The Effects of Country-Related Affect on Product Evaluations

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Affect toward countries can be generated by people's personal experiences with the country or by targeted advertising campaigns designed to create positive affect toward the country. In four experiments, this research examines the effect of country-related affect (CRA) on the evaluations of products originating from the country. Country-related affect (CRA) systematically influences product evaluations depending on the valence as well as the warmth or competence associations of CRA. Positive CRA enhances evaluations of products with favorable country-related product (CRP) associations, but it boomerangs and decreases evaluations of products with unfavorable CRP associations. Positive CRA engenders high (vs. low) construal processing that directs consumer attention to CRP associations under low (vs. high) arousal conditions (experiments 1 and 2). Experiments 3 and 4 establish that CRA is a unique type of incidental affect that influences product evaluations based on its warmth or competence associations. The implications for country of origin research are discussed.

In January 2011, New York's Time Square witnessed a media blitz of *Experience China*, a video shown on six billboard-size screens featuring more than 50 Chinese celebrities that ran for 2 hours a day for over a month (*Wall Street Journal* 2011). Similarly, in October 2013, Korea organized a free public event in Times Square with cultural shows promoting Korean culture. Thus, governments are spending large amounts of money to promote positive feelings toward their respective countries in hopes of facilitating trade and other business activities (World Travel and Tourism Council 2013). While media coverage confirms that such events do induce positive affect toward the promoted countries, we know very little about the subsequent impact of such positive affect on consumers' evaluations of products from these countries. Despite the prevalence and importance of such positive country-related affect, its impact on and the mechanism by which it influences the product evaluation process has not been fully understood. In this research, four experiments establish that country-related affect systematically influences product evaluations in unexpected ways, depending on the valence as well as the warmth- and competence-related country-specific associations of country-related affect.

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THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Country of Origin and Country-Related Affect

Country of origin serves as an important basis for evaluating products (Hong and Wyer 1989). Past research has primarily examined the effects of product-specific performance and quality-related associations on consumers' evaluations of products originating from the target country. In general, most research has shown that consumers use stereotypical country-related product (CRP) associations as a summary cue to evaluate similar products from the target country (Swaminathan, Page, and Gürhan-Canli 2007). Pos-

itive (vs. negative) product stereotypes lead to more (vs. less) favorable product evaluations. For example, consumers could have positive experiences with electronics made in Japan and therefore view electronics from Japan to be of good quality (Maheswaran 1994). Similarly, consumers may associate France with design and fashion and thus evaluate favorably luxury products made in France (Leclerc, Schmitt, and Dubé 1994).

However, countries are multidimensional and complex constructs. The effect of country of origin can often go beyond CRP associations. Interestingly, limited research has suggested the possibility that country of origin may have an affective meaning for consumers due to non-product-related exposure to the country that is unrelated to specific product-related stereotypes (Batra et al. 2000; Maheswaran and Chen 2006; Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999). These product-unrelated associations are termed as either affective associations (i.e., country-related affect: CRA) or country-related normative (CRN) associations (Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999). Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999, 526) differentiate between these two types of product-unrelated associations and state that "affective associations are generated by direct or indirect exposure to country-related information, whereas normative associations are a function of long standing cultural, political, and economic factors." Neither of these associations is related to the performance of products from that country. While the normative dimension of country of origin has been examined in the context of ethnocentrism and animosity effects (Klein, Ettenson, and Morris 1998), the affective dimension of country of origin has been largely unexplored. Our research suggests that this country-related affect influences product evaluations in unexpected ways.

Country-Related Affect and the Product Evaluation Process: Valence and Arousal

Consumers can develop positive or negative CRA depending on the favorability of their exposure to the country. Extant research has shown that the valence of affect may have an indirect effect on evaluations by influencing the product evaluation process (Kim, Park, and Schwarz 2009). Positive affect signals that the immediate environment is benign and people are safe, whereas negative affect signals imminent threat and a need to address that threat (Schwarz and Clore 1983). Thus, people who experience positive affect often rely on stereotypes in forming judgments, whereas people who experience negative affect are more cautious and scrutinize concrete details. Specifically, positive (vs. negative) affect may result in a high (vs. low) level of construal and a focus on higher- (vs. lower-) level constructs (Labroo and Patrick 2009).

Building on these findings in the country of origin domain, we suggest that positive affect toward a country may induce a high-construal information processing mode and a focus on higher-order cues such as the country of origin. Thus, positive CRA would direct attention to stereotypical country-related product (CRP) associations. If consumers have favorable CRP associations, these associations will have a positive impact on the processing of product attribute information, resulting in more favorable product evaluations. In contrast, if consumers have unfavorable perceptions of a country's products, that is, their CRP associations are negative, positive affect would direct their attention to these unfavorable CRP associations. As a result, the processing of product attribute information will be influenced negatively and subsequent product evaluations will be undermined. In contrast, negative CRA will facilitate a low-construal processing mode (Labroo and Patrick 2009). Therefore, consumers who experience negative CRA are expected to pay more attention to concrete product attributes, and the favorability of CRP associations is not expected to influence either attribute processing or product evaluations. Specifically, under negative CRA conditions, we expect product evaluations to be determined by the type of product information, with strong and persuasive product information delivering more favorable evaluations than weak product information (Chaiken and Maheswaran 1994). Thus, our theorizing leads to the counterintuitive prediction that positive affect can negatively impact product evaluations for countries with unfavorable stereotypic CRP associations.

H1: When consumers experience positive (vs. negative or neutral) country-related affect (CRA), country-related product (CRP) associations are more (vs. less) likely to influence product evaluations.

H2: When consumers experience positive (vs. negative or neutral) country-related affect, country-related product associations are more (vs. less) likely to guide the processing of product attribute information.

H3: When consumers experience negative country-related affect, only the strength of the attribute information will influence their product evaluations.

In addition to valence, the effect of CRA is also likely to vary by the level of arousal that it is associated with. Arousal has been defined as a state of alertness that may vary from wakefulness to drowsiness (Steenkamp, Baumgartner, and van der Wulp 1996). Fedorikhin and Patrick (2007) have suggested (but not validated) the possibility that since arousal signals immediate concerns, it may interfere with the high construal facilitated by positive affect. Thus, under positive CRA, high arousal would disrupt the ability to engage in high-construal processing and, therefore, would dampen consumers' ability to adopt abstract higher-order concepts such as the country of origin. Hence, product evaluations will not be guided by CRP associations. In contrast, under low arousal conditions, positive CRA should lead to the effects predicted in hypotheses 1 and 2. This expectation, relying on a moderation approach to demonstrate the underlying process (Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005), also supports the view that the effect of CRA on product evaluations is an affective process.

H4: High (vs. low) arousal will minimize the high-construal processing induced by positive CRA,

and product evaluations will be less (vs. more) influenced by CRP associations.

CRA and the Stereotype Content Model

The theorizing and hypotheses so far have focused on the effect of CRA on product evaluations and the accompanying underlying process. CRA is similar to incidental affect investigated in past research to the extent that it is induced prior to product evaluation by information that is both unrelated to and uninformative about the product. However, CRA also differs from general incidental affect because it is generated when consumers process information that is related to the country where the product originates and is thus integral to the product's country of origin. So far, our hypotheses are aligned with past research on general incidental affect. However, CRA is a unique type of affect because of its dual function of being incidental to the product and integral to the country. Specifically, depending on whether CRA is induced by warmth- or competence-related country associations, it can result in outcomes that are distinct from general incidental affect.

The Stereotype Content Model (Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007) posits that people make judgments about a target as either warm or competent and that these judgments can form the basis for positive or negative affect elicited by the stereotype. As noted, countries are multidimensional stereotypical constructs that likely form based on different associations that consumers may develop over time. Thus, country-related affect can also be generated from the two primary sources in social judgment: competence and warmth. Competence describes a group's ability, and this includes perceptions of its capability and efficiency. Warmth refers to a group's positive or negative intent, and this includes how friendly, good-natured, and warm the group is perceived to be (Fiske et al., 2007). We suggest that the competence- or warmth-related content of CRA determines whether the effect of CRA on subsequent product evaluations is either a direct, valence-consistent effect or an indirect effect resulting from high-construal processing.

Since competence- (vs. warmth-) related judgments engender perceptions of ability (Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone 2012), affect generated by competence-related judgments may be perceived as directly relevant to product evaluations. In addition, competence and efficiency are often related to business and manufacturing and can have a direct impact on consumers' quality perceptions related to the country of origin. Hence, CRA that arises from competence-related judgments may directly influence product evaluations in a valence-consistent manner, with positive CRA leading to more favorable evaluations than negative CRA. In contrast, affect generated by warmth-related judgments should be perceived as nondiagnostic to the country's product quality. Therefore, warmth-related CRA should not interfere with high-construal processing, resulting in the indirect effect of CRA predicted in hypotheses 1 and 2.

Furthermore, as the direct effect of CRA results from the perceived relevance of competence-related associations of the country of origin, affect that is unrelated to the product and the country (general incidental affect) would not be considered relevant or informative. Hence, this general affect would not differentially impact the product evaluation process regardless of its content (warmth or competence). Thus, only affect elicited by a specific country is expected to have direct valence-consistent effects or indirect effects on product evaluations depending on the content of CRA.

H5: For competence-related CRA, positive affect will result in more favorable product evaluations than negative affect, regardless of the valence of country-related product associations.

H6: For warmth-related CRA, positive (vs. negative or neutral) affect will result in country-related product associations being more (vs. less) likely to impact product evaluations.

H7: The asymmetric effects of CRA for competence- and warmth-related associations on evaluations will only be observed for affect induced by country-specific (vs. country-unrelated) information.

See figure 1, parts *A* and *B*.

OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

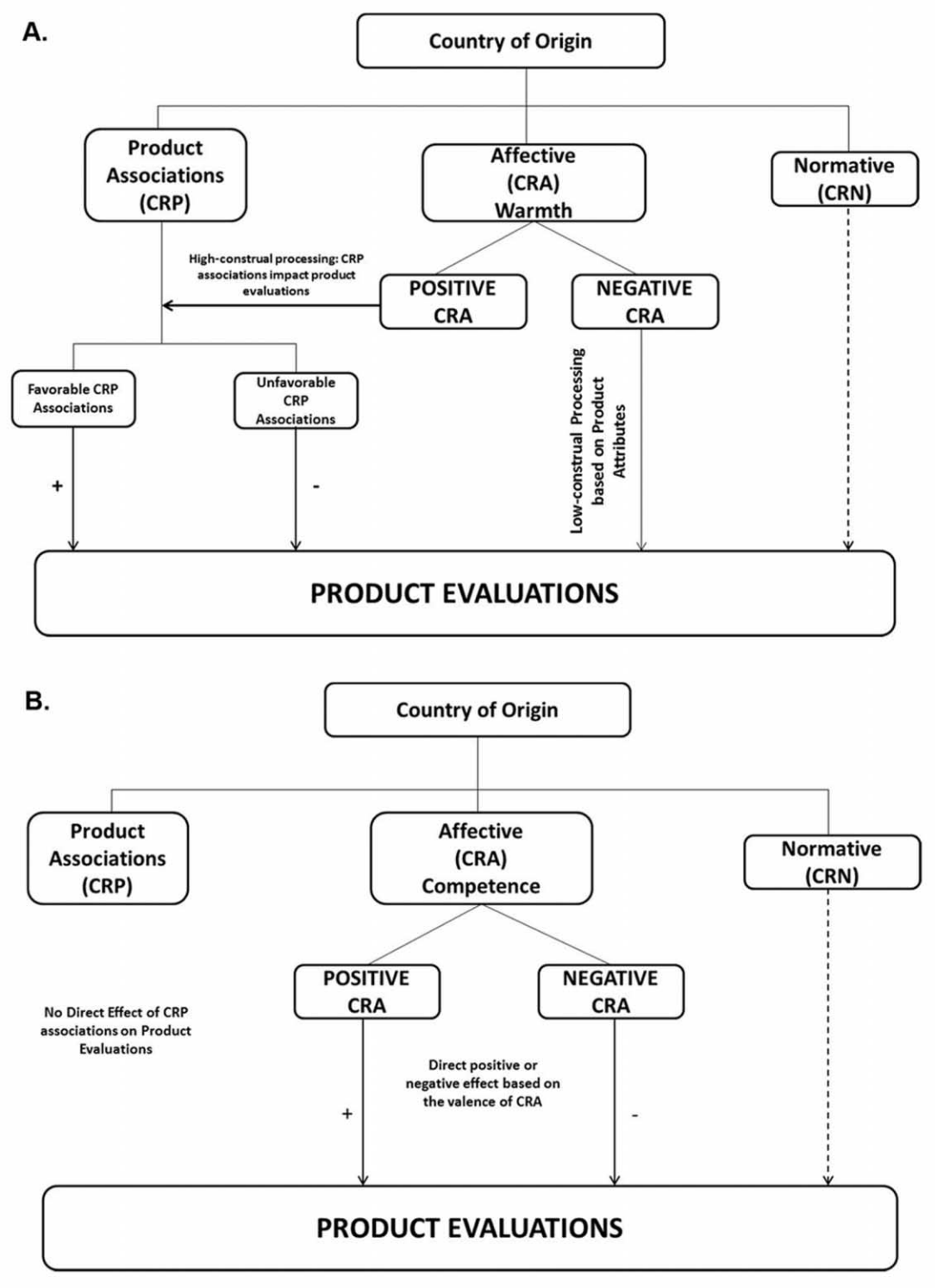
We examine the above hypotheses in four experiments. Experiments 1 and 2 support hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 by showing that positive CRA engenders high-construal processing and product evaluations are based on the valence of country-related product associations. However, for negative CRA, product evaluations are based on specific product attribute information. Using a moderation approach, experiment 2 identifies the affective process mechanism underlying the above asymmetric outcomes and implicates the level of arousal as a moderator of the positive CRA-high-construal relationship (hypothesis 4). Experiments 3 and 4 establish that the effect of CRA on evaluations is uniquely determined by the content of CRA (warmth or competence). Competence-related CRA has a direct valence-consistent effect on evaluations, while warmth-related CRA has an indirect effect on evaluations guided by high-construal processing. These findings support hypotheses 5 and 6 and differentiate CRA from general incidental affect. Experiment 4 supports hypothesis 7 by reinforcing the view that the systematic difference in competence- and warmth-related associations observed in experiment 3 occurs only if the affect was induced by country-specific information.

EXPERIMENT 1

In experiment 1, we tested the premise that country-related affect (CRA) indirectly impacts product evaluations (hypotheses 1, 2, and 3). Two hundred and forty-seven participants at Baruch College received compensation for participation and were randomly assigned to conditions in a 3 (country-related affect: positive vs. negative vs. neutral) ×

FIGURE 1

A, CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR WARMTH-RELATED CRA; *B*, CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR COMPETENCE-RELATED CRA



2 (country of origin: Japan vs. China) × 2 (product description strength: strong vs. weak) between-subjects design. Participants took part in an experimental session in which they completed a few ostensibly unrelated computer-based studies, all presented as being conducted by a market research agency that was assessing consumer reactions to new products. The ostensible first study manipulated the affect toward Japan or China and was presented as market research seeking to determine the traveler reviews and/or information that would appeal to customers for a traveler review website. After the first study, participants moved on to filler studies that required them to rate products in questionnaires presented as market research about different products. Finally, participants started the last study in the session that featured a new digital camera made in either Japan or China. Participants completed dependent measures after reading a product description that depicted the camera as being superior to two competing brands. Participants also indicated the perceived objective of the study in an open-ended suspicion probe, and none of the participants guessed the objective.

Independent Variables

Pretests. Five pretests were conducted in order to establish the validity of the manipulations—country-related affect, country-related product associations, and product description strength. In the first pretest, Japan and China were selected as the focal countries based on two criteria: (i) both had strong favorable or unfavorable CRP associations for a single category (digital cameras), and (ii) participants reported moderate familiarity with both countries. In pretest 2, digital cameras from Japan were perceived to be of higher quality than those from China. For pretest 3, six different versions of an ostensible travel website posting (word count 457) were pretested to validate the positive, negative, and neutral affect manipulations for Japan and China. In the positive (vs. negative) condition, participants read a traveler's account about his/her recent trip to Japan (or China) during which the traveler encountered a problem (lost bag with passport) and the traveler's subsequent pleasant (vs. unpleasant) experience. In the neutral condition, the web post described Japan's (or China's) tourism industry. Pretest 3 validated the CRA manipulations such that, regardless of the country, the positive web post led to more positive CRA than the neutral and negative web posts. The negative web post, in turn, resulted in less favorable CRA than the neutral web post. Two more pretests determined and validated the product description strength manipulations. The detailed descriptions of all five pretests are included as appendix A, which appears online.

Country-Related Affect (*CRA*). As noted, the study was presented as an ostensible series of studies in which participants were required to assess and evaluate different products. Participants first assessed web posts on a travel review website. These web posts were the same as those validated in pretest 3 and served as the CRA inductions. Half of the participants saw either the positive, negative, or neutral post about Japan, while the other half saw one of the three for China. Thus, participants saw only one web post and were asked to read the post very carefully and to try and identify with the experience of the traveler in the web post. Participants then moved on to complete several filler studies that lasted 18–20 minutes.

Country of Origin. Participants proceeded to a study titled the New Product Study and were asked to evaluate a new digital camera (CPS8000) based on the information provided. Half of the participants learned that the digital camera was manufactured in Japan by a Japanese manufacturer, while the other half learned that the digital camera was manufactured in China by a Chinese manufacturer. As determined in the pretest, Japan has more favorable CRP associations with digital cameras as compared to China.

Product Description Strength. Participants then read a 500-word product description that was stated to have been prepared by an independent agency that compared the CPS8000 with two competing brands on six attributes. The product descriptions used in the strong and weak conditions were the ones validated in pretest 5. In the strong product description condition, the CPS8000 digital camera was described as superior to the competing brands on four important attributes (battery life, ease of use, image stabilization, and optical zoom) and inferior on two less important attributes (camera bag included and color of camera body). In the weak product description condition, the digital camera was presented as being superior on four less important attributes (manual control of aperture and shutter, Internet connectivity, camera bag included, and color of camera body) and inferior on two important attributes (battery life and optical zoom).

Dependent Measures

All dependent variables except for cognitive responses were assessed using scales anchored by 1 and 7. Participants evaluated the CPS8000 digital camera on three 7-point scales anchored by "negative/positive," "not at all favorable/very favorable," and "bad/good," which were averaged to form an evaluation index ($\alpha = .96$), with higher values indicating more favorable evaluations. Participants were then given 3 minutes to list any thoughts that came to mind while reading the product description. An independent rater categorized these thoughts as country of origin related or product attribute related (C, A) and as positive, negative, or neutral (+, −, 0; Maheswaran and Chaiken 1991). A valenced country of origin–related (VCT) index was generated by subtracting the number of negative country of origin thoughts from the number of positive country of origin thoughts, while a valenced attributed-related index (VAT) was calculated by subtracting the number of negative attribute thoughts from the number of positive attribute thoughts (Maheswaran and Chaiken 1991).

Participants also rated the extent to which the CPS800

digital camera was portrayed as "superior to" and "inferior to leading brands," had "many" and "fewer positive," and "few" and "many negative" attributes. These items were averaged to form a product description strength index (α = .88), which served as a check of the product description strength manipulation. Participants then indicated how easy, realistic, and believable the product description was (all differences insignificant, $p > .25$) and indicated their level of familiarity with and frequency of usage of digital cameras (1 = not at all; 7 = very much). Participants indicated their level of arousal by indicating on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) the extent to which they felt sleepy, calm, restful, relaxed (averaged to create a low arousal index, α = .84), and tense, agitated, and excited (averaged to create a high arousal index, α = .79). The arousal level indices were seen to be unaffected by the predictor variables ($p > .35$). Participants also completed the Behavioral Identification Form (BIF; Vallacher and Wegner 1989), in which they identified 25 behaviors in either abstract or concrete terms, thus tapping into whether experimental conditions influenced respondent construal level. Participants also indicated their familiarity with the two countries, anchored on 1 (not at all familiar) and 7 (very familiar). Participants then indicated their affect toward Japan (or China) by reporting the extent to which the words *joyful*, *happy*, *upset*, and *frustrated* described their feelings toward Japan (or China), anchored on 1 (not at all descriptive) and 7 (very descriptive). Finally, participants' perception of the purpose of the study was collected, and no participants indicated suspicion about the study objectives. Age, gender, ethnicity, and the numbers of years spent in the United States were indicated at the end of the study, and none of these served as meaningful covariates.

Results

Manipulation and Other Checks. A 3 (CRA) × 2 (country of origin) × 2 (product description strength) ANOVA on the product description strength index revealed a main effect of product description strength, such that the strong (vs. weak) description generated more positive perceptions ($M_{strong} = 6.06$, $M_{weak} = 4.72$; $F(1, 212) = 55.68$, $p < .001$). No effects were observed for respondent familiarity with digital cameras, camera features, and country (all $p > .40$).

To check if country-related affect indeed altered construal level, we created the BIF score based on the behavioral identification form, with higher scores indicating a more abstract construal (Vallacher and Wegner 1989). The 3 (CRA) × 2 (country of origin) × 2 (product description strength) ANOVA revealed a main effect of CRA ($F(2, 212) = 5.59$, $p < .05$). Planned contrasts revealed that the BIF score for positive CRA was higher than that for negative CRA ($M_{pos} = 17.02$, $M_{neg} = 13.27$; $F = 11.42$, $p < .001$) and neutral CRA ($M_{neutral} = 14.54$; $F = 4.89$, $p < .05$), thus supporting the premise that positive CRA and higher construal were related.

The CRA manipulation was also validated. The 3 × 2 × 2 ANOVA on the reported affect toward the country, generated by subtracting the negative affect mean ratings (upset and frustrated; α = .89) from the positive affect mean ratings (joyful and happy; α = .97), revealed a main effect of CRA ($F(1, 212) = 3.36$, $p < .05$). Planned contrasts revealed that positive CRA resulted in more positive affect toward the country ($M_{pos} = 1.76$) as compared to the negative ($M_{neg} = 0.55$; $F(1, 212) = 6.88$, $p < .01$) and the neutral condition ($M_{neutral} = 1.01$, $F(1, 212) = 3.49$, $p < .05$). The affect toward the country was significantly more negative in the negative (vs. neutral) condition ($p < .05$).

Product Evaluations. The 3 (CRA) × 2 (country of origin) × 2 (product description strength) ANOVA on the evaluation index revealed a main effect of product description strength ($M_{strong} = 5.73$, $M_{weak} = 4.52$; $F(1, 212) = 40.53$, $p < .001$) and a significant interaction between CRA and country of origin ($F(2, 212) = 2.78$, $p = .05$). Planned contrasts revealed that the country of origin had a significant effect in the positive CRA conditions: the digital camera was evaluated more favorably when it was manufactured in Japan (vs. China) ($M_{Japan} = 5.64$, $M_{China} = 4.76$; $F(1, 212) = 8.36$, $p < .01$). In the negative and neutral affect conditions, however, the country of origin did not influence product evaluations (negative: $M_{Japan} = 5.37$, $M_{China} = 5.26$; $p > .75$; neutral: $M_{Japan} = 5.25$, $M_{China} = 5.38$; $p > .69$), thus supporting the expected impact of positive CRA on product evaluations (hypothesis 1).

Planned contrasts also showed that in the positive affect conditions, there was a significant main effect of country of origin when the product description was weak ($M_{Japan} = 5.10$, $M_{China} = 4.19$, $F(1, 212) = 4.98$, $p < .05$), and marginally so when the product description was strong ($M_{Japan} = 6.14$, $M_{China} = 5.40$; $F(1, 212) = 3.44$, $p = .07$). In contrast, in both the negative and neutral conditions, only the main effect of product description strength was significant (negative: $M_{strong} = 5.89$, $M_{weak} = 4.64$; $F(1, 212) = 16.77$, $p < .001$; neutral: $M_{strong} = 5.86$, $M_{weak} = 4.85$; $F(1, 212) = 10.74$, $p < .001$). In addition, when the country of origin was China (i.e., negative CRP association), interestingly, the product evaluation was more favorable in the negative (vs. positive) CRA condition ($M_{pos} = 4.80$, $M_{neg} = 5.26$; $F(1, 212) = 3.79$, $p = .05$). The means of all 12 conditions are reported in table 1.

Mediation Analysis: Role of Country-Related Affect. To examine the role of reported affect toward the country on product evaluations in the positive affect conditions, we conducted a moderated mediation analysis using the Process code (model 8; Hayes 2013), which includes a bootstrap analysis of mediation (Zhao, Lynch, and Chen 2010). The analysis revealed a significant direct effect of CRP associations on evaluations (*effect* = −.83, $t(122) = -2.49$, $p = .01$) in the positive CRA conditions, but this effect was not significant in the negative CRA conditions (*effect* = .08, $t(122) = .25$, $p = .81$). In addition, the reported affect toward the country had a significant mediating effect in the positive CRA conditions (*effect* = −.11), with a 95% confidence interval not including zero (CI: −.52 to −.05), but

TABLE 1

EXPERIMENT 1: MEANS FOR PRODUCT EVALUATIONS, VAT INDEX, AND VCT INDEX

	Product description strength: Strong		Product description strength: Weak	
	Country of origin: China	Country of origin: Japan	Country of origin: China	Country of origin: Japan
DV: Product evaluations:				
Positive CRA:				
Mean	5.40	6.14	4.19	5.10
SD	1.36	.87	1.62	1.17
Negative CRA:				
Mean	5.86	5.92	4.67	4.61
SD	1.78	1.55	1.39	1.43
Neutral:				
Mean	5.86	5.87	4.96	4.74
SD	.81	1.01	1.26	1.67
DV: VAT index:				
Positive CRA	−.13	.59	−.71	.50
Negative CRA	.06	.06	−.25	−.12
Neutral	−.14	.07	−.19	−.17
DV: VCT index:				
Positive CRA	−.07	.24	−.06	.21
Negative CRA	−.06	.24	−.17	.18
Neutral	−.14	.27	−.19	.17

NOTE.—DV = dependent variable; CRA = country-related affect; VAT = valenced index of attribute-related thoughts; VCT = valenced index of country of origin–related thoughts.

an insignificant mediating effect in the negative CRA conditions (*effect* = −.07) with a 95% confidence interval including zero (CI: −.37 to .15). The mediation analysis supported the hypothesized process: CRA moderated the impact of country of origin on product evaluations, and this effect was driven by the impact of respondents' affect toward the country in the positive but not negative CRA conditions.

Examining Indirect Effects of CRA on Information Processing: Cognitive Responses. Attribute-related cognitive responses were coded as positive thoughts (e.g., "The CPS8000 camara [*sic*] has internet connectivity, and that is very nice") or negative thoughts (e.g., "The camera's shorter battery life is not pleasant"). Similarly, country of origin thoughts were coded as positive (e.g. "This camera is from Japan! Given that, this will not be just another camera. It will be awesome") or negative thoughts ("Seems like a solid camera, but I really dislike the fact that its [*sic*] made in China. I'm sorry I can't help it"). To establish that country of origin impacted product evaluations by influencing attribute processing in the positive CRA conditions, a 3 (affect) × 2 (country of origin) × 2 (product description strength) ANOVA on the valenced index of attribute-related thoughts (VAT) revealed a significant main effect of country of origin ($M_{\text{Japan}} = .15$, $M_{\text{China}} = -.23$; $F(1, 189) = 5.27$, $p < .05$) and an affect × country of origin interaction ($F(1, 189) = 3.08$, $p < .05$). Favorable attribute-related thoughts were listed for the product from Japan (vs. China) in the positive affect conditions ($M_{\text{Japan}} = .54$, $M_{\text{China}} = -.42$; $p < .001$) but not in the negative affect ($M_{\text{Japan}} = -.03$, $M_{\text{China}} = -.09$; $p = .89$) and neutral affect conditions ($M_{\text{Japan}} = -.05$, $M_{\text{China}} = -.17$; $p = .73$). An identical analysis on the valenced index of country of origin–related thoughts (VCT) index revealed a main effect of country of origin ($M_{\text{Japan}} = .22$, $M_{\text{China}} = -.11$; $F(1, 189) = 4.55$, $p < .05$), but the affect × country of origin interaction was not significant ($F(1, 189) = .03$, $p = .97$), thus supporting hypothesis 2. The means of VAT and VCT indices are reported in table 1.

Mediation Analysis: Cognitive Responses. To examine the indirect impact of CRA on attribute information processing, we conducted a bootstrap analysis of mediation (Zhao et al. 2010) using 5,000 bootstrap resamples. The result revealed that the VAT index mediated the effect of country of origin on product evaluations only in the positive affect conditions. Using Hayes's (2013) Process code, we observed a significant mediating effect in the positive affect conditions (*effect* = −.24), with a 95% confidence interval not including zero (CI: −.53 to −.50), but no mediation in the negative affect conditions (*effect* = .15), with a 95% confidence interval including zero (CI: −.09 to .50). This mediation analysis provided evidence for the posit that attribute processing was influenced by CRP associations in the positive (vs. negative) CRA conditions.

Discussion

Experiment 1 demonstrated that CRA had an indirect effect on product evaluations. When participants experienced positive (vs. neutral or negative) affect toward a country, evaluations for products originating from that country were influenced by the corresponding CRP associations. In contrast, when participants experienced negative or neutral affect toward a country, evaluations were influenced only by product attributes and not by their CRP associations. Ex-

amination of the underlying process validated the conceptualization—participants' perceived affect toward the country mediated the impact of CRP associations on product evaluations in the positive affect conditions. Process evidence also provided support for the indirect effect of CRA on the processing of product information in the positive affect condition. Interestingly, in the positive CRA condition, product evaluations suffered when CRP associations were less favorable. In the next experiment, we investigate this affective process further by varying the arousal level, thus testing hypothesis 4. Employing a moderation approach to test the underlying process (Spencer et al. 2005), we expect that if the underlying process is indeed affective, the curtailing of the influence of positive CRA should diminish its indirect effect on product evaluations.

EXPERIMENT 2

Experiment 2 was designed to test the effect of arousal on the impact of country-related affect (CRA) on product evaluations (hypothesis 4). Because we expected to observe the direct and indirect impact of CRA only in the positive affect conditions, we induced only positive CRA in this study. One hundred and fifty participants were recruited from a student subject pool at Singapore Management University, and they received one course credit for completing a computer-based study conducted in a behavioral lab. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (arousal: high vs. low) × 2 (country of origin: Japan vs. China) × 2 (product description strength: strong vs. weak) between-subjects design. The procedure was similar to that of experiment 1 with the exception of the CRA manipulation. Participants saw a 100-second-long video, presented as a video study that elicited positive affect toward China and manipulated the arousal level. Participants were told that the objective of the study was to identify content in a video that was most memorable and that got their attention. The computer-based study was set up such that all participants had to finish watching the full video before proceeding. Participants were told that a memory task would be administered in the end.

The two video clips were created using various national publicity movies for China. The images included natural scenery, city scenery, arts, sports, and food. Traditional Chinese music was used as the background music for both clips. While both films had similar scenes, the frames switched from one to the other at a faster pace in the high (vs. low) arousal condition. In addition, the tempo of the music in the high (vs. low) arousal condition was faster to be consistent with the frame switches (Gomez and Danuser 2007). A pretest with 40 participants established that both clips elicited positive affect toward China and were equally liked. However, the video clip in the high (vs. low) arousal conditions was rated as more exciting (vs. relaxing) ($M_{high} = 5.00$, $M_{low} = 3.30$; $t(38) = 3.85$, $p < .000$). Pretest participants also rated the music as more exciting in the high (vs. low) arousal condition ($M_{high} = 5.50$, $M_{low} = 3.90$; $t(38) = 5.21$, $p < .01$).

In the filler study, we asked participants to rank Asian movies that they had recently watched. Respondents listed an average of 5.3 movies, of which they listed an average of 2.7 Chinese movies. Ninety percent of participants listed one or more Chinese movies. Whether respondents listed a Chinese movie, as well as their specific preference for Chinese movie(s), did not significantly impact dependent measures. In the subsequent New Product Evaluation task, participants compared a new tablet PC (Brand H) that was designed and manufactured by a Japanese (vs. Chinese) company to an iPad (made in the United States) on six attribute dimensions. In the strong product description conditions, the new tablet was described as superior to the iPad on four important attributes (battery life, processor, capacity, and camera) and inferior on two less important attributes (flash support and connecting ports). In the weak product description conditions, the tablet was described as superior on two less important attributes (flash support and connection ports), on par on two important attributes (battery life and capacity), and inferior on the other two important attributes (camera and processor). Participants also wrote down their thoughts as described in experiment 1. Other dependent measures and the coding for the thought protocol were the same as described in experiment 1. The suspicion probe revealed that six participants linked the video to the product evaluations, and their data were excluded from the subsequent analyses. The rest of the participants either linked the video to the movie study in the filler study or considered them all independent.

Results

Manipulation Checks. After watching the video clip, participants were asked to indicate their affective reactions to China. The 2 (arousal) × 2 (country of origin) × 2 (product description strength) ANOVA on the arousal measure (excited, relaxed [reverse coded], lively; $\alpha = .86$) revealed, as expected, significantly higher arousal in the high (vs. low) arousal conditions ($M_{high} = 4.08$, $M_{low} = 3.53$; $F(1, 136) = 12.43$, $p < .001$). An identical analysis on the affect valence measure (pleased, joyful, happy; $\alpha = .91$) revealed no differences between the two arousal conditions ($M_{high} = 4.57$, $M_{low} = 4.73$; $p = .48$). No other effects were significant (all $p > .45$), and no difference in the enjoyment of the video and the familiarity with and general attitudes toward China was observed.

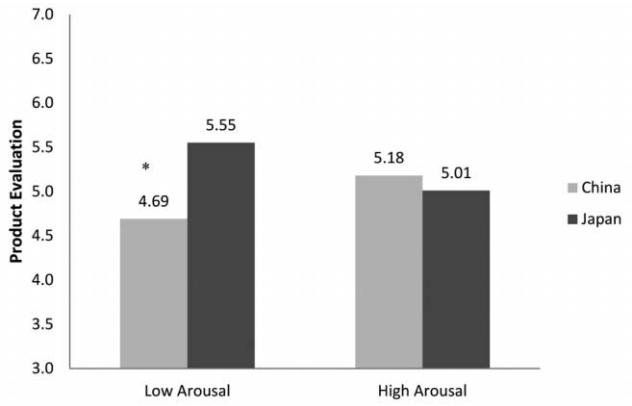
Product Evaluations. A 2 (arousal) × 2 (country of origin) × 2 (product description strength) ANOVA on the product evaluation index ($\alpha = .98$) revealed a main effect of product description ($M_{strong} = 5.36$, $M_{weak} = 4.86$; $F(1, 136) = 5.02$, $p < .05$), an arousal × country of origin interaction ($F(1, 136) = 5.25$, $p < .05$), and an arousal × product description interaction ($F(1, 136) = 9.05$, $p < .05$). When the arousal level was low, product evaluations were significantly lower for the tablet when it was manufactured in China (vs. Japan) ($M_{China} = 4.69$, $M_{Japan} = 5.55$; $p < .01$). When the arousal level was high, the evaluation of the tablet was unaffected by whether it was made in China or Japan

($M_{China} = 5.18$, $M_{Japan} = 5.01$; $p = .21$). No other pairwise comparisons were significant. In addition, we also observed that when arousal was low, as anticipated, there were no significant differences between the two product description strength conditions ($M_{strong} = 5.03$, $M_{weak} = 5.20$; $p = .59$). However, when arousal was high, the product evaluations were significantly higher when the product description was strong (vs. weak; $M_{strong} = 5.69$, $M_{weak} = 4.51$; $p < .001$). These results support hypothesis 4.

Cognitive Responses. A 2 (arousal) × 2 (country of origin) × 2 (product description strength) ANOVA was conducted on the number of country of origin–related thoughts. As anticipated, the number of country of origin–related thoughts was significantly lower in the high (vs. low) arousal conditions ($M_{high} = .05$, $M_{low} = .20$; $F(1, 136) = 3.95$, $p < .05$), thus providing evidence that high arousal may have interrupted high-construal processing and resulted in greater reliance on specific attributes rather than country of origin in product evaluations. In addition, consistent with product evaluations, an identical analysis on the coded valenced index of attribute-related thoughts (VAT) index revealed an arousal × country of origin interaction ($F(1, 136) = 3.90$, $p < .05$) and an arousal × product description strength interaction ($F(1, 136) = 4.28$, $p < .05$). Also, the VAT index was lower for China than Japan ($M_{China} = .08$, $M_{Japan} = .45$; $p < .05$) when arousal was low, but not different between China and Japan when arousal was high ($M_{China} = .30$, $M_{Japan} = .37$; $p > .20$), suggesting that only low arousal resulted in the indirect impact of CRA on product evaluations. Similarly, when the arousal was low, the VAT index was similar for the strong and weak product description conditions ($M_{strong} = .33$, $M_{weak} = .30$; $p > .10$), but was significantly higher in the strong (vs. weak) description condition when the arousal was high ($M_{strong} = .52$, $M_{weak} = .15$; $p < .05$). See figure 2.

FIGURE 2

EXPERIMENT 2: MEANS FOR PRODUCT EVALUATIONS



NOTE.—* $p < .05$.

Discussion

As expected, experiment 2 identified the level of arousal as a moderator of the relationship between positive affect and high-construal processing. Using a moderation approach (Spencer et al. 2005), experiment 2 also highlighted the underlying process and supported the affective nature of the impact of CRA on product evaluations. Specifically, under positive affect, experiment 1 findings were replicated when the arousal level was low. When the arousal was high, high-construal processing was minimized, and there was a significant effect of product description strength. As predicted, if indeed an affective relationship exists, the limiting effects of high arousal would be relevant and would attenuate the indirect effect of CRA on product evaluations.

EXPERIMENT 3

In experiments 1 and 2, the effects of country-related affect (CRA) appear to be similar to those documented for general incidental affect—when the affect is positive, it engenders high construal processing and leads to a focus on the higher-order country-related product (CRP) associations, but when affect is negative, it leads to a focus on concrete product attributes. While these observations are important to establish that CRA acts as a form of incidental affect, the distinguishing feature that differentiates CRA from general incidental affect is that CRA is integral to the country; therefore, CRA will likely be influenced by (*a*) the content of the affect associated with the country and (*b*) whether CRA is elicited by the target country. In experiments 3 and 4, we empirically establish that CRA is unique from general incidental affect by showing that both the content of affect (hypotheses 5 and 6) and whether it is associated with the specific country (hypothesis 7) are meaningful.

In experiment 3, we examined how the content of CRA (specifically, warmth or competence) led to a systematic variation in the impact of CRA on evaluations (hypotheses 5 and 6). This experiment would thus help to identify the unique features of CRA, as well as the conditions under which CRA would extend the indirect effects observed in experiments 1 and 2, or result in a direct, valence-consistent effect on evaluations.

Participants were recruited from a student subject pool at the Singapore Management University, and they received one course credit for completing the study. The experiment was computer-based and was conducted in a behavioral lab. Participants responded to a filtering question in which they were asked to choose from a list of Asian countries those they had traveled to in the past 5 years. If China was not selected, they were redirected to another unrelated study. Two hundred and five participants out of 230 registrants selected China and were randomly assigned to a 5 (type of affect: positive warmth vs. positive competence vs. negative warmth vs. negative competence vs. neutral) × 2 (country of origin: Japan vs. China) between-subjects design. Five

participants were excluded from the analyses based on suspicion probe measures.

The procedure was similar to that of previous experiments. Participants were asked to complete a list of unrelated studies. The first study, titled The Travel Experience Study, ostensibly aimed to collect insights for a local travel agency. In each condition, participants were asked to write about a vivid and detailed travel experience in China. In the positive warmth conditions, participants were asked to write about a travel experience in China that made them feel really good and include three of the following five words—*nice*, *empathetic*, *considerate*, *honest*, and *warm-hearted*. In the positive competence conditions, the five words were *helpful*, *competent*, *resourceful*, *efficient*, and *knowledgeable*. In the negative warmth conditions, participants wrote about a travel experience that made them feel really bad, and they used three of the following words—*cold*, *pessimistic*, *indifferent*, *dishonest*, and *hard-hearted*. In the negative competence conditions, the words were *incompetent*, *inefficient*, *inexperienced*, *unprofessional*, and *amateur*. In the neutral conditions, participants were asked to write as objectively as they could about tourism in China using the words *flight*, *train*, *hotel*, *restaurant*, and *domestic*. Participants were informed that 10 minutes would be allocated for this task. Since the experiment was conducted on computers, the proceed button was disabled for 7 minutes on this screen. On average, participants spent 8.1 minutes on this task, and the writing time did not significantly impact the predictor variables.

In the filler study, participants were asked to choose the country of origin for six movies nominated for the Best Foreign Film Award from a list of 10 countries. The movies were *Hero* (China), *Departures* (Japan), *Life Is Beautiful* (Italy), *A Prophet* (France), *Lagaan* (India), and *Elling* (Norway). About 35% of all participants correctly identified the country of origin for *Hero* and 31% for *Departures*, and this difference was not significant. In addition, whether or not the movies' country of origin was identified correctly did not significantly impact any of the dependent measures in the analysis, including the perceived country-related warmth and competence measures. Participants then responded to the New Product Evaluation task, in which they evaluated a new camera that was designed and manufactured in either Japan or China and was compared to two competing products on six attributes. The thoughts were collected before the evaluation ratings. Participants also rated the importance of country of origin information (1 = not at all important; 7 = very important) and indicated the perceived warmth and competence for a list of countries including China and Japan. All other measures and the thought coding were similar to previous experiments.

Results

Manipulation Checks. As a manipulation check for affect, participants indicated how descriptive the words *joyful*, *happy*, *upset*, and *frustrated* were when they thought about China. A 5 (type of affect: positive warmth, positive competence, negative warmth, negative competence, neutral) × 2 (country of origin) ANOVA conducted on the affect index (positive affect minus negative affect) revealed a significant main effect of affect ($F(4, 190) = 97.59$, $p < .001$). Participants in the positive warmth and positive competence conditions reported similar positive affect ($M_{pos\_warm} = 1.69$, $M_{pos\_compt} = 2.52$; $p = .15$), which was significantly more positive than the neutral condition ($M_{neutral} = .71$; $p < .001$), which in turn was more positive than the negative warm and negative competence conditions ($M_{neg\_warm} = -6.79$, $M_{neg\_compt} = -5.83$). The two negative conditions were not different from each other ($p = .66$).

To check the warmth/competence manipulation, we conducted a 5 × 2 ANOVA on the perceived warmth and the perceived competence for Japan and China. No significant findings were revealed for Japan. In contrast, participants found China warmer and friendlier in the positive warmth (vs. competence) conditions ($M_{pos\_warm} = 4.56$, $M_{pos\_compt} = 4.08$; $p < .01$) but less warm and less friendly in the negative warmth (vs. competence) conditions ($M_{neg\_warm} = 1.24$, $M_{neg\_compt} = 2.10$; $p < .001$). China was also considered more competent and efficient in the positive competence (vs. warmth) conditions ($M_{pos\_warm} = 4.26$, $M_{pos\_compt} = 4.68$; $p < .05$) but less competent in the negative competence (vs. warmth) conditions ($M_{neg\_warm} = 1.87$, $M_{neg\_compt} = 1.53$; $p < .05$). The neutral condition was in the middle for both measures ($M_{neutral\_warm} = 2.73$, $M_{neutral\_compt} = 2.69$), and pairwise contrasts showed significant differences from all other conditions (all $p < .05$).

Product Evaluations. The 5 (type of affect) × 2 (country of origin) ANOVA on the evaluation index revealed a main effect of country of origin ($F(1, 190) = 5.12$, $p < .05$) and an affect by country of origin interaction ($F(4, 190) = 2.40$, $p = .05$). When affect toward China was based on competence, the evaluation of the product from China showed a valence-consistent pattern and was significantly higher for the positive (vs. negative) CRA condition ($M_{ChinaCOO\_pos\_compt} = 5.14$, $M_{ChinaCOO\_neg\_compt} = 4.30$; $p < .05$), thus showing that when CRA was competence-related, positive affect generated more favorable evaluations than negative affect regardless of the CRP association (hypothesis 5).

When CRA toward China was warmth-related, as anticipated, evaluations for the product from China (vs. Japan) were less favorable when CRA was positive ($M_{ChinaCOO\_pos\_warm} = 4.33$, $M_{JapanCOO\_pos\_warm} = 5.27$; $p < .05$), but not different when CRA was negative ($M_{ChinaCOO\_neg\_warm} = 4.70$, $M_{JapanCOO\_neg\_warm} = 4.86$, $p = .70$) or neutral ($M_{ChinaCOO\_neutral\_warm} = 5.17$, $M_{JapanCOO\_neutral\_warm} = 5.05$; $p = .69$). Thus, when the affect toward China was based on warmth, product evaluations were impacted by the CRP associations when positive (vs. negative and neutral) CRA was induced (hypothesis 6).

Additional evidence supporting the premise that the effects of CRA were determined by the content of affect was obtained by contrasting product evaluations of the Chinese product in the positive CRA warmth and competence con-

ditions. Pairwise comparisons revealed that indeed when CRA for China was positive, warmth lead to lower product evaluations as compared to competence ($M_{ChinaCOO\_pos\_warm} = 4.33$, $M_{ChinaCOO\_pos\_compt} = 5.14$; $p < .05$). When CRA toward China was negative, as expected, warmth and competence did not impact product evaluations ($M_{ChinaCOO\_neg\_warm} = 4.30$, $M_{ChinaCOO\_neg\_compt} = 4.70$; $p = .38$). Importantly, we also observed that the content-specific effects of CRA were only evident for the product from China, and not for Japan, thus suggesting that only affect elicited by a specific country impacts product evaluations contingent on whether it is associated by warmth- or competence-related judgments (hypothesis 7). For the Japanese product, the evaluations were similar for the warmth and competence conditions when CRA toward China was positive ($M_{JapanCOO\_pos\_warm} = 5.28$, $M_{JapanCOO\_pos\_compt} = 5.00$; $p = .35$) and when this CRA was negative ($M_{JapanCOO\_neg\_warm} = 4.86$, $M_{JapanCOO\_neg\_compt} = 5.28$; $p = .25$). No other contrasts were meaningful. These results suggest that CRA is a unique type of incidental affect, which, on account of it being integral to the country, must be country-specific and that it is impacted by the warmth- or competence-related associations of CRA.

The 5 × 2 ANOVA on the importance of country of origin showed a main effect of the type of affect ($F(4, 190) = 4.38$, $p < .01$). Pairwise contrasts showed that the country of origin was considered more important in the two positive affect conditions ($M_{pos\_warm} = 4.98$, $M_{pos\_compt} = 4.45$) than in the neutral ($M_{neutral} = 3.99$) and in the negative conditions ($M_{neg\_warm} = 3.74$, $M_{neg\_compt} = 3.76$; all $p < .05$), thus suggesting that country of origin is considered relevant in the positive warm CRA condition.

Cognitive Responses. The 5 × 2 ANOVA on the VAT index revealed a significant effect of country of origin ($F(1, 190) = 7.78$, $p < .01$) and a CRA by country of origin interaction ($F(4, 190) = 4.36$, $p < .01$). Planned contrasts revealed that when CRA was based on competence, the VAT index was more positive for China in the positive (vs. negative) affect conditions ($M_{China\_pos} = .64$, $M_{China\_neg} = -.29$; $p < .01$), but it showed no difference for Japan ($M_{Japan\_pos} = .33$, $M_{Japan\_neg} = .68$; $p > .20$). In contrast, when CRA was warmth-based, the VAT index was significantly less positive for China (vs. Japan) in the positive CRA conditions ($M_{China} = -.55$, $M_{Japan} = .71$; $p = .01$), but it showed no difference in the negative CRA ($M_{China} = .06$, $M_{Japan} = .52$; $p > .20$) and neutral conditions ($M_{China} = .17$, $M_{Japan} = .00$; $p = .57$), replicating experiments 1 and 2.

Mediation. Similar to previous experiments, a bootstrap analysis with 5,000 samples was conducted to examine the mediating effect of the VAT index on the effect of CRP associations on product evaluations, moderated by affect valence and the warmth (vs. competence) associations. The effect of CRP associations on product evaluations was mediated by the VAT index in the positive warmth condition (*effect* = −.14, CI: −.30 to −.01), in the positive competence condition (*effect* = −.08, CI: −.16 to −.02), and in the negative competence condition (*effect* = −.11, CI: −.23 to −.02), but was insignificant, with 95% confidence interval including zero, in the negative warmth condition (*effect* = −.06, CI: −.15 to .02) and the neutral condition (*effect* = −.03, CI: −.15 to .08).

TABLE 2

EXPERIMENT 3: MEANS FOR PRODUCT EVALUATIONS

DV: Product evaluations	Country of origin: China	Country of origin: Japan
Positive CRA competence	5.14	5.00
Negative CRA competence	4.30	5.28
Positive CRA warmth	4.33	5.27
Negative CRA warmth	4.70	4.86
Neutral	5.17	5.05

Discussion

Experiment 3 findings supported hypotheses 5 and 6 by demonstrating that the effects of CRA are contingent upon the content of the CRA, thus supporting the premise that while CRA is incidental to the product, it is also integral to the country and is influenced by the warmth- or competence-related country associations of CRA. In addition, experiment 3 provided support for the country-specific nature of the effects of CRA. As the results revealed, when the affect was based on China, only the evaluations of the Chinese (vs. Japanese) product were impacted. Unlike general positive or negative incidental affect, the effects of CRA were thus contingent on whether it was elicited by the same country as the country of origin of the product being evaluated. We test this premise directly in experiment 4, in which we contrast CRA with general incidental affect. As noted in hypothesis 7, we expect that only when affect is elicited by a specific country, and not when affect is general and incidental, product evaluations will be based on the warmth- or competence-related associations.

EXPERIMENT 4

Design and Procedure

Experiment 4 procedures were similar to experiment 1 procedures with the following exceptions—a general incidental affect condition was introduced, only the positive affect condition was tested, and affect was generated with warmth or competence considerations. In addition, China was the only country used for generating CRA, and China served as the only country of origin of the product to be evaluated. Thus, experiment 4 was a 1-way between-subjects design with four levels: China CRA–warmth based, China CRA–competence based, general affect–warmth based, and general affect–competence based. Similar to experiment 1, in the China CRA conditions, respondents were first asked to read about the positive travel experience of a traveler in China. In the warmth condition, a traveler's positive account of his/her travel in China depicted the Chinese as nice, empathetic, considerate, honest, and warm-hearted, while in the competence condition,

a similar positive description depicted the Chinese as helpful, competent, resourceful, efficient, and knowledgeable. In the general warmth and competence conditions, the same corresponding traveler descriptions were used without specifying the country. Thus, four unique and distinct scenarios corresponded to each of the four conditions. The detailed descriptions of the four scenarios are included as appendix B.

Respondents then read about and evaluated a new digital camera (EOS 890) that was made in China and that was to be launched in the respondents' local market. As done in experiments 1 and 3, the product description described the new camera favorably on six attributes (picture quality, AV connection, color accuracy, battery life, high definition video, and lens shade). One hundred and one respondents then provided evaluations of the product on the same items ($\alpha = .95$) as described in experiment 1. In the two China CRA conditions, respondents indicated the extent to which the words *joyful*, *happy*, *upset*, and *frustrated* described their feelings toward China (1 = not at all descriptive; 7 = very descriptive). In the two general affect conditions, respondents indicated the extent to which the words *joyful*, *happy*, *upset*, and *frustrated* described their own feelings after reading the traveler's description. Planned contrasts performed on participants' reported affect toward China, which was generated by subtracting the negative affect score (taken as the mean ratings of upset and frustrated; $\alpha = .84$) from the positive affect score (generated as the mean ratings of *joyful* and *happy*; $\alpha = .80$), revealed that both the warmth and competence conditions elicited similar positive affect toward China ($M_{\text{China-Warmth}} = 3.35$, $M_{\text{China-Competence}} = 3.14$, $p = .73$). An identical analysis on the reported affect in the general affect conditions revealed that the reported affect, taken as the difference between the mean negative affect ratings ($\alpha = .92$) and the mean positive ratings ($\alpha = .85$), was not different in the warmth and competence conditions ($M_{\text{General-Warmth}} = 2.88$, $M_{\text{General-Competence}} = 3.54$, $p = .24$). In addition, respondents also indicated their perception of China's warmth and competence (1 = very low; 7 = very high). In the China CRA-warmth condition, China was perceived to be significantly more warm than competent ($M_{\text{China-Warmth}} = 5.33$, $M_{\text{China-Competence}} = 4.83$; $p < .05$), while the opposite was observed in the China CRA-competence condition ($M_{\text{China-Warmth}} = 4.79$, $M_{\text{China-Competence}} = 5.74$; $p < .05$). The identical analysis on respondent ratings of warmth and competence in the general affect conditions revealed similar results (warmth: $M_{\text{General-Warmth}} = 6.39$, $M_{\text{General-Competence}} = 5.95$, $p = .07$; competence: $M_{\text{General-Warmth}} = 5.68$, $M_{\text{General-Competence}} = 6.25$, $p < .05$). Respondents also reported arousal on measures identical to those reported in experiment 1, and no systematic difference in arousal was observed across conditions (all $p > .36$). These checks reliably validated the affect and CRA content manipulations.

Results

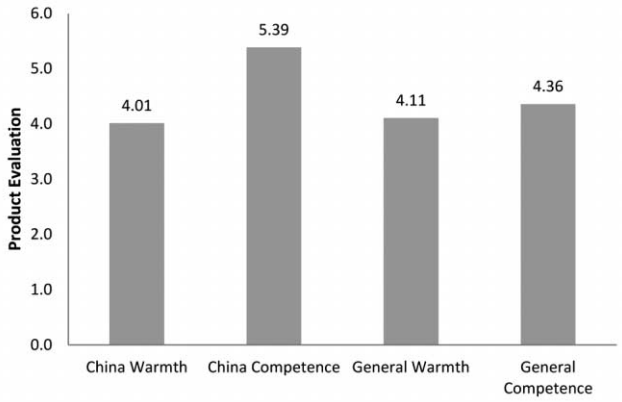
The 1-way ANOVA on product evaluations with the type of affect serving as a between-subjects variable revealed a significant effect of the type of affect ($F(1, 97) = 5.17$, $p < .01$). Planned contrasts revealed that, as expected, evaluations were more favorable for the China-related competence-based CRA condition in comparison to the other conditions ($M_{\text{China-Competence}} = 5.39$, $M_{\text{Others}} = 4.16$; $t(97) = 3.82$, $p < .001$). Central to our conceptualization, when affect was induced by China, product evaluations were more favorable in the competence (vs. warmth) condition ($M_{\text{China-Competence}} = 5.39$, $M_{\text{China-Warmth}} = 4.01$; $t(97) = 11.95$, $p < .001$), but in the general affect condition, the content of the affect had no effect on product evaluations ($M_{\text{General-Competence}} = 4.36$, $M_{\text{General-Warmth}} = 4.11$; $p = .51$). Thus, experiment 4 builds on the findings of experiment 3 by directly demonstrating that the effects of CRA are distinct from general incidental affect because CRA is country-specific and its effects are determined by the content of the affect. See figure 3.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Country of origin is a multidimensional construct that has both product- and nonproduct-related associations. Past research in the country of origin domain has primarily examined the effect of stereotypic country-related product (CRP) associations. In this research, four experiments examined the conditions under which country-related affect (CRA) influences subsequent product evaluations. Experiment 1 provided evidence that positive CRA induced high-construal processing and directed consumers' attention to the preexisting stereotypic CRP associations such that favorable (vs. unfavorable) product stereotypes resulted in favorable (vs. unfavorable) product evaluations. In contrast, under negative affect, evaluations were influenced only by concrete product attribute information. Experiment 2, using a different product category, identified the level of arousal as a moderator of the positive affect–high construal relationship such that high (vs. low) arousal disrupted the high-construal processing induced by positive affect, thus minimizing the impact of country-related product (CRP) associations. The moderation approach used

FIGURE 3

EXPERIMENT 4: MEANS FOR PRODUCT EVALUATIONS



in experiment 2 provided support for the affective nature of the process mechanism underlying CRA effects on evaluations. Experiments 3 and 4 established CRA as a special type of incidental affect, which, while incidental to the product, is also integral to the country of origin and thus influences product evaluations based on country-specific content associations (warmth and competence).

Theoretical and Substantive Contributions

This research contributes to the country of origin literature in three major ways. First, this research demonstrates the interactive effects of country-related affect (CRA) and country-related product (CRP) associations on product evaluations. While past research has conceptualized country of origin as having multiple dimensions, the affective dimension has received limited attention (Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999). We specifically demonstrate how CRA is distinct from CRP associations and show that it can influence evaluations both independently of, and in interaction with, CRP associations. Notably, we report the novel finding that positive CRA may lead to unfavorable product evaluations for countries with negative preexisting CRP stereotypes, thus resulting in a boomerang effect of positive CRA.

Second, this research shows that depending on the content of associations (warmth- or competence-related), CRA uniquely influences product evaluations either indirectly by influencing the product evaluation process or directly in a valence-consistent manner. While country of origin has been viewed as having warmth- or competence-related associations, the systematic influence of these variations in the stereotype content on subsequent product evaluations has not been fully understood (Fiske et al. 2007). Our findings show that competence- (vs. warmth-) based CRA directly influences product evaluations in a valence-consistent manner due to its greater perceived relevance for product evaluations.

Finally, this research documents the affective mechanism underlying these effects and identifies the moderating role of arousal on the effects of CRA on product evaluations. While past research has suggested that arousal is likely to moderate the positive affect–high construal processing relationship, this has not been empirically validated. While this effect is demonstrated in the country of origin context, it may also be of relevance to general incidental affect situations.

From a marketing perspective, our findings are relevant for managing nation equity (Maheswaran and Chen 2006). As noted, several countries are actively building nation equity to promote exports, attract foreign investment, and encourage tourism by sponsoring international events or broadcasting commercials (e.g., the "Incredible India" advertising campaign, or the "The Island of Bahamas" advertising campaign). We suggest that inducing positive CRA in advertising may only be productive for countries with favorable CRP associations. However, countries with negative CRP associations would benefit by addressing these negative CRP associations before engaging in national image advertising because of the boomerang effect documented in this research. Our research also implies that for countries with less favorable CRP associations, it may be an effective strategy to create increased levels of active engagement (arousal) with the country to minimize high-construal processing, as well as to advertise products on specific concrete features in order to decrease the salience of the unfavorable CRP associations. In addition, countries should aim to base CRA on competence-based associations. CRA based on competence judgments may result in favorable product evaluations, regardless of the valence of CRP associations.

Limitations and Future Research

The process findings in experiments 1 and 2 raised the possibility that the effects of CRA were similar to those documented in past research for general incidental affect and thus minimized the utility of examining CRA. However, Experiments 3 and 4 were able to differentiate CRA from general incidental affect by showing that only country-specific associations accounted for the pattern of response observed in our research. For example, in experiment 3, we observed that the content of CRA was meaningful and that positive affect induced for China (vs. Japan) had no effect on evaluations for products from Japan. Experiment 4 explicitly contrasted CRA and general affect and also found that the asymmetric pattern of response for warmth and competence was only obtained for CRA. Thus, CRA is a type of incidental affect, yet it uniquely influences product evaluations due to its country-specific nature.

This research provided insights on how positive affect induced by non-product-related and country-specific factors such as personal travel experiences and country-related imagery in media influences product evaluations. The efficacy of our findings for other positive or negative country-related affective contexts that are more enduring, such as ethnocentrism or animosity, or that are induced by macro factors, such as politics, economic development, and culture, need additional investigation. These enduring and chronic affective associations to countries are termed *country-related normative* (CRN) associations, and these may or may not have outcomes similar to those reported in this research. Similarly, our research is also distinct from past research that has examined specific negative emotions such as anger and sadness in the country of origin context and shown that the appraisal tendencies differed for these emotions (Maheswaran and Chen 2006). Future research can examine positive country-related specific emotions (e.g., happiness) and add to our understanding of how specific emotions can influence product evaluations.

To examine the impact of CRA on attribute processing, we used products that are generally evaluated on physical attributes. However, consumers may give more weight to an overall holistic evaluation when considering experiential products (e.g., movie or arts). Future research should examine whether the effects demonstrated in this research extend to these experiential products. In addition, as is the norm in experimental research, our research operationalized affect in a laboratory setting. However, it is likely that real-world affect, especially affect that is directed toward countries and is based on personal experience and associations,

may be more intense. While we expect our findings to replicate regardless of the intensity of affect, it may be of value to examine the research question in a field setting.

This research examined scenarios where positive and negative affect were separately induced. However, in the context of countries, consumers may often hold simultaneous favorable and unfavorable country CRA. For example, consumers often feel positive about visiting exotic countries such as Papua New Guinea, but they may also have negative affect based on the lack of travel infrastructure. Future research should investigate the effect of ambivalence in CRA and its subsequent impact on evaluations.

DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

The first author supervised the collection of data for the second and third experiments by research assistants at the Singapore Management University during 2012 and analyzed the data. The second author supervised the collection of data for the first and fourth experiments by research assistants at Baruch College between summer 2013 and spring 2014 and analyzed the data. The third author acted as supervisor and consultant for all studies. All data collection and analysis methods and techniques were discussed among and agreed upon by all authors.

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