to identify potential pitfalls of such strategies.

From the knowledge perspective, this thesis contributes to a furthered integration of the multiple research strains, which are at the verge of the fields of marketing, sector studies in tourism and public diplomacy. It is desirable that the various perspectives on the topic are increasingly recombined, so a unified theory can be developed, potentially contributing to the overall quality of related publications. Furthermore, first steps towards a generalizable theory are taken as various studies with comparable approaches but with different geographic and/or socio-economic contexts are presented and compared to each other, often pointing in a similar direction.

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