

From Korea to Consumer Choice: How Country-of-Origin Image Shapes Purchase Intention through Perceived Quality among COSRX Consumers in Medan, Indonesia

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: country-of-origin image, perceived quality, purchase intention, COSRX, Korean cosmetics	The objective of this study is to evaluate the influence of Country-of-Origin image toward Purchase Intention mediated by Perceived Quality among COSRX consumers in Medan City, Indonesia. Country of Origin Image is an external stimulus, Perceived Quality is the internal appraisal of consumers and Purchase Intention is their behavioral response according to Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. This research uses a quantitative explanatory approach with purposive sampling for consumers who are familiar with COSRX skincare products. The application of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is illustrated using a simulated dataset. The results suggest that Country-of-Origin Image positively increases Perceived Quality and Purchase Intention. Furthermore, Perceived Quality positively influences Purchase Intention and acts as a complementary partial mediator of the link between Country-of-Origin Image and Purchase Intention. The results indicate that the positive view of South Korea as the place of origin directly and indirectly influences consumers' purchasing intentions by improving their evaluations of COSRX product quality. In theory, this research extends the applicability of the S-O-R framework in international marketing by demonstrating the mediating role of Perceived Quality in the relationship between Country-of-Origin Image and Purchase Intention. Managerial implications The results suggest that the positive linkages of COO with credible product quality qualities should be incorporated to increase consumers' confidence and purchase inclinations in the worldwide skincare marketplaces.
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INTRODUCTION

Competition among domestic and international skincare brands has intensified as e-commerce, social platforms, and digital promotion broaden consumers' exposure to products from different countries (Juliana et al., 2022). Purchasing decisions consequently involve more than price and product functionality: buyers also interpret external cues when product performance cannot be assessed before use (Nasib et al., 2026). The product's country of

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origin is one such cue, evoking perceptions of technological advancement, innovation, manufacturing expertise, and anticipated quality (Indri et al., 2024). Country-of-Origin Image (COI) therefore provides a useful perspective for examining how consumers respond to imported skincare brands (Amin et al., 2026).

Country-of-Origin Image captures consumers' overall impressions of the nation associated with a brand or product (Wijaya et al., 2026). When firsthand evidence about product quality is limited, these impressions can inform product appraisal and transfer favorable national associations to goods originating there (Pujiatuti et al., 2022). For South Korean skincare, perceptions of the country's innovation and prominence in the international beauty industry may shape evaluations of Korean cosmetics (Khasanah & Hidayat, 2023). Such associations are particularly relevant to understanding consumer perceptions of COSRX (Eryc et al., 2026).

Country associations, however, need not translate immediately into buying intentions. Consumers also consider whether a skincare product is likely to meet their expectations (Salqaura & Salqaura, 2026). Perceived Quality describes this subjective appraisal of a product's excellence, dependability, and expected performance (Hou et al., 2024). Existing work links country-related cues to quality perceptions and subsequent consumer responses (Soeroto et al., 2023). In skincare, ingredient composition, formulation, suitability, reliability, and anticipated benefits provide further grounds for evaluation (Khairumi et al., 2025). Evidence from beauty markets likewise associates Perceived Quality with Purchase Intention (Aisya et al., 2024).

Purchase Intention denotes a consumer's willingness or plan to buy a product in the future. In a skincare market offering numerous local and imported alternatives, consumers must weigh competing attributes and value propositions (Pebriani et al., 2025). Previous research connects COI with Purchase Intention (Pandey et al., 2024) and identifies Perceived Quality as a predictor of intended purchases of beauty products (Rambe, 2023). These relationships suggest two possible routes: country associations may relate directly to Purchase Intention, or they may first inform quality assessments that subsequently shape purchasing plans (Rokis et al., 2026).

Medan City offers a setting in which consumers encounter domestic and imported skincare through physical retailers, online marketplaces, and social-media commerce. As a South Korean brand, COSRX provides a case for examining how impressions of a country become judgments about product quality and purchasing intentions. Indonesian research has considered the relevance of origin and quality cues for COSRX and other Korean skincare brands (Londong et al., 2024). Nevertheless, favorable views of South Korea alone may not generate purchase intentions when consumers remain unconvinced about the quality of COSRX products.

The unresolved issue addressed here is the evaluative pathway connecting COI to Purchase Intention. Earlier studies have examined country-image associations with consumer responses, while other research has considered the contribution of Perceived Quality to purchasing intentions (Nguyen & Duong, 2024). Although Perceived Quality has increasingly

been discussed as an intervening construct (Firayant & Nuvriasari, 2025), its role in Korean skincare consumption within an Indonesian emerging-market setting warrants closer examination. By focusing on COSRX consumers in Medan City, this study considers how country-level impressions are interpreted as product-level quality assessments before consumers form purchasing intentions.

We examine this sequence using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm, which indicates that an external cue is processed via an internal cognitive or affective state before a behavioral response is formed (Dhianita & Rufaidah, 2024). In the suggested model COI is the stimulus, Purchase Intention is the response, and Perceived Quality is the organismic evaluation. The application of this framework with country of origin research allows this study to examine the direct relationship of COI with Perceived Quality and Purchase Intention, the relationship between Perceived Quality and Purchase Intention, and the indirect relationship from COI to Purchase Intention through Perceived Quality among COSRX consumers in Medan City, Indonesia.

METHOD

A quantitative explanatory approach was defined to examine the links between Country-of-Origin Image, Perceived Quality and Purchase Intention within the framework of COSRX skincare. The population targeted was citizens of Medan City who knew the brand and its products. Because the entire population was not listed, the approach used non-probability purposive sampling. To be eligible the participant had to be a resident of Medan, have to know of COSRX and be familiar enough with its goods to be able to submit an informed evaluation. A simulated data set of 300 eligible respondents is used for paper development reasons; these cases are not to be considered validated field-survey replies.

The proposed instrument was composed of structured elements of the questionnaire assessed on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The model consists of three latent variables. The exogenous construct is Country-of-Origin Image, the mediator is Perceived Quality, and the endogenous construct is Purchase Intention. The indicators were developed based on recognized measurements in the literature and tailored to the setting of South Korean skincare products.

The simulated dataset was analyzed through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS. As in Hair et al. (2022), the process first evaluates the measurement model and then investigates the structural links. Item dependability is measured using outer loadings for the reflective constructions. Internal consistency is measured using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Convergent validity was evaluated by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity by Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Outer loadings and reliability coefficients must be 0.70 or higher, AVE must be greater than 0.50, and HTMT must be less than 0.90.

Following the evaluation of measurement requirements, the structural assessment was performed, focusing on collinearity, path estimations, coefficients of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2). Hypothesis testing was performed via bootstrapping

process of 5,000 resamples. Mediation was tested by comparing the sign and importance of the particular indirect path with the relevant direct path. These processes together define the hypothesized correlations between Country-of-Origin Image, Perceived Quality, and Purchase Intention in the simulated model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	72	24
	Female	228	76
Age	17–25 years	147	49
	26–35 years	93	31
	36–45 years	42	14
	>45 years	18	6
Occupation	Student	96	32
	Private employee	105	35
	Government employee	27	9
	Entrepreneur	45	15
	Others	27	9
Monthly Income	< IDR 2,000,000	81	27
	IDR 2,000,000–4,000,000	102	34
	IDR 4,000,001–6,000,000	72	24
	> IDR 6,000,000	45	15
Previous Purchase Experience with COSRX	Never purchased	63	21
	Purchased 1–2 times	108	36
	Purchased 3–5 times	81	27
	Purchased >5 times	48	16
Total Respondents		300	100

The simulated respondent profile comprises 228 women (76.0%) and 72 men (24.0%). Participants aged 17–25 years account for 147 cases (49.0%), followed by 93 cases aged 26–35 years (31.0%). The remaining age categories comprise 42 respondents aged 36–45 years (14.0%) and 18 respondents older than 45 years (6.0%). Accordingly, younger consumers represent a larger share of the simulated sample, although older age groups are also included.

By occupation, the simulated sample includes 105 private-sector employees (35.0%), 96 students (32.0%), 45 entrepreneurs (15.0%), 27 government employees (9.0%), and 27

respondents in other occupations (9.0%). Monthly income is distributed across IDR 2,000,000–4,000,000 for 102 cases (34.0%), below IDR 2,000,000 for 81 cases (27.0%), IDR 4,000,001–6,000,000 for 72 cases (24.0%), and above IDR 6,000,000 for 45 cases (15.0%).

The simulated purchase-history categories also vary. A total of 108 respondents (36.0%) had purchased COSRX once or twice, 81 (27.0%) had purchased it three to five times, and 48 (16.0%) had purchased it more than five times. Another 63 cases (21.0%) represent individuals without a previous COSRX purchase who were nevertheless assumed to know enough about the brand to assess Country-of-Origin Image, Perceived Quality, and Purchase Intention.

Measurement Model Evaluation

Indicator Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 2. Outer Loading Test Results

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Decision
Country-of-Origin Image	COI1	0.808	Valid
	COI2	0.826	Valid
	COI3	0.839	Valid
	COI4	0.852	Valid
	COI5	0.872	Valid
Perceived Quality	PQY1	0.828	Valid
	PVY2	0.842	Valid
	PVY3	0.849	Valid
	PVY4	0.861	Valid
	PVY5	0.875	Valid
Purchase Intention	PTN1	0.851	Valid
	PTN2	0.862	Valid
	PTN3	0.875	Valid
	PTN4	0.887	Valid

Source: Simulated SmartPLS Data Processing Results, 2026.

All 14 retained indicators exceed the specified outer-loading criterion of 0.70, with values across the measurement model ranging from 0.808 to 0.887. The five Country-of-Origin Image items load between 0.808 and 0.872; the five Perceived Quality items between 0.828 and 0.875; and the four Purchase Intention items between 0.851 and 0.887. On the reported criterion, each item contributes adequately to measurement of its assigned construct.

Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Decision
Country-of-Origin Image	0.894	0.922	0.703	Reliable and valid

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Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Decision
Perceived Quality	0.906	0.93	0.724	Reliable and valid
Purchase Intention	0.892	0.925	0.755	Reliable and valid

Source: Simulated SmartPLS Data Processing Results, 2026.

Internal-consistency estimates satisfy the adopted threshold for each construct: Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.892 to 0.906, while composite reliability ranges from 0.922 to 0.930, all above 0.70. AVE equals 0.703 for Country-of-Origin Image, 0.724 for Perceived Quality, and 0.755 for Purchase Intention. Because each AVE exceeds 0.50, the reported measurement results meet the stated convergent-validity criterion.

Discriminant Validity

Table 4. HTMT Test Results

Construct Relationship	HTMT	Criterion	Decision
COI-PQ	0.748	< 0.90	Satisfied
COI-PI	0.731	< 0.90	Satisfied
PQ-PI	0.824	< 0.90	Satisfied

Source: Simulated SmartPLS Data Processing Results, 2026.

The reported HTMT ratios are 0.748 for Country-of-Origin Image–Perceived Quality, 0.731 for Country-of-Origin Image–Purchase Intention, and 0.824 for Perceived Quality–Purchase Intention. The latter is the highest of the three, but all remain below the adopted 0.90 threshold. Under this criterion, the simulated measurement results support discriminant validity among the constructs.

Structural Model Evaluation

Coefficient of Determination and Predictive Relevance

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination and Predictive Relevance

Endogenous Construct	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Q ²	Interpretation
Perceived Quality	0.454	0.452	0.318	Moderate
Purchase Intention	0.612	0.609	0.441	Moderate

Source: Simulated SmartPLS Data Processing Results, 2026.

Country-of-Origin Image accounted for 45.4% of the variance reported in Perceived Quality ($R^2 = 0.454$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.452$), leaving 54.6% outside the model. The combined effects of Country-of-Origin Image and Perceived Quality explain 61.2% of the variation in Purchase Intention ($R^2 = 0.612$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.609$). The positive values of Q^2 for the endogenous dimensions, 0.318 for Perceived Quality and 0.441 for Purchase Intention, show the predictive relevance of the model as per the criterion utilized in the manuscript. These estimates are about the explanatory and predictive features of the simulated model, and they are not confirmed effects at the population level.

Effect Size

Table 6. Effect Size Test Results

Structural Relationship	f ²	Interpretation
COI → Perceived Quality	0.832	Large
COI → Purchase Intention	0.121	Small
Perceived Quality → Purchase Intention	0.444	Large

Source: Simulated SmartPLS Data Processing Results, 2026.

The reported f^2 values distinguish the relative contribution of the modeled predictors. Country-of-Origin Image has a large effect size for Perceived Quality ($f^2 = 0.832$), but a small direct effect size for Purchase Intention ($f^2 = 0.121$). Perceived Quality has a large effect size for Purchase Intention ($f^2 = 0.444$). Within the simulated model, quality evaluation therefore contributes substantially to explaining intended COSRX purchases.

Direct Effects

Table 7. Direct Effect Test Results

Hypothesis	Structural Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H1	COI → Perceived Quality	0.674	16.842	< 0.001	Supported
H2	COI → Purchase Intention	0.286	5.917	< 0.001	Supported
H3	Perceived Quality → Purchase Intention	0.548	11.763	< 0.001	Supported

Source: Simulated SmartPLS Data Processing Results, 2026.

The three direct approaches are positive and significant at the .05 level in the simulation analysis. The Country-of-Origin Image predicts Perceived Quality ($\beta = 0.674$; $t = 16.842$; $p < 0.001$) supporting H1. The Country-of-Origin Image predicts Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.286$; $t = 5.917$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. Perceived Quality predicts Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.548$; $t = 11.763$; $p < 0.001$). H3 is supported. The bigger reported path coefficient of two direct predictors of Purchase Intention is Perceived Quality. The results show that higher purchase intention is associated with more positive nation images and product-quality ratings in the simulated data set.

Indirect Effect and Mediation Analysis

Table 8. Indirect Effect and Mediation Test Results

Hypothesis	Indirect Relationship	Indirect Effect (β)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Mediation Type	Decision
H4	COI → Perceived Quality → Purchase Intention	0.369	9.884	< 0.001	Complementary partial mediation	Supported

Source: Simulated SmartPLS Data Processing Results, 2026.

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The specific indirect path from Country-of-Origin Image to Purchase Intention through Perceived Quality is positive ($\beta = 0.369$; $t = 9.884$; $p < 0.001$) confirming H4. The direct pathway continues to be positive and significant ($\beta = 0.286$; $t = 5.917$; $p < 0.001$). This pattern is compatible with complementary partial mediation because the two routes have the same sign and satisfy the criterion of importance. The total effect is 0.655, with the direct effect being 0.286 and the indirect effect being 0.369. Therefore, the simulated model includes the direct link between nation image and purchase intention, and another association mediated by product-quality evaluation.

Discussion

The Effect of Country-of-Origin Image on Perceived Quality

For H1, the simulated estimate indicates a positive relationship between Country-of-Origin Image and Perceived Quality ($\beta = 0.674$; $t = 16.842$; $p < 0.001$). Consumers who hold more favorable impressions of South Korea are represented as assigning higher quality to COSRX skincare. In S-O-R terms, country image operates as an external informational stimulus that enters the consumer's internal assessment of the product. This interpretation aligns with country-of-origin research linking national image to brand and quality evaluations (Sari et al., 2023)(Oduro et al., 2026), as well as evidence from Korean-product contexts (Ardisa et al., 2022)(Sim & Leng, 2024). Research on Korean cosmetics likewise connects country-image dimensions with perceived product quality (Martins et al., 2023)(Nofriza, 2022). The managerial implication is to connect Korean-origin positioning with verifiable details about ingredients, formulation, manufacturing consistency, innovation, and functional benefits rather than treating origin as a substitute for product evidence.

The Effect of Country-of-Origin Image on Purchase Intention

The H2 pathway is also positive in the simulated results ($\beta = 0.286$; $t = 5.917$; $p < 0.001$), suggesting an association between favorable views of South Korea and stronger Purchase Intention toward COSRX. This is consistent with the S-O-R proposition that external cues can be related to behavioral responses. Earlier studies have examined country-of-origin effects on product appraisal and intended purchases (Onozaka et al., 2023) and (Chiang et al., 2022). Evidence concerning Korean and US products further suggests that information available to consumers, including online reviews, may matter for the country-image relationship (Kim et al., 2024); product-level evaluations also remain relevant (Li & Setiowati, 2023)(Harianto et al., 2024)(Effendi et al., 2023). The reported COI–Purchase Intention coefficient ($\beta = 0.286$) is smaller than the COI–Perceived Quality coefficient ($\beta = 0.674$). Accordingly, COSRX communications could pair its Korean identity with transparent information about product ingredients, formulation, and performance to support informed consumer evaluations.

The Effect of Perceived Quality on Purchase Intention

The simulated analysis supports H3: Perceived Quality is positively associated with Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.548$; $t = 11.763$; $p < 0.001$). Evaluations of product dependability, expected

effectiveness, and consistency therefore form an important part of the proposed purchasing mechanism. Under the S-O-R framework, these evaluations represent the internal processing that precedes a behavioral intention. Prior beauty-care research has also connected perceived quality with intended purchasing (Ningsih, 2020) and (Thamrin et al., 2025), including evidence from Indonesian green cosmetics (Junaidi et al., 2022)(Munandar et al., 2022). Because skincare is applied directly to the body, consumers may pay particular attention to formulation, suitability, expected benefits, and product reliability. COSRX can respond by presenting understandable, substantiated information on ingredients, appropriate use, and expected performance rather than relying solely on brand visibility.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Quality

H4 concerns the quality-evaluation pathway linking Country-of-Origin Image to Purchase Intention. Its reported indirect coefficient is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.369$; $t = 9.884$; $p < 0.001$), while the direct COI–Purchase Intention path also remains positive ($\beta = 0.286$; $p < 0.001$). This pattern supports complementary partial mediation within the simulated model: perceptions of South Korea are associated with purchasing intentions both directly and through consumers' assessments of COSRX quality. Earlier work has considered perceived quality in country-of-origin and purchasing relationships (Karagiannis et al., 2022) and (Ciu & Anna, 2024). Interpreted through S-O-R, COI supplies the stimulus, Perceived Quality represents internal appraisal, and Purchase Intention constitutes the response (Bulibuli et al., 2022)(Salqaura & Nasib, 2026). For COSRX, Korean-origin messaging can therefore be accompanied by substantiated quality information across online marketplaces, digital campaigns, beauty communities, and consumer education.

CONCLUSION

This study considers Purchase Intention toward COSRX skincare through the relationships among Country-of-Origin Image, Perceived Quality, and the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework. In the simulated analysis, Country-of-Origin Image is positively associated with both Perceived Quality and Purchase Intention, and Perceived Quality is positively associated with Purchase Intention. The positive direct and indirect pathways indicate complementary partial mediation: favorable impressions of South Korea relate to purchasing intentions both independently and through evaluations of COSRX product quality.

The proposed model contributes a process-oriented interpretation of country-of-origin cues in international skincare marketing. Country-of-Origin Image functions as the external stimulus, Perceived Quality as the consumer's internal appraisal, and Purchase Intention as the intended behavioral response. For brand management, the model points to the value of presenting Korean-origin associations alongside credible information about formulation, ingredients, innovation, product consistency, and expected benefits, rather than relying exclusively on cultural familiarity or brand identity.

The dataset used here is simulated and comprises 300 cases created for manuscript-development purposes. Its numerical results are illustrative and must be replaced with

findings from actual collected and validated data before the manuscript is presented as an empirical study. The proposed setting is also restricted to Medan City, limiting the geographic scope of any subsequent empirical investigation. Future research could recruit consumers across multiple regions and examine brand trust, perceived value, electronic word-of-mouth, consumer ethnocentrism, and Korean Wave involvement. Longitudinal, experimental, or mixed-method designs could further investigate how country associations develop into quality judgments and purchasing behavior.

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