



**Katarzyna Wolder**

Country of origin effect in young consumers'  
purchasing decisions on international markets

Efekt kraju pochodzenia w decyzjach  
zakupowych młodych konsumentów  
na rynkach międzynarodowych

**Doctoral dissertation**

PhD Supervisor: prof. dr hab. Małgorzata Bartosik-Purgat  
Auxiliary PhD Supervisor: dr Tomasz Grzegorzczak

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Supervisor's signature

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## INTRODUCTION

The act of purchasing a product involves consumers engaging in the decision-making process, whereby they exercise their cognitive freedom as decision-makers to consider a variety of internal and external factors related to their behaviour. These factors may include personal beliefs, preferences, values, needs, and financial resources (Mihajlović & Koncul, 2016; Tao, Sun, Liu, Tian, & Zhang, 2022). Consumer expectations are increasing and young people expect personalised approaches and tailored solutions. When evaluating different product options, they compare them on the basis of their individual set of criteria, with the main goal being to choose a product that provides them with maximum benefits and satisfaction (Pappas, 2016). Among the external factors, it is worth pointing out, for example: economic factors, including the range and attractiveness of the offer; social factors, especially the opinion of family, opinion leaders; cultural determinants, affecting many areas of life and activities, e.g. dress, leisure time (Fabio, Romeo, & Calabrese 2023), as well as situational factors influencing dynamic changes in the market and society, consumer attitudes and behaviour, such as the country of origin of products.

The literature pertaining to consumer behaviour recognizes that personal values and needs are significant factors that shape an individual's behaviour (Kyove, Streltsova, Odibo, & Cirella, 2021; Wolniak, 2019). However, many studies also acknowledge that these factors can be influenced by cultural conditioning (Maison, 2019; Crosta et al., 2021; Górka – Chowaniec & Sikora, 2022; Valaskova, Kramarova, & Bartosova, 2015) linked to beliefs, customs, etc. With regard to the significance of culture, extant research has also investigated the attitudes of young consumers towards the origin of manufactured products (Marshall, 2016; John, Balapure, Benny, & Godwin, 2020; Tarka & Kukar-Kinney, 2022). One of the most frequently discussed factors that affect consumer perception and influence purchasing decisions is the Country of Origin Effect<sup>1</sup>, which is one of the most extensively studied international aspects of consumer behaviour (Gidakovic & Zabkar, 2021; Katsumata & Song, 2016; Nguyen & Alcantara, 2020; Ananda, Rini & Sembiring, 2019; Lee, 2019; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009; Wysocka & Bartosik-Purgat, 2020). In other words, consumers' perceptions of products can evoke extremely different associations.

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<sup>1</sup>Some researchers use the acronym COO for Country of Origin Effect. However, in this dissertation, Country of Origin Effect is shortened to COO effect for clarity.

These are based on perceptions of a country's characteristics, such as its reputation, history, culture, and sometimes also stem from pre-formed beliefs about the quality, reliability and value of products from that country (Lee & Schaninger, 1996; Nebenzahl, Jaffe, & Usunier, 2003; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2003).

COO effect is also an important factor in the evaluation of imported products in the context of international trade and plays a key role in the commercialisation of products in foreign markets (Bhakar et al., 2013). Earlier studies have reported on various aspects of consumer behaviour in relation to COO effect (Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013). For example, positive perceptions of the country of origin were found to increase the likelihood of purchasing products (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). In addition, a positive image of the production processes of certain product categories in a country can also have a positive impact on the brand strength of products when evaluating them (Esch et al., 2006). Understanding how consumers use country-of-origin information in their decision-making process for a selected product is important for producers active in global markets (Blanco-Encomienda et al., 2024).

COO effect has not been uniformly defined to date, hence the body of literature on the subject has been used for the purposes of this dissertation. To illustrate the COO effect, it should be noted that some researchers identify this effect as consumers' perceptions of products imported from a specific country (Roth & Romeo, 1992). Others define it as consumers' attitudes towards specific product categories that are linked to perceptions of the quality of manufactured products in particular markets (Ahmed & d'Astous, 2008; Haubl, 1996; Wolanin-Jarosz, 2014). Another group of researchers defines COO effect as the stereotypical perception of a product made in a particular country (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Licsandru et al, 2013; Nagashima, 1970). The author of the dissertation shares the latter interpretation of the COO effect, while extending it to include the identifying elements of the COO effect. For the purposes of the dissertation, it is therefore assumed as: *the associations between the category of product and the country of manufacture that are created in the consumers' minds on the basis of stereotypes and other elements of identifying the origin of the products, i.e. attributes and sources of information*. This effect works even if consumers have no experience in consuming a particular product (Kala & Chaubey, 2018; Visbal, Herrera-Mendoza, Orozco-Acosta, & Herzberg, 2017).

The importance of COO effect is well-recognized in the literature, however, it is still very important due to the changes in the production processes of enterprises and consumer behaviour (Gidakovic & Zabkar, 2021; Micevski, Diamantopoulos, & Erdbrugger, 2021; Thøgersen, Pedersen, Paternoga, Schwendel, & Aschemann-Witzel, 2017). There is no doubt that cultural change and technological advances have expanded the range of products, services and knowledge available, providing entrepreneurs with opportunities to grow online. The internet - as an interactive and multidimensional platform - is characterised by attributes such as convergence, global reach, networked technology and interactivity. This enables consumers to simultaneously create and consuming content simultaneously. In addition to these changes, there is a growing divergence in consumer preferences and consumer behaviour under the influence of personalised needs, cultural factors and expanded product choice. This divergence is evident in cultures striving for distinct identities, prompting companies to adopt flexible strategies to meet different preferences in a changing market landscape (Suvattanadilok, 2020).

It is worth mentioning that due the COVID-19 pandemic, consumer behaviour has changed. Several shifts in consumer behaviour were observed during the lockdown period, particularly in the department store, hardware, electrical, grocery, and liquor categories (Hall, Prayag, Fieger, & Dyason, 2020; Svajdova, 2021). Initially, there was a surge in spending as people anticipated the lockdown and made their purchases ahead of time (Loxton, Truskett, Scarf, Sindone, Baldry, & Zhao, 2020). However, although supermarkets and convenience stores remained accessible during the lockdown, there was a subsequent decline in spending followed by a gradual return to normal levels. Nevertheless, these changes in the availability of purchasing opportunities did have an impact on online shopping behaviour. Consumers began to prioritize local online stores, likely due to the convenience and accessibility they offered during the lockdown (Hall et al., 2020; Sheth, 2020). It should also be noted that the trend of buying all categories of products online has become a new reality.

After the COVID-19 situation stabilized and cases decreased, Russia launched an attack on Ukraine. Those situations caused consumers to become more aware of the origin of the products they were purchasing, and many discount shops stopped selling Russian-made products. In many countries, consumers started checking product labels to avoid supporting the Russian economy. Additionally, the invasion of Ukraine led to the closure of



many stores in Russia and Ukraine owned by international brands, including H&M, Zara, Levi's, Chanel, Prada, Hermes, Burberry, Estée Lauder, McDonald's, Starbucks, Coca-Cola, Unilever, and others, as reported by various news sources (Duffy & Dean, 2022; Hirsch, 2022). Those events show how consumers' preferences and habits have changed. Observing consumers, it can be noticeable that they started making more conscious purchase decisions taking into account the world's difficult situation (Hall et al., 2020; Loxton, Truskett, Scarf, Sindone, Baldry, & Zhao, 2020; Svajdova, 2021). Those changes refer also to young consumers.

Given the aforementioned complexities, it's evident that the COO effect warrants thorough examination to understand its impact on the purchasing decisions of young consumers. Initially, COO effect is commonly understood as how a product's country of manufacture influences its evaluation by consumers (Samiee, 1994). De Mooij (2004) aptly suggests that while consumers may not always accurately identify a product's origin, they do form preferences for products from certain countries. Therefore, this dissertation centres its considerations on the COO effect as a significant factor in shaping purchasing decisions (Kuzminska-Haberla, 2013; Roth & Romeo, 1992).

The literature distinguishes cognitive, affective and normative mechanisms describing consumer behaviour that can be analysed in terms of the influence of country of origin on product perception (Bloemer, Brijis, & Kasper, 2009). The cognitive mechanisms concern consumers who have a certain perception (opinion, association) about a product originating from a given country but have never purchased such a product (Macht, Klink-Lehmann, Piqueras-Fizman, & Hartmann, 2021; Reardon, Vianelli, & Miller, 2017). They evaluate the product through the prism of positive or negative attitudes, behaviour, and reputation as a producer of goods of a certain type. In the literature, such a phenomenon is called the halo effect (Motsi & Park, 2020; Oh, Lee, & Lee, 2021; Raggio, Leone, & Black, 2014). Cognitive mechanisms also include the situation when consumers have purchased products of a particular brand originating from a particular country. On the next occasion, they will be guided by the experience just gained by using the product previously purchased. This will apply to both the product category and the brand. Affective mechanisms evoke certain emotions in the consumer that can be positive or negative, e.g., a German car is associated with safety and solidity. Normative mechanisms, on the other

hand, depend on individual consumer behaviour or social influences, e.g., americanisation of products (Bartosik-Purgat, 2018).

Nevertheless, the complex process of production that involves multiple countries can make it challenging for consumers to determine the actual country of origin of a product since design, manufacturing, and assembly could happen in various locations (Chao, 1993; Soyoung & Pysarick, 2000; Tamas, 2016). This issue is particularly noticeable in the case of high-tech products, such as computer parts, which may be made in several different countries. This multidimensionality means that the label *Made in...* cannot reflect the actual country of manufacture, leading to confusion among consumers. As a result, consumers may focus more on the brand of the product rather than the country of origin when making purchasing decisions, leading to uncertainty about the quality of products made in different countries of the same brand. It should be noted that also a brand can support identification of the products origin.

In the literature, the analysis often concerns the study of consumer behaviour in terms of COO effect taking into account several factors, e.g. income, gender, age, and personality (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2016; Josiassen, Assaf, & Karpen, 2011), however, there are not many studies focusing only on the young consumers, Generation Z (Berkup, 2014; Kim, Jang, Choi, Youn, & Lee, 2022). This Generation comprises an interesting group to study for several reasons. The consumer perspective of four categories, namely clothing and footwear, electronic devices, cosmetics, and wine, has been largely neglected despite the fact that they represent a lucrative market segment for both actual and potential buyers (Kautish & Sharma, 2019). According to the author of this dissertation, Generation Z is an interesting group to research, among other reasons, because they use social media extensively and are up-to-date with new technologies (Turner, 2015), enabling them to quickly search for necessary information about products, including their origin. It is important to highlight that Generation Z grew up in a time of rapid development of digital technologies, i.e. internet, social media and laptops (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018; Hamdi, Indarti, Manik, & Lukito-Budi, 2022; Seemiller & Grace, 2017), so the study of this group is particularly interesting in terms of examining the impact that promotional activities, e.g. on social media, have on young people's purchasing decisions.

However, it is not easy to gain Generation Z's attention mainly because of their multitasking and self-conscious attitude (Parsakia, Rostami, Darbani, Saadati, &

Navabinejad, 2023). They may be less sensitive to classic promotional tools and thus will force companies to use innovative marketing tools to convince consumers to familiarise themselves with their offer. Additionally, it is forecasted that Generation Alpha will have some similarities in their purchasing behaviour to the current young adult segment described in this dissertation (Ziatdinov & Cilliers, 2021). Therefore, it can be assumed that the purchase decisions of the young will be different from other generations in many aspects so that Generation Z is a forward-looking important segment for companies. With the rise of social media and the emphasis on appearance, young consumers are more inclined to invest in cosmetics, clothes and shoes to enhance their personal care routines (Akram, Ansari, Ulhaq, & Yan, 2023). To stay current, it is crucial for companies to keep up with the latest trends in electronic devices as Generation Z represents a significant consumer segment.

This dissertation describes the comparison between three culturally different consumer groups, but similar in terms of age. This multidimensional phenomenon of difference between Germans, Poles, and Spaniards depends on the habits, characteristics features, ways of thinking, values and stereotypes of selected cultural groups and should be understood by companies (Srnrka, 2004). The dissertation compares the purchasing decisions of young Germans, Poles, and Spaniards. Cultural differences between countries can influence consumer behaviour in various ways. For example, Germans tend to be more practical and value quality and efficiency over emotional appeal (Scholz & Grotend, 2019). On the other hand, Spaniards may be more emotional in their decision-making, valuing aesthetics and design (Rubio Gil & Sanagustín-Fons, 2019). Poles, as a society that has gone through significant changes in the past few decades, may be more conscious of tradition and local heritage when making purchasing decisions (Król & Zdonek, 2021). Another example of cultural differences is the importance of family and social relationships in purchasing decisions. In Spain and Poland, family ties and social connections play a more significant role in decision-making than in Germany, where individualism is more valued. Furthermore, communication styles may differ between these countries, influencing marketing strategies (Asamoah & Chovancová, 2016). Germans tend to be more direct and prefer facts and figures, while Spaniards and Poles may prefer a more personal and relational approach.

Moreover, the differences in purchasing decisions among three selected nationalities were displayed in the research conducted by Bartosik-Purgat (2018). Young Polish consumers are highly ethnocentric when it comes to food products, with a majority (85.6% in 2015) preferring to buy Polish food. Additionally, the study found that among young Polish consumers, there is a strong preference for cosmetics made in France. For clothing and footwear, Italian design is favoured, with an increasing number of respondents preferring it in 2015. Japan is the preferred origin for consumer electronics products, followed by Germany.

The same research concluded that the Spanish group represents the highest level of ethnocentrism towards food products, with 86.4% in 2008 and 95.2% in 2015 preferring Spanish food over imports due to specific eating habits and the belief that domestic products are superior (Bartosik-Purgat, 2018). The same trend was observed in the clothing and footwear category, likely due to the popularity of Spanish fashion brands in international markets. The frequent release of new clothing collections every year by popular brands such as ZARA and Massimo Dutti has helped them to gain the loyalty and fondness of their customers worldwide. French cosmetics were the preferred choice among Spanish respondents, while young Spaniards preferred Japanese electronics (Bartosik-Purgat, 2018).

The third selected group of consumers is Germans, who have also been analysed by Bartosik-Purgat (2018). In both 2008 and 2015, young German respondents showed a preference for German food. In 2008, a significant percentage of young German respondents preferred German cosmetics, while in 2015, the majority of them indicated a preference for French cosmetics. Italian clothing and footwear were the top choices for the majority of respondents in both years. In 2008 Japanese consumer electronics were preferred, but in 2015 more respondents chose German electronics. Bartosik-Purgat's (2018) study reveals that Germans, Poles, and Spaniards tend to favour domestic producers, citing the quality of their products. Taking into account the above consideration, the following **research questions** have been formulated:

1. Which elements identifying the COO effect are the most significant when identifying the origin of the product?
2. Which elements identifying the COO effect are the most significant when making purchase decisions?

3. Which product categories are most likely to be influenced by the COO effect during purchasing decisions?
4. What differences exist in the identification of the COO effect in purchasing decisions among young consumers in Germany, Poland and Spain?
5. Does the COO effect differentiate purchase decisions among young Germans, Poles, Spaniards?

This dissertation is focused on product categories that are important for reaching young consumers aged 18-25 years old (Generation Z). The study concentrates on four specific categories: clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine. The selection was made based on the abundance of research studies in these categories, as well as their universal appeal to individuals (Antoine, 2004; Baran, 2018; Hu & Baldin, 2017; Pagan, Giraldi, Maheshwari, de Paula, & de Oliveira, 2021). The first three product categories, clothing and footwear, cosmetics, and electronic devices, are universally purchased even during pandemic times. The wine category was selected due to its increasing consumption in the European Union (EU), and consumers' preference for wines from countries with positive reputations for wine production such as France and Italy (Olsen, Atkin, Thach, & Cuellar, 2015; Schaefer, Olsen, & Thach, 2018; Velasco & Ares, 2018). Wine is also characterized by its place of origin, which determines its quality and characteristics, and is subject to specific rules regarding grape varieties, wine-making techniques, yield per hectare, and analytical traits (Alston & Gaeta, 2021; Pomarici & Sardone, 2020).

The dissertation was written in a structured manner to enable easy comprehension of the information presented. The research methodology involved several phases, which are clearly illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Research procedure**

Source: own elaboration.

Most studies on the COO effect from a consumer perspective have been conducted using quantitative methods and focused on consumers from developed countries such as the USA, or emerging markets like China and India (Chen, Wright, Gao, Liu, & Mather,

2021). El-Kassar, Makki, Gonzalez-Perez, and Cathro (2023) highlighted the significance of acknowledging noteworthy differences in the strength of relationships due to cultural variations. They conducted an empirical study using primary data gathered via an online questionnaire from two private universities located in developing countries, Lebanon and Colombia, which have distinct geographical and cultural backgrounds. Fewer studies have been conducted on consumers from emerging EU markets and young consumers, including Germany, Poland and Spain (Bartosik-Purgat, 2018; Witek-Hajduk & Grudecka, 2021). Rašković, Ding, Škare, Došen and Žabkar (2016) conducted through web-based questionnaires administered to undergraduate students at prestigious business schools in Japan, China, Slovenia and Croatia. The authors conducted a comparison between the decision-making processes of young consumers in two developing countries and those in developed countries. It is important to note that consumer behaviour, including their attitudes towards the COO effect, may vary by country. The literature studies carried out have shown that the issue of the buying behaviour of Generation Z aged 18-25 coming from Germany, Poland, and Spain is still new and interesting to analyse. Currently, the definition of young consumers and their characteristics is often inconsistent and thus insufficient (Marshall, 2016; John, Balapure, Benny, & Godwin, 2020; Tarka & Kukar-Kinney, 2022). Usually, the age characterising this market segment is adopted differently depending on the purpose for which it is established. A detailed analysis of the age range is presented in subchapter 3.1.2.

This dissertation includes four distinct aspects, namely COO elements, young consumers belonging to Generation Z, product categories, and the perspectives of three different nationalities - Germans, Poles, and Spaniards. While many researchers have studied the COO effect, no other study has comprehensively covered all the aspects together. There is also no consensus on the definition of the term COO effect, as different studies have approached it in different ways. Furthermore, the literature on Generation Z is still relatively recent, and there are many unexplored aspects of this demographic group that require further investigation. These young adults differ from other generations mainly because they are the first generation that was brought up with new technology. It is also worth adding that there is no comparative research conducted among Germans, Poles, and Spaniards aged 18-25 in the aspect of identifying the origin of the product in the prism of all elements of COO which were mentioned in the literature. The study proposes a research

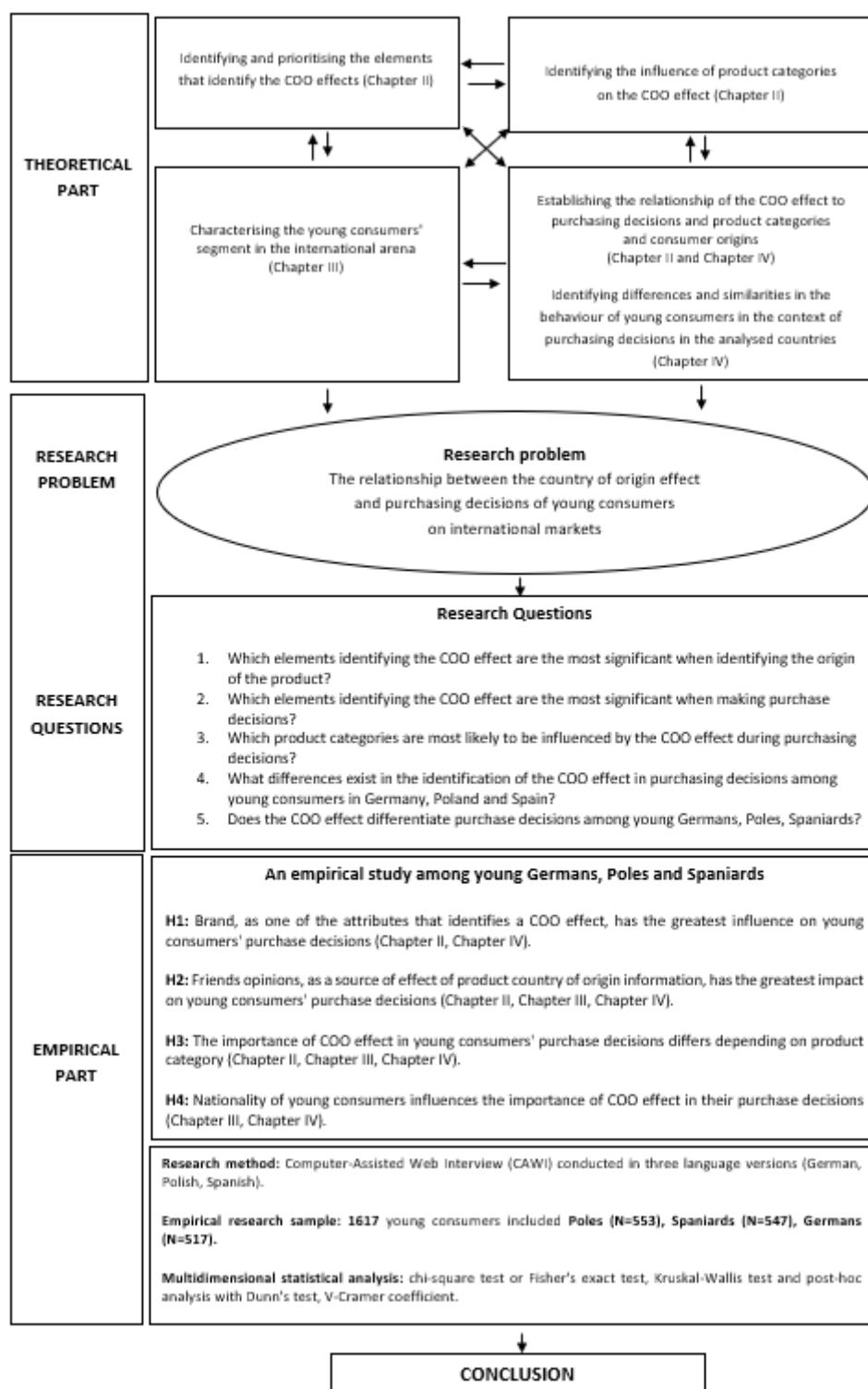
framework that incorporates four key variables: three nationalities (Germans, Poles, and Spaniards), four product categories (clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine), Generation Z (individuals aged 18-25), and the classification of COO elements, including attributes and sources of information.

In response to the identified research gap, the **research problem** addressed in this dissertation is the relationship between the COO effect and the purchase decisions of young consumers on international markets. The analytical scheme proposed by the dissertation serves as a transparent and effective method to present the key elements of the study (Figure 2). In this manner, it is easier to follow the stages of the author's research. Firstly, the theoretical background is indicated with all the specific objectives and their relations between the chapters of the dissertation. The second part forwards the research problem and questions, whilst the empirical part displays the hypothesis, research method, sample, and method of statistical analysis. The last part is a summary with conclusions about the conducted research.

The **subject** of the study is the COO effect and the decision-making process of young consumers in the German, Polish, and Spanish markets. The dissertation is both theoretical and empirical in nature. The theoretical part is based on foreign and Polish literature on consumer behaviour, sociology, cultural anthropology, and psychology. Apart from the main publications, the paper uses information published in scientific papers in journals, research monographs, chapters in monographs, as well as reports and scientific publications available on the Internet. The analysis of the literature and the deliberations was an attempt to organize the presented ideas and to create a workshop for research contained in the empirical and analytical parts.

The **main objective** of the dissertation is to determine the importance of the country of origin effect (through the prism of elements identifying it) as a factor influencing the purchase decisions of young consumers from different international markets. To achieve the main objective, the following **specific objectives** were formulated:

1. Identifying and prioritising the elements that identify the COO effect (Chapter II).
2. Identifying the influence of product categories on the COO effect (Chapter II).
3. Characterising the young consumers' segment in the international arena (Chapter III).
4. Establishing the relationship of the COO effect to purchasing decisions and product categories and consumer origins (Chapter II and Chapter IV).
5. Identifying differences and similarities in the behaviour of young consumers in the context of purchasing decisions in the analysed countries (Chapter IV).



**Figure 2. Analytical scheme of the author's dissertation**

Source: own elaboration.



This dissertation will examine the COO effect and its identifying elements. Besides the *Made in...* label, other elements have been proposed, such as brand, product name, packaging, barcode, product description language, promotional activities, and producer's address (Figiel, 2004). Brand and packaging play a significant role in communication with consumers, and the barcode can indicate the country of final manufacture. Producers are required to provide information in the local language on products and packaging, including the manufacturer's address (Act of March 6, 2018 - Entrepreneurs' Law (Journal of Laws of 2021, item 162, as amended)). The dissertation proposes the classification of COO elements as attributes and sources of information in detail presented in sub-chapter 2.2. Based on those elements, the pilot research and final version of the questionnaire were prepared.

The current COO effect approach may no longer be appropriate in today's business environment, especially with the availability of hybrid products worldwide (Tamas, 2016). While the COO effect emphasizes the perception of where a product is produced, recent studies suggest that brand origin may be more significant than the country of manufacture in consumer assessments (Zhou & Hui, 2003). Brand origin refers to the country where a brand is associated with its target market, and it can positively or negatively affect consumers' decisions (Thakor & Lavack, 1996). The brand origin can increase brand value, regardless of where the product is manufactured. For example, Reebok, an American-origin brand, manufactures in Asia to lower production costs, but consumers focus more on the brand image than the place of manufacture. Some researchers also suggest that the brand itself provides information about the origin and can influence consumers' decisions (Harun, Wahid, Mohammad, & Ignatius, 2011).

It is also worth mentioning that still stereotypes play an important role in the consumers' perception of the origin of products and brands (Sousa, Nobre, & Farhangmehr, 2018). Wang, Shen, and Yan (2021) claim that positive stereotype of the origin of the brand has an impact on consumers' purchase decisions. Additionally, UK consumers pay attention to brand image and its origin while making purchase decisions (Eng, Ozdemir, & Michelson, 2016). For Chinese consumers, the brand is related to social status value and its influence on their decisions (Gorostidi-Martinez, Xu, & Zhao, 2017; Shi, Zhang, Xie, & Zhou, 2016). Having taken into consideration the aforementioned theoretical inferences hypothesis 1 was formulated as:

**H1:** *Brand, as one of the attributes that identify a COO effect, has the greatest influence on young consumers' purchase decisions.*

Analysing COO elements, it is necessary to mention the sources of information which can have an impact on consumer decisions. In today's digital age, young consumers are highly susceptible to trends and recommendations displayed on social media by influencers, friends, and online communities (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). They feel the need to be informed and involved in the online world and often base their purchasing decisions on how they are perceived by others (Autumn Fair, 2019; Yadav, & Rai, 2017; Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). Friends' opinions are highly influential in motivating young consumers to make a purchase (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022; Vlontzos, Kyrgiakos, & Duquenne, 2018). This is mainly noticeable on social media platforms, where consumers rely on social interaction with their friends and utilize e-commerce technology to gather information and make purchase decisions (Yu et al., 2023). Consumers are social shoppers who share the recommendation on social media, mostly on Instagram. It should be also noted that consumers who participate in a social shopping group often experience a sense of belonging, concern for others, trust, and a strong commitment to the group (Gershoff & Johar, 2006). Friends' opinions have the greatest impact in the pre-purchase phase of the decision-making process (Yu et al., 2023). This is the moment of choosing the product alternatives so friends can share their personal experiences with the products and encourage them to buy specific models (Kim, Suh, & Lee, 2013). According to Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege (2013), consumers engage in seeking advice from their friends regarding specific products prior to making purchase decisions. This behaviour is explored in both pre-purchase and post-shopping behaviour simultaneously. After purchasing, friends provide social support, share information, make recommendations, and provide referrals (Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege, 2013). This leads to hypothesis 2, which was formulated as:

**H2:** *Friends' opinions, as a source of effect of product country of origin information, has the greatest impact on young consumers' purchase decisions.*

The literature suggests also that the COO effect pertains to consumer attitudes towards certain product categories, wherein they evaluate the quality of the products based on the country of origin, often relying on existing stereotypes (Chryssochoidis, Krystallis, & Perreas, 2007; Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2001; Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004). The COO effect is linked to the *Made in...* label, and consumers who pay attention to it typically look for a positive match between the product type and the source-country based on stereotypes. For example, Italy is often associated with high-quality leather products, while France is associated with luxury cosmetics, wine, and cheese. Similarly, Germany is associated with high-quality cars, and Japan is associated with advanced electronics (Diamantopoulos, Szócs, Florack, Kolbl, & Egger, 2021; Micevski, Diamantopoulos, & Erdbrügger, 2021; Roth & Romeo, 1992). Companies often leverage these associations in their marketing strategies, using symbols, colours, and other cues to highlight the country of origin of their products. However, if there is no positive association between the category of product and COO, companies may try to downplay or hide the country of origin to avoid any negative associations that could hurt sales (Bartosik-Purgat & Wysocka, 2017). One example of this is the German brand Bruno Banani, which produces perfumes, shoes, and clocks, among other products. The brand name sounds Italian, which may create a more positive perception among consumers who associate Italy with fashion and luxury. Consumers may not be conscious of the product's manufacturing location, but they take into account other factors such as the brand's image and reputation when assessing the product before making a purchase. This view is shared by several researchers who suggest that consumers seek country-of-origin cues mainly for specific product categories (Khachaturian & Morganosky, 1999).

According to the literature, the COO effect is influenced by various factors, such as product category and development level (Ercan, 2010; Jiménez & San Martín, 2014; Wang & Yang, 2008). Certain stereotypes exist about specific product categories and their country of origin (Dekhili & D'Hauteville, 2009). Oumlil (2020) investigated the COO effects on different product categories. The study's analysis of data collected from Moroccan consumers revealed that certain countries were more favoured for specific product categories (Oumlil, 2020). Germany was favoured for automobiles, followed by Japan, the USA, and France. Japan was the most favoured for major and small appliances, cameras, and televisions, while France was most favoured for haute couture, followed by the USA

and East European nations and the UK. The USA was favoured for casual clothes, followed by France and developing nations. For wines, France was most favoured, followed by East European nations. Olumlil's (2020) findings support previous research that indicates products from developed countries are generally perceived as higher quality, and there is a bias against products from less advanced countries (Cateora, Graham, & Gilly, 2019; De Mooij, 2004). Overall, there is a need for further research to understand the relationship between COO effect and product category. Taking into consideration the aforementioned inferences, hypothesis 3 was formulated as:

**H3:** *The importance of the COO effect in young consumers' purchase decisions differs depending on product category.*

The COO effect refers to how consumers perceive and evaluate products from different countries based on their origin (Dekhili & D'Hauteville, 2009). The study conducted by Bartosik-Purgat (2018) among eight nationalities showed that young consumers in Poland and the Czech Republic are influenced by mental stereotypes perpetuated in mass media when making informed purchasing decisions. Consumers in these countries prefer to buy food originating in their own country, French cosmetics, shoes made in Italy, consumer electronics from Japan, and cars from Germany/Japan. Consumers in more developed countries (UK, Germany, France, Finland, Spain and Portugal) showed greater support for domestic products. These findings support previous research conducted by other scholars (Roth & Romeo, 1992; Ercan, 2010; Sharma, 2011; Jiménez & San Martín, 2014). The study also found a strong preference for domestic food across all surveyed groups, and a preference for French cosmetics, Japanese consumer electronics, and German cars. However, the preference for German cars changed in 2015, with a majority of respondents preferring Japanese cars. The clothes/footwear category showed the greatest variance, with most respondents choosing domestic origin for these products except for Poles, Czechs, and Germans.

Another study found that the respondents had a slight preference for buying local products instead of foreign ones, indicating a mild level of ethnocentrism (Saeed et al., 2013). However, when evaluating cosmetic products from the USA and France compared to Pakistani cosmetics, Pakistani consumers considered the foreign products to be more

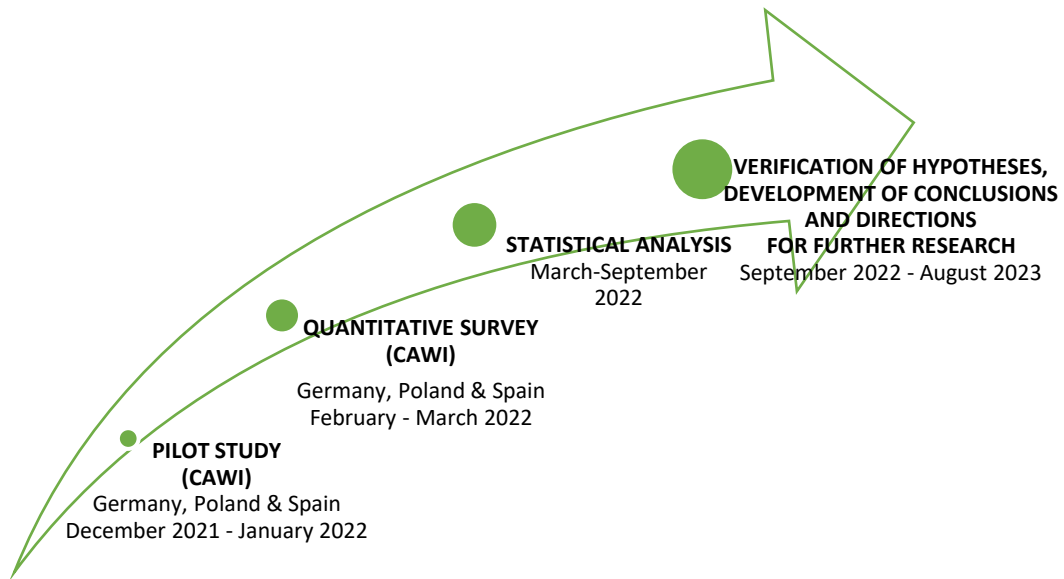
reliable, better value for money, better in appearance, and of better quality. This suggests that Pakistani consumers are not highly ethnocentric and would choose cosmetic products from developed countries over local ones if given the option. However, it should be noted that individuals with a higher level of ethnocentrism may still prefer local cosmetic products over foreign ones (Wang & Chen, 2004).

Furthermore, studies have shown that Taiwanese consumers hold US-made products in high regard and often prefer them over products made in Japan, China, or Taiwan (Semaan, Gould, Chao, & Grein, 2019). Consumers were willing to pay a higher price for luxury handbags and rated US-made refrigerators and sweaters higher than their Japanese and Taiwanese counterparts (Lin & Sternquist, 1994). However, in a separate evaluation, consumers were willing to pay more for a domestic cell phone compared to a foreign-made cell phone, suggesting a partial support for the preference reversal phenomenon (Semaan, Gould, Chao, & Grein, 2019). Based on the aforementioned considerations, hypothesis 4 was formulated as:

**H4:** *The nationality of young consumers influences the importance of COO effect in their purchase decisions.*

The dissertation focused on the literature study covering the period from 1965 to 2024, while the empirical research was conducted from February 2022 to March 2022. The empirical research plan is presented on Figure 3 to illustrate the time frames for conducting the quantitative research.

The empirical research on young Germans, Poles and Spaniards' purchasing decisions including the COO effect on chosen products' categories was conducted firstly as a pilot questionnaire in February 2022, and secondly as the main form of data collection in March 2022. Young consumers were defined as individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 who were either financially dependent on their parents, part-time students balancing education with employment, or financially independent. Although the age range for young consumers may differ across countries, the dissertation focused on Generation Z, which includes individuals born between 1997 and 2004.



**Figure 3. Timetable for empirical studies**

Source: own elaboration.

The **pilot study** covered a total of 30 young individuals. The respondents constituted 10 Germans, 10 Poles and 10 Spaniards. They were all students. As the research method, Computer-Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) was used. Young consumers were invited to the pilot study via e-mail with the link to the survey questionnaire. A non-random (purposive) sampling method in the pilot study was used. Having gathered feedback, the final version of the questionnaire was created.

The **main empirical research** was conducted among 1617 respondents from Germany, Poland and Spain. There were 517 Germans, 553 Poles and 547 Spaniards. The survey questionnaire was also prepared in the CAWI research method. A non-random (purposive) sampling method for the main empirical research was used. It means that only consumers with specific criteria were able to take part in the research. The criteria were the age between 18 and 25, and the origin of the respondents, such as Germany, Poland and Spain. The use of a non-random sampling method in the study means that the results cannot be generalized to the young population in those countries.

It is important to add that the survey questionnaire was first prepared in the Polish version. However, to cater to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the participants, the research questionnaire was translated into their respective native languages. It was thus subsequently translated in to German and Spanish to attract young consumers to take part in the research. To avoid errors and inconsistencies that may arise from language and

contextual differences, a back translation procedure was employed during the questionnaire's creation phase (Craig & Douglas, 2006; Rašković, Ding, Škare, Došen, & Žabkar, 2016). Each translated language version was double-checked by two independent translators to be sure that it would be understandable for respondents no matter the language version.

The structure of the dissertation has been subordinated to its main objective and consists of an introduction, a conclusion and four chapters. Chapter 1 is the theoretical part with an analysis of consumer behaviour, while Chapters 2 and 3 describe the theoretical and empirical aspects of the country of origin effect and the definition of young consumers. Chapters present the current state of knowledge about the issues raised in the literature and the aim is to present the relationship between the COO effect, product category, and the origin of young consumers. Chapter 4 describes the methodology and results of the empirical research. At the end of the dissertation, there are appendices containing the survey questionnaire in Polish, English, Spanish, and German. In addition, graphic presentations of the research results and all tables with the statistical calculations are included.

Chapter 1 provides a thorough understanding of the review of definitions of consumer behaviour and a division of consumers. This section outlines the stages involved in the consumer decision-making process. What is more, a critical review of the comprehensive purchasing decision process models is exposed. In addition, it describes the types of consumers purchasing decisions and the classification of the factors influencing consumer decisions, e.g., COO effect which is the fundamental term of this dissertation. This chapter highlights a gap in the literature, as previous research has primarily focused on describing the consumer decision-making process, without specifically examining the behaviour of young consumers from Generation Z. Thus, it recognizes the need for a comprehensive definition of a consumer of Generation Z and its decision-making process.

In a need for a comprehensive view of the role of COO effect on consumer behaviour, Chapter 2 is entirely devoted to the description of this term. The review of COO effect definitions is presented and a new definition is proposed for the purposes of this dissertation. The chapter describes the factors of COO that are divided into the attributes and sources of information. It is worth indicating that those already mentioned elements can help in identifying the origin of the product and also influence consumers while making

purchase decisions. The study not only explains the elements of the COO effect but also categorizes them and presents a research framework. Chapter 2 presents the mobile application as a source of information for verifying the product origin which is adequate to the Generation Z attitudes toward using smartphones. The chapter identifies the influence of product categories on the COO effect. Additionally, the significance of COO effect and its impact on hybrid products and brands are exposed.

Chapter 3 starts with the classification of generations and their main characteristics. Then, the focus is shifted to Generation Z. The chapter indicates the definitions of young consumers but also displays the age range of Generation Z members. It is necessary to point out that the characteristics of the young consumer segment in the international arena have been exposed. What is more, the dissertation presents an analysis of the attitudes of consumers from Germany, Poland, and Spain towards domestic and foreign products. Chapter 3 presents the differences between the three chosen nationalities. After the review of the characteristics of Germans, Poles, and Spaniards, an attempt is made to present the key elements of purchasing decisions among the analysed nationalities. The chapter concludes with an explanation of what are the most influential COO elements among the analysed Generation Z members.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to investigating the interactions among the different elements associated with the COO effect, as discussed in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. It describes the research process in depth. The results of the empirical research are presented and compared with other researchers concerned in this branch of knowledge (scientific discussion). Furthermore, chapter 4 is devoted to attempts at empirical confirmation of research hypotheses set in the dissertation. It contains a description of the methodology adopted and the results of the quantitative research conducted. this part states the limitations of the current research.

The dissertation ends with conclusions resulting from the theoretical considerations and the conducted empirical research and explores the usage for managerial decision-making. Finally, this part gives some suggestions for future research and implications for academia and businesses have been exposed which can be taken advantage of as an application value based on the gathered data about young consumers, Generation Z from Germany, Poland, and Spain.



## **CHAPTER 1. PURCHASING DECISIONS IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: A THEORETICAL BASIS**

### **1.1. Consumer and consumer behaviour process – interpretation and significance**

#### **1.1.1. Consumer**

Companies operating in a competitive market economy place significant emphasis on the consumers, who are at the centre of their focus (Lim, Kumar, Pandey, Verma, & Kumar, 2022; Sethna & Blythe, 2016). In the past, merchants were able to maintain regular and personal interaction with their customers, enabling them to have a comprehensive understanding of their preferences and requirements in regards to their goods. As the market and distribution networks developed, such contact almost disappeared and this informal source of information was replaced by professional consumer research (Chenarides, Grebitus, Lusk, & Printezis, 2020). Knowledge of consumers' behaviour, their personality, motivation, market perception, and attitudes are, from a marketing point of view, extremely important. This is what allows manufacturers in the marketplace to understand where the demand for specific products comes from (or does not come from), predict the direction of its changes and, subsequently, adjust not only the product but also the marketing message, which can help to meet the needs of the consumer and thus achieve success in sales in highly competitive markets.

It is worth mentioning that both consumer and producer play an important role in the market; they are bound to each other in an economic and marketing relationship. This is why researchers pay close attention to a certain group of consumers and then focus on their behaviour and habits (Crosta et al., 2021; Chenarides et al., 2020; Cross, 1997; Maison, 2019). It should be noted that consumers can be categorised in different ways. Consumers can be divided into buyers and users of the purchased products. The first group, buyers, purchase the product for themselves or another user, while users utilize or dispose of the product. It should be noted that in this dissertation, the attention is paid to individual consumers who buy and use the purchased products for their own or their family's needs.

When taking into consideration consumer behaviour in respect to the above division of consumers into groups, it is necessary to point out a few important details (Bombol, 2006; Burnett, 2008; Kieźel, 2000; Malczyńska-Biały, 2017):

- a person making a purchase is not always a user of a purchased product, and a user is not always the buyer of the product;
- a consumer is a broader concept than a user; they can use and also perform other activities: make decisions, purchase, utilize used goods etc.;
- a term 'consumer' is not the same as 'buyer' and not every buyer is a consumer;
- a consumer is a final user of the product and as an entity of behaviour, can act both individually and in groups.

All the above considerations indicate that in the literature, the concept of 'consumer' is accompanied by similar terms as customer, buyer (purchaser), user and payer (Bon & Pras, 2001; Schiffman & Kanuk, 1995; Zalega, 2014). The term 'consumer' is therefore not equivalent to the term 'buyer' but is broader than 'user'. The consumer, unlike the user, also performs other activities: makes decisions, makes a purchase, utilizes goods, etc. (Kiezel, 2010).

It is also important to notice that not every buyer is a consumer. For instance, the buyer is a person who buys food for other people but does not satisfy own needs, i.e. uses of this good (Karwowski, 1997). Kotler, Keller, and Chernev (2021) define a buyer as an individual, organization or group that purchases goods, services, or ideas for personal or business use. In Kotler's definition, the buyer can be either an end-user or an intermediary who purchases goods on behalf of another party. According to Bon & Pras (2001) and Williams (1976) these terms cannot, therefore, be used interchangeably. For instance, a person who buys a product is not necessarily a consumer, whereas the buyer (purchaser) and the payer are usually the same person. The buyer is a person who buys, the payer is a person who finalises the purchase and the consumer is a person who utilizes the product or service. According to Kiezel (2010) a buyer is a person who buys goods on the market to meet their own consumption needs or the needs of others. Likewise, a buyer is a person who buys a particular product, although it does not have to be intended exclusively for use by that person (Kufel & Mruk, 1998). Diamantopoulos, Fritz, and Hildebrandt (2012) use the term "buyer" to refer to individuals or organizations that engage in the process of purchasing goods or services. Users, however, are people who use the product, regardless of whether they have chosen and/or purchased the product themselves. Shimp (2010) defines user as someone who actually uses or consumes the product or service, rather than simply purchasing or possessing it. The user is any economic entity that may be effectively or potentially interested in a product or service (Kufel & Mruk, 1998).

One other term needs to be defined at this juncture: the customer. It should be noted that companies on the market should be aware of the dual character of the role of customers. The customer role is important in marketing because it highlights the fact that customers' needs and wants may differ depending on which role they are currently playing. For example, a customer may be price-sensitive when making a purchase decision as a buyer, but quality-conscious when evaluating the product as a user (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006). On the one hand, they can be consumers, the buyers who purchase the product or service, but on the other hand, they can be just the supporters of the purchase. What is more, a customer is a person interested in the product of the brand or the company (Mruk, 2012). For instance, in a clothes shop there are many customers but, depending on their roles, they can be a consumer, user or buyer. It depends on the purpose of the purchase. The customer (client) is any business entity (person, company or institution) that is potentially interested in purchasing a given product (Kieźel, 2000). By contrast, according to Rudzewicz (2018) a customer is an entity that buys the product and does not have to be a user. According to Fardon, Adcock and Prokopiw (2005) a customer is a person or organization that obtains goods or services. Datta (2016) defines a customer as a person or group that buys a product or service for their own or for use in their business. This definition emphasizes the transactional nature of the customer-seller relationship, where the customer provides payment in exchange for the goods or services they receive. It should be indicated that a customer may also be a consumer if they are the ones who ultimately use or consume the product or service they have purchased (Datta, 2016). However, a consumer does not necessarily have to be a customer if they have not directly engaged in a transaction with the seller or provider.

All these definitions notwithstanding, customer and consumer are understood synonymously in a vast bulk of the literature (e.g. McDonald, 2006; McLaughlin, 2009). This discourse of 'consumers' and 'customers' assumes an entity that is able to rationally access services through the market, and 'buy' services in an effective and efficient way to meet their own needs, irrespective of whether the provider is a state-provided or private service (Fardon, Adcock, & Prokopiw, 2005; McDonald, 2006; McLaughlin, 2009). The dissertation mentions customers to justify the meaning of this term in the literature, however, in the next chapters the attention will be paid to the consumer. To have transparency in defining a consumer, the Table 1 was prepared, where the review of consumer's interpretation is showed.

**Table 1. Definitions of consumer**

<b>Author/s</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Antonides & Raaij (2004)	A consumer refers to an individual or a collective entity that engages in the acquisition of products or services for personal or household utilization, driven by the purpose of satisfying their needs and desires.
Smyczek & Sowa (2005)	A consumer is an individual entity that participates in the act of consumption, primarily focused on utilizing the goods they have purchased in order to fulfil their own personal needs and desires.
Sobol (2005)	A consumer is a buyer of the products or services or the user of some resources or goods.
Vicentin (2008)	A consumer is an individual or a collective group that fulfils their needs by utilizing the goods and services produced within the process of production.
Kieźel (2010)	A consumer is an individual who experiences a sense of need or desire for consumption, leading them to acquire a product through a purchase or other means. This acquisition allows them to fulfil the perceived need and consume or utilize the product. This need is a fundamental aspect throughout the entire consumption process, encompassing the pre-purchase stage, the actual purchase, and the post-purchase stage.
Schiffman & Kanuk (2010)	A consumer is an individual or a group of people who engage in the act of purchasing and utilizing goods and services with the purpose of fulfilling their needs and desires.
Directive of the European Parliament and the Council (2011)	A consumer is any individual who engages in activities not associated with commercial, economic, trade, or freelance endeavours.
Usunier & Lee (2012)	A consumer refers to an individual or a group of individuals who acquire and make use of goods or services in order to satisfy their personal or collective needs and desires.
Datta (2016)	A consumer is an individual who engages in the utilization or consumption of a product or service.
Correal Valbuena (2017)	A consumer is an individual who is considering, or has already bought a particular product from a variety of options available.
Solomon (2018)	A consumer is an individual who experiences a need or desire, engages in the purchase of a product, and subsequently goes through the post-purchase stage where they dispose of or use up the product.
Rudzewicz (2018)	A consumer typically refers to an individual who, in their personal capacity and not as part of any business or professional activity, carries out legal actions and transactions.
Kumar & Sharma (2019)	A consumer is an individual who, in exchange for a payment or promise of payment, either fully or partially, acquires products or utilizes services. This may also include situations where payment is made through a deferred payment scheme.
Comănescu (2019)	A consumer, whether an individual or a legal entity, exhibits a tendency towards making diverse purchases of tangible products or services. In the present era of global marketing, the concept of a consumer has gained a new significance, transitioning seamlessly from traditional offline purchasing to the emerging realm of online consumerism.

Source: own elaboration based on Antonides & Raaij, 2004; Smyczek & Sowa, 2005; Kieźel, 2010; Directive of the European Parliament and the Council, 2011; Usunier & Lee, 2012; Datta, 2016; Correal Valbuena, 2017; Rudzewicz, 2018; Solomon, 2018; Vicentin, 2008; Kumar & Sharma, 2019; Comănescu, 2019.

Looking further into the above definitions of consumer, it should be noted that the fundamental element in the definition is to satisfy a need. Some researchers relate it to purchase of the product (e.g. Correal Valbuena, 2017; Kiezel, 2010) and the others related it to products and services (e.g. Sobol, 2005). Others extend this definition to meeting a need is a process of three stages, i.e. pre-purchase stage, purchase and post-purchase stage (e.g. Kiezel, 2010). It is important to indicate that some researchers claim that the definition of consumer should cover the disposal of the product (e.g. Solomon, 2018). Others add that purchased products or services should be on the personal use or household (e.g. Antonides & Raaij, 2004). Taking into consideration the above definitions, in the dissertation a consumer is defined as: *an individual who engages in the act of purchasing and utilizing various products*. Consumers make decisions regarding the acquisition of items that meet their needs or desires. This interpretation is connected with the survey questionnaire of the empirical research in this dissertation (see chapter 4) that is focused on the purchase decisions of the products within a year among four selected categories. Thus, the dissertation supports the definition that consumer is someone who buys and uses the product to have a transparent information about the chosen products.

### **1.1.2. Consumer behaviour**

In the past sellers only communicated face to face with their consumers in order to understand their needs. Over time, it has been noted that companies and the market have grown significantly and direct contact with the buyer has been replaced by research about consumers (Didia & Ogonu, 2017; Jisana, 2014; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

To understand consumer behaviour, it is necessary to focus on the essence and the nature of consumer needs. The starting point is always realizing the need or overcoming a lack of something (Kiezel, 2003; Peter & Olson, 2010; Pohorille, 1980). The need is a major stimulus for human activity, which leads to the elimination of an unpleasant state of imbalance and motivates efforts to restore internal comfort; stimuli which, in turn, help to satisfy needs (Skowron & Sak-Skowron, 2017; Gutkowska & Ozimek, 2005). It is treated as one of the elements of broadly understood human behaviour which is related to the purchase and consumption of tangible and intangible goods (Rudzewicz, 2018). The lack may be caused by external factors, e.g., advertising, the perception of a given product by

someone else, an increase in income etc., or internal, e.g., experience from previous usage (Pilgrimieni et al., 2020; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015; Mazur, 2013).

Consumer behaviour is an integral part of human activity and people have always felt needs and met them (Carrington, Neville, & Whitwell, 2014; Barmola & Srivastava, 2010; Hu, Filieri, Acikgoz, Zollo, & Rialti, 2023). However, academic research on behaviour has been conducted since the middle of the twentieth century so it is relatively young field. Development of the field of consumers' behaviour has been divided into seven phases by two researchers, Antonides and van Raaij (2003). Each stage, they argue, was concerned with a specific subject or theory. The authors distinguish: pre-scientific stage, research on motivation, explanations in terms of single concepts, great theories, concepts of information processing, approaching consumer behaviour in terms of emotions, and understanding consumer behaviour in terms of sensations (Antonides & Raaij, 2003).

The pre-scientific stage lasted until 1940, during which consumer behaviour was monitored, discussed from a philosophical and social point of view. At the time Veblen (1967) studied the phenomenon of spectacular consumption, and Tarde (1989) formed the foundation for economic psychology (Drakopoulos & Katselidis, 2017; Katz, 2006; Tarde, 1989; Veblen, 1971).

A second phase (1940-1964) saw research on motivation (Bryan & Sell, 2011; Bowlby, 1973; Bretherton, 1992). For example, Dichter (1965) adopted the psychoanalytical theory of Freud to study consumer behaviour (Bowlby, 1973; Bretherton, 1992). The tendency of the 1960s was to explain consumer behaviour through individual concepts. Examples include personality, perceived risk and cognitive dissonance, which was used in isolation from others to explain and predict some part of consumer behaviour.

The next stage was between 1966 and 1972, when great theories arose (Bowbrick, 1996; Madhavan & Chandrasekar, 2015). The authors tried to comprehensively capture consumer behaviour by creating models that reflect them<sup>2</sup>. In the 1970s, the focus was on processing consumer information (Ajzen, 1993). During that time Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) created a theory of attitudes. In the 1980s, researchers focused on cognitive processes and the role of emotions in consumer behaviour (Dimov, Marewski, & Schooler, 2013; Prezenski, Brechmann, Wolff, & Russwinkel, 2017; Ajzen, 1985).

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<sup>2</sup> Models of consumer behaviour were proposed by many researchers. Some models are described in sub-chapter 1.1.3. of this dissertation.

The 1990s brought the interest of researchers to the area of consumption, self-expression through consumption and epicureanism (Dijst, Farag, & Schwanen, 2008). The real flourishing of research on consumer behaviour occurred when researchers turned their attention to marketing activities (Azevedo, Pereira, Ferreira, & Pedroso, 2008; Kroeber-Riel, 1992; Wohlfeili & Whelan, 2006), explaining that consumer behaviour and consumption are not only about buying and owning but also about having experiences and involving emotions in those processes (Azevedo, et al., 2008; Wohlfeili & Whelan, 2006).

In the 2000s, consumer behaviour was related mostly to the economic activity of the individual; a person becomes a consumer, undertaking economic activity in the sphere of consumption. This field of knowledge was a subject of reflection not only in marketing or economics but also in scientific disciplines such as sociology, psychology (experimental<sup>3</sup>, clinical and social), biology, physiology, sociology, semiotics, demography, history and cultural anthropology (Olejniczuk-Merta, 2009; Solomon et al., 2010; Hu et al., 2023). For example, scholars in biology and physiology have examined the neurological and physiological processes underlying consumer decision-making, such as how the brain processes information and how physiological responses affect consumer behaviour (Plassmann, Venkatraman, Huettel, & Yoon, 2015; Rangel, Camerer, & Montague, 2008). Sociologists have explored how social norms, values, and culture shape consumer behaviour, while semioticians have studied the ways in which signs, symbols, and language influence consumer perceptions and meanings. Demographers and historians have examined consumer behaviour over time and how it has changed with demographic shifts and historical events, while cultural anthropologists have studied how consumer behaviour varies across cultures and societies. Nowadays, some researchers focus on how social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram influence consumer behaviour (Javed, Tučková, & Jibril, 2020; Loxton et al., 2020). There is also extended research on cross-cultural consumer behaviour and their key research directions for the future (Hu et al., 2023; Magalhaes, Çakmakçı, Campo, Çakmakçı, Makishi, Silva, & Trindade, 2023).

The multilateral nature of the research on consumer behaviour and its diversity are the fundamental reasons for the numerous definitions in the literature highlighting various aspects of the above-mentioned behaviours. Polish authors (e.g. Kieźel, 2003; Szczepański,

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<sup>3</sup> Experimental psychology began to achieve significant successes in the 1920s. More about experimental psychology write Erdfelder (2010); Meiser (2011); Stahl (2014); Voss, Nagler, & Lerche (2013).

1981; Pohorille, 1980) indicate, in particular, the real dimension of actions undertaken by consumers. The objective of such activities is the means of satisfying consumer needs, which are known as indispensable motivators of behaviours. However, others claim that besides obtaining the means of consumption and meeting needs, it is important to assess the accuracy of the decisions made (Foxall, Oliveira-Castro, James, & Schrezenmaier, 2011). Table 2 presents the comprehensiveness of this area and the wide scope that it covers.

**Table 2. Review of definitions of consumer behaviour**

Author/s	Definition
Hansen (1972)	Consumer behaviour as the totality of consumer actions and perceptions that make up the decision to choose a product, make that choice and consume. Consumer behaviour consists of three types of reactions: communication, choice and consumption.
Fabiunke, Fischer, Jager, & Koppert (1976)	Consumer behaviour is based on the individual perception of needs and covers all objectively and subjectively defined, rational and emotional, conscious and unconscious actions in preparation to make decisions in the consumer goods market and consumption over time. According to this definition, consumer behaviour a person's attitude during in the process of the intention to buy and consume, and subsequently during the transformation of a need into a demand and in the course of meeting it (or failure to satisfy) as a result of a decision to buy or use (or not) a good or service.
Schiffman & Kanuk (1978)	Consumer behaviour as action related to the search, purchase, use and evaluation of goods and services, that have the capacity to meet needs.
Pohorille (1980)	Consumer behaviour is defined as a way in which the consumer prioritizes the needs, selects goods and services to satisfy them and uses the goods.
Szczepański (1981)	Consumer behaviour consists of all the activities and procedures of the individual aimed at acquiring the means to meet the needs and the general ways of handling of them.
Mowen (1987)	Consumer behaviour is a process or cycle, which is divided into several stages such as sourcing, consuming and disposing of the product.
Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard (1993)	Consumer behaviour is all about the obtainment, the usage and disposal of products and services, together with decisions preceding and conditioning these activities. It follows from this definition that consumer behaviour consists of two types of reactions: purchase and consumption.
Kaufman (1995)	Consumer behaviour is all kinds of people's behaviour - at home, in a shop or even on the street, so wherever they think they are shopping, buying or using the products they buy.
Rudnicki (1996)	Consumer behaviour is the whole range of activities and the consumer's perception of the choice decision product, making this choice and buying it.
Belch & Belch (1998)	Consumer behaviour is defined as the processes and activities people engage in when searching for, selecting,



	purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy their needs and desires.
Falkowski & Tyszka (2001)	Consumer behaviour encompasses everything that precedes, occurs during and after the acquisition of goods and services.
Peter & Olson (2002)	Consumer behaviour concerns thoughts, feelings and actions that people negotiate in the consumption process, as well as environmental factors that influence these thoughts, feelings and actions.
Kieźel (2003)	Consumer behaviour is a coherent sum of activities and proceedings related to making choices in the process of satisfying consumer needs in specific social, cultural and economic conditions.
Antonides & Raaij (2003)	Consumer behaviour includes mental and physical activities (their reasons and causes) of units and small groups. These activities concerns on buying, using, maintaining and disposing of a product (consumption cycle). They are also associated with household production (DIY). Consumer behaviour allows consumers to realise the goals and values, achieve satisfaction and prosperity, basing on short- and long-term effects but also on individual and social consequences.
Hoyer & MacInnis (2004)	Consumer behaviour comprises all people's decisions relating to the purchase, consumption and disposal of goods and services over time.
Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, & Hogg (2010)	Consumer behaviour is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.
Zalega (2012)	Consumer behaviour is a set of actions and activities to meet the needs of a consumer unit or group by acquiring goods and services. The actions are clearly correlated with the system of preferences and the manner of usage of purchased goods.
Valaskova, Kramarova, & Bartosova (2015)	Consumer behaviour include all consumers' actions and perceptions that prepare to make a decision of a given product, to choose of that product and to follow consumption process.
Kotler (2016)	Consumer behaviour is a of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society

Source: the author's elaboration based on Hansen, 1972; Fabiunke, Fischer, Jager, & Koppert, 1976; Schiffman & Kanuk, 1978; Pohorille, 1980; Szczepański, 1981; Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1993; Kaufman, 1995; Rudnicki, 1996; Belch & Belch, 1998; Falkowski & Tyszka, 2001; Peter & Olson, 2002; Antonides & Raaij, 2003; Kieźel, 2003; Hoyer & MacInnis, 2004; Bywalec, 2010; Zalega, 2012; Valaskova, Kramarova, & Bartosova, 2015.

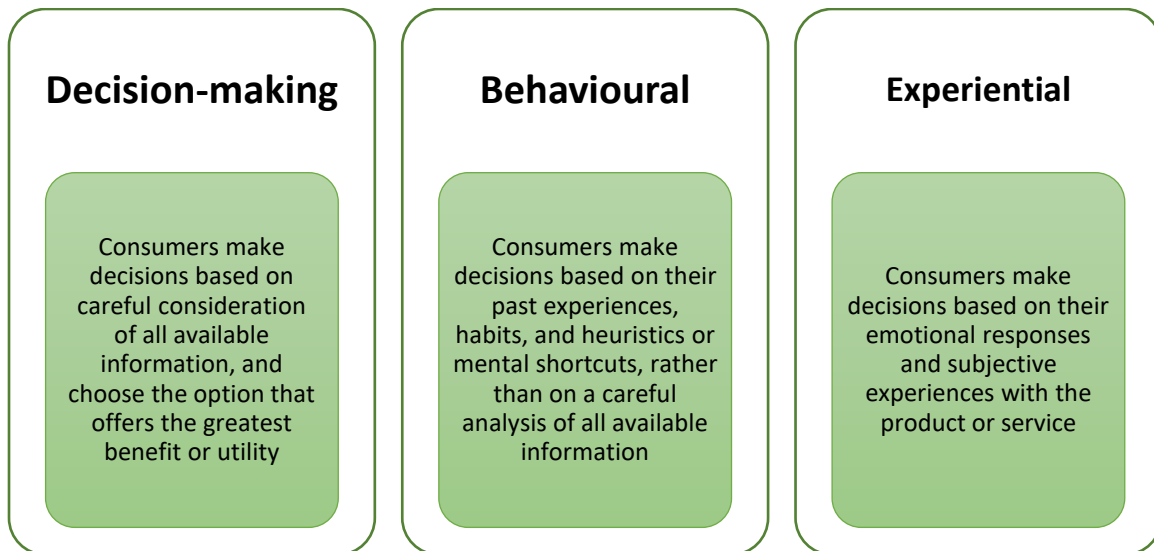
It is important to notice that the behaviour of consumers on the market can be defined in terms of different approaches. Looking further into the above definitions (Table 2), it should be noted that over time there are modifications of interpreting consumer behaviour. Researchers differently define the process of duration. For example, Engel,

Blackwell and Miniard (1993) defines it as preceding decision processes, obtaining, use and disposition. A similar definition is present Hoyer and MacInnis (2004), however, instead of obtaining the authors point out that this is purchase of the product. Mowen (1987) also treats consumer behaviour as a process. The first stage consists of all activities and thought operations leading to and connected with, the purchase of a product. The stage includes acquiring and comparing available information and finally selecting and purchasing the product. Consumption refers to the current use of the product and the accompanying feelings of the consumer. The last stage of behaviour is called disposition. This refers to the activities and thought processes immediately after consumption. It is primarily related to the level of satisfaction felt by the consumer, as well as to the decision to about how to get rid of the packaging and the product residues (Aschemann-Witzel, Hooge, Amani, Bech-Larsen, & Oostindjer, 2015; Mowen, 1987). It is important to note that the different stages of this process vary depending on the object of purchase, the consumer's socio-economic situation or the phase of the family's life cycle. The role of other people in the decision-making process also changes (Turka & Sasan, 2015).

It should be noted that Hansen (1973) distinguishes three types of reactions in consumer behaviour: purchase, consumption, and communication. Hansen's approach also considers the mental dimension of consumer behaviour, including motivation, perception, and decision-making, which complement the observable actions of consumers. However, it should be noted that Hansen's approach does not include the disposal of products in his definition of consumer behaviour. Additionally, it is important to focus on object of enquiry in above definitions. Some researchers pay attention to individuals or single consumers (Hansen, 1972; Zalega, 2012), others take into consideration the people as an object of research (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2004; Kaufman, 1995; Valaskova, Kramarova, & Bartosova, 2015). Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg (2010) analyse individualists and groups. It should be also indicated that the definitions differ from the domain of choices that are corresponding to products and goods or services. For example, Belch and Belch (1998) connect to both goods and services, however, Kaufman (1995) focus only on the products.

Having in mind all the above definitions, the dissertation explains consumer behaviour as a process of discovering and evaluating the need, the moment of purchase or obtain the product, the usage and its disposal. It is necessary to add that if the need is satisfied in emotional, cultural and economic conditions, the purchase of the product can be repeated.

In addition, the above definitions of consumer behaviour highlight the issue of choice. In marketing literature, consumer behaviour is analysed from three perspectives (described in Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Three perspectives of consumer behaviour by Mowen**

Source: author's own elaboration based on Mowen, 1988.

In fact, these perspectives are more complementary than substitutive and highlight different aspects of the purchasing process. However, taking the **decision-making perspective** as a starting point for current considerations, it is reasonable to consider that consumer choice is a complex and multi-stage process (Harcar, Spillan, & Kucukemiroglu, 2005; Mowen, 1988). The consumption and accompanying consumer behaviour are characterised by the dynamics of change, interactions and exchanges within the environment (Peter & Olson, 2002; Wu, 2003). These alterations apply to individuals and consumer groups, but also the whole society. The renewability and the constant emergence of new needs is the reason for such changes. This takes place in the conditions of market exchange, in which consumers spend their resources (money, time, knowledge, skills, work), in return receiving means to meet perceived needs. On a micro-social scale, consumer behaviour is therefore part of the consumption process (Kieźel, 2000). It is important to note that consumer behaviour can also be defined as the preparation of decision-making about a chosen product, taking into consideration individual scale of preferences and reality available purchasing power and making a purchase (Woś, Rachocka & Kasperek-Hoppe, 2004).

The **behavioural perspective** challenged the decision-making approach by focusing on the influence of environmental stimuli on consumer behaviour. This perspective emphasized the direct impact of situational factors, societal norms, and environmental contingencies on consumer actions, without relying on internal processes (Westaby, Probst, & Lee, 2010). Environmental stimuli, such as building design, seating arrangements, lighting, and music, were found to shape consumer behaviour. Operant conditioning and classical conditioning were identified as behavioural influence techniques, explaining how consumers respond to environmental reinforcers and the effects of advertising (Westaby, Probst, & Lee, 2010). The behavioural influence perspective underscores the significance of external factors in shaping consumer behaviour and suggests that these stimuli can directly influence consumer actions, potentially leading to increased spending.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, consumer researchers challenged the traditional decision-making approach, which led to the emergence of the **experiential perspective**. This new perspective focused on the role of emotions, leisure activities, and entertainment in consumer behaviour (Kranzbühler, Kleijnen, Morgan, & Teerling, 2017). It examined phenomena such as reactance, impulse buying, and variety seeking. Reactance refers to the motivational state when consumers perceive their freedom to be threatened. Impulse buying is the purchase of goods without prior recognition of a problem or intention to buy. Variety seeking is the tendency to buy new brands despite being satisfied with previous ones, often driven by a desire to reduce boredom (Forlani, Buratti, & Pencarelli, 2018). The experiential perspective shifted the focus of consumer research to explore these emotional and experiential aspects of consumption, leading to the development of new theories and insights.

Consumer behaviour can also be divided into rational and irrational (Krestyanpol, 2022; Foxall, Oliveira-Castro, James, & Schrezenmaier, 2011). Rational behaviour is characterized by a systematic and logical decision-making process (Uzonwanne, 2016). Consumers who exhibit rational behaviour carefully evaluate the alternatives, weigh the pros and cons, and choose the option that maximizes their utility or satisfies their needs (Sofi, Reshi, & Sudha, 2023). This approach assumes that consumers have access to complete information and are capable of making informed decisions based on that information (Artinger, Gigerenzer, & Jacobs, 2022). While, irrational behaviours deviate from this pattern, because they are inconsistent, contrary to the economic interest of the consumer, with no logic of

profitability (Krestyanpol, 2022). It should be remembered that this type of behaviour by the consumers themselves do not have to be seen as irrational (Damasio, Tranel, & Bechara, 2018). It is usually assumed that the group of irrational consumer behaviours include, among others impulsive, demonstrative, compensatory and shopaholic behaviour - consumer behaviour, which is based on the problem of addiction to the act of purchase (Adamczyk, 2021).

It is necessary to note that purchase situations may differ in terms of the importance that consumers attribute to the products they purchase and the degree to which they are involved in the decision-making process. Some of the choices cannot be made in the same way because of the difference in product categories. The final shape of the decision-making process depends on the type and complexity of the consumer decision (Skowron & Sak-Skowron, 2017; Stankevich, 2017). Decisions can be made by different people who assume specific roles as the buying process proceeds and they interact actively to make the purchase decision. Table 3 presents the roles played by consumers.

**Table 3. Roles played by consumers**

(Kotler, 1983; Garbarski, 1998; Karwowski, 1997)	(Mowen, 1987; Turka & Sasan, 2015)	Related functions with the role
Initiator	Gate keeper	A person recognises the need to buy the product, collects information about the product and controls the flow of information or access to other groups (e.g. family) involved in the buying process For instance, a teenager may act as an initiator for a motorcycle that they want for commuting, a housewife may feel the need for a higher capacity refrigerator, or a busy executive may feel the need for apparel that is comfortable and stylish.
Influencer	Influencer	A person provides product information, helps to specify the requirements, evaluates the alternatives and thus affects the choice. Influencers may be a part of the reference group of the initiator, experts in the particular categories, people who provide technical input, retailers, or other such individuals from whom information is sought. Influencers vary in the extent to which they can change or persuade players in the decision-making process. A teenager may consider their friends to be more important in suggesting what brands to buy or what features to evaluate before buying, more than their parents.
Decider	Decider	A person makes decisions, resolves conflicts, has financial resources, ultimately decides whether, what and how much to buy, when and where to buy. For instance, the wife could be the decider or the husband can be dominant. In both these decisions, much depends on the interplay of the various players involved in the decision-making process. The husband and wife can jointly negotiate which washing machine to buy if both have an equal say in the buying process. In the case of the executive, they play multiple roles of being an initiator, payer, decider, buyer and user.

Buyer	Buyer	This person actually makes a purchase. Visiting stores, making payments and effecting delivery. This person may take a major role in the negotiations on price and conditions of supply. The teenager may purchase the scooter alone, with friends or with family members. The couple is likely to purchase the electronic device from the retailer, while the busy executive may shop alone or with friends or family.
-	Preparer	Transforms the product and makes it fit for consumption.
User	User	A person uses or consumes or requires the product or service in order to undertake their operational duties. A user may or may not be the initiator. The product can be used by an individual, or it may be used by a group. The teenager and the wife are the dominant users of the products that they have bought, but the products can be used by other members of the family as well.
-	Disposer	Determines when to stop using the product and what to do with it.

Source: the author's elaboration based on Kotler, 1983; Mowen, 1987; Karwowski, 1997; Garbarski, 1998; Turka & Sasan, 2015.

Participants playing these different roles influence the shopping process in various ways. It should be noted that people can play more than one role (De Bruijn & Ten Heuvelhof, 2018; Hermans & Thissen, 2009; Mowen, 1987). According to Khan (2004), a person can assume various roles and such positions depend on the purchased product and current situation. This is more likely to occur in the case of low-engagement products such as the purchase of a pencil, whilst in high-engagement products, there is a more transparent separation of buyers' roles. It is worth adding that identification of the role in the decision-making process is especially important for marketers, whose job it is to influence people to follow their trends (Skowron & Sak-Skowron, 2017; Stankevich, 2017; Khan, 2004).

It is important to highlight that a buyer is often not the only person who influences the decision, but also one who actually has the authority to make the ultimate decision (Turka & Sasan, 2015). The process of making decisions within a group is much more intricate and distinct from the decision-making process of individual consumers (Mowen & Minor, 2001). Mowen and Minor (2001) discuss how consumers' needs, motivations, and attitudes may vary depending on the context in which they are making a purchase, and how marketers can use this knowledge to develop effective marketing strategies. They also examine the impact of cultural and social factors on consumer behaviour, as well as the role of ethics and social responsibility in marketing.

With regard to the roles played by consumers, it is important to highlight one interesting area of knowledge concerning international markets: research on consumer behaviour (Cherubino et al., 2019; Jordão, Souza, Oliveira, & Giralaldi, 2017; Utkarsh & Medhavi, 2015; Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Yoo & Chon, 2008). Observing how people make purchasing

decisions and what motivates them to purchase the goods is not only important for those companies that prepare offers, but also for researchers who analyse the decision-making processes and the roles played by individual consumers. Attempts to find answers to questions about the hierarchy of needs or criteria for the rationality of consumer behaviour contribute to a better understanding of their behaviour, even in situations of significant alterations in the economy and, most recently, world affairs, e.g. during the COVID-19 pandemic (Yuen, Wang, Ma, & Li, 2020). What is more, the active participation of consumers as market actors in economic and social life makes constant research on their behaviour a necessity. It is safe to state that consumers are key drivers of the demand for goods and services in modern economies (Chenarides, Grebitus, Lusk, & Printezis, 2020; Kaynak & Kara, 2002; Loxton, Truskett, Scarf, Sindone, Baldry, & Zhao, 2020; Naeem, 2021).

In marketing analysis, a purchase is treated as a complex process which takes place in several stages, with the consumer selecting from general to strictly defined characteristics of a product (Hossain, Islam, & Hasan, 2021). Consumers' decisions can be influenced not only by internal but also external factors. Additionally, from a marketing perspective, the act of purchase is not the last stage. All the post-purchase activity affects consumer behaviour in the future so there is a probability that the consumer will make a decision to buy products again (Prasad & Ratna, 2021). Prasad and Ratna (2021) discuss the factors that influence post-purchase evaluation, such as product quality, satisfaction, and loyalty. What is more, the final effect of consumers' desire to meet their needs and expectations is the decision-making process (Liczmańska, 2013). According to Euromonitor International (2021), there is a trend towards personalization. Consumers are increasingly expecting personalized experiences, with retailers using data analytics to tailor their offerings to individual preferences.

It should be noted that the consumer behaviour has changed due to COVID-19 (Ali, Khan, Islam, & Akram, 2023; Svajdova, 2021; Taylor, 2021). During the pandemic, the online shopping increased, because of the lockdowns of physical stores or limited in their operations. Online sales increased across all categories, from groceries to clothing to home goods. Additionally, as the pandemic spread, consumers began stockpiling essential items like toilet paper, cleaning supplies, and non-perishable foods (Taylor, 2021). This behaviour was driven by fear and uncertainty about the future. It is important to add that with many people experiencing job losses or reduced income, consumers became more cautious

about their purchasing. Spending shifted away from non-essential items like travel, entertainment, and luxury goods (Svajdova, 2021). Furthermore, the pandemic highlighted the importance of health and wellness, and consumers began to prioritize products and services that promote physical and mental well-being. It might be indicated that irrational consumer behaviour before the pandemic has changed into rational during and after this difficult for everybody period of time (Ali, Khan, Islam, & Akram, 2023).

Drawing the above section together, in this dissertation, the attention should be paid on the individual consumer of a product. It is worth mentioning that the concepts of consumers and their behaviours are very broad and have changed due to COVID-19.

### **1.1.3. Models of consumer behaviour**

Consumer behaviour has been extensively researched since the early twentieth century and has undergone several developmental stages, resulting in various models proposed by many scholars (O'Shaughnessy, 1994; Nicosia, 1996; Kotler, 1999). It is not possible to create a holistic, comprehensive model of customer behaviour on the market. Instead, the partial models are analysed, systematized and described the customer's procedure from different perspectives and aspects (Skowron & Sak-Skowron, 2017; Schiffman & Kanuk, 1995). These models vary in complexity, but each one contains a series of assumptions and limitations due to the highly diverse community. It should be noted that the models are based on research and theories from various fields such as psychology, sociology, economics, and marketing. Furthermore, there are gaps in the knowledge and understanding of certain behaviours, leading to generalizations and simplifications in the models (Stankevich, 2017).

Consumer behaviour models can be interpreted as simplified schemes showing the relationships between different elements that make up consumer behaviour (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1995). They contain a number of variables that are mutually dependent, explaining the effect of a specific action (Światowy, 2006). Shahzad, Pasha and Ali (2021) pay attention to a specific sequence of variables that are present in some models; from fixed variables leading to awareness of the need, through preparation for purchase, after purchase and reactions in post-purchase evaluation. This allows consumer behaviour models to be treated as a sequential chain of interdependent activities (Śleszyńska-Świdorska, 2017). On



the one hand, some models focus on determinants of consumer behaviour and on interdependencies between determinants. On the other hand, some of them concentrate on consumer decision-making processes and the conditions accompanying the purchase. It is also worth highlighting the impact of the marketing tools employed by each company. These instruments affect relations between customers and a company so it is crucial to choose the model which will respectively correspond the consumer behaviour in a specific industry (Fotis, 2015).

It is important to add that according to Kieźel (2006), the term 'model of behaviours' is not interchangeable with 'patterns of behaviours'. Behavioural patterns reflect current market patterns and regularities of the behaviour of consumers via empirical evidence. These behaviours include consumer preferences which shape a hierarchy of needs and a structure of consumption. By contrast, a model is a simplified reflection of reality; is more theoretical, and only in functional terms can it be identified with a pattern of behaviour (Kieźel, 2006; Kędzior & Karcz, 1998).

Depending on the criterion adopted, different classifications are used in the literature on consumer behaviour and models are divided into simple and complex ones (Michalska-Dudek, 2017; Stankevich, 2017). The first group – simple models - refers to the basic determinants describing consumers' behaviour, which are the general characteristics of such behaviours. Simple models of consumer behaviour describe Armstrong & Kotler (2016), Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), Howard & Sheth (1969) and Stankevich (2017):

- black box models based on results obtained during direct observation factors associated with reactions and influencing consumer behaviour;
- decision-making models, showing the different stages of consumers' decision-making processes;
- personal variables models, which concentrate on internal determinants that shape consumer behaviour;
- hybrid models (decision-making-personal), showing the different stages of the decision-making process and at the same time highlighting the impact of internal consumer factors on the final outcome of this process.

Simple models enable researchers to only conduct very cursory considerations about consumer behaviours, which lead to the creation of gaps in analysis of consumers. Some models take into account internal and external variables, and this provide an accuracy of

the analysis and ability to better predict behaviour, but nevertheless still fail to pay attention to many details, as complex models do (Rahman & Noor, 2016; Taylor & Fujita, 2017).

The second group of models – complex models – attempt to provide answers in the context of constantly changing environmental and consumer needs. It is important to add that complex models, especially structural ones, focus on the decision-making process itself, but also place the emphasis on important conditions shaping the consumer's behaviour and the correlations between these conditions. Most of them are based on attitude to the market, with many models having a psychological basis (Jachnis & Terelak, 1998). The division into simple and complex models is very practical because it systematizes the models chronologically, and links them in groups according to the used concepts. According to this division, one can distinguish (Maciaszczyk, 2014; Michalska-Dudek, 2017):

- *Classical models of the consumer psyche* - focused on the overall description of human behaviour and less on the understanding of motives and goals actions and desires, or explaining or forecasting actions on the market. These models were not empirically tested, but based mainly on introspective studies in philosophical psychology, consisting of a description of subjective experiences and experiences of man (Lai & Ya-Shin, 2011).

- *Cognitive models of consumer behaviour* - based on the assumptions of cognitive psychology, they mainly focus on internal mental processes, including different elements of the cognitive process such as images, memory, attention and various variables influencing processes cognitive, e.g., personality, motivation, emotions, and random events. This group of models consists of information theory, theories of communication, theories of artificial intelligence and psychological decision theories (Dimov, Marewski, & Schooler, 2013; Prezenski et al., 2017; Yakın, Güven, David, Güven, Bărbuță-Mișu, Güven, Virlanuta, 2023).

The cognitive approach in psychology emerged to shift away from understanding humans solely in terms of energy and instead focus on the processes that occur during information processing in the human mind (Galalae & Voicu, 2013). This approach has been influenced by advancements in computer science, research on artificial intelligence, and theories explaining reactions through signal functions. Cognitive models include those focused on information theory, communication processes, information processing, and decision-making behaviour (Prezenski et al., 2017; Yakın et al., 2023).

- *Holistic models of consumer behaviour* - related to human psychology and aimed at a holistic, personal view of humans. Holistic models assume that human behaviour is not fully determined by the environment or experience in past. According to this assumption, a human being has the ability to create elements of reality on their own by making decisions, controlling actions and making elections (Galalae & Voicu, 2013; O'Shaughnessy & Holbrook, 1988). Decisions taken by consumers are an integral part of their behaviours. These decisions do not cause a one-off purchase but are instead a complex process that involves several phases. It is conditioned by many social and cognitive factors, which ultimately shape the choice made (Yakin et al., 2023).

Holistic models of consumer behaviour take their name from holistic and individualised insights from psychology. Accusations against the cognitive models, concerning the lack of overall coverage – including external consumer processes and groups of conditions – have led to the creation of new models which include both the achievements of cognitive psychology and the previously-missing socio-cultural aspects, which are key when analysing consumer behaviour (Americus et al., 2012).

It is important to note that there are various models based on making the final decision such as disjunctive, lexicographic, expected utility or ideal brand (Voss, Nagler, & Lerche, 2013; Hauser, Ding, & Gaskin, 2009; Erasmu, Bosgoff, & Rousseau, 2001). The disjunctive model enables consumers to eliminate products that do not meet their minimum level of requirements (Hauser, Ding, & Gaskin, 2009; Adamczyk, 2006; Rajagopal, Venkatesh, & Muthukrishnan, 2021), while the lexicographic model ranks product features based on their importance and consumers choose the product that is rated the highest based on the feature that appears first in the ranking (Voss, Nagler, & Lerche, 2013; Hauser, Ding, & Gaskin, 2009; Elrod, Johnson, & White, 2004). In the expected utility model, consumers balance the negative and positive characteristics of the products before choosing the one that has more positive features (Neumann & Morgenstern, 1944; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). The ideal brand model assumes that an individual's decision-making process is influenced by their ideal brand image, as well as their actual behaviour. The individual may choose an option that aligns with their ideal brand image, even if it is not the most rational choice based on their actual behaviour or preferences (Young & Rubicam, 1984).

With regards to this dissertation, the most widely recognized and relevant models of consumer behaviour were selected and are presented in Table 4: the Andreasen Model

(1965), Nicosia's model (1966), the Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell Multimediation Model (1968), the Howard-Sheth Model (1969), Black Box model by Kotler (1972), Mullen's and Johnson's model (1990), O'Shaughnessy's model (1994) and Rosania's model (1995).

**Table 4. Characteristics of chosen models of consumer behaviour**

Models	Characteristics
<b>The Andreasen Model (1965)</b>	Andreasen's model of consumer choice behaviour focuses on attitudes and their changes, which are influenced by exposure to various types of information over time. The model is based on specific conceptions about attitude formation and change drawn from social psychology. The disposition component is the central intervening variable in the model and is related to an individual's disposition towards each product or service. The model emphasizes information processing as the most salient feature of consumer decision-making and comprises seven major elements of the information processing cycle, including input stimuli, perception and filtration, disposition changes, outcome, selection decision, search decision, and no-action decision. The model accommodates repetitive decision behaviour through the concept of habit formation. The behavioural outcome of an attitude subsystem is action with respect to the attitude object, and the attainment of maximum positive valence in the disposition component of the attitude subsystem represents an attitude change. Compared to other models, Andreasen's model does not include other psychological constructs and individual characteristics, and much emphasis is placed on attitude components.
<b>Nicosia's model (1966)</b>	Nicosia's model is a closed cycle that emphasizes the process of information flow feedback and the interaction between a company and a consumer. It consists of four phases that a consumer passes through with increasing motivation to make a purchase, from the source of a message to the consumer attitude, search for and evaluation of means-ends relationships, transformation of motivation into an act of purchase, and storage and consumption that lead to experience with the brand. Feedback from the consumption experience can be transferred to the enterprise, leading to new knowledge of advertising messages and product policies, causing the process to be repeated and attitudes and needs to constantly change. However, the model's practical application is limited by difficulties in its evidence and the unclear linkage of its elements.
<b>The Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell Multimediational Model (1968)</b>	Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell developed a detailed consumer behaviour model that takes into account decision-making aspects, information flow, and environmental factors. The model consists of functional blocks, with the first being information input, which can be triggered by an external stimulus or a search for information. This activates an information processing block that compares the stimulus with short term memory and past experiences to identify the problem and initiate the decision-making process. There are five main phases in the model that a consumer goes through during the purchasing process. The first is the identification of the problem, which is triggered by the need and motivation to meet it. The second is the search for information to satisfy the need, using beliefs, knowledge, and experience. The third is the pre-purchase alternative evaluation, where the consumer filters, selects, and values the collected information to choose the most suitable alternative. The fourth phase is the purchase, which is influenced by various variables such as demographics, market situation, and promotional activities. Finally, the fifth phase is the post-purchase alternative evaluation, where the consumer feels the effects of their choice and can experience either satisfaction or dissonance. According to the model, the processes described in each phase are intuitive and not consciously undertaken by consumers. The model also takes into account environmental factors such as cultural norms and values, family, lifestyle, and circumstances that can affect the decision-making process. However, the model's high level of detail makes it complex and difficult to empirically verify.

<b>The Howard-Sheth Model (1969)</b>	<p>This model is widely regarded as a comprehensive model of consumer learning, and it is based on Hull's learning theory from 1943. Its main objective is to explain the decision-making process of consumers when making purchases, including their criteria for selecting products, purchasing motives, and product perception. The model assumes that consumers behave rationally when making purchases, and that the decision-making process is repetitive and influenced by stimuli from the environment.</p> <p>The model consists of four main groups of variables: input variables, hypothetical variables, output variables, and external variables. Input variables are stimuli from marketing activities and social environments and consist of significant stimuli, symbolic stimuli, and social incentives. Hypothetical variables include psychological variables that determine the consumer's behaviour when making purchasing decisions, such as perceptual constructions and learning processes. Output variables include purchase, intention, attitude, perception, brands, and attention. External variables have a significant impact on consumer decisions and are used in marketing activities as a segmentation criterion.</p> <p>This model is complex and requires empirical verification of each segment. The most commonly used methodology for estimation is regression modelling with the use of structural analysis. The model has initiated studies on the development of relations between the scope of information, purchase decision, the balance of the consumer's motivation, and the development of their satisfaction and loyalty.</p>
<b>Black Box model by Kotler (1972)</b>	<p>The model is divided into two stages. The first stage focuses on the characteristics of the consumers that affect their perception and response to stimuli. The second stage is the consumer's decision-making process, which influences their behaviour. The stimuli that affect purchasing decisions include price, quality, availability, type, service, opinions, and image. These stimuli make up the environment, which is a system that actively influences the human being, and refers to marketing stimuli that can be precisely controlled. The model provides data on the relationships between the stimuli and the observed reactions of the consumer, but it does not explain the mental processes that take place in the human mind. Therefore, it is limited in explaining human behaviour comprehensively, as it does not cover the mental state, emotions, mind, or personality. The intermediate variable introduced in the model determines the unobservable variables, mainly psychological consumer behaviour, such as motivation, perception, emotions, attitudes, personality, learning, cognitive processes, and the whole range of human consciousness connected with individual experience. The aim of this model is to identify and explain all relevant variables that have an influence on shaping final decisions, in order to eliminate the black box and replace it with a comprehensive understanding of the consumer.</p>
<b>Mullen's and Johnson's model (1990)</b>	<p>The main goal of this model is to explain how consumers receive and process information and how this information generates intentions that may lead to specific behaviours. This model assumes that human behaviour is an active transformation process rather than a simple coding of information. According to this model, a recipient receives internal or external stimuli, which are then analysed, systematized, and transformed by various personality properties, including mental properties such as perception, memory, and learning, as well as dynamic properties such as emotion and motivation. These properties interact and lead to the formulation of certain intentions or purposes in relation to the stimuli. This may result in specific consumer behaviour, but it does not necessarily mean that the consumer will buy the product. The internal personality patterns in this model are self-contained units, and the order, weighting, and mutual influences of one system on another are not specified. The model also acknowledges that the social and cultural contexts in which the consumer operates can significantly influence the process. However, the range and extent of this influence are difficult to determine.</p>

<b>O'Shaughnessy's model (1994)</b>	<p>This model focuses on the importance of consumer motivation, needs, and beliefs in driving purchasing behaviour. Needs are classified into three categories according to O'Shaughnessy (1994):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unsatisfied needs, which may be hidden or passive, arise when consumers are unaware of how to meet their goals or when they cannot afford products that would fulfil those needs.</li> <li>- Needs that are routinely met arise when consumers make habitual purchases. If the products do not differ, the purchase is made randomly, but if consumers have internal preferences, the purchase may be influenced by these preferences.</li> <li>- Needs that require reflection are satisfied by obtaining information and interpreting it. Consumers may base their purchase decisions on objective criteria such as technical and economic factors or on subjective criteria such as their internal preferences.</li> </ul>
<b>Rosania's model (1995)</b>	<p>Rosania's model of consumer decision-making process focuses on the consumer's psychological functions, individual characteristics, and post-purchase behaviour. The process begins with the appearance of a stimulus that creates motivation, leading to the identification of a need. The consumer then evaluates possible alternatives based on internal variables such as knowledge and experience, as well as external variables such as advertising and objective sources of information. This evaluation takes place within the context of the consumer's personality, perception, attitude, and motivation, leading to a purchasing decision. The final steps include specific behaviour and subsequent post-purchase evaluation that can influence future purchase decisions.</p>

Source: author's elaboration based on Engel, Kollat, & Blackwell, 1968; Howard & Sheth, 1969; Mullen & Johnson, 1990; O'Shaughnessy, 1994; Schiffman & Kanuk, 1995; Nicosia, 1996; Kotler, 1999; Światowy, 2006; Stasiuk & Maison, 2014.

It is worth pointing out that models exposed in Table 4 are the key to explain different aspects of consumer behaviour while buying goods on the market. Due to the multitude of existing models, in the dissertation only those related to the objective of the study are presented. However, the research framework proposed in this dissertation is similar to Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell model (1968) because it incorporates decision-making, information flow, and environmental factors. The model includes functional blocks starting with information input triggered by stimuli or information search. This leads to an information processing block that compares the stimulus with memory and past experiences to identify the problem and initiate decision-making. The model outlines five main phases in the purchasing process. Firstly, consumers identify the problem based on needs and motivations. Then, they engage in information search using beliefs, knowledge, and experience. Next, consumers evaluate alternatives before making a selection. The actual purchase is influenced by many factors such as demographics, market conditions, and promotions. Lastly, consumers assess their post-purchase experience, leading to satisfaction or dissonance. It should be noted that the model suggests that these processes occur intuitively rather than consciously. Environmental factors like cultural norms, values, and lifestyle are also considered in this model.

The knowledge of consumer behaviour is the basis for formulating a marketing strategy in companies. Consumer behaviour researchers, representing different fields scientific, deal with different elements of these behaviours - from the process decision making, through consumer perceptions, the influence of various factors on purchasing or consumer reactions to a product as an individual and a family or other group member. Research about consumer behaviour makes it possible to understand their needs and forecast future purchasing decisions. It allows them to make a simultaneous analysis of many factors and ascertain the mutual interactions. Identification of the factors that make the strongest effect on purchasing decisions can facilitate and speed up making the right decisions by those responsible for marketing plans in companies. These factors of consumer behaviour are described in the following section.

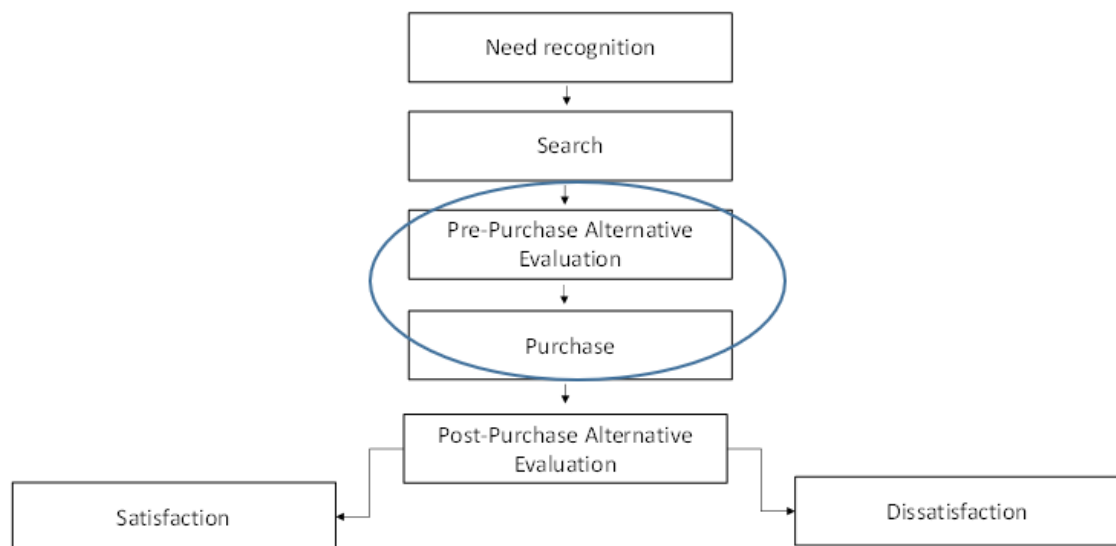


## **1.2. Decision-making process as an element of consumer behaviour**

In the field of consumer behaviour, the attention should be paid on analysis of decision-making process that currently differ from those expressed by representatives of the classical theory of consumer behaviour (Gurumoorthy & Vijayalakshmi, 2018). The typical characteristics of that theory were rational decision makers, performing economic calculations on how to spend the income, maximizing utility and minimizing costs. While the decision-making process for consumers has undergone significant changes over the years due to advancements in technology, changes in societal values and norms, and shifts in the competitive landscape of markets (Loxton et al., 2020). The main differences can be noticeable in information availability. In the past, consumers had limited access to information about products and services. Today, with the proliferation of the internet and social media, consumers have easy access to vast amounts of information about products and services, as well as reviews and feedback from other consumers (Chen, Samaranayake, Cen, & Lan, 2022). What is more, technology has made it easier for consumers to research products, compare prices, and make purchases online (Zhao, Yao, Liu, & Yang, 2021). In the past, consumers had to physically go to a store to make a purchase, but nowadays, they can make purchases from the comfort of their own homes using their smartphones, tablets, or computers (Khasawneh & Akroush, 2021). Furthermore, the current decision-making process is more personalized than in the past. Advances in data analytics and machine learning have made it possible for businesses to offer personalized recommendations and customized experiences based on the consumer's past behaviours, preferences, and purchase history. It should be also indicated that in the past consumers relied on recommendations from friends and family members to make purchase decisions. Nowadays, social media platforms have made it possible for consumers to get recommendations from a broader network of people, including influencers and strangers (Kang, Sun, Liang, & Mao, 2022). It should be taken into consideration that the current decision-making process is much faster than in the past. Consumers can research and compare products in a matter of minutes and make purchases with a few clicks of a button. In the past, the decision-making process took days or even weeks (Dadwal & Malik, 2019).

It should be noted that the decision-making process varies from current and previous due to the development of new technologies. The purchasing process became quicker and more comfortable (shopping from home). However, the typical decision-making process model

consists of five stages and the most widespread in the literature is that proposed by Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (1968). They presented it as a set of many different phases which appear sequentially. The phases include need recognition, search, pre-purchase alternative evaluation, purchase, consumption and post-purchase alternative evaluation (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. Consumer decision-making process by Engel, Kollat and Blackwell**

Source: author's own elaboration based on Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1993; Pride & Ferrell, 2007.

**The need recognition** stage in the consumer decision-making process (as it was mentioned in the subchapter 1.1.2.) is characterized by a state of tension resulting from the consumer's awareness of the difference between reality and their desired state (Khan, 2004; Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, & Kasser, 2001). This can be triggered by internal or external stimuli and may take place over a period of time (Baruk, 2008; Biesiok & Wyród-Wróbel, 2016). Meeting a need is not a one-time occurrence, as other needs can arise, and people continuously try to satisfy repeatable needs.

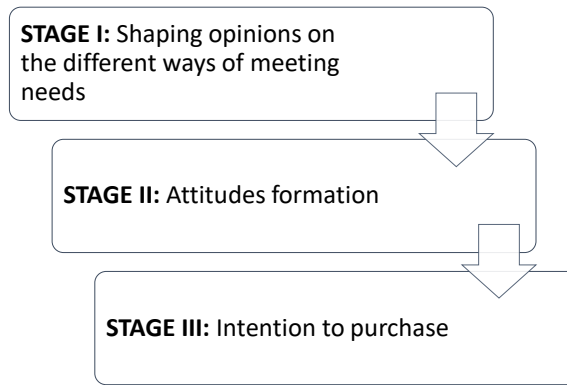
**The search for opportunities** is the phase of meeting the need (Engel et al., 1993; Peter & Olson, 2002; Smyczek & Sowa, 2005; Solomon et al., 2006). Consumers analyse whether they can and have to satisfy a need; how they can obtain the desired product; how, when and where to buy it; how much money they can spend on it; and what type, model and colour of product they can buy. At this point, they can go into a state of sharpened attention or actively search for information. They acquire information from personal, commercial, public and experience-based sources (Kotler et al., 2002; Antonides & van Raaij, 2003). The significance of particular sources changes depending on the personality of the consumer, type of product,

type of purchase, etc. (e.g. the more serious and frequent the changes in the market offer, the greater the probability of using additional information (Garbarski, 1998).

Making decisions is related also to the pre-purchase alternative evaluation phase and to the purchase of the product. The knowledge obtained during the search for and processing of information is the foundation for the selection of criteria for the assessment of individual possibilities of satisfying the need, and thus the specific features of the products most desired by the consumer is called the **pre-purchase alternative evaluation** phase (Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege, & Zhang, 2013; Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, & Kasser, 2001). Physically and financially available ways of satisfying a need become the subject of assessment and choice. Sometimes the assessment is easy, but in most cases the characteristics of different products are compared, and the choice itself is extremely difficult and involves high risk. Meanwhile, Kim and Lee (2020) conducted two experiments using different product categories and found that both product and consumer characteristics significantly influenced consumer evaluation.

The selection process is usually based on a calculation of the advantages and disadvantages of accepting one option and rejecting another. When looking for the specific benefits of using a product, consumers perceive benefit as a bundle of attributes. However, the different attributes have different levels of relevance for each customer. Furthermore, each consumer has a specific perception of the product and gives different utility functions to particular features (Muro-Rodríguez, Perez-Jiménez, & Gutiérrez-Broncano, 2017; Lobasenko, 2017).

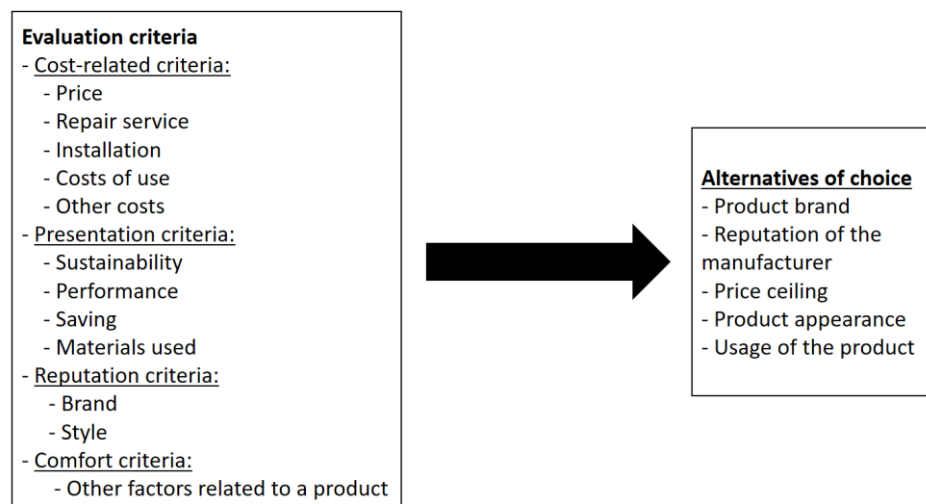
Each consumer perceives individual factors differently, therefore the assessment of a given product can be made by different people completely in other way. In the course of making a choice, tendencies to move from one possibility to another, conditioned by preferences, which express a tendency to translate one choice over another, become manifest (Kuo, Wu, & Deng, 2009). As a last resort, a certain order of purchase is established, which is consistent with a hierarchy of importance, an urgency of needs and a scale of preferences for valuing goods. To meet their needs, consumers have several acceptable alternatives to choose from which they can use to make the final decision. According to Garbarski et al. (1997) there is a three-step process for assessing selection alternatives (Figure 6).



**Figure 6. The process of assessing alternatives to consumer choice**

Source: author's elaboration based on Garbarski et al., 1997.

In this process, different evaluation criteria are used. They are usually expressed in terms of the preferred product characteristics. It is worth mentioning that evaluation criteria can differ from product to product (Liczmańska, 2013; Park, Shin, & Ju, 2014). The basic criteria include a product's price and quality, convenience of purchase, a reputation of the producer, and a popularity of a product brand. When the product is expensive, people spend more time gathering the information about a desired good. The higher the price, the higher the risk satisfaction of the purchase (Al-Salamin, Al-Baqshi, Al Rasasi, & Al Salem, 2015). If given a choice between a well-known brand and a slightly cheaper, no-name brand, consumers will most often choose the more expensive, yet more popular brand (Chacharkar, 2013; Anholt, 2005; Khan, 2004). The variety of selection criteria used by consumers is shown in Figure 7.



**Figure 7. Criteria for assessing consumer choice alternatives**

Source: author's elaboration based on Rosenberg, 1977; Kiežel, 2004.

It is worth noting that, as a result of the assessment, consumers sometimes come to a conclusion that no product would meet their needs. In this instance, consumers can start looking for information about additional products, which indicates movement to the second stage of the decision-making process. If, however, the result of the assessment is to refrain from buying, the experience acquired by the consumer will be stored in the memory and may be used in the future (Rambabu & Porika, 2020; Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, & Hogg, 2006).

The decision-making process for consumers during a purchase involves evaluating various alternatives based on their individual needs and preferences. Consumers typically use either optimization or simplified procedure to make their final choice (Smyczek & Sowa, 2005). In the optimization procedure, consumers assess each product brand based on all the most important criteria for them, while in the simplified procedure, consumers limit the range of characteristics under consideration and make their final choice based on only one of the most relevant criteria, often price (Pratama & Suprpto, 2017; Rambabu & Porika, 2020). The type of procedure used by the consumer depends on factors such as the type of product, purchasing situation, and demographic profile (Xiao, Guo, Yu, & Liu, 2019). The final decision to make a purchase depends on the assessment of the possibility of purchase and can be influenced by situational factors or the attitudes of others.

All the activities after a purchase are known as the **post-purchase alternative evaluation**. Consumers assess the extent to which the product and circumstances of the purchase met their expectations. Usually the action gives rise to a feeling of satisfaction, sometimes delight or dissatisfaction or disappointment. The greater the discrepancy between expectations and reality, the greater the dissatisfaction of the buyer. Discomfort and satisfaction can be the subject of information exchange between consumers, it certainly becomes an experience and a source of knowledge for subsequent decisions (Yadav, Valck, Hennig-Thurau, Hoffman, & Spann, 2013). The consumer does not stop at the purchase, but instead assesses the product during its use. This evaluation may result in positive feelings, e.g., satisfaction, which in turn may lead to brand loyalty in the long term (Sweeney, Hausknecht & Soutar, 2000). However, a frequent result of a purchase are negative feelings, e.g., post-purchase cognitive dissonance (Akbar, Ahmad, Asif, & Siddiqui, 2020; Bawa & Kansal, 2008). This term refers to tensions that result from the perception of conflicting stimuli and, in relation to the purchase, to partial or total dissatisfaction with the product (e.g. as a result of noticing a defect or realising that a competitive product is to some extent better). It is worth pointing out that the more important

the purchase is for the consumers, the more various types of sources of information they check (Engel et al., 1993; Falkowski & Tyszka, 2001; Smyczek & Sowa, 2005; Solomon et al., 2006).

It should be noted that the current process is more streamlined, personalized, and influenced by technology and social media, while the past process relied more on personal recommendations and physical interactions with products and services (Abrar, 2018; Gao, Huang, Xie, & Xu, 2021). Moreover, consumer behaviour is constantly changing and it is thus necessary to improve theoretical concepts and construct models which are compatible with a complex reality (Woźny, 2012). It is also important to consider that consumer behaviour and decision-making process in human minds are quite abstract they are therefore difficult to identify. As such, these areas are still not fully understood (Stankevich, 2017). This notwithstanding, a number of models of consumer behaviour are described in the following section.

### **1.3. Consumer decisions in the light of theoretical classifications**

It is difficult to determine the basic types of consumer behaviour because of the variety of decisions taken on the market by consumers, the diversity of their complexity and the degree of uncertainty. Therefore, there are several criteria in the literature for the classification of these decisions (Kieźel, 2000; Kotler, 2005). One of the possible divisions that allows a taxonomy of consumer purchasing behaviour is their division by the type of shopping situation in which the consumers find themselves (involvement) and the way of perception of the differences between the brands available on the market (Oumlil, 2020; Zhao, Yao, Liu, & Yang, 2021). Table 5 presents the types of consumer purchasing decisions because of the consumer's involvement level.

**Table 5. Types of consumers' purchasing decisions**

	<b>High involvement</b>	<b>Low involvement</b>
<b>Type of purchase</b>	Specific decisions (concerning the purchase of durables); Considerable evaluation before purchase	General decisions (routine, habitual)
<b>Significant differences between brands</b>	The complexity of buyer behaviour	The search for differences between brands
<b>Little differences between brands</b>	The reduction of cognitive dissonance in behaviours	Routine purchasing decisions
<b>Expenditure</b>	Usually high (expensive products)	Usually low (cheap products)
<b>Risk</b>	High	Low
<b>Time and effort in the search</b>	Long time to find and make the purchase	Short time to find and make the purchase
<b>Consequence of purchase</b>	Very important	Less important
<b>Information required</b>	As much as possible	Minimum
<b>Frequency of purchase</b>	Rare purchase products	Frequently purchased products
<b>Decision-making process</b>	Strong consumer involvement in the decision-making process	Low consumer involvement in the decision-making process

Source: author's elaboration based on Assael, 1987; Kotler, 2005; Janoś-Kresto & Mróz, 2006; Olejniczak, 2009; Woźny, 2012 Oumlil, 2020.

According to the degree of consumer engagement in pre-purchase considerations, consumers' decisions on the market can be divided into:

- a) new decisions - authentic, non-routine, non-programmed - in which one can distinguish:
- prudent decisions - well thought-out purchase problems, e.g., meeting needs, e.g. buying a new product;
  - prudent decisions with a partial solution to the problem - e.g., buying a product known on the market, with the choice concerning the brand of the product;
  - immediate decisions - these are impulsive, spontaneous, improvised decisions (Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner, & Verhoef, 2021; Falkowski & Tyszka, 2001).
- (b) routine decisions - also called habitual, stereotypical, automatic, customary, or programmed decisions. It should be stressed, however, that a strict distinction between different types of decisions is not always possible. In some situations, there may be a changeability of decision and a shift from one type of decision to another (Baumeister, 2002; Radder, Foubert, De Bock, & Van Den Poel, 2020; Solomon, 2006). This applies especially to the relationship between unprogrammed (new) and routine decisions. For example, certain purchase decisions, even for inexpensive everyday household items, may initially be unprogrammed. Over time, once experience has been gained, purchases are increasingly made through a routine procedure (Antonides & van Raaij, 2003; Falkowski & Tyszka, 2001).

In the literature two extreme behaviours can be identified among consumers' behaviour on markets: impulsive and planned, i.e. actions that are generally either ill-considered or

generally thought out (Baumeister, 2002). A planned purchase results from a decision taken in principle before entering the shop, whereas an impulsive purchase consists of the buyer deciding to buy the product directly at the shop shelf (Dittmar, Long, & Bond, 2007).

Involvement is the degree of perceived relevance and personal importance accompanying a particular purchase decision (Kotler, 2005; Yoon & Lee, 2021). In high involvement decisions, consumers carry out extensive evaluations of the brands. High involvement purchases are in general related with high expenses and personal risks. Consumers spend more time and effort in arriving at the 'right' decision (Woźny, 2012; Yoon & Lee, 2021). The evaluation of choices is more strict and consumers use a large range of choice criteria on which to evaluate various brands. What is more, with regard to high involvement products, consumers evaluate the consequences of the purchase and what others will think about it. The attributes that are weighed heavily will influence the decision more strongly (Jiang & Niu, 2021; Khan, 2004).

The opposite of high involvement is low involvement products. In this case there is less expenditure and personal risk and consumers spend less time and effort in such decisions (Solomon et al., 2006; Xiao, Guo, Yu, & Liu, 2019). Consumers are focused on simple choice tactics to reduce time and effort in buying the product rather than maximising the consequences of the purchase. In addition, low involvement products are characterised by awareness, trial and repeat purchases (Hamli & Sobaih, 2023). These kinds of products are bought frequently and have low prices and thus, customers perceive less risk in their purchase (Ao, Bansal, Pruthi, & Khaskheli, 2023; Kotler, 2005). They do not conduct a rigorous evaluation of alternatives and if customers are sufficiently knowledgeable about a product, they tend to simply go and buy it. Indeed, even mere awareness of the brand name may lead to a purchase (Ao, Bansal, Pruthi, & Khaskheli, 2023; Hamli & Sobaih, 2023).

It is also worth mentioning that the purpose of decisions made by consumers in order to satisfy their needs is to choose such a product from the whole set of available products that will ensure the greatest usability. There are various, purposefully created instruments influencing consumers and their behaviours on the market and they can be subsumed into four groups related to shaping the composition of the marketing mix (Garbarski, 1998; Niestrój, 2019; Solomon et al., 2006):

- product-related instruments (product itself, packaging, trademark, brand),
- price-related instruments (price level, rebates, discounts),
- instruments related to distribution (type of point of sale, distribution channel),



- instruments related to promotion (advertising, sales promotion, personal sales, public relations).

It is worth adding that in the dissertation the classification of elements helping in identifying the origin of the products was proposed. Thus, the attributes and sources of information were highlighted. The attributes cover those listed as product-related instruments. The sources of information include instruments related to promotion (promotional activities) but also family opinions, friends' opinions, consumers' own experience with the products and mobile applications which share lots of information about the products. Those sources of information will be deeply described in Chapter 2.

The way products are chosen and presented can greatly impact a customer's decision to buy. The process of consumption begins well before a purchase is made and continues long after, with feedback and impressions of the product being essential in gauging customer satisfaction. Satisfaction is determined by the extent to which a customer's expectations are met regarding the purchase and product (Brito & Hammond, 2007; Niestrój, 2019). If expectations are exceeded, customers are more likely to repurchase and recommend the product to others. To ensure that customers are satisfied with their purchase, it's essential for retailers to focus on the entire customer experience, from the selection of products to their post-purchase usage (Basfirinci & Mitra, 2022).

It is also reasonable to consider that there is enormous variability in the way customers use and buy products. Buying the same product does not mean using them in the same way. Some people will buy products after many consultations, whereas others will make the purchase decision of the same product in complete solitude (Hunt & Arnett, 2004). Moreover, some consumers buy a product from an upscale store whereas the other will buy the same product from a modest store close to where they live.

Research on the behaviour of customers is necessary to segment the market in new ways and serve them with different marketing mixes. Marketing specialists need to prepare a marketing strategy for many clients, which becomes more and more demanding. Therefore, in-depth analysis and knowledge of customers is a prerequisite for marketing. Consumer behaviour influences the choice of target markets and the nature of the marketing mix developed to serve it (Zhao, Yao, Liu, & Yang, 2021; Khan, 2004).

## **1.4. Determinants influencing purchasing decisions**

The purchasing decision process is a complex and multifaceted process that involves a wide range of determinants, both internal and external (Wang, Pacho, Liu, Kajungiro, 2019; Wang, Li, Wang, & Li, 2021). While determinants influencing purchasing decisions provide a comprehensive view of the factors influencing consumer behaviour, criteria for assessing consumer choice alternatives focus on the specific attributes consumers prioritize when evaluating different options. Figure 7. displayed in subchapter 1.2. concentrates on the specific attributes that consumers consider when comparing and evaluating different options. These criteria served as benchmarks or standards against which alternatives are measured. Price, quality, features and benefits, brand reputation, convenience, social proof, environmental sustainability, and personal preferences are among the common criteria consumers use to make informed choices. However, determinants provide a holistic understanding of the influences shaping consumers' purchase decisions and are described in details in the following pages. Understanding these determinants is essential for marketers and businesses seeking to influence consumer behaviour and develop effective marketing strategies (Basfirinci & Mitra, 2022; Jamil et al., 2022). There are many and various classifications of factors affecting consumer behaviour. The determinants are divided into psychological (internal, psychological, individual), economic and social (sociocultural, sociological). Some researchers describe social factors, physical factors and attitudinal factors (Pride & Ferrell, 2000; Stanton, 1997). Additionally, according to social factors, there could be reference groups that influence consumer behaviour by setting norms and expectations for what is considered desirable or acceptable (Basfirinci & Mitra, 2022). For instance, if a consumer's reference group places a high value on fitness and health, they may be more likely to purchase athletic wear and health supplements (Straughan & Roberts 1999).

The decision-making process of the consumer is conditioned by numerous factors (Piligrimienė, Žukauskaitė, Korzilius, Banytė, & Dovalienė, 2020). Most of them cannot be controlled, but they should nonetheless be considered. The approach presented in this dissertation is a proposal whose main objective is to organise the determinants of consumer behaviour and to provide an exhaustive account in the context of the chosen product categories. The dissertation presents a dichotomous classification, distinguishing two groups of determinants. This juxtaposition presents the links between the factors and the young

consumer and also reveals the determinants external and internal to the purchaser. The factors influencing consumer behaviour are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Factors affecting consumers' behaviour**

Internal	External
<p><b><u>Personal factors</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs</li> <li>• Habits and customs, traditions</li> <li>• Lifestyle</li> <li>• Age and stage of life</li> <li>• Personality and self-awareness</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Profession</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Psychological factors</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation and themes</li> <li>• Perception</li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Learning and knowledge</li> <li>• Convictions and attitudes</li> <li>• Mood</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Economic factors</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income (economic situation)</li> <li>• Prices</li> <li>• Commercial network development</li> <li>• Technology</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Socio-cultural factors</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Reference and social groups</li> <li>• Leaders of opinion</li> <li>• Social roles and status</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Subculture</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Situational factors</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical conditions (light, temperature, sound, place of living<sup>4</sup>)</li> <li>• Social conditions</li> <li>• Conditions arising from the substance of the situation</li> <li>• Time aspect (time of the day, time pressure)</li> <li>• Conditions accompanying the purchase</li> <li>• Reason for the purchase</li> <li>• Country of origin effect of the product</li> </ul>

Source: author's elaboration based on Foxall & Goldsmith, 1998; Kiezel, 2000; Kotler et al., 2002; Kotler & Armstrong, 2007; Rudnicki, 2012; Stasiuk & Maison, 2014; Piligrimienė et al., 2020; Wang, Li, Wang, & Li, 2021.

**Internal factors** are those related to mental, emotional and spiritual processes, which indicate a person's cognitive sphere. They are divided into personal and psychological. The first group, **personal determinants** includes age, sex, lifestyle, occupation, possession of funds, education or place of residence (Das & Ramalingam, 2022; Neeley, 2005; Wang, Li, Wang, & Li, 2021). Depending on the profession of the person, they may have different preferences e.g. for clothing. A blue-collar worker will buy suitable work clothes, while the white-collar worker will buy suits, elegant shirts and ties. On the other hand, a lifestyle is a person's model of life expressed in their opinions, actions and interests (Kotler et al., 2002; Piligrimienė et al., 2020). Additionally, it is worth indicating that determinant is also the emergence of a need, its type, scope, source, which act as the "driving force" of market activity and behaviour. It is necessary to mention that the listed conditions of conduct of market participants are revealed with varying strength and intensity depending on the stage at which

<sup>4</sup> For more about geographical and environmental factors see: Kiezel (2000); Janoś – Kresło & Mróz (2006).

decisions are made while influencing its nature, level of rationality and mechanism (Olejniczak, 2009). However, **psychological factors** refer to the internal influences, thoughts, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions that shape an individual's behaviour and decision-making processes. These factors encompass consumers' unique qualities and their distinctive ways of responding to stimuli. External influences undergo a process of internal processing and transformation within an individual's psyche, leading to the initiation of the motivation process (Lichev, 2017).

The second group of determinants are **external factors**. This group includes economic determinants such as a supply of goods and services, range and attractiveness of the offer; social factors, especially families, small social groups, opinion leaders, social roles and status; and cultural conditions affecting many areas of life and activities, e.g., clothing, free time (Fabio, Romeo, & Calabrese, 2023; Kardes, Cronley, & Cline, 2011; Milaković, 2021). The **economic factors** are related to the economic environment, including individuals' financial resources, income levels, employment status, and overall economic conditions. The economic situation of an individual is closely related to income and work. For instance, not everyone will allow themselves to buy an expensive television, equipped with 4K and other additional features.

Additionally, **socio-cultural factors** also play a crucial role in shaping consumer intentions and behaviour (Hoang & Nguyen, 2020). One important aspect is the influence of groups on individuals. Affiliation groups, such as primary and secondary groups, have a direct impact on an individual's behaviour. Primary groups involve regular interactions and include family, friends, neighbours, and colleagues. On the other hand, secondary groups are more formal and include organizations like religious groups, trade associations, and unions. It is also important to distinguish between reference groups and aspiration groups. Reference groups directly or indirectly influence a person's attitudes and behaviour, even though the person may not belong to those groups. Aspiration groups, in contrast, are groups that individuals desire to be a part of (Ramya & Ali, 2016; Janoś – Kresło & Mróz, 2006; Tyszka, 2010). Social factors also encompass the expectations and roles assigned to individuals within their social circles and the broader society (Pilgrimienė et al., 2020). What is more, status, which refers to the level of respect and recognition associated with a particular role in society, is another aspect of social factors that can influence consumer behaviour (Slabá, 2019; Furaiji, Łatuszyńska & Wawrzyniak, 2012).

Socio-cultural factors include also culture that is an intangible heritage of humanity, which is passed down from generation to generation and includes relevant components such as subcultures, traditions, beliefs and worldviews (Shavitt & Cho, 2016). Each culture consists of groups of people sharing a system of values based on shared experience and life situations, e.g., subcultures. These groups are formed due to national, religious, racial and geographical differences. Social groups are usually solid and orderly groups in society, whose members have similar values, interests and behaviours. Understanding the role of consumers' culture, subculture and social group is important because it is the basis of people's desires and behaviours, i.e., most human behaviour is learned and from an early age parents and teachers teach children to perceive and make specific decisions (Dawson & Chatman, 2001; Furaiji, Łatuszyńska, & Wawrzyniak, 2012).

Furthermore, the **situational factors** are related to the dynamics of structural changes occurring constantly on the market significantly affect changes in consumer attitudes and behaviour, both on the market and in other areas of social life (Hoang, Bich Ho, Tran , & Le, 2022; Ramya & Ali, 2016). As market actors, consumers take action due to a variety of factors. Some people pay attention to a brand, whilst others more or less consciously choose products that appeal to their beliefs, and others are ready to overpay for no particular reason. Factors related to the consumer are primarily the experiences of a customer who has specific financial resources and a specific attitude towards products (their type, price or brand). Additionally, situational factors include the time and place of purchase and the intended use of the product (Ramya & Ali, 2016). All of the above factors shape the so-called level of consumer involvement. This means that they affect the time, energy, thoughts and feelings associated with the consumer's choice of the product.

In examining the factors influencing consumer behaviour, it is important to consider the attitudes of young consumers towards domestic and foreign products, particularly in relation to ethnocentric tendencies. These tendencies are often characterized by uncertainty and resistance against the unknown (Danilwan, Dirhamsyah, & Pratama, 2020; Nguyen, Kien Dao, Duong, Nguyen, Nguyen, & Dao, 2023). Dealing with uncertainty is a culturally influenced phenomenon, and individuals from different cultural backgrounds may experience anxiety towards other groups (Danilwan, Dirhamsyah, & Pratama, 2020). Such feelings of uncertainty are typically shared within a given group and are shaped by cultural heritage and transmitted

through institutions like family, schools, or the state. These attitudes may appear incomprehensible or abnormal to outsiders (Bauman, 2016; Hofstede, 2000).

However, it should be noted that ethnocentric tendencies can be influenced by prejudices that are based on preconceived notions about a particular group or individual, even in the face of contradictory information. Biases are rooted in hearsay rather than evidence, making them resistant to change (Peters, 2022). They involve emotional relationships with individuals, social groups, or nations and can have either positive or harmful effects. Prejudices are the result of stereotypical thinking, which relies on patterns and simplifications that often lead to social dissonance and isolation from certain societies or nations (De Mooj, 2004; Peterlini, 2023).

Stereotypes, originating from social sources, directly impact consumer behaviour and reflect the level of ethnocentrism (Artinger, Gigerenzer, & Jacobs, 2022; Ramya & Ali, 2016). They are shaped during the process of socialization, influenced by family, teachers, and social circles. Stereotypes can be considered as mental constructs that contain simplified and emotionally coloured views of reality, shaped by personal experiences and socialization processes.

The COO effect is another important aspect to consider, as it involves the stereotypical perception of products and brands, which influence purchasing behaviour (Lampert & Jaffe, 1998). Consumers often exhibit typical behaviour by choosing products associated with specific countries, such as German cars, French perfumes, or Italian clothes. However, consumers may struggle to articulate the reasons behind their choices, as they are influenced by deep-rooted stereotypes and prejudices. Prejudices tend to be emotionally charged, while stereotypes serve as a means to organize the world (Casad & Bryant, 2016; Matusitz, 2012). Stereotypes fulfil various functions, including strengthening group ties, expressing common values, emphasizing group individuality, enabling discrimination against other groups perceived as threatening, demonstrating loyalty to one's own group, and creating a "scapegoat" during times of crisis (Figiel, 2004). It should be noted that national stereotypes are among the most common stereotypes, representing emotionally coloured thought constructs about other nations (Chattalas, Kramer, & Takada, 2008; McGrath & Goldberg, 2006). This definition implies that certain products become associated with specific countries.

Numerous factors contribute to the formation of stereotypes, including personal experiences with products or brands, knowledge of their production history, positive

perceptions of certain countries, and recommendations from friends, among others. In recent times, the production landscape has undergone significant changes, with many components being manufactured in China or other Asian countries and then transported to various regions, including Europe and other continents. The COVID-19 pandemic shed light on this process, as automotive companies worldwide were compelled to halt production due to shortages of semiconductors and other crucial components necessary for each vehicle's implementation (Burkacky, Deichmann, Pfingstag, & Werra, 2022). Knowing the world's problematic situation, stereotypical thinking consumers should confirm that cars and electronic devices are made of many elements which can come from different countries. Then the topic of this dissertation is really current.

To sum up, the consumer buying behaviour is intricate, influenced by numerous factors of varying nature and impact. A comprehensive examination of these factors allows for a complete comprehension of consumer market behaviour. However, amidst the complexity of these intertwined factors, it is the economic conditions that ultimately shape consumer behaviour. Consequently, the internal drivers of consumer behaviour are unveiled predominantly within economically, socially, and culturally diverse groups. It should be noted that the research has examined the impact of the COO on consumer behaviour, which played a significant role in product strategy. Consumers use their knowledge of the COO of products in a symbolic context. Two examples would be France, which is associated with luxury and originality or Germany, which is an example of reliability and high quality. This process is multidimensional and complicated. Chapter 2 is devoted to an investigation of the COO effect as a factor in consumer behaviour.

## **CHAPTER 2. COUNTRY OF ORIGIN EFFECT AS A FACTOR INFLUENCING PURCHASING DECISIONS OF CONSUMERS**

### **2.1. Country of origin (COO)**

#### **2.1.1. Country of origin – background and chronological development**

The first information about the country of origin (COO) can be dated back to 3,000 B.C.E in Egypt. It was found that the items from this era had some typical indications, as name and the origin of the manufacturer (Wengrow, 2008). This phenomenon was later expanded by the British. They introduced the 'Merchandise Marks Act 1887' to inform where imported products come from. Thus, all products exported to Britain required the stamps with information of COO (National Archives, n.d.; Slot, 2020). The Germans, Japanese and Swiss also started to put the labels on imported products. The above-mentioned countries were, and still are, among the countries with the best reputation and quality of manufactured products (Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Slot, 2020). By contrast, for countries whose reputation over the world is not so well-known, e.g. Myanmar, Laos, Suriname, COO had a negative effect (Kotler & Gertner, 2002).

The pioneer in describing COO was Dichter (1962) who pointed out that this phenomenon impacts upon the acceptance of the products and their success on the market. Schooler (1965), who confirmed Dichter's idea, conducted the first empirical tests surrounding COO. The field of COO was, and still is, one of interest for many researchers e.g. Alonso Dos et al., 2022; Bhattacharya, Sharma, & Gupta, 2022; Chen, Wright, Gao, Liu, & Mather, 2021; Chung, Pysarchik, & Hwang, 2009; Hanes & Wolcott, 2016; Laufer et al., 2009; Magnusson, Zdravkovic, & Westjohn, 2022; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2003; Pegan, Vianelli, & de Luca, 2020; Thakor & Katsanis 1997; Zolfagharian et al, 2014. To understand the different points of view of interpretation the term of 'country of origin',

Table 7 offers the main definitions as found in the reviewed literature.



**Table 7. Country of origin (COO) definitions used in the reviewed literature**

Author/s	COO definitions
Nagashima (1970, 1977)	COO as the country where the product is made in.
Bannister & Saunders (1978)	COO as the country where the product is made in.
Chasin & Jaffe (1979)	COO as the country where the product is made in.
Johansson et al. (1985)	COO is that country where the corporate headquarters of the company, marketing the product or brand is located (the company's home country).
Ozsomer & Cavusgil (1991)	COO is the country where the headquarters of the company marketing the product or brand is located.
Samiee (1994)	COO is country where the product was manufactured, appeared on the made-in label, and generally is the country where final assembly of the item took place.
Soyoung & Pysarchik (2000)	COO is a place where the company or brand has its origin.
Papadopoulos & Heslop (2003)	COO is country where the product was manufactured.
Wu & Fu (2007)	COO is the country where the headquarters of the company marketing the product or brand is located.
Chung, Pysarchik, & Hwang (2009)	COO is country where the product was manufactured.
Josiassen & Assaf (2010)	COO is the place of manufacture of the product.
Zolfagharian et al. (2014)	COO is the country where the product was manufactured.
Tjandra, Omar, & Ensor (2015)	COO is the last place where a product was manufactured or substantially modified, which is usually ascertained by the "Made in" label.
Hanes & Wolcott (2016)	COO is the place from which the merchandise was directly received; that is the last border crossed or port entered before reaching its final destination; (b) the country of the consignment (i.e., from where the goods were sold); or (c) the country of original growth or extraction.

Source: own elaboration based on Nagashima, 1970, 1977; Bannister & Saunders, 1978; Chasin & Jaffe, 1979; Johansson et al., 1985; Ozsomer & Cavusgil, 1991; Samiee, 1994; Soyoung & Pysarchik, 2000; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2003; Wu & Fu, 2007; Chung, Pysarchik, & Hwang 2009; Josiassen & Assaf, 2010; Zolfagharian et al, 2014; Tjandra, Omar, & Ensor, 2015; Hanes & Wolcott, 2016.

Looking further into the above definitions (

Table 7.), there are many diverse definitions of COO. Some researchers highlight that COO is related only to origin of products (Bannister & Saunders, 1978; Josiassen & Assaf, 2010; Tjandra, Omar, & Ensor, 2015), however, Soyoung and Pysarchik (2000) in their interpretation also added the origin of brand. Additionally, some definitions indicate that researchers define the COO as the location of the company headquarters or where the brand is located (Ozsomer & Cavusgil, 1991; Wu & Fu, 2007). Tjandra, Omar and Ensor (2015) claim that COO is also when the label *Made in...* is added to the product. On the other hand, COO can refer to the place where the product was directly received from, the country of the consignment, or the place where the raw materials were sourced (Hanes & Wolcott, 2016).

This dissertation defines the country of origin (COO) as: *a place or country where the product was made*. This does not include the brand, because it is treated as a sum of features

that identify specific company, i.e. name, logo, design etc. Additionally, brands can serve as a way to identify the origin of a product and can also impact consumer purchasing decisions.

The widespread use of global sourcing and manufacturing in the last two to three decades has diluted the concept of a clear-cut country of origin (COO) for products. The traditional definition and significance of COO can be misleading due to the division of production process within few countries. This makes it challenging for consumers to differentiate between products and has led to a greater focus on phrases like "made in," "country of origin," "product country image," "country of manufacturing," and "country of design" by marketers around the world. In the past, a product like a Sony TV made in Japan was easily recognized, but today, manufacturers and marketers have expanded their operations beyond geographical boundaries. That is why COO is a multidimensional term and will be explored in greater detail in the subsequent pages of this chapter.

### **2.1.2. The significance of COO and its impact on hybrid products**

The intensely changing market conditions of today confirm that companies strive for competitive advantages that foster demand for a given good. Consumers are increasingly demanding and expect an individual approach (Anker, Ross, & Zainuddin, 2022; Nagel, Cronin, & Utecht, 2018). Making a decision to purchase a given product is usually faced with selection difficulties connected to the significant variety of offerings. Taking into consideration the needs of highly demanding consumers, a conclusion can be drawn that they make decisions about the product based on a series of extrinsic cues such as price, brand, quality and origin. This is also influenced by many factors related, among others, to the individual preferences of buyers, opinions of other people, stereotypes and perceptions about the product.

COO has evolved and it is crucial aspect in understanding consumer behaviour and attitudes towards the internationalization of markets, paying attention to the impact that it has on decisions (Cherubino, 2019; Licsandru, Szamosi, & Papadopoulos, 2013; Schneller & Swanson, 2018; Vesela & Zich, 2015; Vukasovic, 2015). The internationalization of enterprises and the associated hybridization of products make it difficult for the "average" buyer to identify the country of origin of a product and to make a preliminary estimate of its quality (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004; Ha-Brookshire, 2012). In the view of the rapidly developing hybridization process, the origin of the product is increasingly taken into account

(Andéhn, Nordin, & Nilsson, 2016; Ha-Brookshire, 2012). It should be indicated that hybridization is related to multinational production of diverse elements of the products. For example, electronic devices consist of many small elements that could be manufactured in one country, designed in second country, their parts can come from third country and the country of assembly can be a totally different place. Such a mix of countries causes confusion among consumers. They are faced with the dilemma about the quality of the products (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2008; Chao, 1993; Connelly et al., 2011; Katsumata & Song, 2016). For instance, product design takes place in country X, individual components are manufactured in countries Y and Z (where labour costs are lower), and the whole is assembled in country A (Aiello et al., 2010; Wysocka & Bartosik-Purgat, 2020; Bouldn, 2007; Gereffi & Memedovic, 2003; Tjandra, Omar, & Ensor, 2015; Usunier, 2006). Consequently, the label *Made in...* placed on each product cannot reflect the actual country of its manufacture, as it would be correct to write *Made in country X, Y, Z and A* or just *Made in Everywhere* (Clarke, Owens, & Ford, 2000; Hochberg, 2020; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2000; Wooldridge, 2016). This situation is noticeable in particular in the case of high-tech products. For instance, one computer part could be marked "part made in Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, China and Mexico" (Rojek, 2007). Other multidimensional products also include: cars, televisions, computers and tablets, smartphones, electronics, cosmetics, clothing and food (Tamas, 2016). Additionally, a well-known Samsung TV, could be designed in Japan, involve parts from China and assembled in Taiwan (Hamzoui & Merunka, 2011). It should be noted that there are more and more hybrid products and this cause that consumers cannot recognise actually origins of them. One example is Seat cars, which are part of the Volkswagen Group but are produced in Spain. Some Spaniards still believe that Seat is a Spanish brand, not German. Additionally, in the USA Americans were asked where Volkswagen Vox is manufactured. The results displayed that 66% respondents marked Germany as a place of production, while only 8% answered Brazil, where actually this model of VW was manufactured (Bartosik-Purgat, 2011; Thakor & Lavack, 2003).

To sum up, the internationalization of enterprises and the resulting hybridization of products has made it difficult for consumers to identify the country of origin of a product and estimate its quality. This is especially evident in high-tech products like electronics, where different components may be manufactured, designed, and assembled in multiple countries. The labelling of products as *Made in...* cannot accurately reflect the actual country of

manufacture, leading to confusion among consumers. The example of Seat cars and Volkswagen Vox highlight the complexity of identifying the country of origin of a product. Companies must consider the impact of hybridization and internationalization on consumer perceptions of product quality and country of origin.

### 2.1.3. Subcomponents of COO concept

Due to involvement of more than one country in the production process, the alternative conceptualisation of COO as a multi-faceted structure has been proposed. The idea was to consider a multidimensional model. The precursor of the recognition of the COO taking into account several dimensions was Chao (1993). He investigated the COO effect on hybrid and non-hybrid brands. Hybrid products include products with diversified origins, the place of design (COD), the place of manufacture (COM), place of assembly (COA) and the place of parts (COP). Thus, the splitting of COO into its sub-dimensions allows for an in-depth understanding this phenomenon (De Nisco & Oduro, 2022; Insch & McBride, 2004). The subcomponents of COO and the ways of their identification are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8. Possible subcomponents of COO concept**

Ways of identification	Subcomponents of COO
<b>COM – country of manufacture</b>	<i>Made in...</i> label Barcode Description language Graphic solutions highlighting country affiliation (flag, national attributes, the colours of the packaging)
<b>COB – country of brand</b>	Contact details of the manufacturer product name or brand How to write the logotype Graphic solutions - logotype Advertising slogans
<b>COD – country of design</b>	<i>Designed in...</i> label, the physical features of the products
<b>COA – country of assembly</b>	<i>Assembled in...</i> label
<b>COP – country of parts</b>	Indication of <i>Parts from ...</i>

Source: author's elaboration based on Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Hugstad & Dur, 1986; Chao, 1993; Lim & O'cass, 2001; Insch, 2003; Chattalas, Kramer, & Takada, 2008; Kalicharan, 2014; Dobrucali, 2019.

Analysing the COO subcomponents is necessary to provide the definitions proposed in this dissertation but also compare them to those available in the literature of this field. One of the COO subcomponents is country of manufacture (COM), which is identified by the ***Made in... label*** attached to the clothes, shoes and other products (Maher & Carter, 2011; Sousa, Nobre, & Farhangmehr, 2018; Rashid et al., 2016). This is a small "addition" to the product, informing

the customer about the country in which the product was produced. It sometimes happens that in the case of clothing products or cosmetics packed in additional packaging the *Made in...* label on a package is blurred, erased or simply lost. In such a situation, the customer cannot be sure of the origin of a given product, but can only rely on supporting identifiers, i.e. the characteristic symbol of a given country, the language of the product description or the country of origin of raw materials and components, the design, the origin of the idea. These examples are of minor importance, but their task is to support recognition of the place of production of a given commodity. The dissertation defines the *Made in...* label as: *an element that is placed on the product and provides information where the product was manufactured.*

Another COO subcomponent is **country of brand (COB)**, which is defined by the place or country where a brand is affiliated with its target market and it is associated with brand origin, which can have positive or negative implications while choosing specific product (Thakor & Lavack, 1996). According to Pamungkas and Salehudin (2021), COB pertains to the country in which a brand originated and where the company's central operations are located. Heine (2019) provides a definition of COB as the perceived origin country or countries of a brand according to the beliefs held by target consumers. In essence, COB represents the country that consumers associate with a particular brand. COB can be identified based on the contact details of the manufacturer product name or brand, the method of writing the logotype, graphic solutions related to the logotype or just advertising slogans. The COB can increase the brand value no matter where the product or brand is manufactured (Fetscherin & Toncar, 2010). For instance, Reebok, an American origin brand manufactures in Asia because of the lower costs of production. Not many people focus on place of manufacture of Reebok shoes. The consumers have a positive image of USA and they choose the specific model of shoes very often based on the brand image not the place of its origin. In this dissertation the COB is defined as: *the place where the company headquarters are located.*

**Country of design (COD)** is the country in which a product was conceived and engineered (Insch & McBride, 1998). Vianelli and Marzano (2012) claim that COD was created so that companies have the option to establish their Research and Development (R&D) facilities in countries that are different from the location of their production activities. In order to emphasize the COD, products are frequently labelled with phrases such as *Designed in...* Additionally, it can impact consumer purchase decisions because it can be related to the positive image of the country where the product was created. From a customer's viewpoint,

it can be challenging to determine the actual origin of a product since it may involve design in one country, production in another, and assembly in yet another. However, this complexity offers opportunities for companies to shape their communication strategies (Aichner, 2013). For instance, Apple, a US consumer electronics brand, mitigates the potential negative effects associated with the COA, mainly China, by emphasizing their COD with the statement *Designed by Apple in California* (Aichner, 2013). This approach aims to alleviate any concerns related to COA and reinforces the perceived origin of the brand. This COO attribute is also connected with the packaging of the product, which gather the basis information about the good. The dissertation defines COD as: *the place or country where the product was designed*.

**Country of parts (COP)** is defined as the place where the majority of the materials used in the product come from and/or the component parts are manufactured (Insch & McBride, 1998; Witek-Hajduk & Grudecka, 2022). According to Ha-Brookshire (2012), COP indicates the country where the component parts of a product are manufactured. This element of COO is quite new, only becoming an issue when the first hybrid products started being produced. The origin of the part is mainly indicated as *Parts made in....* According to Ha-Brookshire (2012), policy makers should consider incorporating the concept of COP into COO label regulations. This is because consumers attribute different values to products based on the country of origin of their component parts, even if the final product is manufactured in the same country. Currently, consumers may assume that products labelled as *Made in U.S.A.* are produced in the United States using domestic raw materials, and they may be willing to pay a premium for such products. However, without a guarantee that the *Made in U.S.A.* label is reserved exclusively for products made with 100% domestic raw materials, components, and manufacturing, there is potential for consumer deception and misunderstanding regarding COO. By including COP information on COO labels, this issue can be addressed, allowing consumers to accurately understand and assess the value of apparel products. COP in this dissertation is defined as: *a place or country where the components or parts used in the manufacturing of a product were produced or sourced*.

**Country of assembly (COA)** is the country where the most of the products' final assembly took place (Insch & McBride, 1998; Witek-Hajduk & Grudecka, 2022). According to Samli (2013) COA refers to the specific location where the final product is assembled or put together. This COO attribute is identified by label *Assembled in...* and is especially important for multinational corporations that transfer the production of branded goods to developing

countries in order to reduce manufacturing costs. Chandrasen and Paliwoda (2009) and Van Pham (2006) claimed that among all the COO subcomponents, COA was identified as the most significant factor affecting consumer perceptions of product quality. It is worth pointing out that if the consumer has a positive perception of COA then this attribute of COO should be highlighted instead of COD or COP if they have negative consumer perception. The dissertation defines COA as: *the place or country where the all parts of the products are assembled together*.

COO subcomponents have been investigated by many scholars (e.g. Chao, 1993; Hamzaoui-Essoussi & Merunka, 2006; Dobrucali, 2019; Chen, 2020; Bryła & Domański, 2023). In industrialized nations, there is an elevated perception of quality for products. Biswas, Chowdhury, and Kabir (2011) studied the impact of COA, COD, and COP on consumer assessments of television sets from Japan, China and Bangladesh and found that when the COP was associated with developed countries, the quality was heightened when both the COD and the COA are domestic nations. Products that are entirely manufactured within domestic borders and are priced at a higher range are perceived to possess superior quality compared to similar televisions that have their COD, COA, or COP situated in industrialized countries.

Moreover, other researchers noticed that consumers evaluate COA as an important factor while choosing stereo products (Van Pham, 2006; Tse & Lee, 1993). Chao (1993) found that even a stronger COD was unable to counter the negative effect of a poor COA. Chandrasen and Paliwoda (2009) indicated that a brand with a strong quality image might decrease the COA bias, while judging the cars from a negative quality image country. In addition, research done by Seidnfuss, Kathawala, and Dinnie (2010) indicated that COA, COP and warranty level have influence on Asian consumers' perceptions and images of cars. It was also mentioned that the warranty extensions can impact COA effects on quality.

Magnusson, Westjohon and Zdravkovic (2011) tried to present the most important determinants of the COO concept. The results of the research are ambiguous. For instance, Chao (1993) implied that COA is more substantial than COO. By contrast, Li et al. (2000) suggested that the most crucial are COD and COB. Insch and McBride (2004) believed that COP is more influential. However, Aiello et. al. (2010) claimed that COA, COD and COM are all equally important. Hamzaoui-Essoussi & Merunka (2006) believed that consumers are more emotional to COM and COD of brands for public goods than for private ones. Moreover, in some countries there are cross-cultural differences, for example, Germans see COA and COM

as more essential (Tarabella & Marcati, 2019), whilst the Japanese consider COD as more influential than other determinants (Ishii, Miyamoto, Ishikawa, & Yokota, 2018). Previous studies showed that the impact on divided COO components on consumer evaluation of products can differ depending on the product categories (Chen, 2020). Inch and McBride (1998) claimed that the influence of COA is stronger while assessing athletics shoes than mountain bikes. Their study on Americans and Mexicans displayed the differences of the effects of COD, COA and COP across categories of the products (Inch & McBride, 2001) and showed that the impact of COP on consumer product evaluation can be more important than COA and COD effects.

In summary, the COO subcomponents, which include COM, COB, COD, COA, COP were developed to assist consumers in determining the origin of products. With a wide variety of options available, consumers can select which subcomponent best supports their understanding of the product's origin or influences their purchasing decisions. The COO breakdown serves as a tool for uncovering the production process of hybrid products.

## **2.2. COO and its effect on identification of products**

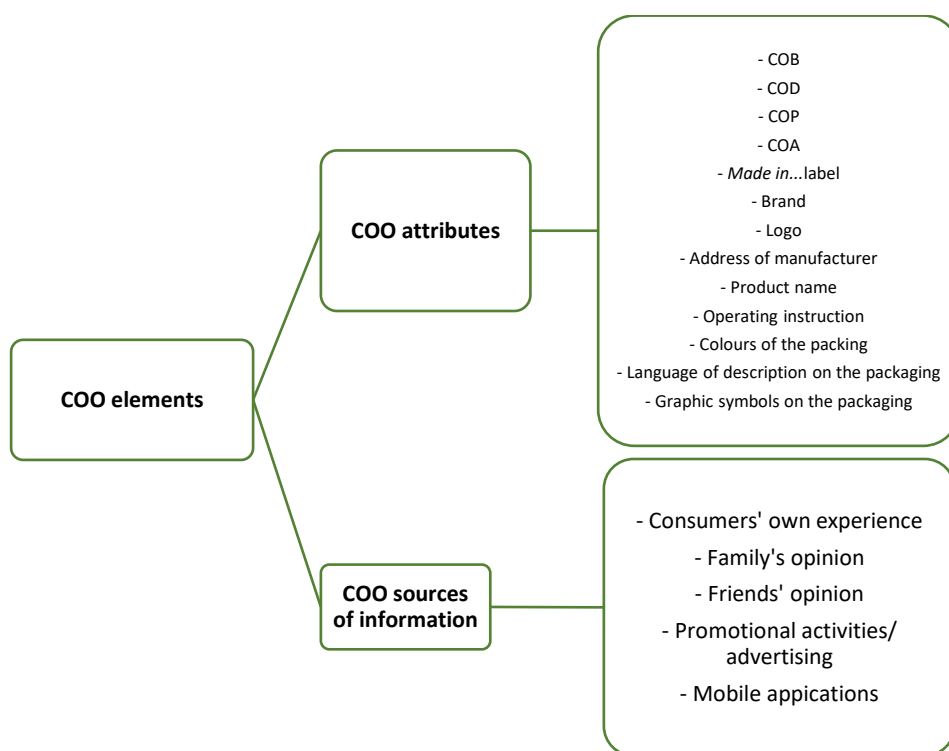
In today's globalized world, as companies expand beyond their domestic markets to attract new customers and reduce production costs, identifying the origin of products is becoming increasingly challenging (Micevski, Diamantopoulos, & Erdbrügger, 2021). However, there are several elements that can help in identifying a product's country of origin, including its brand, logo, *Made in...* label, packaging design and colours, emblems associated with a specific country, language used in product descriptions, information about the manufacturer's address, promoting activities and COO subcomponents. The last elements can provide valuable clues about a product's origin, as outlined in subsection 2.1.3.

Szromnik and Wolanin-Jarosz (2014) categorized product country of origin elements into two groups: main and supporting identifiers. The primary identifier for a product's country of origin is its brand symbol or logo. The product name is also important for identifying where it comes from, especially for items that are unique to a particular country. The brand name itself can also suggest the product's country of origin (Hong, Zhang, Zhang, & Hu, 2023). The barcode is another element, with the first three digits indicating the place of production. The *Made in...* label is a commonly used identifier for indicating the place of manufacture. Supporting



elements include additional characters and symbols that indicate the country of origin of raw materials and components, the design, the origin of the idea behind the product, characteristic colours symbolism, the product's purpose, and the language used in its description (Hong, Zhang, Zhang, & Hu, 2023; Mandler, 2019; Szromnik & Wolanin-Jarosz, 2014). Other researchers claim that consumers evaluate products based on informational cues, which can be classified into internal factors such as taste, construction, and operation, and external factors such as price, brand, and warranty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Vasić, Kilibarda, & Kaurin, 2019; Wiśniewska, 2016).

It is important to acknowledge that there are various factors that contribute to identifying the country of origin of a product, and these factors can be classified into different groups. In addition to the attributes associated with the product itself, there are also elements related to the sources of information. To address this, in the dissertation a classification of these two groups of COO elements has been developed, as illustrated in Figure 8.



**Figure 8. Author's own classification of COO identification elements**

Source: author's own elaboration.

The first group in the proposed classification consists of COO attributes. These are COO subcomponents including the *Made in...* label, COB, COD, COP, and COA (described in subchapter 2.1.3.), but also the address of manufacturer, barcode, brand, logo, the

specification of the packaging (the colours, graphic symbols and language of the product packaging description), product name and operating instructions. Their aim is to help consumers identify the products origin. Kowalczyk (2016), Szromnik and Wolanin-Jarosz (2014) focus on the main and supporting identifiers mentioned above. Others claim that the visual aspects of the product such as colours of the packaging, design of the product packaging, has a great importance in identifying the origin of the products (Ibojo & Olawepo, 2015). Many companies adopt unique branding of the product to maintain a consistent standards and practices but also to stand out across different markets. Those COO attributes are helpful for consumers to distinguish the quality of the products with which they associate specific brands. It is worth mentioning that in the literature COO attributes are taken into account but they are not considered as one group of elements, and are instead analysed separately. Hong, Zhang, Zhang and Hu (2023) highlighted that those attributes related to the brand are important part of brand awareness among consumers. They constituted the basis of the significance of each product manufactured by specific brand. According to Aaker (1991), Levi's is widely recognized as a representative of American jeans, while Dewar's is associated with Scotch whisky. Despite being considered global brands, Keller (2013) acknowledges that these brands have strong associations with their country of origin no matter whether the production is in foreign countries e.g. China or Vietnam.

The second group, COO sources of information, are the ways of gathering information about the product's origin. These are: consumers' own experience, family's opinion, friends' opinion, promotional activities/advertising, and mobile applications (e.g. Pola, Polskie Marki, Made in, Vivino, CodeCheck). The proposed classification of COO sources of information based on the literature that describe the significance of those elements on identification of the product origin (Davtyan & Tashchian, 2022; Hong, Zhang, Zhang, & Hu, 2023; Mandler, 2019). Many researchers confirm that the family can help with identifying the product origin by sharing information about the products. Additionally, friends are also a source of information, especially when it comes to Generation Z that use social media every day (Vlontzos, Kyrgiakos, & Duquenne, 2018). They share many messages including pictures or short movies about the products they find on, e.g., Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest (Djafarova & Foots, 2022). Taking into account young consumers, it might be suspected that they take advantage of mobile applications that they can check the origin of the product. However, according to the reviewed literature, there is a little information about applications such as Pola, Polskie Marki,

Made in, Vivino, or CodeCheck. This might be caused by insufficient promotion and knowledge-sharing among young consumers. What is more, advertising can also be helpful in identifying the origin of the products. Some promotional advertisements are displaying products in specific circumstances that they can be associated with the specific country. In other words, consumers connect a product with the country based on the advertising slogans or TV commercial. For instance, “Das Auto” is connected with the Volkswagen or “Impossible is nothing” by Adidas.

Analysing COO attributes in detail, it is worth indicating the **brand**. Consumers consider its form as a certain arrangement of the letters used, the type of font chosen, which directly indicates where the product is manufactured (Lerclerc & Shmitt, 1994; Li & Shoostari, 2003; Thakor & Lavack, 2003). In addition, more and more global brands create their names from specific linguistics system which in general uses local spelling and meanings where the brands come from (Shalofsky, 1987). It was shown that a language is the gist of a particular culture and the variety of linguistics systems caused that the growth of brand names in international markets is more complicated than ever before (Mc Donald & Roberts, 1990; Schmitt, Pan & Tavasolli, 1994). Particular phonetics, morphology and semantics create a unique identity to a brand and can cause that consumers will have a common idea of the origin of the brand. According to certain marketers, a strong brand name should be constructed based on the principles of language structure and should transcend cultural boundaries (Budzanowska-Drzewiecka & Jedynak, 2014; Zhang & Schmitt, 2004). For instance, the Japanese car brand Honda can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, consumers may comprehend a word that it comes from the Japanese morpheme. Secondly, the pronunciation of *Honda* can without any doubt display Japanese cultural origin. It is necessary to add that only people who are interested in linguistics will pay more attention to the origin of word which is used in the brand name. In the dissertation a brand is defined as a sum of features that identify specific company, i.e. name, logo, design etc.

One COO attribute that is related to the brand is **logo (or logotype)**. The main objective of placing a logo on the product or packaging is to focus and transfer attention to other elements of the label (Cian, Krishna, & Elder, 2014). A logo is a graphic symbol located on the product to confirm the relation with the brand. However, it is not only graphics that make up a logotype, but also the linguistic properties of the language are crucial for a logo – for example, the typical spelling for a given language. This dissertation defines logo as: *a visual*

*symbol or design that serves as a unique identifier for a company, brand, product, or organization.*

Another COO element can be a **barcode**, which is a graphic labelling tool that can be used to verify the origin of a product by identifying the country of manufacture based on the prefix included in the code. However, this prefix cannot guarantee that the product was manufactured in that country, and additional verification is required. The code has a specific structure with each group of digits representing the national prefix, manufacturer code, product code, and a checksum for verification. Each number or group of numbers in the barcode has a strict meaning (EAN-13, 2022):

- the first two or three digits indicate the national prefix of a given country (in Poland the prefix "590", in Germany is "400–440" and in Spain is "840–849");
- the manufacturer's code (4 digits), thus the "registered trademark code" identifying the destructor company. This means that all products manufactured by a given entrepreneur have the same code. It is assigned by the UCC (Union Custom Code);
- product code (5 digits) assigned by the manufacturer individually. It is determined on the basis of defined parameters (e.g. quantity, composition, size, etc.);
- checksum (1 digit) is calculated using an algorithm and the digit in the code. It was created to verify the correctness of the scanned code.

The Polish prefix '590' at the beginning of each barcode may indicate that the products have been manufactured in Poland or are distributed by a company registered there (HIT - Kody Kreskowe, 2022; Wedziuk, 2015). By comparison, goods distributed by a company registered in France have a prefix between 30 and 37, in Spain – 84, and in Portugal - 560 (HIT - Barcodes, 2022). This means that the string of digits "590" contained in the code cannot guarantee that the product was manufactured in Poland and that the profit from sales will go to the Polish entrepreneur. The definition of barcode used in this dissertation is a symbol made up of vertical bars and spaces of different widths that are used to represent a specific code or number. Verifying the COO using the barcode is not always straightforward, and other information, such as the company's address details and place of manufacture, may also need to be checked.

Another attribute that can help in verifying origin of the product is an **address of the manufacturer**. According to European Law, it is necessary to indicate the place of the manufacturer's registered office (The Act of 6 March 2018 - Entrepreneurs' Law (Journal of

Laws of 2021, item 162, as amended). It is important to highlight that the packaging has to bear the name of the person who takes responsibility for the labelling of the product. Sometimes the actual manufacturer of the product may be replaced by the packager or distributor. However, this depends on the agreement between them and the responsibility for the information given in the product labelling. The dissertation defines an address of manufacturer as: *the detailed address of place or location where a product was manufactured or produced*.

**Product name** is another example of a COO attribute. There are so many products on the market, therefore companies create more exclusive product names to differentiate their products from competitors'. A product name identifies a specific product and becomes a brand name when the company begins using it (Arora, Kalro, & Sharma, 2023; Fetscherin, Diamantopoulos, Chan, & Abbott, 2015). For instance, the Wedel company have a great range of confectionery products and the company create specific names of the products, e.g. Ptasia Mleczko<sup>5</sup>. In this case, name of the product category is a confectionery, the product name is Ptasia Mleczko, however, brand name is Wedel. When consumers say 'Ptasia Mleczko' there is an immediate association with the origin in Poland. Another example can be Turrón<sup>6</sup>. The name of the product indicates Spanish origin and the product is associated with Spanish culture. There are few brands that produce turróns, e.g. Vicens, Suchard, Simón Coll. The dissertation defines product name as: *the unique name or title given to a specific product*.

Additionally, a **language description of the packaging** can be treated as a COO attribute helping in identifying the origin of the product. The description of packaging would typically include details about its size, shape, materials, colour, and any text or graphics that are printed on it. The language on the packaging is related to the graphics that can help create a brand identity and differentiate products from competitors. The **graphics on packaging** refers to images or pictures printed on product packaging, intentionally or unintentionally. To create a significant emotional and symbolic experience for customers, marketers must focus

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<sup>5</sup> Ptasia Mleczko is a type of soft marshmallow-like candy coated in a layer of chocolate. The interior typically consists of a sweet and creamy filling, often flavoured with vanilla or fruit. Ptasia Mleczko is known for its smooth and delicate texture, making it a favourite treat among many people.

<sup>6</sup> Turrón is a traditional Spanish treat consumed during the Christmas season. It consists of a solid mass made from a blend of honey, sugar, egg whites, and toasted almonds or other nuts. The mixture is cooked until it solidifies and is then shaped into rectangular bars or rounds. Turrón has a chewy texture, a sweet and nutty taste, and is available in various forms such as hard and soft turrón. It is a well-liked delicacy in Spain and is also enjoyed in other regions influenced by Spanish cuisine.

on designing innovative and distinctive product packaging (Shukla, Misra, & Singh, 2023). This is particularly important as packaging can have a profound impact on customer perception and behaviour (Li, Wang, Meng, & Zhang, 2019). High-quality graphics on packaging can improve consumer perceptions of product quality, while images on packaging can attract buying intentions. Choosing the right image that relates to the brand can draw consumer attention and influence purchasing decisions. The language description of the packaging is defined as a written depiction of the various features and characteristics of a product's packaging, such as its dimensions, shape, materials, colour, and any graphics or text that are printed on it. However, the graphics on packaging are national symbols and colours, with the aim to create a sense of national identity and promote the product's origin as a source of quality and authenticity.

Another COO attribute is a **colour of packaging**. This element is a crucial element in packaging as it can influence consumers' emotions and perceptions (Keller, 2009). Different colours can create varying impressions and opinions towards a product's packaging. Additionally, the colour of the packaging is essential in distinguishing a product from others that have similar features offered by competitors. Researchers have also found that the colour of packaging can affect consumers' purchase intentions, particularly when a new product has a packaging style similar to that of a previously familiar product (Ibojo & Olawepo, 2015). Javed and Javed (2015) have stated that choosing the appropriate colour for packaging is crucial as it can capture consumers' attention. Conversely, selecting the wrong colour can result in consumers losing interest in the product. Furthermore, the choice of colours used in packaging can evoke and emphasize different moods and emotions (Ali, Ahmad, Hussain, Ibrahim, & Noreen, 2015). The dissertation defines colour of the packaging as: *a specific hue or combination of hues that are used in the design of a product's packaging*.

The **operating instructions** accompanying the product may also be an element indicating its origin. In addition to information on how to use the product, the address of the manufacturer and information on the place of manufacture appear on the leaflet. It is rarely used COO element but in case there is no information on the product, consumer can search information of this additional document added to the product. The dissertation defines it as: *a document that provides instructions and guidance on how to use and operate the product but also includes detailed information about the product itself*.

The image of a country is dynamic and changes under the influence of information from various sources, experiences, contacts with its people, promotional campaigns of the country or brands from it. The second analysed group of COO elements are sources of information that vary, including personal opinions about the product, family and friends' opinions, mobile applications, and advertising or promotional activities. Observing generation Z – i.e., people born between 1997 and 2004 – their independence stands out. This means that most of the decisions they make are based on their own beliefs and assessments about the products or materials used in production process. Young people are open to changes but on the other hand, sometimes, depending on product category, they need the incentive from other people, e.g. family or friends. The people from their nearest environment can give advice or just help in choosing the desired product. Additionally, a friend's opinion will be important especially because it is available in the social media platforms and applications. They can mentor other online without leaving their houses.

The first analysed COO source of information that impact identification of product origin is a customer's **own experience with the product**. This refers to the personal encounter and interaction an individual has with a specific product. It encompasses the first-hand encounter and usage of the product, allowing the individual to form their own perceptions, opinions, and judgments based on their direct experience. This includes factors such as the product's functionality, quality, usability, and overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction derived from using the product (Angelini & Gilli, 2022). It should be noted that between customer and the product or the company there is an interaction that can include cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social components. The customer experience can be deliberately influenced by a company through various means, such as product or brand characteristics, website design, or mobile applications (Koetz, 2019).

**Family opinions** are also a crucial element in sharing information. According to Köcher, Sommer and Hurrelmann (2017), parents are considered the most influential advisors for Generation Z. They play a crucial role in providing guidance and advice to young people. Additionally, research by Albert et al. (2015) suggests that there is generally a positive and harmonious relationship between Generation Z individuals and their parents. Family members discuss about products they want to test or buy. They share the recommendations but also doubts. Trusted family members talk about products, brands and their origins. They consider whether they can afford certain expenses. However, the family opinion is defined as the

thoughts, beliefs, or feelings that the members of a person's family have about a particular product.

**Friends' opinion** also serve as a significant source of information for Generation Z, particularly through the extensive use of social media platforms (Vlontzos, Kyrgiakos, & Duquenne, 2018). They actively engage in sharing various content related to products, such as images or short videos, primarily on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). If the product attracts their attention then they share it among friends. It means that the core of the communication about the origin of the products will be clear brand communication in the social media and by advertising. The dissertation defines friends' opinions as: *the thoughts, feelings, or beliefs that one's friends have about a particular product*.

Another source of information which can help in identifying the origin of the product but also encourage young consumers to buy specific product is **advertising** and often the accompanying advertising slogans. Its purpose is to play on the emotions of those interested in buying a given product or service. All these elements allow companies to verify the level of trust that consumers have in them and to know their opinion about the product and the brand (Figiel, 2004; Álvarez del Blanco, 2000). Some indications concerning the country of origin can be included in an advertising slogan placed on the product or in specific graphic solutions (showing a characteristic visual element of the country visual element for a given country). Advertising slogans are designed to be memorable and impactful, and often aim to create a positive association or emotional connection with the target audience. Some well-known examples of advertising slogans include "Just Do It" (Nike), "Auto *emoción*" (Seat) and "Think Different" (Apple). The dissertation defines them as: *short and catchy phrases that are used in marketing and advertising campaigns to promote a product, service, or brand*. What is more, this source of information can help to understand and spread information about the products. In this way of communication, consumers can get to know about new models of the desired products or just to found out about the origin of the their favourite brand and product. In this dissertation advertising is a type of communication that is designed to promote or sell a product to a particular audience.

It should be noted that due to the difficulties in identifying the origin of products a range of **mobile applications** have been created. These are a software applications that are designed to run on smartphones and tablets and help in identifying the origin of the products based on



the bar code, name of the product or brand. Popular mobile applications include Pola, Polskie Marki (transl. *Polish Brands*), Made in, CodeCheck and Vivino. There was also one called Wspieramrynek.pl (transl. *Support for the market*), however it was terminated in 2020.

The **Pola** application is a free mobile application available for download on Google Play, App Store, and Windows Store, created by the Jagiellonian Club in cooperation with the Koduj dla Polski (trans. Coding for Poland) community and the Institute of Logistics and Warehousing. The application enables consumers to scan the barcode of a product and determine its country of origin, the manufacturer's location, and the level of Polish capital in the company. The application uses five criteria to assign a score out of 100 to each manufacturer, including domestic capital share, company registration in Poland, production in Polish factories, product development research, and Polish brand ownership. The application allows users to submit product proposals that are not available in the database, and the creators plan to create a comprehensive database of all manufacturers with a history of changes and sources (Pola, 2022).

**Polskie Marki** (trans. *Polish Brands*) is a mobile application that enables consumers to check the place of manufacture of a product by entering the product name, brand name, or company name. The latest version of the app, 3.0, includes an updated barcode scanner, ready lists of Polish equivalents, a bookmark with news, and an improved category list of products. The app features a "Categories" function that allows users to search for groups of products, service brands, or companies. It also includes a shopping list feature, where users can add brands with their own descriptions, enabling them to plan "patriotic" shopping before entering the shop. The app is available for download on Google Play. Each brand listed in the app includes a description informing consumers about the origin of the company's capital, the real owner, the place of production, and job creation. The app also considers market nuances like private labels of retail chains and regional brands not available throughout Poland (Polskie Marki, 2022).

**Made In** is a popular mobile application used abroad that enables consumers to check the country of origin of a product by scanning the barcode or entering it manually. By scanning the product, the app displays the flag and the name of the country where the product comes from on the user's phone screen. The app is available for free download on Google Play. Compared to Polish apps, Made In appears to be more advanced in terms of its technological solutions for providing detailed product information (Made in, 2022).

Another application launched by a German student in 2002 is **CodeCheck**. Although this app is only available in Germany, for the purpose of this dissertation it was reviewed with a German user. CodeCheck is very popular in Germany, and users can find essential information about the product and its brand. Consumers can rate products and share comments, and there is also information on whether the product is vegan-friendly. Users can search for a specific product by brand name, but there is a possibility that the product might not be available. In such cases, scanning the product barcode will display other products from the same brand. It should be indicated that the app informs also about country of origin of the product.

**WspieramRynek.pl** (transl. *Support for the market*) was an app created in 2015 that allowed buyers to check the country of origin of a product, who its producer was, and the percentage of Polish capital in the company. By scanning the product, the app displayed the place of manufacture and market the product as green for Polish origin, or red and yellow for products manufactured abroad. The app also provided alternative Polish brands that produced similar products. However, the app was terminated in 2020 due to the difficult market situation caused by COVID-19.

In order to indicate the implication of the discussed applications, *the light birch day cream* manufactured by the Polish company Sylveco was compared in all the discussed solutions on the basis of scanning or entering the bar code of the product (Table 9).

**Table 9. Comparison of functionalities of mobile applications identifying the COO of Sylveco day cream**

Application	Gathered information
<b>Pola</b>	Polish capital share 100%. The company is registered, produces, conducts research and development in Poland and is not part of a foreign concern. Moreover, the application informs about the industry in which the company operates. The consumer can also learn that the company was established in 1992. It specialises in cosmetics for sensitive and allergy-prone skin. It conducts its production and research activity in Rzeszów (where its factory is located). The application enables scanning only one-dimensional codes, i.e. EAN8 and EAN13, and entering digits manually.
<b>Polskie Marki (trans. Polish Brands)</b>	The application presents information about the analysed product, i.e. the product is 100% Polish, the brand supports Polish development, creates new jobs in Poland. In addition, the consumer can learn that Birchwood cosmetics are based on selected plant materials so as to naturally restore a healthy look to the skin. A distinguishing ingredient is a birch bark extract containing betulin and betulinic acid - active substances of high effectiveness and safety at the same time. The application does not have a scanning function or manual code entry. Instead, it allows you to search for the brand name.
<b>Made In</b>	The consumer only obtains information on the country of origin of the product. The application displays the flag and the name of the country.
<b>CodeCheck</b>	This application does not have the information about this specific Sylveco day cream, however, other day cream description consists of ingredients of the products, origin of the product, bar code number, information about the producer, category of cosmetic, additional information. Sylveco is company which specialised in hypoallergic cosmetics and natural ingredients, that is why the additional information indicates about anti-allergic ingredients.
<b>Wspieramrynek.pl</b>	In case of an unclear code, the application allows for manual entry of digits. Scanning the birch day cream of SYLVECO company, the application has verified the country of production (Poland), while the capital of the company is unknown. There was information about a limited scope of information concerning this product. According to the information on the application, it is possible to report a new product by adding a photo from the front, back of the packaging along with the barcode. The creators also ask for the name of the manufacturer, a short name of the product and the barcode.

Source: author's own elaboration on information from applications CodeCheck, Pola, Polskie Marki, Made in and Wspieramrynek.pl conducted in 2019.

**Vivino** is a wine application that serves as an electronic sommelier and social medium for wine lovers. It has over 13 million wines in its database with prices, tasters' reviews, and suggestions for dishes that complement the wine (Kotonya, De Cristofaro, & De Cristofaro, 2018). It has a personalized recommendation feature based on the user's ratings of previously consumed wines. The main function of the app is the ability to find a wine by scanning its label,

which provides information on its producer, country and region of origin, varietal, price, and user ratings. It also allows for the comparison of multiple wines' ratings and can scan wine lists in restaurants.

To summarize, it is important to indicate that there are many elements which help consumers to verify the origin of the products. More and more marketing specialist knowing the challenges consumers face with the identification of the product origin, take advantage of COO in promoting products/brands based on positive perceptions with a foreign or domestic origin.

### **2.3. COO effect and its impact on products perception**

As individuals go through the socialization process, people learn their beliefs and stereotypes from influential authorities and their closest family. These stereotypes are shaped by how individuals perceive the world around them and serve as mental constructs that simplify and sometimes carry emotional biases. Consumer behaviour research highlights the significance of certain stereotypes about the quality of products from specific countries in consumers' evaluation and purchase decisions. It is worth noting that the COO effect is the phenomenon of consumers evaluating a product based on their knowledge of the country in which it was manufactured. COO effect can be triggered by a set of commonly held country stereotypes, where social judgments and beliefs about a particular country's typical features are shared (Gidakovic & Zabkar, 2021; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Micevski, Diamantopoulos, & Erdbrugger, 2021). As a result, consumers' purchasing decisions can be related to the quality and level of risk associated with a brand or product (Teas & Agarwal, 2000; Maheswaran and Chen, 2009; Magnusson, Westjohn, & Zdravkovic, 2011; Micevski, Diamantopoulos, & Erdbrügger, 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to consider a stereotyping perspective to investigate the effects of COO cues on consumers' attitudes and behaviour towards brands or products made in foreign countries (Chattalas et al., 2008; Micevski, Diamantopoulos, & Erdbrügger, 2021). Stereotypes can have a significant influence, especially when consumers have a lack of information or personal experience with the product. Liczmańska (2014) shares a similar view, suggesting that information about a product's origin can affect buyers' perception and evaluation, ultimately translating into their actual market behaviour. This implies that the COO effect is typically based on deeply ingrained stereotypes (Gidakovic & Zabkar, 2021).

COO effect is widely discussed aspect in the field of international marketing and consumer behaviour all over the world (e.g. Andéhn, Nordin, & Nilsson, 2016; Wysocka & Bartosik-Purgat, 2020; Jiménez & San Martín, 2014; Lee, 2019; Nguyen & Alcantara, 2020; Ananda, Rini & Sembiring, 2019; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009; Samiee, 2010; 2011; Witek-Hajduk & Grudecka, 2021). It should be indicated that there are different COO effect designations in the literature. Some researchers use the abbreviation COO as the COO effect (e.g. Olsen & Olsson, 2002; Semaan, Gould, Chao, & Grein, 2019), others take advantage of COE as an COO effect (e.g. Bartosik-Purgat, 2018; Grudecka & Witek-Hajduk, 2023). The dissertation will focus on the country of origin effect marked as COO effect. The existing literature on COO effect provides varying recommendations for practical applications, which can be attributed to inconsistent definitions of the term and research techniques focused primarily on attribution. Table 10 presents definitions of COO effect.

**Table 10. Definitions of COO effect used in the reviewed literature**

Author/s	COO effect definitions
Nagashima (1970)	COO effect is the picture, the representation, and the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products from a specific country. This image is created by such variables as representative products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history and tradition.
Bilkey & Nes (1982)	COO effect is a collection of generic beliefs about particular products from a country, also known as stereotypes that consumers hold in relation to different products with different origins.
Wang & Lamb (1983)	COO effect is intangible barrier to enter in to new markets, which generates a negative perception towards imported products.
Papadopoulos (1993)	COO effect is the country of manufacture, assembly, design, or parts.
Samiee (1994)	COO effect is the impact that the country of origin of a product has on consumer product evaluations.
Haubl (1996)	COO effect reflects a consumers' general perceptions about the quality of a product made in a specific country, and the nature of people from that country have on the consumers' choice processes or subsequent behaviour.
Usunier (2003)	COO effect is an impact on the country of manufacture, brand, assembly or design has on a consumer's positive or negative perception of a product.
Figiel (2004)	COO effect is the image of the product or brand in the eyes of consumers, so the country which these products come from.
Jaffe & Nebenzahl (2006)	COO effect is the country which a consumer associates a certain product or brand as being its source, regardless of where the product is actually produced.
Ahmed & d'Astous (2008)	COO effect is an adventitious element that sways the apparent quality and value of a product, the risk coupled with it, and consumers' inclinations and intention to purchase it.
Bloemer, Brijs & Kasper (2009)	COO effect is a process in which the consumers consciously or subconsciously relate the "made in" or "country of origin" label of the product as a criteria to develop an attitude towards products made in different countries and to evaluate the quality of products made in different countries.

Roth & Diamantopoulos (2009)	COO effect identifies three definitional domains which include (1) the general image, (2) product-country image and (3) product image. These definitions differ in terms of their local image object under the country image (CI) definitional domain.
Sikora (2009)	COO effect is created under the influence of elements that effect its contents such as: - factors related to geography and history, - factors related to demography, economy and political system, - stereotypes relating to the inhabitants of a given country, - opinions about the culture of the country.
Liczmańska (2010)	COO effect is the influence of a particular country image on evaluation of products and brands from that country.
Licsandru, Szamosi, & Papadopoulos (2013)	COO effect is the picture, the representation, and the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products from a specific country. This image is created by such variables as representative products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history and tradition.
Wolanin-Jarosz (2014)	COO effect presents consumer attitudes towards certain product categories and is connected with the perception of quality of such products manufactured in particular markets.
Nakra (2015)	COO effect is an impact that the country of manufacture, assembly or design has on a consumer's positive or negative perception of a product.
Magier-Łakomy & Boguszewicz-Kreft (2015)	COO effect is the influence of a particular country image on evaluation of products and brands from that country.
Guilhoto (2018)	COO effect encompasses all the descriptive, inferential, and informational beliefs an individual holds about a specific country. It's commonly viewed as a construct comprising various aspects influenced by a country's political, economic, technological, and social domains.
Riesgo, Codina, & Sádaba (2023)	COO effect is defined as a country's image in a consumer's mind, influencing their evaluation of the products or brands produced by that country.

Source: Nagashima, 1970; Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Wang & Lamb, 1983; Papadopoulos, 1993; Samiee, 1994; Peterson & Jolibert, 1995; Haubl, 1996; Usunier, 2003; Figiel, 2004; Jaffe & Nebenzahl, 2006; Ahmed & d'Astous, 2008; Bloemer, Brijis & Kasper, 2009; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009; Sikora, 2009; Liczmańska, 2010; Licsandru, Szamosi, & Papadopoulos, 2013; Wolanin-Jarosz, 2014; Nakra, 2015; Magier-Łakomy & Boguszewicz-Kreft, 2015; Guilhoto (2018); Riesgo, Codina, & Sádaba, 2023.

Looking further into the above interpretations, it should be pointed out that some researchers define COO effects as an influence that changes the perceptions of evaluation of the products (Samiee, 1994); products or brands (Figiel, 2004; Magier-Łakomy & Boguszewicz-Kreft, 2015). On the other hand, others define COO effect as a sum of beliefs and attitudes about a specific product from different countries (Bilkey & Nes, 1982). Some interpretations explain it as the perception of quality of the manufactured products (Haubl, 1996; Wolanin-Jarosz, 2014). There are also definitions paying attention to stereotypical perception of the product made in specific country (Licsandru, Szamosi, & Papadopoulos, 2013; Nagashima, 1970).

With all of the above in mind, this dissertation explains a COO effect as: *the associations between the category of product and the country of manufacture that are created in the consumers' minds on the basis of stereotypes and other elements of identifying the origin of the products, i.e. attributes and sources of information*. This effect works even if consumers have no experience of consuming a particular product (Kala & Chaubey, 2018; Visbal et al., 2017).

Based on the above considerations, a classification of COO elements is forwarded that helps in identifying the origin of the products. These are COO attributes that help a product to be recognized by consumers (e.g. brand, graphic symbols on the products, language on the product packaging) and COO sources of information (e.g. own experience of the product, family and friends opinions about the products and country). The proposed scheme is displayed in sub-chapter 2.2. The first group is related to national characteristics and the second to stereotypes which are usually spread by influential people generalising the origin of products.

The COO effect, much like stereotypes, can elicit either positive or negative associations, as well as neutral perceptions, when it comes to evaluating product quality based on the product's manufacturing country (Baran, 2018; Bartosik-Purgat & Wysocka, 2017; Martín & Cerviño, 2011; Prendergast, Tsang, & Khan, 2010). There are several consumer behaviour mechanisms that can be analysed to understand how the country of origin affects product perceptions (Urbonavicius et.al., 2011; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Those mechanisms are cognitive, affective and normative.

A **cognitive mechanism** should be considered in three situations. Firstly, consumers have no knowledge or experience related to the product but formed an opinion on the country in which the product was manufactured and the image of the country (opinion) combines with the products. This type of behaviour is referred to as the "halo effect" e.g. a tendency to assess people or institutions too low or too high on the basis of a distinguishing feature (Klink-Lehmann, Maesano et al., 2021; Piqueras-Fiszman, & Spence, 2015; Woo 2019). It is worth adding that the halo effect of COO image influences consumers' general judgements of products and secondly it results from the opinions of consumers about the possibilities of producing a specific type of products with specific characteristics, associations and assessment of quality from a competitive country (Faisal, Fernandez-Lanvin, De Andrés, & Gonzalez-Rodriguez, 2020; Motsi & Park, 2020; Oh, Lee, & Lee, 2021; Zeiss & Chapman, 2021).

Secondly, consumers have experience and knowledge about the product and its brand because they had the opportunity to try it. In such a situation, a new, unknown product is observed through the prism of the offer benefits of a given brand or image of country where the product come from (Siahtiri & Lee, 2019; Soni, 2017). To be more precise, in this approach the image of the country of origin is not so important. Thirdly, consumers have both knowledge and experience related to the acquisition and trying out different products and brands from the same country. In this case, if consumers encounter a new, previously unknown product, they will buy it, knowing which country it comes from (De Nisco et al., 2015; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009).

The **affective mechanism** is based on emotional and symbolic values, where a particular country evokes emotions and represents a source of symbolic values for consumers. This mechanism is influenced by factors such as cultural associations, historical events, and personal experiences (Bartosik-Purgat, 2011; Faisal et al., 2020; Gallarza, Ruiz-Molina, & Gil-Saura, 2016; Liu et al., 2016; Soni, 2017; Zeiss & Chapman, 2021). However, this mechanism can be easily influenced by rumours or misinformation, leading to irrational decisions.

In turn, the **normative mechanism** is driven by social standards and norms, where companies may reject products from a specific country due to negative events or behaviour associated with that country (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004; Sikora, 2009; Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998). This mechanism has been particularly noticeable during the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, with many Polish companies reducing their purchases of Russian and Belarusian products or completely halting imports from those countries (e.g. Polish branch of Lidl).

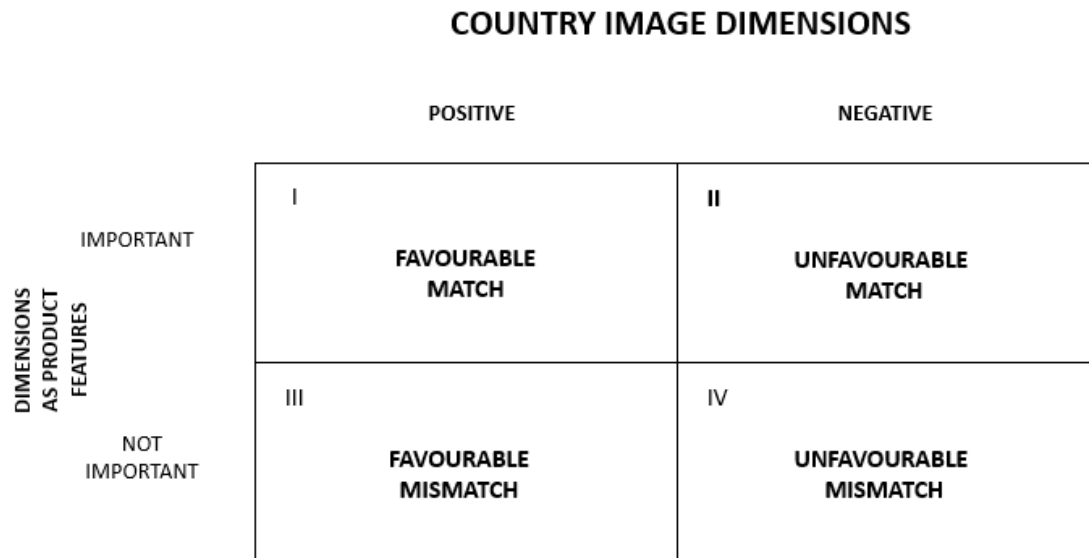
Summing up, it is important to note that the aforementioned COO elements make it possible to point out the COO effect of products, which is used by companies in promoting products in various categories and industries. The application of elements demonstrating the COO effect is presented in the next subchapter using several product categories as examples.



## 2.4. Product category and COO effects

The COO effect and the mechanisms discussed in subchapter 2.3. have a significant impact on the perceived match between the type of product and the country of origin, leading to either favourable or unfavourable evaluations of the product. Roth and Romeo (1992) developed strategies to promote products based on the favourable or unfavourable image of the country of origin, which can be applied to four types of situations:

- *favourable match*, which occurs when the image of a country is beneficial and important to the purchaser, then this compliance should be emphasized and in the strategy promote the introduction of national symbols. The example can be Italian leather accessories. Consumers consider Italy as a pioneer in clothing and leather footwear. Another favourable match will be German or Japanese car which are treated as high-quality goods.
- *unfavourable match* when the image of the country is adverse and the country of origin is important for the buyer, then all associations should be omitted with the actual country of manufacture. For instance, a Mexican watch or electronic device.
- *favourable mismatch* arises when a country's image attributes hold positive values, yet they lack significance within the context of the specific product category. The example of this situation can be Japanese beer or Japanese chocolate.
- *unfavourable mismatch* occurring when the country image is negative, but the country of origin is not a significant factor in the buyer's decision-making process. In this situation the country of origin should not be mentioned in the strategy promotion. In this case, the example can be Bulgarian cosmetics.



**Figure 9. Country and product category matches and mismatches**

Source: Roth & Romeo, 1992; Kuźmińska-Haberla 2013; Brodie & Benson-Rea, 2016; Bartosik-Purgat & Wysocka, 2017.

Conversely, there are businesses that capitalize on foreign-sounding brand names in an attempt to obscure the origin of their products. These brands have gained widespread recognition globally and are designed to be easily memorable (Licsandru, Szamosi, & Papadopoulos, 2013; Spillan & Harcar, 2012). There are few examples of brands of different products' categories and countries, which country of origin is equal with the brand name spelling:

- Gino Rossi – Polish producer of shoes and leather goods. This Italian spelling name of the brand relates this company with Italy. In Poland Italian shoes and clothes are believed to be of very good quality. Poles can even pay more to have Italian products. What is more, this supplier differentiates with high quality leather products and original designs. The company is popular in Poland but many people think that this is an Italian company (Bartosik-Purgat & Wysocka, 2017).
- Americanos - Polish company which sells jeans clothes. Its name is related to America which is treated as the explorer of this kind of products (Bartosik-Purgat & Wysocka, 2017).
- Da Milano – Indian brand which offers shoes, clothes and leather furniture. Indian consumers relate it with Milan, the capital of fashion and popular, modern Italian style (Bartosik-Purgat & Wysocka, 2017; Bhattacharya, 2015; Egan, 2015).
- Krüger&Matz - Polish brand of tablets, headphones, speakers, smartphones and TV sets. Its German related brand name led to the success of this company in Polish market. Germany is

thought as a producer of high quality products and new technologies. That is why the owners of the company decided to use favourable match with the German image (Bartosik-Purgat & Wysocka, 2017).

- Estee Lauder – French spelling brand name which originated in United States. It offers high quality cosmetics all over the world. The link with France was made to highlight the quality of the products of this category (Bartosik-Purgat & Wysocka, 2017).

- Bruno Banani – German brand which sell perfumes, clothes, shoes, watches and other accessories. Italian spelling stresses the associations with fashion and new trends. Even advertisements promote the marketing headline “Not for everybody”, which can suggest that those products are only for those consumers who like experiments and want to broaden the horizons (Bartosik-Purgat & Wysocka, 2017).

COO effect in a promotion strategy can be used in various ways (Magnusson, Westjohn, & Zdravkovic, 2022; Micevski, Diamantopoulos, & Erdbrügger, 2021). There are several methods to conceal the negative influence of a country's image on the production of goods, including branding techniques that suggest a desirable country of origin, finishing or assembling products in a country with a more favourable image, and referencing a country with a positive image in the product's name or logo. Having knowledge of whether a match is beneficial or detrimental can greatly impact marketing campaigns. This understanding can be used to manipulate consumers' preconceived notions and stereotypes about particular countries, resulting in a more effective marketing approach that alters their perceptions.

The perceived importance or influence of the COO effect in the evaluation and estimation process can vary depending on the product category or industry (Alden, Hoyer, & Crowley, 1993; Krupka & Arežina, 2017; Cordell, 1992; Watson & Wright, 2000). In addition, there is a level of the involvement of the consumer in the purchasing decision-making process, such as the amount of information the consumer will gather about the product. The consumer involvement level in the purchasing decision-making process is higher for durable and more risky products than for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) (Krupka & Arežina, 2017; Kalicharan, 2014; Lu Wang, Li, Barnes, & Ahn, 2012). Limański and Drabik (2010) suggest that the COO effect manifests itself with different intensity depending on the type of product. The more standardised the products, the less influence the image of the country of origin has on consumer decisions. In the case of differentiated products, the country of origin may have a significant impact on consumer market behaviour (Stoenescu, 2014).

There are many studies about COO effect which have confirmed that impact on evaluations of different types of products is not the same in each product category (Tseng & Balabanis, 2011; Chattalas et al., 2008; Zhou & Hui, 2003; Visbal et al., 2017). It is very difficult for scientists to generalize the results theoretically and practically. Nevertheless, there are some product categories which are recognizable with a specific COO (like German cars, French perfumes, Italian clothes), but there are categories, e.g. tools, detergents which are not directly determined by COO effect (Bhaskaran & Sukumaran, 2007). For that reason, consumers consciously or unconsciously evaluate products and relate them to COO cues (Cordell, 1992). Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2008) believe that some nations are likely to dominate in specific product categories due to a product's quality and design attributes.

Certain countries have earned a reputation for producing specific types of goods due to their specialization and expertise developed over several decades. This has resulted in these countries being recognized as reliable producers of those products in the global market. This is mainly due to consumers' knowledge of countries, their image, history, traditions, specialties, and sometimes stereotypical thinking regarding the association of product quality and COO effect (Chuin & Mohamad, 2012; Kucharska, Flisikowski, & Confente, 2019; Nguyen & Alcantara, 2020). It is worth pointing out that both literature and practice emphasize the fact that, for example, German cars are associated with precise workmanship and durability and safety, Italian shoes with modern design, and a Swiss watch with reliability (Chuin & Mohamad, 2012; Nguyen & Alcantara, 2020; Stasiuk & Maison, 2014). More examples of countries with typical product types are presented in Table 11.

**Table 11. COO effect – examples of typical products and their origin**

Belgium	Chocolate pralines
France	Fashion, perfume, wine, baguettes, champagne, cheese, cosmetics
Germany	Beer, cars, washing powders, detergents
Italy	Pizza, pasta, parmesan, espresso coffee, fashion, art, wine, ice cream, shoes
Japan	Raw fish, kimono, rice, sake, cars, audio-video equipment, cameras
Netherlands	Cheese, windmills, flowers
Mexico	Tequila, sombrero
Norway	Salmon, almonds (almond cakes)
Poland	Vodka, kabanos <sup>7</sup> , oscypek <sup>8</sup>
Scotland	Whisky, kilt
Spain	Sangría, Cava, tapas, turrón
Switzerland	Watches, cheese, chocolate
United Kingdom	Tea, sandwich, eggs on bacon
USA	Hamburgers, big cars, hot dog, ketchup, jeans

Source: own elaboration based on De Mooj, 2013; Bartosik-Purgat & Wysocka, 2017.

Some countries use graphic symbols on their products to enhance their positive image among consumers within their country. Examples can be high-quality chocolate known from Belgium or Switzerland. For instance, chocolate pralines presented in Figure 10. have the national symbol, Belgian flag. There is also information on the package in French that the product was made in Belgium. Such moves can help with identification of the product origin.

**Figure 10. Belgian flag on chocolate pralines**

Source: Internet: <https://e-superfood.pl/Belgijskie-czekoladki-serca-bez-dodatku-cukru-bezglutenowe-BIO-100-g> (access: 24.04.2022)

<sup>7</sup> Kabanos is a type of dry sausage that originates from Poland. It is made of pork and sometimes beef, and is seasoned with caraway seeds and black pepper. Kabanos is usually long and thin, and it has a smoky flavour due to the way it is smoked during the production process. It is often consumed as a snack or appetizer, and it is also used as an ingredient in dishes such as salads and soups. Kabanos is a popular food item in Poland and can be found in Polish specialty stores around the world.

<sup>8</sup> Oscypek is a type of cheese that originates from the Tatra Mountains region of Poland and Slovakia. It is made from unpasteurized sheep's milk, which is first heated and then mixed with a starter culture before being molded into distinctive shapes and smoked. Oscypek has a characteristic smoky flavour and a firm, dense texture, and is usually served grilled or fried. It is often paired with cranberry or lingonberry jam and is a popular traditional food in Poland, especially in the Podhale region.

It is worth emphasizing that numerous multinational brands employ marketing strategies that seek to assimilate their image with local and universal elements, aiming to boost their sales and gain a competitive edge in domestic markets. By aligning themselves with specific cultural nuances and values, these brands strive to cultivate a positive perception among consumers and establish a strong brand image (Hsieh & Lindridge, 2005; Zhou & Belk, 2004). Those actions are done when consumers could have a negative opinion about the country of origin of the products. For instance, Starbucks in Russia adapted their brand name in Cyrillic and in the UK there are many advertisements of Honda Civic and CR-V models to highlight localness of the production. It is important to notice that because of Brexit, the production of Honda Civic was moved to Japan. Another example is Unilever's a fast-cleaning liquid well-known in Europe and adopted its name to the markets. In Switzerland is *Vif*, in Germany consumers buy *Viss*, in Britain and Greece is called *Jif* and in France and Poland it is named *Cif* (Palumbo & Herbig, 2000). Another example is *Vizir* washing powder in Poland; in the USA, Dubai and the Philippines is named *Tide*. These actions are a response to globalisation to encourage the acceptance of foreign products among a local consumer segment (Alden, Steenkamp & Batra, 2006; Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006).

Differences in the impact of COO effects can be observed across various products (Tseng & Balabanis, 2011). According to Diamantopoulos et al. (2012) consumers are prone to spend more for products originating from countries with a favourable image, consociating the image with a better quality and higher product reliability. However, Tseng and Balabanis (2011) claim that a COO might wield substantial influence in specific product categories, its significance may be limited in others (for instance, Germany's strong COO impact on cars compared to its impact on cosmetics or perfumes). By contrast, more and more people claim that goods produced in developing markets (example China, India, Vietnam) are treated as old-fashioned, low quality or simply imitators (Zarrad & Debabi, 2012). The fact is that consumers in developed countries notice goods differently than emerging nations. For instance, it was examined that Americans perceive Indian and Chinese cars differently with regard to competence, excitement, sophistication and severity (Fetscherin & Toncar, 2010). Fetscherin and Toncar (2010) claim that the Chinese cars are distinguished as more "daring, up-to-date and outdoorsy" than US or Indian cars. What is more, Chinese and US cars were recognized as more smart, favourable and upper class than Indian cars. Ahmed and d'Astous (2001) highlighted that Canadians had a negative attitude towards products made in newly

developed East Asian Countries (EAC) regarding quality, efficiency and originality. Nevertheless, products from EAC were considered as very economical in comparison to those from highly developed nations. The survey's results showed that COO images towards East Asian Countries are less negative for products with medium level of involvement such as video cassette recorder and other electronics.

What is more, consumers evaluate some categories of products positively and other negatively. The COO effect can count on the existing affective relation between the country and the product category (Andéhn, Nordin, & Nilsson, 2016). It is important to notice that a particular COB could be perceived differently by consumers. For instance, for people who live in a country with a different level of economic development (Eng, Ozdemir, & Michelson, 2016).

To summarize, the purchasing decisions of young consumers can vary depending on the specific category of products they are considering. In this regard, marketers prepare communication strategy based on the positive connotations with the brand and its origins. It is worth pointing out that some matches can be favourable (e.g. Swiss chocolate, Italian wine, French perfume), whilst others are negatively perceived by consumers (e.g. Japanese chocolate, Spanish electronics). These aspects should be in-depth analysed by marketers and product designers.

## CHAPTER 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE YOUNG CONSUMER SEGMENT ON INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

### 3.1. Young consumers

#### 3.1.1. Generations of consumers

With regard to the crystallization of the young consumer category, it is impossible to ignore the generational approach, which distinguishes four generation groups of consumers, taking into account the age criterion (Bartczak, 2009; Kieźel, 2010; Lipowski, 2017; Rudolph, Rauvola, & Costanza, 2021; Zwierzchowska, 2009). In the twentieth century the main analysed generations were: the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. However, in the twenty-first century Generation Z was additionally taken into account. It is important to indicate over time, the age groups and research interests have moved on to people who are potential consumers of products, nowadays members of Generation Z or even Generation Alpha. In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the age ranges associated with different generations described in literature, the following generations are presented (Bako, 2018; Eldridge, 2023; Valickas & Jakštaitė, 2017):

- *Silent Generation* - the oldest generation including people born between 1909 and 1945;
- *Baby Boomers* - people born during the post-war baby boom between 1946 and 1964. This group focused on the families and their jobs. The biggest satisfaction was success. They used televisions and radios for consuming news and information.
- *Generation X* (Gen X) - people born between 1965 and 1980. This generation's cohorts place significant emphasis on maintaining a healthy work-life balance and consistently strive to find equilibrium among their family, personal life, and professional commitments (Dabija, Bejan, & Tipi, 2018; Kaylene et. al., 2010). They prioritize their families and personal time to such an extent that they are unlikely to compromise their leisure hours for work-related matters. Many individuals within this generation are disinclined to work during weekends, as these days are reserved for spending time with their families. They are proactive in expressing their needs and expectations when confronted with circumstances that could impact their overall quality of life (Kian & Yusoff, 2012). These are often educated people, intellectually and materially, but consciously fleeing to the margins of official life, not susceptible to advertising spots, periodic fashions, disregarding consumer-market rules. What is more, this generation



represents very traditional people who live as they parent say (Lissitsa & Laor, 2021). New technologies are challenges for them, because of great competition in the labour market, they need to gain new skills not to lose their jobs (Berraies, Ben Yahia, & Hannachi, 2017). If they do not accept the new ideas of their employers, some of them end up on the margins of society after losing their jobs.

- *Generation Y* (Millennial Generation, Generation Next, Net Generation, Gen Y) - people born between 1981 and 1995, who followed the baby boom of the post-war period. Representatives of this generation have emerged with the development of technology, i.e. mobile telephony, multi-channel television, computers, e-mail, and social media. This generation is the first to live in a constantly changing and transforming environment, in which new devices are appearing at a speed not experienced by previous generations. They keep abreast of world events on television and get their entertainment faster than ever from rich print publications, versatile electronic media, computer software and the Internet (Dorie & Loranger, 2020; Lissitsa & Laor, 2021). In many countries, this is the first generation to grow up online, whose main characteristic is the desire to be constantly connected to the world (Lissitsa & Laor, 2021; Woldeamanuel & Nguyen, 2018).

- *Generation Z* (Gen Z, iGeneration, Gen Tech, Online Generation, Post Millennials, Facebook Generation, Switchers, Selfie Generation, "always clicking", connected to the internet"; "computerized"; "communicating"; "content-centric"; "community-oriented", "changing") - people born between 1995 and 2012. They check every doubt on the Internet, to which they usually have permanent access. Generation Z grew up in relative prosperity, but on the other hand it is one of the most divided generations, because it is easy to see exactly what their home situation is like, what their parents passed on to them, what their material situation is like, what access they have to culture, development and education.

- *Generation Alpha* (Gen Alpha) – people born after 2012. Their lives are full of new technologies and social media. Generation Alpha, for the most part, has parents who belong to the millennial generation, and as a result, they are sometimes referred to as "mini millennials" (Eldridge, 2023). Gen Alpha is a witness of a global pandemic and the loss of jobs that caused by COVID-19. This generation has had to quickly adjust to online classes and studying mostly at home because of the pandemic (Ziatdinov & Cilliers, 2021). Some researchers called Gen Alpha also Generation C. Due to COVID-19, the Generation adopt also

the name Coronials new name of those who were born and growing up during pandemic COVID-19 (Eldridge, 2023).

It should be noted that these are broad terms and there are, in reality, different divisions of generations in international markets. Researchers point to different time frames and characteristics of all generations (Bartosik, Minska-Struzik, & Jankowska, 2022; Reeves & Oh, 2007). For example, in Spain Generation X refers to people born between 1960 and 1980, Generation Y refers to people born between 1981 and 1990, and Generation Z refers to the youngest population, born between 1991 and 2000 (Herrando, Jimenez-Martinez, & Martin-De Hoyos, 2019). In German literature, Generation X is defined as those born between 1965 and 1980, Generation Y are people who were born between 1980 and 2000 and Generation Z represents people born between 2000 and 2012 (Deutschland.de, 2023), however, there are German researchers who defined Generation Z as those who were born after 1995 (Lassleben & Hofmann (2022). In turn, in Polish literature Generation X refers to people aged 1965-1979 (Dolińska-Weryńska, 2016) or 1964-1979 (Opalińska, 2018), Generation Y are people who were born after 1982 (Dolińska-Weryńska, 2016) or 1980-1994 (Opalińska, 2018) and Generation Z refers to people who were born after 1995 (Grabiwoda, 2019; Aniszewska, 2015). It means that those range differ even inside the country. Next pages of this chapter will be focused on Generation Z.

### **3.1.2. Young consumers segment – ways of interpretation**

The first research about the young consumer segment can be traced back to the period connected with the development of marketing, as well as the need to define the target market for companies' products. This period starts in the 1950s in the United States, while in Poland it only started in the 1990s (Kotler, 1994). The core of defining the notion of "young consumer" is to determine the age range of the consumer who can be qualified and categorised into this market segment. Analysing scientific output in the field of consumer behaviour and marketing behaviour of enterprises, it is possible to state that there is a great diversity among authors' proposals concerning the definition of the age range describing the category of young consumers (Marshall, 2016; John, Balapure, & Godwin, 2020; Tarka & Kukar-Kinney, 2022; Guan, Lau, Yang, & Ren, 2022). In general, the age range characterising this market segment can be (and often is) adopted differently depending on the purpose for which it is established.

Young people are an important distinct part of any society (Squires & Ho 2022). They are special market participants, in contrast to adults - they have different needs, perception of the world, understanding of messages addressed to them, different value systems, and manners of conduct. Their full participation in the market is limited by numerous barriers, mainly legal conditions, age, social influences, means of consumption, level of market education, understanding of the mechanisms of market or access to information (Chillakuri, 2020; Riley & Klein, 2021; Djafarova & Fouts, 2022).

In psychological classification, adulthood is typically divided into different stages, including early adulthood, which refers to the period between the ages of 18 to 25-30 years old, where individuals are transitioning from adolescence to full-fledged adulthood (Strelau, 2003). This stage of development is characterized by significant changes and transitions, including the exploration of personal identity, establishing a sense of autonomy, and taking on new responsibilities. Age classification of young adults can also be based on the biological criterion. Those ranges are of 15-24 years and 25-34 years (Boni & Szafraniec, 2011). Age of young adults is also referred to as the 18-29 age range (Pańków, 2012; Piłkuła-Malachowska, 2018). This dissertation is focused on individual consumers and pays the attention to young people, as such a working definition of 'young people' is needed, as is presented in Table 12.

**Table 12. Delimitation of a group of young consumers based on age criteria according to various authors**

The author	Age of young consumers
Włodarczyk-Śpiewak (2004)	up to 35 years old
Spero & Stone (2004)	17–25 years old
Wrzesińska (2006)	18-35 years old
Wolny (2006)	15-24 years old
Balcerzak-Paradowska (2007)	18-35 years old
Penman & McNeill (2008)	19-23 years old
Cismaru, Lavack, & Markewich (2008)	up to 24 years old
O'Cass & Choy (2008)	18-30 years old
Olejniczuk-Merta (2008)	18-34 years old
Bilska (2009)	20-25 years old
Bartosik-Purgat (2009)	18-30 years old
Woźny (2013)	19-34 years old
Rohm, Swaminathan, & Tanniru, 2013	up to 20 years old
Marshall (2016)	18-22 years old
John, Balapure, & Godwin (2020)	24- 36 years old
Tarka & Kukar-Kinney (2022)	17-25 years old
Guan, Lau, Yang, & Ren (2022)	18 - 34 years old
Gaur, Srivastava, & Gupta (2022)	18–24 years old
Squires & Ho (2023)	18 - 24 years old
Su, Iqbal, Haque, & Akter (2023)	18–37 years old

Source: own elaboration based on Bilska, 2004; Włodarczyk-Śpiewak, 2004; Spero & Stone, 2004; Kusińska, 2005; Wrzesińska, 2006; Wolny, 2006; Balcerzak-Paradowska, 2007; Penman & McNeill, 2008; Cismaru, Lavack, & Markewich, 2008; O'Cass & Choy, 2008; Olejniczuk-Merta, 2008; Bilska, 2009; Bartosik-Purgat, 2009; Woźny,

2013; Rohm, Swaminathan, & Tanniru, 2013; Marshall, 2016; John, Balapure, & Godwin, 2020; Tarka & Kukar-Kinney, 2022; Guan, Lau, Yang, & Ren, 2022; Gaur, Srivastava, & Gupta, 2022; Squires & Ho, 2023; Su, Iqbal, Haque, & Akter, 2023.

Having considered the different age ranges presented in Table 12, for the purpose of this dissertation a young consumer is defined as: *a person aged 18-25*. In Poland, young people are mainly those who graduated the high school or technical school and are able to start the studies at the University or start to work and get permanent contracts (in age of 18-19 years old). The group of young consumers are those who studied Bachelor's and Master's degrees and also those who graduated their studies. In Germany young people finish their high schools of the age of 18. In Germany, tertiary education or post-secondary education refers to the educational level that students pursue after completing secondary school. There are various types of universities and institutions that comprise the tertiary education system, and the selection of a suitable option depends on a student's secondary school grades. In Germany attention is paid to more technical schools to achieve the competences and conquer a profession. In turn, in Spain young people need to attend to school until the age of 16. Secondary education is divided into two stages: Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO) and Bachillerato or professional training. ESO is mandatory for all students, while Bachillerato, which prepares students for university, is optional. Whilst the educational systems differ from country to country, young people aged 18-25 mostly either study or combine study with work.

For the purpose of this dissertation, the same age of young people were chosen from Germany, Poland and Spain. The specific age segment was chosen mainly due to differences with define age range of young consumers (Generation Z). Young adults aged 18 to 25 from Germany, Poland, and Spain were invited to participate in the research conducted for the dissertation. In the dissertation, the terms "young consumer" and "Generation Z" are used interchangeably. It should be noted that this dissertation places emphasis on Generation Z, which refers to individuals born after 1995, as young consumers, taking into account the various definitions of young consumers found in literature. To provide more precise details, the time range for the dissertation was narrowed down to between 18 to 25 years old, indicating that the respondents who were invited were born between 1997 to 2004.

### 3.1.3. Age range and characteristics of Generation Z

Generation Z constitutes a statistically significant group of the population, although a tendency towards the phenomenon of ageing societies is visible in all regions of the world. The group of people aged 18-25 referred in this dissertation as young consumers, is and will continue to be a significant market segment in every country. The main reason is that they were born in the 1990's and grew up in the 2000s during which the main technological changes with internet, laptops, smartphones, freely available networks, social and digital media were developed (Dolot, 2018; Singh & Dangmei, 2016). For this reason, it is an important and intellectually intriguing category of consumers. Therefore, it is crucial to differentiate the age range of Generation Z and provide a comprehensive literature review, as depicted in Table 13.

**Table 13. Generation Z age range - literature review**

Age range	Authors
born 1990 or later	Świerkosz-Hołysz (2016); Wiktorowicz & Warwas (2016)
between 1990 and 1999	Half (2015)
between 1991 and 2000	Tulgan (2009); Herrando, Jimenez-Martinez, & Martin-De Hoyos (2019)
between 1991 to 2002	Westlund (2010); Euromonitor (2011)
between 1993 and 2012	White (2017)
between 1993 and 2005	Turner (2013)
after 1995	Opolska-Bieleńska (2016); Black, Asadorian, & Dunnett (2017); Cilliers (2017); Dudek (2017); Ensari (2017); Lanier (2017); Chillakuri & Mahanandia (2018); Lassleben & Hofmann (2022)
between 1995 and 2000	Baltescu (2019); Grabiwoda (2019); Koksai (2019); Moscrip (2019); Romero & Lado (2021)
between 1995 and 2009	Ha (2019)
between 1995 and 2010	Seemiller & Grace (2017); Chaturvedi, Kulshreshtha, & Tripathi (2020); Ismail, Nguyen, Chen, Melewar, & Mohamad (2021); Djafarova & Fouts (2022)
between 1997 and 2012	Dimock (2019); Gentilviso & Aikat (2019); Wolf, Wolf, & Lecat (2020); McKee-Ryan (2021)
after 2005	Dorie & Loranger, 2020; Bartosik-Purgat, Jankowska, & Minska-Struzik (2022)

Source: authors' own elaboration based on Westlund, 2010; Euromonitor, 2011; Tulgan, 2009; Turner, 2013; Half, 2015; Opolska-Bieleńska, 2016; Świerkosz-Hołysz, 2016; Wiktorowicz & Warwas, 2016; Black, Asadorian, & Dunnett, 2017; Cilliers, 2017; Dudek, 2017; Ensari, 2017; Lanier, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2017; White, 2017; Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Baltescu, 2019; Dimock, 2019; Gentilviso & Aikat, 2019; Ha, 2019; Herrando, Jimenez-Martinez, & Martin-De Hoyos, 2019; Koksai, 2019; Moscrip, 2019; Chaturvedi, Kulshreshtha, & Tripathi, 2020; Dorie & Loranger, 2020; Wolf, Wolf, & Lecat, 2020; Ismail, Nguyen, Chen, Melewar, & Mohamad, 2021; McKee-Ryan, 2021; Romero & Lado, 2021; Bartosik-Purgat, Jankowska, & Minska-Struzik, 2022; Djafarova & Fouts, 2022; Lassleben & Hofmann, 2022.

Taking into account various age ranges, it is important to indicate that almost all researchers define members of Generation Z as a people born in 1990s. The key distinctions lie in the specific commencement or conclusion date of Generation Z. Some researchers claim that Generation Z are those who born after Facebook was launched (Dorie & Loranger, 2020).

On the other hand, some indicate that the changes of behaviour of Generation Z were visible before Facebook became so popular around the world (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Chaturvedi, Kulshreshtha, & Tripathi, 2020). Although there is a lack of consensus on this matter, when examining Generation Z, it is crucial to consider its distinctive attributes.

Some researchers pinned the term *identity nomads* to Gen Z because they focus on developing self-authenticity, “be your true self!” (Fromm & Read, 2018). They are role models to themselves (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). It means that they would like to truly live their lives, not imitating other people. They characterize themselves in both stereotypical and experimental ways on social media to create various digital identities. Southgate (2017) and Feher (2019) have called them digital natives due to their dependency on digital media and access to online literature. They can search, they know how to navigate the Internet, and they have no problems with virtual communication. They often have many friends from distant parts of the world, thanks to the Web and Facebook, founded in 2004, and as such official borders do not exist (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020). Generation Z is more willing than other generations to engage in discussions on forums or social media. Generation Z is open to new technologies and perfectly find themselves in virtual space, which they treat as a convenient place to search for information, express their opinions or contact companies. Sak (2018) suggests that these individuals tend to disconnect from traditional societal norms and rely heavily on the Internet as their primary means of interaction. They have a penchant for capturing moments throughout their day and sharing them on social media platforms (Horvathova et al., 2016). In a study conducted by Jankova (2020), it was discovered that the use of the Internet and engagement with social networks are among the most prominent leisure activities for Generation Z, and nearly all members of this generation access the Internet daily, predominantly through their mobile phones.

Young consumers using mobile devices when making purchasing decisions reach for opinions and comments posted on the Internet, exchange observations and experience, and compare prices and product prices and features of goods. Considering the rapidly growing electronic device market (in particular smartphones), it has to be highlighted that the interactive and multimedia nature of consumption appears to be one of the most important directions of its development. Recognition of this trend is a challenge for enterprises, which have to respond both to the changing mobile technological environment new, emerging generation of consumers (Paczka, 2020). Generation Z is an ideal target segment for influencer

marketing due to their adeptness in digital technologies and their preference for social networks. Their proficiency in navigating the digital world makes them highly receptive to influencer-driven promotional campaigns on various social media platforms (Nadanyiova & Sujanska, 2023). Generation Z perceives influencers as peers and views them as more trustworthy and dependable compared to traditional celebrities (Martinez-Lopez et al., 2020). Furthermore, Kantar's research (2020) revealed that 44% of Generation Z members base their purchase decisions on influencer recommendations, indicating the significant impact influencers have on their consumption patterns.

It is worth pointing out that Generation Z is not deterred by distance. Young consumers like to travel, change places of living and make spontaneous decisions as going to the other side of the world if they have the opportunity and it can help them in their self-development (Euromonitor, 2011; Santer, Manago, & Bleisch, 2022). Young consumers are very "self-"oriented. The typical expressions of Generation Z can be self-learners, self-starters or self-motivators. What is more, young consumers consists of individualists, often even loners, who are rebellious, sometimes even egoistic. Their view of the world is characterised by realism, which tends towards pessimism (Bautista & Saavedra, 2020). At the same time, they are very creative people who value self-development and independence.

It should be noted that young individuals are increasingly gaining independence and entering the job market. They often balance their initial professional responsibilities with their studies. As a result, they start earning their own money through their professional activities, giving them the freedom to manage their finances according to their own discretion (Pikuła-Malachowska, 2018). This shows that Generation Z is characterized by innate multitasking (Otieno & Nyambegera, 2019; Gould, Nalepa, & Mignano, 2020, Okros, 2020). Young consumers are able to do several things at once. Gen Z is very interactive and this is somehow natural for them. It is not a problem for them to talk to someone, write a message and watch a TV series at the same time (Westlund, 2010). This divides their attention and so, for the same reason, they are not able to focus on just one thing, and it is difficult to grab their attention to the extent that stop other activities. It is worth adding that they are often addicted to, or at least reliant on Google's tools (Hamdi et al., 2022). Additionally, Bautista and Saavedra (2020) claimed that Generation Z has a fear of missing out (FOMO) and fear of living offline (FOLO). They are worried about an uncertain future, financial security, terrorism, natural disaster and the COVID-19 pandemic (Hamdi et al., 2022; Otieno & Nyambegera, 2019).

Generation Z also succumb to trends very easily. It is said that Generation X was the one who got hooked on advertising and was susceptible to it, but it seems that Generation Z has surpassed them in this respect (Kang & Motley, 2021; Krotova & Podshivalova, 2020; Kowalczyk, 2007). It often succumbs to it completely unconsciously. The brand is important to them, but at the same time they want the price to be reasonable, so it is important for them to have high quality, for which they will not overpay (Bautista & Saavedra, 2020). What is more, Generation Z's representatives are cautious spenders and risk averse (Azimi et al., 2022; Squires & Ho, 2022). It should also be pointed out that Generation Z focuses on the environmental perspective (Chaturvedi, Kulshreshtha, & Tripathi, 2020). Young consumers verify whether their favourite brands are eco-friendly (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). They are well-educated and they know how important is the surrounding nature. Additionally, they believe that brands are responsible for the environment so they should face problems if they are not seen as coming up to standard (Adnan et al., 2017). Petro (2020) claims that they can even pay more for the products if they know that the brands take care of the environment. This trend is confirmed by German consumers, however, the attention is paid mostly on domestic product to reduce the transportation pollution (Pedersen et al., 2018).

To summarize the reflections on the term "young consumers", it is important to highlight that there is currently no universally accepted definition for this concept. The specific age range of individuals who fall under this category cannot be clearly determined. Generally, the identification of young consumers depends on the research objectives and the specific product categories being analysed. Due to the existing knowledge gap in this area, further research should focus on refining the conceptual framework pertaining to the segment of young consumers, while considering the distinct characteristics of this group across different product categories. It is worth noting that the dissertation focuses on individuals aged 18-25, who are part of Generation Z. Subsequent sections of the dissertation explore the consumer behaviour of young individuals in Germany, Poland, and Spain.

### **3.2. Generation Z's perception towards COO effect**

This subchapter focuses on exploring common trends and considerations regarding Generation Z's perception of the COO effect that pertains to how consumers perceive and evaluate products based on their country of origin. Young consumers look for product



information before making a purchase. Depending on their age, the information comes from television, the Internet, social media channels, contacts with peers, leaflets and books or magazines. It has become very popular among Gen Z to also take advantage of livestreams and online TV or streaming. All of those sources of information can provide information about the characteristics of the products as well as about the origin.

Despite the increasing globalisation of trade and production, Generation Z consider a product's origin when evaluating its quality, safety, and overall desirability (Abraham & Patro, 2014). The correlation analysis among young Polish consumers provided by Zalega (2019) revealed a statistically significant but weak relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intentions towards domestically produced goods. The survey results showed that Generation Z have a preference for domestic products, but the level of ethnocentrism varied depending on the type of product. It should be noted that young Polish consumers generally favour domestic products, particularly food items, but their ethnocentrism is less pronounced for other categories like household appliances, infotainment equipment, mobile equipment, clothing, footwear, and chemical products (Zalega, 2019). This could be due to feelings of patriotism or a desire to support local industries. Additionally, people's attitudes are a form of conscious consumption, which portray consumers as actors who can create acceptable patterns of behaviour oriented, for example, towards the place of origin goods (De Nisco, Massi, & Papadopoulos, 2020). Therefore, it is worth pointing out the existing attitudes of all groups of consumer generations, including young consumers, towards domestic and foreign products. These attitudes include:

- a preference for domestic products - an ethnocentric attitude;
- preference for foreign products - an internationalist attitude;
- lack of orientation towards the origin of the product (preferences originate from other product characteristics) - cosmopolitan attitude (Bartosik-Purgat, 2011; Ertmańska, 2011).

The first analysed group are ethnocentric consumers whose attitude is related to ethnocentrism as a special case of the COO effect, e.g. preference for goods manufactured in-house country (Chattalas, Kramer, & Takada, 2008; De Nisco, Massi, & Papadopoulos, 2020; Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Szromnik, 2014). This choice may be thoughtless, but more often it is conscious and purposeful, and preferences are made not only by practical advantages of the products, but also a conviction about the ethical and moral obligation to buy native products (Liczmańska, 2010). What is more, ethnocentric people pay attention to domestic

materials, parts and graphic symbols which displays nationality. They support opening national subsidiary and traditional products' brands. This attitude is mainly visible among Spaniards that they highlight the domestic production (Solbes-Canales, Valverde-Montesino, & Herranz-Hernández, 2020). According to some studies, the origin of a quality wine is often more influential in consumers' preferences than other factors, such as the price of the wine (Martinez-Carrasco, Brugarolas & Martinez-Poveda, 2005). In other words, consumers may be more likely to choose a wine based on where it was produced rather than how much it costs (Barrena & Sanchez, 2009; Jimenez, 2002).

Some researchers indicate that in developed countries, consumers perceive local products to have better quality than imported ones (Granzin & Painter, 2001; Karoui & Khemakhem, 2019; Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004). It should also be noted that Germans indicate their commitment to domestic production. In 2015 and 2016, the percentage of young Germans who indicated a preference for buying regional products remained constant at 63.20 %. In 2017, there was a slight increase to 64.80 %, indicating a slightly higher inclination towards purchasing regional products (VuMA, 2019). By 2018, the percentage further rose to 66 %, suggesting an upward trend in the preference for regional products. Siemieniako, Kubacki, Glińska, and Krot (2011) examined national-level consumer attitudes toward what makes a brand of beer "Polish". Respondents aged 22 and 23 identified that a brand must be physically produced in Poland, using Polish ingredients and traditional recipes to be considered genuinely Polish. Students who took part in the research claimed that when they had the option to choose regional beer they always but it instead of a foreign one.

In contrast, in developing countries, consumers believe that products made by local producers are not as good as imported products (Wang & Chen, 2004). It is worth mentioning that there is not as much research investigating the importance of consumer ethnocentrism in developing countries as in developed ones (Karoui & Khemakhem, 2019; Makanyeza & du Toit, 2017). Therefore, ethnocentric consumer tendencies can be expected to show different levels in developed and developing countries (Karoui & Khemakhem, 2019). Research also shows that in developed economies consumers, who have experienced cultures other than their own appear to be less ethnocentric and more favourably disposed towards imported products.

The second group are internationalists, who prefer buying foreign products instead of domestic ones. This group of consumers is popular in developing countries, where there are

shortages of goods and domestic products are of low quality (Mahmoud, Mallen-Ntiador, Andoh, Iddrisu, & Kastner, 2021; Szromnik, Wolanin-Jarosz, 2014). It is worth adding that for internationalists, owning a foreign product is often a symbol of the holder's material status and higher social position (Figiel, 2004; Mahmoud et al., 2021). Some researchers also claim that consumers can buy more expensive goods coming from abroad but with lower quality (Akbarov, 2021; Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2016; Diamantopoulos, Davydova, & Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, 2019; Kumar & Paul, 2018; Mahmoud et al., 2021). Additionally, Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2016) indicated that internationalists do not compare the prices and quality of domestic and foreign products, they just choose those manufactured abroad. Examples include clothing, toothpaste, soaps, building materials, and pharmaceuticals (Mahmoud et al, 2021; Mueller, Broderick, & Kipnis, 2010).

Cosmopolitans are consumers who identify themselves as citizens of the World (, 2015; Nummela, Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, Harikkala-Laihin, & Raitis, 2021; Watson, 2018). Consumers with a cosmopolitan perspective are not restricted the geographical boundaries. They do not care about the origin of the product. They just buy those goods which they need. They are not used to taking advantage of just one product. They compare products based on their characteristics and then buy products that have the most benefits possible (Figiel, 2004). They are open to moving from one place to another, working in different countries, learning foreign languages, and buying different products.

In the 1990s there was a trend that if products were not made in countries with a positive country image, then even cosmopolitans from developed countries would not buy them (Chao, 1993; Papadopoulos et al., 1990). Later, because of low-cost production in developing countries, this perception changed. Steenkamp and de Jong (2010) claimed that cosmopolitans from developed countries changed their perception. However, cosmopolitans from developing countries preferred foreign products, and the best originated in well-developed countries (Kinra, 2006; Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price, 2008). According to the survey conducted by Zalega (2018), nearly half of the respondents aged 18-34 in the study identified themselves as having cosmopolitan attitudes. Among this group, a significant majority (58.4%) stated that they often pay attention to whether a product is of foreign origin and also consider the brand, particularly when it comes to mobile devices, infotainment systems, and household appliances. Additionally, 22.9% of cosmopolitan consumers reported that they very often

consider the product's origin and brand, while 18.7% stated that they always or almost always take these factors into account when making a purchase decision (Zalega, 2018).

To sum up, Generation Z is a young and tech-savvy group of people that rely on various sources of information such as television, the Internet, social media, and peers to gather product information before making a purchase. When evaluating products, young consumers consider product origin as a factor in assessing quality, safety, and desirability. They exhibit different attitudes towards domestic and foreign products, including ethnocentric, internationalist, and cosmopolitan attitudes.

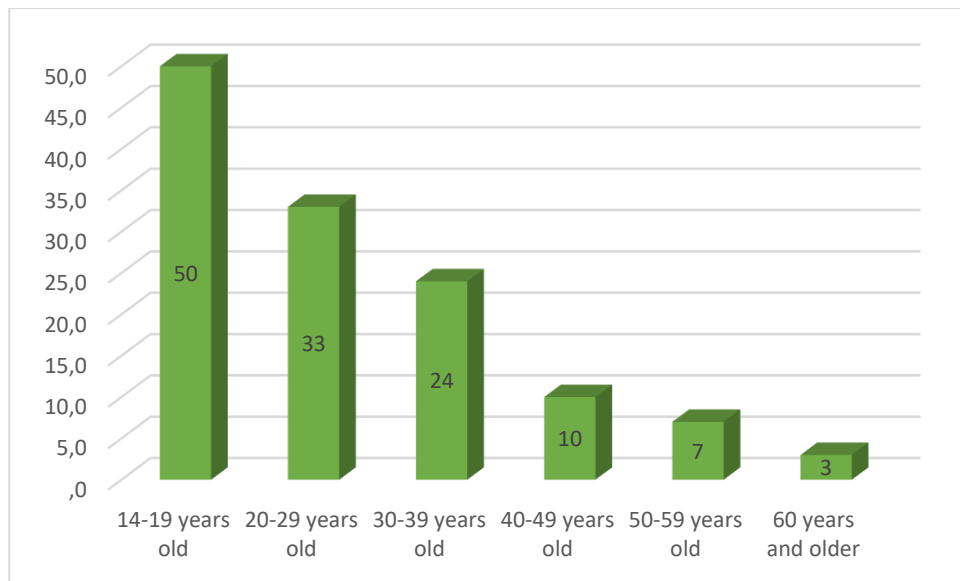
### **3.3. Generation Z in Germany, Poland and Spain: Characteristics and decision-making processes**

Analysing Gen Z it is difficult to unequivocally state whether young Germans, Poles and Spaniards are representatives of one of the types of consumers mentioned in subchapter 3.2. It is probable that in each country and age group of consumers there will be supporters of each approach. Due to economic, cultural and social factors, the characteristics of the young consumer segment in Germany, Poland, and Spain exhibit some variations. These differences can be noticed in the demographic structure, level of education and the various ways of behaviour based on the cultural background.

According to Statistisches Bundesamt Destatis (2018a), the population of Germany in 2017 was 82,740,900, consisting of 41,918,900 females and 40,822,000 males. Within this population, there were 15,744,078 who belonged to Generation Z, i.e., born between 1990 and 2010, with 48,6% females and 51,4% males (Statistisches Bundesamt Destatis, 2018b). It should be noted that Germany's economic prosperity is reflected in its low unemployment rate, which stood at 5.8% for the entire civilian labour force in 2022 (Eurostat, 2022). The youth unemployment rate for individuals aged 15 to 24 was slightly higher at 6.1% in May 2018. Germany offers a favourable environment for the younger generation, with a balanced ratio of job openings for apprenticeships and vocational training compared to the number of unemployed young individuals (Scholz & Grotefend, 2019). This has resulted in a decreasing number of applicants for vocational training as more people opt for higher education at colleges and universities. In fact, Germany had over 2.8 million students in higher education institutions during the winter semester of 2017/2018, and education is nearly free at all levels.

Young German consumers are highly tech-savvy and comfortable with using digital platforms for various activities, including shopping and socializing. Germans are known for their flexibility and their ability to adapt their traditions to suit the evolving environment (Al-Alawi & Alkhodari, 2016). They are open to new ideas and readily embrace innovation and progress. They are also environmentally conscious and there is a strong emphasis on sustainability among young consumers in Germany. They prioritize eco-friendly products and are willing to pay a premium for brands that align with their values (Dreyer & Stojanová, 2023). Additionally, young Germans are quality-conscious they are willing to invest in durable and reliable items rather than opting for cheaper alternatives (Scholz & Grotefend, 2019). While quality is important, young German consumers are also price-conscious. They are keen on finding value for money and tend to compare prices and look for discounts before making a purchase. Young Germans also evaluate different options based on factors like price, quality, brand reputation, and personal preferences. According to a survey conducted by Statista (2021), it was found that brand recognition plays a significant role among young Germans, particularly in the Generation Z segment. The report revealed that 78.3% of Generation Z individuals stated that once they are satisfied with a brand, they tend to remain loyal to it. Furthermore, 65.8% of the young respondents mentioned that they prefer to purchase well-known brands because they trust the quality associated with them. Additionally, 59.3% of the participants expressed a preference for buying regional products whenever possible. These findings emphasize the importance of brand satisfaction, trust in quality, and the appeal of regional products for young consumers in Germany. What is more, German youth values individualism and uniqueness. They appreciate brands and products that allow them to express their personal style and identity (Faschan, Chailan, & Huaman-Ramirez, 2020).

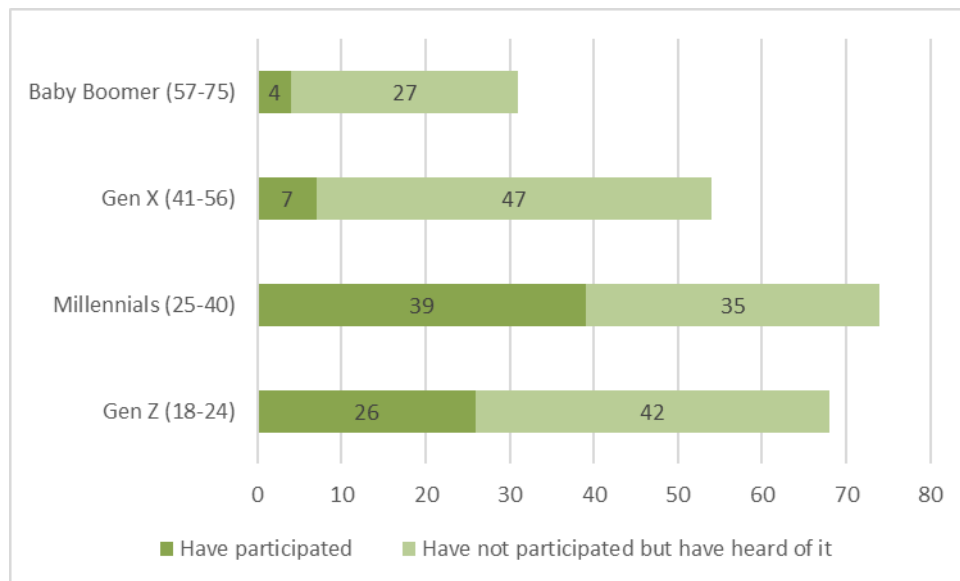
Some researchers claimed that young people buy products because of they are motivated by influencers' recommendations (Croes & Bartels, 2021; Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017). This consideration can be confirmed by research provided by Faktenkontor (2017) among Germans. Comparing the size of different age groups in Germany are challenging due to variations of the age range, however, Figure 11 shows that influencers had the biggest impact on young people aged 14-19 and 20-29 to make purchase decisions.



**Figure 11. Effect of influencers on purchase decisions in Germany 2016**

Source: Faktenkontor, 2017.

It means that among the youngest group of respondents, influencers impact their purchase decisions therefore this channel of communication should be taken into consideration in promoting different product categories. It is important to add that there is an emerging trend in consumer behaviour in Germany of increasing popularity of live streaming purchases (Baersch, Richard, & Siepermann, 2022). Live streaming shopping events, where products are showcased and sold in real-time through online platforms, have gained traction among consumers. This innovative approach allows customers to interact with sellers, ask questions, and make purchases directly during the live stream. The concept of live streaming purchases is growing in popularity due to its interactive and engaging nature (Lee & Chen, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). Consumers can view product demonstrations, receive real-time feedback, and make instant purchase decisions, all from the comfort of their own homes. This trend is driven by advancements in technology, the rise of social media platforms, and the convenience it offers to shoppers (Baersch, Richard, & Siepermann, 2022). Figure 12 displays share of people generation who had participated in or heard of a live streaming shopping event in Germany in 2022 but not participated.



**Figure 12. Livestream e-commerce participation and awareness in Germany 2022 by age**

Source: Klarna, 2022.

A survey conducted by Klarna (2022) revealed that livestream shopping events had gained significant traction among German millennials, with 39 % of respondents from this generation indicating their previous participation. This percentage was higher compared to other age groups. Among Gen X respondents, 47 % had heard of live commerce, but only seven percent had actually engaged in it. On the other hand, baby boomers had the lowest levels of participation, with only 4% reporting their previous involvement, and only 27 % displaying awareness of livestream shopping events. However, Gen Z presented the second group of consumers who took part in the livestreaming shopping and heard about it. These findings highlight the varying degrees of familiarity and engagement with live commerce across different generational cohorts in Germany.

The second analysed group in this dissertation is young Poles. According to the Central Statistical Office of Poland (2022), the population of Poland was estimated to be around 37.76 million people. The share of women is consistently almost 52% (CSO, 2022). Based on data from CSO (2022), young consumers between the ages of 18 and 25 accounted for 8% of the total population. Among this group, women comprised 49% of the young consumers, while men constituted 51%. The youth unemployment rate in Poland witnessed an increase from 9.6 % in 2021 to 11.4 % in 2022 (Eurostat, 2022). The education system in Poland also plays a vital role in shaping opportunities for the younger generation. Higher education in Poland is accessible and affordable, with numerous universities and colleges offering a wide range of

programs. In 2018, there were 1.18 million students enrolled in Polish higher education institutions. This number reflected a significant decrease of nearly 20% compared to the student population in 2012. Approximately three-quarters of all students pursued their education in public higher education institutions (Bojko et al., 2019).

Young Polish consumers are known for being price-sensitive and looking for good deals. They tend to prioritize affordability and are willing to switch brands if they find better value elsewhere. That said, while value is important, young Poles also exhibit a certain degree of brand loyalty (Mazurek, 2019). Once they find a brand they trust and are satisfied with, they are likely to stick to it. Polish customers show an inclination towards sustainable fashion but with specific conditions: they embrace it when the product aligns with their aesthetic preferences, practical needs, and financial considerations (Rahman & Koszewska, 2020). What is more, Poles have traditional shopping preferences. While e-commerce is growing in popularity, young Polish consumers still have a preference for physical stores. They enjoy the experience of shopping in brick-and-mortar locations and value personal interactions with salespeople. However, research conducted by Bylok (2022) indicated that the majority of Polish internet users, approximately 72%, prefer to purchase products and services from Polish online shops and around 30% of e-consumers opt to buy from foreign online shops. Among all the age groups, young people are particularly active online shoppers. In 2020, those aged 15 to 24 constituted 17% of online shoppers, while individuals aged 25 to 34 made up 22% of the online shopping population (Bylok, 2022). The most common items purchased by these young consumers were clothing, accessories, footwear, books, CDs, and films (Gemius for e-Commerce Polska, 2020). It should be noted that social media platforms play a significant role in shaping the preferences and purchase decisions of young Polish consumers (Nadanyiova & Sujanska, 2023). They often seek recommendations from influencers and peers before making a purchase (Nieżurawska & Dziadkiewicz, 2016). In addition, Polish youth aspires to improve their standard of living and is willing to invest in products and experiences that reflect their aspirations and social status.

Grabiwoda (2019) investigated the purchasing decision-making process of Generation Z involving 523 participants born between 1995 and 2001. These individuals owned at least one mobile device (Grabiwoda, 2019). The study demonstrated the escalating impact of mobile solutions on the consumer behaviour of Polish youths, particularly in their purchasing decision-making and the shaping of their needs. Notably, company messages delivered

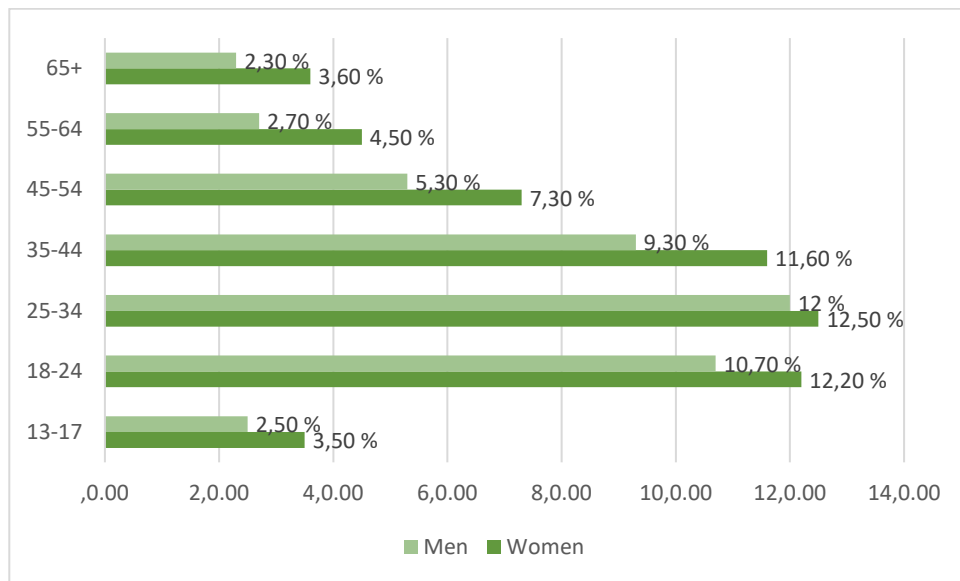


through mobile devices in the form of images, advertisements, offers, or promotions played a significant role in influencing this behaviour. A majority (53%) confirmed their attention to such messages and found them beneficial (46%) (Grabiwoda, 2019). Over half (55%) indicated that these messages influenced young consumers to plan purchases (Grabiwoda, 2019). This advertising method was perceived as highly effective (46%), ranking closely with television advertising (47%) (Grabiwoda, 2019). Furthermore, 89% of respondents reported using smartphones and tablets for seeking information about products or companies (Grabiwoda, 2019). The preferred avenues for gathering information included search engines, instant messaging, video content, blogs, and thematic forums. About 71% of participants admitted to employing smartphones or tablets for product evaluation and comparison (Grabiwoda, 2019).

According to Protasiuk (2018), Polish consumers are enthusiastic "dual-screener," meaning they are more inclined than counterparts in the Czech Republic, Greece, and Ukraine to use smartphones while watching TV for tasks like exploring offers, seeking information, and making purchase decisions. Notably, this trend is particularly conspicuous among the youngest generation, who are adept at employing multiple devices simultaneously to engage in multitasking activities (Mróz, 2013).

What is more, the study conducted by Grabiwoda (2019) highlighted that the young consumer not only uses mobile devices for purchasing but also for non-purchasing activities. A substantial 89% of respondents engaged in evaluating goods or services, often by participating in surveys or providing ratings. About 70% communicated with companies by leaving comments or posts on manufacturers' profiles or websites (Grabiwoda, 2019). Additionally, the PwC report (2018) investigate that young consumers rely heavily on online reviews and recommendations, often prioritizing them over marketing messages like advertisements or promotions from retailers when making purchasing decisions. A significant proportion, around 58%, seek shopping inspiration from social media, while 42% utilize price comparison websites (PwC, 2018).

Additionally, more than half of the participants used mobile devices to share information about products with friends, posting content like text, photos, or videos on their social profiles (Paczka, 2020). Thus, social media play a significant role in young Poles' lives. The main platform that attract young consumers in Poland are Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Tiktok and Facebook Messenger. Statista (2023) offer research about social media advertising audiences in Poland, and is displayed in Figure 13.



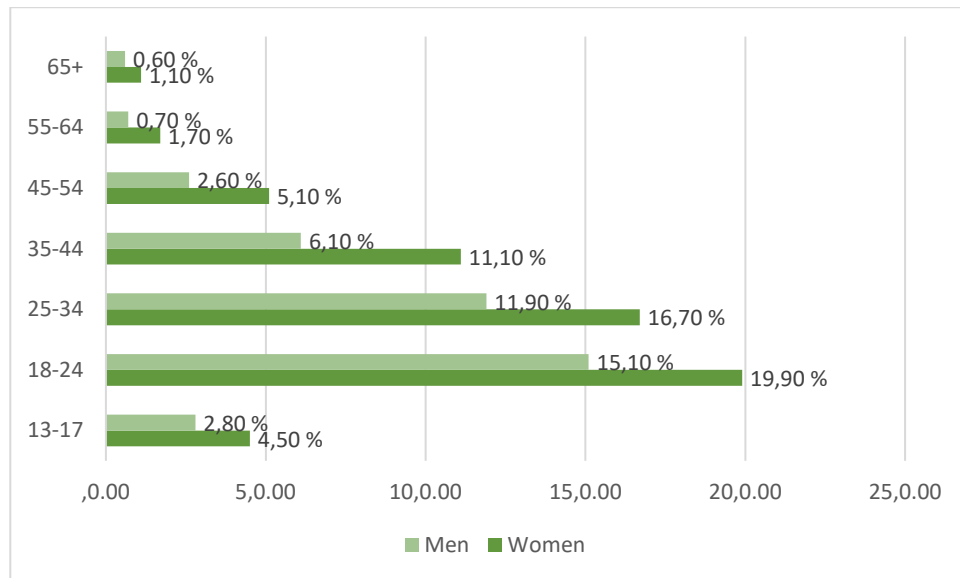
**Figure 13. Social media advertising audience in Poland 2022 by gender and age**

Source: NapoleonCat, 2022.

It should be noted that the advertising audience of social media in Poland is predominantly composed of women, with higher percentages in each age group compared to men. The age group of 25-34 has the highest representation of both women and men in the advertising audience, with 12.50% and 12% respectively. The 18-24 age group also shows a significant presence of both women and men in the advertising audience, with 12.20% and 10.70% respectively. As age increases, the percentage of both female and male users in the advertising audience generally decreases, which aligns with the common observation that older demographics may not be as engaged with social media advertisements. The 35-44 age group has the second-highest percentage of women in the advertising audience at 11.60%, while men's representation is slightly lower at 9.30%. From the age group of 45-54 and onwards, the gender gap in the advertising audience becomes more pronounced, with a higher percentage of women compared to men. Lastly, the age group of 65+ has the smallest percentage of users in the advertising audience for both women (3.60%) and men (2.30%), consistent with the trend that social media platforms are more popular among younger generations.

According to Jackson (2019), Instagram has become the preferred social media platform over Facebook and Twitter for businesses and marketers due to its exceptional engagement rate per post. Additionally, it boasts a high conversion rate (Sahu, 2020). This makes Instagram an attractive platform for companies to sell their products or services, as evidenced by the

initiative taken by numerous companies (Sembada & Koay, 2021). It should be also added that to tap into the potential of Instagram's vast user base, businesses have shifted their advertising strategies away from traditional methods. Instead, they are now collaborating with Instagram influencers to promote their brands (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015). Figure 14 provides a breakdown of Instagram use for all generations in Poland.



**Figure 14. Share of Instagram users in Poland 2023 by age and gender**  
Source: We Are Social, DataReportal, & Meltwater, 2023.

In Poland, there is a clear trend of women being more active users of Instagram across all age groups. The age group with the highest percentage of female users on Instagram is 18-24, accounting for 19.90% of the user base. Similarly, the highest percentage of male users is also in the 18-24 age group, comprising 15.10% of the user base. There is a notable gender gap in the 13-17 age group, with female users representing 4.50% and male users 2.80%. In the 25-34 age group, the second-highest percentage of users for both genders is observed, with women making up 16.70% and men 11.90%. As age advances to the 35-44 age group and beyond, the gender gap in Instagram usage becomes more pronounced, with female users consistently having a higher share than male users. Not surprisingly, the age group of 65+ has the smallest percentage of Instagram users, as social media platforms are generally more popular among younger generations.

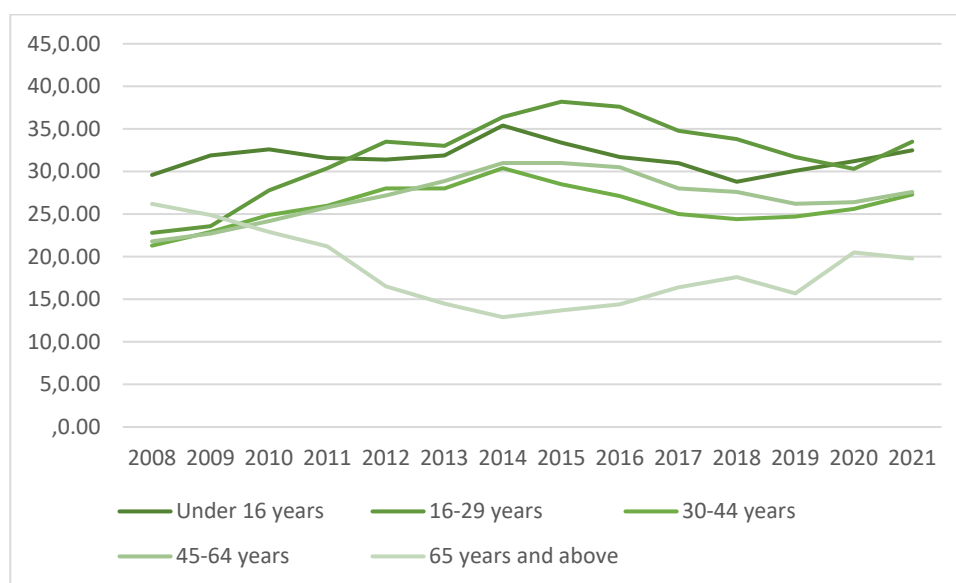
Data provided by We Are Social, DataReportal, and Meltwater (2023) highlights the gender and age distribution of the advertising audience on social media platforms in Poland, indicating that women are more dominant across all age groups, and the younger demographics have a higher representation in social media advertisements. More and more

purchases of different types of products on Instagram and Facebook are made through interactive posts by simply clicking on a "buy now" button, which redirects consumers to the company's online shop page. Compared to traditional shopping methods, this process is much faster and more convenient for consumers. One of the key advantages of this approach is the regular promotion of products on Instagram and Facebook by influencers. These influencers often create content featuring natural and relatable circumstances, such as scenes of nature, home, or family, aiming to evoke positive associations in consumers and motivate them to buy the showcased products. According to a study conducted by Statista (2023), it is evident that this type of marketing strategy significantly impacts the younger consumer demographic, and in particular Generation Z. This generation is highly influenced by the content they see on Instagram. As a result, businesses are leveraging the power of influencers and social media to effectively target and engage with this specific audience.

The third analysed cultural group of young consumers in this dissertation is Spaniards. Spain has a population of approximately 46,528,966 people, which accounts for 0.61% of the total world population (Spanish National Statistics Institute, 2017). The number of individuals aged 15-24 years was 2,643,499, with 51,7% males and 48,3% females. The youth unemployment rate in Spain has risen to 32.3 %, representing an increase of 1.1 % compared to the previous year (Eurostat, 2022). This suggests that a considerable portion of young people in this generation struggle to find suitable employment opportunities. In Spain, Generation Z is entering the job market with a similar trend to Generation Y. The job market for young people is heavily polarized, with a significant number of individuals having dropped out of education and lacking training, while others possess high qualifications. The term "ni-nis" (neither-nors) was used to describe those from Generation Y who neither studied nor worked. This high number can be attributed to the combination of high youth unemployment rates, a lack of vocational training opportunities, which are not highly valued in society, and inflexibility in matching secondary education with job market demands. Regarding education levels among young people in Spain, more than 61% of them have attained upper-level vocational training or university education (Rubio Gil & Sanagustín-Fons, 2019). However, the rate of education abandonment in Spain remains one of the highest in EU (18.3%). One of the main reasons for this is that although there is a perception that education provides better job opportunities, some individuals prefer quick monetary gains. Furthermore, vocational training in Spain is not as fully institutionalized compared to other countries. According to Megías

Quirós and Ballesteros Guerra (2016), 76.6% of individuals in Spain believe that vocational training is the most effective preparation for employment, while compulsory studies are not seen as useful. On the other hand, 82% of respondents consider university studies as the pathway to obtaining a profession (Rubio Gil & Sanagustín-Fons, 2019).

It should be indicated that the rates of poverty and social exclusion among different age groups in Spain have shown contrasting trends, indicating a shift in the distribution of income between generations (Figure 15).



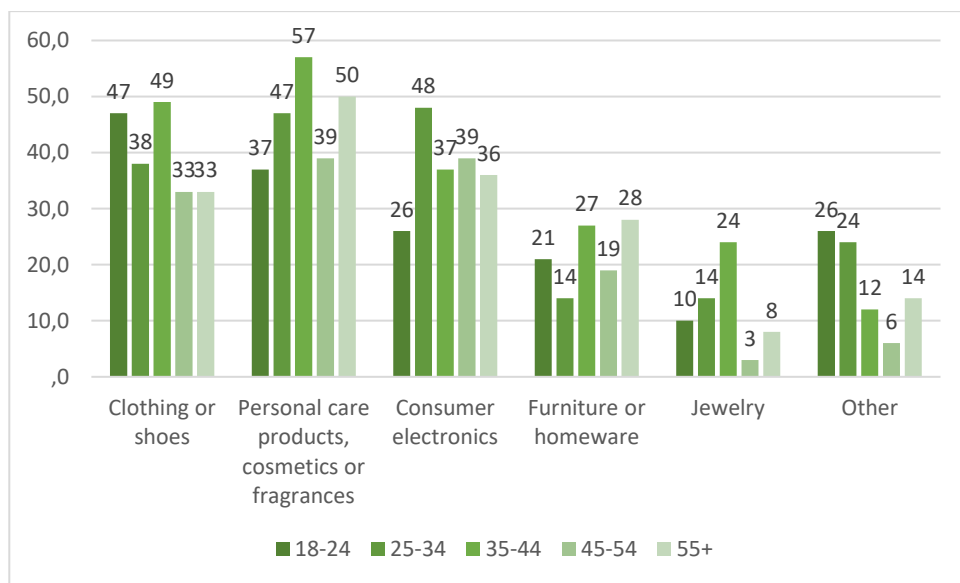
**Figure 15. Share of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Spain**

Source: INE, Spain, June 29, 2022.

Over the years, the rates of poverty and social exclusion among different age groups in the country have shown contrasting trends, indicating a shift in the distribution of income between generations. In 2008, the percentage of people aged 16 to 29 years who were at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 22.3%, which was the third lowest rate among all age groups. However, between 2012 and 2019, this age group's risk surpassed that of those under 16, becoming the age group with the highest risk. By 2021, this trend continued, with 33.5% of the population aged 16 to 29 being at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Conversely, the older population has experienced a different trajectory. They shifted from having the second-highest risk of poverty or social exclusion to becoming the group with the lowest risk. This suggests that the distribution of income has changed in favour of the elderly, making them less vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion compared to other age groups. In spite of the various challenges and issues discussed earlier, young Spaniards, on the whole, express

satisfaction with their lives (El País, 2021). In fact, they display the highest level of life satisfaction compared to other age groups. Their contentment largely stems from the support and positive experiences they have within their family, good health, and strong friendships. These factors are the primary sources of happiness and well-being for young individuals.

Additionally, young Spanish consumers are highly socially engaged and value experiences that allow them to connect with others. They are more likely to make purchases based on recommendations from friends and family (Rubio Gil & Sanagustín-Fons, 2019). Spaniards place a strong emphasis on fashion and personal style. They are keen on following the latest trends and often invest in clothing, accessories, and beauty products. Furthermore, young Spanish consumers are heavy users of mobile devices and are comfortable with making purchases through mobile apps and websites. They appreciate convenience and seamless digital experiences. Figure 16 displays the research of main product categories bought online following a live streaming session in Spain by age group conducted by YouGov Spain (2022).

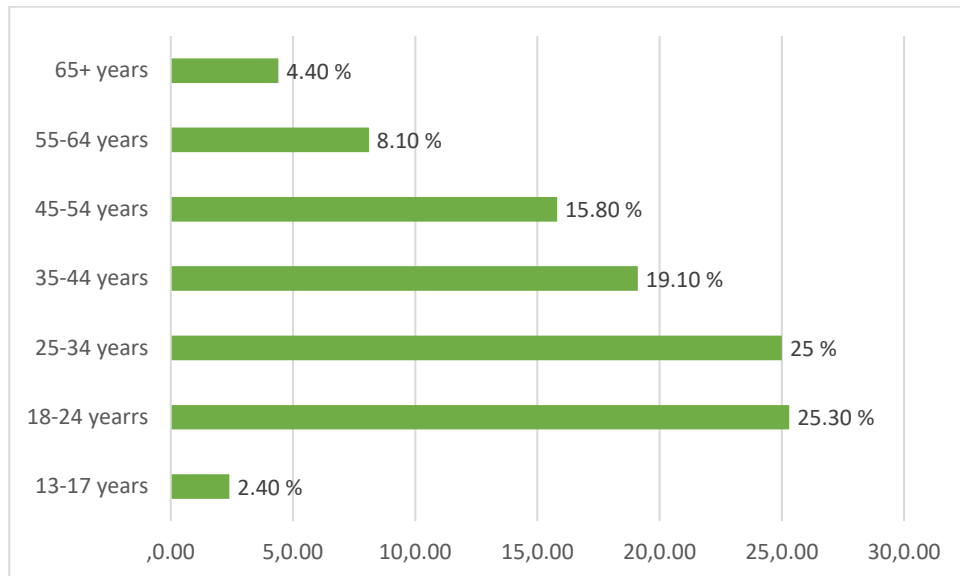


**Figure 16. Main products categories bought online following a live streaming session in Spain in 2022 by age group in %**

Source: YouGov Spain, 2022.

It should be noted that in this research specific product categories were selected, including clothing and shoes, personal care products, cosmetics and fragrances, consumer electronics, furniture or homeware, and jewellery. The study revealed that the primary product categories of interest among participants aged 18-24 were clothing and shoes, accounting for 47% of their preferences, followed by cosmetics at 37% and consumer electronics at 26% (YouGov Spain, 2022). Furthermore, the research findings indicated that older generations tend to

make purchases online following a live streaming session more frequently. It is important to indicate that there are other ways of buying online. The most popular recently social media platform that is taken advantage of selling products is Instagram. Figure 17 displays the share of Spanish Instagram users.



**Figure 17. Instagram user share 2023 by age group in Spain**

Source: NapoleonCat, 2023.

The age group with the highest percentage of social media users is 18-24 years, comprising 25.30% of the total user base. This indicates that young adults are the most active and engaged users of Instagram. Following closely, individuals in the 25-34 age group represent 25% of social media users, indicating that individuals in their late twenties and early thirties are also highly involved in social media. The age group of 35-44 years accounts for 19.10% of social media users, suggesting that a substantial number of individuals in their mid-thirties to mid-forties are actively using Instagram. Users aged 45-54 years make up 15.80% of the social media audience, indicating active engagement among people in this age group as well. The 55+ age group constitutes 12.50% of social media users, showing that a significant portion of people in their late fifties to early sixties are also using Instagram, although to a lesser extent compared to younger demographics.

Analysing Spanish nationality, it should be also noted that Spaniards are increasingly concerned about social and environmental issues. Ray and Nayak (2023) claim that both buying choices and fashion avoidance decisions are influenced by culture and geographical factors. In Spain, consumers tend to avoid fast fashion due to a strong sense of de-

individuation and inauthenticity associated with such products (Yoon, Lee, & Choo, 2020). Instead, they prefer brands that demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility and sustainability. Additionally, young Spanish consumers show a preference for locally produced goods and support local businesses. They appreciate products that have a connection to their culture and heritage (Ortega & Vilanova, 2016).

Based on the information provided about Germans, Poles, and Spaniards, it is evident that these nationalities exhibit notable differences, primarily in cultural behaviour and decision-making processes, but also similarities in ways of gathering information, e.g. through social media platforms. The following section presents the results of an empirical study conducted on a sample of young consumers aged 18-25, highlighting these distinctions. Germans exhibited a preference for efficiency and quality, Poles emphasized tradition and emotional significance, while Spaniards prioritized experiences and social influences. Understanding these differences can assist marketers and businesses in tailoring their strategies to effectively target and engage young consumers from these specific cultural backgrounds.



## **CHAPTER 4. THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN EFFECT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PURCHASE DECISIONS OF YOUNG CONSUMERS IN THE LIGHT OF OWN RESEARCH**

### **4.1. Research methodology**

#### **4.1.1. Empirical research process**

The main subject of empirical research presented within the framework of the dissertation is the relationship between the COO effect and the decision-making of young consumers on the Polish, Spanish and German markets. In the introduction of this dissertation, a comprehensive explanation was provided to justify the selection of the countries. The dissertation thus far has shown that elements of COO can assist in identifying the origin of a product and influence consumers' purchasing decisions. The identification of the abovementioned COO elements was based on an analysis of existing research literature. The research poses certain challenges, especially in the context of quantitative research. Conducting an empirical investigation of consumer behaviour across three international markets required a significant effort to reach a large number of young consumers. Notably, a survey was used to gather insights into the consumer behaviour of various nationalities. To address the issue of translation and context equivalence, a questionnaire was prepared in multiple languages and reviewed by language experts. Despite this challenge, the study examines the specific elements of a product's country of origin that influence the purchasing decisions of young consumers. The research procedure used within the dissertation is outlined in the Table 14.

**Table 14. Procedure of empirical research**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STAGE I</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Formulation of the research problem, main purpose and objective purposes</b></p> <p>Analysis of selected sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- literature: journals, research monograph, chapters in monographs (Polish, English, Spanish);</li> <li>- Internet sources (Polish, English, Spanish);</li> <li>- data about populations from the Polish Central Statistical Office (CSO), Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE), German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis).</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STAGE II</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Preparation of quantitative research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- selection of the method and manner of conducting quantitative research - CAWI;</li> <li>- definition of the qualifying criteria of participants, sample size, and location of the research - consumers aged 18 - 25 of German, Polish, and Spanish origin;</li> <li>- preparation of a research instrument (questionnaire);</li> <li>- pilot study in order to check the reliability and correctness of the questionnaire (30 consumers);</li> <li>- formulation of the final version of the questionnaire.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STAGE III</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Conducting the quantitative research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sampling method: non-random (targeted, people aged 18-25);</li> <li>- quantitative research among the Germans (n=517), Poles (n=553) and Spaniards (n=547) using CAWI (1617 young consumers).</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STAGE IV</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Analysis and interpretation of the quantitative study</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- multidimensional statistical analysis: (chi-square test or Fisher's exact test, Kruskal-Wallis test, and post-hoc analysis with Dunn's test, V-Cramer coefficient).</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STAGE V</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Compilation of quantitative research analysis and their confrontation in the light of research hypotheses set in the study</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STAGE VI</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Formulation of conclusions and implications</b></p>

Source: own elaboration.

In the first stage of the preparation of the dissertation, a narrative literature review of research areas related to was carried out using academic publications, online and statistical sources [data available on the websites of the Central Statistical Office (CSO), the Spanish National Statistical Institute (INE) and the German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis)]. The literature consisted mainly of sources in English, Polish, and occasionally Spanish.

The COO effect on consumer decision-making in Germany, Poland, and Spain is hypothesized in the dissertation, and subsequently, the empirical research was conducted to test these hypotheses. The hypotheses are formed by combining a number of recent areas of inquiry in the COO effect literature (Andéhn, Nordin, & Nilsson, 2016; Berbel-Pineda, 2018; Brodowsky, Tan & Meilich, 2004; Cherubino, 2019; Chuin & Mohamad, 2012; Figiel, 2004; Kucharska, Flisikowski, & Confente, 2019; Lee & Lee, 2009; Licsandru, Szamosi, & Papadopoulos, 2013; Liu & Johnson, 2005; Nakra, 2015; Nguyen & Alcantara, 2020; Schneller & Swanson, 2018; Vesela & Zich, 2015; Vukasovic, 2015; Wu & Fu, 2007; Zeugner-Roth & Fischer, 2017).

The research problem was also formulated based on a general understanding of the importance of the COO effect among young consumers. Specifically, the study aimed to investigate the relationship between the COO effect and the purchasing decisions of young consumers in international markets. The dissertation intended to answer below research questions:

1. Which elements identifying the COO effect are the most significant when identifying the origin of the product?
2. Which elements identifying the COO effect are the most significant when making purchase decisions?
3. Which product categories are most likely to be influenced by the COO effect during purchasing decisions?
4. What differences exist in the identification of the COO effect in purchasing decisions among young consumers in Germany, Poland, and Spain?
5. Does the COO effect differentiate purchase decisions among young Germans, Poles, and Spaniards?

The main objective of the dissertation is to examine the significance of the COO effect, as determined by its identifying elements, in influencing the purchasing choices of young consumers across diverse international markets. The dissertation presented a research framework that included the formulation of four hypotheses, which outlined the relationships between product categories, consumer nationality, purchasing decisions, and COO elements. Additionally, the dissertation provides a classification of COO attributes and sources of information to support the research framework. The main objective of the proposed research framework was to enhance the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

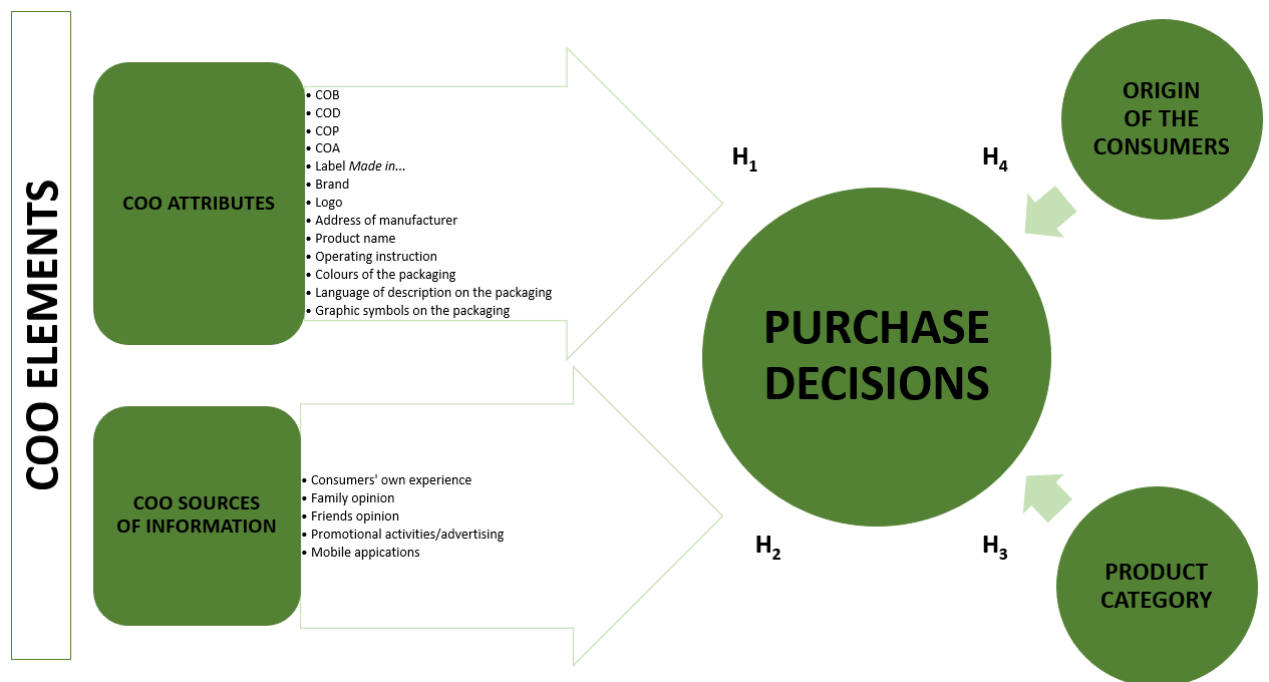
The formulated hypothesis described in the introduction of the dissertation are:

**H1:** Brand, as one of the attributes that identify a COO effect, has the greatest influence on young consumers' purchase decisions.

**H2:** Friends' opinions, as a source of effect of product country of origin information, has the greatest impact on young consumers' purchase decisions.

**H3:** The importance of COO effect in young consumers' purchase decisions differs depending on the product category.

**H4:** The nationality of young consumers influences the importance of COO effect in their purchase decisions.



**Figure 18. Proposed research framework of identification of the COO effect**

Source: own elaboration based on the own research and reviewed literature.

The second stage of the research was the preparation of quantitative research. In the beginning, the method and manner of conducting quantitative research on young consumers was verified. Due to the pandemic situation, the most suitable research method for the study population, spatial scope, and research questions was to conduct an online survey questionnaire. This method enabled the collection of responses from 1617 participants located in Germany, Poland, and Spain.

The empirical study applied the Computer-Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) method due to the several advantages it offered in surveying young consumers from Germany, Poland, and Spain. The foremost benefit of CAWI was its ability to create a customized questionnaire that automatically managed the flow of questions by displaying only relevant ones while omitting irrelevant ones. This approach resulted in increased respondent concentration, enhanced information quality, and reduced survey completion time (Anninou & Foxall, 2017). Furthermore, the CAWI method prevented respondents from being confused by questions that did not apply to them, which ultimately improved their overall survey experience.

Online questionnaires have an advantage in that they can be designed in a clear and structured way, which improves their user-friendliness and response rates (Macer & Wilson, 2016). In CAWI surveys, it is crucial to develop a logical flow of questions where each question

builds on the previous one. Therefore, when creating an online survey, it is important to organize the questions in a logical order to prevent misunderstandings and confusion among respondents (Anninou & Foxall, 2017).

CAWI has additional features that assist respondents. For instance, this method can include instructions at the beginning to help participants complete the questionnaire. This is a significant benefit of online surveys, which are an indirect research method. Unlike in-person interviews, respondents are unable to ask questions if they have any doubts, so it is necessary to provide them with clear instructions and information about the survey's purpose and question types (Trojanowski, 2020). Moreover, this research method is cost-effective (Skarupova, 2014). There are no expenses involved in purchasing electronic devices, as respondents can participate in the survey using their own computers or smartphones. Furthermore, the CAWI method eliminates the need for paper questionnaires, which can be costly for the researcher conducting a PAPI survey (Kagerbauer, Manz, & Zumkeller, 2013).

As previously mentioned, using CAWI can significantly reduce the time required to conduct research. Data collected through CAWI are available in real-time and stored in the administrator's database, which can also reduce the time needed for data analysis. Additionally, CAWI is particularly useful for conducting large-scale surveys, particularly when targeting respondents in different geographic locations (Toepoel & Lugtig, 2015). The method provides access to a vast number of potential respondents and is well-suited for use in wide geographical areas without any restrictions.

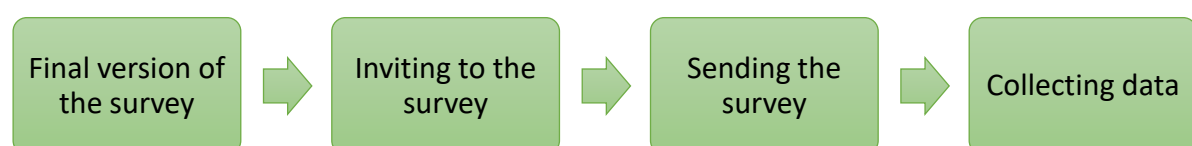
Despite its advantages, the CAWI research method also has some drawbacks. Firstly, it is difficult to verify the accuracy of the responses and the identity of the respondent, which can compromise the reliability of the data collected (Skarupova, 2014). Secondly, GDPR data protection obligations must be considered when collecting personal data. Additionally, there is no interviewer present to guide respondents or answer any questions they may have, which can affect the quality of the data collected. It is also worth noting that not everyone has a stable internet connection, which may limit the number of potential respondents. Furthermore, there is a risk of bias in the representativeness of the survey sample, such as an over-representation of certain groups and under-representation of others.

In conclusion, despite the limitations of the CAWI research method, the most appropriate method for conducting research on young consumers from Germany, Poland and Spain was chosen. The benefits of this method, such as time efficiency, cost effectiveness, and access to

a large pool of respondents, outweighed the potential drawbacks. Moreover, the potential disadvantages of the CAWI research method were mitigated by providing clear instructions and a well-structured survey design. Thus, it can be concluded that CAWI is an effective approach for gathering data for the study.

The selection criteria for participants, appropriate sample size, and geographical location of the research were established for the study. The empirical research targeted young consumers aged 18 to 25 from Germany, Poland, and Spain, with the selection process based on information available on the websites of the Central Statistical Office (CSO), National Statistics Institute (INE), and Federal Statistical Office (Destatis). A research questionnaire was developed based on the research problem and relevant sources to serve as a tool for the CAWI research method. After deciding on the selection criteria and the research method, a pilot study was carried out using a CAWI questionnaire, with 30 young consumers invited to participate, 10 from each country. A hyperlink to the pilot survey questionnaire was sent in three language versions (Polish, German, and Spanish) via e-mail and spread via Facebook. Respondents were selected among the author's friends. This was conducted before the full data collection to ensure the quality of the empirical research. The pilot study was conducted between February 10<sup>th</sup> and February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and its purpose was to test the questionnaire for its readability, comprehension, and completeness. Based on the feedback collected, the survey questions were edited and revised. Then, the final translated versions were sent via invitations to young consumers to take part in the main empirical research.

In the third stage of the research, a quantitative study was conducted. The main steps of the empirical study are displayed in Figure 19.



**Figure 19. The steps of the empirical questionnaire**

Source: own elaboration.

The quantitative research was conducted in two stages. During the first stage of research, which took place from 20<sup>th</sup> February to 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022, an attempt was made to collect responses by sharing the survey questionnaire among Germans, Poles, and Spaniards via Facebook groups. For example, groups bringing together students from a specific university,

undergraduate or graduate course, students from German, Polish, and Spanish university science clubs. However, the number of responses obtained from this source was insufficient, with only 234 respondents providing answers. Therefore, a second stage of quantitative research was deemed necessary to obtain a larger number of respondents. To achieve this, a special list of approximately 3,000 email addresses belonging to lecturers, researchers, professors, and acquaintances from Germany, Poland, and Spain was compiled.

The second stage of quantitative research was conducted between 5<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The email invitations sent to University lecturers included an introduction from the author, definitions of COO elements, and the main questionnaire. The recipients were required to click on the invitation link provided in the email, which redirected them to the survey website. Throughout the research it was possible to interrupt and resume the questionnaire without losing the answers already given. An additional advantage of the survey system used was its adaptation not only to personal computers, but also to mobile devices (such as tablets and mobile phones). This adaptation was intended to give respondents the freedom when answering. This is particularly important given the ever-increasing popularity of smartphones, especially as an email viewing device.

The invitation email was crafted in three different languages: Polish, German, and Spanish, in order to encourage participation from the target group in each respective country. The email addresses used in this phase of the research were obtained from various university webpages, including Poznań University of Economics and Business, Warsaw School of Economics, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań University of Life Sciences, University of Zielona Góra, University of Gdańsk, University of Economics in Katowice, University of Economics in Wrocław, University of Economics in Kraków, University of Szczecin, Pompeu Fabra University, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, University of Navarra, University of Seville, University of Valencia, University of Murcia, University of Cordoba, University of Alicante, University of Almeira, University of Malaga, University of Vigo, University of Girona, University of Granada, University of Salamanca, University of Valladolid, University of Cantabria, University of Munich, University of Hamburg, Humboldt University Berlin, University of Freiburg, University of Bonn, University of Cologne, TU Dresden, University of Göttingen, University of Potsdam, Goethe University Frankfurt, TU Dortmund University, Hamburg University of Technology, Leipzig University, University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Freie Universität Berlin School of Business and Economics, University of Kassel. Lecturers from these

universities who were most likely to have contact with young consumers, such as those pursuing Bachelor's and Master's degrees, were selected. However, it should be noted that despite the purposeful selection of lecturers and universities, only a portion of them agreed to share the questionnaire. Ultimately, the mailing of survey invitations to lecturers resulted in the collection of an additional 1383 completed questionnaires.

On March 21<sup>st</sup> 2022, all links to the various language versions were terminated. The process of collecting responses took approximately one month, during which 1617 respondents completed the survey. The responses were subsequently exported from the website and compiled into three separate .xls files, each containing the answers provided by Germans, Poles, and Spaniards.

The fourth stage of the research was the analysis and interpretation of the quantitative study. The results are presented by selected categories. In the dissertation, three nationalities were compared to see which COO elements helped them to identify the origin of clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine. In addition, the relationships between product categories, the nationalities of young consumers, and the COO elements influencing purchase decisions were compared and explored. These measures were compatible with the questions and research hypotheses formulated earlier.

In the fifth stage, the results of quantitative research analysis are compared with the research hypotheses and objectives set in this dissertation. It should be noted that COO effect is considered an external factor that can impact a product's competitive position and success in the global market (Karagiannis, Hatzithomas, Fotiadis, & Gasteratos, 2022). According to Roth and Romeo (1992), COO effect is considered as an intangible attribute of a product that is different from other material indicators (such as physical presence) and is directly related to its performance. It is generally believed that consumers are willing to pay a premium for branded products that come from countries with a positive image (Koschate-Fischer, Diamantopoulos, & Oldenkotte, 2012). This is because COO effect is often seen as a sign of higher quality by the consumer public, which can be useful in managing the information overload that consumers experience during the purchasing process (Ahmed & D'Astous, 2001; Karagiannis, Hatzithomas, Fotiadis, & Gasteratos, 2022).

The origin of a product has a significant impact on various dimensions of its perceived quality, including performance, reliability, aesthetics, functionality and durability (Costa, Carneiro, & Goldszmidt, 2016). For instance, German cars are known for their reliability, Italian



cars for their beauty, and Japanese cars for their functionality (Karagiannis, Hatzithomas, Fotiadis, & Gasteratos, 2022). Additionally, some products from specific countries are considered to be of overall superior quality, such as Swiss watches, French cosmetics and Argentinian beef. COO effect also has a substantial influence on a brand's image, which ultimately affects consumer purchasing decisions (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, & Paliawadana, 2011). COO effect is directly related to consumer behaviour, consumer choices, and overall product evaluation including branding processes of products and services (Kotabe & Jiang, 2009; Yasin, Noor, & Mohamad, 2007; Lee & Lee, 2011; Shahin, Kazemi, & Mahyari, 2013).

COO effect is also an important factor in the evaluation of imported products in the context of international trade and plays a crucial role in the commercialization of products in foreign markets (Bhakar, Bhakar, & Bhakar, 2013). Various aspects of consumer behaviour have been examined in relation to the COO effect in previous studies (Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013). It has been found that positive perceptions of the COO effect increase the likelihood of purchasing the respective products (Koschate-Fischer, Diamantopoulos, & Oldenkotte, 2012). Additionally, a positive image of the production processes of certain product categories in a country can also have a positive impact on the brand strength of the products during their evaluation (Esch, Langner, Schmitt, & Geus, 2006). Understanding how consumers incorporate COO information with their product knowledge into decision making is crucial for businesses as they become increasingly global (Blanco-Encomienda, Chen, & Molina-Muñoz, 2024). This dissertation aims to investigate how much importance consumers in Germany, Poland and Spain attach to the COO attributes and sources of information while identifying the origin of the product but also while purchasing decisions. In this stage of dissertation, a description of the research limitations was presented.

The last, sixth stage, formulates the conclusions and implications for the future research. This section highlights the significance of the research findings for both business practices (e.g. marketing, product labelling) and for government policy, e.g. regarding the obligation of appropriate labelling or ways of identifying the country of origin of a product.

Therefore, this research analyses the relation between the COO effect and the decision-making process of young consumers on the German, Polish and Spanish markets. Further, it explores if in the statistical analysis are noticeable dependencies between selected nationalities and product categories. The next pages of this chapter describe the structure of

the empirical research instrument, the characteristics of sample and the statistical analysis of the results of the research.

#### **4.1.2. Methods of quantitative analysis research**

A questionnaire survey is the most convenient means of comparison if there are some similarities and differences between analysed groups of respondents. In this dissertation, three nationalities are compared to verify which COO elements help in identifying the origin of the clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine. In addition, the relationships between product categories, nationalities of young consumers, and COO elements influencing purchase decisions were compared and explored.

After the collection of the data, the statistical analysis based on the author's own elaboration of research results was made. The analysis of quantitative variables (i.e. expressed as numbers) was performed by calculating the mean, standard deviation, median and quartiles. The analysis of qualitative variables (i.e. not expressed by number) was performed by calculating the number and percentage of occurrences of each value.

The analysis focuses on non-parametric methods because the answers did not have a normal distribution (as they had a maximum of 5 possible values: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5). The most appropriate for the comparison of three or more groups in terms of some quantitative variable is Kruskal-Wallis (Guo, Zhong, & Zhang, 2013; Van Hecke, 2012). The collected data had a large number of rows in contingency tables with the results (see the next subchapters). With this in mind, the Kruskal-Wallis test is the most appropriate. Additionally, Kruskal-Wallis is used to analyse ordinal data. It should be noted that the Kruskal-Wallis test was calculated only according to age because this was the sole quantitative variable. It is non-parametric, which means that it can be used when the assumptions for parametric tests are not met (Ostertagova, Ostertag, & Kováč, 2014). The Kruskal-Wallis test compares each observation with respect to the median, meaning that it compares sums of ranks and not averages or variances. Therefore, when reporting its results it is worth paying attention to the median value in all groups and draw conclusions on this basis rather than comparing averages. Similar to the analysis of variance, a statistically significant result of the Kruskal-Wallis test only indicates that at least one group differs from another group. Therefore, post-hoc analysis was performed with Dunn's test to identify statistically significantly different groups. In all analysis of the results a

significance level of 0.05 was assumed (Di Leo & Sardanelli, 2020; Greenland et al., 2016). It means that all p-values below 0.05 were interpreted as indicating a significant relationship. The analysis was performed in the program R, version 4.1.3.

Comparison of values of qualitative variables across groups was performed using the chi-square test or Fisher's exact test where low expected numbers appeared in the tables (Kim, 2017). Those tests were computed in income, education among young consumers, professional status, gender, place of residence, and question which of the following product categories consumers have purchased in the last year. In addition, the tests were calculated by analysing each research question about the attributes of all categories for the identification of their origin. The chi-square test or Fisher's exact test displayed the results for COO sources of information for all categories for purchasing decisions and about identification elements of COO for all categories for purchasing decisions for the sample. Additionally, all categories were tested in the context of purchasing decisions, considering COO attributes and the source of information. The comparison of Germans, Poles, and Spaniards was made to indicate the most significant COO attribute and source of information taking into account four categories.

#### **4.1.3. The structure of the empirical research instrument**

The questionnaire was prepared on the basis of the literature analysis presented in the theoretical part of this dissertation. In the literature, researchers have argued that language is one of the factors that constitute a barrier in international projects to using uniform survey instruments (Harzing et. al., 2009; Harzing, Brown, Köster, & Zhao, 2012; McAlpine, Skakni, Sala-Bubare, Weise, & Inouye, 2021). That is why it was decided to prepare the questionnaire in three languages versions. The back translation method was then employed, which is used in cross-cultural and multilingual surveys to evaluate the quality and accuracy of translations (Behr & Shishido, 2016; Epstein, Santo, & Guillemin, 2015). The purpose is to ensure that the intended meaning of the original source text is preserved in the target language. This involves translating the target language back to the source language and comparing it with the original text (Craig & Douglas, 2006). Back translation is commonly used in survey research to ensure that questions are accurately translated across different languages and cultures (Ozolins, Hale, Cheng, Hyatt & Schofield, 2020; Son, 2018). Thus, for purposes of this dissertation, the first version of the questionnaire was prepared in Polish. Then, to avoid problems related to the

language skills of the young respondents, the questionnaire was translated into Spanish and German and then back into Polish from both languages. The resulting versions were then compared and a final version was selected, using the expertise of individuals fluent in both languages and knowledgeable about the specific terminology related to the phenomenon being studied.

The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts and is presented in Annex 1. The number of questions ranged from 11 to 23, depending on the number of product categories purchased within the last year. The first contained 3 questions including gender, age and choice of product categories purchased in the last year. A nominal scale was applied to the question about gender, however, the age was provided in an interval scale with the range of the age between 18 and 25. Respondents who did not meet the age requirement were given a message declining their participation in the survey. The CAWI method used to create the questionnaire ensured that those who were outside the age limit and had already completed the questionnaire were blocked from participating again. This ensured that each person could only take the survey once. Furthermore, each respondent was given a unique link to the survey, which prevented the same person from completing the questionnaire more than once or someone who was not invited to participate from taking the survey.

The next part of the questionnaire was comprised of questions that aimed to investigate the elements and sources that helped consumers recognize the country of origin of products within the selected categories. The primary questions in the empirical research were measured using an ordinal scale. This scale was used to assess the important COO attributes and sources of information that consumers rely on to determine a product's origin. Additionally, the questions were related to making purchasing decisions in the division on product categories. Subsequently, the survey included questions related to the elements and sources that contributed to the COO effect and influenced young consumers' purchasing behaviour, based on the selected product categories. The final section was comprised of extended metric questions, such as educational background, occupational status, place of residence, and a general question about income. In the further part of the questionnaire, nominal scales were applied to questions on nationality, occupation and place of residence. Respondents were asked to choose the five most important COO attributes and the three most important sources of information helping in identifying the origin of the product. The same scale was provided for the questions about purchase decisions.

Four product categories were analysed in the study, namely clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic equipment and wine. Each product group concerns young consumers and their choices. The selection of product categories for the study was based on research (Riesgo, Codina, & Sádaba, 2023; Saeed et al., 2013) and industry reports (PMR Market Expert, 2022) which showed that consumers regularly purchase products from these categories. What is more, the consumption of products from the electronics industry is the everyday life of young people who enjoy buying the latest technological innovations (Senanu, Anning-Dorson, & Tackie, 2023). Having clothing and footwear are a basic need for many young people. The last category, wine, was chosen because of the widespread popularity of tasting wines in restaurants and bars among young consumers. The focus of the dissertation is on examining the reasons behind consumers' choices of particular products, while also considering the origin of those products.

The significance of these product categories in terms of their potential to appeal to and capture the attention of young consumers was a key factor in choosing to study them. The selected product categories were based on the following basis:

- the purchase is repeated. Consumers buy selected product categories for a considerable period. They can monitor what the packaging looks like, if has some changes in graphics, and language, and have some information related to origin of the product;
- the categories of the product are 'gender neutral'. This means that products of the categories are bought by all young consumers and are not affected by gender perception;
- each young consumer can afford the product from selected categories. If the range is wide then the consumers can find products accepted in cost analysis and functionality characteristics;
- a high variety of products available in the selected markets;
- products from chosen categories are easily available goods. Consumers can buy them in a bricks and mortar shop or via online shopping;
- different models, specifications, and brands within the product category. Consumers have a wide choice of products within a category;
- given that the focus of research was Generation Z, it was necessary to choose product categories based on the presence of social media. The questionnaire and its specific questions were designed to address the research questions and hypotheses. The questions regarding product categories were linked to the research questions about the most important factors

that help identify the origin of a product and the most crucial elements that influence purchasing decisions based on the country of origin effect. The survey presented a list of COO attributes and sources of information proposed in the research framework (presented in sub-chapter 4.1.1).

In the category of clothing and footwear, cosmetics and wine respondents had a list of 11 elements of COO (presented in 2.3. sub-chapter) and one open with a short answer marked as “others” to add the individual proposition. In the group, regarding sources of information (presented in 2.3. sub-chapter) there were 5 answers and a short open answer marked “others”. The difference was in the list of COO elements in electronic devices. There were two additional answers, such as COP and COA, because according to the literature, those two COO attributes are analysed in the category of electronic devices or automotive (Seidnfuss, Kathawala, & Dinnie, 2010).

The survey questionnaire was developed to address a research gap by focusing on four key elements: young consumers (Generation Z), four product categories (clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronics, and wine), and three nationalities (German, Polish, and Spanish). The questionnaire also presented fourteen COO factors that could help in identifying the origin of products and influencing purchasing decisions. It should be noted that the survey questionnaire included definitions of each of the listed elements and the language versions of the survey questionnaire are presented in annexes 1-4 of this dissertation.

#### **4.1.4. The characteristics of the empirical research sample**

Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. Despite many efforts, the sample was not representative, i.e. the results cannot be translated to the whole population because of the number of young consumers who took part in this research and the non-probability sampling method used. Prior to analysing the relationships between the various variables proposed in the research framework, a general characterization of the young consumers in the study sample was conducted. The sample consisted of 1617 individuals between the ages of 18-25 who completed both phases of the quantitative survey. The details of the sample are presented in Table 15.

**Table 15. The characteristics of the empirical research sample**

Parameter	Country				P
	Spain (N=547)	Germany (N=517)	Poland (N=553)	Total (N=1617)	
Age	mean±SD	21.05±1.99	22.63±1.78	21.69±1.9	21.77±2
	median	21	23	22	22
	Quartiles	20 - 22	21 – 24	20 - 23	20 - 23
Sex	Woman	401 (73.3%)	377 (72.9%)	392 (70.9%)	1170 (72.4%)
	Male	134 (24.5%)	140 (27.1%)	154 (27.8%)	428 (26.5%)
	Non-binary person	12 (2.2%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (1.3%)	19 (1.2%)
Education	Primary	3 (0.5%)	5 (1.0%)	8 (1.4%)	16 (1.0%)
	Vocational	0 (0.0%)	12 (2.3%)	21 (3.8%)	33 (2.0%)
	Secondary	75 (13.7%)	129 (25.0%)	320 (57.9%)	524 (32.4%)
	Higher	452 (82.6%)	371 (71.8%)	204 (36.9%)	1027 (63.5%)
	Other	17 (3.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	17 (1.1%)
Professional status	Working	28 (5.1%)	5 (1.0%)	61 (11.0%)	94 (5.8%)
	Learning/studying	472 (86.3%)	500 (96.7%)	353 (63.8%)	1325 (81.9%)
	Learning/studying and working	47 (8.6%)	12 (2.3%)	139 (25.1%)	198 (12.2%)
Place of residence	Village	119 (21.8%)	77 (14.9%)	94 (17.0%)	290 (17.9%)
	City below 50 th. inh.	95 (17.4%)	51 (9.9%)	80 (14.5%)	226 (14.0%)
	City 50-100 th. inh.	83 (15.2%)	74 (14.3%)	35 (6.3%)	192 (11.9%)
	City below 100-500 th. inh.	207 (37.8%)	190 (36.8%)	134 (24.2%)	531 (32.8%)
	City over 500 th. inh.	43 (7.9%)	125 (24.2%)	210 (38.0%)	378 (23.4%)
Can you make ends meet on your current income?	With great difficulty	100 (18.3%)	10 (1.9%)	15 (2.7%)	125 (7.7%)
	With difficulty	65 (11.9%)	47 (9.1%)	30 (5.4%)	142 (8.8%)
	With some difficulty	166 (30.3%)	115 (22.2%)	146 (26.4%)	427 (26.4%)
	Quite easily	24 (4.4%)	144 (27.9%)	201 (36.3%)	369 (22.8%)
	Easily	167 (30.5%)	147 (28.4%)	99 (17.9%)	413 (25.5%)
	Very easily	25 (4.6%)	54 (10.4%)	62 (11.2%)	141 (8.7%)

Parameter	Country				P
	Spain (N=547)	Germany (N=517)	Poland (N=553)	Total (N=1617)	
Which of the following categories did you buy in last 12 months? **	Clothing and footwear	530 (96.9%)	517 (100.0%)	511 (92.4%) 1558 (96.4%)	chi2=44.5, df=2, V=0.17 p<0.001*, DE>ES>PL
	Cosmetics	326 (59.6%)	430 (83.2%)	433 (78.3%) 1189 (73.5%)	chi2=85.7, df=2, V=0.23 p<0.001*, DE,PL>ES
	Electronic devices	269 (49.2%)	358 (69.2%)	375 (67.8%) 1002 (62.0%)	chi2=57.6, df=2, V=0.19 p<0.001*, DE,PL>ES
	Wine	175 (32.0%)	287 (55.5%)	324 (58.6%) 786 (48.6%)	chi2=92.4, df=2, V=0.24 p<0.001*, PL,DE>ES

p - for quantitative variables Kruskal-Wallis test + post-hoc analysis (Dunn's test) was calculated, for qualitative variables chi-square test was calculated.

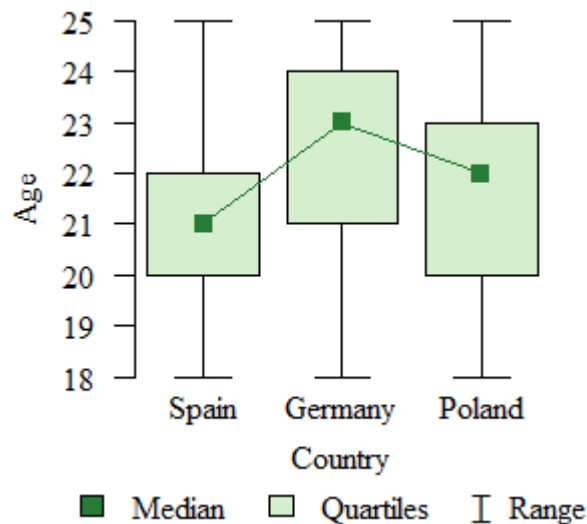
\* Statistically significant difference (p<0.05)

\*\* Multiple choice question - percentages do not add up to 100

Source: own elaboration based on the result of the survey.

The three surveyed groups were relatively similar in size, with the largest group being Polish (553 young consumers), followed closely by Spanish (547 individuals) and German (517 consumers). A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to determine if there were any significant differences in the mean age between the countries. The test resulted in  $p < 0.001$ , indicating a significant difference in the mean age between the countries. A post-hoc Dunn's test was conducted to determine which countries had significantly different mean ages. The results of the test indicate that the mean age of Germany ( $M = 22.63$ ,  $SD = 1.78$ ) was significantly higher than that of Poland ( $M = 21.69$ ,  $SD = 1.90$ ) and Spain ( $M = 21.05$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ), and the mean age of Poland was significantly higher than that of Spain. It should be noted that the recruitment for the study was based on age, and a comparison of the age distribution of the German, Polish, and Spanish respondents is presented in Figure 20.



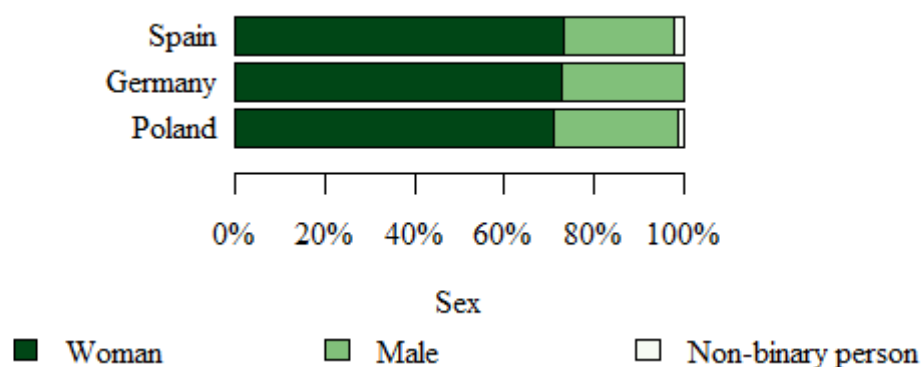


**Figure 20. Age profile of respondents**

Source: own elaboration based on the result of the survey.

The German participants were noticeably older than the Polish participants, who, in turn, were significantly older than the Spanish participants. The median age for Spain is 21 years, for Germany it is 23 years, and for Poland it is 22 years. The quartiles indicate that the middle 50% of ages for Spanish consumers falls between 20 and 22 years, for German consumers it falls between 21 and 24 years, and for Polish consumers it falls between 20 and 23 years.

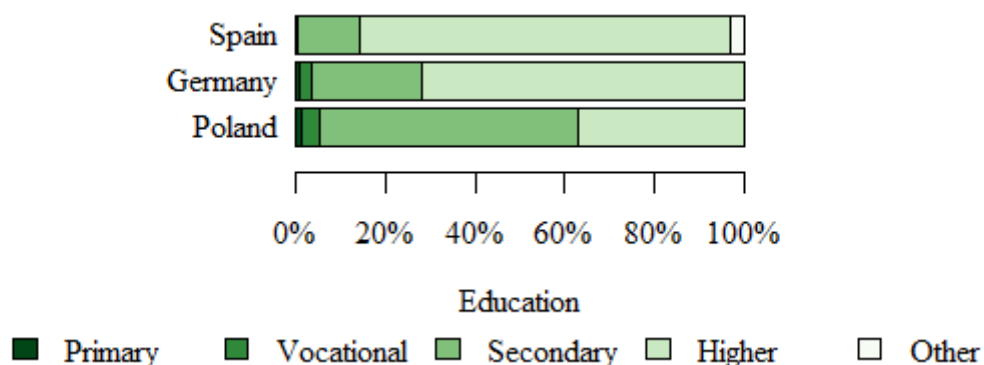
In the research sample the number of male and female participants was similar across all three nationalities, with women accounting for at least 70% of the participants in each country (as illustrated in Figure 21). The largest group of male participants was from Germany, and the smallest group was from Spain. When comparing the research sample to demographic data from Poland, it is worth noting that according to CSO (2022), young consumers aged 18-25 constituted 8% of the total population, with women making up 49% and men making up 51%. In Germany, the number of young consumers aged 18-25 constituted 8.5% of the total population (Destatis, 2022), with women accounting for 51% and men accounting for 49% in this age group. In Spain, Generation Z constituted 8% of the total population of the country (INE, 2022), with 48% of this age group being women and 52% being men.



**Figure 21. Gender characteristics of respondents**

Source: own elaboration based on the result of the survey.

Another variable that was examined in the research was the level of education among the survey participants from Germany, Poland, and Spain. The results showed that in both the Spanish and German groups, the highest percentage of respondents had a higher level of education (as depicted in Figure 22). The surveys were sent to students of the universities so this might explain the percentage of this group in the research sample.



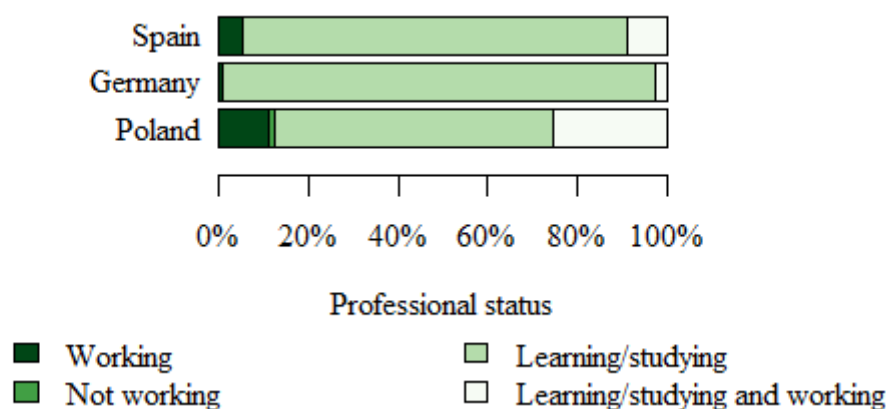
**Figure 22. Education level of respondents**

Source: own elaboration based on the result of the survey.

Among the analysed groups, the Spaniards had the highest level of education, while the Poles had the lowest. Nearly 83.6% of the Spanish respondents had graduated from university, while only 36.9% of the Polish respondents had done so. However, 57.9% of the Polish respondents reported that they had completed secondary school. Based on the age profile of the respondents and their level of education, it can be concluded that the Polish Generation Z representatives were likely in their final year of Bachelor's degree studies at the time of the survey. In Poland, higher education is typically achieved through completing a three-year

Bachelor's degree programme. It should be noted that the  $p\text{-value} < 0.001$ , which suggests that there is a statistically significant association between nationality and educational level.

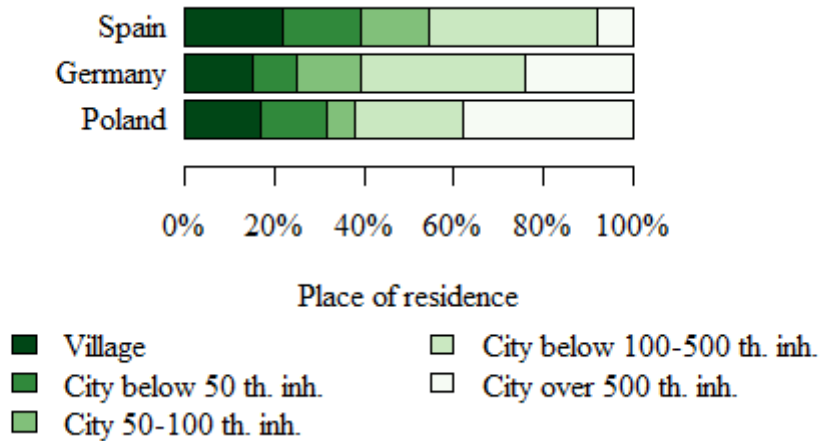
The respondents were further categorized based on their professional status. Figure 23 displays the distribution of participants across various professional statuses.



**Figure 23. Professional status of respondents**

Source: own elaboration based on the result of the survey.

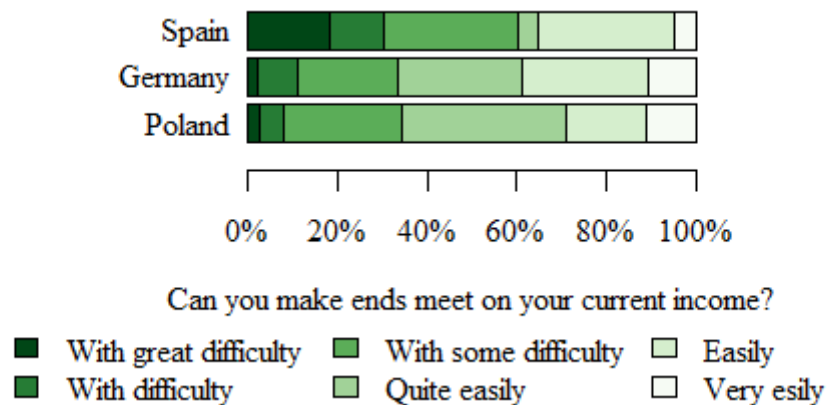
The analysis of the survey data revealed that Germans had the highest proportion of people who were studying, which could explain the higher number of highly educated respondents from this group. In comparison, the Spaniards had a moderate proportion of people who were either working or studying or both, as illustrated in Figure 23. Almost 86.2% of Spaniards were found to be focused solely on studying. Among the three nationalities, the highest percentage of people who were both studying and working was observed among Poles (25.1%), while the lowest was found among Germans. When examining the education level and employment status of Polish respondents, it can be inferred that those who had completed secondary school may have to work while studying to support themselves. However, it is worth noting that an increasing number of young people are choosing to study and work simultaneously, and relocate to university cities. According to Figure 24, depicting the respondents' places of residence, Poles were the largest group living in cities with over 500,000 inhabitants. This suggests that many young Poles may be leaving their families and sharing accommodation with friends while studying at university.



**Figure 24. Place of residence of respondents**

Source: own elaboration based on the result of the survey.

Figure 24 exposes the places of residence of Germans, Poles, and Spaniards. The survey data shows that Poles from the Gen Z group tend to live in the largest cities, while Spaniards are more likely to reside in smaller towns. The percentage of Germans living in villages and cities with a population below 50,000 was found to be the lowest among the three nationalities. Spaniards were found to be the most numerous group residing in cities with a population below 500,000. The survey results revealed interesting findings about the financial situations of the selected group of respondents.



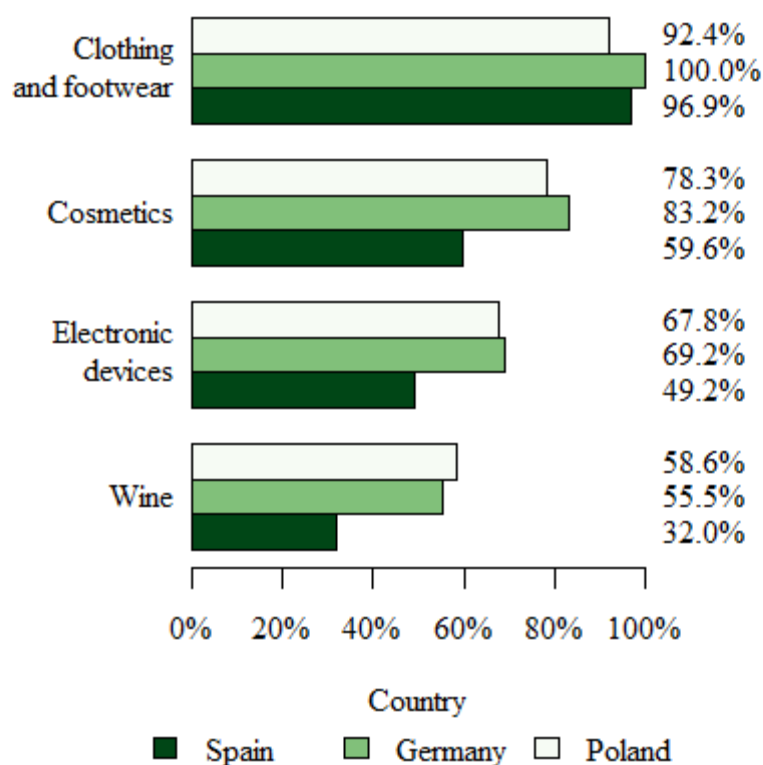
**Figure 25. Economic situation among respondents**

Source: own elaboration based on the result of the survey.

It was found that Spaniards faced greater difficulty than Poles and Germans in managing their finances, as depicted in Figure 25. The majority of Polish respondents reported having an easy or quite easy financial situation, while Germans had the smallest percentage of respondents who reported having a very difficult financial situation. In contrast,

approximately 18.3% of Spaniards reported having great difficulty in making ends meet, with 11.9% reporting difficulty, and almost 30.3% reporting some difficulty.

The purchase decisions of consumers were examined by asking them to choose the categories of products they had bought within the last year, as depicted in Figure 26.



**Figure 26. Comparison of product categories bought by young respondents**

Source: own elaboration based on the result of the survey.

The results of the survey indicated that clothing and footwear were the most commonly purchased products among all three nationalities. However, Poles and Germans also reported purchasing cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine, while Spaniards had lower reported purchase decisions in these categories. Germans reported the highest purchase rates of cosmetics and electronic equipment, while Poles had the highest purchase rate of wine. By contrast, Spaniards reported the lowest purchase rates of cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine. Clothing and footwear were purchased most often by Germans and least often by Poles, while wine was purchased most often by Poles and least often by Spaniards.

The survey had a similar number of respondents from each country, and there was a similar proportion of women in each group, making up over 70% of the total respondents. About 63.5% of all respondents had higher education. In terms of education, Spaniards had the largest number of people with higher education, followed by Germans. Poles made up the

largest group of those who graduated from secondary school, and many of them reported combining work with their studies. The largest group of respondents lived in cities with populations over 100,000. The financial situation of the respondents varied among the nationalities, with Spaniards reporting the most difficulty in making ends meet, although all groups reported some level of difficulty.

The following pages of this chapter present a comparison of the analysed nationalities based on the study's objectives. Specifically, data from four product categories were included for further analysis.

## **4.2. Recognition of the origin of the product on the basis of elements identifying the COO effect**

### **4.2.1. COO attributes helping in identifying the product origin**

In this section of the dissertation, an analysis is conducted to determine whether the mentioned attributes are considered when identifying the origin of a product and in order to indicate the most important COO elements helping to identify the origin of products, a statistical analysis is described below. Additionally, the statistical analysis aims to determine the significance of the impact that these elements have on the identification of a product's origin. The COO attributes will be presented for the four product categories: clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices and wine. Next, the results compare nationalities and COO attributes, and later COO sources of information are calculated based on the V-Cramer coefficient. The strength of a relationship between studied characteristics is measured on a scale from 0 to 1. A score closer to 0 indicates a weaker relationship between the characteristics, while a score closer to 1 indicates a stronger one. The analysis focused on the relationships with the highest V-Cramer coefficient scores, which are presented in tables comparing the behaviour of the three groups of young consumers and their importance in relation to the COO attributes.

#### **Clothing and footwear**

The results for the first category, clothing and footwear, are presented in Table 16. Identification of the origin of clothing and footwear was done through the prism of COO attributes.

**Table 16. The most significant COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of clothing and footwear**

Attributes identifying clothing and footwear origin	n	% *
<i>Made in...</i> label	1323	84.9%
Brand	738	47.4%
COB	578	37.1%
Language of the product packaging description	442	28.4%
Address of manufacturer	387	24.8%
Graphic symbols on the packaging	357	22.9%
Product name	341	21.9%
Logo	329	21.1%
Operating instructions	271	17.4%
COD	193	12.4%
Barcode	134	8.6%
Colours of the product packaging	76	4.9%
Other	11	0.7%

\* Percentages do not add up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question  
Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

It is worth noting that 96.4% of the respondents from all three nationalities declared that they bought clothing and footwear in 12 months. The most important COO attribute used to identify the origin of clothing and footwear among Germans, Poles, and Spaniards was the *Made in...*label (84.9%). As can be seen in Table 16, the other most significant COO attributes used to identify the origin of these products were brand (47.4%), COB (37.1%), and the language used in the product packaging description (28.4%). However, some attributes did not have a significant impact on identifying the product's origin, such as the colour of the product packaging (4.9%), barcode (8.6%), COD (12.4%), and operating instructions (17.4%). Some respondents (11 in total) provided additional responses, most of which were repetitions of the options listed or indicated that fashion was an element that symbolized the country of origin.

Riesgo, Codina and Sádaba (2023) have confirmed that the *Made in...* label is the main element that can indicate the origin of the fashion products, adding that products made in Europe with the label *Made in Italy* or *Made in France* can indicate luxury and higher quality than fast-fashion products manufactured in Asia, in countries such as Bangladesh, Vietnam or India (Riesgo, Codina, & Sádaba, 2023). Additionally, the brand is also an attribute that supports identifying the origin of the clothing, especially sportswear (Tong, & Su, 2014). Some brands are closely associated with specific countries and are known for their strong national

identity or production in a specific country. It has been found that familiarizing oneself with popular brands and their production locations influences consumers' knowledge of the origin of the products (Sataøen, 2021). Additionally, some brands can indicate distinctive manufacturing techniques, craftsmanship styles, or production methods. For example, certain countries are renowned for their expertise in hand-stitched leather goods, precision engineering of watches, or intricate embroidery on textiles. These techniques can provide clues about the origin of the clothing or footwear.

Analysing the clothing and footwear category it is worth indicating if there are some similarities and differences between Germans, Poles and Spaniards (Table 17).

**Table 17. Comparison of COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of clothing and footwear among Germans, Poles and Spaniards**

Attributes that help identifying origin of clothing and footwear	Country			P
	Spain (N=530)	Germany (N=517)	Poland (N=511)	
COB	179 (33.8%)	160 (30.9%)	239 (46.8%)	chi2=31.4, df=2, V=0.14 p<0.001 *, PL>ES,DE
COD	91 (17.2%)	58 (11.2%)	44 (8.6%)	chi2=18.5, df=2, V=0.11 p<0.001 *, ES>DE,PL
Made in...label	459 (86.6%)	453 (87.6%)	411 (80.4%)	chi2=12.2, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.002 *, DE,ES>PL
Address of manufacturer	138 (26.0%)	122 (23.6%)	127 (24.9%)	chi2=0.8, df=2, V=0.02 p=0.659
Language of the product packaging description	178 (33.6%)	125 (24.2%)	139 (27.2%)	chi2=11.9, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.003 *, ES>PL,DE
Barcode	17 (3.2%)	32 (6.2%)	85 (16.6%)	chi2=65.4, df=2, V=0.2 p<0.001 *, PL>DE,ES
Logo	83 (15.7%)	99 (19.1%)	147 (28.8%)	chi2=28.6, df=2, V=0.14 p<0.001 *, PL>DE,ES
Colours of the product packaging	8 (1.5%)	41 (7.9%)	27 (5.3%)	chi2=23.5, df=2, V=0.12 p<0.001 *, PL>ES DE>PL,ES
Product name	139 (26.2%)	88 (17.0%)	114 (22.3%)	chi2=13.1, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.001 *, ES,PL>DE
Brand	269 (50.8%)	185 (35.8%)	284 (55.6%)	chi2=44.1, df=2, V=0.17 p<0.001 *, PL,ES>DE
Graphic symbols on the packaging	51 (9.6%)	86 (16.6%)	220 (43.1%)	chi2=181.9, df=2, V=0.34 p<0.001 *, PL>DE,ES DE>ES
Operating instructions	96 (18.1%)	138 (26.7%)	37 (7.2%)	chi2=68.0, df=2, V=0.21 p<0.001 *, DE>ES,PL ES>PL
Other	5 (0.9%)	3 (0.6%)	3 (0.6%)	p=0.803

p - chi-squared or Fisher's exact test

\* Statistically significant (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.



Each nationality prioritized the same COO attributes to help them identify the origin of the products. The *Made in...* label was chosen by over 80% of young consumers from each country. Additionally, the brand was selected by over 50% of Spaniards and Poles as the second most helpful attribute for identifying product origin. Additionally, the analysis showed that there was a significant distinction in the use of COB between Poland and both Spain and Germany ( $p < 0.001$ ). The proportion of participants from Poland who recognized COB as a helpful attribute in identifying the origin of the product was higher than that of the respondents from Spain and Germany. When it comes to COD, Spanish consumers focus on place of design of clothing and footwear more than Poles and Germans. The *Made in...* label as a COO attribute helping in origin identification was more important among German and Spanish consumers than it was for Poles, although it is important to note that this is a weak relationship ( $V = 0.09$ ). For Spaniards, the language of the product packaging description was a more significant attribute than it was for Germans and Poles, whilst the barcode was a more important COO attribute for Poles than for Germans and Spaniards. For the latter, the V-Cramer coefficient was equal to 0.20 indicating a weak relation between analysed variables but it was higher than for the other nationalities. This could be related to the previously mentioned mobile applications that are used in Poland (Pola, Made in, Vivino). Logo was considered to be a COO attribute more significantly by Poles than Germans and Spaniards, whilst the colours of the product packaging were more important for Germans than for Poles and Spaniards when identifying the origin of clothing and footwear products.

Additionally, the brand was the most significant for Poles than Spaniards compared to Germans, although a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.17 means that the relationship is weak. Moreover, graphic symbols on the packaging were more significant for Poles when identifying the origin of clothing and footwear than for Germans and then Spaniards. Poles are used to seeing graphics with the Polish flag, allowing them to be sure that they are buying domestic products. These graphics are often located on shoe packaging. The analysis shows that operating instructions were more often chosen by Germans than by Spaniards and Poles. This could be explained by the Germans' cultural characteristics of following the rules. Additionally, although  $V = 0.21$  presents a weak relationship, it is higher than the other nationalities. Overall, there is the medium relationship between graphic symbols on the packaging and consumer origin in the clothing and footwear category ( $V = 0.34$ ).

Taking into consideration the analysis above on the COO attributes helping in the identification of the origin of clothing and footwear, the conclusion can be drawn that there are differences between the chosen nationalities. The most significant relationship is between the graphic symbols on the packaging and nationality ( $V=0.34$ ), with Poles having chosen those attributes more often than others. The second most significant relationship is between operating instructions and nationality ( $V=0.21$ ), with Germans focusing on this attribute more often than Spaniards and Poles. The third significant relationship is between barcodes and nationality ( $V=0.20$ ). In this case, Poles pay more attention to barcodes while identifying the origin of the clothing and footwear than Germans and Spaniards. By ascertaining which attributes can help in the verification of the origin of clothing and footwear among the different nationalities, it can be said that companies should focus on graphic symbols on packaging and barcodes in Poland, operating instructions in Germany, COD and language of the product packaging in Spain.

Germany is known for its precision engineering and attention to detail. This attribute is reflected in the quality of products, such as well-crafted shoes and durable clothing. German manufacturers often adopt advanced technologies and techniques in their production processes (Jin & Shin, 2021). This can result in products that showcase innovation, efficiency, and functionality. Germany has several renowned brands in the fashion and footwear industry, with brands like Adidas, Puma, and Hugo Boss associated with German craftsmanship and design. German manufacturers are often committed to sustainability and ethical production practices, prioritizing eco-friendly materials, fair labour conditions, and transparency in their supply chains (Ahmad, Miskon, Alabdan, & Tlili, 2020).

In turn, Poland has a long history of skilled craftsmanship, particularly in textiles and leather goods. Traditional techniques, such as embroidery and hand-stitching, may be evident in clothing and footwear products. Moreover, Poland has become popular for offering good quality products at relatively affordable prices. This attribute is especially relevant for clothing and footwear in the mid-range market segment. Poland's fashion industry has been expanding rapidly in recent years, with emerging designers and brands gaining recognition. This growth contributes to a diverse range of styles and influences in Polish clothing and footwear (Łapińska, Kądziałowski, & Dziuba, 2019).

Lastly, Spain has a rich artistic heritage, and this often translates into the design of clothing and footwear. Spanish products may exhibit flair, creativity, and a blend of traditional and

contemporary aesthetics. Spain has a strong reputation for producing high-quality leather goods and footwear and Spanish shoemakers are known for their craftsmanship, comfort, and use of fine materials (e.g. Hispanitas). Different regions of Spain have their own specialties in clothing and footwear production. For example, Catalonia is known for textiles and high-end fashion, while the region of Valencia is renowned for shoe manufacturing. Spain has a vibrant fashion scene and is often associated with trends and avant-garde designs. Spanish brands like Zara and Mango are recognized globally for their fast-fashion offerings (Stooksbury, 2021; Yoon, Lee, & Choo, 2020).

### **Cosmetics**

The analysis of the second category, which was cosmetics, is presented in Table 18. Identification of the origin of cosmetics was presented through the prism of COO attributes.

**Table 18. The most significant COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of cosmetics**

Attributes identifying cosmetics origin	N	% *
<i>Made in...</i> label	767	64.5%
Brand	571	48.0%
COB	458	38.5%
Product name	348	29.3%
Language of the product packaging description	344	28.9%
Address of manufacturer	318	26.7%
Graphic symbols on the packaging	204	17.2%
Logo	198	16.7%
COD	184	15.5%
Operating instructions	182	15.3%
Barcode	104	8.7%
Colours of the product packaging	28	2.4%
Other	17	1.4%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

Based on the responses of consumers, the most commonly used identification cues for cosmetics were the *Made in...*label, which was selected by 64.5% of the respondents, followed by the brand at 48.0%, COB at 38.5%, and product name at 29.3%. On the other hand, the least commonly used identification cues in cosmetics were the colours of the product packaging at 2.4%, the barcode at 8.7%, operating instructions at 15.3%, and the country of

design of the product at 15.5%. Some respondents also mentioned other identification cues, such as cruelty-free, quality certification, and eco-friendliness.

It should be added that different countries have varying regulations and standards for cosmetic products. Analysed countries are members of the EU so the regulations about the quality of the product are similar. The countries analysed are members of the EU, so product quality regulations are similar. In contrast, for Asian countries, labelling requirements, ingredient disclosure, safety testing and manufacturing practices need to be reviewed. These regulations can provide guidance on COO. Some countries may have unique access to certain natural resources or ingredients. For example, countries like France are known for their expertise in perfumery and access to high-quality fragrance ingredients. Certain countries also have a strong reputation for specific types of cosmetics or beauty products (Dinnie, 2016). For example, South Korea is renowned for its innovative skincare products (Nathan et al., 2020), while France is associated with luxury beauty brands. In addition, some countries have well-established manufacturing facilities or industry clusters for cosmetics. For example, the United States, France, and Japan have significant cosmetic manufacturing infrastructure. Research the presence of large-scale production facilities or industry concentrations in different countries to determine potential origins. Table 19 presents a comparison of COO attributes for cosmetics.

**Table 19. Comparison of the most significant COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of cosmetics among Germans, Poles and Spaniards**

Elements that help identifying country of origin of cosmetics	Country			P
	Spain (N=326)	Germany (N=430)	Poland (N=433)	
COB	145 (44.5%)	119 (27.7%)	194 (44.8%)	chi2=33.5, df=2, V=0.17 p<0.001 *, PL,ES>DE
COD	79 (24.2%)	61 (14.2%)	44 (10.2%)	chi2=29.0, df=2, V=0.16 p<0.001 *, ES>DE,PL
<i>Made in...</i> label	190 (58.3%)	307 (71.4%)	270 (62.4%)	chi2=15.3, df=2, V=0.11 p<0.001 *, DE>PL,ES
Address of manufacturer	85 (26.1%)	131 (30.5%)	102 (23.6%)	chi2=5.4, df=2, V=0.07 p=0.069
Language of the product packaging description	109 (33.4%)	122 (28.4%)	113 (26.1%)	chi2=5.0, df=2, V=0.06 p=0.083
Barcode	12 (3.7%)	12 (2.8%)	80 (18.5%)	chi2=80.9, df=2, V=0.26 p<0.001 *, PL>ES,DE
Logo	52 (16.0%)	59 (13.7%)	87 (20.1%)	chi2=6.5, df=2, V=0.07 p=0.039 *, PL>DE
Colours of the product packaging	11 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)	17 (3.9%)	chi2=16.5, df=2, V=0.12 p<0.001 *, PL,ES>DE
Product name	138 (42.3%)	72 (16.7%)	138 (31.9%)	chi2=60.9, df=2, V=0.23 p<0.001 *, PL>DE ES>PL,DE
Brand	173 (53.1%)	176 (40.9%)	222 (51.3%)	chi2=13.8, df=2, V=0.11 p=0.001 *, ES,PL>DE
Graphic symbols on the packaging	33 (10.1%)	20 (4.7%)	151 (34.9%)	chi2=154.3, df=2, V=0.36 p<0.001 *, ES>DE PL>ES,DE
Operating instructions	56 (17.2%)	54 (12.6%)	72 (16.6%)	chi2=4.0, df=2, V=0.06 p=0.137
Other	4 (1.2%)	13 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	p<0.001 *

p - chi-squared or Fisher's exact test

\* Statistically significant (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

The statistical analysis of the data indicates that there are significant differences between the three countries. The variables showing significant differences between the countries include COB, with a moderate effect size (V=0.17) and COD, with a small-to-moderate effect size (V=0.16). Post-hoc analysis reveals that the Polish and Spanish groups chose COB and COD more often than the German group. What is more, other variables that show significant differences between the countries include the *Made in...*label (V=0.11) and barcode (V=0.26), although both with small effect sizes. Germans focus more on the *Made in...*label than the Polish and Spanish groups, while the Poles pay attention to barcodes more often than Germans and Spaniards.

Additionally, product name ( $V=0.23$ ) and graphic symbols on the packaging ( $V=0.36$ ) show large effect sizes with significant differences between the nationalities. The Polish group chose more often product names in identifying the cosmetics origin than the German and Spanish groups. Poles also focus more on graphic symbols on the packaging than Spaniards and Germans. It is worth noting that some variables, such as address of manufacturer and language of the product packaging description did not show significant differences between the groups, indicating that they may not be reliable indicators of the COO of cosmetics.

Overall, the statistical analysis suggests that certain elements on the packaging of cosmetics can be used to identify the COO effect, but their reliability and effectiveness may vary depending on the specific country and product. The most significant relationship is between graphic symbols on the packaging and nationality ( $V=0.36$ ), with Poles having chosen this attribute more often than others. The second most significant relationship is between barcode and nationality ( $V=0.26$ ), again with Poles focusing on this attribute more often than Spaniards and Germans. The third significant relationship is between product name ( $V=0.23$ ) and nationality. In this case, Spaniards pay more attention than Poles and Germans to the name of the cosmetics when identifying its origin. After ascertaining which attributes can help in the verification of the origin of cosmetics among the different nationalities, it can be said that companies should focus on graphic symbols on packaging and barcodes in Poland, the name of the cosmetics in Spain, and the *Made in...* label Among German respondents.

It is important to note that Germany is known for its advancements in technology and innovation across various industries (Mroczkowski, 2014; Naudé & Nagler, 2017), including cosmetics. German cosmetic companies often leverage scientific research and cutting-edge technologies to develop innovative products and formulations. German manufacturing is often associated with high-quality standards and attention to detail. German cosmetics emphasize precise formulations, rigorous testing, and quality control processes. Germany also has a strong emphasis on natural and organic products and German cosmetic companies may prioritize using natural ingredients, sustainable sourcing, and eco-friendly practices (Siddiqui, Profeta, Decker, Smetana, & Menrad, 2023). Moreover, Germany has a robust research and development ecosystem (Wons & Bendig, 2023) and the country is home to renowned research institutes and collaborations between academia and industry, which contributes to advancements in cosmetic science. This is due to the popularity of the company NIVEA Beiersdorf which also can impact consumers' perception of the product origin.

Poland is known for offering good value for money (Augustyn & Kawińska, 2023), and this can extend to its cosmetics industry. Polish cosmetics may be competitively priced without compromising on quality. Many Polish companies gain popularity with their natural products, e.g. Dr Irena Eris, Ziaja, Oceanic. Polish cosmetic products often draw inspiration from traditional remedies and herbal ingredients. Polish cosmetic companies incorporate traditional botanical extracts and natural ingredients into their formulations. Poland has a growing presence as a contract manufacturer for cosmetics (Augustyn & Kawińska, 2023). Research conducted by Baran (2018) indicated that Polish consumers have distinct perceptions of Polish cosmetics brands compared to brands from other countries. According to their opinions, Polish cosmetics brands are strongly associated with attributes such as natural ingredients, safety in product usage, affordability, and a sense of tradition. It should be noted that many international brands choose to outsource their production to Polish manufacturers due to their cost-effectiveness and quality standards (Kabus, Dziadkiewicz, Miciuła, & Mastalerz, 2022).

Spanish cosmetics, by contrast, often reflect the country's cultural and geographical influences, with a focus on natural ingredients, botanical extracts, and Mediterranean-inspired formulations (Parkhomenko & Denysiuk, 2023). Spain is home to several prestigious beauty brands and luxury cosmetics and Spanish cosmetic companies may emphasize high-quality ingredients, elegant packaging, and a sense of luxury, e.g. Sesderma and Biovène Barcelona. Spain is also recognized for its expertise in dermocosmetics and skincare (e.g. MartiDerm) and Spanish cosmetic companies specialize in products that target specific skin concerns or provide dermatological benefits (Nunes, 2021).

### Electronic devices

The third analysed category is electronic devices. The significant COO attributes for this kind of product are displayed on Table 20.

**Table 20. The most significant COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of electronic devices**

Attributes identifying electronic devices origin	n	% *
<i>Made in...label</i>	591	59.0%
Brand	525	52.4%
COB	343	34.2%
COP	290	28.9%
Operating instructions	271	27.0%
Product name	269	26.8%
Address of manufacturer	241	24.1%
Language of the product packaging description	239	23.9%
Logo	234	23.4%
Country of assembly	232	23.2%
COD	182	18.2%
Graphic symbols on the packaging	93	9.3%
Barcode	64	6.4%
Other	16	1.6%
Colours of the product packaging	14	1.4%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

The results indicate that the most commonly identified elements of the origin among electronic devices were the *Made in...label* (59.0%), brand (52.4%), and COB (34.2%). Other frequently identified elements included the COP (28.9%) and operating instructions (27.0%). Conversely, certain elements, such as the colour (1.4%), barcode (6.4%) and graphic symbols on the packaging (9.3%) were rarely identified by consumers. Additionally, some responses focused on sources of information rather than specific COO attributes, such as online reviews or opinions from friends.

Certain countries are known for being home to prominent electronic brands or original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). For example, companies like Apple (United States), Samsung (South Korea), and Toshiba (Japan) have strong brand identities associated with their respective countries (Molling, Hidalgo, Santini, Monticelli, & de Matos, 2023). Some products



are typically related to the countries because of the popularity of the brands. For instance, Japan has been known for its advancements in consumer electronics, while the United States has a strong presence in tech innovation (Krishna, 2019). However, it should be noted that recognising the origin of the electronic devices is very difficult for consumers because they involve components sourced from multiple countries (Molling, Hidalgo, Santini, Monticelli, & de Matos, 2023). Understanding the supply chain and the origin of key components can provide insights into the overall origin of the device. For instance, certain countries may specialize in semiconductor manufacturing, display panels, or other critical components. Thus, without any *Made in...* label or any other information, it is not possible to ascertain what the actual origin of the electronic devices is. Moreover, different countries have their own regulatory frameworks and standards for electronic devices. Researching the compliance requirements can help identify the country of origin and certification systems, such as CE (Europe), FCC (United States), or CCC (China) may indicate compliance with specific regulations (Wójcik & Doligalski, 2011). Table 21 presents some similarities and differences between analysed groups of consumers.

**Table 21. Comparison of the most significant COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of electronic devices among Germans, Poles and Spaniards**

Elements that help identifying country of origin of electronic devices	Country			P
	Spain (N=269)	Germany (N=358)	Poland (N=375)	
COB	105 (39.0%)	88 (24.6%)	150 (40.0%)	chi2=23.1, df=2, V=0.15 p<0.001 *, PL>ES>DE
COD	72 (26.8%)	48 (13.4%)	62 (16.5%)	chi2=19.5, df=2, V=0.14 p<0.001 *, ES>PL,DE
COP	61 (22.7%)	114 (31.8%)	115 (30.7%)	chi2=7.1, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.028 *, DE,PL>ES
COA	67 (24.9%)	97 (27.1%)	68 (18.1%)	chi2=8.9, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.012 *, DE,ES>PL
Made in...label	135 (50.2%)	264 (73.7%)	192 (51.2%)	chi2=50.2, df=2, V=0.22 p<0.001 *, DE>PL,ES
Address of manufacturer	61 (22.7%)	110 (30.7%)	70 (18.7%)	chi2=15.0, df=2, V=0.12 p=0.001 *, DE>ES,PL
Language of the product packaging description	89 (33.1%)	90 (25.1%)	60 (16.0%)	chi2=25.7, df=2, V=0.16 p<0.001 *, ES>DE,PL DE>PL
Barcode	3 (1.1%)	19 (5.3%)	42 (11.2%)	chi2=27.7, df=2, V=0.17 p<0.001 *, PL>DE,ES DE>ES
Logo	56 (20.8%)	48 (13.4%)	130 (34.7%)	chi2=47.6, df=2, V=0.22 p<0.001 *, ES>DE PL>ES,DE
Colours of the product packaging	3 (1.1%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (2.9%)	p=0.001 *
Product name	79 (29.4%)	89 (24.9%)	101 (26.9%)	chi2=1.6, df=2, V=0.04 p=0.451
Brand	152 (56.5%)	128 (35.8%)	245 (65.3%)	chi2=66.7, df=2, V=0.26 p<0.001 *, ES>DE PL>ES,DE
Graphic symbols on the packaging	24 (8.9%)	20 (5.6%)	49 (13.1%)	chi2=12.2, df=2, V=0.11 p=0.002 *, PL>DE
Operating instructions	76 (28.3%)	132 (36.9%)	63 (16.8%)	chi2=37.7, df=2, V=0.19 p<0.001 *, DE>ES,PL ES>PL
Other	4 (1.5%)	9 (2.5%)	3 (0.8%)	p=0.178

p - chi-squared or Fisher's exact test

\* Statistically significant (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration survey results.

The statistical analysis of the data indicates that there are significant differences between Poles, Germans and Spaniards in terms of the attributes that help to identify the origin of electronic devices. Significant differences between the countries include brand, with a moderate effect size (V=0.26), *Made in...* label, with a moderate effect size (V=0.22) and logo (V=0.22). A statistically significant relationship was also found between brand and nationality and although this relationship was weak, it was still the strongest among the analysed variables. Post-hoc analysis reveals that the Polish group chose brand and logo more often

than the Spaniards and Germans. Furthermore, the impact of the brand as a COO attribute on Spanish consumers was greater than on German consumers in the identification of electronic devices origin. However, the *Made in...* label was more frequently chosen by Germans than by Poles and Spaniards. Other variables with significant differences between the countries include operating instructions ( $V=0.19$ ) and barcode ( $V=0.17$ ), albeit both with small effect sizes. Germans focus more on operating instructions than Spaniards and Poles, while Poles pay attention to barcodes more often than Germans and Spaniards.

Additionally, the language of the description on the packaging ( $V=0.16$ ) and COD ( $V=0.14$ ) show significant differences between the nationalities. Spaniards more often chose the language of the description on the packaging in identifying the electronic devices origin than the German and Polish groups. Spaniards also focus more on COD than Poles and Germans. However, the names of the electronic devices did not show significant differences between the groups, indicating that they may not be reliable indicators of the COO of electronic devices.

Overall, the most significant relationship is between the brand and the nationality ( $V=0.36$ ), with Poles having chosen these attributes more often than the others. The second most significant relationship is between the *Made in...* label and nationality ( $V=0.22$ ), with Germans focusing on this attribute more often than Poles and Spaniards. The third most significant relationship is between the logo ( $V=0.22$ ) and nationality. In this case, Poles pay more attention than Spaniards and Germans to the logo of electronic devices while identifying its origin. Knowing which attributes can help in the verification of the origin of electronic devices among three different nationalities, companies should focus on the brand and logo in Poland, the *Made in...* label in Germany and the language of the product description and COD in Spain.

It should be indicated that Germany is known for its engineering prowess and technological innovation. German electronic devices showcase precision, advanced engineering, and high-quality craftsmanship. Moreover, due to its popularity in the automotive industry, Germany has a strong presence in automotive electronics, including components for vehicles and infotainment systems. German companies specialize in developing electronics for automotive applications (Felser & Wynn, 2020). Germany is also renowned for its industrial automation technology (Yang & Gu, 2021) and electronic devices related to industrial control systems and automation solutions often utilise German expertise. What is more, Germany places a strong emphasis on sustainable manufacturing practices (Scholz, Keijzer, & Richerzhagen, 2016). German electronic devices incorporate energy-efficient features and environmentally friendly

production processes. Young consumers increasingly look for and consume information about the positive activities provided by brands so that they can link electronic device brands with eco-friendliness (Niedermeier, Emberger-Klein, & Menrad, 2021).

Poland has been steadily growing its electronics manufacturing capabilities. Polish manufacturers produce electronic devices across various segments, including consumer electronics, telecommunications, and industrial applications (Prolejko, 2023). One such example is the Polish company Krüger&Matz which takes advantage of a German-sounding name. Poland is increasingly becoming a popular destination for contract manufacturing of electronic devices and Polish manufacturers often offer cost-effective solutions and a flexible approach to production. Additionally, Poland has a thriving IT and software development industry and Polish electronic devices feature strong software capabilities and connectivity options.

In turn, Spain has a reputation for its design sensibilities. Spanish companies focus on delivering innovative and stylish products for the consumer market. Spanish electronic devices emphasize sleek and aesthetically pleasing designs, targeting a balance between form and function, e.g. Surtel Electrónica S.L and iRiparo España. Additionally, Spain has a presence in the consumer electronics sector, including devices such as smartphones, tablets, and audio equipment. Spain has also shown an interest in the development of smart home automation solutions (Statista Market Insights, 2022) with Spanish electronic devices increasingly catering to the smart living market, integrating connectivity and automation features. Lastly, Spain has made advancements in renewable energy technologies and Spanish electronic devices include components or applications related to solar power, wind energy, or other sustainable energy sources.

In each country, there is competition among companies that produce specific products, e.g. electronic devices. However, regardless of the number of companies that are popular in each country, consumers might have their own positive perceptions and stereotypical thinking about specific countries and product categories. When it comes to electronic devices, research confirms that in general people relate electronic devices with Japan due to its high quality of products (Krishna, 2019). Nonetheless, it might prove valuable for future research endeavours to examine the perception of the most prominent models of electronic devices manufactured in Germany, Poland, and Spain in comparison to Japan, a renowned leader associated with exceptional quality.

## Wine

Table 22 presents the most significant attributes that consumers use to evaluate the origin of wine, which was the final category analysed.

**Table 22. The most significant COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of wine**

Attributes identifying wine origin	n	% *
COB	439	55.9%
<i>Made in...</i> label	415	52.8%
Product name	347	44.1%
Brand	338	43.0%
Address of manufacturer	265	33.7%
Graphic symbols on the packaging	213	27.1%
Language of the product packaging description	206	26.2%
Logo	136	17.3%
COD	121	15.4%
Operating instructions	100	12.7%
Colours of the product packaging	97	12.3%
Barcode	41	5.2%
Other	8	1.0%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

It is important to note that the majority of consumers were able to identify the origin of products based on certain indicators such as COB at 55.9%, the *Made in...*label at 52.8%, the name of the wine at 44.1%, and the brand at 43.0%. By contrast other attributes such as the barcode at 5.2%, the colours of the wine packaging at 12.3%, the operating instructions at 12.7%, and the COD at 15.4% were rarely chosen as identifying factors. Additionally, only a small number of consumers mentioned the region of the wine as an identifying factor.

It is worth indicating that different wine regions have specific grape varieties associated with them. For example, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are often associated with Bordeaux, while Chardonnay is prominent in Burgundy (Blackford et al., 2021). Knowing which grape varieties are traditionally grown in specific regions can offer clues about the origin of a wine. However, not everybody knows where all the regions are located that is why they search for other attributes of origin identification. Paying attention to the labelling information on the wine bottle can offer valuable hints about its origin. Consumers can look for indications such as the country, region, specific vineyard, or winery mentioned on the label (Blackford et al.,

2021). Additionally, some regions require specific labelling requirements or include information about the vintage or grape variety.

Additionally, many wine-producing countries have strict regulations and designated appellations that define specific geographical boundaries and production methods. It should be noted that being familiar with these regulations and appellations can help narrow down the possible origin of a wine. For instance, wines labelled with an Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) in France indicate a specific origin and production standard. Some claim that wines from various regions often exhibit distinctive flavour profiles and styles (Tiwari et al., 2022). These characteristics can include acidity levels, fruit flavours, tannin structure, and overall balance. Tasting and comparing wines from different regions can help develop an understanding of the typical flavour profiles associated with each area. What is more, terroir refers to the environmental factors that influence the characteristics of a wine, including the climate, soil composition, topography, and geographic location. Each wine region has its unique terroir, resulting in distinct flavours and aromas. Understanding the typical terroir of a particular region can aid in identifying the origin of a wine (Serni et al., 2020). Table 23 provides a comparison of the most significant attributes among young consumers from Germany, Poland and Spain.

**Table 23. Comparison of the most significant COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of wine among Germans, Poles and Spaniards**

Elements that help identifying country of origin of wine	Country			P
	Spain (N=175)	Germany (N=287)	Poland (N=324)	
COB	124 (70.9%)	130 (45.3%)	185 (57.1%)	chi2=29.2, df=2, V=0.19 p<0.001 *, PL>DE ES>PL,DE
COD	40 (22.9%)	38 (13.2%)	43 (13.3%)	chi2=9.6, df=2, V=0.11 p=0.008 *, ES>PL,DE
Made in...label	88 (50.3%)	165 (57.5%)	162 (50.0%)	chi2=4.0, df=2, V=0.07 p=0.135
Address of manufacturer	52 (29.7%)	135 (47.0%)	78 (24.1%)	chi2=37.5, df=2, V=0.22 p<0.001 *, DE>ES,PL
Language of the product packaging description	30 (17.1%)	83 (28.9%)	93 (28.7%)	chi2=9.6, df=2, V=0.11 p=0.008 *, DE,PL>ES
Barcode	6 (3.4%)	14 (4.9%)	21 (6.5%)	chi2=2.2, df=2, V=0.05 p=0.325
Logo	15 (8.6%)	44 (15.3%)	77 (23.8%)	chi2=19.6, df=2, V=0.16 p<0.001 *, PL>DE,ES
Colours of the product packaging	20 (11.4%)	36 (12.5%)	41 (12.7%)	chi2=0.2, df=2, V=0.01 p=0.916
Product name	71 (40.6%)	129 (44.9%)	147 (45.4%)	chi2=1.2, df=2, V=0.04 p=0.555
Brand	109 (62.3%)	89 (31.0%)	140 (43.2%)	chi2=43.4, df=2, V=0.23 p<0.001 *, PL>DE ES>PL,DE
Graphic symbols on the packaging	49 (28.0%)	95 (33.1%)	69 (21.3%)	chi2=10.8, df=2, V=0.12 p=0.004 *, DE>PL
Operating instructions	9 (5.1%)	65 (22.6%)	26 (8.0%)	chi2=41.0, df=2, V=0.23 p<0.001 *, DE>PL,ES
Other	0 (0.0%)	8 (2.8%)	0 (0.0%)	p<0.001 *

p - chi-squared or Fisher's exact test

\* Statistically significant (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

The statistical analysis of the data indicates that there are differences between the three countries (Poland, Germany, and Spain) in terms of the attributes that help to identify the origin of wine. The variables that show significant differences between the countries include brand and operating instructions with a moderate effect size (V=0.23) and address of manufacturer with a moderate effect size (V=0.22). Post-hoc analysis reveals that the Spanish consumers chose brand more often than the Polish and German groups. Additionally, operating instructions were more significant for Germans while identifying the origin of the wine than for Poles and Spaniards. Germans also more frequently chose address of manufacturer than Spaniards and Poles. COB was more significant for Spaniards than for Poles

and Germans when verifying the origin of the wine. Other variables that show significant differences between the countries include logo ( $V=0.16$ ) and graphic symbols on the packaging ( $V=0.12$ ), albeit both with small effect sizes. Poles focus more on logo than the German and Spanish groups, while the Germans paid more attention to graphic symbols on the packaging of the wine than other nationalities. It should be noted that the COO attributes including *Made in...* label, barcode, colours of the product packaging and name of the wine were not found to be significantly associated with the nationalities.

The most significant relationship was between brand and nationalities but also with operational instructions and nationality ( $V=0.23$ ). The brand was chosen more frequently by Spaniards, however, operating instructions were chosen by Germans. Second the most significant relation was between address of manufacturer and also nationality ( $V=0.22$ ) while Germans focus on this attribute the most frequently. The third significant relation was between COB ( $V=0.19$ ) and nationality. In this case Spaniards paid more attention to COB of the wine while identifying its origin than Poles and Germans. After this identification of which attributes can help in verification of the origin of wine among three different nationalities, companies should focus on brand and COB in Spain and operating instructions in Germany, whilst in Poland companies should consider promoting the logo as an COO attribute that helps identification of the wine origin.

Wine holds a prominent position among beverages due to its unique nature, which evokes various perceptions and associations (Rodrigues et al., 2020). Rodrigues, Ballester, Saenz-Navajas, and Valentin (2015) have highlighted that wine falls into a category of products that can stimulate diverse representations. Its complexity and variety of flavours contribute to its appeal and popularity. Moreover, wine is recognized as a fashionable and trendy beverage worldwide, as supported by Rodrigues and Parr (2019). This perception of wine as fashionable has been prevalent for a considerable period. Notably, wine is frequently mentioned and discussed in various media outlets, including newspapers, books, and academic journals, signifying its cultural significance and widespread interest (Brochet & Dubourdieu, 2001).

It is important to add that Germans often pay attention to the Prädikat system, which categorizes wines based on their ripeness levels. This system indicates the quality and style of German wines. Germans have a particular fondness for Riesling and Pinot Noir wines (Dressler, 2018). These grape varieties are widely grown in Germany and are associated with quality and tradition. German Rieslings are known for their versatility, ranging from dry to sweet, and their



ability to reflect the characteristics of the terroir (Dressler, 2018). Germans tend to focus on labelling information such as the quality designation (e.g., Qualitätswein, Prädikatswein), specific region (e.g., Mosel, Rheingau), and vineyard information.

Poles often pay attention to the country and specific region associated with the wine (Gut, Krzywonos, & Piekara, 2020). They have preferences for wines from certain countries known for their wine production, such as France, Italy, Spain, or Germany. Additionally, wines from specific regions within these countries may hold significance. In addition, Polish wine enthusiasts show an interest in wines made from indigenous grape varieties (Mazurkiewicz-Pizło & Wojciech Pizło, 2019). These grape varieties are specific to certain regions and are associated with local traditions and flavours. Polish consumers often appreciate the uniqueness and authenticity of wines made from indigenous grapes. It is worth adding that the labelling information on the wine bottle is considered important by Poles (Gut, Krzywonos, & Piekara, 2020). They look for details such as the country, region, specific vineyard, or winery mentioned on the label (Mazurkiewicz-Pizło & Wojciech Pizło, 2019). Additionally, some Poles may seek wines with specific certifications or quality designations, such as PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) or PGI (Protected Geographical Indication).

Spaniards place importance on the Denominación de Origen (DO) system, which guarantees the origin and quality of wines produced in specific regions (Estreicher, 2013). The DO label provides credibility and assurance about the wine's origin. Spaniards appreciate wines made from indigenous grape varieties that are specific to each region. Grape varieties like Tempranillo, Garnacha, and Albariño hold significance and reflect the local wine culture. Spanish wines, especially those from regions like Rioja and Ribera del Duero, often undergo oak aging and Spaniards appreciate the influence of oak on the wine's flavour profile and the complexity it adds (Estreicher, 2013).

Understanding how consumers' culture interacts with marketing strategies is vital for predicting the success of products in international markets. One product that exemplifies this phenomenon is wine. With a vast array of wine brands available worldwide, a wine's origin has become increasingly critical in consumers' purchase decisions (Valentin et al., 2021). Several studies shed light on this aspect. For instance, Lacey, Bruwer and Li (2009) conducted research in Australia and discovered that regionality and grape variety played pivotal roles for consumers dining in fine restaurants and these attributes held significant weight when Australian consumers selected wine to complement their meal. Similarly, Ginon, Ares,

Issanchou, Laboissière, and Deliza (2014) conducted a study in Burgundy and found that the region of origin was the second most important criterion for wine selection among local consumers. The association of wine with its place of origin seemed to influence their choices significantly. Furthermore, a study by Atkin and Johnson (2010) emphasized the importance of brand and place-of-origin information, such as the region, country, and state of wine production. These factors emerged as the most crucial attributes shaping consumers' decisions when choosing a bottle of wine.

To enhance consumers' understanding of the importance of a product's place of origin, particularly in the wine industry, there is a need for increased marketing efforts (Martinez-Carrasco, Brugarolas & Martinez-Poveda, 2005). Felzensztein, Hibbert and Vong (2004) conducted a comprehensive review of empirical research on wine consumer behaviour and found that the COO effect could be considered as the fifth element of the traditional marketing mix. The COO effect holds significance in the wine industry and influences consumers' perceptions. However, it is important to note that while the COO effect matters, it is not the sole determining factor in consumers' wine choices and price and quality were identified as having more substantial effects on consumers' decision-making when it comes to choosing a wine. Therefore, while promoting the origin of a wine can be beneficial, marketers should also take into account other influential factors such as pricing and quality to effectively appeal to consumers and drive sales in the competitive wine market. For instance, Ashton (2014) conducted research revealing that the perception of a wine's origin has a significant impact on consumers' enjoyment. In that study where the same wine was believed to be from New Jersey or California, it received lower enjoyment ratings when perceived to be from New Jersey compared to California. Veale and Quester (2009) further emphasized the role of COO in shaping consumers' perceptions of wine, finding that the sensory quality of wines was negatively affected when the COO was not disclosed, resulting in increased sourness and astringency ratings. However, this impact was mitigated when wines were labelled with information about the COO and price. In addition, Rodrigues et al. (2020) revealed that the COO has a greater influence on wine-traders' representation of wines compared to their own perception of COO. In other words, wine traders may prioritize the COO information when marketing wines to consumers.

One might assume that high-involvement consumers, who are more knowledgeable and invested in the product, would rely less on COO information and instead make their decisions

based on intrinsic cues (internal product attributes). However, empirical studies have shown the opposite to be true. Research conducted by Balestrini and Gamble (2006), Guidry, Babin, Graziano, Schneider (2009) revealed that for high-involvement consumers, the place of origin of a wine, including the country and particularly the region, is one of the most critical selection criteria. In other words, consumers who are deeply interested and engaged in the wine-purchasing process place significant importance on where the wine comes from when making their decisions (Časas & Makauskienė, 2013). It is important to note that the effect of COO on consumers' perceptions can evolve over time or be influenced by wine education marketing initiatives: as consumers become more educated about wines and their origins, their perceptions and preferences may change accordingly.

The tables displayed in this subchapter provide the results of the survey questionnaire and the comparisons of the most significant COO attributes helping in identify the origin among Germans, Poles and Spaniards. It has been found that the *Made in...* label, brand, and COB are the most significant COO attributes in product categories including clothing and footwear, cosmetics, and electronics. In the wine category, the most important were COB, *Made in...* label and the name of the wine. According to consumers, the colours of the packaging and barcodes do not help in the identification of origin of the selected four product categories. It should also be pointed out that there were respondents who add some other answers, although these were largely related to COO sources of information. An interesting consideration has been presented that in almost each category, there was a statistically significant relationship between the origin of the consumer and operating instructions. Furthermore, in each product category the relationships between COO attributes and nationality of young consumers were different. There is no, one pattern that could be provided to all nationalities. Despite this, the dissertation recommends focusing on the most significant relationships in each country.

As well as COO attributes, this dissertation also analyses the sources of information that consumers use to identify the origin of the products. This part of the study also focused on four product categories and surveyed young participants to determine the sources they use to identify the origin of the products. The analysis of the survey questionnaire results of COO sources of information is presented in the next subchapter.

#### 4.2.2. COO sources of information helping in identify the product origin

This section focuses on the sources of information that help to identify the origin of products. These include personal experience of the product, family opinions, friends' opinions, advertising activities and also mobile applications that make it possible to verify the origin of the product. The COO sources of information will be presented for the four product categories, including clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices and wine. Additionally, results of a comparison of nationalities and COO sources of information are calculated based on V-Cramer coefficient. The strength of the relationship between the studied characteristics is evaluated on a scale ranging from 0 to 1. A score closer to 0 signifies a weaker relationship between the characteristics, while a score closer to 1 indicates a stronger relationship between them. For this research, the dissertation specifically selected relationships with the highest V-Cramer coefficient scores, indicating strong associations between the studied variables. By examining the V-Cramer coefficients and their corresponding scores, the research endeavours to shed light on the extent to which these information sources contribute to the accurate identification of a product's origin. This analysis serves to provide valuable insights into the factors influencing consumers' perceptions and decision-making processes regarding the origin of products.

##### Clothing and footwear

The first analysed category is clothing and footwear. The most significant COO sources of information in clothing and footwear category are displayed in Table 24.

**Table 24. The most significant COO sources of information in clothing and footwear category**

Sources of information identifying origin of clothing and footwear	n	% *
My own experience with the product	934	59.9%
Promotional activities/advertising	737	47.3%
Mobile applications	635	40.8%
Friends' opinion	402	25.8%
Family opinion	201	12.9%
Other	104	6.7%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based on the result of the survey.

The survey questionnaire results for the clothing and footwear category revealed that consumers rely mostly on their own experience with the product (59.9%) to identify its origin. Promotional activities and advertising (47.3%) and mobile applications that help identify the product's origin, such as the Made in app (40.8%), were also significant sources of information. On the other hand, family opinion (12.9%) and friends' opinion (25.8%) were the least chosen sources of information.

Table 25 shows the results of a statistical analysis of the sources of information used by consumers in Germany, Poland and Spain to identify the country of origin of clothing and footwear products. The analysis used a chi-square test to compare the responses across the three countries.

**Table 25. Comparison of the most significant COO sources of information of clothing and footwear among Germans, Poles and Spaniards**

Sources of information that help in identifying the origin of clothing and footwear	Country			P
	Spain (N=530)	Germany (N=517)	Poland (N=511)	
My own experience with the product	341 (64.3%)	241 (46.6%)	352 (68.9%)	chi2=59.5, df=2, V=0.2 p<0.001 *, PL,ES>DE
Family opinion	88 (16.6%)	51 (9.9%)	62 (12.1%)	chi2=11.0, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.004 *, ES>PL,DE
Friends' opinion	116 (21.9%)	111 (21.5%)	175 (34.2%)	chi2=28.3, df=2, V=0.13 p<0.001 *, PL>ES,DE
Promotional activities/advertising	247 (46.6%)	215 (41.6%)	275 (53.8%)	chi2=15.6, df=2, V=0.1 p<0.001 *, PL>ES,DE
Mobile applications	179 (33.8%)	329 (63.6%)	127 (24.9%)	chi2=176.3, df=2, V=0.34 p<0.001 *, DE>ES,PL ES>PL
Other	33 (6.2%)	54 (10.4%)	17 (3.3%)	chi2=21.2, df=2, V=0.12 p<0.001 *, DE>ES,PL

p - chi-squared or Fisher's exact test

\* Statistically significant (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

The most significant source of information was consumers' own experience with the product, with 64.3% of Spanish consumers, 46.6% of German consumers, and 68.9% of Polish consumers choosing this option. The differences between the countries were statistically significant, with Polish and Spanish consumers relying more on their own experience than German consumers. What is more, family opinion was the least chosen source of information, with 16.6% of Spanish consumers, 9.9% of German consumers, and 12.1% of Polish consumers choosing this option. The differences between the countries were also statistically significant, with Spanish consumers pay more attention to family opinion than German and Polish

consumers. Additionally, friends' opinion was chosen by 21.9% of Spanish consumers, 21.5% of German consumers, and 34.2% of Polish consumers. The statistical analysis showed that there were significant differences between the countries, with Polish consumers placing a higher importance on friends' opinions than Spanish and German consumers.

Furthermore, promotional activities/advertising were chosen by 46.6% of Spanish consumers, 41.6% of German consumers, and 53.8% of Polish consumers. The differences between the countries were statistically significant, but Poles pay more attention to promotional activities than Spaniards and Germans. The data shows that mobile applications were preferred by 33.8% of Spanish consumers, 63.6% of German consumers, and 24.9% of Polish consumers. The statistical analysis revealed significant differences between the countries, indicating that German consumers were more likely to use mobile applications to identify product origin compared to Spanish and Polish consumers. It should be noted that "other" sources of information was selected by 6.2% of Spanish consumers, 10.4% of German consumers, and 3.3% of Polish consumers. According to the statistical analysis, there were significant differences between the countries, with German consumers relying more on "other" sources of information than their Spanish and Polish counterparts.

The most significant relationship is with mobile applications and nationality ( $V=0.34$ ), however accounts for the average relationship between the study variables. The second most significant relationship was own experience with the clothing and footwear and nationality ( $V=0.20$ ) and the third important relationship is with friends opinion and nationality ( $V=0.13$ ). Both results indicated only a weak relationship for the V-Cramer coefficient. By ascertaining which sources of information can help in verification of the origin of clothing and footwear among three different nationalities, it can be stated that companies should focus on mobile applications in Germany, whilst friends opinion are valuable in Poland and families opinions help young Spaniards to verify the origin of the clothing and footwear.

### **Cosmetics**

The next product category analysed is cosmetics. Table 26 presents the most significant COO sources of information in cosmetics category.

**Table 26. The most significant COO sources of information in cosmetics category**

Sources of information	n	% *
My own experience with the product	726	61.1%
Promotional activities/advertising	657	55.3%
Mobile applications	416	35.0%
Friends' opinion	409	34.4%
Family opinion	183	15.4%
Other	72	6.1%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

According to research in the cosmetics industry, young consumers tend to identify the origin of cosmetics based on their own experience with it and promotional activities/advertising. This accounts for 61.1% and 55.3% of the responses, respectively. The third most common way to identify product origin is through mobile applications, which was cited by 35.0% of the respondents. Friends' opinions were also a significant factor at 34.4%. However, family had the least influence at 15.4%. The comparison of the nationalities in context of COO sources of information is displayed in Table 27.

**Table 27. Comparison of the most significant COO sources of information of cosmetics**

Sources of information that help in identifying the origin of cosmetics	Country			P
	Spain (N=326)	Germany (N=430)	Poland (N=433)	
My own experience with the product	209 (64.1%)	227 (52.8%)	290 (67.0%)	chi2=20.0, df=2, V=0.13 p<0.001 *, PL,ES>DE
Family opinion	58 (17.8%)	52 (12.1%)	73 (16.9%)	chi2=5.8, df=2, V=0.07 p=0.056
Friends' opinion	90 (27.6%)	130 (30.2%)	189 (43.6%)	chi2=26.4, df=2, V=0.15 p<0.001 *, PL>DE,ES
Promotional activities/advertising	196 (60.1%)	221 (51.4%)	240 (55.4%)	chi2=5.7, df=2, V=0.07 p=0.057
Mobile applications	90 (27.6%)	236 (54.9%)	90 (20.8%)	chi2=121.0, df=2, V=0.32 p<0.001 *, DE>ES,PL ES>PL
Other	28 (8.6%)	27 (6.3%)	17 (3.9%)	chi2=7.2, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.028 *, ES>PL

p - chi-squared or Fisher's exact test

\* Statistically significant (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

According to the results, the most significant source of information used by respondents in all three countries was their own experience with the product, with the highest percentage of respondents from Poland (67.0%) and the lowest from Germany (52.8%). The least chosen source was "other," with the highest percentage of respondents from Spain (8.6%) and the

lowest from Poland (3.9%). Additionally, in all three countries, family opinion was not a major factor in identifying the origin of cosmetics, with only a small percentage of respondents choosing it: Poland had the highest percentage at 16.9%, while Germany had the lowest at 12.1%. On the other hand, friends' opinion had a higher impact, with the highest percentage of respondents from Poland at 43.6% and the lowest from Germany at 30.2%.

Promotional activities/advertising was chosen by the highest percentage of respondents from Spain (60.1%) and the lowest from Germany (51.4%). Mobile applications to help identify product origin were chosen by the highest percentage of respondents from Germany (54.9%) and the lowest from Poland (20.8%). What is more, the analysis showed significant differences between the countries in some sources of information. For example, respondents from Germany chose the use of mobile applications significantly more often than respondents from Spain and Poland, while respondents from Poland used this source significantly less often than respondents from Spain and Germany. Similarly, respondents from Poland chose friends opinion significantly more often than respondents from Germany and Spain.

It is worth noting that among the variables compared, there was a moderate relationship between mobile phones and the origin of Gen Z members, with a correlation coefficient of 0.32. It seems that Germans tend to use mobile applications like CodeCheck to verify the origin of cosmetics, as discussed in Chapter 2. Spaniards also utilize this technological source of information, although to a lesser extent. The smallest percentage among the three culturally diverse groups was found in Poles. Furthermore, friends' opinions were also found to have an impact on sharing information about the origin of cosmetics. Although the relationship between friends' opinions and young consumers is weak ( $V=0.15$ ), it is still stronger than the other COO sources of information.

### **Electronic devices**

The third analysed category is electronic devices. Table 28 displays the most significant COO sources of information in electronic devices category.



**Table 28. The most significant COO sources of information in electronic devices category**

Sources of information	n	% *
My own experience with the product	616	61.5%
Promotional activities/advertising	430	42.9%
Mobile applications	366	36.5%
Friends' opinion	331	33.0%
Family opinion	269	26.8%
Other	64	6.4%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

For electronic devices, the most frequently selected source of information was own experience with the product (61.5%). Additionally, consumers also relied on promotional activities/advertising (42.9%) and mobile applications to help identify product origin (36.5%). By contrast, family opinion (26.8%) and friends' opinion (33.0%) were the least frequently chosen sources of information. The comparison of COO source of information among young Germans, Poles and Spaniards are presented in Table 29.

**Table 29. Comparison of the most significant COO sources of information about electronic devices**

Sources of information that help in identifying the origin of electronic devices	Country			P
	Spain (N=269)	Germany (N=358)	Poland (N=375)	
My own experience with the product	151 (56.1%)	181 (50.6%)	284 (75.7%)	chi2=53.4, df=2, V=0.23 p<0.001 *, PL>ES,DE
Family opinion	86 (32.0%)	83 (23.2%)	100 (26.7%)	chi2=6.0, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.049 *, ES>DE
Friends' opinion	96 (35.7%)	73 (20.4%)	162 (43.2%)	chi2=44.2, df=2, V=0.21 p<0.001 *, ES>DE PL>ES,DE
Promotional activities/advertising	112 (41.6%)	143 (39.9%)	175 (46.7%)	chi2=3.6, df=2, V=0.06 p=0.163
Mobile applications	77 (28.6%)	223 (62.3%)	66 (17.6%)	chi2=167.7, df=2, V=0.41 p<0.001 *, DE>ES,PL ES>PL
Other	23 (8.6%)	31 (8.7%)	10 (2.7%)	chi2=13.9, df=2, V=0.12 p=0.001 *, DE,ES>PL

p - chi-squared or Fisher's exact test

\* Statistically significant (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

The results indicate that the most frequently used source of information is own experience with the electronic device, which was chosen by 56.1% of respondents in Spain, 50.6% in Germany, and 75.7% in Poland. There was a significant difference between the three countries in terms of relying on their own experience with the product as a source of information for

electronic devices. Poland had a much higher percentage of respondents relying on their own experience, compared to Germany and Spain. Furthermore, family opinion was also a source of information for electronic devices, although to a lesser extent, with 32.0% of respondents in Spain, 23.2% in Germany, and 26.7% in Poland indicating it. A significant difference was found between Spain and Germany, with more respondents in Spain relying on family opinion as a source of information. Friends' opinion was chosen by 35.7% of respondents in Spain, 20.4% in Germany, and 43.2% in Poland. The difference between the countries was significant, with both Poland and Spain having a higher percentage of respondents relying on friends' opinions compared to Germany.

Additionally, promotional activities/advertising were also considered, but to a lesser extent, with 41.6% of respondents in Spain, 39.9% in Germany, and 46.7% in Poland indicating it, however, there was no significant difference between the countries. It is worth pointing out that mobile applications were the least used source of information, but there was a significant difference between the countries with more respondents in Germany relying on mobile applications compared to Spain and Poland. Finally, "other" sources of information were chosen by a small percentage of respondents, with a significant difference between Poland and the other two countries, indicating that respondents in Poland were less likely to choose "other" sources compared to those in Germany and Spain. Poles additionally pointed to Internet searches, expert opinions or testers of electronic equipment as sources for identifying the origin of products.

Analysing the COO sources of information helping to identify of origin of electronic devices, it should be noted that the statistically significant relation is between mobile apps and the origin of consumers ( $V=0.41$ ). This source of information is the most popular among Germans, then Spaniards. The strongest statistical relationship is between Poles and their own experience of identifying the origin of electronic equipment ( $V=0.23$ ). The opinions of friends were the second most frequently chosen source of information by Poles ( $V=0.21$ ). After ascertaining which COO sources of information can help in verification of the origin of electronic devices among three different nationalities, it can be stated that companies should focus on mobile applications in Germany, whilst friends' opinions are valuable in Poland and families' opinions help young Spaniards to verify the origin of the electronic devices.

## Wine

The last analysed category was wine. The most significant COO sources of information in wine category are displayed in Table 30.

**Table 30. The most significant COO sources of information in wine category**

Sources of information	N	% *
My own experience with the product	550	70.0%
Friends' opinion	350	44.5%
Promotional activities/advertising	301	38.3%
Family opinion	273	34.7%
Mobile applications	190	24.2%
Other	26	3.3%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

The results from the wine category showed a significant difference compared to the other product categories. The majority of respondents relied on their own experience with the wine as the main source of information (70.0%), followed by friends' opinion (44.5%). Mobile applications (24.2%) and family opinion (34.7%) were the least chosen sources of information. The promotional activities and advertising had a moderate impact on verifying the origin of wine, with 38.3% of respondents choosing it as a source of information. Comparative statistics for the three nationalities in the wine category is displayed in Table 31.

**Table 31. Comparison of the most significant COO sources of information of wine**

Sources of information that help in identifying the origin of wine	Country			p
	Spain (N=175)	Germany (N=287)	Poland (N=324)	
My own experience with the product	122 (69.7%)	204 (71.1%)	224 (69.1%)	chi2=0.3, df=2, V=0.02 p=0.869
Family opinion	91 (52.0%)	74 (25.8%)	108 (33.3%)	chi2=33.4, df=2, V=0.21 p<0.001 *, PL>DE ES>PL,DE
Friends' opinion	74 (42.3%)	102 (35.5%)	174 (53.7%)	chi2=20.8, df=2, V=0.16 p<0.001 *, PL>ES,DE
Promotional activities/advertising	56 (32.0%)	120 (41.8%)	125 (38.6%)	chi2=4.4, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.108
Mobile applications	33 (18.9%)	97 (33.8%)	60 (18.5%)	chi2=22.9, df=2, V=0.17 p<0.001 *, DE>ES,PL
Other	9 (5.1%)	8 (2.8%)	9 (2.8%)	chi2=2.4, df=2, V=0.05 p=0.306

p - chi-squared or Fisher's exact test

\* Statistically significant (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

According to the results, there was no significant difference between the countries regarding the own experience with the product as a COO source of information. However, family opinion was significantly more important for consumers in Poland (33.3%) compared to Germany (25.8%) and Spain (52.0%). Friends' opinion was also significantly more important for consumers in Poland (53.7%), compared to Germany (35.5%) and Spain (42.3%). What is more, promotional activities/advertising had a similar level of influence on verifying the origin of wine in all three countries. Mobile applications were significantly more important for consumers in Germany (33.8%) compared to Spain (18.9%) and Poland (18.5%). Other sources of information were not significantly different among the three countries.

The greatest statistically significant relationship was between family opinion and nationality ( $V=0.21$ ). Spaniards focus on family opinion more than Poles, but Polish consumers seek such help more often than Germans. It should be also taken into account that Poles chose friends' opinion as a source of information about wine origin ( $V=0.16$ ). For Spaniards and Germans this source of information was not so important in verifying the origin. However, Germans paid more attention than Spaniards and Poles to mobile applications as a source of wine origin information. The relationship was weak ( $V=0.17$ ) nonetheless significant.

Identifying the origin of products such as clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine can be challenging and the importance of various COO elements can vary based on the product category. According to empirical research, young consumers consider the label *Made in...* and brand as the most significant attributes for identifying the origin of clothing and footwear, cosmetics, and electronic devices. On the other hand, the colours of product packaging and barcodes were considered the least important attributes. For wine, the COB and *Made in...* label were helpful in determining its origin. However, the colours of wine packaging and barcodes were not helpful. According to Dziadkiewicz (2019), the design of packaging serves as a substitute for a salesperson, fulfilling a communicative role by conveying information such as content, origin, composition, and manufacturer. These messages not only inform the consumer about the product but also contribute to shaping their perception of the producer. As a result, the packaging not only imparts information about the item but also contributes to the formation of a distinct brand image in the consumer's mind (Dziadkiewicz, 2019). It should be noted that the results of the analyses carried out in this subsection do not show the great importance of product packaging in the identification of product origin.

Furthermore, the most common source of information about the origin of products was consumers' own experience, while family opinions were the least popular source. Mobile applications and promotional activities did not have a significant impact on identifying the origin of wine.

It is worth noting that identification of product origin of the analysed categories is primarily achieved by individual experience with the product. This means that young Poles, Spaniards and Germans create an opinion about the product made in specific country based on their own consumption. The least important source of information about the product origin were opinions of family and friends in clothing and footwear, cosmetics and electronic devices categories. An interesting trend can be observed in the wine category, where young consumers place great importance on the opinions of family and friends. However, it is also expected that consumers aged 18-25 will likewise seek information about technological solutions such as the Vivino mobile app, which offers a vast amount of information about the origin and characteristics of a product.

### **4.3.The impact of COO on purchase decisions**

#### **4.3.1. COO attributes and their impact on purchase decisions**

As previously mentioned in the theoretical section of the dissertation, various aspects of the COO can influence purchasing decisions. This subsection presents the most significant COO factors that affect the decision-making of young consumers in Germany, Poland, and Spain. To determine the impact of these factors, one straightforward approach is to count the number of distinct COO elements that respondents identify as having an influence on their purchasing decisions. It is important to note that there is a difference in the electronic devices category compared to the other product categories. In the electronic devices category, two additional COO elements, namely country of parts (COP) and country of assembly (COA), were included in the questionnaire, which were not presented in the other product categories. As a result, a simple comparison of the number of marked COO elements across all product categories is not feasible. To address this issue, a comparison of the percentage of marked COO elements was conducted instead.

The arithmetic mean is the most significant measure of a central tendency as it indicates the value of the parameter being measured, such as the intensity of a trait or the level of a

particular ability (Manikandan, 2011). In particular, the arithmetic mean is crucial when conducting tests that compare means, as it allows for determining whether the observed differences between the groups being compared are statistically significant. The results showed that the influence of COO was significantly greater for wine than for clothing, footwear, and cosmetics, and was, in turn, significantly higher than for electronic devices. These findings are presented in Table 32.

**Table 32. Impact of COO on purchasing decisions**

Impact of COO	Product category				p
	Clothing and footwear (N=1558) - A	Cosmetics (N=1189) - B	Electronic devices (N=1002) - C	Wine (N=786) - D	
mean±SD	21.62±9.83	21.8±10.19	20.53±9.3	25.17±10.05	W=116.6, p<0.001
median	23.08	23.08	20	23.08	
quartiles	15.38 - 30.77	15.38 - 30.77	13.33 - 26.67	15.38 - 30.77	D>B,A>C

p - Kruskal-Wallis test + post-hoc analysis (Dunn test)

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

COO effect is the impact that the country of manufacture of a product has on the perception and evaluation of that product by consumers. In this case, COO effect is compared across four different product categories: clothing and footwear (A), cosmetics (B), electronic devices (C), and wine (D). It should be noted that the mean and standard deviation of the perceived COO effect were calculated for each product category. The mean and standard deviation for clothing and footwear were 21.62 and 9.83, respectively. For cosmetics, the mean and standard deviation were 21.8 and 10.19. For electronic devices, the mean and standard deviation were 20.53 and 9.3. Finally, For wine, the mean and standard deviation were 25.17 and 10.05.

To determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the perceived COO effect across the four product categories, a non-parametric test was used. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the medians of the four product categories, and the result was statistically significant (W=116.6, p<0.001), indicating that there was a difference in the perceived COO effect across the four product categories. Post-hoc tests were conducted to determine which categories were significantly different from each other. The results showed that category D (wine) had a significantly higher perceived impact of the COO compared to cosmetics and clothing and footwear. Additionally, wine had a significantly higher perceived

impact compared to electronic devices. No other significant differences were found between the categories. Overall, these results suggest that the perceived impact of the COO varies across different product categories, with wine being perceived as the most influenced by the country of origin, followed by cosmetics, clothing and footwear, and electronic devices.

### **Clothing and footwear**

The first analysed category is clothing and footwear. 96.4% of young consumers confirmed that they bought a product from this category in 2021. It is important to note that the research was conducted in February-March 2022, however, the question pertained to the last 12 months. The most significant COO attributes influencing consumers are exposed on Table 33.

**Table 33. The most significant COO attributes impacting on purchasing clothing and footwear category**

Attributes impacting on purchasing clothing and footwear origin	N	% *
Brand	1230	78.9%
Logo	544	34.9%
<i>Made in...</i> label	523	33.6%
Product name	425	27.3%
COB	369	23.7%
Colours of the product packaging	321	20.6%
Graphic symbols on the packaging	219	14.1%
COD	207	13.3%
Other	168	10.8%
Language of the product packaging description	146	9.4%
Operating instructions	104	6.7%
Address of manufacturer	100	6.4%
Barcode	22	1.4%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

The most commonly identified element was brand, with 78.9% of respondents indicating it as a factor. Logo was the second most frequently identified element, with 34.9% of respondents indicating it, followed by the *Made in...* label at 33.6%. The least frequently identified element was barcode, which was indicated by only 1.4% of respondents. The data highlights the significance of brand in the purchasing decisions of young consumers when it

comes to clothing and footwear. As a result, it is essential for sellers to prioritize brand promotion while marketing clothing and footwear to this young generation.

Studies conducted by Jin, Park and Ryu (2010) have indicated that the impact of the COO effect on consumer behaviour can manifest in various ways. For instance, fashion items originating from developed countries tend to be preferred over those from less developed countries due to the perception that they represent higher status, superior quality, and greater familiarity (O'Cass & Lim, 2002). The quality is connected with the brand and its association with the specific countries, e.g. Massimo Dutti, Mango that are well-known Spanish brands. Additionally, Koskie and Locander (2023) also put attention to a brand as an element to support purchasing the shoes. Consumers desire to distinguish themselves from others, but not to the extent that it causes social isolation (Yu, Hudders, & Cauberghe, 2018). They also desire to conform to social norms, but not to the point where they cannot express their unique identities (Koskie & Locander, 2023). It is important to add that fashion products are evaluated by customers based on both internal and external product cues (Yu, Hudders, & Cauberghe, 2018). Internal product cues include material composition, while external product cues may include price, brand, and COO (Aakko & Niinimäki, 2022; Niinimäki, 2015). Furthermore, labelling indicating the country where a product was made has been considered as an indicator of quality (Business of Fashion, 2015). Most of the above mentioned research primarily took brand into account. This COO attribute was chosen by young consumers who took part in the empirical research for the purpose of this dissertation. Brand is often linked to a logo and the spelling of a name, and these elements also play important role while making purchasing decisions about clothing and footwear.

### **Cosmetics**

The second product category analysed is cosmetics, and it was found that 73.5% of young consumers made purchases in this category. Table 34 presents the most significant COO attributes identified by respondents when evaluating cosmetics.



**Table 34. The most significant COO attributes impacting on purchasing cosmetics**

Attributes impacting on purchasing of cosmetics	n	% *
Brand	833	70.1%
Product name	484	40.7%
<i>Made in...</i> label	299	25.1%
Logo	292	24.6%
COB	286	24.1%
Operating instructions	254	21.4%
Graphic symbols on the packaging	211	17.7%
Colours of the product packaging	205	17.2%
Language of the product packaging description	167	14.0%
COD	110	9.3%
Address of manufacturer	104	8.7%
Other	98	8.2%
Barcode	27	2.3%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

It should be noted that brand was identified as an important COO attribute by 70.1% of respondents in the cosmetics category. Following brand, the most frequently chosen COO attributes were the product name (40.7%), *Made in...* label (25.1%), and the logo (24.6%). On the other hand, barcode (2.3%), address of manufacturer (8.7%), COD (9.2%), and language of the product packaging description (14.0%) were identified as the least important COO attributes by young consumers when purchasing cosmetics. Therefore, similar to the clothing and footwear category, when selling cosmetics, attention should be primarily paid to the brand.

Research conducted by Saeed et al. (2013) revealed that a majority of respondents (57%) purchase cosmetic products for personal use every few months, while 51% purchase such products for household use on a monthly basis. Thus, the cosmetics category is a repeated purchase that allows consumers to observe any changes in packaging design and language. This ongoing familiarity with the product's packaging and access to information related to its origin can play a role in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences over time. According to Saeed et al. (2013), consumers rated the COB as the most crucial factor when evaluating a product (62.8%), followed by packaging, which was the top priority for 38.5% of respondents. Certain countries have a reputation for producing high-quality cosmetics (e.g. France) and consumers associate specific countries with superior manufacturing processes, advanced

technologies, and stringent quality control. Prioritization of stringent quality control measures instils trust in the brand and its products and brands with a positive perception of quality, influence consumers to buy cosmetics associated with those countries.

Furthermore, consumers often seek brands that align with their personal values and lifestyle choices (Akram, Ansari, Ulhaq, & Yan, 2023). Knowing how great the impact of a brand has on consumers decisions, marketing specialists should effectively communicate the brand's core values, whether it's promoting inclusivity, empowerment, or natural beauty, which can in turn attract consumers who resonate with those values. Others claim that clear labelling, honest advertising, and readily available product information can demonstrate the brand's commitment to consumer satisfaction. Thus, transparent practices also contribute to consumers' confidence in the brand and its products (Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry, & Kemper, 2020). What is more, according to Akram, Ansari, Ulhaq and Yan (2023) the brand name has been found to have a notable moderating effect on the connection between consumers' information search regarding the COO and the impact of COO on their perception, specifically when they discover that the product is manufactured in China. Elsewhere, Zbib, Ghaddar, Samarji, and Wahbi (2020) found that the preference of Lebanese female consumers for prominent brands in the cosmetics and skincare industry can be partially attributed to their strong connection to brand names.

### Electronic devices

The third category analysed in this study was electronic devices, and it was found that 62% of young consumers confirmed purchasing products from this category. The most significant COO attributes identified by respondents in this category are presented in Table 35.

**Table 35. The most significant COO attributes impacting on purchasing electronic devices category**

Attributes impacting on purchasing of electronic devices	n	% *
Brand	724	72.3%
Product name	373	37.2%
<i>Made in...</i> label	286	28.5%
Logo	281	28.0%
COB	257	25.6%
Operating instructions	236	23.6%
COA	149	14.9%
COP	139	13.9%
COD	133	13.3%
Language of the product packaging description	125	12.5%
Graphic symbols on the packaging	107	10.7%
Address of manufacturer	86	8.6%
Other	83	8.3%
Colours of the product packaging	74	7.4%
Barcode	33	3.3%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

The study found that the most commonly selected COO attributes among consumers in the electronic devices category were the brand, which was chosen by 72.3% of participants, followed by the product name (37.2%), the *Made in...* label (33.6%), logo (28.0%), and COB (25.6%). The least frequently selected COO attributes were the barcode (3.3%), the colour of the product packaging (7.4%), the address of the manufacturer (8.6%), graphic symbols on the packaging (10.8%), and the language of the product packaging description (12.5%). These findings suggest that the brand is the most important COO attribute for consumers when making purchasing decisions for electronic devices, followed by product naming and labelling.

The study conducted by Yunus and Rashid (2016) found that both COO and brand familiarity have a significant impact on Iranian consumers' purchase intention for smartphones. Iranian consumers placed a higher value on smartphones made in Japan, Korea, and the US, compared to China and Iran. Additionally, brand familiarity played a more

important role than COO in the purchase intention of Iranian consumers. The study also found that Iranian consumers tend to rely more on extrinsic cues, such as brand and COO, than intrinsic cues, such as product features, when making smartphone purchase decisions (Yunus & Rashid, 2016). Furthermore, the study suggests that Iranian consumers' purchase intention is influenced by the perceived quality, prestige, and innovation associated with a particular COO or brand.

Consumer preferences in Pakistan are strongly influenced by their socioeconomic status, with lower-class consumers focusing on price, middle-class consumers prioritizing quality, and upper-class consumers valuing product status (Anwar, Yasin, Iqba, & Sajid, 2013). Most Pakistani consumers, particularly those who are educated, consider a product's COO when making electronic purchases and often prioritize products from specific countries. COO is viewed as a significant factor in determining product quality, particularly among educated consumers. When Pakistani consumers purchase expensive products, such as automobiles, televisions, and mobile phones they usually gather information about the product's country of origin before making a purchase (Anwar, Yasin, Iqba, & Sajid, 2013). One of the most influential attributes for a brand is to be synonymous with quality.

## **Wine**

When making wine purchasing decisions, consumers take into account several factors, including the COO of the wine. Studies have shown that certain COO attributes have a significant impact on consumers' wine purchasing decisions. These attributes include the reputation and image of the wine-producing country, the consumer's familiarity with the country, the perceived quality and taste of wines from that country, the price and value for money of wines from that country, the wine style and varietals associated with the country, and the label and packaging design of wines from that country (Szolnoki & Bruwer, 2015; Velasco & Ares, 2018).

In total, wine was bought by 48.6% of respondents who took part in the questionnaire. The most important COO attributes in the category of wine are displayed on Table 36.

**Table 36. The most significant COO attributes impacting on purchasing wine category**

Attributes impacting on purchasing of wine	n	% *
Brand	462	58.8%
COB	446	56.7%
Product name	387	49.2%
<i>Made in...</i> label	274	34.9%
Logo	182	23.2%
The colours of the product packaging	155	19.7%
Language of the product packaging description	149	19.0%
Address of manufacturer	138	17.6%
Graphic symbols on the packaging	131	16.7%
COD	108	13.7%
Operating instructions	65	8.3%
Other	42	5.3%
Barcode	33	4.2%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based survey results.

According to a study, young consumers showed a preference for wine based on factors such as brand (58.8%), COB (56.7%), the product name (49.2%), and the *Made in...* label (34.9%). In comparison, Germans, Poles, and Spaniards did not prioritize elements such as barcode (4.2%), operating instructions (8.3%), COD (13.7%), and graphic symbols on the packaging (16.7%) when selecting wine. Interestingly, both brand and COB had a similar impact on purchasing decisions in the wine category. Additionally, the name of the wine was found to have a significant effect on consumer behaviour. Therefore, it may be useful to focus on brand, country of origin, and the name of the wine in promotional activities.

It is important to indicate that the study conducted by Baiano (2021) showed that consumers were willing to pay more for wines from countries with a positive reputation for wine production, such as France and Italy, compared to wines from countries with a less positive reputation, such as Bulgaria and China. Velasco and Ares (2018) found that the effect of COO on wine choice behaviour was stronger for consumers with less wine knowledge and experience, as they may rely more heavily on country of origin as a cue for quality and taste. Additionally, the effect of country of origin on wine choice behaviour was found to be stronger in experiments that involved blind tastings, where participants did not know the wine brands or labels, compared to non-blind tastings. This suggests that the effect of country of origin

may be diminished when consumers have additional information about the wine, such as branding or labelling (Velasco & Ares, 2018).

According to a study conducted by Durham, Pardoe, and Vega-H (2004) and later also Agnoli and Outreville (2023), various factors play a crucial role in influencing consumers' wine choices. Their research emphasizes the significance of information related to sensory characteristics, origin, grape variety, and price. These attributes have a considerable impact on consumers' decision-making process when selecting a wine. Similarly, Jaeger, Danaher, and Brodie (2010) found that highly involved wine consumers are primarily driven by specific factors when making their wine choices that the grape variety, geographical region of origin, and the compatibility of the wine with food. What is more, Forbes (2012) highlighted a significant gender disparity in the utilization of the region of origin cue during the wine purchase decision-making process. Male participants were found to place a higher importance on the geographical region or designation of origin of the wine compared to their female counterparts (Forbes, 2012). This finding aligns with earlier research conducted in Australia by Batt and Dean (2000).

It should be noted that Yeo, Tan, Lim and Khoo (2020) found that packaging colour, material and graphics on the packaging played significant role in attracting customer purchase intention. Their research is particularly valuable for the packaging industry in Malaysia, as there is limited research on this topic in the country, but also to understand consumers' needs and preferences that can help the industry fulfil their requirements around the world. Additionally, some scholars confirm that the quality, colour, and material of the packaging can have a positive impact on consumers (Rambabu & Porika, 2020; Sadiq et al., 2020). Consumers prefer having a variety of choices when it comes to packaging, which is why marketers should focus on creating unique and creative packaging that stands out from competitors in the market (Li et al., 2021). Accurate labelling and informative content on the packaging adds value to the product and attracts consumers. The way a product is packaged and presented in the market can strongly influence the consumer's purchasing attitude, even if the product quality itself is average. In today's world, eco-friendly packaging has become a necessity (Zhao, Yao, Liu, & Yang, 2021).

What is more, Deng (2009) conducted a study that establishes a direct relationship between packaging and customer purchasing behaviour. The research suggests that the packaging of a product plays a significant role in influencing customers' purchase decisions.

Khraim (2011) also conducted a study that examined the relationship between packaging, brand loyalty, and customer purchase intention. The findings indicated that there is a strong connection between these three variables. The study revealed that packaging has an impact on brand loyalty, and brand loyalty, in turn, positively affects customers' intention to purchase. Similarly, Kawa (2013) conducted a study focusing on the impact of packaging on customers' product purchasing decisions. The research findings demonstrated a positive influence of packaging on customers' decision-making process when it comes to buying a product.

It should be noted that above four analysed categories confirmed that brand was the most significant COO attribute while purchasing clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices and wine. This seems to prove hypothesis 1 (H1), which stated that brand, as one of the attributes that identify a COO effect, has the greatest influence on young consumers' purchase decisions was confirmed. Consumers choose a branded product mostly because they relate it with the quality of workmanship. For instance, when it comes to fashion items, products originating from developed countries are often preferred over those from less developed countries. This preference is based on the perception that fashion items from developed countries signify higher status, superior quality, and greater familiarity (O'Cass & Lim, 2002). The perceived quality is closely associated with the brand and its connection to specific countries (e.g. the above-mentioned well-known Spanish brands). Furthermore, Koskie and Locander (2023) also emphasize the importance of the brand as a crucial factor in influencing purchasing decisions, particularly in the context of shoes. Thus brand reputation and recognition play a significant role in supporting consumers' choices when considering different shoe options.

However, Yu, Hudders, and Cauberghe (2018) claimed that fashion products are assessed by customers based on a combination of internal and external product cues. The first cues refer to factors related to the product's inherent characteristics, such as its material composition, whilst external product cues encompass various external attributes that influence customers' perceptions and decision-making processes, including the price, brand reputation, and COO. This means that COO and brand are separate factors that impact purchase decisions. It is important to add that Aakko & Niinimäki (2022) and Niinimäki (2015) do not qualify the brand as a COO attribute but they nonetheless highlight that it has great impact on consumer decisions while buying clothing and footwear. Aakko & Niinimäki (2022)

claimed that a product's brand can affect perceptions of reputation and style, and COO can evoke associations of authenticity and superior craftsmanship. By taking into account both internal and external cues, consumers form a comprehensive assessment of fashion products, enabling them to make informed choices aligned with their preferences and needs. These cues collectively influence customers' perceptions, attitudes, and purchasing decisions, contributing to the overall success and appeal of fashion products in the market (Yu, Hudders, & Cauberghe, 2018).

Furthermore, consumers are increasingly drawn to brands that align with their personal values and lifestyle choices. A study by Akram, Ansari, Ulhaq, and Yan (2023) emphasizes that consumers seek out cosmetic brands that resonate with their values. This could include brands promoting inclusivity, empowerment, or a focus on natural beauty. Therefore, it confirms that brand is taken into consideration mostly while purchasing cosmetics. Marketing specialists should effectively communicate the brand's core values to attract consumers who share and appreciate those values. It should be noted that the impact of a brand on consumer decisions is substantial, and marketing efforts should focus on clear labelling, honest advertising, and readily available product information. Transparent practices demonstrate the brand's commitment to consumer satisfaction. Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry, and Kemper (2020) highlight that when brands are open about their practices and provide accessible information, it contributes to consumers' confidence in the brand and its products.

The research for this dissertation also indicated that brand has the greatest impact on purchase decisions for the third analysed category, electronic devices. Yunus and Rashid (2016) revealed that brand familiarity held greater significance than COO when it came to the purchase intentions of Iranian consumers. Specifically, Iranian consumers tended to place more emphasis on extrinsic cues, such as the brand and COO, rather than intrinsic cues like product features, when making decisions to buy smartphones (Yunus & Rashid, 2016). They found that Iranian consumers' purchase intentions were influenced by their perceptions of the quality, prestige, and innovation associated with a specific country of origin or brand. In other words, the reputation and recognition of the COO or brand played a crucial role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions for smartphones in Iran.

Analysing the last product category, wine, the most important is brand for novice consumers who, lacking established preferences, are more susceptible to the influence of brand and packaging when making their wine choices (Mueller & Szolnoki, 2010; Latour et al.,



2011). Less experienced consumers tend to base their wine purchasing decisions on external or extrinsic attributes, such as the labelling and bottling of the wine (Gómez-Carmona, 2023). These visible and easily identifiable features play a crucial role in capturing their attention and influencing their choices. However, experienced wine consumers rely on their knowledge of grape variety and genuine emotional responses to assess wine quality, even in blind tasting scenarios (Taylor, Norris, Barber, & Taylor, 2023). The level of expertise and familiarity with wine attributes significantly impacts how consumers perceive and evaluate the quality of the wine they are tasting. What is more, certain consumers are influenced by a brand's reputation for caring about the environment. These environmentally conscious consumers make deliberate choices to continue purchasing products from well-known brands that have demonstrated a commitment to environmental awareness (Taylor, Norris, Barber, & Taylor, 2023). Their decision is not based on indifference but rather on research and a conscious selection of a brand that aligns with their values and beliefs regarding environmental sustainability.

Rinck (2023) noted that the wine market is related to the term "consumer product loyalty", which refers to the strong and enduring attachment that consumers feel towards a specific brand or product. When consumers are loyal to a brand, they repeatedly choose that brand's products over competitors, showcasing their commitment and preference for the brand (Rinck, 2023). This emotional bond is crucial for wine brands as it can lead to long-term customer retention and potentially positive word-of-mouth recommendations, contributing to the brand's success and market standing. Additionally, some researchers confirmed that brand loyalty provide valuable insights into the significance of consumer product loyalty within the wine industry, highlighting its potential impact on consumer behaviour and brand success (Bruwer, Coode, Saliba, & Herbst, 2013; Bruwer, Fong, & Saliba, 2013). Building and maintaining such loyalty is a strategic objective for wine brands to foster long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with their customers. Balasescu (2023) also mentioned that it is crucial to launch experiential marketing that goes beyond merely fulfilling customers' fundamental requirements and aims to captivate and thrill them by integrating the brand into their daily encounters. This approach revolves around comprehending individuals' interests and the organic, distinctive associations they forge with brand equity. By doing so, experiential marketing seeks to create meaningful and memorable interactions that leave a lasting impression on consumers and foster a deeper, more emotional connection with the brand

(Balasescu, 2023). Thus, if consumers, no matter the age, have the strong bond with the brand, they will choose brand as the most significant factor while purchasing wine.

### 4.3.2. COO sources of information and their impact on purchase decisions

#### Clothing and footwear

The second hypothesis in the study aimed to investigate the influence of different sources of country-of-origin information on the decision-making process of young consumers. These sources included personal experience with the product, opinions of family and friends, promotional activities and advertising, mobile applications, and any other sources suggested by the respondents. The study analysed the impact of these sources of information on the decision-making process of young consumers, with a focus on the clothing and footwear category, as presented in Table 37.

**Table 37. The most significant COO sources of information in clothing and footwear category**

Sources of information impacting on purchasing clothing and footwear	n	% *
My own experience with the product	1313	84.3%
Friends' opinion	896	57.5%
Promotional activities/advertising	692	44.4%
Family opinion	554	35.6%
Mobile applications	236	15.1%
Other	28	1.8%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

The study analysed the impact of COO on young consumers' decisions, focusing on different sources of information. The respondents were asked to choose their preferred sources of information when making purchasing decisions, and the results for the clothing and footwear category showed that 84.3% of the respondents relied on their own experience with the product, 57.5% considered their friends' opinion, and 44.4% were influenced by promotional activities or advertising. The least chosen sources were mobile applications to help identify product origin (15.1%) and family opinion (35.6%).

The importance of one's own experience with clothing and footwear was related to the comfort that young consumers seek when wearing clothes or shoes (Mandarić, Hunjet, &

Vuković, 2022). Although they follow fashion trends, they prioritize comfort and popularity (Kim, Jung, & Lee, 2021). Additionally, friends' opinions were found to have a significant impact on young consumers' decisions. It is common for Gen Z members to share pictures or short videos on Instagram asking for recommendations on which shoes or dress to choose, and they make the decision based on the results of online surveys from their friends and other followers (Walsh & Thureau, 2003).

Kuster-Boluda, Aldas-Manzano, Rodríguez-Santos and Vila (2009) indicated that consumers can be classified into groups based on their predominant influencing factors in their purchasing decisions of clothing and shoes. The first group are "Fashion Victims". This group is highly influenced by the affective factor, especially when it comes to fashion items. They prioritize staying on-trend and conforming to current fashion trends. External influences do not have a prominent impact on their choices. A second group are "Professional Buyers". This group is heavily influenced by the functional factor, expert opinions, and universal appeal. They prioritize the functionality and performance of products and rely on expert advice to guide their purchases. The third group is "Fair Traders". Consumers in this group are strongly influenced by the economic factor and the universal appeal of products. They prioritize value for money and fairness in their purchasing decisions. The functional and affective factors have a weaker influence on their choices. The fourth group "Independent" appears to be less influenced by most factors, indicating a deviation from the traditional model of consumption. They make decisions based on their unique preferences and needs, showing independence in their choices. The fifth group "Followers" shows a very strong influence of the conformist factor and the affective factor, and an intermediate influence of expert opinions. They tend to follow trends and prioritize products that align with popular opinions and emotions. These categorizations provide valuable insights into the diverse and nuanced factors that influence consumers' purchasing decisions (Kuster-Boluda, Aldas-Manzano, Rodríguez-Santos, & Vila, 2009). Understanding these consumer groups can help marketers tailor their strategies to effectively target and appeal to each group's specific preferences and motivations.

### **Cosmetics**

The second analysed category in the context of COO sources of information impacting purchase decisions was cosmetics. The result of the survey are displayed on Table 38.

**Table 38. The most significant COO sources of information in cosmetics category**

Sources of information impacting on purchasing cosmetics	n	% *
My own experience with the product	952	80.1%
Friends' opinion	740	62.2%
Promotional activities/advertising	541	45.5%
Family opinion	408	34.3%
Mobile applications	187	15.7%
Other	52	4.4%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

Consumers buy cosmetics based on their own experience with the product (80.1%), friends' opinion (62.2%) and promotional activities/advertising (45.5%). Mobile applications (15.7%) and family opinion (34.3%) are not very common factors influencing purchase of cosmetics. Young consumers pay attention to the ingredients of the cosmetics. It became very common that cosmetics are marked as suitable for vegans. Likewise, young consumers increasingly promote cosmetics in Instagram to attract the attention of other people but also producers themselves.

With the availability of a broad range of cosmetics products and brands, consumers are faced with numerous choices, leading to a more complex evaluation process before making a purchase decision. Consumers aim to minimize the risk of buying disappointing or unsuitable products, making them highly reliant on reviews and feedback from other users who have already tried the products. Consumers actively seek information from various sources to gather insights and influence their decision-making. These sources include friends, family members, salespersons, advertisements, internet research, and other channels (Wang, 2005).

According to Lee and Kacen (2008), interpersonal influence is an important factor that affects consumers' purchase intentions. Interpersonal influence refers to the process by which one person's attitudes, beliefs, or behaviour are influenced by another person. This form of social influence is particularly prevalent in collectivist countries like China, where individuals prioritize group harmony and social connections. In the context of online purchase intentions for cosmetics, Chinese consumers are likely to be influenced by interpersonal factors such as recommendations and opinions from friends and family, social media influencers, and information shared by other cosmetics users (Zbib, Ghaddara, Samarjiband, & Wahbi, 2020). These situational factors play a significant role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions

when using cosmetic mobile commerce (m-commerce) platforms. The influence of friends and family, as well as the impact of social media influencers, can sway consumers' decision-making processes. Positive recommendations, testimonials, or endorsements from trusted individuals or influential figures can enhance consumers' confidence and trust in the products, thereby increasing their purchase intentions (Akram, Ansari, Ulhaq, & Yan, 2023).

Furthermore, the visual appeal of cosmetics products is an additional situational factor that can significantly impact purchase intentions in the context of cosmetic m-commerce. Visually appealing products, such as aesthetically pleasing packaging or attractive design, can capture consumers' attention and evoke positive emotions, leading to an increased likelihood of purchase (Anjana, 2018). In similar vein, the convenience and portability of cosmetics products are, likewise important considerations for consumers, who often seek products that are easy to use and carry with them.

### **Electronic devices**

A statistical analysis of the third category examined in the study, electronic devices, is presented in Table 39.

**Table 39. The most significant COO sources of information in electronic devices category**

Sources of information impacting on purchasing electronic devices	n	% *
My own experience with the product	758	75.6%
Friends' opinion	688	68.7%
Promotional activities/advertising	440	43.9%
Family opinion	423	42.2%
Mobile applications	153	15.3%
Other	35	3.5%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

The most significant COO sources of information that lead to acquire an electronic device were own experience with the product (75.6%), friends' opinion (68.7%), promotional activities/advertising (43.9%) and family opinion (42.2%). The least chosen were mobile applications to help identify product origin (15.3%). It is important to notice that for electronic devices category the most significant source of information is a customer's own experience, however, friends' recommendations and opinions can also impact on decisions. Furthermore,

some respondents indicate that the source of information which motivate them to buy products are reviews on the Internet about the electronics.

A study conducted by Kushwaha, Rao and Ahmad (2015) revealed that the overall set of independent variables showed a moderate association with the dependent variables. However, upon closer examination, it was discovered that social determinants such as the influence of spouse, parents, social status, friends, and children had a strong association with the purchasing decisions of semi-urban consumers. These social factors played a significant role in shaping the consumer behaviour and decision-making process of individuals residing in semi-urban areas (Kushwaha, Rao, & Ahmad, 2015). Additionally, approximately 50% of consumers regarded their parents as opinion leaders, while around one-third of consumers considered their friends as sources of information when making buying decisions related to electronic products (Kushwaha, Rao, & Ahmad, 2015). However, Rafiq and Malik (2018) confirmed that friends also play significant role in decision-making process. It was confirmed that for 40% of respondents friends' opinions had an impact when buying electronics devices. Lastly, 28% of respondents were influenced by advertising while making purchase decision about electronic devices.

## **Wine**

The last analysed category is wine. The results of the most significant COO sources of information on consumers' decisions are presented in Table 40.

**Table 40. The most significant COO sources of information in wine category**

Sources of information impacting on purchasing wine	n	% *
My own experience with the product	590	75.1%
Friends' opinion	553	70.4%
Family opinion	463	58.9%
Promotional activities/advertising	192	24.4%
Mobile applications	88	11.2%
Other	22	2.8%

\* Percents do not sum up to 100 as this was a multiple choice question  
Source: own elaboration based on the result of the survey.

The findings indicate that consumers based purchasing decisions on their own experience with the product (75.1%), friends' opinion (70.4%) and family opinion (58.9%). The least

chosen answers were mobile applications to help identify product origin (11.2%) and promotional activities/advertising (24.4%).

Individuals are influenced by the values, opinions, and behaviours exhibited by their family and social circles (Connolly, 2019) and these factors have the potential to shape consumer behaviour and decision-making processes when purchasing wine. Additionally, social class and cultural norms play a significant role in guiding consumer choices, as they can impact preferences, aspirations, and the perception of certain wines or wine brands.

Available literature about the decision-making process in the category of wine shows that many researchers (e.g., Balenović et al., 2021; Connolly, 2019) confirm that friends' recommendations are important for young consumers. However, the empirical research conducted for the purpose of this dissertation displays that one's own experience with the wine has the greatest impact on purchasing decisions, with friends' opinions being the second most important choice.

H2 stated that friends' opinions, as a source of effect of product country of origin information, has the greatest impact on young consumers' purchase decisions. However, the results presented in this section do not confirm this for any of the product categories analysed. Rather, in all analysed categories, consumers' own opinions and their experience with the product proved to be the most important factors. According to Mandarić, Hunjet, and Vuković (2022), the younger generation values the comfort they experience when wearing clothes or shoes. Despite being interested in following fashion trends, their top priorities remain comfort and popularity (Kim, Jung, & Lee, 2021). Thus, their own experience is the most significant factor while buying fashion items. However, according to Walsh and Thureau (2003), members of Generation Z commonly share pictures or short videos on platforms like Instagram, seeking recommendations from their friends and followers on which shoes or dresses to choose. Moreover, they often make decisions based on the results of online surveys or feedback received from their peers and other followers (Walsh & Thureau, 2003).

Existing literature on the decision-making process in the wine category highlights the importance of friends' recommendations for young consumers (Balenović et al., 2021; Connolly, 2019). Studies conducted by Rasmussen & Lockshin (1999) proposed that consumers with higher levels of wine knowledge are more likely to consider the region of origin when selecting wines. Thus, the higher reliance on the region of origin cue among male wine purchasers suggests that they possess a greater level of wine knowledge compared to

females (Forbes, 2012). According to Gómez-Carmona (2023), as consumers gain more experience and knowledge about wines, their preferences and priorities undergo a shift. For these experienced consumers, the product's designation of origin becomes more significant. The designation of origin provides valuable information about the geographical location where the wine was produced, which, in turn, indicates the wine's unique characteristics, quality, and often reflects specific winemaking traditions or styles associated with that region (Gómez-Carmona, 2023). As consumers become more discerning and sophisticated in their wine choices, they place a greater emphasis on the origin of the wine as a crucial factor in their decision-making process. This means that their own experience and knowledge is the most significant COO source of information that motivate them to buy wine. The decision-making process in the wine category is influenced by various factors, including family, peers, social class, and cultural norms. An in-depth analysis of the results among three nationalities in each category is presented in the following pages of this subsection.

#### **4.3.3. Comparison of purchase decisions among young consumers**

##### **4.3.3.1. COO attributes affecting purchase decisions of Germans, Poles and Spaniards**

After ascertaining the COO elements which help in identifying the origin of a product, it is now worthwhile analysing the influence of COO attributes and sources of information among young consumers from Germany, Poland and Spain. The importance of COO effect in young consumers' purchase decisions depends on product category (Ishak, Omar, Khalid, Ghafar, & Hussain, 2020; Seock & Bailey, 2009; Stasiuk & Maison, 2014; Yasin, Noor, & Mohamad, 2007). Through the dissertation's analysis of four categories, including clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine, this subchapter demonstrates that the COO effect importance in young consumers' purchasing decisions varies by their origin. Those hypotheses are compared to the available literature in this field. Research indicates that more and more concern is paid on the brand, COB and product name than on the *Made in...* label, and whilst this depends somewhat on the product category, these changes in consumers attitudes are nonetheless visible.



This section of the analysis is focused on identifying the key elements that influence the decision-making process of consumers when it comes to purchasing clothes and footwear. The relevant findings are presented in Table 41.

**Table 41. COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in clothing and footwear category among young consumers**

COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in clothing and footwear category	Country			p
	Spain (N=530)	Germany (N=517)	Poland (N=511)	
COB	102 (19.2%)	123 (23.8%)	144 (28.2%)	chi2=11.5, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.003 *, PL>ES
COD	76 (14.3%)	66 (12.8%)	65 (12.7%)	chi2=0.8, df=2, V=0.02 p=0.679
Made in...label	145 (27.4%)	215 (41.6%)	163 (31.9%)	chi2=24.7, df=2, V=0.13 p<0.001 *, DE>PL,ES
Address of manufacturer	29 (5.5%)	42 (8.1%)	29 (5.7%)	chi2=3.8, df=2, V=0.05 p=0.152
Language of the product packaging description	62 (11.7%)	28 (5.4%)	56 (11.0%)	chi2=14.4, df=2, V=0.1 p=0.001 *, ES,PL>DE
Barcode	1 (0.2%)	0 (0.0%)	21 (4.1%)	chi2=39.8, df=2, V=0.16 p<0.001 *, PL>ES,DE
Logo	168 (31.7%)	185 (35.8%)	191 (37.4%)	chi2=3.9, df=2, V=0.05 p=0.139
Colours of the product packaging	169 (31.9%)	92 (17.8%)	60 (11.7%)	chi2=68.3, df=2, V=0.21 p<0.001 *, ES>DE>PL
Product name	141 (26.6%)	146 (28.2%)	138 (27.0%)	chi2=0.4, df=2, V=0.02 p=0.826
Brand	414 (78.1%)	418 (80.9%)	398 (77.9%)	chi2=1.7, df=2, V=0.03 p=0.428
Graphic symbols on the packaging	72 (13.6%)	71 (13.7%)	76 (14.9%)	chi2=0.4, df=2, V=0.02 p=0.809
Operating instructions	23 (4.3%)	47 (9.1%)	34 (6.7%)	chi2=9.5, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.009 *, DE>ES
Other	51 (9.6%)	73 (14.1%)	44 (8.6%)	chi2=9.2, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.01 *, DE>ES,PL

P - chi-square test or Fisher's exact test

\* Statistically significant relationship (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based on survey results

Among Spaniards, the most commonly mentioned factors influencing their purchase decisions were the language used in product descriptions on the packaging and the colours used on the packaging. By contrast, Germans frequently considered the *Made in...* label, the presence of operating instructions, and other factors when making their choices. Additionally, Spaniards mentioned additional answer such as the quality, appearance, material, design, functionality, and price of the product. Similarly, Germans indicated the quality, style of the garment, material, and comfort with the product as additional options. What is more, among Poles, the presence of a COB and barcode on the packaging were the most frequently cited influences on their decision-making process. Pole indicated the quality, material composition and the appearance of the product as additional factors influencing buying clothes and shoes.

Furthermore, it is crucial to examine the associations between consumer origin and COO attributes that influence purchase decisions in the clothing and footwear category. While statistically significant relationships exist, they tend to be weak ( $V < 0.3$ ). The highest V-Cramer result was observed between the colours of the product packaging and young consumers. This COO attribute was given the most consideration by Spaniards, followed by Germans. On the other hand, Poles did not prioritize colours on the packaging as a motivating factor for purchasing clothing and footwear products. Additionally, a V-Cramer value of 0.16 was found for the relationship between barcode and consumer origin. Although this relationship is weak, it is relatively stronger compared to others. Poles checked barcode numbers more frequently than Spaniards, while none of the German respondents identified barcode as a significant COO attribute impacting their purchase decisions.

The factors that exert the most significant influence on young Spanish consumers when purchasing cosmetics are the country of product design and the colours used on the product packaging. Germans frequently mentioned the *Made in...* label, graphic symbols on the packaging, and the inclusion of operating instructions with the product as influential elements in their purchase decisions, whilst among Poles, the presence of a COB, barcode, and brand were the most frequently chosen factors impacting their choices when buying cosmetics.

**Table 42. COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in cosmetics category among young consumers**

COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in cosmetics category	Country			p
	Spain (N=326)	Germany (N=430)	Poland (N=433)	
COB	70 (21.5%)	86 (20.0%)	130 (30.0%)	chi2=13.5, df=2, V=0.11 p=0.001 *, PL>ES,DE
COD	49 (15.0%)	30 (7.0%)	31 (7.2%)	chi2=17.9, df=2, V=0.12 p<0.001 *, ES>PL,DE
Made in...label	74 (22.7%)	135 (31.4%)	90 (20.8%)	chi2=14.3, df=2, V=0.11 p=0.001 *, DE>ES,PL
Address of manufacturer	25 (7.7%)	38 (8.8%)	41 (9.5%)	chi2=0.8, df=2, V=0.03 p=0.683
Language of the product packaging description	41 (12.6%)	54 (12.6%)	72 (16.6%)	chi2=3.8, df=2, V=0.06 p=0.152
Barcode	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	26 (6.0%)	chi2=42.9, df=2, V=0.19 p<0.001 *, PL>ES,DE
Logo	67 (20.6%)	116 (27.0%)	109 (25.2%)	chi2=4.3, df=2, V=0.06 p=0.118
Colours of the product packaging	78 (23.9%)	72 (16.7%)	55 (12.7%)	chi2=16.5, df=2, V=0.12 p<0.001 *, ES>DE,PL
Product name	122 (37.4%)	186 (43.3%)	176 (40.6%)	chi2=2.6, df=2, V=0.05 p=0.271
Brand	246 (75.5%)	281 (65.3%)	306 (70.7%)	chi2=9.2, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.01 *, ES>PL>DE
Graphic symbols on the packaging	50 (15.3%)	92 (21.4%)	69 (15.9%)	chi2=6.2, df=2, V=0.07 p=0.045 *, DE>PL,ES
Operating instructions	52 (16.0%)	122 (28.4%)	80 (18.5%)	chi2=20.4, df=2, V=0.13 p<0.001 *, DE>PL,ES
Other	24 (7.4%)	41 (9.5%)	33 (7.6%)	chi2=1.5, df=2, V=0.04 p=0.471

P - chi-square test

\*Statistically significant relationship (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

COO attributes affecting purchases of cosmetics are presented in Table 42. The brand of cosmetics has a greater impact on the decisions of young Spaniards than Poles or Germans. However, COB affects Polish consumers more than Spaniards and Germans. It should be added that the strongest relationship between analysed variables is between the barcode and the consumer origin. A score of V=0.19 indicates that there is a relationship but it is weak, however, this is nevertheless the highest in this group of COO elements. Poles more frequently check the barcode of the product than Spaniards and Germans, whilst the second the highest relation is noticeable between operating instructions and consumers origin (V=0.13).

The impact on purchasing of Spanish consumers mostly came from colours used on the product packaging. Country of assembly, *Made in...* label, address of manufacturer and user manual included with product were the most frequent COO factors that encouraged Germans purchase products. COP and logo were the most frequent answers among Poles.

**Table 43. COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in electronic devices category among young consumers**

COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in electronic devices category	Country			p
	Spain (N=269)	Germany (N=358)	Poland (N=375)	
COB	67 (24.9%)	79 (22.1%)	111 (29.6%)	chi2=5.6, df=2, V=0.07 p=0.062
COD	43 (16.0%)	44 (12.3%)	46 (12.3%)	chi2=2.3, df=2, V=0.05 p=0.309
COP	43 (16.0%)	31 (8.7%)	65 (17.3%)	chi2=12.9, df=2, V=0.11 p=0.002*, PL,ES>DE
COA	42 (15.6%)	70 (19.6%)	37 (9.9%)	chi2=13.7, df=2, V=0.12 p=0.001*, DE,ES>PL
Made in...label	65 (24.2%)	154 (43.0%)	67 (17.9%)	chi2=60.3, df=2, V=0.25 p<0.001*, DE>ES,PL
Address of manufacturer	16 (5.9%)	51 (14.2%)	19 (5.1%)	chi2=22.9, df=2, V=0.15 p<0.001*, DE>ES,PL
Language of the product packaging description	32 (11.9%)	52 (14.5%)	41 (10.9%)	chi2=2.3, df=2, V=0.05 p=0.32
Barcode	6 (2.2%)	8 (2.2%)	19 (5.1%)	chi2=5.9, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.052
Logo	69 (25.7%)	81 (22.6%)	131 (34.9%)	chi2=14.8, df=2, V=0.12 p=0.001*, PL>ES,DE
Colours of the product packaging	45 (16.7%)	10 (2.8%)	19 (5.1%)	chi2=48.3, df=2, V=0.22 p<0.001*, ES>PL,DE
Product name	89 (33.1%)	144 (40.2%)	140 (37.3%)	chi2=3.4, df=2, V=0.06 p=0.187
Brand	205 (76.2%)	245 (68.4%)	274 (73.1%)	chi2=4.8, df=2, V=0.07 p=0.09
Graphic symbols on the packaging	28 (10.4%)	44 (12.3%)	35 (9.3%)	chi2=1.7, df=2, V=0.04 p=0.426
Operating instructions	52 (19.3%)	118 (33.0%)	66 (17.6%)	chi2=27.6, df=2, V=0.17 p<0.001*, DE>ES,PL
Other	28 (10.4%)	33 (9.2%)	22 (5.9%)	chi2=4.9, df=2, V=0.07 p=0.087

P - chi-square test

\* Statistically significant relationship (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

Table 43 provides detailed data regarding consumer preferences and purchasing decisions in relation to certain attributes. It is worth noting that the COP attribute was more important to consumers from Poland and Spain compared to those from Germany. The statistical analysis reveals a significant but weak relationship, with a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.11. By contrast, the impact of logos on purchasing of electronic devices was found to be greater among Polish consumers compared to Spanish or German consumers, with a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.12. Germans, on the other hand, paid more attention to operating instructions when buying electronic devices, with a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.17. Verification of operating instructions is related to German culture and Germans display a preference for gathering sufficient information before making any decisions, ensuring they are well-informed about a particular situation or topic (Al-Alawi & Alkhodari, 2016). In a corporate setting, Germans have

been found to tend to seek the advice and guidance of experts if they feel they lack the necessary knowledge to handle a particular situation (Bluszcz & Quan, 2016). Thus, when they are faced with a decision on purchasing electronics, Germans tend to opt for a thorough and in-depth analysis. This includes checking the contents of the product manual and conducting a detailed examination of the specifications and features of the electronic device. They take the time to review the information provided in the manual to gain a comprehensive understanding of the product's functionalities and how to use it effectively. This meticulous approach reflects their desire to make an informed and well-considered decision when investing in electronic products.

The analysis also shows a statistically significant relationship between the *Made in...* label and consumer origin, with a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.25. This is the strongest relationship among the listed COO attributes in the cosmetic category, and Germans are the most attentive to the *Made in...* label compared to the other two groups. Furthermore, there is a relationship between the colour of the product packaging and the origin of consumers, with a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.22. The colours of the packaging had a greater impact on Spanish consumers in particular. Additionally, the address of the manufacturer was found to be related to the origin of the analysed consumer groups. Germans showed the highest frequency of considering this COO attribute when making purchasing decisions and this is confirmed by taking advantages of the *Made in Germany* label provided for example by the German company Gigaset, which has been producing cordless phones in its homeland of Germany since 1941. These locally manufactured communication products have gained worldwide popularity and demand. The company highlights the long tradition and displays the *Made in Germany* label even on its webpage. Gigaset holds a unique position as the sole company manufacturing such communication devices in Germany. By selecting Gigaset products, which proudly bear the *Made in Germany* label, consumers are making a conscious decision to prioritize quality and durability, ensuring a long-lasting service life for their communication needs.

However, Table 44 presents the factors influencing the purchase decisions of young consumers in the wine category, indicating a shift in focus to a different product category.

**Table 44. COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in the wine category among young consumers**

COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in wine category	Country			p
	Spain (N=175)	Germany (N=287)	Poland (N=324)	
COB	109 (62.3%)	184 (64.1%)	153 (47.2%)	chi2=20.5, df=2, V=0.16 p<0.001 *, DE,ES>PL
COD	34 (19.4%)	33 (11.5%)	41 (12.7%)	chi2=6.3, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.042 *, ES>PL,DE
Made in...label	70 (40.0%)	104 (36.2%)	100 (30.9%)	chi2=4.6, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.103
Address of manufacturer	27 (15.4%)	71 (24.7%)	40 (12.3%)	chi2=16.9, df=2, V=0.15 p<0.001 *, DE>ES,PL
Language of the product packaging description	27 (15.4%)	52 (18.1%)	70 (21.6%)	chi2=3.0, df=2, V=0.06 p=0.22
Barcode	1 (0.6%)	8 (2.8%)	24 (7.4%)	chi2=15.4, df=2, V=0.14 p<0.001 *, PL>DE,ES
Logo	24 (13.7%)	77 (26.8%)	81 (25.0%)	chi2=11.6, df=2, V=0.12 p=0.003 *, DE,PL>ES
Colours of the product packaging	11 (6.3%)	82 (28.6%)	62 (19.1%)	chi2=34.2, df=2, V=0.21 p<0.001 *, DE>PL>ES
Product name	80 (45.7%)	158 (55.1%)	149 (46.0%)	chi2=6.1, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.047 *, DE>PL
Brand	136 (77.7%)	143 (49.8%)	183 (56.5%)	chi2=36.1, df=2, V=0.21 p<0.001 *, ES>PL,DE
Graphic symbols on the packaging	24 (13.7%)	69 (24.0%)	38 (11.7%)	chi2=18.0, df=2, V=0.15 p<0.001 *, DE>ES,PL
Operating instructions	2 (1.1%)	37 (12.9%)	26 (8.0%)	chi2=19.8, df=2, V=0.16 p<0.001 *, DE>PL>ES
Other	9 (5.1%)	7 (2.4%)	26 (8.0%)	chi2=9.4, df=2, V=0.11 p=0.009 *, PL>DE

P - chi-square test

\* Statistically significant relationship (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

The factors that significantly influence the decision-making process of young consumers in the wine category differ between Germans and Poles. In Germany, the factors most frequently chosen by young consumers are COB, the manufacturer's address, logo, colours used on the product packaging, product name, graphic symbols on the packaging, and operating instructions. These elements play a crucial role in shaping their preferences. On the other hand, Polish young consumers prioritise different factors when making decisions about wine. They tend to focus more on the COD, barcode, brand, and other factors such as price and wine species. These elements have a greater influence on the purchasing decisions of Polish consumers in the wine category.

Among Spaniards, the brand of the wine has the greatest influence on their purchase decisions, and there is a statistically significant relationship with a coefficient of V=0.21. It is worth noting that for Poles, the brand is also the most significant attribute related to the COO. There is a relationship between the colour of the wine packaging and the consumers' origin, with a coefficient of V=0.21. This attribute has the greatest impact on Germans. Additionally,

the COB had a statistically significant relationship with the consumers' origin, with a coefficient of  $V=0.16$ . However, it was found that the language used on the wine packaging does not have a statistically significant impact on purchase decisions.

It should be noted that some studies have highlighted the importance of the wine's region of origin in consumer decision-making (Bernabéu, Díaz, & Oliveira, 2016). Consumers believe that wines derive their uniqueness and distinctiveness from specific geographical locations, making the origin a crucial aspect of their choice (Thode & Maskulka, 1998). The concept of origin can provide wine producers with a sustainable competitive advantage, as it represents something unique, easily distinguishable, and directly linked to the tangible quality of the product. This notion may even override preferences for low prices, indicating that consumers are willing to pay more for wines from specific regions due to their perceived higher quality and unique characteristics. Indeed, several research papers have underscored the significance of the wine's area of origin in consumer wine choices (Gil & Sánchez, 1997; Skuras & Vakrou, 2002; Martínez-Carrasco, Brugarolas, Del Campo, & Martínez, 2006). This indicates that consumers consider the origin as a critical factor when making their purchasing decisions. However, it is important to note that the relationship between origin and willingness to pay more is not always straightforward. For example, a study by Loureiro (2003) found that consumers willing to pay more for wine labelled with the Colorado (USA) origin would only pay a slightly higher price. This suggests that while origin plays a role in consumers' preferences, establishing a good reputation for quality might be even more crucial in influencing consumers' willingness to pay a premium for wine (Bernabéu, Díaz, & Oliveira, 2016).

The packaging and labelling of wine play a crucial role in influencing consumer preferences, especially when indirect research methods like conjoint or discrete choice experiments are used (Lockshin & Corsi, 2012). Consumers who are not regular wine drinkers tend to rely more on labels as a source of information to make purchase decisions, and they often infer the quality of the wine based on the label design (Gluckman, 1990; Chaney, 2000). Compared to factors like wine type, brand familiarity, and price, label design was generally found to be less crucial in influencing consumer decisions (Sherman & Tuten, 2011). However, young consumers have indicated that package elements like design, bottle appearance, and overall image hold more importance for them compared to factors like COO and vintage year (Elliot & Barth, 2012).

To summarize, in the clothing and footwear, cosmetics and electronics categories the most important COO attribute was brand, chosen by Germans, Spaniards and Poles, alike. In wine category brand was chosen by Spaniards and Poles as the most significant COO attribute, however, for Germans the most significant COO element was COB.

#### 4.3.3.2. COO sources of information affecting purchase decisions of Germans, Poles and Spaniards

It should be noted that Germans, Poles and Spaniards pay attention to different COO sources of information affecting their purchase decisions. In this subchapter the variations of three culturally different nationalities are presented in Table 45. The findings are presented in four product categories, clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices and wine.

**Table 45. COO sources of information influencing purchasing decisions in clothing and footwear category among young consumers**

COO sources of information influencing purchasing decisions in clothing and footwear category	Country			p
	Spain (N=530)	Germany (N=517)	Poland (N=511)	
My own experience with the product	449 (84.7%)	457 (88.4%)	407 (79.6%)	chi2=15.0, df=2, V=0.1 p=0.001 *, DE,ES>PL
Family's opinion	219 (41.3%)	159 (30.8%)	176 (34.4%)	chi2=13.2, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.001 *, ES>PL,DE
Friends' opinion	272 (51.3%)	330 (63.8%)	294 (57.5%)	chi2=16.8, df=2, V=0.1 p<0.001 *, DE>PL>ES
Promotional activities/advertising	216 (40.8%)	258 (49.9%)	218 (42.7%)	chi2=9.8, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.007 *, DE>PL,ES
Mobile applications	66 (12.5%)	100 (19.3%)	70 (13.7%)	chi2=10.9, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.004 *, DE>PL,ES
Other	16 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (2.3%)	chi2=14.8, df=2, V=0.1 p=0.001 *, ES,PL>DE

P - chi-square test

\* Statistically significant relationship (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

The opinion of family, along with other proposed answers giving sources of information, were most common among Spaniards. For instance, Spaniards indicated that if the clothing or shoes they like and they can afford them, they just buy the product. Another source of information taken into consideration are recommendations on TikTok or other social media posted mostly by friends. Own product experience, the opinion of friends, promotional activities/advertising and mobile apps were most frequent among Germans. For Poles friends' opinions were more important than for Spaniards while making a purchasing decision.

There was a statistically significant relationship between each pair of information sources and consumer origin. However, the V-Cramer coefficients for all these relationships are below



0.3, indicating that the relationships are very weak. The highest V-Cramer coefficient is observed between family opinion and the origin of young consumers, with a value of 0.09. Family opinion holds more significance for Spaniards compared to Poles and Germans. Germans tended to mentioned promotional activities, advertising, mobile apps, and other factors. For example, Germans commonly highlighted the necessity of purchasing a product when they run out of it (e.g. “I'm out of shampoo – I look at the pack etc.”), followed by considering factors such as quality and eco-friendliness. On the other hand, Poles frequently mentioned their own experience with the product and the opinions of their friends as important factors when buying cosmetics.

Enriching promotional activities with various elements such as product descriptions, categories, iconographics, news, trivia, and interviews is crucial in creating engaging content that captures the attention of the audience. These elements, as highlighted by Li, Zhao, and Pu (2020), contribute to the ongoing promotional efforts of companies and motive to buy some clothing or shoes. What is more, consumers who prioritize sustainability tend to show a greater interest in fashion, actively seeking out fashion-related information and engaging in conversations about it with their family and friends (Riesgo, Lavanga, & Codina, 2023).

COO sources of information can also impact on consumers decisions while buying the cosmetics, as illustrated in Table 46.

**Table 46. COO sources of information influencing purchasing decisions in cosmetics category among young consumers**

COO sources of information influencing purchasing decisions in cosmetics category	Country			p
	Spain (N=326)	Germany (N=430)	Poland (N=433)	
My own experience with the product	283 (86.8%)	316 (73.5%)	353 (81.5%)	chi2=21.5, df=2, V=0.13 p<0.001 *, ES,PL>DE
Family opinion	114 (35.0%)	146 (34.0%)	148 (34.2%)	chi2=0.1, df=2, V=0.01 p=0.956
Friends' opinion	183 (56.1%)	265 (61.6%)	292 (67.4%)	chi2=10.2, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.006 *, PL>ES
Promotional activities/advertising	129 (39.6%)	231 (53.7%)	181 (41.8%)	chi2=18.7, df=2, V=0.13 p<0.001 *, DE>PL,ES
Mobile applications	38 (11.7%)	98 (22.8%)	51 (11.8%)	chi2=25.4, df=2, V=0.15 p<0.001 *, DE>PL,ES
Other	22 (6.7%)	21 (4.9%)	9 (2.1%)	chi2=10.1, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.006 *, ES,DE>PL

P - chi-square test

\* Statistically significant relationship (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based on survey results

The findings highlight the significance of personal experience in the decision-making process for cosmetic purchases. The results indicate that Spaniards and Poles consider their own experiences to have a greater impact on their purchase decisions compared to Germans. Among the various COO elements, the relationship between mobile applications and consumers' origin is statistically significant, with a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.15. This suggests that Germans utilize mobile applications more frequently to gather information about cosmetics before making a purchase. It is worth noting that the same level of relationship, with a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.13, exists between promotional activities, own experiences, and consumer origin. Furthermore, promotional activities hold greater importance for Germans when it comes to acquiring cosmetics.

Promotion plays a significant role in creating awareness and influencing customers' decision to purchase cosmetics (Anjana, 2018). Advertising is a key strategy employed to promote products and establish awareness among potential customers. According to Abideen and Latif (2011), advertising allows manufacturers to establish an emotional connection with customers, leaving a lasting impression in their minds. When advertising is compelling and engaging, it captures customers' attention and evokes positive feelings towards the cosmetics, contributing to brand promotion. Customers who develop a sense of loyalty towards a brand tend to exhibit a positive attitude and inclination towards it. The study conducted by Tang et al. (2007) supports the notion that positive responses to advertising or a brand lead to favourable evaluations. When customers have a positive reaction to specific advertisements, it increases their overall positive perception of the brand, thereby influencing their evaluation and decision-making processes. Bostan and Nabsyeh (2012) conducted a study on Malaysian consumers and found that advertising is a powerful tool that significantly impacts and informs consumer behaviour. Advertising, then, clearly serves as a strong force in shaping consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours.

The electronic devices category is also impacted by the group of sources of information. The results of statistical analysis in detail are displayed on Table 47.

**Table 47. COO sources of information influencing purchasing decisions in electronic devices category among young consumers**

COO sources of information influencing purchasing decisions in electronic devices category	Country			p
	Spain (N=269)	Germany (N=358)	Poland (N=375)	
My own experience with the product	190 (70.6%)	266 (74.3%)	302 (80.5%)	chi2=8.9, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.012 *, PL>DE,ES
Family opinion	124 (46.1%)	156 (43.6%)	143 (38.1%)	chi2=4.5, df=2, V=0.07 p=0.106
Friends' opinion	186 (69.1%)	248 (69.3%)	254 (67.7%)	chi2=0.2, df=2, V=0.02 p=0.886
Promotional activities/advertising	108 (40.1%)	193 (53.9%)	139 (37.1%)	chi2=23.2, df=2, V=0.15 p<0.001 *, DE>ES,PL
Mobile applications	30 (11.2%)	71 (19.8%)	52 (13.9%)	chi2=9.9, df=2, V=0.1 p=0.007 *, DE>PL,ES
Other	18 (6.7%)	0 (0.0%)	17 (4.5%)	chi2=22.3, df=2, V=0.15 p<0.001 *, ES,PL>DE

P - chi-square test

\* Statistically significant relationship (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based on the result of the survey.

It is important to highlight that Poles are more motivated to purchase electronic devices based on their own experiences with using them compared to Spaniards or Germans. Germans, on the other hand, consider promotional activities as a significant factor when buying electronic devices compared to Poles and Spaniards. Spaniards commonly choose various factors as important considerations when purchasing electronic devices, including computer memory, performance, product design, reviews from other users, and the product's ability to meet their specific needs. The category of "others" as an answer choice demonstrates a statistically significant relationship among the analysed consumers, with a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.15. Spaniards also tend to be more willing to share their ideas and opinions about electronic devices compared to Poles. Germans, however, did not propose any additional sources of information that can impact their purchase decisions. Instead, they frequently mentioned promotional activities/advertising and mobile applications as influential factors. The strongest relationships were observed between Germans and promotional activities (V=0.15) and mobile applications (V=0.10). Among the three groups, Poles most commonly emphasized their own experience with the product as a crucial factor in their decision-making process, followed by Germans and Spaniards.

Among Germans, the most common sources of information that assist in buying wine are the opinions of family members and promotional activities/advertising (Table 47). By contrast,

Poles frequently rely on the opinions of their friends and utilize mobile applications when making wine purchasing decisions. In Poland, the mobile application Vivino is particularly popular, as it provides extensive information about the origin of wines available for purchase. This app serves as a valuable resource for Polish consumers, offering insights into the background and details of the wines they are considering.

**Table 48. COO sources of information influencing purchasing decisions in wine category among young consumers**

COO sources of information influencing purchasing decisions in wine category	Country			P
	Spain (N=175)	Germany (N=287)	Poland (N=324)	
My own experience with the product	123 (70.3%)	212 (73.9%)	255 (78.7%)	chi2=4.6, df=2, V=0.08 p=0.098
Family's opinion	135 (77.1%)	184 (64.1%)	144 (44.4%)	chi2=55.2, df=2, V=0.27 p<0.001 *, ES>DE>PL
Friends' opinion	103 (58.9%)	214 (74.6%)	236 (72.8%)	chi2=14.5, df=2, V=0.14 p=0.001 *, DE,PL>ES
Promotional activities/advertising	40 (22.9%)	85 (29.6%)	67 (20.7%)	chi2=6.9, df=2, V=0.09 p=0.032 *, DE>PL
Mobile applications	7 (4.0%)	36 (12.5%)	45 (13.9%)	chi2=12.0, df=2, V=0.12 p=0.002 *, PL,DE>ES
Other	5 (2.9%)	8 (2.8%)	9 (2.8%)	p=1

P - chi-square test

\* Statistically significant relationship (p<0.05)

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

There is no statistically significant relationship between the consumer's origin and their own experience as a source of information influencing their purchasing decisions. However, there are relationships observed between family opinion and Generation Z members, albeit weak ones, with the highest V-Cramer coefficient among the analysed variables being 0.27. Spaniards tend to consider family opinions more significantly when purchasing wines compared to Germans and Poles. Germans, on the other hand, place more emphasis on the opinions of their friends when buying wines, with a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.14. Poles, meanwhile, rely on mobile applications to search for wine recommendations, with a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.12.

In their research Szolnoki and Bruwer (2015) examined the impact of COO on consumers' wine preferences. They found that consumers often have pre-existing beliefs about the quality and characteristics of wine from different countries, which can influence their purchasing

decisions. The review highlighted that the relationship between country-of-origin and wine preferences is complex and can be influenced by various factors, including personal experience with wines from different countries and the individual's level of wine knowledge. Szolnoki and Bruwer (2015) suggested that understanding the influence of COO on wine preferences is important for wine producers and marketers. The review also found that the effect of country of origin varies depending on the wine consumer's level of expertise and cultural background. Novice wine consumers tend to rely more on the country of origin information in their wine choices, while expert wine consumers focus more on other factors such as grape variety and terroir (Szolnoki & Bruwer, 2015). What is more, when it comes to luxury products like wine, the COO information holds significant influence over consumer decision-making (Connolly, 2019). This effect has been observed not only among highly engaged wine consumers (Lockshin & Corsi, 2012) but also among those who are relatively new to the wine consumer market (Perrouy et al., 2006). The country of origin information plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences in the context of wine purchases. Thus, recommendations from trusted sources, such as sommeliers, wine experts, or friends, can play a role in the wine selection process among Poles. Personal experiences and familiarity with certain wine regions or producers may also influence their preferences.

According to Famularo, Bruwer and Li (2010), the sources of wine information can be categorized into two groups: direct and indirect influences. Direct sources of wine information include wine reviews, wine literature including guides, encyclopaedias, and educational materials; articles and reports written by journalists or writers dedicated to wine-related topics, wine shows and online wine sites, wine club membership. However, indirect sources of wine information include guidance and recommendations provided by store staff to customers looking for wines, and information on wine labels, such as grape variety, region of origin, vintage, and tasting notes, which can influence consumer choices. Moreover, promotional materials and displays in stores highlight specific wines, advertisements and marketing campaigns that raise awareness about certain wines.

Barber, Almanza and Donovan (2006) indicated that there were notable differences between male and female respondents regarding the significance of certain label elements in their wine-buying decisions. For female respondents, the front label image, picture, and logo held more significance compared to male respondents. Label colour also played a more important role for females when choosing wines. On the other hand, female respondents

reported that the back label was significantly more confusing, difficult to read (due to the typeface), and contained too much information. This complexity may lead to concerns about making the wrong wine-buying decision among female consumers. Moreover, packaging plays a crucial role in promoting and consuming wine (Bloch et al., 2003; Chaney, 2000).

The findings presented in this section confirm H3, which stated that the importance of the COO effect in young consumers' purchase decisions differs depending on the product category. Additionally, the nationality of consumers has an impact on their purchase decisions. In the clothing and footwear category, there are weak but statistically significant relationships between consumer origin and COO attributes. Colours on the product packaging have the highest influence, particularly for Spaniards and Germans, while Poles do not prioritize this factor. Barcode presence also shows a weak relationship (though relatively stronger than other variables) with consumer origin, with Poles checking barcode numbers more frequently than Spaniards and Germans. The barcode is not considered significant for German consumers.

The highest V-Cramer coefficient is observed between family opinion and the origin of young consumers, with family opinion holding more significance for Spaniards compared to Poles and Germans. In addition, Germans tend to give more importance to factors like promotional activities, advertising, and mobile apps when making cosmetic purchases. They also prioritize factors such as product necessity when running out and consider aspects like quality and eco-friendliness.

Spaniards and Poles consider their own experiences to have a greater impact on their decisions compared to Germans. Among the COO elements, a statistically significant relationship with a V-Cramer coefficient of 0.15 exists between mobile applications and consumers' origin, indicating that Germans use mobile apps more frequently to gather information before purchasing cosmetics. Additionally, a similar level of relation (V-Cramer coefficient of 0.13) exists between promotional activities, own experiences, and consumer origin, with promotional activities holding greater importance for Germans in their cosmetic purchases.

When purchasing electronic devices, Poles are more influenced by their own experiences, while Germans consider promotional activities as significant, and Spaniards consider various factors like performance, design, and reviews. Spaniards are more willing to share opinions about electronic devices. Germans mentioned promotional activities and mobile apps as

influential factors. The strongest relationships were between Germans and promotional activities and mobile apps. Poles emphasized their own experiences the most, followed by Germans and Spaniards. What is more, Germans specifically focus on the *Made in...* label, while Spaniards and Poles prioritize the logo of the product.

Spanish consumers tend to consider family opinions more significantly when buying wines compared to German and Polish consumers. German consumers, on the other hand, place more emphasis on the opinions of their friends when purchasing wines, Polish consumers, meanwhile, rely on mobile applications to search for wine recommendations.

Overall, young consumers consider brand, COB and the name of the wine as the most significant COO attributes. This confirms H4, which stated that the nationality of young consumers influences the importance of the COO effect in their purchase decisions. Moreover, the COO effect can vary in significance based on cultural, social, and economic factors related to a consumer's nationality.

#### **4.4. Scientific discussion**

The current research aims to extend the existing knowledge on purchase intentions by exploring the relationship between COO effect, Generation Z, four product categories and their impact on the purchase intentions of German, Poles and Spaniards. The previous literature on the purchase intention of Generation Z from Germany, Poland and Spain has been limited and far from comprehensive. Whilst there is considerable research about different generations, Generation Z consumers still need to be analysed. Similarly, while various studies have investigated the COO effect on purchase intention in industries such as automobiles (Walter, 2019), and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), there has been a lack of attention given to the context of fashion and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices and wine in the target group of people aged 18-25 focusing on the origin of the products. This study focuses on the COO attributes and COO sources of information that can help consumers to verify the origin of the products from the selected categories and also make purchase decisions. Indeed, the identification of the product origin has been an area with limited exploration in literature to this point. The dissertation not only provides an analysis of the significance of COO attributes and COO sources of information that help in verifying the origin

of the product among young consumers, but also shares opinions of Germans, Poles and Spaniards about four categories and their attitudes to origin.

The comprehensive framework developed in this study sheds light on the role of each COO attribute and COO sources of information in influencing purchase intentions, thus making a substantial contribution to the field of consumer behaviour research. Overall, the research aims to fill the gap in the literature and provide valuable insights into the COO effect influencing the purchase intention of clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices and wine among young consumers from Germany, Poland and Spain.

The analysis provided in this dissertation suggests that the COO effect exerts a substantial and positive influence on young consumers' purchase intentions in Germany, Poland and Spain. A lot of research has been conducted about COO effect (Aichner, Forza, & Trentin, 2017; Hoffmann et al, 2020), purchase decisions and consumers, however, the dissertation is unique in that it presents COO effect through the prism of COO attributes and COO sources of information among Generation Z. COO effect has a significant and positive impact on consumers' purchase intention, which is consistent with several other research studies (Bhattacharya, Sharma, & Gupta, 2022; Chen, Wright, Gao, Liu, & Mather, 2021; Chung, Pysarchik, & Hwang, 2009; Hanes & Wolcott, 2016). According to Kumar and Gautam (2021), the brand name is often a prominent factor influencing consumer evaluations of products. However, the COO can be equally, if not more, crucial in the assessment of foreign products compared to domestic products. Consumers tend to use COO as a significant cue when evaluating products, considering it alongside or even more prominently than the brand name itself (Kumar & Gautam, 2021).

Moreover, the research makes a significant contribution to the existing pool of literature on the COO effect on purchase decisions in Germany, Poland and Spain and the study offers new insights into COO elements that can guide many businesses. In particular, it underscores the importance of conducting research on wine consumer behaviour in various contexts. Transitional markets such as Poland provide opportunities for growth for wine companies, which can be more challenging to achieve in mature markets that are already saturated. Overall, this study provides a useful analysis of COO elements that should be taken into consideration by Generation Z and potential Polish wine consumers. The results gathered can be taken advantage of by shedding light on emerging trends in the Polish wine market, which can be valuable for wine marketers in developing strategies for this market. The findings can



be also used by Germans and Spaniards to enhance the relationship between wine brands and young consumers.

What is more, Corsi, Mueller, and Lockshin (2012) aimed to identify different segments of consumers based on their preferences for various types of information present on wine labels. One of them is the origin of the wine or graphics that indicate the country of production. Likewise, different consumer groups attach varying degrees of importance to specific kinds of information when making decisions about the wines they wish to purchase (Agnoli & Outreville, 2023). Durham, Pardoe, and Vega (2004) found that colour-related sensory features mentioned on the label are just as important as the information provided on the label itself. Several other studies also support the significance of label image and colour in influencing consumers' wine preferences (Boudreaux & Palmer, 2007; Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). These attributes have been found to have a more significant impact on consumer choices than packaging features such as bottle shape and closure (Mueller & Szolnoki, 2012). The results collected for this dissertation confirm that signalling that the wine has domestic graphics and colours on the label are important COO attributes. The results compare those variables with the nationalities and, according to the analysis, those COO attributes are the most important for Spaniards.

Additionally, Mueller and Szolnoki (2010) conducted a study focusing on the significance of non-sensory attributes in influencing the liking of wines among German consumers. They found that packaging elements such as label style, bottle colour, and bottle form, as well as brand evaluation, were the primary drivers for informed wine liking. Blind liking (liking without knowledge of the wine's origin or brand) followed in importance, but it was not as influential as packaging and brand-related factors. Notably, throughout the experiment, only one type of wine was used, which might have limited the impact of sensory attributes due to the lack of variability in wine choices. To appeal to consumers, wine producers should ensure that their labels include essential information, such as the style of wine (sweet, semi-sweet, or dry), type of grape, a specific region of wine origin, winery location, a brief description of the winery, and food pairings (Barber, Almanza, & Donovan, 2006). By understanding the packaging characteristics that matter to consumers, wine producers can tailor their marketing efforts effectively and enhance the overall wine buying experience.

The concept of usage experience is integral to a consumer's past wine consumption experience. This experience forms the foundation that aids in developing both objective and

subjective knowledge about wines. Objective knowledge is the actual information a consumer possesses and is acquired through usage experience and various sources of information. On the other hand, subjective knowledge is based on a consumer's self-perceived knowledge and confidence in their understanding of wines (Dodd et al., 2005; Hall & Lockshin, 2000; Thomas & Pickering, 2003). However, the study conducted by Dodd et al. (2005) revealed that various sources of information, such as recommendations from family, friends, and wine reviews, influence customers in their choice of specific wines. In other words, personal recommendations from trusted individuals and expert reviews play a significant role in shaping consumers' wine preferences and purchase decisions (Taylor, Bing, Reynolds, Davison, & Ruetzler, 2018). Some researchers identified intrinsic motivators as essential determinants of wine consumption (Charters & Pettigrew, 2008). These motivators include experiential aspects, such as personal enjoyment derived from wine-tasting experiences, and symbolic dimensions. It should be noted that it is getting more popular to organize wine tourism experiences, it appears that these experiences can contribute to enhancing brand value, although not to a significant extent. However, the relevance of the brand attribute becomes more pronounced when tourists engage in specific activities beyond just visiting the vineyard and winery. In particular, the act of attending a wine tasting during the wine tourism experience plays a crucial role in improving the importance of the brand in the consumer's purchase decision-making process. When tourists directly experience the wine through tasting sessions, it has a positive impact on their perception of the brand and were also able to learn about the region of origin. During wine experiences, consumers can compare different products, see the label and extend their knowledge about the product and brand.

According to Pellet and Lecat (2014), wine buyers engage in easy and convenient online searches across various platforms such as supermarket websites, shops, wine shops, wine clubs, and wineries using the Internet and mobile applications, and also consult with friends for recommendations (Pelet & Lecat, 2014). These digital channels allow them to research different wine products, compare prices, and place orders. Taking advantage of online channels of communication, the knowledge about the origin of the product also can be shared, as it is done by Lidl on their webpage (Winnica Lidla, 2023) about the alcohols. They communicate to consumers the region of the wine production, reviews of other consumers and share in details on what the label looks like so the consumer can easily identify all of the most important information.

According to research conducted by Thomas and Pickering (2003), when consumers assess wine products before making a purchase, they consider the grape variety, brand name, and price as the most important informational items. However, a study on the importance of labels revealed that the back label of wine bottles is an under-utilized area for providing information. Despite this, consumers perceive the back label as a crucial source for making purchasing decisions and increasing their overall product knowledge (Charters et al., 2000). The process of buying wine is complex due to the wide array of products and attributes available to consumers (Barber, Almanza, & Donovan, 2006). To cope with this complexity, consumers rely on their own wine knowledge and preferences, as well as seek information from external sources such as friends, family, or wine reviews (Dodd et al., 2005).

The study conducted by Kushwaha, Rao, and Ahmad (2015) highlighted that social determinants, such as the influence of spouse, parents, social status, friends, and children, had a strong association with the purchasing decisions of consumers residing in semi-urban areas to buy electronic devices. Specifically, the study revealed that approximately 50% of consumers considered their parents as important sources of opinion when making purchasing decisions related to electronic products. Additionally, around one-third of consumers regarded their friends as sources of information in such decisions (Kushwaha, Rao, & Ahmad, 2015). This indicates that parents and friends held considerable influence over the purchase choices of these consumers when it came to electronic devices. Furthermore, a study conducted by Rafiq and Malik (2018) supported these findings, confirming that friends also played a significant role in the decision-making process for electronic devices. Approximately 40% of respondents stated that their friends' opinions had an impact on their buying decisions. Meanwhile, around 28% of respondents were influenced by advertisements when making purchase decisions related to electronic devices (Rafiq & Malik, 2018).

With the vast array of cosmetics products and brands available, consumers face a complex evaluation process before making purchase decisions. To minimize the risk of buying disappointing products, consumers heavily rely on reviews and feedback from other users who have tried the products. They also seek information from various sources, including friends, family members, salespersons, advertisements, internet research, and other channels (Wang, 2005). What is more, Lee and Kacen (2008) have emphasized that interpersonal influence plays a significant role in affecting consumers' purchase intentions. For Chinese consumers making online cosmetic purchases, recommendations and opinions from friends, family, social

media influencers, and other cosmetics users heavily influence their decision-making (Zbib et al., 2020). Positive endorsements or testimonials from trusted individuals or influential figures enhance consumers' confidence and trust in the products, thus increasing purchase intentions (Akram, Ansari, Ulhaq, & Yan, 2023). Additionally, the visual appeal and portability of cosmetics products are essential situational factors that impact purchase intentions in cosmetic m-commerce (Akram, Rehman Ansari, Ulhaq, & Yan, 2023). Attractive packaging and design capture consumers' attention and evoke positive emotions, increasing the likelihood of purchase (Anjana, 2018). Furthermore, consumers prioritize convenience and portability, seeking products that are easy to use and carry.

Research conducted by Jin, Park, and Ryu (2010) has highlighted the diverse ways in which the COO effect influences consumer behaviour. This effect is evident in preferences for fashion items originating from developed countries, as they are perceived to symbolize higher status, superior quality, and greater familiarity compared to products from less developed countries (O'Cass & Lim, 2002). The perceived quality of such items is closely tied to the brand and its association with specific countries, such as well-known Spanish brands like Massimo Dutti and Mango. Koskie and Locander (2023) also emphasized the role of branding in supporting shoe purchases. Consumers seek to stand out from the crowd while avoiding social isolation (Yu, Hudders, & Cauberghe, 2018). They aim to conform to social norms without sacrificing their ability to express their individual identities (Koskie & Locander, 2023).

It's important to note that consumers evaluate fashion products using both internal and external cues. Internal cues include factors like material composition, while external cues encompass elements such as price, brand, and COO (Aakko & Niinimäki, 2022; Niinimäki, 2015). Additionally, labels indicating a product's country of origin have been seen as indicators of quality (Business of Fashion, 2015). Loewe, a Spanish luxury fashion brand, primarily known for its high-end leather goods and accessories can be an example of expressing its craftsmanship, quality, and distinctive designs, but also highlighting the commitment to traditional Spanish craftsmanship that is marked *Made in Spain*. It should be noted that much of the mentioned research has primarily centred around the brand factor. The concept of a brand often encompasses visual elements like logos and brand name spellings, which also play crucial roles in consumers' decisions when purchasing clothing and footwear.

The significance of personal experiences with clothing and footwear is closely linked to the comfort that younger consumers seek when wearing such items (Mandarić, Hunjet, & Vuković,

2022). While they do keep up with fashion trends, their primary focus is on comfort and popularity (Kim, Jung, & Lee, 2021). Furthermore, the opinions of friends play a substantial role in influencing the decisions of young consumers. It's a common practice among Gen Z individuals to share photos or short videos on platforms like Instagram to ask for suggestions on clothing and shoe choices. They then make their decisions based on the feedback gathered from online surveys conducted among their friends and followers (Walsh & Thureau, 2003).

The analysis provided in Chapter 4 indicates that in each product category, there are more or less significant COO elements that can help in identifying the origin of the selected product categories but also impact buying the products. The dissertation describes the relationships between product categories, COO attributes and COO sources of information but also three nationalities. Armed with this knowledge, companies can take the information presented in this dissertation, process and use it to follow the behaviour of young consumers from Germany, Poland and Spain. The conducted analysis displays the factors that are important for young consumers from three different countries.

In summary, the research offers valuable insights into the purchase intentions of clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices and wine products among Generation Z from Germany, Poland and Spain. This understanding can aid marketers in designing appropriate marketing mix strategies to target existing and potential buyers and position their products and also brand effectively in the analysed markets. Marketing managers need to recognize that consumer attitudes toward a specific COO or brand can undergo significant changes, either positively or negatively, thereby influencing customer preferences. They should especially highlight the importance of brand in selected product categories among Germans, Poles and Spaniards. Given the dynamic nature of customers, marketing strategies should also be adapted to meet their evolving needs and requirements. The bottom line is that by better aligning their strategies with consumer preferences and perceptions, marketers can enhance their appeal to the Generation Z consumer segment in three European countries.

## CONCLUSION

The contemporary era of digital globalization has led to significant changes in the behaviour of young consumers, driven by increased access to information irrespective of time and location. Cultural changes and technological advancements have expanded the array of products, services, and knowledge available, providing businesses with online growth opportunities. The internet, functioning as an interactive and multi-dimensional platform, embodies attributes like convergence, global reach, network technology, and interactivity. This empowers consumers to both create and consume content simultaneously. Beside these shifts, there's a growing divergence in consumer preferences and behaviours, influenced by personalized needs, cultural factors, and expanded product choices. This divergence represents cultures striving for distinct identities, prompting businesses to adopt flexible strategies to address varying preferences in the changing market landscape.

Consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions are intertwined with the COO effect, which has garnered attention in numerous academic investigations. While extensively discussed for items like food, cars, and electronics, it often overlooks variations across diverse product markets. In addition, despite the great interest of researchers in this issue, there are few works on the behaviour of young consumers (18-25 years) and despite the observed ageing of some societies, this group of buyers is particularly important. This is a significant market segment, that, regardless of its origin, is the quickest to absorb new knowledge in the form of technological innovations and is very aware of the climate and economic changes.

This dissertation has focused on studying the following **problem**: the relationship between the COO effect and young consumers' purchase decisions in international markets. This problem has been analysed in relation to four product categories, with identification of COO being tested for clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine. The findings of this dissertation suggest that in almost every product category, consumers tend to verify the origin of the product based on its brand. The literature review enabled the categorization of COO elements essential for determining the provenance of products within the chosen categories. The empirical study subsequently validated the significance of these elements within each category (research question 1). For clothing and footwear, the most significant COO attribute was the *Made in...* label and COO source of information own experience. Surprisingly, in comparison to the other nationalities, Germans focus more on mobile

applications (e.g. CodeCheck, Made in) to verify the origin of the clothing and footwear. The origin of cosmetics was verified mostly by the *Made in...* label and this choice was the most significant for all nationalities. Poles and Spaniards took into consideration their own knowledge and experience when purchasing cosmetics, whilst Germans pointed to mobile applications as the most significant COO source of information about the origin of cosmetics. In turn, when identifying the origin of electronic devices German young consumers mainly paid attention to *Made in...* label, whereas for Poles and Spaniards more significant was a brand of electronic devices. Respondents' own experience with an electronic device was the most important COO source of information for young consumers, however, in a comparison of the three nationalities, Germans used mobile applications the most frequently. Lastly, the identification of wine origin was verified by COB and respondents' own experience.

Furthermore, according to the empirical research, brand was the most significant COO attribute while buying the products from the selected categories (research question 2). These results are also confirmed by other researchers (Lim & O'cass, 2001; Li & Shoostari, 2003; Hamzaou-Essoussi & Merunka, 2007; Zhou & Hui, 2003; Toncar, 2008) who claim that brand is the most important factor while buying products. It is important to add the significance of the COO elements was different for selected categories. For instance, for clothing and footwear, the most important were logo and *Made in...* label and for cosmetics, the product name and *Made in...* label had significance. When it comes to electronic devices, similarly to the cosmetics category, brand, product name and *Made in...* label impact upon making purchases, however for the wine category, brand, COB and wine name were all significant. Additionally, for all of the analysed product categories young consumers' own experiences was the most significant source of information, followed by friends' opinions, and then promotional activities. The outlier here was the wine category, where family opinions were more significant than promotional activities.

The findings also indicated that the perceived effect of the COO varies across product categories, with wine being perceived as the most affected by the COO, followed by cosmetics, clothing and footwear, and finally electronic devices (research question 3). This result was achieved by calculating the Kruskal-Wallis test that assesses the median values of four distinct product categories, and the findings demonstrated statistical significance ( $W=116.6$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). This suggests that there is a notable variation in the perceived COO effect among the four product categories. With regard to this dissertation filling knowledge gaps, it should be

emphasized that there are no articles or publication where those four products categories were compared in the context of the COO effect, Generation Z and three nationalities. Thus the comparisons in this research is a novelty and whilst the findings will be of interest and use for all analysed product categories, this is especially the case for the wine industry, and the results here could help wine producers and sellers to enhance the promotion of the COO on the wines.

In considering research question 4, it appears reasonable to assume that young consumers within the proposed age range (18-25 years old) favour specific product categories, including clothing, footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wines. These product categories are chosen by this group of people over an extended period. It should be indicated that differences and similarities exist in all selected categories and the disparities are primarily found in comparisons between culturally different young groups of consumers in the chosen age range. Some pay attention to packaging details, such as graphics, language, and slogans, whilst others focus more on brand, product name or even logo, however, they all make informed and thoughtful purchasing decisions. For instance, comparing Generation Z from analysed countries, Germans place more attention to the *Made in...* label than Poles and Spaniards when buying clothes and footwear. Spaniards focus on the colours of clothing and footwear packaging more than Germans and Poles, however, Poles put more attention to barcodes than Spaniards. For Germans, barcodes are not COO elements that greatly impact the purchase of clothing and footwear. How it is worth reiterating that in some aspects nationalities' choices were similar, especially in categories of clothing and footwear, cosmetics and electronic devices. The differences are noticeable mostly in the wine category, where Germans chose COB as the most significant factor and stated that they are influenced by friends' opinions when they buy wine. However, Spaniards claimed that they listened to their family's opinions more when they buy wine. In turn, Poles pay attention to their own experience, whilst to a lesser extent friends' opinions impact their decisions. More differences between the three nationalities in terms of buying products in the division of four chosen categories are displayed in subchapter 4.3.3.

In addition to this, the purchasing behaviour of Generation Z (young people aged 18-25) is heavily influenced by products available on social media platforms, where online communities act as supporters and influencers for their buying decisions. These methods of communication are the most commonly used to attract Germans, Poles and Spaniards. It is worth indicating



that young consumers easily get used to new products; they like trying new things, models of products, flavours, and all the novelties that are popular among peers. However, purchase decisions can be impacted by many COO attributes and sources of information and differ among young people of different origins (research question 5). COO effect differentiates purchase decisions among young Germans, Poles, and Spaniards in terms of COO elements.

The dissertation outlines several specific objectives that were proposed to be addressed throughout its chapters. It is important to add that the research framework presented in this dissertation focuses on the COO elements, which are divided into attributes and sources of information. Objective 1 involved identifying and prioritizing the specific elements that contribute to the COO effect, which refers to how consumers' perceptions and preferences are influenced by the country of origin of a product. Objective 1 was supported by examining factors such as brand, logo, *Made in...* label, packaging design and colours, logos associated with a specific country, the language used in product descriptions, information about the manufacturer's address, promoting activities and COO subcomponents. It should be added that visual and textual elements, promoting activities related to the product can also impact the COO perception. Marketing efforts that emphasize the product's association with a particular country or highlight its unique cultural attributes can, likewise, influence consumers' perceptions positively.

The dissertation focused on understanding how different product categories influence the COO effect (objective 2). Certain product categories have stronger associations with specific countries, and Chapter 2 explores how consumers' perceptions of the COO effect vary across different product categories. Objective 2 was supported by displaying the various examples of products, their matches and mismatches of product category and the origin of the products. For instance, in the examples of a box of chocolates that has the Belgian flag on the packaging or Rioja wine, both COO attributes help in the identification of the product origin but also can impact purchase decisions. Additionally, examples of foreign-sounding brands were presented to show what the marketing strategies are for exposing the origin of the product and brand.

Additionally, the dissertation concentrated on a research framework that was realised within both Chapter 2 (theoretical elements) and Chapter 4 (empirical analysis). Objective 3 involved developing a research framework that examines the relationship between the COO effect (presented through the prism of COO attributes and COO sources of information) and purchasing decisions, as well as the influence of product categories and the origin of

consumers. The empirical framework was created based on the field of consumer behaviour, purchase decisions and COO effect, extensively described in the literature. The proposed framework was followed by empirical research to collect data and verify the relationships. Objective 3 was achieved by analysing whether there are relationships between the variables proposed in the empirical framework. All the statistically significant relationships have been presented in Chapter 4.

This dissertation emphasised on understanding and characterizing the behaviour and preferences of young consumers in the international arena. Objective 4 was achieved by exploring the characteristics of demographics, psychographics, consumption patterns, attitudes and preferences of young Germans, Poles and Spaniards. In this dissertation the division of consumer generations was presented, however, attention was mainly paid to young consumers aged 18-25, i.e. those representing Generation Z. Younger consumers are less susceptible to family influences, traditions or developed and recognised consumption patterns in choices and decisions (Milaković, 2021), thus it was possible to verify elements impacting buying products based on their origin.

Many studies have presented the cultural influence on consumer purchasing behaviour (Aichner, Forza & Trentin, 2017; Katsumata & Song, 2016; Pereira, Hsu, & Kundu, 2005). However, this dissertation aimed to identify and compare the differences and similarities in the behaviour of young consumers across Germany, Poland and Spain (objective 5). This involved examining factors such as cultural influences, consumer trends, and motivations that shape the behaviour of young consumers in the analysed countries. According to the research provided in this dissertation, Spaniards, in particular, consider family opinions to be important when purchasing clothing and footwear. On the other hand, Germans and Poles are influenced by promotional activities in their decision-making process when buying clothing and footwear. With regard to sources of information about cosmetics, consumers' own experiences, promotional advertising, and recommendations from friends were all valued equally by the three national groupings. In the category of electronic devices, on the other hand, all selected nationalities indicated that their own experience was the most important source of information when making purchasing decisions. In second place was the opinion of friends, and the next choice for Germans was promotional activities, while for Poles and Spaniards the opinion of family was more important. Among the selected product categories, the choices made by young consumers exhibited the greatest degree of variability within the wine

category. Poles emphasised their own experience with wine, Spaniards focused on the opinion of family and Germans on the opinion of friends. The survey results confirm that there are differences and similarities in the analysed groups of young Germans, Poles and Hispanics.

The theoretical discussions presented in the preceding chapters served as the foundation for formulating the research hypotheses that were subsequently tested in the empirical section of this dissertation. The hypotheses proposed herein suggest that COO elements, so COO attributes (brand, *Made in...* label, logo, product name, COB, COD, COP, COA, colours of product packaging, address of the manufacturer, the language of the product packaging description, barcode, graphic symbols on the packaging and operating instructions) and COO sources of information (own experience with the product, family opinion, friends' opinion, promotional activities/advertising and mobile applications) have an impact on young consumers while purchasing the goods in selected four categories. The **aim of the research** was to determine the importance of the COO effect (through the prism of elements identifying it) as a factor influencing the purchase decisions of young consumers from different international markets. To achieve it, four hypotheses were tested and the results are presented in the Table 49.

**Table 49. Summary of hypotheses testing**

Hypothesis	Result	Comment
<b>H1:</b> Brand, as one of the attributes that identify a COO effect, has the greatest influence on young consumers' purchase decisions.	Confirmed	In the analysed groups of young consumers, the brand was chosen the most frequently in each product category.
<b>H2:</b> Friends' opinions, as a source of COO effect information, have the greatest impact on young consumers' purchase decisions.	Not confirmed	Empirical research provided the results that in analysed groups of young consumers, friends' opinions are not the most significant COO source of information while making purchase decisions. The most influential is a person's own experience with the product from each analysed category.
<b>H3:</b> The importance of the COO effect in young consumers' purchase decisions differs depending on the product category.	Confirmed	The impact of COO varies across different product categories, with wine being perceived as the most influenced by the country of origin, followed by cosmetics, clothing and footwear, and electronic devices.
<b>H4:</b> The nationality of young consumers influences the importance of the COO effect in their purchase decisions.	Confirmed	Purchasing decisions vary depending on the origin of the consumers. Brand was chosen the most frequently in all selected product categories, however, there was an exception in a group of young Germans, who chose COB as the most important COO attribute in the wine category. Additionally, the opinions of German respondents' friends were more important than their own experiences of the wine, whilst among Spaniards family opinion was the most significant source of information when buying wine.

Source: own elaboration.

Overall, it is important to emphasize that the conducted empirical research supports answering the research questions and confirms that the COO effect impacts on purchasing decisions of young consumers aged 18-25 from Germany, Poland and Spain. Taking into consideration that brands are the most influential COO attribute, brands should educate consumers about the origin of their products to advance their knowledge and potential attitudes, which could then lead to improving their purchase behaviour based on reliable information about the origin. For now, certain types of products are often associated with the COO, sometimes based on stereotypical perceptions that may stem from a lack of knowledge about the country (Bourdin, Halkias, & Makri, 2021; Sharma, 2012). This can result in evaluations of products based on others' opinions that have not been personally verified. However, in some cases, the association may be due to a country's specialization in certain product categories. For example, Italian shoes, clothing, and accessories, including leather, have a strong reputation on the market. Some companies even take advantage of Italian designs and use an Italian-sounding company name. Stereotypical perceptions can also arise from traditions and accompanying rituals, such as the English five o'clock tea, or a positive association with the country, such as German cars and household chemicals (Aichner, Forza & Trentin, 2017).

This dissertation contributes to prior work on significance of brand in purchasing decisions (Eng, Ozdemir, & Michelson, 2016; Harun, Wahid, Mohammad, & Ignatius, 2011). Having multiple COO attributes to choose, young consumers aged 18-25 confirmed that brand is the most influential factor during purchasing decisions. Crafting a successful strategy that effectively sustains individuals' engagement in choosing brand, as the most significant COO attributes, becomes crucial, especially when young consumers encounter numerous available options and are overwhelmed by many information. Brands must recognize that Generation Z is savvy and can see through traditional advertising techniques. Instead, they prefer authenticity and want to see their experiences and values reflected in advertising. Building a relationship with this audience is more important than simply pushing products, as Gen Z values experience over material possessions. However, Gen Z also prioritizes privacy and are cautious about sharing personal data. By understanding the unique characteristics of Gen Z and catering to their values, brands can earn their loyalty and effectively market to this generation (Gutfreund, 2016). In addition, young people can access required information about brands and create awareness and eagerness for selected brands. This is related to giving

brands personality, which is so important to young people because of the search for their own identity at this stage in their lives. Gen Z are better informed and have access to a greater number of information transmission channels. It is also important to notice that young consumers are modern *screenagers* raised on screens (TV, computer, cinema, mobile phone). This facilitates and speeds up communication between companies and young people (Robb, 2017) that very quickly gather information about the products and brands. Taking advantage of new technologies, and social media, it is possible to combine the phenomenon of good brand discernment by young people with their very realistic aspirations for different, recognized values, and to start introducing them to brands that are carriers of these values.

Moreover, the dissertation contributes to the literature on purchasing behaviour among Generation Z representatives. It concurs that individual behaviour can differ, but it was demonstrated that some COO attributes and sources of information were utilized in making purchase decisions among Germans, Poles, and Spaniards. During the analysis of the research results, certain comments from young consumers revealed their perception that the brand and COB are closely linked, and this was especially noticeable in the wine category, in which respondents considered the COB to be synonymous with the place or country where the brand originates. According to these perspectives, the brand can significantly enhance its value, irrespective of where the actual product or brand is manufactured. For instance, Reebok, an American-origin brand manufactures in Asia because of the lower costs of production. Not many people focus on the place of manufacture of Reebok shoes. Consumers have a positive image of the USA and they choose the specific model of shoes very often based on the brand image not the place of its origin. It should be indicated that the COO concept paid close attention to *made in country* effect and the most important finding is the strong emphasis on the perception of where the product was produced. It is worth noting that the label *Made in...* was also the most frequently chosen element of COO identification. This COO element was also taken into account while buying clothing or shoes. However, according to the empirical research presented in this dissertation, whilst the *Made in...* label was the most important COO attribute to identify the origin of the products, it did not impact purchases.

Indeed, biases and perceptions towards the origin of a product can vary depending on the country perceived as its place of manufacture. Products made in China or other Asian countries, for example, are often associated with lower quality. This can prompt marketing specialists to conceal the place of production and instead focus on promoting the brand or

leveraging positive attitudes and emotions associated with the product. However, it can be challenging to completely eradicate negative stereotypes associated with specific countries in consumer perceptions.

The consensus among product-country-image researchers has been that the COO effect appears to be product and country-specific. That is, the existence and strength of country-related effects depend on the product category and specific countries under consideration. While the results of the study are intuitively appealing, they may not be generalizable across all product categories and countries. The issue of COO is particularly sensitive concerning the competition between products of selected categories such as electronic devices, cosmetics, clothing, and footwear industries. Those three categories are mostly based on the place of manufacture of the product, which is verified by young consumers while gathering information about the product's origins.

Beyond generalising the current study across countries or product categories, the findings suggest avenues for pursuing theoretical explanations of how a COO is used by consumers and what COO affects them. The above analysis showed the differences found between the nationalities studied and the attributes and sources of information. The dissertation encompasses an examination of the primary COO elements that influence consumers' purchasing decisions, as well as those that assist in identifying the origin of a product. This indicates the potential for variations in the utilization of COO information among consumers of different nationalities and in different product categories.

This dissertation has extended the literature by presenting a theoretical framework, as to the author's knowledge there have been no publications to date comparing four product categories (clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices and wine) in the context of the identifying elements of the COO effect, generation Z and the three culturally distinct nationalities. Previous literature discusses the issue of the COO effect and its impact on purchasing decisions in many industries including automotive, electronics and also FMCG (Kumar & Gautam, 2021; Micevski et al., 2021). Moreover, the available literature takes into account elements that can help identify a product's country of origin, including its brand, logo, *Made in...* label, packaging design and colours, emblems associated with a specific country, the language used in product descriptions, information about the manufacturer's address, or promotional activities (Hong et al, 2023; Mandler, 2019; Szromnik & Wolanin-Jarosz, 2014). Some researchers have divided the elements of a product's country of origin into primary and

secondary identifiers (Szromnik & Wolanin-Jarosz, 2014; Vasić et al., 2019), of which the brand appeared to be the most important. Interestingly, the results of the empirical study confirmed that brand was the most important attribute influencing purchase decisions among a selected group of young people from Spain, Germany and Poland. The division of COO elements (into attributes and sources of information) proposed by the author of the dissertation, on the other hand, makes it possible to put in order the attributes discussed earlier by many researchers, and also extends this division to the second group, i.e. sources of origin information.

The empirical study conducted by the author of this dissertation showed that for young Spaniards, Germans and Poles in all the product categories studied, individual product-specific opinions are the most important. Some researchers indicated that a key factor motivating young consumers to make purchases is the opinions of friends who share their recommendations via social media (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022; Vlontzos et al., 2018). Moreover, this dissertation provides a theoretical basis for further research on the behaviour of Generation Z consumers and may be an important reference point for the younger Alpha generation.

It is worth noting that the COO effect is not absolute for all product categories (Kaynak & Cavusgil, 1983), meaning that a country may rank high in the consumer's mind for one product category and low for another. Roth and Romeo (1992) and Johnson et al. (2016) also highlighted this point, showing that a positive product-country fit exists when a product is perceived to be very strong in a particular area (e.g. design), which is also an important feature of a product category (e.g. fashion). The empirical study of this dissertation confirms the above findings that COO effect may be more relevant for specific product categories; the strongest statistical relationship occurred for the wine category.

The types of products selected for analysis in the dissertation – clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronics, and wine – are predominantly driven by the participation of young consumers. In response to the diagnosed cognitive gap in the sphere of research on the behaviour of young consumers, the dissertation attempts to determine the importance of the COO effect as a factor influencing the purchase decisions of young consumers from different international markets. This dissertation was devoted to the issue of the relationship between young consumers who come from Germany, Poland, and Spain and their knowledge about the origin of the products and their identifications. It is important to add that the findings of the

dissertation can be a guide to companies on how to prepare their offer to Polish, Spanish, and German young consumers. What is more, taking into consideration the consumers' origin can help in designing the packaging of the product, including whether colours match consumers' desires and attract their attention. The findings of this dissertation suggest that product category, the nationality of consumers, and COO elements (presented through the prism of the COO effect) can affect the purchase decisions of young consumers. Further, the consumers' level of knowledge about COO elements is significant while acquiring the products because they can make more conscious decisions.

This research also offers important ethical implications for the retailing industry, business organizations, and financial institutions. As noted above, the dissertation highlights the fact that Generation Z is the group of consumers who have adapted quickly to life online – using the internet for work, studies, communication with friends, and leisure, as well as adopting mobile technologies and accepting the virtualization of consumption, and this was only exacerbated by the pandemic situation. As a result, it is worth focusing on online activities to attract young consumers.

First of all, nowadays, positioning the brand's web page is the underlying activity. Therefore, companies should take into account whether the keywords related to their products and the names of the brands match the target group. If the product and brand have a favourable match then positive perceptions should be made. While searching on the internet, consumers should have the possibility to easily identify the origin of the products. This can be provided by relating the origin of the brand or its components to keywords on the web pages. This way, while looking for the national products, consumers can immediately identify that this specific brand is, e.g., from Poland and produces high-quality products. This helps to link the product with positive associations in consumers' memories. It is also worth adding precise descriptions of the products and their models through long-tail phrases. These will make it much easier for a user to come to the site looking for a specific product. What is more, when clicking on the web page consumers should get access to unique and interesting content. The quality of the articles about the brand and its products encourages users to visit and take inspiration from the web page.

Secondly, collaborating with influencers has become crucial, particularly when considering the product categories examined in this study. Influencers offer a higher level of authenticity as they face 'real' challenges in their everyday lives, making it easier for their audience to



relate to them. They have the ability to effectively communicate information about the brand's origin, and if the influencer holds patriotic values, they can inspire consumers to purchase domestically made products.

Thirdly, visibility on social media platforms is a basic part of any marketing strategy. Young consumers cannot imagine their lives without communication via the internet and social media channels are the greatest way to share information. Cooperating with influencers and publishing unique content on social media can increase the range of information about the products and brands.

Fourthly, companies can create blogs and where they can describe details of the products and brands. Such blogs should share knowledge about the materials the products are made of, the origin of the products, and brands (if they are different), presenting modern trends in fashion (clothing and footwear), technology (smartphones, electronic devices), and health (cosmetics).

Another aspect that should be taken into consideration is the packaging of the product. As mentioned in subchapter 2.4., the design, colours, and graphics on the packaging can bring positive or negative perceptions of the product's origin. It is important to note that one of the most significant ways to acquire new customers and enhance the product or brand perception among existing customers is experiential marketing. By focusing on creating immersive and engaging experiences, this approach has shown remarkable efficiency in drawing the attention of potential customers, enticing them to explore the brand further, and ultimately converting them into loyal consumers.

This serves as a suggestion for marketing professionals to verify whether the packaging design resonates with the preferences of the new target audience before launching a product campaign in a new market. The most effective approach is to conduct market research among consumers to gauge their attitudes toward product origin, colours, perceptions, and other relevant factors. Although marketing research can be seen as expensive and time-consuming, it is an essential step for a brand to achieve success in selling a new product. Fortunately, there are numerous online tools available for companies to track consumer behaviour and trends. An interesting example of visitor identification software widely recognized in Great Britain is Lead Forensics. This software enables tracking of activities on brand websites, utilizing an algorithm to identify keywords used in searches on the page and determine which products are most frequently viewed by consumers. Moreover, it provides detailed information on the

specific individuals visiting a brand's website. The software offers a 14-day free trial, which presents a valuable opportunity for companies to assess consumer interest in their promotional efforts. By way of illustration, consider a scenario where a Polish cosmetic brand has developed a new product. The company highlights its country of manufacture (which is the same as the brand's origin) and emphasizes its eco-friendliness. The packaging incorporates Polish colours and graphics, while the product description is available in Polish, English, and Spanish. The brand actively spreads awareness of the new product in foreign markets, even sending samples to international retailers. In this context, the Lead Forensics software can track the frequency of searches based on keywords like *Made in Spain* or "Polish brand." Undoubtedly, this software serves as an invaluable and advantageous tool for marketing specialists. This software is widely recommended among companies that focus on launching new products in foreign markets.

Last but not least, it should be noted that currently, there is no organization that consolidates all companies originating from Poland with products that are 100% made in Poland. While *Staropolska Izba Przemysłowo-Handlowa* (transl. *Staropolska Chamber of Industry and Commerce*) exists, its primary focus lies on supporting the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. Similarly in Spain, there is Spanish Chamber of Commerce that prioritizes supporting and enhancing foreign trade for Spanish businesses, recognizing internationalization as crucial for improving competitiveness and economic revitalization, however, this organisation did not focus on companies who produce only Spanish products. Creating such an authoritative body is urgently necessary. This entity would not only promote domestic companies on the global stage but also influence consumer attitudes through active participation in conferences, trade fairs, and networking events. The ultimate goal would be to foster a shared vision for the promotion of the Polish economy and national companies and brands. The dissertation also highlights the popularity of the *Teraz Polska* (transl. *Now Poland*) initiative in Poland, which promotes Polish products by featuring specific graphics on the packaging. However, this project still requires further enhancements and regulations to effectively define which companies can be officially recognised as Polish entities.

The information in the dissertation can be considered as a source of knowledge about young consumers' preferences, values, attachment to domestic products, and the way they make purchase decisions, etc. The collated data can facilitate the operation and creation of new product offers by multinational companies that focus on Generation Z. The findings may

also contribute to certain activities in the given markets. The role of culture in international marketing forces companies to prepare adequate marketing strategies, create specific packaging for the products and also use advertising campaigns which will encourage young consumers to buy products. However, it is worth pointing out that cultural aspects can often be a barrier or a reason for mistakes made by companies in the international arena.

The empirical study and primary research methods employed in this dissertation come with inherent challenges and limitations, which are exacerbated when conducting research across multiple countries. Despite efforts to distribute surveys to young individuals in Germany, Poland, and Spain, the sample invited for the Computer-Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) research was non-representative due to various factors, including challenging period of the pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine affecting participation. Despite these obstacles, the research managed to collect responses from 1617 young consumers, but the sample sizes relative to the populations of these countries remained small, potentially impacting the generalizability of findings.

The limitation of the research was also the usage of the closed-form survey questions, which are declarative in nature. Although respondents had the option to provide additional comments, few chose to do so, possibly indicating a reliance on pre-defined answers. Furthermore, questionnaire-based research introduces the potential for respondents' actual behaviour to differ slightly from their declarations, and translation of the questionnaire across languages might introduce lexical differences or nuances despite using the back translation technique for accuracy.

While acknowledging these limitations, they also point toward avenues for future research. The dissertation emphasized the significant influence of the brand as a COO element on consumer decisions. To enhance the understanding of COO effects, it's suggested that future studies replicate the research across diverse European cultures, employ non-declarative methods like experiments or observations, and explore various tools to understand consumer behaviour better, including emotions during discussions about various product aspects. Moreover, research could delve into the COO's impact on consumption habits, such as taste-testing products and analysing consumer reactions to package information. Additionally, expanding the scope to include more product categories, comparing results with different generations, and considering gender differences could yield deeper insights.

Future research possibilities include comparing the impact of the COO effect on purchases made in physical stationery shops versus online shopping contexts. Exploring differences in buying behaviours based on COO effects could provide insights. Additionally, further investigation comparing purchase decisions and the origin of online shops is needed. This concept, proposed by Brand and Baier (2022), emphasizes the importance of replicating COO effect studies across different brands and consumer groups.

There's a belief that delving into COO's connection with psychosocial and cognitive factors is valuable for understanding the challenges companies face when basing marketing activities on this effect. This exploration should encompass ethical and moral dimensions. By examining specific product business cases and consumer attitudes, and comparing them to existing theories, a comprehensive understanding can be achieved. While this research adopted a quantitative approach, future inquiries could enhance these findings by incorporating qualitative methods like consumer interviews. This would provide a deeper understanding of the impact of product origin on purchasing choices, considering various product categories.

Despite the extensive discussion of the COO effect in existing literature, it remains an ongoing topic of interest for researchers. Given the access to new technologies, young consumers are swift in seeking information, including product origins. This is evident in companies emphasizing production location to connect with young consumers. In consideration of the points explored in this dissertation, it can be concluded that the COO effect significantly influences the purchasing decisions of young individuals from Germany, Poland, and Spain.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. QUESTIONNAIRE - POLISH VERSION

Poznań, luty 2022 r.

Szanowna Respondentko, Szanowny Respondencie,

Jestem doktorantką w Katedrze Zarządzania Międzynarodowego Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Poznaniu. W ramach przygotowywania pracy doktorskiej prowadzę badania dotyczące określenia znaczenia efektu kraju pochodzenia (przez pryzmat atrybutów go identyfikujących m.in. emblemat *Made in...*, kraj pochodzenia marki, kraj zaprojektowania produktu, adres producenta, język opisu na opakowaniu, kod kreskowy, elementy graficzne na opakowaniu; oraz przez pryzmat źródeł informacji o pochodzeniu produktów, tj. działania promocyjne, aplikacje mobilne czy opinie innych) jako czynnika wpływającego na podejmowanie decyzji zakupowych młodych konsumentów pochodzących z różnych rynków międzynarodowych.

Zwracam się do Ciebie z uprzejmą prośbą o udzielenie kilku odpowiedzi na poniższe pytania poprzez zaznaczenie tej właściwej dla Państwa.

Zapewniam Cię, iż badania mają charakter anonimowy, a wszystkie jego wyniki posłużą wyłącznie celom naukowym.

Z poważaniem  
Katarzyna Wysocka

Poniżej znajdują się interpretacje pojęć ujętych w kwestionariuszu. Proszę o szczegółowe zapoznanie się z nimi.

#### **ATRYBUTY IDENTYFIKACJI:**

**Kraj pochodzenia marki** - miejsce, w którym znajduje się siedziba główna marki.

**Kraj zaprojektowania** - miejsce lub kraj, w którym produkt został zaprojektowany.

**Kraj pochodzenia części** - miejsce lub kraj, w którym komponenty lub części użyte do wytworzenia produktu zostały wyprodukowane lub pozyskane.

**Kraj montażu** - miejsce lub kraj, w którym wszystkie części produktu są montowane razem.

**Etykieta *Made in...*** - element umieszczany na produkcie informujący o tym, gdzie produkt został wyprodukowany.

**Adres producenta** - szczegółowy adres miejsca lub lokalizacji, w której produkt został wyprodukowany lub wytworzony.

**Język opisu na opakowaniu produktu** - pisemne przedstawienie różnych cech i właściwości opakowania produktu, takich jak jego wymiary, kształt, materiały, kolor oraz wszelkie grafiki lub tekst, które są na nim wydrukowane.

**Kod kreskowy** - symbol składający się z pionowych pasków i spacji o różnej szerokości, które są używane do reprezentowania określonego kodu lub numeru.

**Logo** - wizualny symbol lub projekt, który służy jako unikalny identyfikator firmy, marki, produktu lub organizacji.

**Kolory opakowania produktu** - określony odcień lub kombinacja odcieni, które są używane w projekcie opakowania produktu.

**Nazwa produktu** - unikalna nazwa lub tytuł nadany konkretnemu produktowi.

**Marka** - suma cech identyfikujących konkretną firmę, tj. nazwa, logo, projekt itp.

**Symbole graficzne na opakowaniu** - symbole narodowe i kolory, których celem jest stworzenie poczucia tożsamości narodowej i promowanie pochodzenia produktu jako źródła jakości i autentyczności.

**Instrukcja obsługi** - dokument zawierający instrukcje i wskazówki dotyczące użytkowania i obsługi produktu, ale także szczegółowe informacje o samym produkcie.

#### **ŹRÓDŁA INFORMACJI:**

**Własne doświadczenia z produktem** - osobiste interakcje danej osoby z konkretnym produktem.

**Opinia rodziny** - myśli, przekonania lub uczucia, jakie członkowie rodziny danej osoby mają na temat konkretnego produktu.

**Opinia znajomych** - myśli, uczucia lub przekonania, jakie na temat danego produktu mają znajomi danej osoby.

**Działania promocyjne/reklama** - rodzaj komunikacji mający na celu promowanie lub sprzedaż produktu określonej grupie odbiorców.

**Aplikacje mobilne** - aplikacje, które są przeznaczone do uruchamiania na smartfonach i tabletach i pomagają w identyfikacji pochodzenia produktów na podstawie kodu kreskowego, nazwy produktu lub marki.

### **KWESTIONARIUSZ SELEKCJI**

#### **1. Płeć:**

Mężczyzna	
Kobieta	
Osoba niebinarna	

#### **2. Wiek:**

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **3. Które z poniższych kategorii produktów zakupiłeś/eś w ciągu ostatniego roku?**

ODZIEŻ I OBUWIE	
KOSMETYKI	
SPRZĘT ELEKTRONICZNY	
WINA	
ŻADNE Z POWYŻSZYCH	

## KWESTIONARIUSZ BADAWCZY

4. Które z poniższych atrybutów pomagają ZIDENTYFIKOWAĆ kraj pochodzenia produktów w kategorii .....? Można wybrać maksymalnie 5 atrybutów.

L.p	Kategoria produktu	ODZIEŻ I OBUWIE	KOSMETYKI	SPRZĘT ELEKTRONICZNY	WINA
ATRYBUTY IDENTYFIKACJI					
1.	Kraj pochodzenia marki				
2.	Kraj zaprojektowania produktu				
3.	Kraj pochodzenia części				
4.	Kraj montażu				
5.	Etykieta <i>Made in...</i>				
6.	Adres producenta				
7.	Język opisu na opakowaniu produktu				
8.	Kod kreskowy				
9.	Logo				
10.	Barwy opakowania produktu				
11.	Nazwa produktu				
12.	Marka				
13.	Symbole graficzne na opakowaniu				
14.	Instrukcja obsługi				
15.	Inne....(jakie?)				

5. Które z poniższych źródeł informacji pomagają ZIDENTYFIKOWAĆ kraj pochodzenia produktów w kategorii .....? Można wybrać maksymalnie 3 źródła informacji.

L.p	Kategoria produktu	ODZIEŻ I OBUWIE	KOSMETYKI	SPRZĘT ELEKTRONICZNY	WINA
ŹRÓDŁA INFORMACJI					
1.	Moje własne doświadczenia związane z produktem				
2.	Opinia rodziny				
3.	Opinia przyjaciół/znajomych				
4.	Działania promocyjne/reklama				
5.	Aplikacje mobilne pomagające w identyfikacji pochodzenia produktu				
6.	Inne....(jakie?)				

6. Które z poniższych atrybutów pomagają w podjęciu DECYZJI o zakupie produktów z kategorii ...?

\*Podjęcie DECYZJI oznacza zakup produktu.

Możesz wybrać maksymalnie 5 atrybutów.

L.p	Kategoria produktu	ODZIEŻ I OBUWIE	KOSMETYKI	SPRZĘT ELEKTRONICZNY	WINA
ATRYBUTY IDENTYFIKACJI					
1.	Kraj pochodzenia marki				
2.	Kraj zaprojektowania produktu				
3.	Kraj pochodzenia części				
4.	Kraj montażu				
5.	Etykieta <i>Made in...</i>				
6.	Adres producenta				
7.	Język opisu na opakowaniu produktu				
8.	Kod kreskowy				

9.	Logo				
10.	Barwy opakowania produktu				
11.	Nazwa produktu				
12.	Marka				
13.	Symbole graficzne na opakowaniu				
14.	Instrukcja obsługi				
15.	Inne....(jakie?)				

**7. Które z poniższych źródeł informacji pomagają w podjęciu DECYZJI o zakupie produktów z kategorii ...?**

\*Podjęcie DECYZJI oznacza zakup produktu.

Możesz wybrać maksymalnie 3 źródła informacji.

L.p	Kategoria produktu	ODZIEŻ I OBUWIE	KOSMETYKI	SPRZĘT ELEKTRONICZNY	WINA
ŹRÓDŁA INFORMACJI					
1.	Moje własne doświadczenia związane z produktem				
2.	Opinia rodziny				
3.	Opinia przyjaciół/znajomych				
4.	Działania promocyjne/reklama				
5.	Aplikacje mobilne pomagające w identyfikacji pochodzenia produktu				
6.	Inne....(jakie?)				

## **METRYCZKA**

### **Jakie jest Twoje wykształcenie?**

- podstawowe/gimnazjalne
- wyższe
- zawodowe
- średnie ogólnokształcące
- inne (jakie?) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Jaki jest Twój status zawodowy? [Wielokrotny wybór]**

- pracuję
- szukam pracy
- uczę się/studiuję
- nie pracuję

### **Miejsce zamieszkania (obecne):**

- wieś
- miasto poniżej 50 tys. mieszkańców
- miasto od 50 tys. do 100 tys. mieszkańców
- miasto od 100 tys. do 500 tys. mieszkańców
- miasto powyżej 500 tys. mieszkańców

### **Ocena dochodowości. Czy przy aktualnym dochodzie wiążesz koniec z końcem?**

- z wielką trudnością
- z trudnością
- z pewną trudnością
- dość łatwo
- łatwo
- bardzo łatwo

Dziękuję za poświęcony czas na udział w badaniu.



## APPENDIX 2. QUESTIONNAIRE - ENGLISH VERSION

Poznań, February 2022

Dear Respondent,

I am a PhD student in the Department of International Management at the Poznań University of Economics. As part of my dissertation preparation, I am conducting research on determining the importance of the country of origin effect (through the prism of attributes identifying it, e.g. Made in... label, country of origin of the brand, country of product design, manufacturer's address, language of description on packaging, barcode, graphic elements on packaging; and through the prism of sources of information on product origin, i.e. promotional activities, mobile applications or opinions of others) as a factor influencing purchase decisions of young consumers from various international markets.

I kindly ask you to provide some answers to the following questions by marking the appropriate one for you.

I assure you that the research is anonymous and all its results will be used solely for scientific purposes.

Yours sincerely  
Katarzyna Wysocka

Below you will find interpretations of the terms included in the questionnaire. Please read them in detail.

### **ATTRIBUTES OF IDENTIFICATION:**

**Country of origin of brand** - the place where the headquarters is located.

**Country of design** - the place or country where the product was designed.

**Country of origin of the parts** - a place or country where the components or parts used in the manufacturing of a product were produced or sourced.

**Country of assembly** - the place or country where the all parts of the products are assembled together.

**Made in... label** - an element that is placed on the product and provides information where the product was manufactured.

**Manufacturer's address** – a detailed address of place or location where a product was manufactured or produced.

**Language of the description on the packaging of the product** - a written depiction of the various features and characteristics of a product's packaging, such as its dimensions, shape, materials, colour, and any graphics or text that are printed on it.

**Barcode** - a symbol made up of vertical bars and spaces of different widths that are used to represent a specific code or number.

**Logo** - a visual symbol or design that serves as a unique identifier for a company, brand, product, or organization.

**Colours of the product packaging** - a specific hue or combination of hues that are used in the design of a product's packaging.

**Product name** - an unique name or title given to a specific product.

**Brand** - a sum of features that identify specific company, i.e. name, logo, design etc.

**Graphic symbols on the packaging** - national symbols and colours that aim is to create a sense of national identity and promote the product's origin as a source of quality and authenticity.

**Operating instructions** - a document that provides instructions and guidance on how to use and operate the product but also includes detailed information about the product itself.

#### **SOURCES OF INFORMATION:**

**Own experience with the product** - personal interaction an individual has with a specific product.

**Family opinion** - the thoughts, beliefs, or feelings that the members of a person's family have about a particular product.

**Friends opinion** - the thoughts, feelings, or beliefs that one's friends have about a particular product.

**Promotional activities/advertising** - a type of communication that is designed to promote or sell a product to a particular audience.

**Mobile applications** - software applications that are designed to run on smartphones and tablets and help in identifying the origin of the products based on the bar code, name of the product or brand.

### **SELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **1. Gender:**

Man	
Woman	
Non-binary person	

#### **2. Age:**

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **3. Which of the following product categories have you purchased in the last year?**

Clothing and footwear	
Cosmetics	
Electronic devices	
Wine	
None of the above	

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

4. Which of the following attributes help you to **IDENTIFY** the country of origin of the products in the category .....? You can select up to 5 attributes.

	Product category	CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR	COSMETICS	ELECTRONIC DEVICES	WINE
<b>ATTRIBUTES OF IDENTIFICATION</b>					
1.	Country of origin of the brand				
2.	Country of design of the product				
3.	Country of origin of parts				
4.	Country of assembly				
5.	Label <i>Made in...</i>				
6.	Address of manufacturer				
7.	Language of the description on the product packaging				
8.	Barcode				
9.	Logo				
10.	Colours of the product packaging				
11.	Name of the product				
12.	Brand				
13.	Graphic symbols on the packaging				
14.	Operating instructions				
15.	Other....(what?)				

5. Which of the following sources of information help you to **IDENTIFY** the country of origin of the products in the category .....? You can select up to 3 sources of information.

	Product category	CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR	COSMETICS	ELECTRONIC DEVICES	WINE
SOURCES OF INFORMATION					
1.	Own experience with the product				
2.	Family opinion				
3.	Friends opinion				
4.	Promotional activities/ advertising				
5.	Mobile applications to help identify product origin				
6.	Other....(what?)				

6. And which of the following attributes help you make a **DECISION** to buy products from the category of ...?

\*Making a DECISION means buying the product.

You can select up to 5 attributes.

	Product category	CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR	COSMETICS	ELECTRONIC DEVICES	WINE
ATTRIBUTES OF IDENTIFICATION					
1.	Country of origin of the brand				
2.	Country of design of the product				
3.	Country of origin of parts				
4.	Country of assembly				
5.	Label <i>Made in...</i>				
6.	Address of manufacturer				
7.	Language of the description on the product packaging				
8.	Barcode				

9.	Logo				
10.	Colours of the product packaging				
11.	Name of the product				
12.	Brand				
13.	Graphic symbols on the packaging				
14.	Operating instructions				
15.	Other....(what?)				

**7. And which of the following sources of information help you make a DECISION to buy products in the category of...?**

\*Making a DECISION means buying the product.

You can select up to 3 sources of information.

	Product category	CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR	COSMETICS	ELECTRONIC DEVICES	WINE
1.	Own experience with the product				
2.	Family opinion				
3.	Friends opinion				
4.	Promotional activities/advertising				
5.	Mobile applications to help identify product origin				
6.	Other....(what?)				

## METRIC

**What is your educational background?**

- primary
- higher
- vocational
- secondary
- other (what kind?)\_\_\_\_\_

**What is your professional status? [Multiple choice]**

- I am working
- looking for a job
- learning/studying
- not working

**Place of residence (present)**

- village
- city below 50 thousand inhabitants
- city between 50 thousand and 100 thousand inhabitants
- city between 100 thousand and 500 thousand inhabitants
- city with more than 500 thousand inhabitants

**Income assessment. Can you make ends meet on your current income?**

- with great difficulty
- with difficulty
- with some difficulty
- quite easily
- easily
- very easily

**Thank you for taking the time to participate in the survey.**

### APPENDIX 3. QUESTIONNAIRE - SPANISH VERSION

Poznań, febrero de 2022

Estimado/a,

Soy estudiante de doctorado en el Departamento de Gestión Internacional de la Universidad de Economía de Poznań. Como parte de la preparación de mi tesis, estoy llevando a cabo una investigación para determinar la importancia del efecto país de origen (a través del prisma de los atributos que lo identifican, por ejemplo, el emblema *Made in...*, el país de origen de la marca, el país del diseño del producto, la dirección del fabricante, el idioma de la descripción en el envase, el código de barras, los elementos gráficos del envase; y a través del prisma de las fuentes de información sobre el origen del producto, es decir, las actividades promocionales, las aplicaciones móviles o las opiniones de terceros) como factor que influye en las decisiones de compra de los consumidores jóvenes de diversos mercados internacionales.

Por favor responde a las siguientes preguntas marcando que le corresponda.

Me aseguro que la investigación es anónima y todos tus resultados se utilizarán únicamente con fines científicos.

Le saluda atentamente  
Katarzyna Wysocka

A continuación encontrará interpretaciones de los términos incluidos en el cuestionario. Léalos detenidamente.

#### **ATRIBUTOS DE IDENTIFICACIÓN:**

**País de origen de la marca** - el lugar donde se encuentra la sede central.

**País de diseño** - lugar o país donde se diseñó el producto.

**País de origen de las piezas** - lugar o país donde se produjeron u obtuvieron los componentes o piezas utilizados en la fabricación de un producto.

**País de ensamblaje** - lugar o país donde se ensamblan todas las piezas del producto.

**Etiqueta *Made in...*** - elemento que se coloca en el producto y proporciona información sobre dónde se fabricó el producto.

**Dirección del fabricante** - dirección detallada del lugar o ubicación donde se fabricó o produjo un producto.

**Lenguaje de la descripción del envase del producto** - descripción escrita de los distintos rasgos y características del envase de un producto, como sus dimensiones, forma, materiales, color y cualquier gráfico o texto que esté impreso en él.

**Código de barras** - símbolo formado por barras verticales y espacios de diferente anchura que se utilizan para representar un código o número específico.

**Logotipo** - símbolo visual o diseño que sirve como identificador único de una empresa, marca, producto u organización.

**Colores del envase del product** - un tono específico o una combinación de tonos que se utilizan en el diseño del envase de un producto.

**Nombre del product** - nombre o título único que se da a un producto específico.

**Marca** - conjunto de características que identifican a una empresa concreta, como el nombre, el logotipo, el diseño, etc.

**Símbolos gráficos en el envase** - símbolos y colores nacionales cuyo objetivo es crear un sentimiento de identidad nacional y promover el origen del producto como fuente de calidad y autenticidad.

**Instrucciones de uso** - documento que proporciona instrucciones y orientación sobre cómo utilizar y manejar el producto, pero que también incluye información detallada sobre el propio producto.

#### **FUENTES DE INFORMACIÓN:**

**Experiencia propia con el producto** - la interacción que un individuo tiene con un producto específico.

**Opinión de la familia** - los pensamientos, creencias o sentimientos que los miembros de la familia de una persona tienen sobre un producto concreto.

**Opinión de los amigos** - pensamientos, sentimientos o creencias de los amigos sobre un determinado producto.

**Actividades promocionales/publicidad** - tipo de comunicación diseñada para promocionar o vender un producto a un público determinado.

**Aplicaciones móviles** - aplicaciones de software diseñadas para funcionar en teléfonos inteligentes y tabletas que ayudan a identificar el origen de los productos basándose en el código de barras, el nombre del producto o la marca.

### **CUESTIONARIO DE SELECCIÓN**

#### **1. Sexo:**

hombre	
mujer	
persona no binaria	

#### **2. Edad:**

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **3. ¿Cuál de las siguientes categorías de productos has comprado en el último año?**

ROPA Y CALZADO	
COSMÉTICOS	
EQUIPOS ELECTRÓNICOS	
VINO	
NINGUNA DE LAS ANTERIORES	



## CUESTIONARIO DE LA ENCUESTA

4. ¿Cuál de las siguientes atributos te ayudan a **IDENTIFICAR** el país de origen de los productos de la categoría .....? Puedes seleccionar hasta 5 atributos.

	Categoría de producto	ROPA Y CALZADO	COSMÉTICOS	EQUIPOS ELECTRÓNICOS	VINO
<b>ATRIBUTOS DE IDENTIFICACIÓN</b>					
1.	País de origen de la marca				
2.	País de diseño del producto				
3.	País de origen de las piezas				
4.	País de montaje				
5.	Etiqueta <i>Made in...</i>				
6.	Dirección del fabricante				
7.	Lengua de la descripción en el envase del producto				
8.	Código de barras				
9.	Logotipo				
10.	Colores utilizados en el envase del producto				
11.	Nombre del producto				
12.	Marca				
13.	Símbolos gráficos en el envase				
14.	Manual de instrucciones				
15.	Otros....(¿qué tipo?)				

5. ¿Cuál de las siguientes fuentes de información te ayudan a **IDENTIFICAR** el país de origen de los productos de la categoría .....? Puedes seleccionar hasta 3 fuentes.

	Categoría de producto	ROPA Y CALZADO	COSMÉTICOS	EQUIPOS ELECTRÓNICOS	VINO
1.	Mi propia experiencia con el producto				
2.	Opinión de la familia				
3.	Opinión de los amigos				
4.	Acciones de promoción/publicidad				
5.	Aplicaciones móviles para ayudar a identificar el origen de los productos				
6.	Otros....(¿qué?)				

6. Y cuál de las siguientes cosas te ayudan a tomar la **DECISIÓN** de comprar productos de la categoría .....?

\*Tomar una DECISIÓN significa comprar el producto.

Puedes seleccionar hasta 5 artículos.

	Categoría de producto	ROPA Y CALZADO	COSMÉTICOS	EQUIPOS ELECTRÓNICOS	VINO
<b>ATRIBUTOS DE IDENTIFICACIÓN</b>					
1.	País de origen de la marca				
2.	País de diseño del producto				
3.	País de origen de las piezas				
4.	País de montaje				
5.	Etiqueta <i>Made in...</i>				
6.	Dirección del fabricante				
7.	Lengua de la descripción en el envase del producto				
8.	Código de barras				
9.	Logotipo				
10.	Colores utilizados en el envase del producto				
11.	Nombre del producto				

12.	Marca				
13.	Símbolos gráficos en el envase				
14.	Manual de instrucciones/folleto que acompaña al producto				
15.	Otros....(¿qué tipo?)				

**7. Y cuáles de las siguientes fuentes de información te ayudan a tomar la DECISIÓN de comprar productos de la categoría?**

\*Tomar una DECISIÓN significa comprar el producto.

Puedes seleccionar hasta 3 fuentes.

	Categoría de productos	ROPA Y CALZADO	COSMÉTICOS	EQUIPOS ELECTRÓNICOS	VINO
1.	Mi propia experiencia con el producto				
2.	Opinión de la familia				
3.	Opinión de los amigos				
4.	Acciones de promoción/publicidad				
5.	Aplicaciones móviles para ayudar a identificar el origen de los productos				
6.	Otros....(¿qué?)				

## **MÉTRICA**

### **¿Cuál es tu formación académica?**

- elementaria
- secundaria
- grado/licenciatura superior, ingeniería/ máster superior
- técnico superior (FP)
- otra (¿de qué tipo?) \_\_\_\_\_

### **¿Cuál es tu situación profesional? [Opción múltiple]**

- estoy trabajando
- buscando activamente trabajo
- estudiando
- desempleado

### **Lugar de residencia (actual):**

- pueblo
- ciudad de menos de 50 mil habitantes
- ciudad entre 50 mil y 100 mil habitantes
- ciudad entre 100 mil y 500 mil habitantes
- ciudad con más de 500 mil habitantes

### **Evaluación de los ingresos. ¿Puedes llegar a fin de mes con tus ingresos actuales?**

- con gran dificultad
- con dificultad
- con cierta dificultad
- Muy fácilmente
- Fácilmente
- Muy fácilmente

**Gracias por participación en la encuesta.**

## APPENDIX 4. QUESTIONNAIRE - GERMAN VERSION

Poznań, Februar 2022

Sehr geehrter Befragter, sehr geehrte Befragte,

ich bin Doktorandin an dem Lehrstuhl für Internationale Verwaltung der Wirtschaftsuniversität in Poznań. Im Rahmen der Vorbereitung meiner Dissertation untersuche ich die Bedeutung des Herkunftslandes (im Zusammenhang mit den Merkmalen, die es identifizieren, z.B. das *Made in...* Emblem, das Ursprungsland der Marke, das Land, in dem das Produkt entworfen wurde, die Adresse des Herstellers, die Sprache der Beschreibung auf der Verpackung, der Strichcode, die grafischen Elemente auf der Verpackung; und im Zusammenhang mit Informationsquellen über die Herkunft von Produkten, d.h. Werbemaßnahmen, mobile Anwendungen oder Meinungen von anderen) als Faktor, der die Kaufentscheidungen junger Verbraucher auf verschiedenen internationalen Märkten beeinflusst.

Ich bitte Dich, einige Antworten auf die folgenden Fragen zu geben, indem Du die zutreffende Antwort markierst.

Ich versichere Dir, dass die Studie anonym ist und alle Ergebnisse nur für wissenschaftliche Zwecke verwendet werden.

hochachtungsvoll  
Katarzyna Wysocka

Im Weiteren findest du detaillierte Erklärungen zu den Begriffen, die im Fragebogen aufgeführt sind. Bitte nimm dir die Zeit, sie gründlich durchzulesen.

### **IDENTIFIZIERENDE ATTRIBUTE:**

**Ursprungsland der Marke** - der Ort, an dem sich der Hauptsitz befindet.

**Land des Markendesigns** - der Ort oder das Land, in dem das Produkt entworfen wurde.

**Ursprungsland der Teile** - der Ort oder das Land, in dem die bei der Herstellung eines Produkts verwendeten Komponenten oder Teile produziert oder bezogen wurden.

**Land der Montage** - der Ort oder das Land, in dem alle Teile des Produkts zusammengebaut werden.

***Made in...* Emblem** - ein Element, das auf dem Produkt angebracht ist und Informationen darüber liefert, wo das Produkt hergestellt wurde.

**Anschrift des Herstellers** - eine detaillierte Adresse des Ortes oder der Stelle, an der ein Produkt hergestellt oder produziert wurde.

**Sprache der Beschreibung auf der Produktverpackung** - eine schriftliche Darstellung der verschiedenen Merkmale und Eigenschaften der Verpackung eines Produkts, wie z. B. seine Abmessungen, Form, Materialien, Farbe und alle Grafiken oder Texte, die darauf gedruckt sind.

**Strichcode** - ein Symbol, das aus vertikalen Strichen und Lücken unterschiedlicher Breite besteht, die zur Darstellung eines bestimmten Codes oder einer Nummer verwendet werden.

**Logo** - ein visuelles Symbol oder Design, das als eindeutiges Erkennungszeichen für ein Unternehmen, eine Marke, ein Produkt oder eine Organisation dient.

**Auf der Produktverpackung verwendete Farben** - ein bestimmter Farbton oder eine Kombination von Farbtönen, die bei der Gestaltung der Verpackung eines Produkts verwendet werden.

**Produktname** - ein eindeutiger Name oder Titel für ein bestimmtes Produkt.

**Marke** - eine Summe von Merkmalen, die ein bestimmtes Unternehmen identifizieren, d. h. Name, Logo, Design usw.

**Grafische Symbole auf den Verpackungen** - nationale Symbole und Farben, die ein Gefühl der nationalen Identität schaffen und die Herkunft des Produkts als Quelle der Qualität und Authentizität fördern sollen.

**Dem Produkt beiliegende Gebrauchsanweisung** - ein Dokument, das Anleitungen und Hinweise zur Verwendung und Bedienung des Produkts enthält, aber auch detaillierte Informationen über das Produkt selbst.

#### **INFORMATIONSQUELLEN:**

**Meine eigenen Erfahrungen mit dem Produkt** - Interaktion einer Person mit einem bestimmten Produkt.

**Meinung der Familie** - - die Gedanken, Überzeugungen oder Gefühle, die die Mitglieder der Familie einer Person über ein bestimmtes Produkt haben.

**Meinung der Freunde/ der Bekannten** - die Gedanken, Gefühle oder Überzeugungen, die die Freunde einer Person über ein bestimmtes Produkt haben.

#### **Werbemaßnahmen/**

**Werbung** - eine Art der Kommunikation, die darauf abzielt, ein Produkt an ein bestimmtes Publikum zu verkaufen.

**Mobile Anwendungen zur Identifizierung der Produktherkunft** - Softwareanwendungen, die auf Smartphones und Tablets laufen und dabei helfen, die Herkunft der Produkte anhand des Strichcodes, des Produkt- oder Markennamens zu identifizieren.

### **AUSWAHLFRAGEBOGEN**

#### **1. Geschlecht:**

männlich	
weiblich	
divers	

#### **2. Alter:**

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **3. Welche der folgenden Produktkategorien hast Du im letzten Jahr gekauft?**

Kleidung und Schuh	
Kosmetika	
Elektronische Geräte	
Weine	
Keiner der oben genannten Punkte	

## FRAGEBOGENERHEBUNG

4. Anhand welcher der folgenden Kriterien kannst Du das Herkunftsland der Produkte in der Kategorie IDENTIFIZIEREN? Hier kannst Du bis zu 5 Attribute auswählen.

	Produktkategorie	KLEIDUNG UND SCHUHE	KOSMETIKA	ELEKTRONISCHE GERÄTE	WEINE
IDENTIFIZIERENDE ATTRIBUTE					
1.	Ursprungsland der Marke				
2.	Land des Markendesigns				
3.	Ursprungsland der Teile				
4.	Land der Montage				
5.	<i>Made in...</i> Emblem				
6.	Anschrift des Herstellers				
7.	Sprache der Beschreibung auf der Produktverpackung				
8.	Strichcode				
9.	Logo				
10.	Auf der Produktverpackung verwendete Farben				
11.	Produktname				
12.	Marke				
13.	Grafische Symbole auf den Verpackungen				
14.	Dem Produkt beiliegende Gebrauchsanweisung				
15.	Andere....(was?)				

5. Welche der folgenden Informationsquellen helfen Dir, das Ursprungsland der Produkte in der Kategorie zu IDENTIFIZIEREN? Hier kannst Du bis zu 3 Informationsquellen auswählen.

	Produktkategorie	KLEIDUNG UND SCHUHE	KOSMETIKA	ELEKTRONISCHE GERÄTE	WEINE
1.	Meine eigenen Erfahrungen mit dem Produkt				
2.	Meinung der Familie				
3.	Meinung der Freunde/ der Bekannten				
4.	Werbemaßnahmen/ Werbung				
5.	Mobile Anwendungen zur Identifizierung der Produktherkunft				
6.	Andere....(was?)				

6. Und welche der folgenden Punkte helfen Dir bei Deiner ENTSCHEIDUNG, Produkte aus dieser Kategorie zu kaufen?

\*Eine ENTSCHEIDUNG treffen bedeutet, ein Produkt kaufen.

Du kannst bis zu 5 Artikel auswählen.

	Produktkategorie	KLEIDUNG UND SCHUHE	KOSMETIKA	ELEKTRONISCHE GERÄTE	WEINE
IDENTIFIZIERENDE ATTRIBUTE					
1.	Ursprungsland der Marke				
2.	Land des Markendesigns				
3.	Ursprungsland der Teile				
4.	Land der Montage				
5.	Made in... Emblem				
6.	Anschrift des Herstellers				
7.	Sprache der Beschreibung auf der Produktverpackung				
8.	Strichcode				
9.	Logo				



10.	Auf der Produktverpackung verwendete Farben				
11.	Produktname				
12.	Marke				
13.	Grafische Symbole auf den Verpackungen				
14.	Dem Produkt beiliegende Gebrauchsanweisung				
15.	Andere....(was?)				

**7. Und welche der folgenden Informationsquellen helfen Dir, eine ENTSCHEIDUNG zum Kauf von Produkten aus dieser Kategorie:**

\*Eine ENTSCHEIDUNG treffen bedeutet, ein Produkt kaufen.

Hier kannst Du bis zu 3 Informationsquellen auswählen.

	Produktkategorie	KLEIDUNG UND SCHUHE	KOSMETIKA	ELEKTRONISCHE GERÄTE	WEINE
1.	Meine eigenen Erfahrungen mit dem Produkt				
2.	Meinung der Familie				
3.	Meinung der Freunde/ der Bekannten				
4.	Werbemaßnahmen/ Werbung				
5.	Mobile Anwendungen zur Identifizierung der Produktherkunft				
6.	Andere....(was?)				

## **METRIK**

### **Wie ist Ihre Ausbildung?**

- Grundschule
- Hauptschule
- Hochschulreife – Abitur/ Fachausbildung
- Berufsausbildung
- Bachelor-/ Master-Abschluss

### **Was ist Ihr beruflicher Status? [Mehrfachauswahl]**

- Angestellte
- Arbeitssuchende
- Schüler/ Student
- Arbeitslos

### **Wohnort (derzeit)**

- Kleinstadt/ Gemeinde
- Stadt mit weniger als 50.000 Einwohnern
- Stadt mit 50.000 bis 100.000 Einwohnern
- Stadt mit 100.000 bis 500.000 Einwohnern
- Stadt mit mehr als 500.000 Einwohnern

### **Bewertung der Rentabilität.**

#### **Kommen Sie mit Ihrem derzeitigen Einkommen über die Runden?**

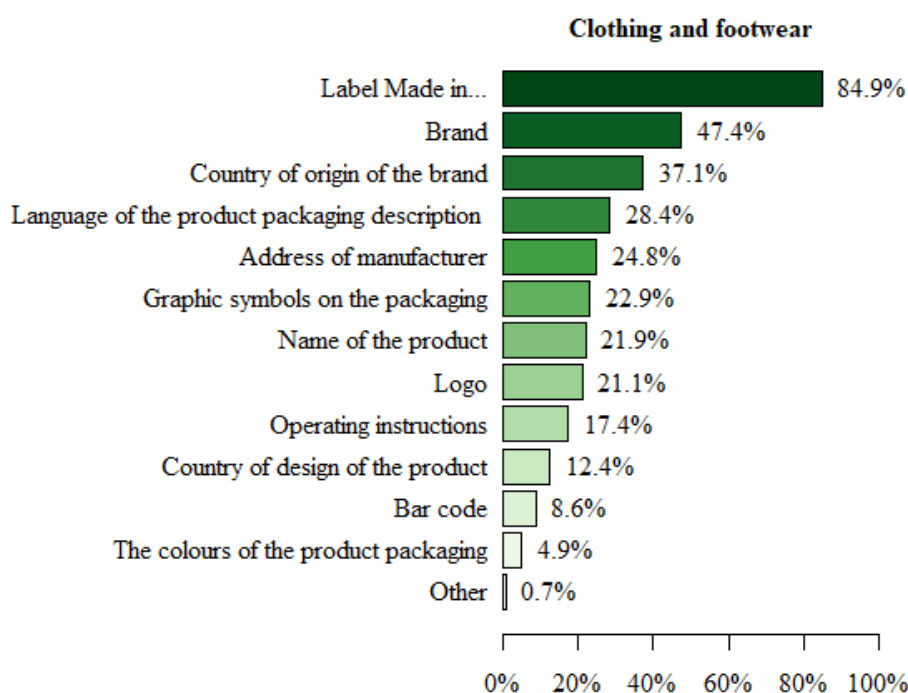
- mit großer Mühe
- mit Mühe
- mit einigen Schwierigkeiten
- ganz einfach
- einfach
- sehr leicht

**Danke für die Teilnahme an meiner Untersuchung.**

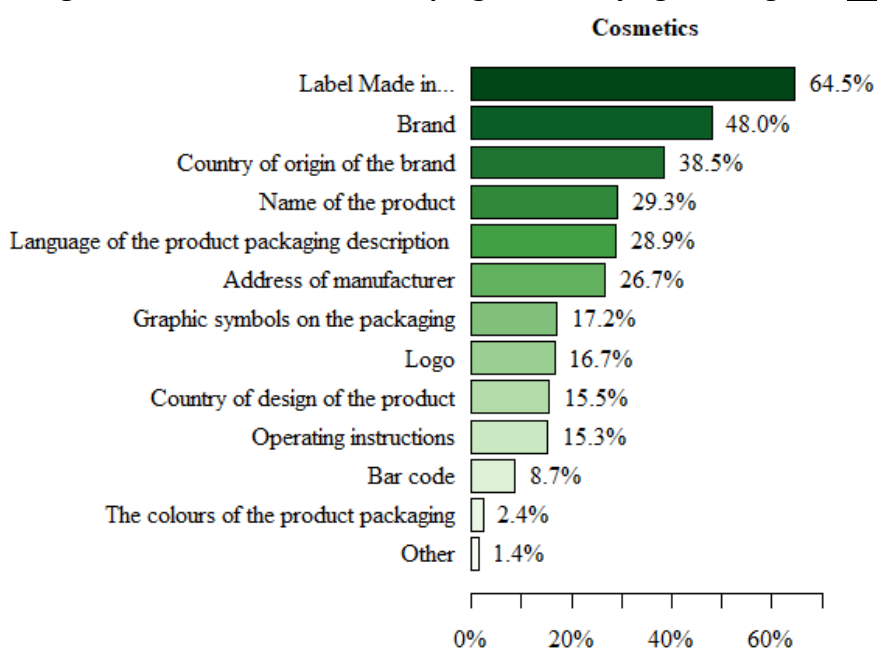
## APPENDIX 5. – ADDITIONAL RESULTS

In the following pages, are the results presented in the graphic version. They are arranged in the order presented in subchapter 4.2.1 divided into COO attributes and COO sources of information. Firstly, the result of COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of the four categories, clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine are displayed.

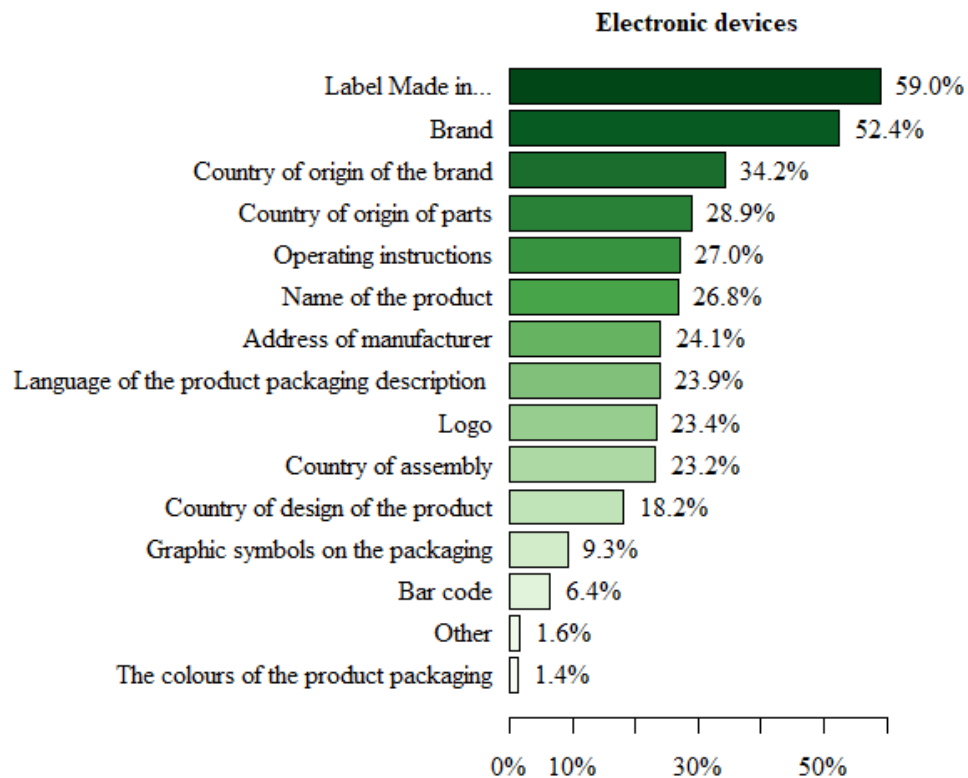
### The most significant COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of clothing and footwear



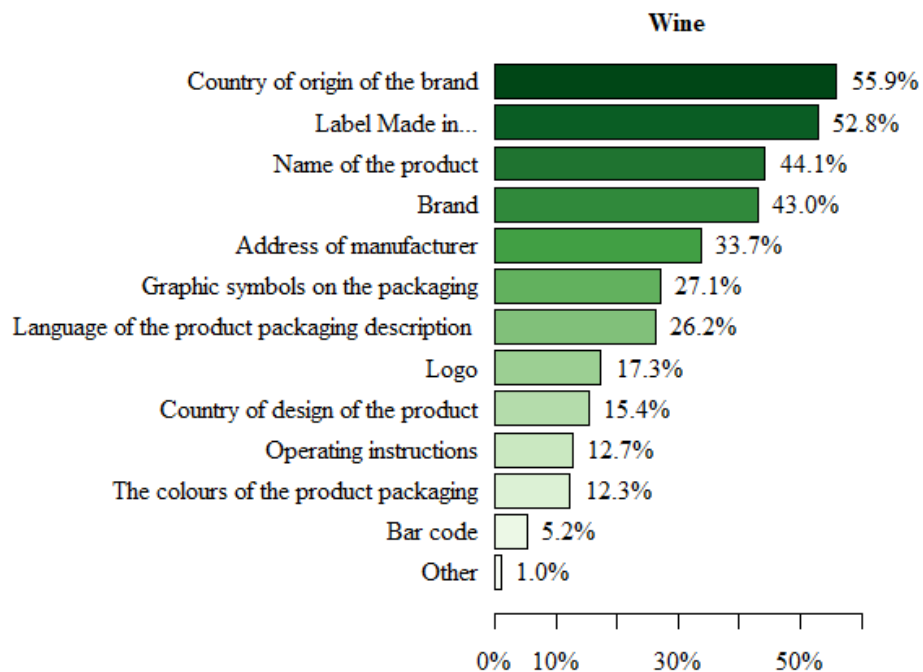
### The most significant COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of cosmetics



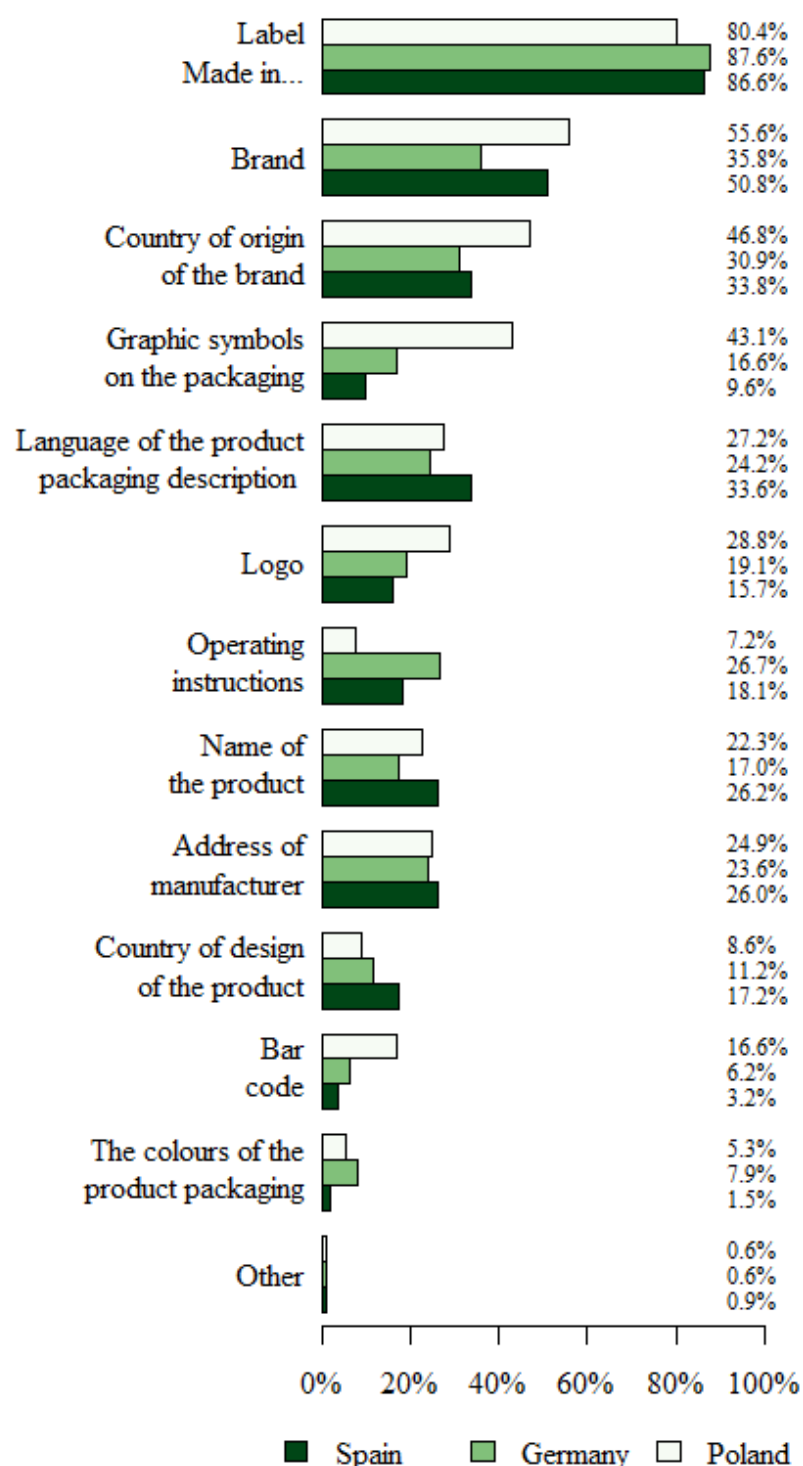
### The most significant COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of electronic devices



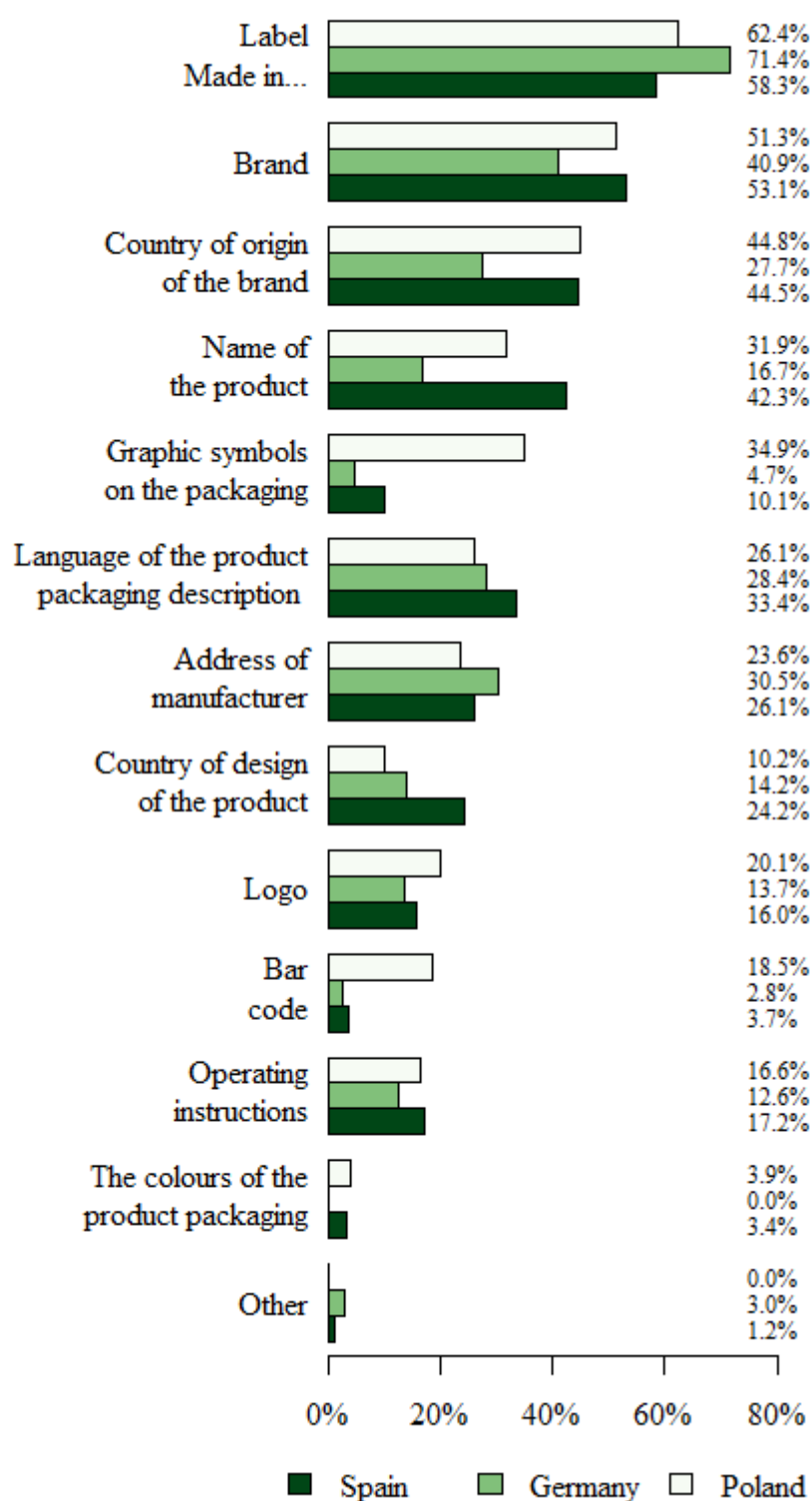
### The most significant COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of wine



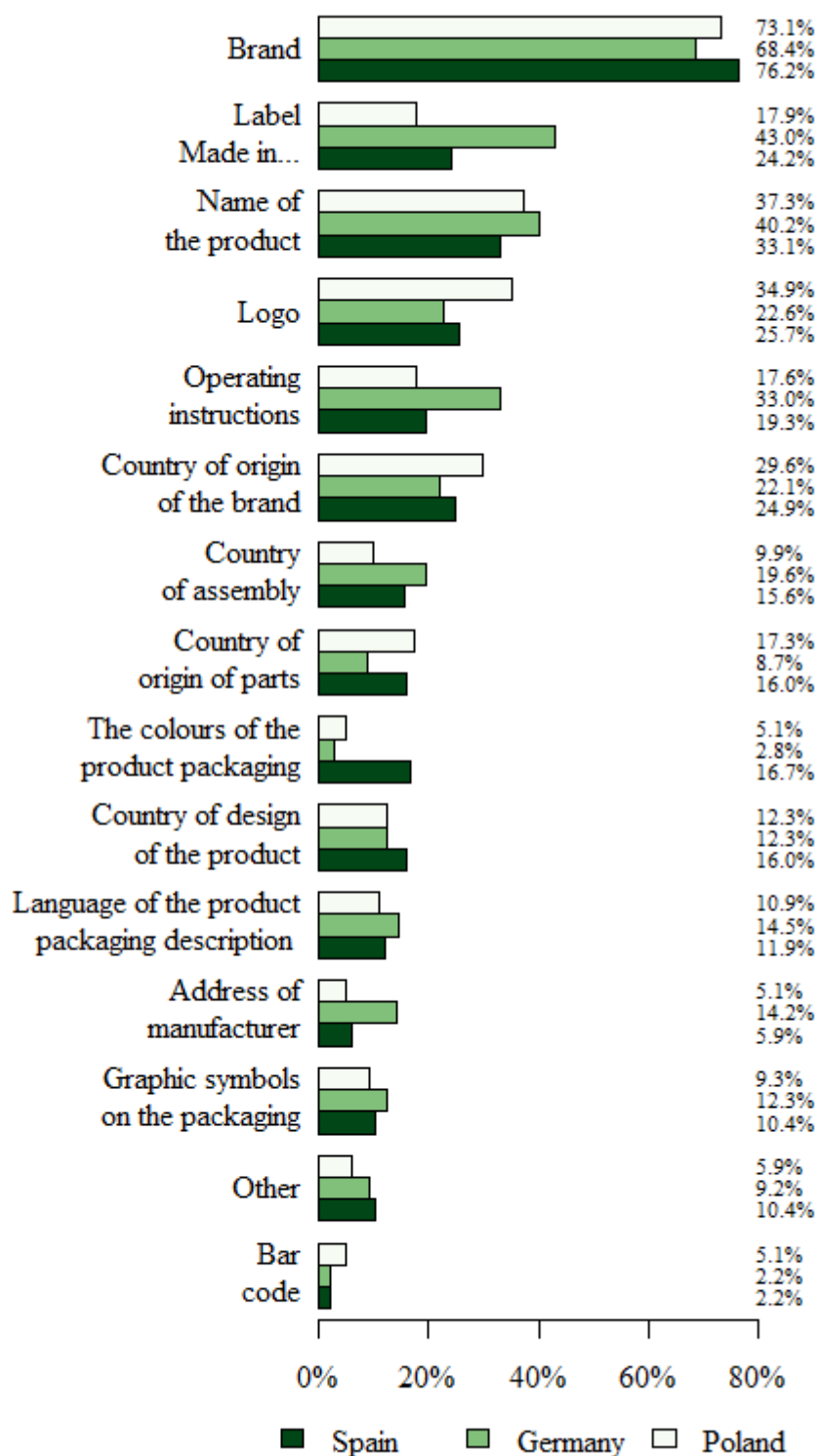
**Comparison of COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of clothing and footwear among Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**



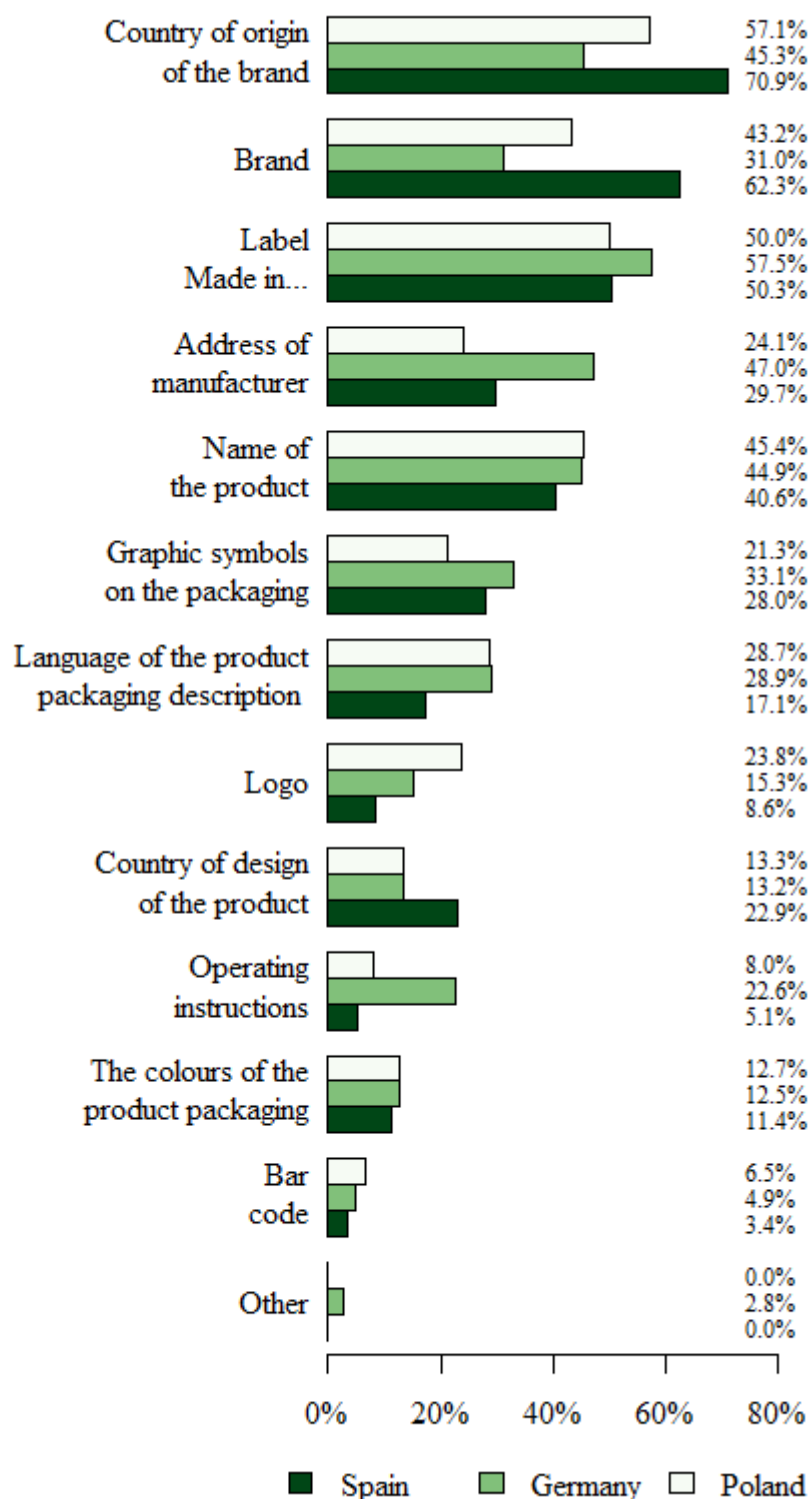
**Comparison of COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of cosmetics among  
Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**



**Comparison of COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of electronic devices among Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**



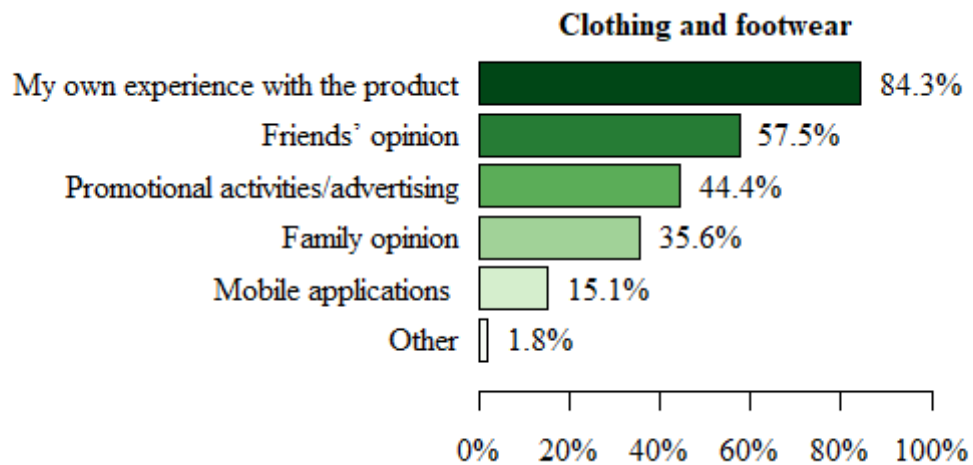
**Comparison of COO attributes helping in identifying the origin of wine among Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**



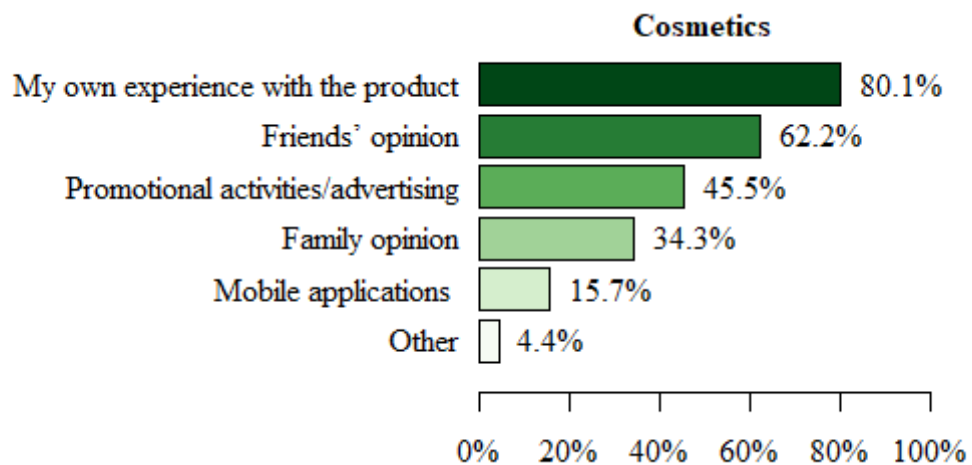


Secondly, the results of COO sources of information helping in identifying the origin of the four categories, clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine are presented (see subchapter 4.2.2.).

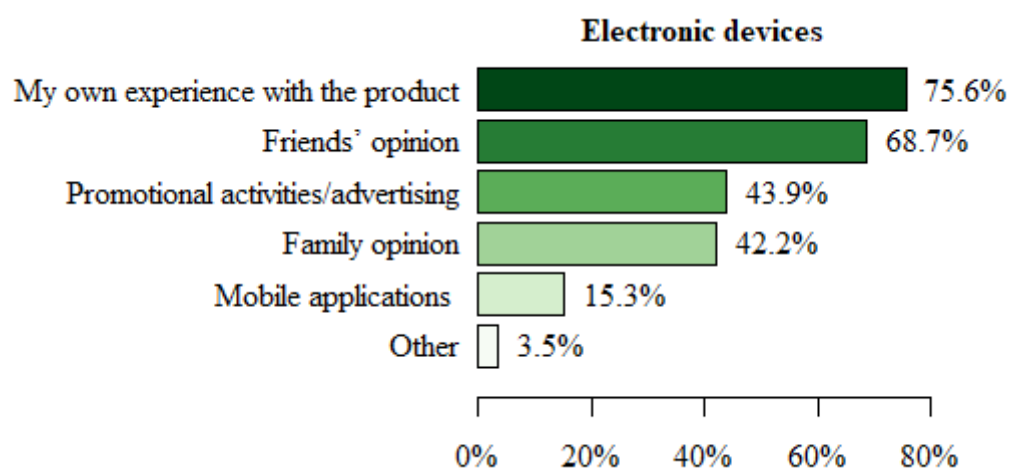
**The most significant COO sources of information in clothing and footwear category**



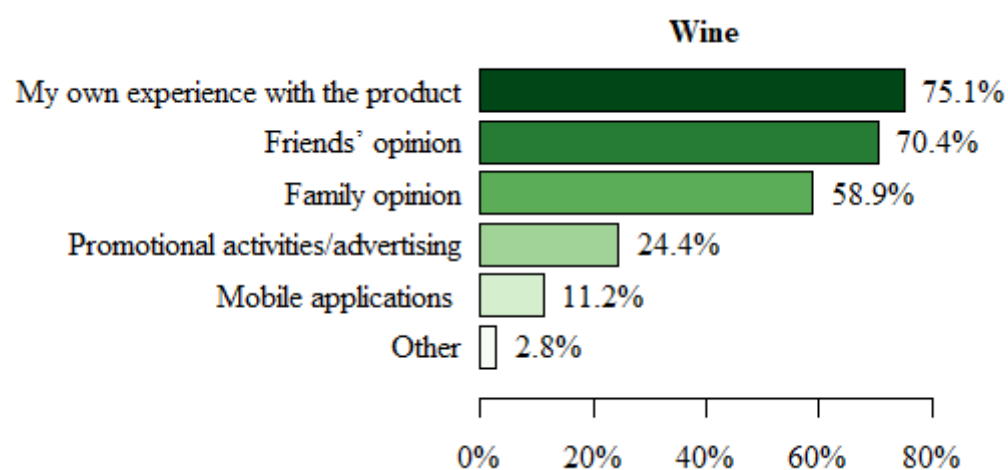
**The most significant COO sources of information in cosmetics category**



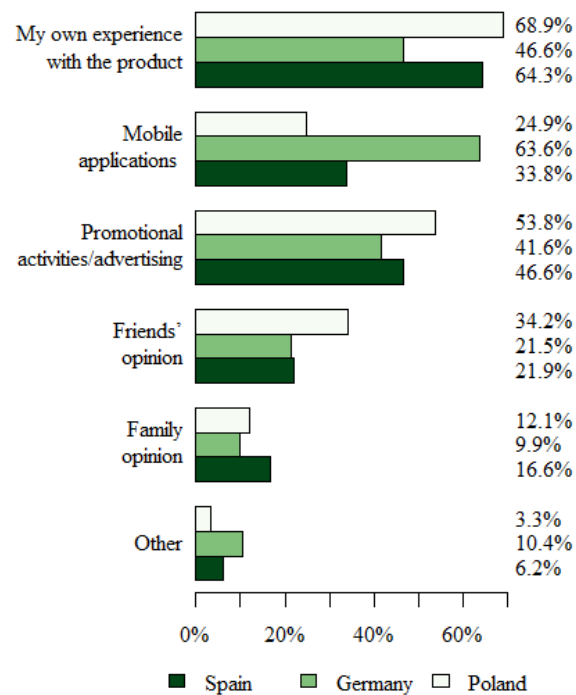
**The most significant COO sources of information in the electronic devices category**



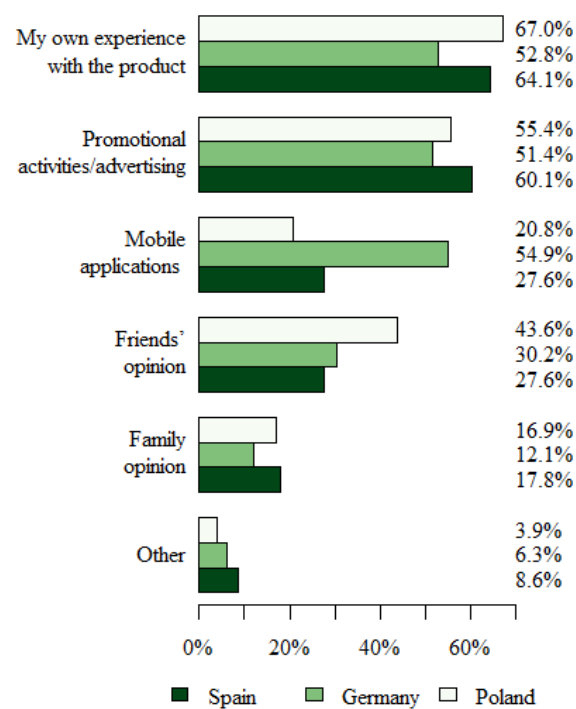
**The most significant COO sources of information in wine category**



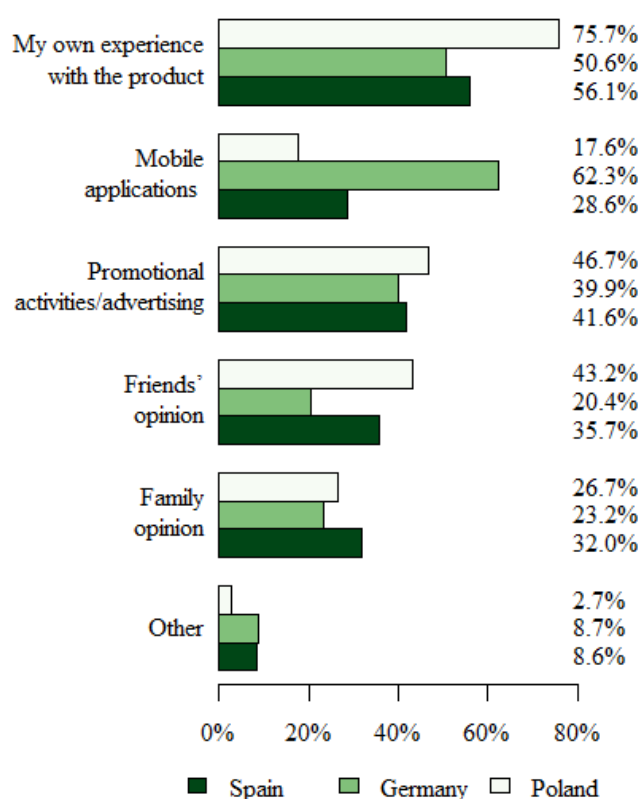
**Comparison of the most significant COO sources of information of clothing and footwear among Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**



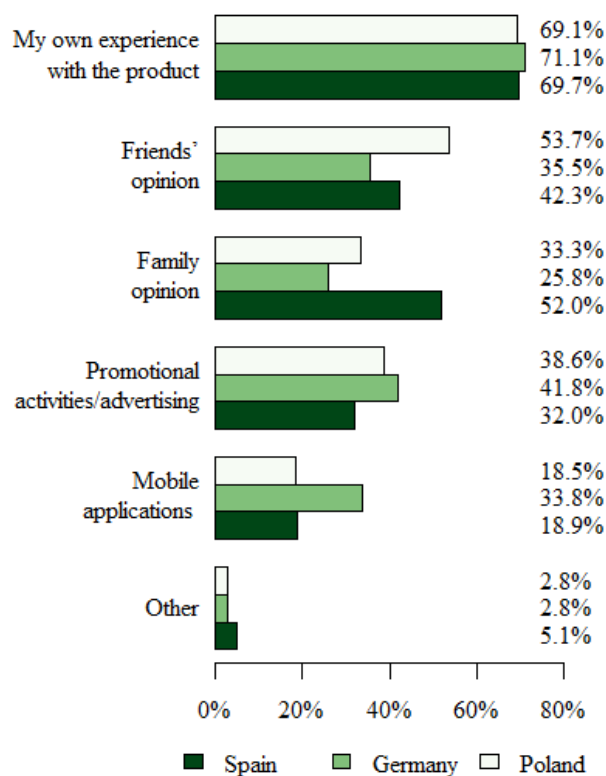
**Comparison of the most significant COO sources of information of cosmetics among Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**



**Comparison of the most significant COO sources of information of electronic devices  
among Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**

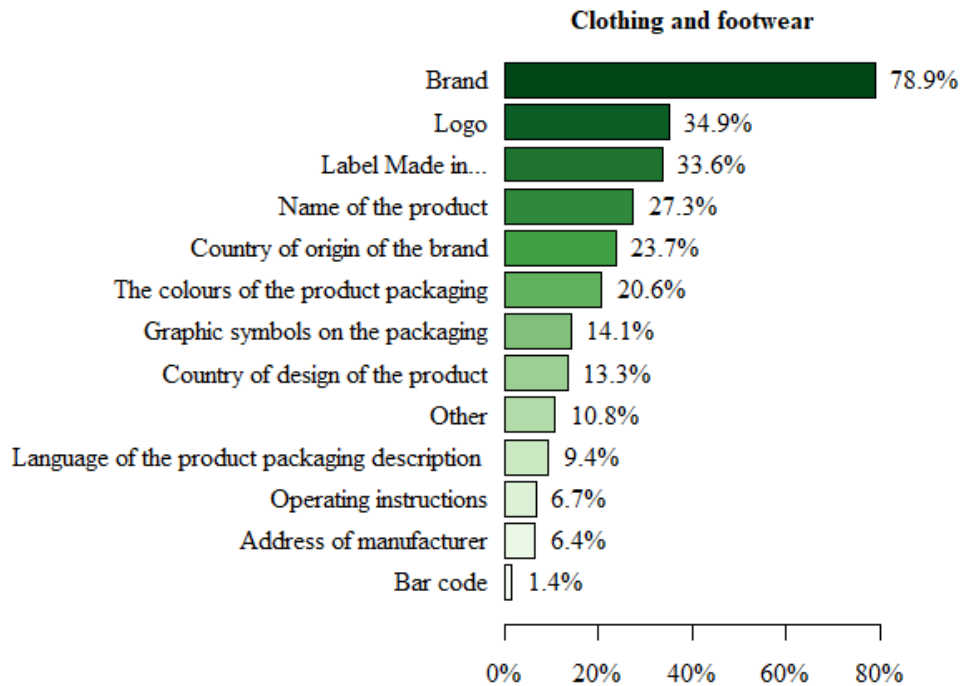


**Comparison of the most significant COO sources of information of wine  
among Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**

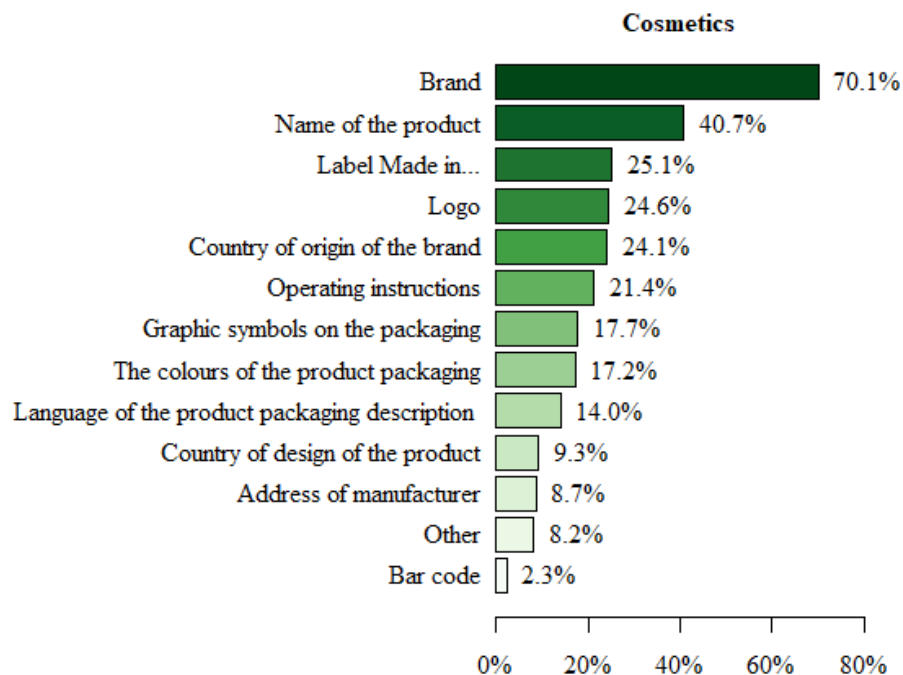


Then, the results of COO attributes and their impact on purchase decisions also in the division into four categories, clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine are presented (see subchapter 4.3.1.).

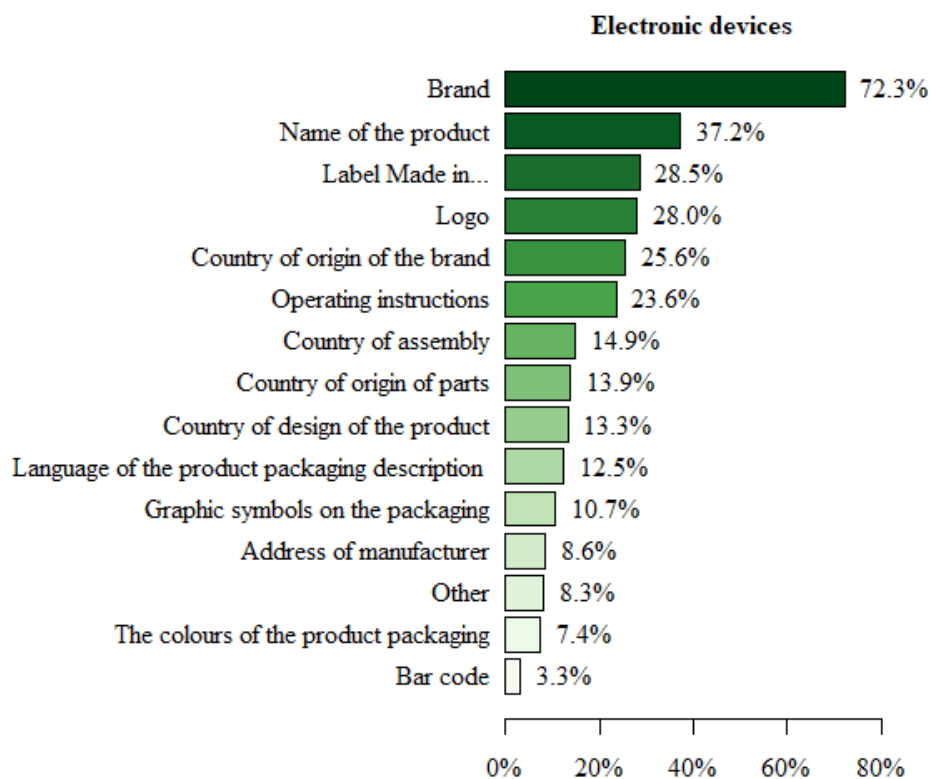
**The most significant COO attributes impacting  
on purchasing clothing and footwear category**



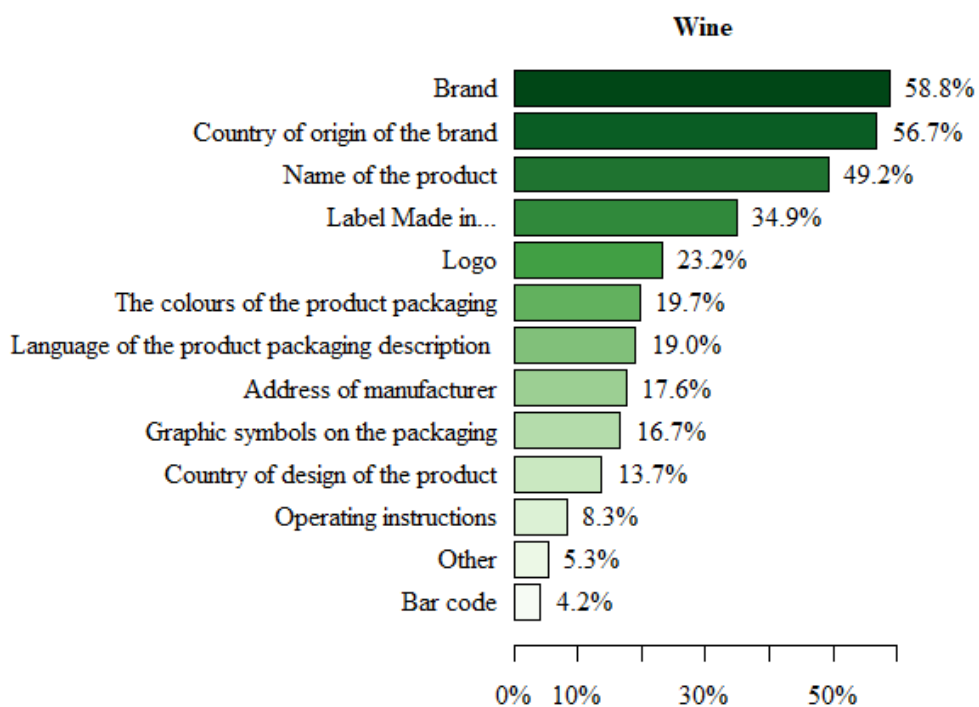
**The most significant COO attributes impacting  
on purchasing cosmetics category**



**The most significant COO attributes impacting  
on purchasing electronic devices category**

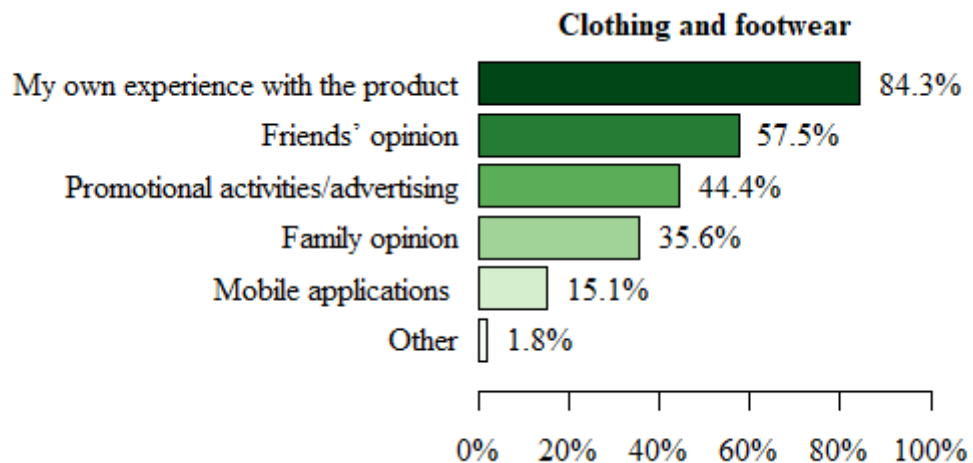


**The most significant COO attributes impacting on purchasing wine category**

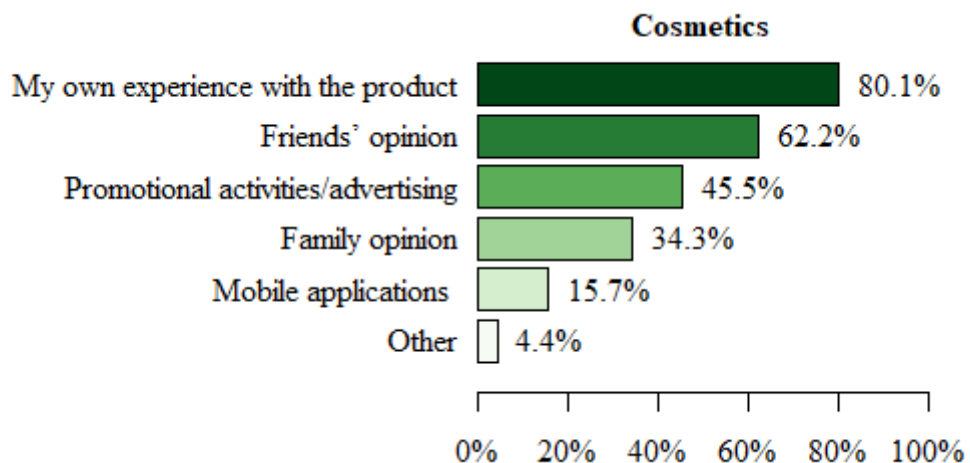


Then, the results of COO sources of information and their impact on purchase decisions in the division into four categories, clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronic devices, and wine are displayed (see subchapter 4.3.2.).

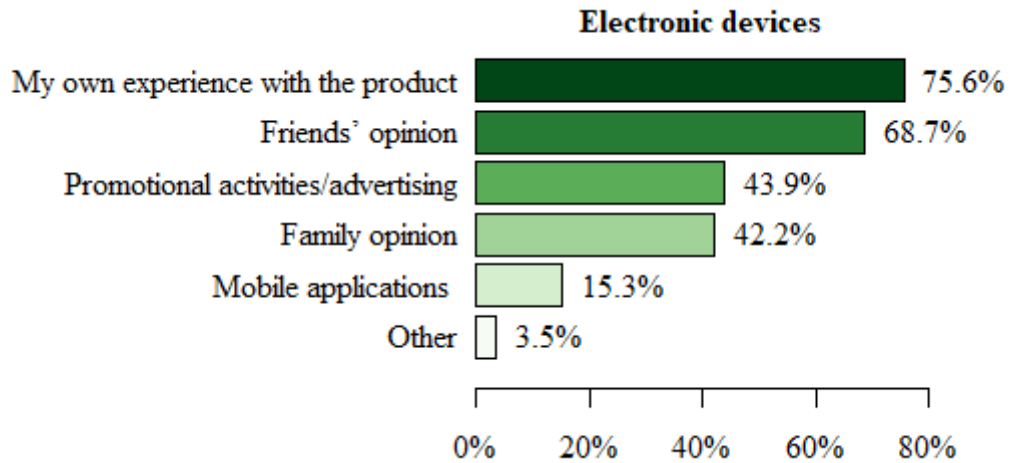
**The most significant COO sources of information impacting purchasing  
clothing and footwear category**



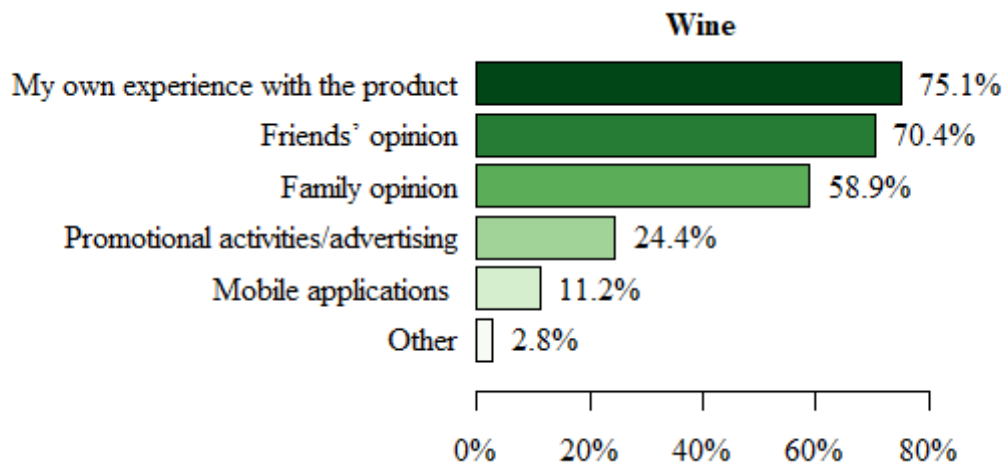
**The most significant COO sources of information impacting purchasing  
cosmetics category**



**The most significant COO sources of information impacting purchasing  
electronic devices category**



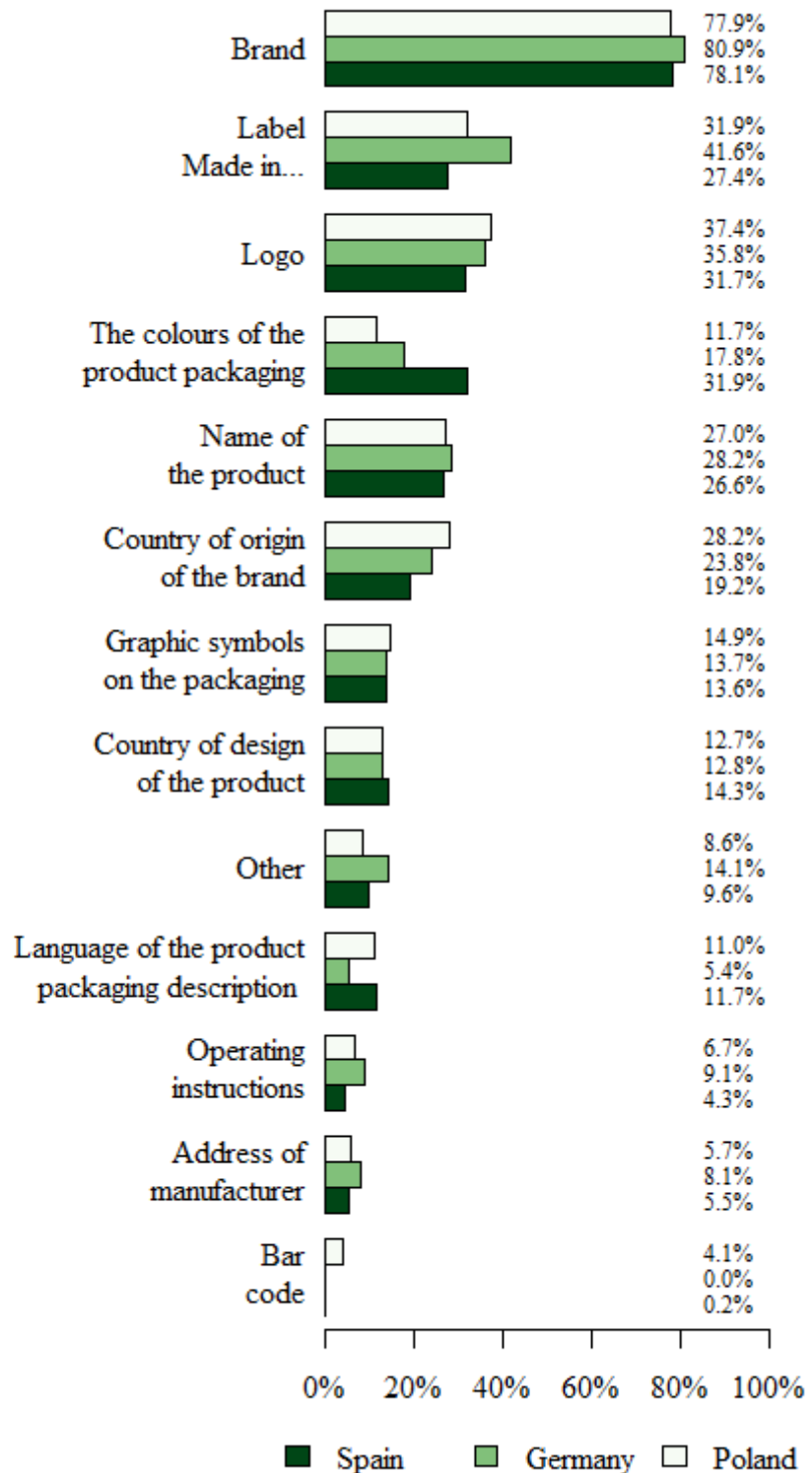
**The most significant COO sources of information impacting purchasing  
wine category**



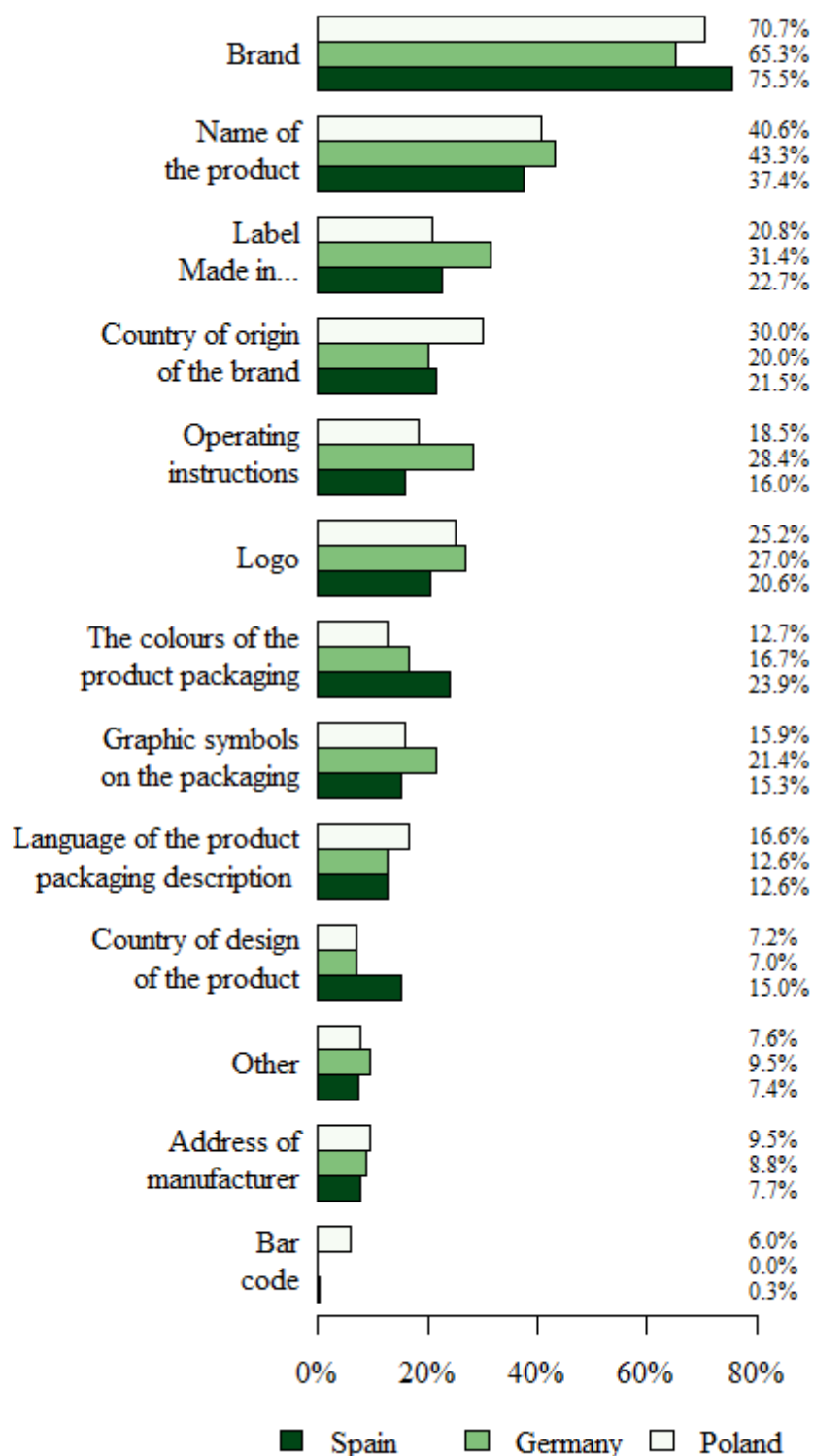


Next, a comparison of purchasing decisions among young consumers from Germany, Poland, and Spain, according to four categories with COO attributes (see subsection 4.3.3.1.).

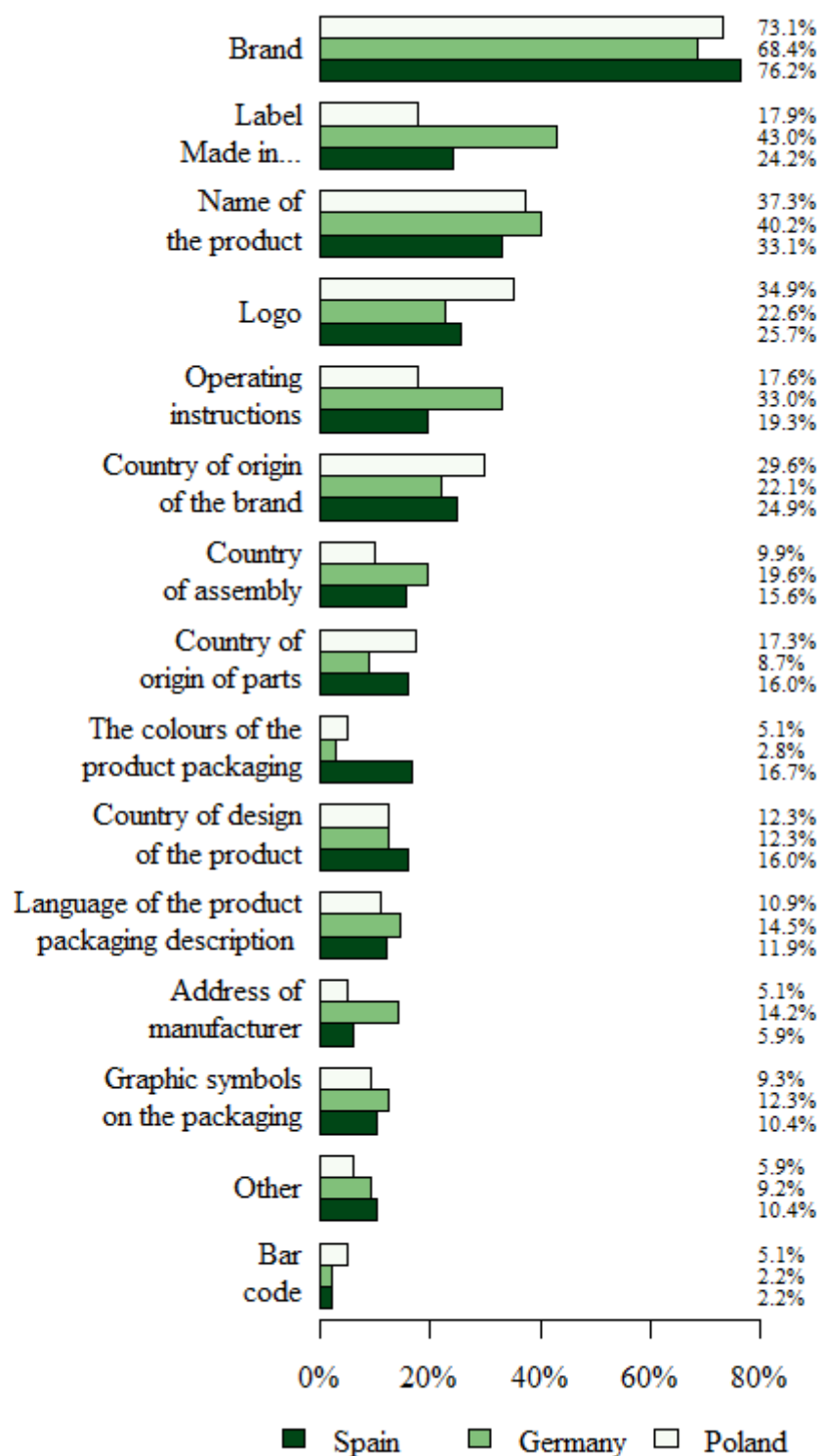
**COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in clothing and footwear category among young Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**



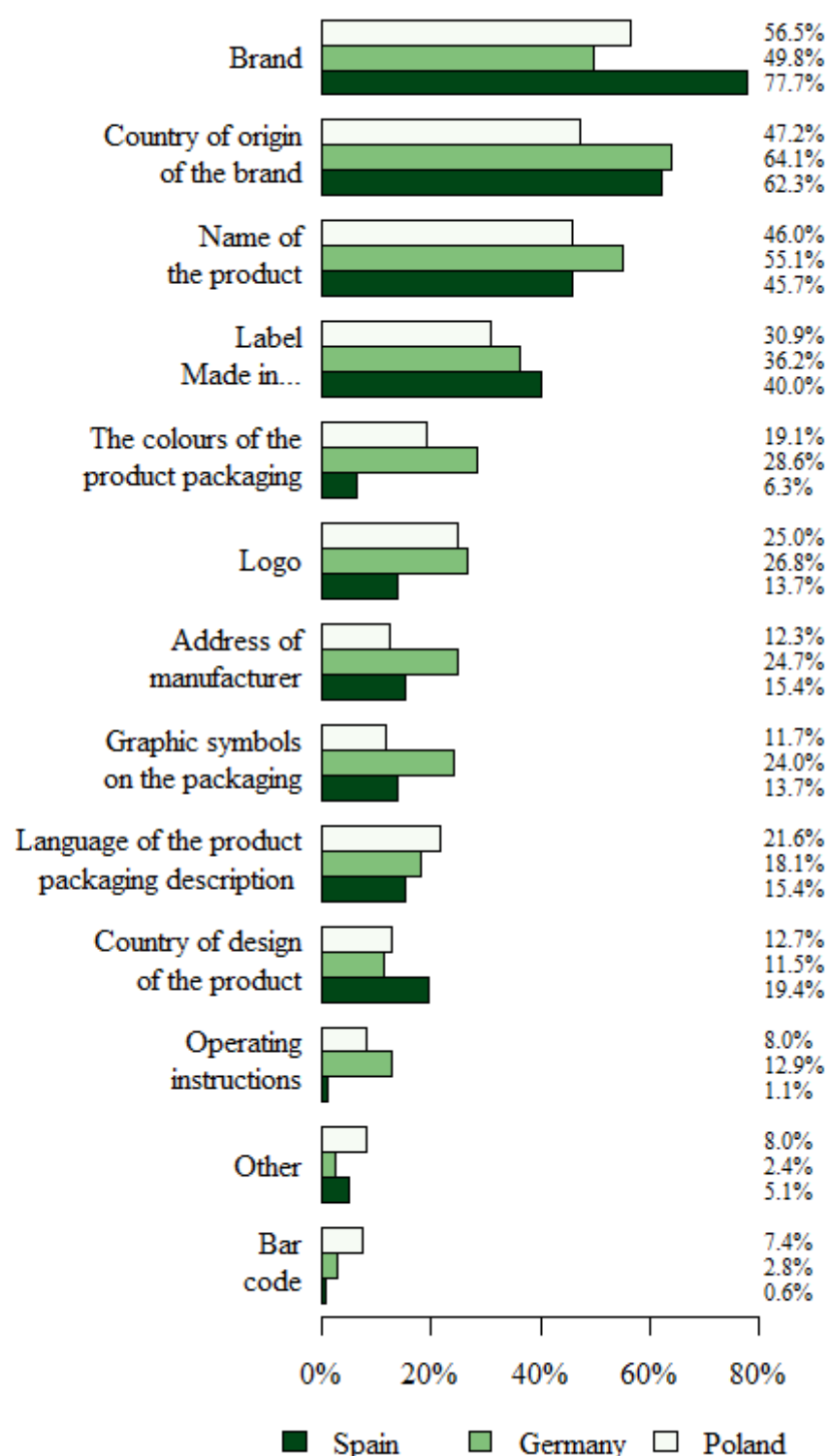
**COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in cosmetics category  
among young Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**



**COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in electronic devices category  
among young Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**

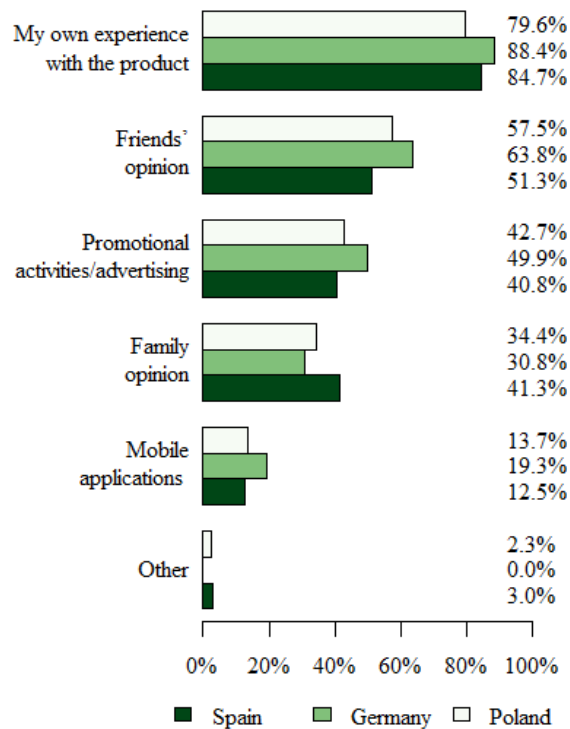


**COO attributes influencing purchasing decisions in wine category  
among young Germans, Poles, and Spaniards**

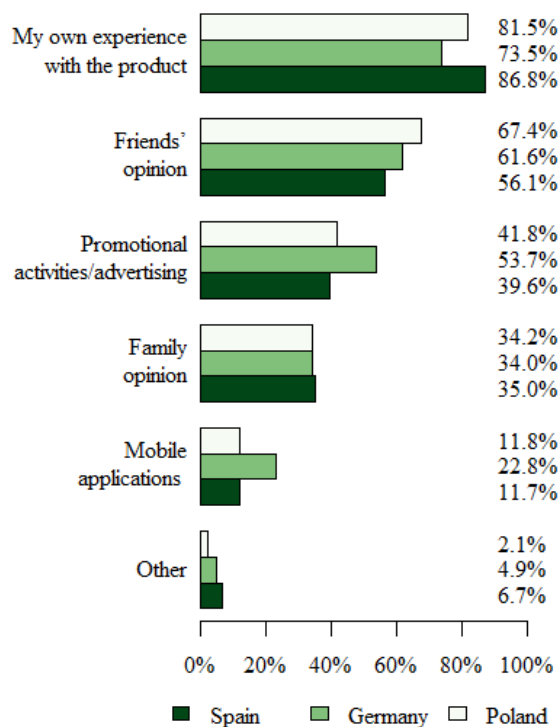


Finally, a comparison of purchasing decisions among young consumers from Germany, Poland, and Spain, according to four categories with COO sources of information (see subsection 4.3.3.2.).

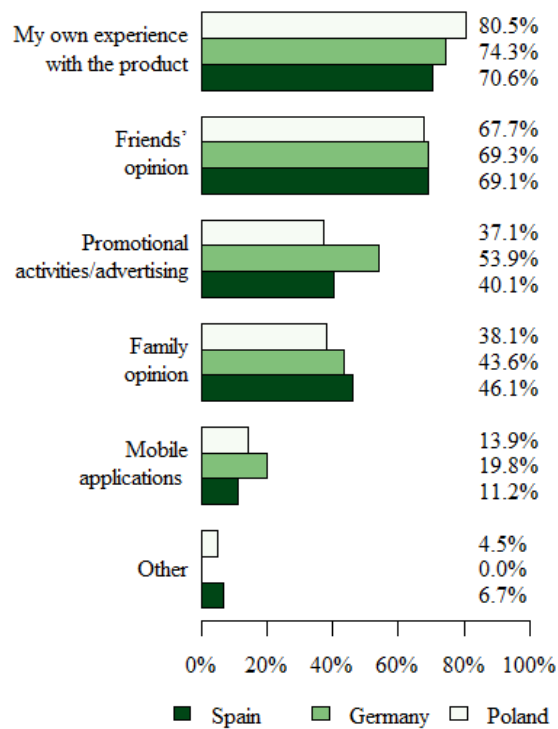
#### Comparison of purchasing decisions in clothing and footwear category among young consumers



#### Comparison of purchasing decisions in cosmetics category among young consumers



**Comparison of purchasing decisions in electronic devices category  
among young consumers**



**Comparison of purchasing decisions in wine category  
among young consumers**

