IJAFAME
International Journal of Accounting, Finance,
Auditing, Management & Economics

The "made in Morocco" label: preference, perception and key decision factors for Moroccan consumers

Le « made in Morocco » : préférence, perception et facteurs clés de décision pour les consommateurs marocains

Houda El Ferachi *(PhD , Student)*
Faculty of Economics and Management
Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco

Hicham Bouchartat *(PhD, Professor)*
Université Internationale de Casablanca, Morocco

The "made in Morocco" label: preference, perception and key decision factors for Moroccan consumers

Abstract

This research aims to establish the link between the country of origin (made in) and the consumer buying behavior, through the exploration of pasta consumption in Morocco. The main objectives of this study are to determine the preferences of the Moroccan consumers (current and potential) regarding pasta products that are made in Morocco as opposed to the imported ones; to gage their perception of the Moroccan brands; and to identify the key purchasing factors of the "made in Morocco" pasta.

Our methodological choice focused on the quantitative method known as a sample survey. The study was carried out on 105 individuals; 15 cities were represented with, however, dominance of the Rabat-Salé region, and a rich diversity in terms of family situations, ages, and socio-professional categories. The questionnaire was administered face to face in part and online for the remainder.

It appears that Moroccans consume pasta of Moroccan origin more than pasta of foreign origin. This preference is not explained by ethnocentrism as one would expect and would not necessarily reflect the behavior of an engaged, economically responsible, or culturally attached citizen. It is explained by intrinsic determinants such as price, quality, and availability of Moroccan pasta. For these same reasons, the perception of Moroccan pasta is rather positive. This perception is upheld by the reputation of the Moroccan brands, in particular the brands Tria and Dari (2021).

The results we have achieved are generally satisfactory, but slightly offend the findings of previous studies on the subject.

Key words: Country of origin, Perception, Key Decision Factors, Made in Morocco.
JEL Classification : D18, M30
Paper type: Empirical research

Résumé

Cette recherche vise à établir le lien entre le pays d'origine (made in) et le comportement d'achat du consommateur, à travers l'exploration de la consommation de pâtes au Maroc. Les principaux objectifs de cette étude sont de déterminer les préférences des consommateurs marocains (actuels et potentiels) concernant les produits de pâtes qui sont fabriqués au Maroc par opposition aux produits importés ; mesurer la perception des marques marocaines ; et d'identifier les facteurs clés d'achat des pâtes « made in Morocco ».

Notre choix méthodologique a porté sur la méthode quantitative dit enquête par sondage. L'étude a été réalisée auprès de 105 individus ; 15 villes ont été représentées avec toutefois une domination de la région Rabat-Salé, et une riche diversité en termes de situations familiales, d'âges, et de catégories socioprofessionnelles. Le questionnaire a été administré en face à face en partie et en ligne pour le reste.

Il apparaît que les Marocains consomment plus de pâtes d'origine marocaine que de pâtes d'origine étrangère. Cette préférence ne s'explique pas par l'ethnocentrisme comme on pourrait s'y attendre et ne refléterait pas nécessairement le comportement d'un citoyen engagé, économiquement responsable ou culturellement attaché. Elle s'explique par des déterminants intrinsèques tels que le prix, la qualité et la disponibilité des pâtes marocaines. Pour ces mêmes raisons, la perception des pâtes marocaines est plutôt positive. Cette perception est confortée par la notoriété des marques marocaines, notamment les marques Tria et Dari (2021).

Les résultats auxquels nous avons abouti sont satisfaisants dans l'ensemble, mais heurtent légèrement les trouvailles d'études précédentes sur le sujet.

Mots clés : Pays d'origine, Perception, Facteurs de Décision Clés, Made in Maroc.
Classification JEL : M13
Type de l'article : Recherche appliquée.

1. Introduction

With the multiplication of the international financial and economic crises, marketing is regaining, more than ever, its letters of nobility. The competitiveness of companies, once limited to the national or even local scale, is now measured on a global level. Thus, multinational companies and international marketers seek new opportunities in the global market which induces increased competition.

Nowadays, the need for safety expressed by the consumer encourages brands to develop their reputation, even their ethics. But reputation presupposes temporal capitalization and new entrants can only rely on the image associated with a geographical territory, a way of producing, a terroir. In addition, in an economic context of market saturation, quality becomes an essential element of business strategy and a determining element in consumer choice. Subsequently, even if consumers can evaluate all the intrinsic characteristics of the product (notably thanks to the experience effect), the extrinsic characteristics appear to have more influence. Therefore, the determining parameters are the brand of the product and the perception of the country of origin (LYLin & Chen, 2006).

The notion of country-of-origin dates to World War I. Losing countries (Germany, etc.) were obliged to indicate the origin of their products as a sanction, in order to isolate them economically (Cai, 2002). This measure, which was originally negative, has taken on more positive dimensions over the years. It is now perceived as a distinctive element impacting the purchasing decision. The concept of country-of-origin refers to the country that produces, designs, or assembles either a product or an associated brand (JKLee, 2009). If we consider the example of Sony: although it is a Japanese brand, if it is assembled in another country (Thailand for example), it is of Thai origin; and if it is made in Japan, it is of Japanese origin (Yassin, Noor, Mohamad, 2007). The affixing of an original marking of the made in type is, in most cases, optional. Indeed, no national or European provision requires the affixing of origin marking on products imported or marketed in the EU. Only some agricultural or food products make the exception.

The study of the impact of the country of origin on purchase intention is at least four decades old (Ghazali et al, 2008), it has been specified that purchase intention is measured through the will to buy a product in the future and not the actual purchase. Several researchers have conducted studies to analyze the link between country of origin and purchase intention (Cordell, 1992; Brouthers and Xu, 2002; Johansson and Ebenzahl, 1986; Klein, 2002; Lee Yi and Lee, 2005; Nagashima, 1970; Roth and Romeoin, 1992). Their work has made it possible to underline that consumers unfairly underestimate products originating in a developing country because of certain beliefs and received ideas. Johnson et al. (2002) add that country of origin can often be an indicator of customer preferences for brands. Dagger and Raciti (2011) argue that the country of origin may unintentionally influence product appraisal.

This means that the political factors, the cultures and the economy of a country can lead to stereotypes concerning certain countries (Teo, Mohamad et al, 2011). As a result, the country of origin is considered when assessing product quality (Parkvithee, 2012). Countries like Germany, Japan, the United States and Canada have a very good image while China and Korea rank among the countries with the worst images. It is common knowledge that the country's image plays an important role in the purchasing decision. Lim and Darley (1997) explain, then, that countries with a bad image have more risk in terms of purchasing intentions. The notion of the country's image dates to the 1970s (Nagashima); it is any special image, stereotype and position the consumer has towards a given country (Lin, 2006). The image of a country thus reflects the economic, political, technological, and social data of that country.

In this study, the concept of "Made in Morocco" is treated as being all the products and services manufactured by companies which produce in Morocco regardless of the origin of

the brand or its shareholders. The concept of production does not only refer to the secondary sector but is used extensively to refer to the primary (agriculture), secondary (industry) and tertiary (services) sectors. At a first glance, it is necessary to register the "made in Morocco" in a globalized context and not in a closed patriotic framework. Moroccan entrepreneurs face wind and tide; the wind of consumer trends and preferences; and the tide of foreign competition. Moroccan consumers swallow aggressive, invasive, rowdy advertisements full of traps. Given the limited purchasing power of average Moroccans, some foreign products (Chinese and Turkish in particular) are on the rise. Some families are used to traveling long distance to shop for pantry goods such as spreadable cheese, rice, powdered milk, flour and sometimes even medicine. Such behavior is more prominent in some cities: Nador, Tangier, and Oujda. This research is carried out on four levels. First, we will present the main contributions to the subject in a literature review of the Moroccan context, then we will outline the methodology and empirical techniques adopted. On a third level, we will present the results and discuss them in comparison to previous findings on the subject. And at last, we will summarize the research and its limitations in the conclusive level.

2. Literature Review

The correlation between country of origin and purchase intention has been established by many researchers (Keller, 2003; Nayir and Durmusoglu, 2008; Baldauf, et al. 2009; Zugner-Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009). The link between purchase intention and country of origin is influenced by consumers' perception of the country of origin (Zugner-Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009), demographic factors, the level of involvement of the product, product knowledge (product attributes), and the level of patriotism.

The level of product involvement is one of the most important factors in the decision-making process. When people buy products like cigarettes, wine, cosmetics, which are high level of involvement, the country's image plays a major role. The second moderating factor is knowledge of the product. The set of experiences and knowledge that people have in their minds about a given product influences the link between intention to purchase and the origin of products (Brucks, 1985). When people have a low level of product knowledge, they compensate with the origin of the product. They thus use the origin of the product as an alternative for the performance of the goods when they have little experience with this product. Also, when people know little about the product, they become very sensitive to advertisements and vice versa. The literature shows that the attributes of the products to which consumers give value shape their consumption behavior (Grunert, 1986). These attributes can be intrinsic or extrinsic and objective or subjective (Zeithaml, 1988; Wu, Day, & MacKay, 1988; Forney, Pelton, Caton, & Rabolt, 1999; Liefeld et al., 2000). The attributes include price, quality, notoriety, availability, packaging and design, country of origin, etc.

The third moderating factor is obviously patriotism and ethnocentrism. Patriotism and ethnocentrism represent physiological variables that influence the purchase of foreign products (Shimp, 1984). Ethnocentric consumers believe that buying a domestically produced product has more advantages than buying an imported product. Patriotism (positive feeling towards one's country) can also influence purchase intention, but for certain products (Lantz and Loeb, 1996). Last, advertising can help improve a country's image (Dragger and Raciti, 2011). It is an invaluable asset that makes an important contribution to marketing strategies (Zeugner, 2008). Authorities in different countries or cities can label their areas as brands to improve business, tourism, etc. (Keller, 2008). Thakor and Lavak (2003) concluded that the effect of the brand's country of origin is more striking than the product's country of origin (made in).

Few studies have been carried out in Morocco on "made in Morocco". The literature review for this research is limited to those that are directly relevant. The first study is that of

the Moroccan Association of Marketing and Communication (AMMC), whose conclusions were reported in L'économiste. This study, conducted on a sample of 1000 people, revealed that the Moroccan product is better appreciated in other African countries than in Morocco. Indeed, the study attempted to report on the appreciation of Moroccans of the "Label Maroc" as well as its strengths and weaknesses in several areas: The business climate, tourism, products and services and Human Resources. It appears that Moroccans aged 25 and over tend to have a negative perception of "made in Morocco", since less than 40% of them gave it a positive assessment. This result can be explained by several factors: the lack of constancy and consistency of local products; the lack of innovation; the efficiency of the after-sales services; the real value of the products; and the projection of the brands in the future. The same AMMC study concluded that only 39% of respondents believe that Moroccan companies deliver quality services according to their field of expertise.

In response to the same questions, the respondents that are from francophone African countries seem to have a rather positive assessment of "Made in Morocco". The study showed that 73% of the respondents believe that the products labeled in Morocco are of good quality, while 75% believe that Moroccan companies deliver quality services. This confirms the potential that this region represents for Moroccan exports. This rather negative result must be qualified with regard to craft products. The latter have rather a positive appreciation among Moroccans, since 76% of the respondents declare that Moroccan handicraft products are refined and of high quality. With effective promotional and marketing strategies, Moroccan crafts could have a brighter future.

A second online study was conducted by Nielsen, a marketing research company, on more than 31,500 participants in 63 countries (including Morocco). This study asked about consumer preferences for locally produced products as opposed to major global / multinational brands in 34 categories. It appears that the preference for local brands among Moroccan consumers exceeds global averages in several categories. The category with the strongest local preference in Morocco is dairy products, with 71% of participants preferring a local brand over an international brand; a difference of 17 points from the global average. Next come household cleaning products (30%), baby food (20%), as well as baby wipes and diapers (12%). On the other hand, the Moroccan consumer has a lower-than-average tendency to turn to a locally made brand for ice cream, with only 20% preferring a local brand in this category.

If we know that "made in Morocco" does not yet have an official label and that there is no system for controlling the exportable supply, we will more easily understand the results of these two studies, especially the first. In addition, in a forum organized by Maroc Export, ESCA and the Amadeus Institute, it was recommended to regulate the conditions for granting this label by designing a charter listing its characteristics as well as its technical outlines. It was also recommended creating sub-labels by product or family of products (sardines, Clementine, Moroccan olive oils). This must be crowned by the establishment of a global and inclusive communication strategy highlighting the important role to economic operators.

This is not likely to blur the competitiveness deficit from which Moroccan manufacturers suffer. To overcome this weakness, Moroccan companies must follow the concept of mutualization within the framework of consortia or even within the framework of ecosystems, while moving towards innovation.

3. Methodology

In the light of this global context, this research focuses on three central objectives: understand whether Moroccan consumers prefer "made in Morocco" or imported pasta; gage their perception of "made in Morocco"; and determine the purchasing decision factors of "made in Morocco" pasta. It is important to specify that this study could theoretically cover several fields of research. Indeed, this research collides with the scope, perception and

purchasing factors of "made in Morocco" products consumed in Morocco as well as the notoriety of Moroccan brands compared to foreign brands. However, these two fields fall outside the framework of this study and will not be tackled. This research focuses specifically on the perception of Moroccan consumers of "made in Morocco" pasta, and the key purchasing decision factors that motivate the choice of Moroccan pasta over foreign pasta. Thus, any interaction or juxtaposition that may exist between the aforementioned fields would not be dealt with in this study.

3.1. Conceptual Framework

This theme is therefore multifaceted as it requires economical, sociological, psychological, and marketing contributions. It would have the merit of presenting scientific work to all stakeholders (entrepreneurs, marketers, consultants, etc.). This work intends to contribute to the conceptualization of "made in Morocco" label, which governs many reflections. The choice of pasta is not accidental. It was done because of the observed fierce competition between Moroccan and foreign producers on the market, especially that from Spanish and Italian provenance. Also, the research assumed that respondents could decide whether to buy this product as pasta is widely consumed in Morocco in various forms. This research is based on the conceptual framework presented in figure 1.

Figure 1: *Conceptual framework*
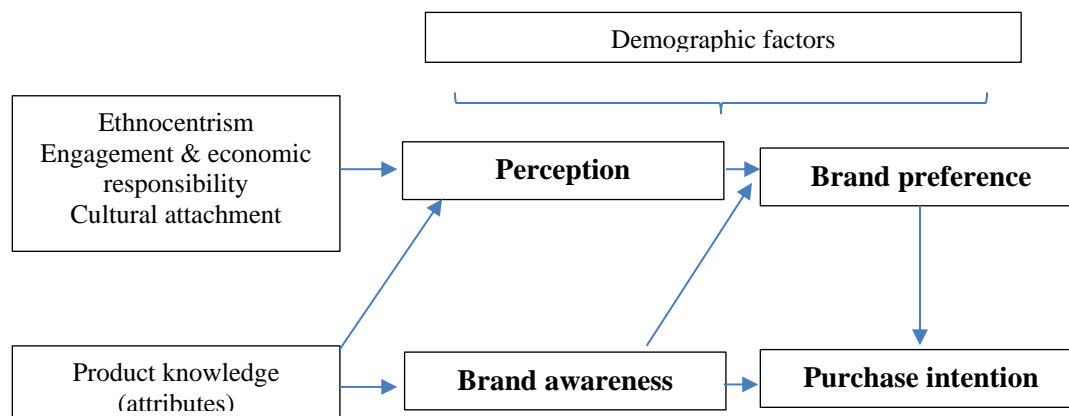
Source : Cathy J. Cobb-Walgren, Cynthia A. Ruble & Naveen Donthu (1995)

This framework was inspired by a combination of the work of Cathy J. Cobb-Walgren, Cynthia A. Ruble & Naveen Donthu (1995), who have worked in the relationship between brand equity, brand preference, and purchase intention; and that of Hadi Moradi and Azim Zarei (2011), who have worked on the impact of brand equity on purchases intention and brand preference, while taking into consideration the moderating effects of country-of-origin image.

On the first level of the consumer behavior model, this study evaluates the perception of the country of origin based on the level of patriotism. Three variables are tested through the categorization of respondents' agreements to a set of declarations on ethnocentrism, engagement and economic responsibility, and cultural attachment. On a second level, brand awareness is evaluated through four questions: when you think about pasta, which brands first come to your mind? What other pasta brands can you list? Among the following pasta brands, which ones do you recall? And last, among the following brands, which ones are Moroccan? As product attributes are directly linked to brand awareness, the link between product attributes and brand preference will be established further in this study to test the impact of brand awareness on brand preference.

In order to test the product knowledge at this level, respondents were asked to select the most important attributes for their choice of pasta. It is important at this stage to point that

product knowledge in the framework of this research is not considered as the combination of information that the consumer has about the product prior to purchase, but as the information that the customer values during purchases. Bloch, Ridgway and Sherrell (1989) have developed a scale to measure product knowledge, through which respondents are asked to rate their agreement to use a Likert scale to a set of declarations on product knowledge. In this study, as product knowledge here serves to sport the most important information for pasta purchasing, respondents are asked to select the most utile information about the product among price, quality, notoriety, availability, packaging, cooking time, shapes or other. Perception and brand awareness both lead to brand preference that was evaluated by directly ask respondents to categorize their preference for either Moroccan or foreign pasta brands. Last, four demographic factors are tested in this study for moderating effects: gender, socio-professional categories, marital status, and age.

3.2. Methodology and Sampling

This research was conducted using quantitative techniques. The research objectives are perfectly measurable using objective consumer behavior and perception quantitative scales that were previously tested and validated by other researchers. Four main concerns were verified during data collection: the choice of the research subjects; the material used; the protocol of the investigation; and data analysis methods. Concerning sampling and the choice of research subjects, the population includes all Moroccans who have consumed pasta (Moroccan or foreign) at least once; it means that potentially any Moroccan adult person (below 18 years old) is concerned. Therefore, the sample included 105 individuals that are used to making regular purchasing decisions of pasta. The choice of subjects was based on non-probabilistic convenient sampling, including all Moroccan regions, socio-professional categories, gender, and age. The authors used their network of acquaintances to administer the questionnaire via two modes: face to face and google forms. Any consumer (current or potential) of pasta is eligible to be part of the sample. But we have varied profiles (students, civil servants….), the cities (Rabat, Agadir, Salé…) as well as the gender (men and women).

As for the working tools, this research preferred the administration of a questionnaire in order to be able to study a larger number of participants, and limit the effects linked to the personality traits in the purchasing decision. The questionnaire design paid great attention to the wording of the questions as well as the practicality of each one. The simplification of the questions was mandatory in this research, given the nature of sampled subjects, as the sample included pasta consumers regardless of their educational background, or social status. The administered questionnaire included 17 questions, escalating down from general questions on their consumption of pasta, towards more specific questions which measure the influence of the origin of the brand on their purchasing behavior. The 17 questions focus on four main themes :

1/ Brand awareness and product attributes.

2/ the brand preference and Consumption habits for pasta made in Morocco

3/the perception of the Moroccan consumer vis-à-vis the brands of pasta of Moroccan origin.

4/ The identification questions.

As for the research protocol, the questionnaire was distributed face to face in the region of Rabat, Salé, Kenitra, and online to reach the sampled subjects from all other Moroccan regions.

Descriptive methods allowed to describe, structure, summarize and represent the available data, while regression analysis was conducted to establish the link between perception of country of origin and brand preference, and brand awareness and brand preference. This research aims to test two main hypotheses:

H1: The perception of country of origin is positively correlated with brand preference regarding pasta consumption.

H2: **Brand awareness (product attributes) is positively correlated with brand preference regarding pasta consumption.**

4. Results

The demographic analysis of the sample, shown in table 1, provides a detailed description of the research subjects. 63.81% of the respondents are women and 36.19% are men. Also, the sample was composed of 70% employees or civil servants, and 30% from the other categories (unemployed, liberal professions, retirees and students). The majority of respondents were between 26 and 45 years old, thus, 60% of them were married. Finally, 15 cities were represented with a slight dominance of the Rabat-Salé region.

Figure 2: *Sampling demographic distribution*

Demographical factors		Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	67	63,81%
	Male	38	36,19%
Socio-professional category	Employed	48	45,71%
	Student	8	7,62%
	Civil servant	25	23,81%
	Liberal profession	6	5,71%
	Retired	13	12,38%
	Unemployed	5	4,76%
City	Rabat	41	39,05%
	Salé	28	26,67%
	Khemessat	6	5,71%
	Agadir	5	4,76%
	Kenitra	3	2,86%
	Témara	6	5,71%
	Marrakech	3	2,86%
	Oujda	2	1,90%
	Tiflet	1	0,95%
	Tanger	2	1,90%
	Casablanca	3	2,86%
	Khouribga	1	0,95%
	Safi	2	1,90%
	Benslimane	1	0,95%
	Benimellal	1	0,95%
Age	55 and more	13	12,38%
	18-25	10	9,52%
	26-35	41	39,05%
	36-45	29	27,62%
	46-55	12	11,43%
Marital status	Single	38	36,19%
	Maried	63	60,00%
	Widowed	4	3,81%

Source: Authors

4.1. Brand awareness and product attributes

Regarding the consumption behavior, the entire sample consumes pasta, and 89% of them have already bought pasta themselves. Results showed that spaghetti and vermicelli are the mostly consumed pasta types as 84.76% of respondent voted for them, while Ravioli and linguine, on the other hand, are consumed by a minority not exceeding 4.76% and 6.67% respectively. Gender moderated consumption preferences as well since it was found that women show a slight preference for lasagna while men prefer tagliatelle. These preferences are also moderated by the socio-professional category for consumers with liberal professions declared preference for lasagna and the unemployed consumers or students claimed to have a limited variety of pasta consumption.

A descriptive reading of the results of the survey demonstrated that Moroccan brands have a good reputation. Thus, TRIA is found to be the mostly known brand among the studied sample (30,47%), then comes the brand DARI (26,66%) and Panzani in third place (13,33%). Men know the brand TRIA more than women. However, when it came to spontaneous brand awareness, women were able to recall more brands than men. Concerning the Moroccan

brands Tria, Dari, Dalia and Itkane, they were found to be known by the majority of respondents, with the exception of the brand Keyna, which is only known by 42.86% of consumers. Also, respondents were asked to situate their preference for either Moroccan or foreign pasta brands, and the results were in line with the previous ones as 68% claimed to consume Moroccan pasta brands. This preference was equally observed among women and men. However, it was less observed among respondents with liberal professions and students, whose preferences remained divided between Moroccan brands and foreign brands. As for family status, widowers were found to be divided between those choices as well.

This preference is justified mainly by price and quality. Indeed, according to the respondents, 62% believe that Moroccan pasta is of good quality and is suitable for several dishes. 17% claimed to be satisfied with the value for money, and one respondent claimed to appreciate the price-value ratio. However, 23,8% said that Moroccan pasta brands need improvements for different reasons: quality, reputation, packaging, etc. Here too, we observe that gender and socio-professional category imply a different sensitivity to one or the other parameter. We can see that women are more sensitive to quality, shapes, and cooking time than men, while the latter are more interested in price, brand, and availability in the places where they shop. Also, the "unemployed" are very price sensitive, students and retirees are sensitive to quality and availability, while employees, civil servants and professionals are more sensitive to quality and price.

Table 1: *Product attributes' importance according to gender and socio-professional category*

Product attributes	%	Female	Male	Employed	Student	Retired	Unemployed	Libreal profession	Civil servant
Price	46,67	43,28%	52,63%	54,17%	0,00%	30,77%	100,00%	50,00%	44,00%
Quality	56,19	61,19%	47,37%	66,67%	37,50%	38,46%	20,00%	83,33%	52,00%
Notoriety	19,05	14,93%	26,32%	20,83%	0,00%	15,38%	20,00%	33,33%	20,00%
Availability	40,95	37,31%	47,37%	39,58%	37,50%	38,46%	40,00%	50,00%	44,00%
Packaging	5,71	5,97%	5,26%	4,17%	12,50%	0,00%	0,00%	16,67%	8,00%
Cooking time	15,24	16,42%	13,16%	16,67%	25,00%	15,38%	0,00%	33,33%	8,00%
Shape diversity	19,05	20,90%	15,79%	20,83%	12,50%	30,77%	40,00%	33,33%	4,00%
Other	6,67	7,46%	5,26%	2,08%	12,50%	15,38%	20,00%	0,00%	8,00%

Source: Authors

4.2. Country of origin perception

Contrary to what the literature seems to indicate on the influence of "made in" on purchase intention, the results of this study could not confirm this hypothesis. Indeed, 70 people claimed that they are not influenced by the country of origin when buying. The fact of buying Moroccan pasta is not perceived by most respondents (60% on average) as the reflection of a committed, economically responsible, or culturally attached citizen. The socio-professional category showed differences in results at this level as well since the majority of employees, students and civil servants do not agree with the fact that the consumption of pasta of Moroccan origin reflects the actions of a committed, economically responsible or culturally attached citizen. However, subjects with liberal professions tend to agree more with these declarations. As to gender distribution, women believe in patriotism as a motivator to purchasing Moroccan pasta much more than men. Table 2 below demonstrates the country-of-origin perception among respondents by socio-professional category.

Table 2: *country-of-origin perception by socio-professional category*

A customer who buys Moroccan pasta is an engaged citizen	Empl oyed	Stud ent	Civil servant	Liberal profession	Reti red	Unemp loyed
Completely disagree	16%	4%	10%	1%	2%	1%
Agree	12%	2%	5%	3%	3%	3%
Disagree	13%		5%	1%	6%	1%
Completely agree	4%	2%	4%	1%	2%	
A customer who buys Moroccan pasta is economically responsible	**Empl oyed**	**Stud ent**	**Civil servant**	**Liberal profession**	**Reti red**	**Unemp loyed**
Completely disagree	12%	1%	7%	2%	3%	1%
Agree	18%	2%	6%	1%	4%	3%
Disagree	15%	2%	6%	1%	4%	1%
Completely agree	3%	3%	6%	2%	2%	
A customer who buys Moroccan pasta is culturally attached	**Empl oyed**	**Stud ent**	**Civil servant**	**Liberal profession**	**Reti red**	**Unemp loyed**
Completely disagree	17%	3%	11%	1%	6%	2%
Agree	13%	2%	8%	2%	2%	1%
Disagree	14%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Completely agree	4%	1%	4%	1%	3%	1%

Source: Authors

In contrast, 63 people (39 women and 24 men) believe that the consumer who buys pasta of Moroccan origin is price sensitive. This confirms the results already found further on. Thus, most people are not ready to pay more for pasta of Moroccan origin, except for students.

4.3. Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Prior to running the regression analysis, several assumptions were checked. Indeed, the dependent variable (brand preference) is dichotomous, and the independent variables are either dichotomous (product attributes) or measured using a LIKERT Scale from 1 to 3 (engagement, economic responsibility, and cultural attachment). According to the Central Limit Theorem, a sample needs to be greater than 30 to be normally distributed. The sample of this study is composed of 105 observations. Linear regression is used to test the first hypothesis: brand awareness (through product attributes) is positively correlated to brand preference. For the second hypothesis, logistic regression is used, meaning the independent variables do not have to be an interval, normally distributed, linear, or have equal variance within each group. It only requires a larger sample size than linear regression. This study has more than 50 observations for each of the predictors. Another assumption that should be assessed before proceeding with any analysis using logistic regression is the autocorrelation among variables. If the correlation coefficient is greater than 0.5, the variables are said to be correlated among each other, and the study would be erroneous. In this case, as shown in Table 3 below, the autocorrelation among variables is verified.
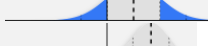
Table 3: *Auto-correlation analysis among variables*

|	BRAND PREF	PRICE	QUALITY	NOTOR	AVAIL	PACK	COOKTIME	SHAPES	OTHER	PERC	ENGAGED	ECO RESP	CULT ATTA
BRAND PREFERENCE	1,000	-0,370	0,491	0,099	-0,452	0,162	0,408	0,302	0,043	-0,367	0,011	0,116	0,076
PRICE	-0,370	1,000	-0,021	-0,113	0,075	0,016	-0,078	-0,162	-0,097	0,135	-0,036	-0,187	-0,023
QUALITY	0,491	-0,021	1,000	-0,061	-0,475	0,052	0,374	0,086	-0,149	-0,217	-0,030	-0,024	0,066
NOTORIETY	0,099	-0,113	-0,061	1,000	-0,157	0,090	-0,003	0,135	-0,032	-0,069	-0,052	0,052	-0,113
AVAILABILITY	-0,452	0,075	-0,475	-0,157	1,000	-0,122	-0,191	-0,157	-0,067	0,178	0,014	-0,052	-0,110
PACKAGING	0,162	0,016	0,052	0,090	-0,122	1,000	0,124	0,194	-0,066	0,000	-0,108	-0,069	0,011
COOKING TIME	0,408	-0,078	0,374	-0,003	-0,191	0,124	1,000	0,199	-0,007	-0,150	0,052	0,002	0,020
SHAPES	0,302	-0,162	0,086	0,135	-0,157	0,194	0,199	1,000	0,065	-0,069	-0,052	-0,047	-0,146
OTHER	0,043	-0,097	-0,149	-0,032	-0,067	-0,066	-0,007	0,065	1,000	0,027	-0,072	0,125	-0,174
PERCEPTION OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	-0,367	0,135	-0,217	-0,069	0,178	0,000	-0,150	-0,069	0,027	1,000	-0,067	-0,028	0,038
ENGAGED CITIZEN	0,011	-0,036	-0,030	-0,052	0,014	-0,108	0,052	-0,052	-0,072	-0,067	1,000	0,413	0,521
ECONOMICALLY RESPONSIBLE	0,116	-0,187	-0,024	0,052	-0,052	-0,069	0,002	-0,047	0,125	-0,028	0,413	1,000	0,412
CULTURALLY ATTACHED	0,076	-0,023	0,066	-0,113	-0,110	0,011	0,020	-0,146	-0,174	0,038	0,521	0,412	1,000

<u>**Source:**</u> *Authors*

For the first hypothesis, the tested model is highly significant with a P-value of 0.001 < 0.05, $F_{(8, 96)}$ = 11,719, an R square of 0,494, and an adjusted R square of 0,452. This confirms the hypothesis of this research, saying that product attributes (brand awareness) impact the customers' brand preference. There is a need here to recall that this study does not investigate the brand preference competition wise, but only preference between Moroccan or foreign pasta products. The results conclude, with 95% confidence level that price, quality, availability, and cooking time are the most significant factors.

Table 4: *Regression analysis of brand awareness and brand preference*

Product attributes	coefficient	std. error	visualization	t-statistic	p-value
Price	-0,293	0,071		-4,104	0,000
Quality	0,293	0,087		3,354	0,001
Notoriety	0,033	0,092		0,356	0,722
Availability	-0,204	0,084		-2,432	0,017
Packaging	0,156	0,155		1,012	0,314
Cooking time	0,259	0,106		2,434	0,017
Shapes	0,162	0,094		1,731	0,087
Other	0,082	0,144		0,567	0,572
constant	1,317	0,095		13,798	0,000

For the second hypothesis, the tested model is highly significant with a P-value of 0.001 < 0.05, t(103) = 3,998, an R square of 0,134, and an adjusted R square of 0,126. This confirms the hypothesis of this research, saying that the perception of country of origin impacts the customers' brand preference. Figure 3 below shows the results. Regression analysis was run between perception of country's origin as a dependent variable and the three patriotism factors to see if perception was impacted by engagement, economic responsibility or cultural attachment, but the model was not valid as the p-value was 0,774. The sane results were encountered between brand preference and the three patriotism factors with a p-value 0.609. Therefore, even though the hypothesis that the brand preference is linked to the perception of country of origin, the link between its determinants was not verified.

Figure 3: *perception of country of origin and brand preference*

Perception of country of origin estimated coefficient

$p < 0,001$
$\beta = -0,371$
$SE = 0,093$
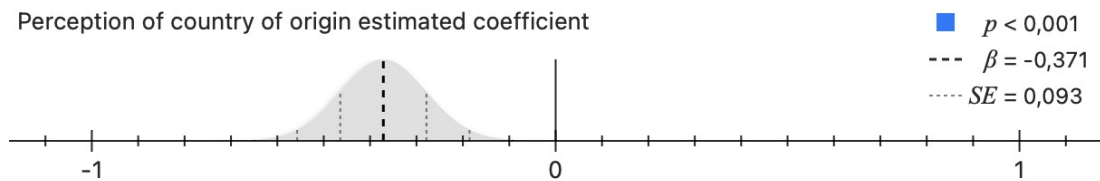
Source: Authors

5. Discussion

The discussion of the results of this study will be structured in three parts: consumption habits, perception of products made in Morocco, and a comparative study with the results of similar studies carried out in the Moroccan context.

5.1. Brand preference and Consumption habits for pasta made in Morocco.

The study revealed that Moroccan consume mostly spaghetti and vermicelli among all other pasta types. Indeed, these two varieties have been anchored in the consumption habits of Moroccans for a long time. They can be cooked and prepared in different ways (with milk, sugar and cinnamon, with chicken, etc.). Regardless of the social status, all Moroccans have access to these two varieties, especially since they are available in all types of stored (supermarkets, grocers, retailers, wholesalers, etc.) and are sold packaged or per kilogram at the local groceries. These same reasons (availability, cultural aspects, etc.) largely explain the low consumption of ravioli and linguine, who remain relatively foreign to Moroccan culture despite a relative openness and dietary diversity of certain socio-professional categories (liberal professions in particular).

To meet those specific needs, most respondents (68%) use Moroccan brands. This consumption, which is oriented more towards brands of pasta of Moroccan origin, is mainly explained by a cheaper price, good quality and availability at the level of different distribution points. The brand TRIA followed by DARI thus enjoys spontaneous good notoriety as they belong to the "top of mind" and use more aggressive advertising than the competition.

5.2. The perception of the Moroccan consumer vis-à-vis the brands of pasta of Moroccan origin

Moroccan consumers, that participated in this study, have a low level of ethnocentrism, since only 35 out of 105 said to prefer a product because of its country of origin. The preference for pasta of Moroccan origin is explained by the intrinsic characteristics of the products (price, quality, availability) much more than by the extrinsic characteristics (country of origin). This result is consistent with the literature on the subject which maintains that the influence of the country of origin of the purchase intention is moderated mainly by the knowledge and by the degree of involvement of the product in question. When it comes to pasta, the degree of involvement is low, and consumers know enough about the product to be able to evaluate it intrinsically. Subsequently, the results of this study show that pasta of Moroccan origin is rather well received. All credit goes to the competitive prices displayed, the quality and availability of these products. Moreover, most respondents say they are not ready to pay more for pasta of Moroccan origin. This is corroborated by the fact that many of the respondents do not perceive the consumption of Moroccan pasta as an act of a committed citizen that of an economically responsible one, and even less, as a culturally attached individual.

5.3. Comparison with previous studies on the subject made in:

The results of this research are slightly different from those of the study conducted by the Moroccan Association of Marketing and Communication (AMMC) on the influence of

products made in Morocco on the buying behavior of the Moroccans. Indeed, the latter has shown that most Moroccans have a rather negative perception of Moroccan brands, which is obviously not the case for Moroccan pasta. This can be explained by the context in which the two studies were carried out, as well as their somewhat different purposes. The AMMC study looked more services at the national level (business climate, tourism, Human Resources, etc.) while this study has focused on a consumer product. If we introduce the moderating factors put forward by the literature, in this case the degree of involvement and the level of product knowledge, we will more easily understand the reasons for this apparent contradiction.

However, we can see a certain consistency with the study conducted by the Nielsen firm, which focused on the influence of the origin of the brand on consumer behavior. The two studies conclude that Moroccans often display a preference towards brands of Moroccan origin, especially in all that is essential products, namely dairy products, wipes, and pasta in particular. Overall, we can say that the "foreign product" effect has no impact in the case of pasta. On the other hand, the Moroccan originality of the same product has a positive effect on the general behavior of the consumer of pasta without being a key purchasing factor. The most decisive factors remain intrinsic characteristics such as price, quality, and availability.

6. Conclusion

The primary objective behind this study was to analyze the link between the country of origin and the purchase of Pasta of Moroccan origin to answer the following three questions: Does the Moroccan consumer prefer "made in Morocco" or imported pasta? How is "made in Morocco" pasta perceived by the Moroccan consumer? And what are the determinants of the choice of the Moroccan pasta? The results are overall coherent, though they slightly repudiate the findings of previous studies on the subject. It has thus been established that Moroccans consume more pasta of Moroccan origin than pasta of foreign origin. This preference is not explained by ethnocentrism as one would expect and would not necessarily reflect the behavior of an engaged, economically responsible, or culturally attached citizen. It is explained more by intrinsic determinants such as the price, quality, and availability of pasta of Moroccan origin. Regarding the perception of Moroccan pasta, it is rather positive for the same reasons to their preference. This perception is cemented by the spontaneous brand awareness of Moroccan pasta brands, in particular Tria and Dari (2021).

This study is not without limitations and certain paths for improvement can help generate more reliable results and reduce their limitations. The first limitation is the absence of a qualitative study. Given the time constraints, we were unable to carry out a qualitative study which would have given us more insight on the key variables to be considered in the study. Second, we have faced the reluctance of people who abstained from answering the survey, under various reasons (lack of time, difficulty understanding the French language, lack of confidence, etc.). As to overcome those problems, we administered the questionnaire online, although we were able to carry out a significant number of face-to-face questionnaires. This augmented the chance of generating biased results as we could not assist the respondents through the questionnaire, and we may have excluded consumers who do not use the internet.

In conclusion, it would be judicious to see whether the results of this survey can be transposed to other products and services, as well as investigate in a profounder way the socio-professional category or the gender impact on the purchasing behavior of pasta. These are interesting research perspectives in this area.

Refences

(1) Ahmed, ZU, Johnson, JP, Ling, CP, Fang, TW, & Hui, AK, (2002), "Country-of-origin and brand effects on consumers' evaluations of cruise lines", International Marketing Review, 19 (3), PP. 279-302.

(2) Baldauf, A., K. Cravens, A. Diamantopoulos, & K.P. Zeugner-Roth, 2009. The impact of product-country image and marketing effort on retailer-perceived brand equity: An empirical analysis. Journal of Retailing, 85(4): 437-452.

(3) Bloch P. H., Ridgway, N. M., and Sherrell, D. L. (1989). Extending the concept of shopping: An investigation of browsing activity, Journal of Academy of Marketing Science, 17, 13-21.

(4) Brouthers, L., Xu, K., 2002. Product Stereotypes, Strategy and Performance Satisfaction: The Case of Chinese Exporters. J Int Bus Stud 33, 657–677.

(5) Brucks, M., (1985), "The effects of product class knowledge on information search behavior", Journal of Consumer Research, PP. 1-16.

(6) Cai, Y. (2002). Country-of-origin effects on consumers' willingness to buy foreign products: an experiment in consumer decision making.

(7) Cathy J. Cobb-Walgren , Cynthia A. Ruble & Naveen Donthu (1995) Brand Equity, Brand Preference, and Purchase Intent, Journal of Advertising, 24:3, 25-40.

(8) Cordell, V., 1992. Effects of Consumer Preferences for Foreign Sourced Products. J Int Bus Stud 23, 251–269.

(9) Dagger, TS, & Raciti, MM, (2011), "Matching consumers' country and product image perceptions: an Australian perspective", Journal of Consumer Marketing, 28 (3), PP. 200-210.

(10) Ghazali, M., Othman, MS, Yahya, AZ, & Ibrahim, MS, (2008), "Products and country of origin effects: The Malaysian consumers' perception", International Review of Business Research Papers ", 4 (2), PP. 91-102.

(11) Haim, F., "Le Made In Morocco, We don't believe", The Economist, Edition N °: 4915 Le 09/12/2016

(12) Keller, K., (2008), "Strategic Brand Management", Pearson Prentice Hall: USA.

(13) Keller, K.L., 2003. Stratégic brand management: Building, measuring and managing brand equity. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, Pearson Education Inc.

(14) Lee, JK, & Lee, WN, (2009), "Country-of-origin effects on consumer product evaluation and purchase intention: the role of objective versus subjective knowledge", Journal of International Consumer Marketing, 21 (2), PP. 137-151.

(15) Leifeld, J. P. 2004. "Consumer Knowledge and Use of Country-of-Origin Information at Point of Purchase," Journal of Consumer Behaviour 4(2), 85-96.

(16) Lin, LY, & Chen, CS, (2006), "The influence of the country-of-origin image, product knowledge and product involvement on consumer purchase decisions: an empirical study of insurance and catering services in Taiwan", Journal of Consumer Marketing, 23 (5), PP. 248-265.

(17) Moradi, H., Zarei, A., 2011. The Impact of Brand Equity on Purchase Intention and Brand Preference-the Moderating Effects of Country-of-Origin Image. Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 5(3): 539-545.

(18) Nagashima, A., (1970), "A comparison of Japanese and US attitudes toward foreign products", The Journal of Marketing, PP. 68-74.

(19) Nayir, D.Z., & S.S. Durmusoglu, 2008. Country image in the context of European Union membership: the Turkish case. Journal of Management Development, 27(7): 791-808.

(20) Parkvithee, N., & Miranda, MJ (2012), "The interaction effect of country-of-origin, brand equity and purchase involvement on consumer purchase intentions of clothing labels", Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, 24 (1) , PP. 7-22.

(21) Roth, M.S., & J.B. Romeo, 1992. Matching product category and country image perceptions: A framework for managing country-of-origin effects. Journal of International Business Studies, 23(3): 477-497.

(22) Takor, M., & L. Katsanis, 1997. A model of brand and country effects on quality dimensions: Issues and implementations. Journal of International Consumer Marketing, 9(3): 70-100.

(23) Teo, PC, Mohamad, O., & Ramayah, T., (2011), "Testing the dimensionality of Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale (CETSCALE) among a young Malaysian consumer market segment", African Journal of Business Management, 5 (7), PP. 2805-2816.

(24) Thakor, MV, & Lavack, AM, (2003), "Effect of perceived brand origin associations on consumer perceptions of quality", Journal of Product & Brand Management, 12 (6), PP. 394-407.

(25) Yasin, NM, Noor, MN, & Mohamad, O., (2007), "Does image of country-of-origin matter to brand equity?", Journal of Product & Brand Management, 16 (1), PP. 38-48.

(26) Zeugner Roth, KP, Diamantopoulos, A., & Montesinos, M. Á., (2008), "Home country image, country brand equity and consumers' product preferences: an empirical study", Management International Review, 48 (5), PP. 577-602.