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## **A Comparative Analysis of Changes in Finnish Consumer Attitudes Toward the Products and Associated Marketing Practices of Various Selected Countries, 1975 to 2000**

Consumer purchase behavior is strongly influenced by attitudes toward products and the associated marketing practices. The country-of-origin is a particularly important influence on the development of consumer attitudes toward products and services. This particular article reports on the research data of a longitudinal study of Finnish consumer attitudes toward the products and associated marketing practices of England, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, Sweden, and the USA. The initial research was conducted in 1975 and was replicated in 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2000.

These data provide a longitudinal analysis of the country of origin information on Finnish consumer attitudes and highlight significant changes in these attitudes toward the products and the marketing practices associated with them. This 25-year study addresses the following questions: (1) What are the general attitudes of Finnish consumers toward the products of various selected countries? Thirteen different product attributes were analyzed. (2) What are the general attitudes of Finnish consumers toward the marketing practices associated with products from various selected countries? Thirteen different marketing practices were analyzed. (3) How important to Finnish consumers is the product's country of origin in the consumer's purchase process? Five different issues were analyzed with regard to this general purchase behavior question. Finally, a general overall question was analyzed regarding the average ranking of countries as preferred country of origin for Finnish consumers.

The most significant conclusion from the study is that there are continuing, consistent and significant differences in the attitudes of Finnish consumers with regard to the products and associated marketing practices of the eight countries. These are closely related to the preferences expressed for products from the various countries studied. These findings serve to demonstrate both the importance of the country of origin in the decision-making of consumers, and the difficulty faced by marketers and policy makers who hope to overcome negative country of origin stereotypes in the market positioning of products in the international arena.

In the 2000 study of Finnish consumers, as well as in the prior five surveys, the most positive responses were to the products and marketing activities of Finland, Sweden and Germany. Japan was held in the next highest regard in terms of product characteristics and marketing activities. Ratings for specific product characteristics and marketing activities were typically high, but varied when specific product or marketing issues were the focus of attention and analysis. The study also highlights several general product attributes and marketing practices that can be improved by business firms marketing the products of various countries (including Finland). These improvements would no doubt help to secure a more competitively attractive position and level of profitability in the Finnish consumer market, and perhaps other similar national markets.