

A Study on the Influence of the Country of Origin on Women's Purchasing Behavior: A Case Study of Kitenge Garment.

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Abstract

This study analyzes the impact of the nation of origin on women's purchasing behaviors of Kitenge garments. A discussion with a few women was organized to gain insight into their purchasing behavior for kitenge garments, particularly in the country whose kitenge garment is preferred, and the attributes they seek when planning to buy it. Responses obtained were used to develop an instrument for the study. A sample of 100 Women was selected, considering that women are the major users of Kitenge garments. A descriptive design was employed, utilizing convenience sampling as the sampling technique. A personal interview was used as a data collection technique. The findings showed that 82 percent of respondents were aware of the presence of imported Kitenge garments in the market. Regarding the country of origin whose imported kitenge garment is preferred, respondents ranked the Netherlands first, followed by Senegal, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the United Kingdom. Concerning the attributes that influence the purchase of Kitenge garments, the texture was ranked first, followed by the country of origin, price, appearance (color), brand name, and durability. The findings would be very useful to the local manufacturers of Kitenge as they will understand what factors influence women to buy Kitenge garments, thereby making their products more competitive. Managerial implications have also been discussed.

Keywords: Kitenge, Purchasing behavior, Women.

1. Introduction

Consumers in emerging nations intentionally seek out quality items, yet they are frequently unaware of product category qualities and benefits (Batra et al, 2000). As a result, brands and countries of origin act as surrogates for informing consumers about the product's quality. Furthermore, increased exposure to global media has raised consumers' desire for branded items from some developed countries, as Western-branded products allow them to exhibit social standing (Marcoux et al., 1997) and better their standard of living. It's no surprise that certain consumers' tastes for specific products are influenced by the country in which they were manufactured.

It is common for different governments, particularly in emerging economies, to urge their respective citizens to support their local industries by buying locally made products. However, kitenge from different countries can be seen in various shops in our towns, implying that millions of foreign currencies are spent annually to import kitenge garments, though it is also manufactured locally. Although traders sell both imported and locally manufactured Kitenge garments, there have been no studies conducted to understand how the country of origin influences the choice of Kitenge garments bought. Hence, this study aims to cover this gap. Thus, the objectives will be to find out if consumers are aware of the imported kitenge garment in the local market, if buyers are aware of the country of origin of the kitenge garment they buy, to compare the level of preference between the imported and the locally manufactured kitenge garment and the reasons for such preferences, to find out the attributes that influence their preferences, and to find out the usage of the kitenge garment they buy.

Several authors have written about how the country of origin affects consumer purchasing behavior. For example, Sichtmann, & Diamantopoulos (2013) evaluated the impact of perceived brand globalness, brand origin image, and brand origin-extension fit on brand extension success. They discovered that brand origin-extension fit has the greatest impact on brand extension success, both in terms of quality ratings and purchase intentions. It was also discovered that consumers' perceptions of the focal brand's nation of origin have a greater influence on extension success than their beliefs about the brand's worldwide availability and reach. In the same vein, Johnson et al. (2016) and Hamzaoui & Merunka (2007) discovered congruence between the brand and the country of manufacture, which could influence purchasing intention. Hamelin et al. (2011) investigated the effects of consumer ethnocentrism and nation of origin in the Moroccan market and discovered that customers with ethnocentric tendencies choose country of origin in their choice process, whereas polycentric customers prefer style.



In the case of jeans, the study discovered that consumers who preferred the quality of Moroccan-made jeans tended to be more ethnocentric, but for cars, the higher the impression of quality for a Japanese car, the more polycentric the respondents (Hamelin et al., 2011). Yunus & Rashid (2016) explored how the country of origin affects consumer purchase intentions for Chinese mobile phone brands. They discovered that economic growth and the country's efforts in technical and economic development appear to have had a significant impact on how customers began to form positive impressions of China's country image, product quality, and brand familiarity. Similarly, Sichtmann & Diamantopoulos (2013) discovered that the nation-of-origin effect is also brand-specific. As a result, customers identify a country's image with not only specific talents in an industry or product area but also with the broader capabilities of developing good brands.

On the other hand, Lee et al. (2017) and Lee et al. (2013) studied cross-border Strategic Brand Alliances (SBAs) and discovered that Strategic Brand Alliances have positive synergistic effects when the images of the countries involved are both favorable. Furthermore, the partner brand with a less favorable national image might use a country of origin to improve its brand image and customer product evaluation. Thus, the earlier literature serves as a foundation for the current work.

The goal of this article is to investigate how women's purchasing behavior is influenced by their nation of origin when purchasing Kitenge clothes. Kitenge garments are commonly worn by women in most Sub-Saharan African countries, including Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Malawi, Zambia, and certain West African countries. Kitenge clothes are worn for a variety of situations and reasons. Although certain African countries manufacture Kitenge clothes, a large portion of them are imported from other areas of the world, such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, while some African countries import them from other African countries.

2. Materials and Methods

The methodology involved a descriptive study in which the influence of the country of origin on the purchasing of Kitenge garments was investigated. The population was women, buyers of Kitenge garments, in Kigali city, whose number could not be ascertained. Women were chosen because they are the primary users of Kitenge garments (although men also wear Kitenge shirts), and hence they were expected to provide more relevant information related to the origin of the Kitenge they purchase, as well as the attributes they seek when purchasing Kitenge garments. Since neither the population size nor the geographical location of the respondents was known,



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convenience sampling was used to recruit respondents for the study, as it was not feasible to apply any of the probability sampling techniques.

Respondents were selected from women shoppers at the shops that sell Kitenge garments, and women who had put on Kitenge garments during the time of data collection were also approached for the purpose. In this case, only 100 women were interviewed, bearing in mind that respondents were busy and in a hurry that which could make it difficult to convince some of them to participate in the study. Even with such efforts, only 95 respondents provided complete responses, which were analyzed following a descriptive analysis using percentiles. Before data collection, a discussion with a few women was organized to gain an insight into their purchasing behavior for Kitenge garments, particularly the country whose Kitenge garment is preferred, and the attributes sought when planning to buy a Kitenge garment. Responses obtained were used to develop an instrument for the study.

In addition, questions were formulated to capture respondents' demographic data, such as age, education, education level, monthly income, and marital status. Specifically, the following information was collected, namely: respondents' level of awareness of the presence of imported kitenge garments in the market, level of awareness of the origin of imported kitenge garments available in the market, ranking kitenge garment preference concerning the country of origin, comparison of preference between locally made and imported kitenge garment, ranking attributes that influence the purchase of kitenge garment, and usage of kitenge garment.

3. Results and discussion

The study revealed, as indicated in Table 1, that 85 percent of respondents were 26-40 years of age, which indicates the age bracket that finds the kitenge garment to be very convenient. The majority of respondents were married (46 percent), followed by those who were single (38 percent), widowed (11 percent), and separated (5 percent), which implies that they live with other family members and therefore increases the need for a Kitenge garment because of the many activities involved in their daily lives. 81 percent of respondents have attended high school or above, which implies that this is a group of customers that demands high-quality products. 56 percent earn 50,001 Frw and above per month and therefore could save and afford to buy a kitenge garment of their choice.

Table 1:



Profile of respondents

Characteristics	Percentage	Characteristics	Percentage
Age		Education level	
20-25	8	<i>Primary school</i>	19
26-30	44	<i>High School</i>	40
31-35	28	<i>College</i>	13
36-40	13	<i>Postgraduate</i>	28
41-45	4		
46-50	3		
Total	100	Total	100
Marital status		Monthly income	
Single	38	<i>Frw 10,000 and below</i>	24
Married	46	<i>Frw 10,001-50,000</i>	20
Widow	11	<i>Frw 50,001-100,000</i>	26
separated	5	<i>Frw 100,001-200,00</i>	19
		<i>Frw 200,000 and above</i>	11
Total	100	Total	100

On another hand, Table 2 shows that 82 percent were aware of the presence of imported kitenge garments in the local market, and when they were asked to mention the countries of origin of the imported kitenge garment (Table3), 83 percent identified the Netherlands, 63 percent mentioned the Democratic Republic of Congo, 61 percent identified Senegal and 59 percent mentioned the United Kingdom. The results, therefore, indicate the importance of kitenge garments in the daily lives of Rwandan ladies, such that they are highly involved in the search for product information (Kagayo, 2022).

Table 2:**Level of awareness of the presence of imported kitenge in the market**

Aware	Percentage
Yes	82
No	18
Total	100

Rezvani et al. (2012) claims that a product's country of origin is an extrinsic product cue, or intangible product attribute, that is different from an intrinsic or

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physical product characteristic. As a result, a country-of-origin cue is comparable to price, brand name, or warranty, even though none of these factors directly affect a product's performance.

Table 3:

<i>Level of awareness of the origin of imported kitenge</i>	
<i>Country of origin</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Netherland</i>	83
<i>United Kingdom</i>	59
<i>Nigeria</i>	27
<i>Tanzania</i>	18
<i>Democratic Republic of Congo</i>	63
<i>Cameroon</i>	39
<i>Ivory Coast</i>	24
<i>Ghana</i>	18
<i>Senegal</i>	61
<i>Congo Brazaville</i>	35
<i>Burundi</i>	1

On the country of origin preference, Table 4 shows that the Netherlands came first (36%), followed by Senegal (24%), DRC (13%), and the United Kingdom (11%), which indicates how kitenge garments from these countries meet the attributes sought for by the customers. In the same vein, Ma et al (2024) and Bimenyimana et al. (2020) observed that consumers in developing economies appear to perceive that products from developing countries are of lesser quality and will result in higher levels of dissatisfaction.

Table 4:

<i>Level of preference of imported kitenge</i>	
<i>Country of origin</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Netherlands</i>	36
<i>Senegal</i>	24
<i>DRC</i>	13
<i>UK</i>	11
<i>Cameroon</i>	9
<i>Tanzania</i>	7
<i>Total</i>	100

Corollary to the above explanation, Table 5 shows that 87 percent of respondents expressed that they preferred imported kitenge garments to locally manufactured ones,



which implies that locally manufactured kitenge garments fall short of the minimum qualities required by the local market. In other words, it can be argued that buyers of kitenge garments exhibit a low level of consumer ethnocentrism, for which, according to Sharma et al. (1994) and Kaynak & Kara (2002), consumer ethnocentrism can lead to an underestimation of the quality of foreign goods and an overestimation of the features and general quality of domestic goods.

Table 5:

Preference between locally made kitenge and the imported one

<i>Preference</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Imported</i>	87
<i>Locally made</i>	10
<i>No difference</i>	3
<i>Total</i>	100

When ranking the first five attributes that led to a preference for the kitenge garment (Table 6), fabric texture came first, followed by country of origin, price, appearance/color, and brand name in that order. This indicates that the previous results of country preference, fabric texture, and country image are closely related because country of origin effects are also brand-centric (Sichtmann & Diamantopoulos, 2013). According to earlier research, a favorable assessment of a nation's product-country image leads to positive behavioral responses in terms of buying preferences, willingness to buy, and referrals to others (Hsieh et al., 2004; Roth & Romeo, 1992). This is since, like other external cues like price or brand name, consumers' favorable perceptions of a product's country of origin lower perceived risk and, in situations where they are unfamiliar with a particular brand or product, assist them in deducing the true qualities (such as craftsmanship or innovativeness) of that product (Han, 1989; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999, Bimenyimana et al., 2024). Therefore, customers' overall decision to purchase goods from a country is positively impacted by a positive perception of that nation and its products.

Table 6:



Attributes that influence the purchasing of kitenge

<i>Attributes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Rank</i>
<i>Texture</i>	84	1
<i>Country of origin</i>	81	2
<i>Price</i>	78	3
<i>Appearance (color)</i>	46	4
<i>Brand name</i>	43	5
<i>Durability</i>	40	6
<i>Others</i>	22	7

The usage of the kitenge garment (Table 7) was found to include personal use (100 percent), gift giving (71 percent), carrying babies (45 percent), and decoration (16 percent), which implies that, given various uses for the kitenge garment, a buyer may purchase more than one kitenge garment. This is very healthy for business because the marketer is likely to sell more as product use increases (Bublitz & Peracchio, 2015).

Table 7:
Uses of Kitenge

<i>Uses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Attire</i>	100
<i>Giving gift</i>	71
<i>Carrying baby</i>	45
<i>Decoration</i>	16
<i>Others</i>	5

4. Conclusions

This study presents the evidence surrounding the country of origin and its impact on the consumer purchasing behavior of apparel products, particularly the kitenge garment, which is one of the most famous African attire across regions. It was also found that the majority of respondents are aware of the presence of imported Kitenge garments in the local market, which implies that they go the extra mile for product information by searching for quality fabric. Respondents also ranked countries according to their perception of the quality of imported Kitenge garments and mentioned the attributes that influence them when selecting Kitenge garments to purchase.

It was not surprising to find that respondents preferred the imported kitenge garment to the locally made one because the latter's quality does not match that of the imported one. This is consistent with earlier research that indicated respondents prefer

imported goods over locally produced ones and that consumers in developing nations appear to favor imported, branded goods over domestic ones (Agbonifoh & Elimimian, 1999; Batra et al., 2000; Marcoux et al., 1997; Wang et al., 2004), indicating some reverse ethnocentrism. However, contrary to previous studies (van et al., 2013; Daniels et al., 2012), the instrument was developed together with the target population, which led to the development of a simple and suitable instrument for the local environment, but it also brought about similar results to those obtained in other countries.

5. Managerial implications

This implies that as long as local manufacturers are not able to meet their customers' aspirations for quality products, it will be difficult to attract and retain them. Consequently, as more local manufacturers will lose customers, it will hurt the country's balance of payment as more kitenge garments will be imported, and will also lead to unemployment because local manufacturing firms will be compelled to lay off workers. It is therefore recommended that local manufacturers use quality inputs and adopt contemporary manufacturing technologies, which will improve efficiency in production and increase product quality, thus making locally made products more attractive and affordable.

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