



# **Country image and consumers' instrumental personal values: is there a link?<sup>1</sup>**

**Janaina de Moura Engracia Giraldi<sup>2</sup>**

**Ana Akemi Ikeda<sup>3</sup>**

**Adriana Backx Noronha Viana<sup>4</sup>**

## **Abstract**

Even though cultural differences seem to be a fruitful area to understand variations in country image, few studies have investigated if and how a specific component of a nation's culture – its citizens' personal values – can influence a country's evaluation. This article's problem is: Is there a relationship between instrumental personal values and country image? A descriptive and quantitative empirical research was used and data were analyzed through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, using a convenience sample of Brazilian executives. Consumers' instrumental personal values are composed of three dimensions (Civility, Self-Direction, and Conformity) and so does the country image (Underdog, Quality and Satisfaction Seeker, and Economic Value Seeker). It was found that instrumental personal

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<sup>2</sup> Doutorado em Administração pela Universidade de São Paulo. Docente da Universidade de São Paulo. End: Av. Bandeirantes, 3900, Monte Alegre, Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brasil. E-mail: jgiraldi@usp.br

<sup>3</sup> Doutora em Administração pela Universidade de São Paulo. Docente da Universidade de São Paulo. E-mail: anaikeda@usp.br

<sup>4</sup> Doutor em Engenharia Elétrica pela Universidade Estadual de Campinas. Docente da Universidade de São Paulo. E-mail: backx@usp.br

values and the country image are both multidimensional constructs. However, there is a weak linear relationship between these two constructs, with personal values influencing negatively the country image formation.

**Keywords:** Personal Values; Country Image; China

## **Imagem do país e valores pessoais instrumentais dos consumidores: há relação?**

### **Resumo**

Apesar das diferenças culturais parecerem ser uma área frutífera para entender variações da imagem do país em, poucos estudos investigaram se e como um componente específico da cultura de uma nação - os valores pessoais dos seus cidadãos - podem influenciar a avaliação de um país. O problema deste artigo é: Existe uma relação entre a imagem do país os valores pessoais instrumentais? Uma pesquisa empírica descritiva e quantitativa foi conduzida e os dados foram analisados por meio de análise fatorial exploratória e confirmatória, utilizando uma amostra de conveniência de executivos brasileiros. Valores pessoais instrumentais dos consumidores são compostas de três dimensões (Civildade, Auto-direção e Conformidade) e bem como a imagem do país (Underdog, Qualidade e buscador de Satisfação, e buscador de Valor Econômico). Verificou-se que o campo da imagem e valores pessoais instrumentais são dois constructos multidimensionais. No entanto, existe uma fraca relação linear entre estes dois construtos, com valores pessoais que influenciam negativamente a formação da imagem do país.

**Palavras-chave:** Valores pessoais; Imagem de país; China

## Introduction

The fast market globalization has led to an unprecedented increase of international commerce during the last decades. With the advent of increasingly faster communication, transport and financial flowing processes, time and distance are rapidly becoming shorter. This fact has led many companies to learn how to enter foreign markets and enhance their global competitiveness. At the same time international commerce expands, a growing literature on marketing is being published regarding research about the country of origin (COO) effect and country image (COI). Several empiric studies have assessed COO effects from different perspectives. In general, it is admitted that a country's image influences consumers' product evaluations, as well as buying decision, generating the fact known as the country of origin (COO) effect. In general, the country of origin effect refers to the influence the information about the country of origin causes on attitudes and behaviour in relation to a product or brand.

For Wang and Lamb (1983) and Agbonifoh and Elimimian (1999), such effect may be considered as an entry barrier of new products in new markets, in the form of negative bias consumers have towards imported products. In times of growing global competition, COO stands as a research subject of considerable interest for both marketing professionals and researchers. Therefore, comprehending its effects can lead to consumers' better buying decisions and, or, better strategies for marketing professionals.

In turn, consumers' choices and behaviours can be influenced by their personal values (MOOIJ, 1998), since values provide standards to consumers so that they can compare alternatives. For Vinson, Scott and Lamont (1977), values are responsible for the selection and maintenance of the ends or goals toward which the human beings strive. Values also regulate the methods and manner in which this striving takes place. According to Rokeach (1973), values play an important role in the selective process of human actions and are useful for understanding how people present themselves to others.

It is well understood that individual values are strongly influenced by the social or cultural system in which people are raised (EREZ; EARLEY, 1993). Vinson, Scott and Lamont (1977) have shown that values are culturally and socially learned. In this respect, it is verified that some researchers have attempted to find a relationship between cultural differences and countries evaluations (BALABANIS and others, 2002). However, according to Balabanis and others (2002), most research treats COI as an independent variable and focuses on its

consequences, rather than on its antecedents (such as culture and values). Among the antecedents that contribute to the formation of a country's image, there can be mentioned: contact between countries, language similarity, demographic factors, lifestyle, culture and personal values (BALABANIS and others, 2002; CHAO; RAJENDRAN, 1993).

Considering the little academic research into how cultural differences among consumers influence their perception of different countries, Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran's (2000) have indicated that country of origin effects vary across cultures on the basis of diverse cultural patterns that are present in different countries, which leads to the need to customize country of origin-based strategies across countries. To Laroche and others (2002), single-culture and also cross-culture studies on country image have implicitly assumed that homogeneous consumer groups exist within the nations studied, which is not true. Roccas and Sagiv (2009) also state that there is a substantial variance in the importance attributed to values across cultures. By ignoring these cultural heterogeneities within nations (including the ones due to personal values differences), marketing professionals may overlook opportunities and threats. Thus, the development of effective international marketing strategies that are sensitive to these cultural differences within a country would be of considerable importance for succeeding in the competitive marketplace (LAROCHÉ and others, 2002).

In particular, Kamakura and Novak (1992) believe that values can be better predictors of attitudes and behaviour, and therefore they provide a more stable and inner-oriented understanding of consumers. Personal values have been found to be associated with a variety of behaviors and behavioural intentions, including consumer purchases (ROCCAS; SAGIV, 2009). Nonetheless, few studies have investigated if and how a specific component of a nation's culture – its citizens' personal values – can influence a country's evaluation, although cultural differences seem to be a fruitful area to understand variations in country image (BALABANIS and others, 2002). Therefore, this study aims to address this gap and presents the following issue for investigation: is there a relationship between instrumental personal values and the evaluation of a country's image? The theoretical reference frameworks required for understanding the theme are presented next.

## Personal Values

The first construct investigated in this study refers to instrumental personal values. Values are the very essence of culture and are thus frequently used to define and describe different cultures (HOFSTEDE, 1991). The origins of culture and, therefore, the formation of human values, can be found in sociology and anthropology, according to Triandis (1994). The first human beings lived in groups in order to satisfy their biological needs more easily (HAVILAND, 1990). By living in groups, individuals received the group's values and culture, which were transmitted from one generation to the next. For Triandis (1994), the cultural elements (such as values) that proved effective resulted in solutions to daily problems and were shared and transmitted to other people. Thus, culture determines the social context in which individuals' values and behaviour operate (ROCCAS; SAGIV, 2009).

Hitlin and Piliavin (2004) state that values are considered as the causes of observed behaviors, being often ignored as too subjective or too difficult to measure accurately. Nonetheless, values play an important role in the selective process of human actions and are useful for understanding how people present themselves to others (ROKEACH, 1973). Hitlin and Piliavin (2004), in their literature review on values, have detected that measuring values, like measuring many social psychological concepts, is imperfect, and thus there is a distinct lack of standardization across theoretical and empirical research. The authors suggest that many researchers, instead of measuring values, in their work examine attitudes, beliefs, or opinions.

The original empirical work was the development of the Rokeach Value Survey (ROKEACH, 1973), which influenced other researchers (HITLIN; PILIAVIN, 2004). Rokeach (1973) believes that elements such as cultural similarities, social system, social class, gender, occupation, education, religion and political orientation can likewise mold the value systems of a large number of people. While personality factors increase the variations among individual value systems, the cultural, institutional and social factors restrict these variations to a reasonably smaller number of dimensions. Values can express the feelings and the purpose of people's lives, often becoming the bases of their struggles and commitments. Therefore, values act as standards that guide consumers' choices, beliefs, attitudes and actions. In this sense, values are evaluative, since they guide individuals' judgments about appropriate behavior both for oneself and for others (PARKS; GUAY, 2009).

Rokeach (1973) believes that personal values are influenced by social values. Distinguishing the two levels of values (social and personal) is crucial for understanding how values are connected with behaviour (ROCCAS; SAGIV, 2009). Many social factors may strongly restrict the number of variations in value standards. Social values define the behaviour that is considered normal for a society or group, whereas personal values define the normal behaviour of the individual. Social values have an important influence on the choice of personal values, which reflect the choices that an individual makes from a variety of available social values. Thus, although social values (religion, family, nation, etc.) influence an individual's personal values, he or she chooses social values in order to develop his or her own set of personal values.

Rokeach (1973) assumes that the total number of values a person has is relatively small; that everybody, everywhere, has the same values to differing degrees; and that the antecedents of human values may be found in the culture, society and social institutions. He created a research scale (RVS - Rokeach Value Survey), in which he divided and measured two kinds of personal values: instrumental and terminal. Terminal values are related to final desired states of existence, while instrumental values refer to desirable modes of conduct. For Peter and Olson (1999), instrumental values are seen as objectives, whereas terminal values are seen as needs, which represent the broadest and most personal outcomes that human beings try to achieve in their lives. Rokeach's (1973) terminal "to have" values are: true friendship, mature love, self-respect, happiness, inner harmony, equality, freedom, pleasure, social recognition, wisdom, salvation, family security, national security, a sense of accomplishment, a world of beauty, a world at peace, a comfortable life, and an exciting life. In turn, instrumental "to be" values are: cheerful, ambitious, loving, clean, self-controlled, capable, courageous, polite, honest, imaginative, independent, intellectual, broad-minded, logical, obedient, helpful, responsible and forgiving.

Instrumental values may be divided into two groups: moral and competence values (WEBER, 1990). There are certain forms of behavior, such as honesty, for example, that lead an individual to believe that he or she is behaving in a moral way. On other occasions the individual shows that he or she reasons in a logical and intelligent way, thereby indicating a competence behavior. A person may feel a conflict between two moral values (such as behaving honestly and in a friendly way), between two competence values (such as using one's

imagination and being logical), or between a moral and a competence value (such as acting politely and offering intellectual criticism). Terminal values are also divided into two groups: personal terminal values, which have to do with the individual personally (such as inner peace and salvation), and social terminal values, which have to do with interpersonal relationships (such as world peace) (WEBER, 1990).

Other academics have tried to reduce the RVS scale to smaller value groups, and the work of Crosby and others (1990) is one of the most restrictive, according to Schwartz (1994). Based on previous factor results, the authors argue that instrumental values can be grouped into three categories (conformity, virtuousness and self-direction), while terminal values can be grouped into three (idealism, security and self-actualization).

With regard to the difference in the importance attributed to terminal and instrumental values across gender, men and women have ranked many values in similar ways: at the top of the list for both genders are a world at peace, freedom, honest, ambitious and responsible (ROKEACH, 1973). Values such as an exciting life, pleasure, imaginative, obedient, intellectual and logical are at the bottom. The greatest difference is for the value a comfortable life, which is in fourth place for men and in tenth for women (HITLIN; PILIAVIN, 2004). However, such classification can vary, depending on the country where the scale is applied.

## Country Image

The second construct analyzed in this study is the country image (COI), which has been defined in many ways in literature. The COI construct is developed from the idea that people usually make stereotyped judgments with regard to other people and countries and, consequently, towards the products manufactured in those countries (BALABANIS and others, 1999). Consumers' stereotypes of countries and people may transcend the assessment of specific brands or products and, up to a point, determine the buying intentions and behaviour of individuals. For Usunier (2006), there is an estimate that the number of publications on topics relating to country image at over 1000, with at least 400 of them being published in academic journals, which demonstrates the huge interest in this research topic.

According to Pharr (2005), the decades of study on the topic have led to an apparently unequivocal conclusion: the product's country of origin may influence the consumers' assessment of this product. Works done on the theme have indicated that the country

image evaluation may be affected by a range of intrinsic (involving the physical composition of the product) and extrinsic (related to the product, but other than its physical composition) information about the product, and also by environmental and cultural factors. To Chuang and Yen (2007), through repeated use and learning, consumers associate the country of origin heuristically and naturally with a particular product attribute (including its quality and price).

While there seems to be a consensus on the fact that the country of origin has an impact on the product evaluation, there is, at the same time, a constant debate about the magnitude of this effect. Particularly, this debate considers the strength of other intrinsic and extrinsic information about the product and also environmental and cultural factors that may facilitate or inhibit the trust in the country of origin. Characteristics that may have an influence on the country-of-origin effect are: consumers' level of education and conservatism, age and gender, fluency in the language of the country, the number of clues about the product, the need for cognition, motivation, degree of involvement, familiarity with the brand and culture (ANDERSON; CUNNINGHAM, 1972; BALABANIS and others, 2002; CHAO; RAJENDRAN, 1993; JOHANSSON; DOUGLAS; NONAKA, 1985; MAHESWARAN, 1994; SCHAEFER, 1997; SHIMP; SHARMA, 1987; ZHANG, 1997). One must highlight that the country-of-origin effect may vary according to the country, the sample used and the products evaluated (MARTIN; EROGLU, 1993).

However, despite the growing interest on the construct called "country-of-origin image", Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) and Laroche and others (2005) indicate that the literature has reached no consensus on how to conceptualize and operationalize it. No systematic analysis of extant conceptualizations and associated measurement scales of the country-of-origin image exist, leaving researchers with little guidance on how to best operationalize the construct in empirical efforts. As a result, many authors mix the concepts of a specific country's image and the image of the products manufactured in such country.

An attempt has been recently made by Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) to organise the different conceptualisations of a country's image, with the establishment of three groups of definitions. The first group considers the country image as a construct involving general images created not only by the products that represent the country, but also by the degree of economic development and by political maturity, culture and traditions, level of technological



advance and industrialisation (ROTH; DIAMANTOPOULOS, 2009). This group is called the one of “overall country image” (COI). For instance, according to Papadopoulos (1993), country image is defined as an image and the thoughts it creates in the consumer’s minds. In the same way, Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) indicate that a country’s image refers to mental representations regarding people, products, culture and national symbols of a country. Jaffe and Nebenzahl (2001) define country image as the mental representations people have about countries. The inferences consumers make of a country are related to the beliefs these consumers have about this country, which are formed by past associations. The formed country image is, thus, the total perception of a country that consumers have when processing the information from several sources over time.

The second group of definitions considers country image in their role as origins of products, the so-called “product-country image” (PCI). This group implies that country image and product image are two distinct (but related) concepts, but country images affect the images of products from that country. For many authors, this conceptualisation is considered “the country-of-origin effect” (BALABANIS and others, 2002; JAFFE; NEBENZHAL, 2001; PHARR, 2005). The third and last group defines country image exclusively as the image of the products from this country, as described by Nagashima (1970), being called “product image” (PI). For this author, the product image is the picture, the reputation, the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products of a specific country. Roth and Romeo (1992) have also focused their conceptualisations on the image of the product instead of the country. In their research, Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) present other authors that have defined the country image as, essentially, a product-related construct.

The inconsistency in the definitional domains of the COO construct noted in Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009)’s research can result in considerable confusion regarding its conceptual specification. Some authors define country image as “perceptions”, others suggest it represents impressions or associations, there are those who support it is a stereotype or schema, and finally, some authors specify the country image as “beliefs”. This lack of consensus seems to be the result of the lack of consensus on the definition of image itself (POIESZ, 1989).

These several notions of country image that exist in the literature, with different specifications of the conceptual domain, have led to a plethora of measurement instruments (ROTH; DIAMANTOPOULOS, 2009). One recent example of COO

measurement instrument is the one by Nebenzahl and others (2003), who have developed a scale for assessing country image, based on the consumer's structure of mental references, rather than the researcher's one. This scale was classified by Roth and Diamantopoulos, (2009) in the second group of definitions on country image; product-country image (PCI) or country-of-origin effect.

This was an approach called "personification". In their study, the authors asked consumers the following question: "A person who buys home appliances manufactured in [name of country] is...", in which [name of country] represents the country whose image is being assessed. When respondents were asked to describe a person who buys a product from a particular country, instead of describing the product itself, the reply obtained is associated with the buyer's own attitudinal, behavioural, social and personality concepts. It is expected that respondents' evaluations regarding people who buy products manufactured in a particular country will reflect the image of products manufactured in that country.

The image dimensions obtained through the application of this scale represent different profiles of personality that are related to persons who buy products from other countries: "Quality and Satisfaction Seeker", "Underdog" and "Economic Value Seeker". If the person is described as a gambler, it means that the purchase of products entails a high risk. Likewise, if a respondent agrees with the negative trait statements, it means that she has strong negative emotions towards the country and/or its products (NEBENZAHL and others, 2003). Thus, the methodology makes it easier to identify the perceptual dimensions that consumers use to evaluate products (NEBENZAHL and others 2003). This scale was used in this study to check the relationship between personal values and the evaluation of a country image.

Other approaches to measure the importance of country image involve the adoption of experimental designs. The typical outline of such studies consists of a product's description according to a number of attributes (or cues) and the assessment of the impact of country image and other cues in the general evaluation of the product (VERLEGH; STEENKAMP, 1999). In these experiments, respondents assess products made in countries which image is considered as favourable and products made in countries with unfavourable images; thus, country image is manipulated as a variable. Other designs include presenting two identical products, with only their origins being changed, or asking consumers to assess products from a series of

different countries. In these cases, product descriptions are offered to the consumers, mainly verbally.

However, little is known on the reasons (or cues) related to good or bad evaluations (VERLEGH; STEENKAMP, 1999). Examples of experimental studies are Chao and Rajendran's (1993) and Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran's (2000). In order to overcome this problem of experiments not providing explanations for the obtained country image, this study proposes a innovative way to measure the country image; by means of the structural equation modelling approach. Such an approach was not been seen before in past researches, constituting a contribution of this research, and it makes possible to evaluate the influence of country image on the attitude towards products, pointing out the dimensions where the country has not a good performance.

After having presented the two constructs under investigation, it has to be stated that, in this study, the argument of Balabanis and others (2002) has been taken into account. These authors indicate that there is little academic research into how cultural differences among consumers influence their perceptions of different countries. Values are a culture's core.

### **Relationship Between Personal Values And Country Image**

According to Balabanis and others (2002), the few studies that have related values to the evaluation of a country's image are based on the concepts of individualism and collectivism, which are more related to social values than to personal values, such as the works of Sharma and others (1995), Watson and Wright (2000), Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran (2000) and Hofstede (2001).

Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong cohesive groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. On the other hand, individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family only (HOFSTEDE, 1991). Hofstede (2001) suggests that collectivist countries show greater bias against foreigners than individualist countries do. Studies that have involved consumer choice have also shown that collectivist people are more averse to foreign products than individualist ones (SHARMA and others, 1995; WATSON; WRIGHT, 2000; GURHAN-CANLI; MAHESWARAN, 2000).

For Sharma and others (1995), collectivist consumers will probably perceive foreign products as a threat to the local economy

and to jobs. Compared to collectivists, individualists will be less likely to make sacrifices for the benefit of their countries or any other group. On the other hand, collectivists have a natural propensity to emphasize the group rather than the individual, tending to evaluate more favourably national products, regardless of being or not better than the foreign ones.

Another important cultural aspect for checking COO influence is the degree of ethnocentrism of the culture in focus. Ethnocentrism may be defined as the way in which a group sees itself as the reference framework, classifying other groups according to its own characteristics. For Shimp and Sharma (1987), the more ethnocentric the consumers are, the more they will tend to see the purchase of foreign goods as something harmful, because their consumption would harm the domestic economy, lead to job losses and be unpatriotic. Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2004) state that ethnocentrism seems to be an important antecedent in the assessment of the product's country-of-origin image. Shankarmahesh (2006), however, indicates that the construct ethnocentrism is sometimes confused with 'country-of-origin bias', although the two topics are distinct and independent of each other. Ethnocentrism would act as a normative construct, influencing the final country image.

An important study that has investigated the relationship between personal values and country image was the one by Balabanis and others (2002), and it has shown that Schwartz (1992, 1994) values (hedonism, power, achievement, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, conformity, tradition, security) are stronger predictors of country image than demographic data, influence of language or direct contact of consumers with the foreign country. Balabanis and others (2002) argue that, although values may provide useful information for adjusting marketing programs, results suggest that the proposed approach will only be successful if the values are used on an ad hoc basis (country by country), taking into account other contextual factors.

In the search on the literature on the theme, no studies on the relationship of personal values (as measured by Rokeach) and country image was found. Despite this fact, there are plenty of results that indicate that social and personal values can explain consumers' purchase behavior (ROKEACH, 1973; SCHWARTZ, 1994). Therefore, this study hypothesis is: Personal values influence the evaluation of a country's image. Since studies that related the country image and Rokeach's instrumental values have not been found, it is not possible to

state, a priori, one hypothesis about which instrumental values would lead to a more intense effect. This relationship is being originally study in this research, which proposes to develop new theory.

## Methodology

In this descriptive-type research (with quantitative data collection and analysis), two constructs have been considered: the country image and consumers' instrumental personal values. With regard to the first construct, in this research, the scale proposed by Nebenzahl and others (2003) was used to measure the country image, as mentioned before. The evaluations about people who buy products manufactured in China were used to evaluate the country image. The research participants were asked to state their degree of agreement with the sentences that described both Chinese electric home appliances and the persons who buy these products (the personification approach).

Since previous research have shown that country image may vary according to the product category under evaluation (D'ASTOUS; AHMED, 1999, NEBENZAHL and others, 2003), it is important to mention that home appliances were analyzed in this study. The choice of home appliances may be justified by the fact that China, the study's target country, manufactures and sells such products in Brazil (where the field research was performed). Consumers' assessments of Chinese home appliances and of people who usually buy such products have been collected by means of a scale ranging from one to nine, according to the degree to which respondents would agree with each statement. The closer the assessment was to number one, the more respondents agreed with the sentences. Note that in the statistical analysis, the items with negative valence were had their scales inverted, so that all the questions would have the same sense. Thus, the closer the score was to nine, the more *negative* was the image associated with the product.

The second construct refers to instrumental personal values. Concerning the type of personal value investigated in this study, due to the widespread use of the Rokeach (1973) RVS scale to measure values, its psychometric properties as a measuring tool are well-documented (KAMAKURA; MAZZON, 1991). Furthermore, Bigoness and Blakely (1996) believe that the Rokeach scale is appropriate for application in western societies such as Brazil; therefore, it is suitable for this study. Moreover, the instrumental values deal with issues related to people's conduct, it is assumed that they would be more

relevant for this study than the terminal values, since the main objective has been to better understand purchasing behaviour. Due to the conceptual superiority of measuring values through individual's evaluation, rather than by ranking them (SCHWARTZ, 1994; BECKER, 1998), a scale to assess values from one to nine, according to their importance to the respondents has been used. The closer to nine, the more important the instrumental value was for respondents.

The survey method was used to collect the information necessary to comply with the proposed objective. The population for this research was defined as "executives from the business and marketing areas that had done Executive MBA courses in institutions located in São Paulo state, Brazil". This state has been chosen, since it is responsible for approximately one-third of the Brazilian Gross Domestic Product, making it the largest economy of South America and one of the biggest economies in Latin America, second after Mexico.

The population has been defined in this way because this group of executives is a segment of interest to several companies, as potential purchasers of foreign products. They could easily afford to pay for the product under investigation in this research (since they are part of the most affluent consumer category). Additionally, because São Paulo is the wealthiest state in Brazil and one of the largest economies in Latin America it was expected that the target population would be well connected internationally. Moreover, although the middle class in Brazil has become a major consumer of electronics and home appliances in Brazil in 2010, displacing the wealthiest families, the per capita spending of these middle class consumers is lower than the upper classes'. It is observed that the middle class in Brazil represents 50.5% of the population and accounts for 45% of household appliances spending in the country, while the upper classes represent only 10.5% of the population, but accounts for 37% of these expenditures (SALLOWICZ, 2010).

As this population is fairly homogenous in demographic terms, a non-probabilistic sample of 192 people has been used in the research, with the elements being chosen using a convenience criterion. Non-probability samples are acceptable for theory testing purposes when the focus of the study is on investigating relationships among constructs and not differences in absolute magnitudes (ROTH; DIAMANTOPOULOS, 2009). However, since the sample elements were not randomly chosen, there is no way to objectively evaluate the sampling error (CHURCHILL, 1991). Therefore, without knowing the

error that can be attributed to the sampling procedures, it is not possible to place limits to the precision of the estimates.

Data were collected by means of a self-administrated questionnaire in electronic form. The questionnaire was placed in an Internet site to which the respondents were directed by means of a link placed in an e-mail invitation. Data were analyzed through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. The analytical method chosen to estimate the parameters of the proposed model was partial least squares (PLS) with SmartPLS v. 2.0.M3. PLS is a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) tool that takes a component-based approach to estimation. To Sirohi and others (1998), PLS is a powerful technique for analyzing latent variable structural equation models with multiple indicators. According to Chin (1998), PLS employs a least-squares estimation procedure that places minimal demands on measurement scales, distributional assumptions, and sample size. Due to this study's relatively small sample size ( $n=192$ , in comparison to the mean number of 238 elements reported in a survey on papers published in MIS Quarterly, by Ringle and others, 2012) and its theory development purpose, the PLS technique seems appropriate.

## Results and Discussions

A total of 192 valid responses were received, and there were no missing values. With regard to the sample profile, all respondents were Brazilian with 36 years old of average age, and a standard deviation of 8.5 years old. Most of them were male (67.4%) and the majority had degrees in engineering (27.5%), followed by business (25.1%) and communication (6.0%). Middle manager was the most frequent job position of the respondents (19.8%), followed by Director (14.6%).

In this research, it was first employed an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to reduce data related to instrumental personal values and to the country image. Data were considered suitable for treatment using factor analysis, according to Bartlett's sphericity test and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test. The KMO test value for factor analysis in the personal values' questions was equal to 0.92 and to 0.84 for the country image. Procedures adopted in the EFA: main components analysis as the extraction method; *eigenvalues* greater than one as a criterion for the number of factors; Varimax rotation method, Cronbach's alpha as the internal consistency check. The orthogonal rotation method was preferred in this research because the factors obtained should not be highly correlated (HAIR JR. and others, 1998), in order to avoid problems related to multicollinearity in the

subsequent regression analysis. As for the instrumental values, three factors were found, which jointly explain 58.94% of the total variance of the elements, named as “Civility”, “Self-direction” and “Conformity” (see Table 1 for factor loadings).

**Table 1: Rotated Component Matrix – Instrumental Values**

Variables	Factor Loadings		
	1	2	3
Loving	0.77		
	2		
Cheerful	0.73		
	5		
Clean	0.73	0.26	
	0	9	
Responsible	0.70	0.42	
	1	4	
Polite	0.67	0.21	0.35
	4	0	3
Helpful	0.67	0.21	0.49
	0	8	7
Honest	0.61	0.56	
	9	0	
Logical		0.82	0.25
		1	0
Intellectual		0.73	0.25
		7	9
Capable	0.54	0.64	
	5	6	
Imaginative	0.31	0.62	
	1	0	
Independent	0.41	0.59	
	3	0	
Courageous	0.54	0.57	
	1	9	
Liberal	0.29	0.55	
	8	4	
Ambitious		0.41	
		0	
Obedient			0.83
			1
Self-controlled		0.32	0.65
		1	9
Tolerant	0.40	0.26	0.47
	9	1	4



The “Civility” dimension represents personal values related to the concern of the respondents in conducting themselves well before the society, in accordance with the social rules of interaction ( $\alpha=.887$ , accounting for 25.58% of the total variance). The “Self-direction” represents personal values related to intellectual aspects of the respondents, who wish to follow a practical orientation in their conduct ( $\alpha=.844$ , and it accounts for 22.51% of the total data variance). Finally, the “Conformity” dimension represents restrictions on actions, inclinations and impulses of people that would probably offend or harm others and violate expectations ( $\alpha=.559$ , explaining 10.85% of the total variability). Despite the Cronbach’s alpha of the last dimension’s was lower than 0.70, it has been decided to keep it in the analyses, since it contains personal values with very different meanings than the other two value dimensions.

In general, there is a similarity among the three personal values’ dimensions derived from the sample used and those seen in the theory about values, suggesting face validity. The dimension found here are related to those observed by Lenartowicz and Johnson (2002), Crosby and others (1990) and Schwartz (1992), with only small differences as to the values that comprise them. As for the country image construct, three factors were also found, shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Rotated Components Matrix – County image

Variables	Factor Loadings		
	1	2	3
Is a lower class person	0.761		
Is stupid, foolish	0.754		
Is a poor person	0.707		
Is unthinking, rash, naïve	0.662		
Is mistaken in choosing the product	0.620		
Will be dissatisfied	0.608	0.340	
Is not knowledgeable about the product	0.598	0.350	
Is stingy	0.574		
Is getting ripped off	0.566		
Doesn't care about quality	0.551		0.340
Is getting a good deal		0.764	
Is correct in choosing the product		0.763	
Will be satisfied		0.678	
Products my friends would not buy		0.629	
Is making the best choice		0.623	
High quality products		0.571	0.401
Is knowledgeable about the product			

	0.556	
Cares about quality	0.509	0.509
Products I like	0.462	0.321
Expensive products		0.688
Is buying a good but expensive product		0.679
Inexpensive products		0.638
Is paying top price for top quality		0.594
Demands high quality	0.363	0.585
Looks for established brand names		0.499
Products I'll be proud to show my friends		0.481
Is a gambler		0.391

It can be seen that the variable “Cares about quality” loads in the same intensity in two different factors (0.509). So, this variable was not considered in the analysis. Also, the variable “Is a gambler” has a weak relation with the factors, showing a factor load of only 0.391 in Factor 3. Thus, this variable was also not considered in the analysis.

For the factors interpretation, it is important to remember that the evaluations were collected by means of grades ranging from one to nine and the closer the grade was to number one, the more respondents agreed with the sentences. Since the items holding negative meaning had their value *inverted*, the closer the score was to nine, the more *negative* was the image associated with the product.

The composition of factor 1 is exactly the same of the dimension named by Nebenzahl and others (2003) as “Underdog”. Only the variable “Is a gambler” is not included in Factor 1 of this research, but it was not considered in the analysis. This way, Factor 1 is also named “Underdog” ( $\alpha=.852$ , explaining 25.99% of the total variance) and it represents the group of sentences that describe people who buy Chinese home appliances as being stupid, not knowledgeable about the product, with low purchasing power, potentially being misled into buying these products and, therefore, will be dissatisfied with the purchase.

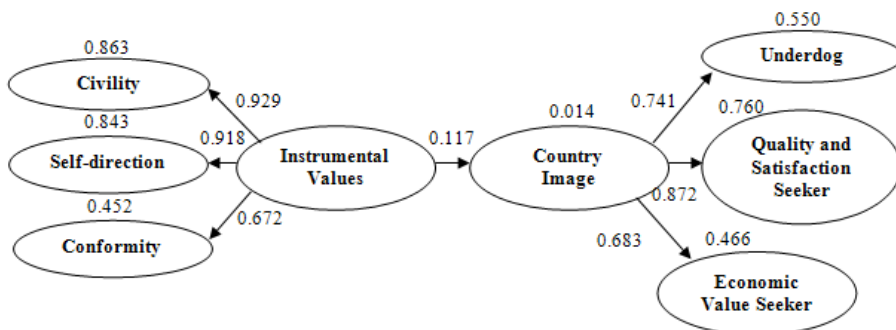
When comparing the elements of Factor 2 with the dimension “Quality and Satisfaction Seeker” by Nebenzahl and others (2003), we note that the composition of the factors is almost the same; only the variables “Demands high quality” and “Products I'll be proud to show my friends” would be missing and that, in this research, are part of Factor 3. Due to the similarities between the dimensions found, Factor 2 shall also be named “Quality and Satisfaction Seeker” ( $\alpha=.83$ ,

explaining 13.05% of the total variance). This factor represents the group of sentences that describe people who buy Chinese home appliances as the ones that are getting a good deal, buying products of high quality and will be satisfied.

Finally, with the exception of the two variables that originally belonged to the “Quality and Satisfaction Seeker”, all the remaining variables in factor 3 are the same as the dimension named by Nebenzahl and others (2003) “Economic Value Seeker” (which is the factor’s name),  $\alpha=.738$  and it accounts for 6.55% of the total variance of the elements. The factor contains the sentences that describe people who buy Chinese home appliances as the ones paying a high price in exchange of good quality, purchasing products that would make their friends proud.

After creating composed measures, originated from the sum of questions composing the three personal values factors and the three country image factors, the personal values’ and the COI’s dimensions have been treated with PLS procedures to estimate the structural model. Following Chin’s (1998) suggestions, the psychometric properties of the measurement model were assessed to examine internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Based on the results from the exploratory factor analyses, the Exhibit 2 shows the relationships analyzed (measurement and structural models – indicators are all reflexive ones).

**Exhibit 2:** Structural and measurement models of second order latent variables



According to Hulland's (1999) suggestions, indicators with factor loadings less than 0.50 were not retained. Instrumental values and country image are second order latent variables (indicators omitted; they were calculated in the previous EFA). Considering the use of resampling methods for significance testing, the model's coefficients were not subjected to bootstrapping or jackknifing, since this research has used a convenience sample, and, therefore, the F test for the determination coefficient and the t test for the regression coefficients cannot be carried out. Therefore, the results found refer only to the sample used and should not be generalized to the research population (inferential statistics were not performed).

The estimation algorithm has been executed and results (coefficients, composite reliability and average variance extracted – AVE) are presented in Table 3. It was used the composite reliability measure that is similar to Cronbach's alpha, but preferred in structural equations modelling, because it estimates consistency on the basis of actual measurement loadings. For the first order factors, the AVE and composite reliability values presented in Table 3 were obtained directly from the SmartPLS software. For the second order factors (Country Image and Instrumental Values), reliability and validity were calculated according to Hair Jr. and others's suggestion (1998, p.612). With regard to the composite reliability, Table 3 presents all values above the cutting point of 0.70, both for first and second order latent variables, which indicate results' reliability.

Establishing convergent validity requires AVE to be greater than 0.50, evidencing that the variance due to measurement error is smaller than the variance captured by the construct (FORNELL; LARCKER 1981).

**Table 3: Structural Model Specification**

	AVE	SQR AVE	Composite Reliability	R Square	Communality	Redundancy
Country Image	0.591985	0.7694	0.811559	0.013668	0.256483	0.003433
Underdog	0.437453	0.6614	0.885094	0.549677	0.437451	0.227018
Economic Value Seeker	0.405062	0.6364	0.825212	0.466195	0.405063	0.178089
Quality and Satisfaction Seeker	0.506382	0.7116	0.877226	0.760286	0.506382	0.379721
Instrumental Values	0.719116	0.8480	0.882770		0.430441	
Civility	0.604824	0.7777	0.914304	0.863373	0.604824	0.519304
Conformity	0.517053	0.7191	0.757683	0.451615	0.517052	0.218067
Self-Direction	0.573418	0.7572	0.903499	0.842635	0.573418	0.480059

In Table 3, it can be seen that with the exception of the factors “Underdog” and “Economic Value Seeker”, the remaining ones indicate acceptable convergent validity. Deleting these items would result in a higher AVE, but a decision was made to retain them in further analyses due to its content validity, and also because they were not much lower than 0.50. Thus, it is assumed that there is convergent validity. Discriminant validity was assessed according criteria suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981) for reflective-indicator models: the square root of the AVE (Table 3) is greater than all corresponding correlations (Table 4 for first order and Table 5 for second order variables).

**Table 4: First Order Latent Variable Correlations**

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
#1. Civility	1.000000					
#2. Conformity	0.551747	1.000000				
#3. Economic V. S.	0.101517	0.064488	1.000000			
#4. Quality S. S.	0.096942	0.024131	0.533801	1.000000		
#5. Self-Direction	0.733695	0.519680	0.137437	0.069126	1.000000	
#6. Underdog	0.045091	0.097630	0.203017	0.431497	0.074180	1.000000

Thus, there is also discriminant validity in the proposed model. Each latent construct account for more of the variance in its own indicators than it shares with another construct. Once again, it is remembered that statistical significance was not assessed, since this research has used a convenience sample and inferential statistics were not performed, since there was no way to objectively evaluate the sampling error (CHURCHILL, 1991).

**Table 5: Second Order Latent Variable Correlations**

	#1	#2
#1. Country Image	1.000000	
#2. Instrumental Values	0.116912	1.000000

Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) indicate that there is a general lack of validity and reliability assessments in studies on COO, a weakness that was overcome in this paper. Since validity and reliability have been established, model results can be discussed. The research problem was: *Is there a relationship between instrumental personal values and the evaluation of a country's image?* To answer the research questions, the  $R^2$  and the regression coefficient of the structural model shown in Exhibit 2 had to be analyzed. With regard to the statistical significance of the estimated model, it has to be remembered that, as this research has used a convenience sample, the inferential tests have not been carried out. Therefore, the results found refer only to the sample used and should not be generalized to the research population.

For this model,  $R^2$  is equal to 0.014. As  $R^2$  measures the percentage of total variation in the dependent variable, which is explained by the variation in the independent variable, with values varying from zero to one, it may be seen that there is a very weak relationship between the constructs Instrumental Values and Country Image, because  $R^2$  is close to zero. Therefore, based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that there is almost no dependence relationship between the consumers' instrumental values and the evaluation of a country's image.

This result may be related to the fact that the majority of the replies about the importance of personal values have been concentrated in the highest points of the scale, since the 18 instrumental values were considered important to the respondents, with some values a little more important than others. This factor may

have resulted in a low  $R^2$  for the relationship between instrumental personal values and the evaluation of a country's image.

However, despite the low value of  $R^2$ , it is still possible to analyze the direction of the relationship between instrumental values and the evaluation of a country's image, by looking at the regression coefficient value (magnitude and valence). In Exhibit 2, this value can be seen (0.117), demonstrating that the instrumental values construct exerts a positive but weak influence on the evaluation of a country's image. Nonetheless, before interpreting the size and valence of this regression coefficient, it is important to remind that higher the values seen in the dependent variable, the more *negative* is the image of Chinese products by the respondents. Regression coefficients express the expected change in the dependent variable for each unit of change in the independent variables. As the coefficient is positive, this means that, when there is an increase in the importance of the instrumental personal values for consumers, there is also an increase in the evaluation of a country's image variable.

Therefore, the image associated with Chinese home appliances is more *negative* as the instrumental personal values grow in importance. For instance, the more important it is for the respondents to behave according to the social rules of interaction (Civility dimension), the more negatively they will evaluate the Chinese home appliances. The more respondents consider intellectual aspects to be important, thus deciding to follow a practical orientation in their lives (Self-direction dimension), the more negatively they would evaluate Chinese home appliances. The dimension Conformity, on the other hand, has a lower correlation with the Personal Values construct and it is less determinant in influencing the evaluation of country image.

All these dimensions have a weak influence on the formation of a country's image (China, in this case). In turn, China image was formed by three dimensions: Underdog, Quality and Satisfaction Seeker and Economic Value Seeker. From these image dimensions, the one with the highest correlation with the Country Image construct was the Quality and Satisfaction Seeker. Therefore, we can conclude that, even if the relationship between the constructs is weak, as the personal values become more important, participants tend to evaluate people who buy Chinese home appliances as the ones who *do not pay* a high price in exchange of good quality, purchasing products that would make their friends proud.

## Closing Remarks

This research aimed to investigate the relationship between personal values and the evaluation of country image (COI). Personal values were chosen as an antecedent variable of the country image formation to be studied, since they are related to decisions that shape several aspects of people's lives, such as one's career choice, as well as to daily behaviors (ROCCAS; SAGIV, 2009). The country chosen for this research was China, since it is one of Brazil's most important commercial partners and also because, over the last 25 years, it has enjoyed impressive economic growth and a rising integration into the world economy.

By using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, it has been found that instrumental personal values and the COI are both multidimensional constructs. However, it was found a weak linear relationship between these two constructs, with personal values influencing negatively the COI: the more the instrumental personal values (Civility, Self-direction and Conformity) grow in importance, the more negative the foreign country is evaluated (which is formed more intensely by the Quality and Satisfaction Seeker dimension).

This research has presented interesting results, since the findings might help to understand how instrumental values and consumers' evaluations of a country and its products are related. Marketing professionals and theoreticians may better understand the role of personal values in the evaluation of a country image and of products manufactured in that country. In this regard, it does not seem relevant for importers to conduct surveys of their customers to determine how to segment their markets on the basis of their personal values, since the influence of this construct on the COI was very weak. Perhaps the evaluation of countries images is more related to social values than to personal ones, since social values define the behaviour that is considered normal for a society or group and influence the choice of personal values.

Nonetheless, this study extenuates one gap observed in the literature review (that studies on the country image subject should be much more attentive to testing the measurement properties of any instrument), since reliability and validity checks were performed. Finally, another contribution of this research is that it has used an indirect approach to measure the evaluation of country image not seen before in the literature (through structural equation modelling).

As to methodological drawbacks of this research, it is worth highlighting that the target population defined for this study has not covered other important purchasing segments of foreign products, like



the professionals and affluent consumers, resident in other regions in Brazil. In this regard, the results found cannot be generalized to all segments of Brazilian people, due to the very specific nature of the sample used. Another restraint refers to the low value found for the  $R^2$ , which indicates that there may be some unexplained factors that need further investigation in future researches. Moreover, the fact that a non-probabilistic sample was used meant that statistical significance tests could not be applied, thus not allowing population generalization to be performed.

These research's results and the limitations presented suggest future research possibilities. For instance, one must indicate that the results obtained might be more deeply investigated in other descriptive studies, using probabilistic samples, aiming at generalizing the results to the populations studied. Moreover, it is worth adding that the research could be applied to other populations that companies are interested in, to check the consistency of the results obtained. Finally, the relationship among the variables is probably a non linear one, which should be deeper investigated and modelled in subsequent studies.

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