



## The influence of country of origin effect on export marketing performance in the cotton industry of Zimbabwe

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the influence of country of origin effect on export marketing performance in the cotton industry of Zimbabwe. Specific variables studied were brand image, customer attitude, customer product evaluation and export market performance. There is little research on the influence of country of origin effect on export marketing performance in the cotton industry of Zimbabwe, hence, the need to carry out this study. The research was conducted through a survey where pre-coded structured questionnaires were administered to respondents from the 5 cotton trading companies. A total of 80 questionnaires were sent to the respondents in the cotton industry. The main data analysis method used was factor analysis using inferential statistics which are total variance explained and rotated component matrix. Hypotheses were tested using one sample T test. Cronbach's alpha proved that the data obtained from the sample was adequate and reliable. Results from the study showed that cotton buyers consider the image of the country when evaluating products; Despite country image organizations prefer cotton lint from Zimbabwe; A positive word of mouth is spread about cotton lint from Zimbabwe; I have or would recommend Zimbabwean produced lint to other organisations; Your organizational perception of a country portrays the reputation of organisations within that country; There will always be continuous purchase of cotton lint from Zimbabwe; There is guarantee you would recommend lint from Zimbabwe. The study brought significant contribution in understanding the concept of country of origin effect in the cotton industry. The study recommended that brand image can be made positive by organizations through unique marketing strategies which can separate the perception customers have about a country to the image of the product; Organizations must ensure customer attitude is positive about the organization; The product must be of high quality so that cotton lint from can be competitive on the global market. Beside the findings, this study had limitations, including a smaller sample size. So, future studies can be done researching the same topic but using a sample which is bigger in size and a geographical delimitation which is wider.

**Keywords:** Country of origin effect, brand image, customer attitude, customer product evaluation, export market performance, cotton

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### 1. Introduction

Companies operating in today's highly internationalized markets should be extraordinarily innovative to attain a constant competitive advantage in challenging global environment. Globalization and internationalization have opened doors to various firms to trade across the globe. Most developing countries like Zimbabwe, Zambia and Ghana eye the international community to increase their profits and improve their economies as a nation, which will in turn trigger improving their performance in the export market. Origin rules serve as conditions for access to markets or to provide protection to domestic industries. And, in the context of preferential arrangements, these rules have increasingly been designed to provide advantage to various producers.

Country of origin effect (COE) is defined as any influence that the country of manufacture, assembly or design has on a consumer's positive or negative perception of a product (Laroche, 2013). Schneider (2002) defines export marketing performance as the extent to which organizational objectives, both economic and strategic, with respect to exporting products / services into a foreign market, is achieved.

Laroche (2013) indicated that country of origin effect influences product evaluations both directly and indirectly through product beliefs. Dinne (1994) emphasizing that present day studies into country-of-origin effects have been largely influenced by the term product-country image (PCI) in order to reflect the effect of economic globalization on country-of-origin perceptions. Product categories in which COE is generally given greater importance include perfumes, wines, cars, high-fashion clothes, consumer electronics and software. For all these products, country specific stereotypes exist.

Renkem and Schofer (2014) in Indian consumer goods concluded that country of origin effect influences a consumer's perception of brand equity via three mechanisms: cognitive, affective and normative. Country-of-origin effect often used influences how consumers predict quality and performance of products. Jarvelainen (2012) in Finnish clothing products noted that in the minds of Russian tourist many of these studies accentuate the significant effect the COO has on consumer's product attribute evaluations. People routinely associate country images with products and services in order to judge and categorize them based on perceived quality and risk levels; therefore, COE can influence the likelihood of a purchase (Jarvelainen, 2012). Dharmadasa (2017) posit that the country-of-origin effect and its impact on consumer purchase intentions and product evaluation have attracted the increased attention of scholars in many academic disciplines over the years owing to its ability to influence consumer purchase behavior. The various studies found by the researcher do not focus directly on how country of origin effect influences the export marketing performance in the cotton industry. Dimitrova, Korschun and Yotov (2017) in their study shows that export volume is dependent on country reputation.

D'Astous and Ahmed (1999), however revealed that country-of-origin effect (design and assembly) as the least important attribute from a set of attributes also including brand, price, and warranty. Nakra (2015) noted that COE is less pronounced in products in which technology is widely diffused across the globe. COO effect in the study of consumer decision making styles in retailing is demoted by Lysonski and Durvasular (2013) as they are of the notion that it is not relevant in influencing customer decision as the world is now characterized by globalization and multinational production. The various studies found by the researcher do not focus directly on how country of origin effect influences the export marketing performance in the cotton industry in Zimbabwe, with which this research is focusing on.

Globally as noted by Moon and Han-Mo Oh (2017) the attitude towards foreign brands, social valuation of the origin of brands, and perceived behavioral control affect overseas distributors' intention to place foreign brands. In addition, there is country-induced bias factors—buyer animosity and country-related affect to the origin of manufacture—are considered to be the antecedents of attitude towards foreign brands. World over COE does not operate as an independent

factor. It's co-varied with the notion of trust which contributes to the country image including: of the country's economy, most countries with a positive COO effect are highly industrialized. This factor is typically strong for export-oriented nations such as Germany or China. The *Cotton-to-Clothing (C2C) Export Strategy* launched by Zimbabwe in (2014) indicated that cotton is produced in 34 of the 42 SSA countries, with 30 countries exporting their output.

In Africa, the export market is mainly dominated by European products as they are more trusted. It's therefore either European or local products not from other African countries. Ramsaran (2015) noted that, Africa needs to adapt quickly to the changing environment in order to make country of origin effect less relevant on the continent's economy. Specifically, in Zimbabwe where production has decreased and contract scheme has collapsed due to rampant side-marketing and ineffective regulatory oversight. The Herald (September 2016) reported that the Zimbabwean cotton industry from being one of global cotton's top-quality producers the sector has virtually collapsed with production levels down to less than 10 percent of normal volumes, therefore not a viable industry. Comesa (2014) noted the area dedicated to cotton slumped from 300000 hectares in 2011/2012 to 110000 hectares during the 2015/2016 agricultural season. This has in turn affected the export market as at some point Zimbabwe exported 740000 tonnes of cotton on average making it one of the largest exporters in ESA, hence successful in the export market. However, the government of Zimbabwe has put in place policies and export incentives through the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe to encourage export market performance aimed at improving the cotton industry and the nation as a whole. Farmers are now getting "free inputs" and 20 million dollars export facility which all is yet to generate results (Zimtrade, 2017). The cotton industry of Zimbabwe has many players but the major players who have been active are: Cottco, a parastatal which was formed in 1969 as Cotton Marketing Board (CMB) and in 1997 privatized and named Cottco and also Southern Cotton Company a private organization formulated in 2001 as FSI Agricon. There is also ETG Parrogt, Alliance, China-Africa and Graffax. The cotton industry generates employment across its numerous sub-sectors thus being a tool for poverty alleviation. It is estimated that, at peak about 300,000 smallholder households (Hunyani-Mlambo et al., 2008). However, the industry is facing challenges as there is a significant growth in popularity of synthetic fiber, lack of innovation and modernization and price vitality in the industry.

Over the years, the cotton industry has been experiencing viability challenges as production declined, with the area dedicated to cotton shrinking. This has in turn affected the exported volumes as quality was also compromised, despite the government measures of putting in place policies and export incentives. The extent to which the drastic decrease in export marketing performance of the cotton industry is attributed by various factors to be analyzed with special attention to the COE.

### 1.1 Research objectives

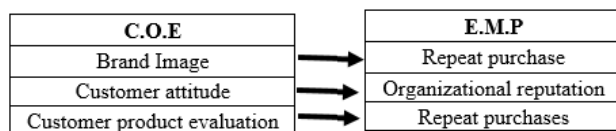
- To determine the influence of brand image on repeat purchase.
- To assess the influence of customer attitude on organizational reputation.

- To establish the influence of customer product evaluation on repeat purchases.

### 1.2 Research hypothesis

- H1: Brand image has a positive influence on repeat purchase.
- H2: Customer attitude has a positive influence on organizational reputation.
- H3: Customer product evaluation has an influence on repeat purchases.

### 1.3 Conceptual framework



Source: Paul and Dasgupta (2010)

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

### 2.1 Country of origin influence on export marketing performance

Export performance of a firm reflects a firm-specific behavior in leveraging its resources and capabilities in an international context at a given point of time (Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2010). Firm export performance is regarded as one of the key indicators of the success of organizational export operations, and as such, it has been an extensively studied phenomenon. Numerous studies have been conducted pertaining to provide better understanding of the factors that make exporting a successful venture (Beleska-Spasova, 2014). Consumers can rely on their perceptions of product quality from a specific country and use them to evaluate other products from the same country. A country image can also vary in time, due to changes in its level of industrialization but also lifestyle patterns. When consumers are asked to evaluate products from different countries, products from industrialized countries are generally positively evaluated (Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2010).

Measures of export performance are usually categorized in two broad groups: financial/economic and non-financial/non-economic measures (Busse, 2008). Attainment of successful export performance is at the heart of the strategic decision-making process for both corporate and public policy decision-makers (Lee, 2010). For companies, the success of the export performance indicates the extent to which firm's objectives, both economic and non-economic, is achieved in an international context at a given point of time and reflects the suitability of the chosen export strategy in responding successfully to the firm and environmental circumstances (Sun and Paswan, 2011). Busse (2008) noted that, Sub-Saharan African countries could increase revenues and benefits from cotton in the future, but subject to three major challenges namely achieving greater value through improved quality, marketing, and valorization of by-products, bridging performance and competitiveness gaps through farm-level productivity and ginning efficiency, and improving the sector's sustainability through institutional development and capacity-building of stakeholders, as well as strengthening of governance structures and management systems.

There is an increasing consensus that a country could be seen as a brand (Sun and Paswan, 2011) and the countries, especially those from the emerging group, can change and

improve their country-brand image, which in turn will enhance their exports marketing performance. For example, a country's food can help boost its country image and thus enhance consumer evaluations of other products from the focal country (Jo and Kim, 2014). Country of origin effect measures the impact of the country in which the product is made on the consumers. It has been found that COE significantly impact on consumer behavior, it is associated with greater brand recall (Juneja, 2013). The brand a country gets associated with can lead to both positives above and negatives, once customers form brand and country association and brand recall is made accordingly; it becomes hard to change the perceptions afterwards (Juneja, 2013). However, research on country image has made little attempt to link image dimensions to product categories. While it has been postulated that COO varies by product categories, research has shown that country quality perceptions (measured as a summary construct) may vary across product categories. For instance, in one study Japanese electronic products received high quality evaluations while Japanese food products received low ones (Lee, 2010). Consumers tend to have stereotypes about products and countries that have been formed by experience, hearsay, and myth, (Citesales.com, 2012).

Sun, Paswan and Tieslau (2016) <sup>[19]</sup> posit that, if a country wants to increase its export performance, it needs to focus more on communication infrastructure and economic development, since these are significant contributors to exports. If a country's economy is growing, the country will export more products and services since consumers, especially younger ones, have developed more positive attitude towards products exported from developing countries (Ahmed and d'Astous, 2003; Jin et al., 2014). Country image, measured as the perceptions of consumers or people outside the focal country, has significant indirect impacts on the country's exports (Sun et al., 2016) <sup>[19]</sup>. A country's existing image could interact with individual factors to either positively or negatively influence its exports. For example, an improvement in a country's image could help improve the country's exports if the country develops its economy, due to the positive impact on the relationship between economic factors and exports. On the other hand, an existing poor image of a country may not inhibit the improvement of the country's export marketing performance (Sun et al., 2016) <sup>[19]</sup>.

### 2.2 Brand image influence on repeat purchase

Customer repurchase intention is of great importance to business practitioners because it is an indication of business continuity, future revenue generation prospects and hence business profitability (Chang, 2012). Customer satisfaction, trust and loyalty are consistently among some of the factors that have increasingly being recognized in the extant literature as predictors of customer intention to re-purchase (Hong and Cho, 2011; Hui, Kandampully and Juwaheer, 2009; Sirdeshmurk, Sigh and Sabel, 2012). The importance of these factors is well documented in the retail literature, especially in Europe, the USA and Asia (Boshoff and du Plessis, 2009; Dabholkar and Sheng, 2012; Hong and Cho, 2011; Huddleston, Whipple, Mattick and Lee, 2009; Olaru, Purchase and Peterson, 2008). Satisfied customers personify a positive brand image that develops trust in the service or product provider and become loyal and as a result make repeat purchases (Chinomona, 2013) <sup>[4]</sup>.



One of the studies on the image of Zimbabwe by Dakin and Carter (2010) <sup>[5]</sup> suggested that no substantial group of UK importers had registered Africa as a footwear source, either continentally, as individual countries or at the level of specific firms. The UK importers argued that the image of the African home business environment was one of poverty, lack of skills, poor transport and out-dated industrial infrastructure (Dakin and Carter, 2010) <sup>[5]</sup>. Being risk disinclined they were reluctant to trade with Zimbabwe or other developing countries, basically a decision based on negative image (Dakin and Carter, 2010) <sup>[5]</sup>. The international market identifies lack of stability in the African business environment as a major cause for the negative image (Dakin and Carter, 2010) <sup>[5]</sup>. UK importers had little or no general knowledge of manufacturing in Africa and let alone Zimbabwe itself, it was not individually attractive due to an image of political isolation, instability and under investment (Dakin and Carter, 2010) <sup>[5]</sup>. Exporters and importers acknowledged these perceptions affected commercial purchase decisions (Dakin and Carter, 2010) <sup>[5]</sup>. As a result, Africa and in particular Zimbabwe, while part of the international business environment, are essentially marginalized and separated from the main stream of international trade which has a tremendous bearing on the performance on the export market despite the local government's efforts to boost performance (Dakin and Carter, 2010) <sup>[5]</sup>.

The country-of-origin effect influences the brand image to a great extent (Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2010). Brand image is the picture, the reputation, the stereotype that business people and consumers attach to products of a specific country (Dakin and Carter, 2010) <sup>[5]</sup>. This image is created by variables such as representative products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history and traditions. Cannon et al. (2008) noted that branding is used to identify the product or service offered and differentiate it with its competitors, thereby making the product preferred by customers. The effect of country image on brand image is moderated by both brand and country reputation (Koubaa, 2008) <sup>[10]</sup>. That is, to say the brand image of a well-known brand of a given product produced in a famous country for that product is likely to be affected differently from the brand image of a well-known brand produced in an unknown country and vice-versa (Koubaa, 2008) <sup>[10]</sup>.

Andreani, Taniaji and Puspitasari (2012) <sup>[1]</sup> stated that brand image is the perception of a brand through brand association in the minds of customers. Image is formed from perceptions that are formed from views, agreements and information to a particular brand product (Matulescu, 2014) <sup>[14]</sup> that is the view, agreements and information customers may have about a country will eventually affect brands from that specific country. Other scholars with the same notion that brand image as various elements and influence repeat purchase are, Keller (2013) noted that brand knowledge comprises awareness, attributes, benefits, images, thoughts, feelings, attitudes and experience. Fetscherin (2010) <sup>[7]</sup> and Zakladna, and Ehrl (2011) <sup>[21]</sup> agree that customer make a purchase decision after attaining knowledge of the country of origin as it is the one that embodies the brand image of a product. This strengthens the assertion by most scholars that brand image indeed influences the purchase intention on people. Koubaa (2008) <sup>[10]</sup> in Japan found that country of origin effect had a significant impact on brand image perception. Both highly

reputed brands and less reputed brands are affected but differently (Koubaa, 2008) <sup>[10]</sup>. High reputed brands experience more erosion when production is shifted to other countries than the brand-origin (Koubaa, 2008). Less reputed brands may benefit from their production in their brand-origin if the brand-origin is well perceived as a producer of the product in question (Koubaa, 2008). A study by Baffes (2009) <sup>[3]</sup> in Ugandan reveal that cotton industry was affected by brand image as after a collapse of the industry in 1960s and it bounced back but is believed to have not reached its full potential as the product was considered to be of low quality on the international market and there was low level of domestic consumption which led to the replacement of the crop by other profitable food crops.

Sondoh et al. (2008) in Pakistan noted that overall, image can generate value in terms of helping customer to process information, differentiating the brand, generating reasons to buy, give positive feelings, and providing a basis for extensions. The model proposed Sondoh et al. (2008) posit that brand image benefits to have an effect on satisfaction, which in turn leads to customers' loyalty. The positive influence of brand image aggregated by the country of origin effect on the brand give an advantage on market and economic performance (Baumgarth, 2010). Consumers' perceptions may not be purely product specific; they may combine both corporate and country images (Hoa, 2013). When a country is associated with a good image, consumers evaluate the quality of specific products from that country as being related to that image (Hoa, 2013).

Additionally, Keller (2008) underscored that, repeat purchase occurs when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds some strong, favorable, and unique brand associations in memory. Christodoulides and de Chernatony (2010) have defined brand image as "a set of perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors on the part of consumers that results in increased utility and allows a brand to earn greater volume or greater margins than it could without the brand name". Image is owned by the brand itself, in the form of views, agreements, and information pertaining to a particular brand of product (Christodoulides and de Chernatony, 2010).

Koubaa (2008) <sup>[10]</sup> noted that consumers are influenced by the brand-origin. Therefore, the better the image the popular a brand can be (Koubaa, 2008) <sup>[10]</sup>. Marketers should be aware of this association. Brand origin creates image that customers associate with products (Hoa, 2013). Brand image influences a customer's future decision on whether they will deal with the same supplier or not (Koubaa, 2008) <sup>[10]</sup>. That is, brand image can positively influence customers' loyalty to a market offering and possibly boost customer commitment (Hoa, 2013).

However, in contrast to brand image, repeat purchase behavior, it's an act of repeat sales on a product or brand that is more influenced by habit (Matulescu, 2014). It is deniable that country image plays a major role in influencing brand image as well as brand perception (Matulescu, 2014). Positive brand image can at times not be as a result of the origin of the product, that is country of origin effect can have no influence on the customer's intention to continuously purchase. Brand image can be made positive by organizations through unique marketing strategies which can separate the perception customers have about a country to the image of the product (Koubaa, 2008) <sup>[10]</sup>.

### 2.3 Customer attitude on organizational reputation

Makanyeza, Macheyo and du Toit (2015) <sup>[13]</sup> suggest that attitude is belief, feeling and experience. Kotler and Keller (2009) <sup>[12]</sup> and Oliver (2010) suggest that customer satisfaction describes a customer's feeling, which can be pleasurable or disappointing thus results in comparing his or her product's perceived performance versus expectations. The customer is satisfied when perceived performance of the product matches expectations (Almossawi, 2012; Kotler, Armstrong, Wong, and Saunders, 2008; Kotler and Keller, 2009) <sup>[11, 12]</sup>. Firms strive to satisfy their customers because satisfied customers are known to engage in repeat purchasing. As such, the profitability of the firm is increased (Aghdaie and Faghani, 2012; Almossawi, 2012; Homburg, Koschate and Hoyer, 2005; Li et al., 2014). Consumer attitude describes the general consumer evaluations toward an object (Kim et al., 2013; Oliver, 2010).

The survival of a manufacturing firm that is dependent upon the consumers' acceptance and purchase of its products. Asshidin, Abidin and Borhan (2016) <sup>[2]</sup> conducted a study to understand repeat purchase intention in terms of different variables that are forecasted to be interrelated with each other; which are the need for uniqueness and attitudes toward international products indicated that the need for uniqueness contribute to the positive attitudes toward international products; whereby as the need for uniqueness increases, Malaysian consumers have increasingly positive attitudes toward international products. However, results also indicate that the relationships that exist between these two variables are very low with only 8 percentage of impact from one to another (Asshidin et al., 2016) <sup>[2]</sup>. Among Malaysian consumers, need for uniqueness is not a strong reason on their positive attitudes toward international products (Asshidin et al., 2016) <sup>[2]</sup>. Kumar et al. (2009) found that a positive relationship between Indian consumers' need for uniqueness and attitudes toward international products. However, attitude gives the ability to appreciate uniqueness for repeat purchase, which results in favorable export performance (Asshidin et al., 2016) <sup>[2]</sup>.

An attitude in marketing terms is defined as a general evaluation of a product or service formed over time (Solomon, 2008) <sup>[17]</sup>. An attitude satisfies a personal motive and at the same time, affects the shopping and buying habits of consumers. Perner (2010) defines consumer attitude simply as a composite of a consumer's beliefs, feelings, and behavioral intentions toward some object within the context of marketing. Attitude can also be result from previous experiences. Cherry (2018) noted that attitudes form directly as a result of experience. Attitudes may emerge due to direct personal experience, or they may result from observation (Asshidin et al., 2016) <sup>[2]</sup>. A consumer can hold negative or positive beliefs or feelings toward a product or service that is positive or negative attitude. Borg (2009) noted that when an individual has a less positive attitude towards something than another individual, his words will also be less favorable towards it.

In Zimbabwe, recent surveys of international buyers have produced mixed findings on the impact of increased competition on the quality of Zimbabwean lint. The buyers' survey conducted by the "Competition and Coordination" project, which asked about the average premium or discount given to different African lint over time, found that there was little difference in the average premium over the A index paid for Zimbabwean lint in 1995- 99 and 2000-04. However, one

respondent who indicated that the premium received by Zimbabwean lint had fallen by 1c/lb between 1995/99 and 2000/04 commented that the premium in 1995/99 was attributable to "good classing (only three players)", whereas the lower premium in 2000/04 was attributable to "new players (exporters/ginners)". Similarly, Estur (2008) found that the premium paid for the top lint grades from Zimbabwe had only fallen by US\$1/lb between the mid-1990s and 2006/08. On the other hand, Estur (2008) also reports that, "PT Apac Inti Corpora classed Zimbabwe cotton in the group of seriously contaminated origins. Based on 2,900 tons inspected in 2004 and 2005, 93 percent of the bales were found to be contaminated, on average 28 grams per ton, including 82 percent of fibrous contaminants. This cotton was likely supplied by newly established ginners" (Hanyani-Mlambo, 2008). This exhibits the influence of attitude on uptake in the international market.

A behavioral intention is defined by the consumer's belief or feeling with respect to the product or service, which has a direct effect to the reputation of the service or product of an organization (Dean, 2010) <sup>[6]</sup>. If the attitude is negative, then reputation will also be negative this will in turn affect export performance as no customer would be comfortable dealing with such as it poses too much risk (Asshidin et al., 2016) <sup>[2]</sup>. In this study, attitude can be towards the country of origin or the specific product for export and as stated by Iedunote (2017). Behavior is the way a person responds to his attitude, which can highly determine whether there will be repeat purchase with a supplier or not. This response is either positive or negative. According to the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), consumer attitude influences consumer purchase behavior. According to this theory, behavior is determined by intentions, which are also influenced by attitudes and subjective norms (Dean, 2010) <sup>[6]</sup>. The result of a study by Gurudu (2009) revealed that the country of origin plays a role by effecting the attitudinal change of the consumers by creating perceptual competitive differences between products in the mind of a consumer during the buying process by dominating the effect of the intrinsic cues of products. Gurudu (2009) posit that "particularly before the COO information implies that agricultural products like this one can still be strong competitor brands in the international market if more promotional work is done on them by positioning the image of the country in parallel to the strong performance of the products".

The relationship between attitude and behavioral intentions has been widely examined and supported empirically (Dean, 2010) <sup>[6]</sup>. There is a positive influence of customer attitude on organizational reputation as attitudes leads to loyalty and loyalty influences word of mouth about a firm (Gurudu, 2009). All this build organizational name, be it good or bad (Ruiz-Molina and Gil-Saura, 2008) <sup>[15]</sup>. Ali and Elham (2013) quoted that attitude towards a brand is the degree of satisfaction that they think a brand will bring to them. Failure to adequately satisfy that need would give a bad name to an organization (Gurudu, 2009). Attitudes can be influenced by many factors outside the product attributes (Dean, 2010) <sup>[6]</sup>. Social and cultural environment as well as demographic, psychographic, and geographic conditions can sometimes shape consumer behavior (Ruiz-Molina and Gil-Saura, 2008) <sup>[15]</sup>. Consumer attitude, if positive, is an advantage to the performance of the export market as it portrays positive reputation of the exporting firm as well (Ruiz-Molina

and Gil-Saura, 2008) <sup>[15]</sup>.

The good corporate reputation is a chance for the companies to achieve successful sustained superior performance (Ruiz-Molina and Gil-Saura, 2008) <sup>[15]</sup>. Attitude raises the probability of following behavior towards a firm, this means following behavior can be good or bad for an organization (Iedunote, 2017). The good corporate reputation has many benefits to the firms such as attracting the investment (Iedunote, 2017). Furthermore, the favorable corporate reputation helps in building consumers' commitment to the company (Ruiz-Molina and Gil-Saura, 2008) <sup>[15]</sup>. Therefore, corporate reputation is considered as one of the valuable corporate intangible assets that all successful organizations and countries should enjoy. However, this can be easily lost if customers have a bad attitude towards product, produced by foreign nations as it will affect the number of customers in the international market (Huang and Sarigöllü, 2012).

According to Akbar (2009), attitude is a subjective norm and perceived behavioral control consist the theory of planned behavior which represents the three conceptually independent determinants of predicting intention and have a significant impact on intentions. Repurchase intention may be the result of customer attitude and commitment towards repurchasing a particular product (Akbar, 2009). A positive corporate brand image is not only help companies to fight competition but also encourage consumers to re-purchases (Iedunote, 2017).

Balla and Ibrahim (2012) postulates that the intention to perform a specific behavior is determined by a person's attitude toward that behavior. Moreover, a person's attitudes toward a specific behavior will be determined by individual's beliefs (Iedunote, 2017). Corporate reputation helps in building consumers' commitment to the company (Balla and Ibrahim, 2012). Choi (2008) postulate that the more positive a customer's attitude is the more they are likely to continue or repeat purchases of a product. Florent, Kalimang'asi and Majula (2014) <sup>[4]</sup> postulated that the problem of attitude to local or non-local products has been recognized in many parts of the world as a key economic issue in the consumer behavior markets. Bias against imports is high among people with positive attitudes towards their host countries (Iedunote, 2017). Likewise, attitudes toward products from culturally similar countries are more favorable than those toward products from culturally dissimilar countries (Florent et al., 2014) <sup>[4]</sup>. Borg (2015) concluded that a negative experience with the country of origin will give customers a less favorable attitude towards that country.

#### 2.4 Customer product evaluation on repeat purchase

Repeat purchase has many influences and product evaluation is one of them. The concept of perceived value is critical in the success of many firms (Belal, Shirahada and Kosaka, 2013; Choi and Kim, 2013; Ntayi, Rooks, Eyaa and Qian, 2010; Oliver, 2010). It describes the trade-off between evaluating a product and consumer sacrifices in acquiring a product for the benefits or utilities that the consumer gets from the product (Belal et al., 2013). It is the desire of every consumer to derive more benefits than costs from the acquisition of a product which influences repeat purchase (Oliver, 2010). As such, firms strive to increase customer value either by adding customer benefits to the product or reducing the sacrifices made (Choi and Kim, 2013). Product evaluation is a result of customer perceived value which has

a subjective nature, since it means an evaluative judgment (Borg, 2015). Balla and Ibrahim (2012) highlights the existence of a relationship between perceived value and customer attitude, considering this variable an important determinant of customer loyalty. Loyalty guarantees relationship growth and repeat purchase with customers; hence loyalty embodies marketing performance in the export market (Borg, 2015). Srivastava (2014) <sup>[18]</sup> noted that country of origin of a product affects purchase decisions because consumers tend to infer the quality of a country's products from its national image.

Rezvani et al. (2012) suggested that, international trade is higher affected of country of origin because it is an indication of the consumers' intentions. The consumers use country of origin as an indication of quality and care more about where the product is made (Rezvani et al., 2012). Consumers place an emphasis on specific relational behaviors in evaluating the product use experience (Srivastava, 2014) <sup>[18]</sup>. Specifically, trust, commitment and expertise seemed more important when products were difficult to evaluate in advance, whereas social benefits and special treatment were mentioned with search and credence products more than experience products (Florent et al., 2014) <sup>[4]</sup>. Therefore, the perception of country of origin can affect the trust that customers have on products which will in turn affect their buying decision (Belal et al., 2013). Consumers employ simple choice tactics when making a decision on products to purchase once off and continuously (Belal et al., 2013). McKinsey (2009) found out that there are stages in customer behavior where there is initial consideration of a product; active evaluation, or the process of researching potential purchases and then closure, when consumers buy brands; after sale evaluation is one that will drive the customer to return and buy again. Repeat purchase decision is reached as a result of numerous experience and evaluation which comes after a number of trials (Belal et al., 2013).

Evaluation is based on product origin as a country is associated with its products (Belal et al., 2013). Country-of-origin effect can be either positive (halo effect) or negative (horns effect) regarding how the consumer rely on the general image of country and this will affect their evaluation of the product and brand (Kotabe and Helsen, 2009; Sivakumar, 2009). It is believed that COO is not a secluded evaluation criteria for consumers and that the COE is stronger if they are not familiar with a product or manufacturing company (Belal et al., 2013).

Patel (2018) found out that no customer satisfaction means no retention. No retention means shrinking customer base and bad word-of-mouth and plummeting profits (Patel, 2018). Retention is a guarantee of repeat purchase but however with no satisfied customers then there will be no export performance as the profits will be shrinking (Patel, 2018). How consumers evaluate a country's produce is important as it influences repeat purchase and increase in business (Kotabe and Helsen, 2009). Findings by Gudero (2009) revealed that consumers tend to give a less flattering rating to products from less developed nations compared to the developed ones. It has been found that in many studies that products originating from more developed countries are also subject to the effect country of origin (Gudero, 2009). However, the evaluation is positive hence influencing high uptake and repeat purchase with developed countries (Gudero, 2009).



### 3.1 Research methods

Positivism philosophy was used since the researcher collected quantitative data in an independent way and the researcher do so in an objective way (Ramanathan, 2008; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009) <sup>[16]</sup>. As supported by Wilson (2010) <sup>[20]</sup>, who argued that using positivism approach ensure you are independent of your research and your research can be purely objective. This research adopted cross sectional survey design (Creswell, 2012; Saunders et al., 2009) <sup>[16]</sup>. The research mainly concentrated on quantitative research approach because the variables can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. The researcher made use of literature by Williams (2011) who emphasizes that quantitative research creates meaning through objectivity uncovered in the collected data and can be used in response to relational questions of variables within the research. Williams (2011) suggested that quantitative research begins with a problem statement and involves the formation of a hypothesis, a literature review, and a quantitative data analysis.

### 3.2 Target population, sampling methods and techniques

The target population was all cotton exporting companies and all companies that purchase Zimbabwean cotton lint. The study employed non-probability sampling method in this type of population sampling, members of the population do not have equal chance of being selected. Participants were drawn from local cotton contracting corporate and foreign and local buyers. Local buyers are: Glendale spinners, Twine and Cordage, Afroran, Dongeinic. Foreign customers are: Luis Dreyfus, Olam International, Branson Commodities, Tariq international, Devcot SA, Reinhart, Tai Yuen. Local producers: Cottco, Southern Cotton Company, ETG Parrogate, Alliance, China-Africa and Graffax. However, due to strict resources actual participants were from Banson commodities, Olam International, Twine and cordage, Cottco and Southern Cotton company. These five companies have about 100 employees in total.

### 3.3 Sample size and sampling procedure

The sample was obtained through using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size table for research. The relationship between sample size and total population is illustrated on the small sample size table. The population from the five

companies chosen is 100 employees. The sample size according to the above-mentioned table is 80. Using that table, a convenience sample of 80 respondents from 5 cotton involved organizations were chosen to participate in the survey based on their willingness to take part in the research.

### 3.4 Research instruments

Closed ended, five-point Likert scale questionnaires were directed to 80 respondents and questions from the research hypothesis and objectives were fused in the questionnaires given to respondents to ascertain country of origin effect on export marketing performance.

### 4.1 Data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings

The response rate was 88%. Cronbach alpha was at 0.797 and was acceptable since the minimum threshold is 0.7 so the there was internal consistency within the data gathered.

### 4.2 Test for sample adequacy

It is a measure of how suited data is for factor analysis. Sample adequacy test ranges from 0 to 1. Data less than 0.6 is considered not adequate. Data from table 1 below shows an acceptable figure of 0.683, therefore, the sample is adequate and factor analysis can be conducted on the data. Bartlett's test of sphericity with an associated significance value of  $p < 0.001$  indicates that we can proceed to conduct further tests using factor analysis.

**Table 1:** Test for sample adequacy

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.683
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1071
		.769
	Df	190
	Sig.	.000

### 4.3 Inferential data analysis

Covers factor analysis by hypothesis, because the data is adequate based on KMO test.

### 4.3.1 Effect of brand image on repeat purchase

Covers an analysis of the findings on influence of brand image on repeat purchase. This is analyzed in form of total variance, scree plot and rotated matrix.

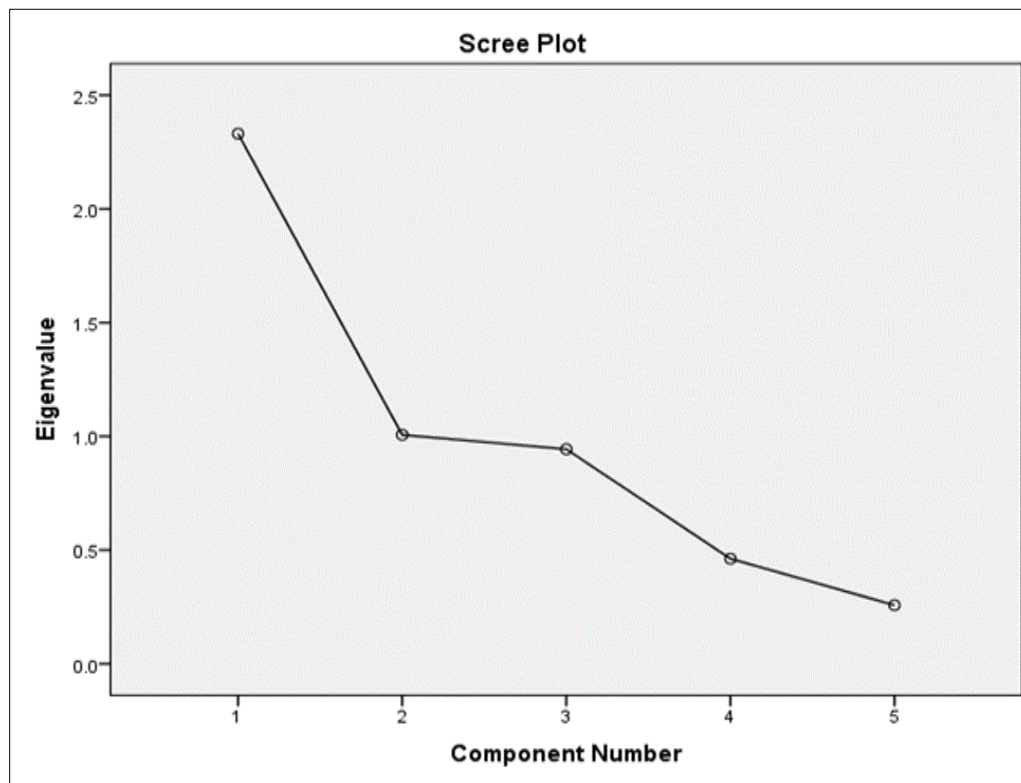
**Table 2:** Total variance explained on effect of brand image on repeat purchase

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.331	46.615	46.615	2.331	46.615	46.615
2	1.006	20.130	66.744	1.006	20.130	66.744
3	.943	18.868	85.612			
4	.462	9.237	94.849			
5	.258	5.151	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 2 shows 2 critical components extracted out of the data using factor analysis which measure the effect of brand image on repeat purchase. The results of factor analysis show that there are 2 components that explain the 66.744% of the total

variance. This means that these 2 components have a major contribution of 66.744% of the total variance. Evidence of these results are further collaborated on Figure 2 below.



**Fig 2:** Scree plot on effect of brand image on repeat purchase

On the Scree plot on Figure 2 above, there are 2 components with Eigenvalues greater than 1. Thus, there are 2 distinct constructs out of the 5 items under brand image and this simply confirms the effect of the 2 components on repeat purchase. These two components best describe the effect of brand image on repeat purchase. From figure 2 and table 2, the Eigenvalues of the two major components are as follows: component 1 has 2.331 and component 2 has 1.006.

**Table 3:** Rotated component matrix on effect of brand image on repeat purchase

	Component	
	1	2
Zimbabwe has a positive image in foreign markets	.614	.516
We consider the image of the country when evaluating products	.842	.073
Our purchase decision is based on your perceived image of the country of origin	.806	.014
We consider country image more than the product itself when making a purchase decision	-.127	.753
Despite country image organizations prefer cotton lint from Zimbabwe	.419	.755

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

#### a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

On Table 3 above, the rotated component matrix shows the factor loadings for each variable i.e. the component on which each variable loaded most strongly on. The rotated component matrix helps to determine what the components represent. One of the sub variables under brand image loaded strongly on component 1 with a factor loading of 0.842 to confirm that image of the country is considered when evaluating products. For the second sub variable, a strong factor loading of 0.755 on component 2 shows that despite

country image organizations prefer cotton lint from Zimbabwe.

From table 3 the findings are: 2 variables contribute 66.744% and they best explain the effect of brand image on repeat purchase. These are: We consider the image of the country when evaluating products; Despite country image organizations prefer cotton lint from Zimbabwe. This is supported by literature as follows:

The effect of country image on brand image is moderated by both brand and country reputation (Koubaa, 2008) <sup>[10]</sup>. That is, to say the brand image of a well-known brand of a given product produced in a famous country for that product is likely to be affected differently from the brand image of a well-known brand produced in an unknown country and vice-versa (Koubaa, 2008) <sup>[10]</sup>. Fetscherin (2010) <sup>[7]</sup> and Zakladna and Ehrl (2011) <sup>[21]</sup> agree that customer make a purchase decision after attaining knowledge of the country of origin as it is the one that embodies the brand image of a product. Additionally, Keller (2008) underscored that, repeat purchase occurs when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds some strong, favorable, and unique brand associations in memory.

However, in contrast to brand image, repeat purchase behavior, it's an act of repeat sales on a product or brand that is more influenced by habit (Matulessu, 2014). It is deniable that country image plays a major role in influencing brand image as well as brand perception (Matulessu, 2014). Positive brand image can at times not be as a result of the origin of the product, that is country of origin effect can have no influence on the customer's intention to continuously purchase (Koubaa, 2008) <sup>[10]</sup>. Brand image can be made positive by organizations through unique marketing strategies which can separate the perception customers have about a country to the image of the product (Matulessu, 2014).



### 4.3.2 Influence of customer attitude on organizational reputation

Covers an analysis of the findings on influence of customer

attitude on organizational reputation. This is analyzed in form of total variance, scree plot and rotated matrix.

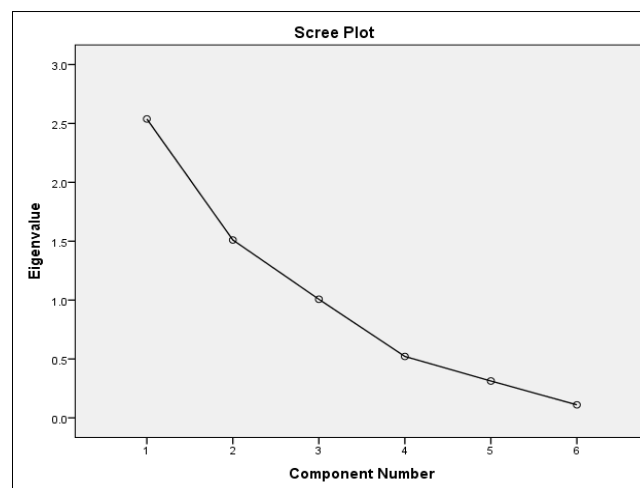
**Table 4:** Total variance explained on influence of customer attitude on organizational reputation

Component	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.538	42.303	42.303	2.538	42.303	42.303	2.165	36.089	36.089
2	1.510	25.169	67.472	1.510	25.169	67.472	1.615	26.910	62.999
3	1.007	16.784	84.256	1.007	16.784	84.256	1.275	21.257	84.256
4	.521	8.689	92.945						
5	.313	5.214	98.159						
6	.110	1.841	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 4 shows 3 critical components extracted out of the data using factor analysis which measure the influence of customer attitude on organizational reputation. The results of factor analysis show that there are 3 components that explain

the 84.256% of the total variance. This means that these 3 components have a major contribution of 84.256% of the total variance. Evidence of these results are further collaborated on Figure 3 below.



**Fig 3:** Scree plot on influence of customer attitude on organizational reputation

On the Scree plot on Figure 3 above, there are 3 components with Eigenvalues greater than 1. Thus, there are 3 distinct constructs out of the 6 items under customer attitude and this simply confirms the influence of the 3 components on organizational reputation. These three components best

describe the influence of customer attitude on organizational reputation. From figure 4.2 and table 4.15, the Eigenvalues of the three major components are as follows: component 1 has 2.538; component 2 has 1.510; component 3 has 1.007.

**Table 5:** Rotated component matrix on influence of customer attitude on organizational reputation

Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>			
	Component		
	1	2	3
Experience with products influences what you tell the next organisation	-.225	-.584	.656
Your organizational perception of a country portrays the reputation of organisations within that country	.275	.186	.877
A positive word of mouth is spread about cotton lint from Zimbabwe	.899	.184	.186
Consumers are willing to pay more for lint coming from Zimbabwe	.655	.552	-.138
Cotton producers are more concerned with making money than satisfying requirements	.895	.125	.072
I have or would recommend Zimbabwean produced lint to other organisation	-.024	.940	.127

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

On Table 5 above, the rotated component matrix shows the factor loadings for each variable i.e. the component on which each variable loaded most strongly on. The rotated component matrix helps to determine what the components represent. One of the sub variables under customer attitude loaded strongly on component 1 with a factor loading of 0.899 to confirm that a positive word of mouth is spread about cotton lint from Zimbabwe. For the second sub variable, a factor loading of 0.940 on component 2 shows that buyers have or would recommend Zimbabwean produced lint to other organisations. For the third sub variable, a factor loading of 0.877 confirms that organizational perception of a country portrays the reputation of organisations within that country.

Table 5 shows that there are three factors that best describe the influence of customer attitude on organizational reputation, these are: A positive word of mouth is spread about cotton lint from Zimbabwe; I have or would recommend Zimbabwean produced lint to other organisations; Your organizational perception of a country portrays the reputation of organisations within that country. These three factors constitute 84.256%. From literature, there is evidence: Makanyeza, Macheyo, and du Toit (2015) <sup>[13]</sup> suggest that attitude is belief, feeling and experience. Kotler and Keller (2009) <sup>[12]</sup> and Oliver (2010) suggest that customer

satisfaction describes a customer's feeling, which can be pleasurable or disappointing thus results in comparing his or her product's perceived performance versus expectations. Cherry (2018) noted that attitudes form directly as a result of experience. There is a positive influence of customer attitude on organizational reputation as attitudes leads to loyalty and loyalty influences word of mouth about a firm, all this build organizational name, be it good or bad (Ruiz-Molina and Gil-Saura, 2008) <sup>[15]</sup>. Consumer attitude, if positive, is an advantage to the performance of the export market as it portrays positive reputation of the exporting firm as well (Ruiz-Molina and Gil-Saura, 2008) <sup>[15]</sup>. Country of origin plays a role by effecting the attitudinal change of the consumers by creating perceptual competitive differences between products in the mind of a consumer during the buying process by dominating the effect of the intrinsic cues of products (Gurudu, 2009). Srivastava (2014) <sup>[18]</sup> noted that country of origin of a product affects purchase decisions because consumers tend to infer the quality of a country's products from its national image.

#### 4.3.3 Effect of customer product evaluation on repeat purchase

Covers an analysis of the findings on the effect of customer product evaluation on repeat purchase.

**Table 6:** Total Variance explained on effect of customer product evaluation on repeat purchase

Component	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.507	50.148	50.148	2.507	50.148	50.148	2.215	44.291	44.291
2	1.307	26.147	76.295	1.307	26.147	76.295	1.600	32.004	76.295
3	.629	12.579	88.874						
4	.348	6.966	95.840						
5	.208	4.160	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 6 shows 2 critical components extracted out of the data using factor analysis which measure the effect of customer product evaluation on repeat purchase. The results of factor analysis show that there are 2 components that explain the

76.295% of the total variance. This means that these 2 components have a major contribution of 76.295% of the total variance. Evidence of these results are further collaborated on Figure 4 below.



**Fig 4:** Scree plot on effect of customer product evaluation on repeat purchase

On the Scree plot on Figure 4 above, there are 2 components with Eigenvalues greater than 1. Thus, there are 2 distinct constructs out of the 5 items under customer product evaluation and this simply confirms the effect of the 2 components on repeat purchase. These two components best describe the effect of customer product evaluation on repeat purchase. From figure 4 and table 6, the Eigenvalues of the two major components are as follows: component 1 has 2.507; component 2 has 1.307.

On Table 7 below, the rotated component matrix shows the

factor loadings for each variable i.e. the component on which each variable loaded most strongly on. The rotated component matrix helps to determine what the components represent. One of the sub variables under customer product evaluation loaded strongly on component 1 with a factor loading of 0.862 to confirm that there will always be continuous purchase of cotton lint from Zimbabwe; A factor loading of 0.888 on component 2 shows that there is guarantee you would recommend lint from Zimbabwe.

**Table 7:** Rotated component matrix on effect of customer product evaluation on repeat purchase Rotated Component Matrixa

	Component	
	1	2
Zimbabwe produced lint is preferred on the export market	.849	-.142
Cotton producers make sure customers are satisfied with the product all the time	.129	.802
There is guarantee you would recommend lint from Zimbabwe	.075	.888
There is consistent trust of Cotton lint produced in Zimbabwe	.854	.266
There will always be continuous purchase of cotton lint from Zimbabwe	.862	.276
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.		
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.		

Table 7 shows that the following 2 factors contribute 76.295%. These are: There will always be continuous purchase of cotton lint from Zimbabwe; There is guarantee you would recommend lint from Zimbabwe. Based on literature the following authors are supporting the results as illustrated below: McKinsey (2009) found out that there are stages in customer behaviour where there is initial consideration of a product; active evaluation, or the process of researching potential purchases and then closure, when consumers buy brands; after sale evaluation is one that will drive the customer to return and buy again. Some scholars argue that repeat purchase decision is reached as a result of numerous experience and evaluation which comes after a number of trials. Rezvani et al. (2012) suggested that, international trade is higher affected of country of origin because it is an indication of the consumers' intentions. The consumers use country of origin as indication of quality and care more about where the product is made (Rezvani et al., 2012). Country-of-origin effect (COE) can be either positive (halo effect) or negative (horns effect) regarding how the consumer rely on the general image of country and this will affect their evaluation of the product and brand (Kotabe and Helsen, 2009; Sivakumar, 2009). Patel (2018) found out that no customer satisfaction means no retention. No retention means shrinking customer base and bad word-of-mouth and plummeting profits (Patel, 2018). Retention is a guarantee of repeat purchase but however with no satisfied customers then there will be no export performance as the profits will be shrinking (Patel, 2018). How consumers evaluate a country's produce is important as it influences repeat purchase and increase in business (Patel, 2018). In findings by Gudero (2009) consumers tend to give a less flattering rating to products from less developed nations compared to the developed ones. Despite that, consumers still purchase and recommend cotton lint from Zimbabwe to other foreign buyers.

#### 4.3.4 Country of origin effect on export marketing performance

Export performance of a firm reflects a firm-specific behavior in leveraging its resources and capabilities in an international context at a given point of time. Firm export performance is regarded as one of the key indicators of the success of organizational export operations, and as such, it has been an extensively studied phenomenon. Numerous studies have been conducted pertaining to provide better understanding of the factors that make exporting a successful venture (Beleska-Spasova, 2014). Consumers can rely on their perceptions of product quality from a specific country and use them to evaluate other products from the same country. A country image can also vary in time, due to changes in its level of industrialization but also lifestyle patterns.

For companies, the success of the export performance indicates the extent to which firm's objectives, both economic and non-economic, is achieved in an international context at a given point of time and reflects the suitability of the chosen export strategy in responding successfully to the firm and environmental circumstances.

Table 8 below shows the overall effect of country of origin effect on export marketing performance. The T-test is at 95% confidence interval using a 2-tailed test and 69 degrees of freedom and the test value =0. All the t values above are above zero and all the mean differences are between the lower and upper intervals. Therefore, country of origin effect affects export market performance. This is supported by literature as follows: There is an increasing consensus that a country could be seen as a brand (Sun and Paswan, 2011) and the countries, especially those from the emerging group, can change and improve their country-brand image, which in turn will enhance their exports marketing performance. Country of origin effect measures the impact of the country in which the product is made on the consumers. Consumers tend to



have stereotypes about products and countries that have been formed by experience, hearsay, and myth, (Citesales.com, 2012).

However, Busse (2008) noted that Sub-Saharan African countries could increase revenues and benefits from cotton in the future, but subject to three major challenges namely achieving greater value through improved quality, marketing,

and valorization of by-products, bridging performance and competitiveness gaps through farm-level productivity and ginning efficiency, and improving the sector's sustainability through institutional development and capacity-building of stakeholders, as well as strengthening of governance structures and management systems.

**Table 8:** One sample test on country of origin effect on export marketing performance

One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Zimbabwe has a positive image in foreign markets	16.741	69	.000	2.329	2.05	2.61
We consider the image of the country when evaluating products	18.086	69	.000	2.314	2.06	2.57
Our purchase decision is based on your perceived image of the country of origin	29.995	69	.000	3.071	2.87	3.28
We consider country image more than the product itself when making a purchase decision	40.494	69	.000	3.557	3.38	3.73
Despite country image organizations prefer cotton lint from Zimbabwe	20.111	69	.000	1.757	1.58	1.93
Experience with products influences what you tell the next organization	12.819	69	.000	1.557	1.31	1.80
Your organizational perception of a country portrays the reputation of organizations within that country	22.350	69	.000	2.814	2.56	3.07
A positive word of mouth is spread about cotton lint from Zimbabwe	24.007	69	.000	2.329	2.14	2.52
Consumers are willing to pay more for lint coming from Zimbabwe	23.954	69	.000	2.314	2.12	2.51
Cotton producers are more concerned with making money than satisfying requirements	34.419	69	.000	3.371	3.18	3.57
I have or would recommend Zimbabwean produced lint to other organizations	33.124	69	.000	1.743	1.64	1.85
Zimbabwe produced lint is preferred on the export market	20.942	69	.000	2.143	1.94	2.35
Cotton producers make sure customers are satisfied with the product all the time	37.187	69	.000	2.886	2.73	3.04
There is guarantee you would recommend lint from Zimbabwe	29.560	69	.000	1.671	1.56	1.78
There is consistent trust of Cotton lint produced in Zimbabwe	17.390	69	.000	2.257	2.00	2.52
There will always be continuous purchase of cotton lint from Zimbabwe	20.459	69	.000	2.286	2.06	2.51

A country's existing image could interact with individual factors to either positively or negatively influence its exports. For example, an improvement in a country's image could help improve the country's exports if the country develops its economy, due to the positive impact on the relationship between economic factors and exports. On the other hand, an existing poor image of a country may not inhibit the improvement of the country's export marketing performance (Sun et al., 2016) <sup>[19]</sup>.

### 5.1 Recommendations

In competitive environment, the only way to stay alive, is to adapt to the shifting from product brand to corporate brand. Brand image can be made positive by organizations through unique marketing strategies which can separate the perception customers have about a country to the image of the product. So, the Zimbabwean cotton industry must focus on creating brand and corporate image, since country image is a political phenomenon which the industry has no control over. However, the industry may lobby government to adopt the expectations of the international cotton buyers by

following the conventions set in the industry globally.

Attitude is belief, feeling and experience, therefore, an organization must ensure customer attitude is positive about the organization. The organization must ensure that customers have positive feeling and experience with the organization. Every encounter must be memorable. Once customers are satisfied, they will tell others about their experience. That is, positive word of mouth and this will create positive organizational reputation. If country of origin is negative but organizational reputation is positive this will neutralize the impact. The products may still be competitive and Zimbabwean lint will still attract many buyers despite the negative country of origin effect. Therefore, organizations in the cotton industry must work on their reputation despite the challenges of country of origin effect to remain competitive in the global cotton industry.

From the study it has been identified that: There will always be continuous purchase of cotton lint from Zimbabwe. This is attributed to the high quality of cotton lint from Zimbabwe. Therefore, companies which export cotton must focus more on product quality, so that when customers evaluate the

product, they will be satisfied despite negative country of origin effect. Since there are stages in customer behaviour where there is initial consideration of a product; active evaluation, or the process of researching potential purchases and then closure, when consumers buy brands; after sale evaluation is one that will drive the customer to return and buy again. Also, from the conclusions it was established that: There is guarantee customers would recommend lint from Zimbabwe. It was also established out that no customer satisfaction means no retention. No retention means shrinking customer base and bad word-of-mouth and plummeting profits. Retention is a guarantee of repeat purchase but however with no satisfied customers then there will be no export performance as the profits will be shrinking. How consumers evaluate a country's produce is important as it influences repeat purchase and increase in business. Therefore, customers to continue recommending the cotton lint from Zimbabwe the product itself must be of high quality such that foreign buyers will continue to buy and also refer cotton lint from Zimbabwe to other countries.

Zimbabwean cotton lint companies could increase revenues and benefits from cotton in the future, but subject to three major challenges namely achieving greater value through improved quality, marketing, and valorization of by-products, bridging performance and competitiveness gaps through farm-level productivity and ginning efficiency, and improving the sector's sustainability through institutional development and capacity-building of stakeholders, as well as strengthening of governance structures and management systems. An existing poor image of a country may not inhibit the improvement of the country's export. Therefore, cotton lint companies must focus mainly on controllable variables such as product quality, organizational reputation and brand image in order to be competitive in the cotton global market. Notwithstanding the fact that country of origin effect affect cotton from Zimbabwe in the global market, cotton players must focus on strengthening their governance structures and management systems.

## 5.2 Areas of future research

Due to the shortcomings of this research outlined in the study future research should be conducted on the influence of country of origin effect on export market performance. Despite the study shortcomings the researcher managed to finish the study and add knowledge to the academic body. However, future studies must investigate the effect of one country of origin variable on export market performance and focusing on an extensive geographical location. Such an extensive geographical delimitation may result in different results to the study thus furthering the body of knowledge.

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