HOW SAUDI ARABIA CONSUMER PERCEIVES INTERNATIONAL BRANDS THROUGH SHOP WINDOW DISPLAYS?
Abstract

Research on consumers’ attitude on shop window displays is still a sphere that lacks attention from researchers in the field of consumer behaviour. Moreover, one of the most upcoming research fields recently is Islamic marketing field. Thus, this work is focused on the research of Saudi Arabia consumers’ attitudes on international brands shop window displays. For this purpose the questionnaire was created and spread out in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. There were 61 respondents who answered the questionnaire. Collected results were analysed using mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. Analysis showed that international brands make adjustments of shop window displays in Saudi Arabia. To add more, and most important, local consumers are willing to have more internationalised shop window displays with less cultural adaptation.

Keywords

Consumer behaviour; visual merchandising; country of origin; window displays; Saudi Arabia; Islamic marketing; marketing; international brands.
Acknowledgement

Some people see things that are and ask, Why?
Some people dream of things that never were and ask, Why not?
Some people have to go to work and don’t have time for all that.

/George Carlin/

Thank you to all of those who asked “Why?”, to all who told “Why not?” and those who were bringing me down to earth.

Special thank you is to Amer Kahmis who helped to make the first steps towards my small dream.
# Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................. 3  
Keywords .................................................................................................................. 3  
Acknowledgement .................................................................................................. 4  
Contents .................................................................................................................. 5  
List of tables .......................................................................................................... 6  
List of figures ......................................................................................................... 6  
Abbreviations ....................................................................................................... 7  

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Islamic marketing ............................................................................................... 8  
1.2 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ........................................................................ 8  
1.3 Saudi and fashion ............................................................................................. 10  
1.4 Importance of window displays ..................................................................... 10  
1.5 Country of origin ............................................................................................. 11  
1.6 Problematization and relevancy ..................................................................... 11  
1.7 Purpose ............................................................................................................ 12  
1.8 Research questions ......................................................................................... 12  
1.9 Overview ......................................................................................................... 12  

## 2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 Country of origin ............................................................................................. 14  
2.2 Influences on consumer’s opinion .................................................................. 15  
2.3 Globalization .................................................................................................... 16  
2.4 Visual merchandising ..................................................................................... 18  
2.5 Interaction between theories .......................................................................... 21  

## 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Pre-test ............................................................................................................. 23  
3.2 Theories for methodology ............................................................................. 24  
3.3 Questionnaire .................................................................................................. 25  
3.3.1 Closed questions ....................................................................................... 25  
3.3.2 Open ended questions ............................................................................. 26  
3.3.3 Questions for questionnaire ..................................................................... 27  
3.4 Data collection and sample .......................................................................... 30  
3.5 Validity and reliability ................................................................................... 31  

## 4. RESULTS

4.1 Consumers and window displays .................................................................... 32  
4.2 Consumers and country of origin ................................................................... 33  
4.3 Opinions on shop window displays ................................................................ 39  

## 5. DISCUSSIONS


## 6. CONCLUSIONS


## 7. LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH AND IMPLICATIONS


REFERENCES ...................................................................................................... 56  
APPENDIX .............................................................................................................. 60
List of tables

Table 1 Questions and their purpose .................................................................................................................. 27
Table 2 Information about nationality of respondents ......................................................................................... 31
Table 3 Females and males responses on international and local WD ................................................................. 45
Table 4 Concluding ideas ........................................................................................................................................ 52

List of figures

Figure 1 Map of Saudi Arabia............................................................................................................................... 9
Figure 2 Type of window displays ........................................................................................................................ 20
Figure 3 Interaction between theories. Made by author ....................................................................................... 22
Figure 4 Key aspects of window displays ............................................................................................................ 25
Figure 5 Twitter post asking to fill in the questionnaire ...................................................................................... 30
Figure 6 Question #15 and #16 answers by gender ............................................................................................ 33
Figure 7 Question #1 males responses ................................................................................................................. 33
Figure 8 Question #1 females responses ............................................................................................................. 34
Figure 9 Question #2 male and female responses ................................................................................................ 34
Figure 10 Question #7 females and males responses ........................................................................................... 35
Figure 11 Question #15 females’ responses ......................................................................................................... 35
Figure 12 Question #15 males’ responses ............................................................................................................ 36
Figure 13 Question #8 females and males responses ........................................................................................... 36
Figure 14 Question #9 total responses ................................................................................................................ 37
Figure 15 Question #11 males and females responses ........................................................................................ 37
Figure 16 Question #3 males’ responses ............................................................................................................. 38
Figure 17 Question #3 females’ responses ........................................................................................................... 38
Figure 18 Question #10 total responses ................................................................................................................ 39
Abbreviations

COO – Country of Origin
WD- Window Displays
NE- Nation Equity
WOM- word-of-mouth
USA- the United States of America
IRS- Information Rate Scale
LED- light-emitting diode
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Islamic marketing

According to Binyon (2012) there are more than 350 million people living in the Arab world that are potential consumers willing to adjust western lifestyle and they also have good knowledge about western brands. It is very attractive market for the investors and companies that would like to establish themselves in the Middle East region. Though, due to socio-cultural factors it is necessary to understand that this market differs from the markets of the Western world. Taking into the consideration that Islam has impact on everything that Muslims do, they can be more sensitive about religion and social aspects, but no way this has to scare western companies (Mahajan, 2012). “Muslims like any other consumer segment or subculture: love fashion, entertainment, cosmetics and holidays – but most importantly exhibit unique and identifiable homogenous traits” (Wilson, 2012a, p.6).

Wilson (2012b) suggests that there is a necessity of more detailed study of Islamic marketing and consumer’s behaviour. He also argues that these subjects lack sufficient depth and even though the research field and specific literature on Islamic marketing is growing, there still is a wide gap that has to be filled in. Temporal (2011) as well emphasizes that companies do not have enough sufficient information about the culture and lack local knowledge even if the company understands marketing field very well.

Thus, consumers’ who live in Muslim culture behaviour regarding the international brands’ shop window displays was chosen as part of Islamic marketing that is on the spot recently. In this work the focus will be on the consumers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This interesting and fascinating country has been chosen due to its specific very rich and different culture from what we have in so called Western world. One of the bloggers from Finland who is living in Saudi Arabia defined it as “the richly opposed but co-existing world” (Layla, 2014).

As it was mentioned before, Saudi Arabia was chosen as a contrast to other countries regarding the culture. Here is some general information about the country that will help to understand the differences.

1.2 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is situated in Arabic Peninsula with the population of almost 30 million. The main language is Arabic, but English is also spoken especially in urban areas. It is the largest Arab state in Western Asia by land area (Wikipedia, 2014b). Saudi Arabia is monarchy based on Islam and governed by the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. Country’s capital is Riyadh. It is geographically diverse country with forests, grasslands, mountains and deserts. It gets very little amount of rain and the climate is very hot (Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013a).
Nowadays Saudi Arabia has developed from the agricultural society to the modern infrastructure and economic power as regionally as globally. This is one of the fastest developing countries with total nominal GDP of $718.472 billion (estimated number in 2013). Country is the biggest producer and exporter of oil (Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013c). The oil industry comprises about 45% of Saudi Arabia’s nominal gross domestic product, compared with 40% from the private sector (Wikipedia, 2014b).

Saudi Arabia is a heartland of Islam (Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013d) and sometimes is called “The land of the Two Holy Mosques” which are situated in Mecca and Medina(Wikipedia, 2014b). Islam is practised by all Saudis and governs their personal, political, economic and legal lives (Kwintessential, 2013). What is more, the culture of Saudi Arabia is defined by its Islamic heritage, with rooted traditions from Islamic teachings and Arab tribal customs(Lee, 2014). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a unique traditional heritage. Customs and traditions are different depending on the province of Saudi Arabia, but based on Islamic and Arab culture. Arab people are generous and great hosts respecting their traditions, values.

Talking about the clothes, markets in Saudi Arabia display different types of textiles from around the world(Tourism, 2013). A lot of Saudis wear traditional clothes and modern adaptations of traditional designs(Lee, 2014). Of course clothes and accessories differ from one province to another, but in most of the provinces style of clothes and design became similar. Usually men are wearing loose full length clothing (shirt) with long sleeves (Thwab), cloth worn over the head (Ghutra), doubled black rope to hold the Ghutra (Igal)(Tourism, 2013). Women have diverse traditional clothes that conceal and also woman need to wear black cloaks (abaya) on the top of their clothes when going out. What is more, women wear scarf to hide their hair (Shayla). The Mutawwa’in (religious police), ensures that both women and men do not violate any regulations by dressing inappropriately as it is part of the conservative culture of the Saudi Arabian society(Lee, 2014). Though it is also important to notice, that the Saudi people managed to adapt their life to the modern world and uphold their values and traditions(Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013b).
The society of Saudi Arabia is also interesting. For example it has also sub-cultures: “those are now called Darbawiya, or “the people on the path”. They are a group that share lots of parallels with the punk culture in the western countries”(Layla, 2014). What is more, it is important to mention widely discussed topics about the woman rights.

It is fascinating one thousand and one night country full of contrasts inside the country itself and compared to other countries. For more information you can read very interesting blog about the life in Saudi Arabia called “Blueabaya.com”.

1.3 Saudi and fashion

Saudi Arabia people are interested in fashion trends and tend to be very fashion conscious. That is why a lot of international luxury, premium and other brands can be found in the country. In the capital city Riyadh there are such huge brands as H&M, Lindex, Mango, Zara, Top Shop, Monsoon, Miss Selfridge, Guess, Gucci, Prada, Chanel, DKNY and others. The large malls have Debenhams, Harvey Nichols, Sacks Fifth Avenue department stores that are popular places of upper class shoppers.

Women of Saudi Arabia are following latest fashion trends that evolve in the Western world. Upper class women like wearing classic designer clothes under their abayas. What is more “When going out for dinner parties or weddings these women will have Oscar night worthy evening gowns, racy dresses and elaborate jewellery hidden under their abayas. The cloaks will come off at the women-only events though”(Layla, 2014). Younger Saudi women from middle class more often are wearing skinny jeans, high heels, fashionable designer handbags, sunglasses and shoes under their abayas. Thus, it can be seen that international apparel brands are popular in Saudi Arabia and demanded.

Even though Internet has a big impact on buying habits, Saudi people still shop offline. Here into the scene comes company’s visual merchandising policy and how to make shop window displays attractive and appealing to customers.

1.4 Importance of window displays

Regardless the fact that nowadays retailers are using vast variety of different instruments (especially online, new technologies) to attract customers; bricks and mortar shopping is still very important. One of the main instruments in real store shopping is a shop window display. Christopoulou (2011) writes that window display is one of the forms which is able to translate cultural impact using images and has effect on people. This is the main instrument that retailers use in order to communicate with their customers when they are going shopping, draw their attention and them into the store (Sen et al., 2002; Liu et al., 2009). What is more, visual composition of window display can create psychological feelings, emotions and it is the first store image information received by consumers; it mainly influences consumer's decision of staying and purchasing and it is also key factor which determines the success of window display (Liu et al., 2009).

Consumers’ shopping motives and their information processing capacity in a given shopping environment profoundly influence visual perceptions of storefront window displays, the same window displays result in different store entry decisions(Oh and Petrie, 2011). Authors say that if exteriors (including window displays) are not interesting enough, there is less chance that they will buy something from there or even will be willing to enter the shop. Thus, it is
still very important for international brands to understand the local adaptation to new markets as there are many cultural differences in them. And those brands which understand this concept tend to be more successful in new markets. For example, in a study related to Chinese consumers about visual displays of intimate apparel, Law et al. (2012) had found out that those retailers who uses lingerie in their window displays or shops are creating an anxiety for the Chinese consumers. Most big global brands are operating the same way all over the world and do not adapt very specifically to the culture of certain country in a very detailed way.

Despite the fact that window displays are always on the spot to the customer, Sen et al. (2002) in their work are talking that there are not much researches that focus on this matter. Turley and Milliman (2000a) also notice that visual merchandising of windows displays is important but still not so much studied subject itself. Sen et al. (2002) seconds them and adds that even though window displays are the ones that customer always see there is not so much attention on them in the research field.

1.5 Country of origin

In order to understand how Muslim consumers react on international brand’s windows displays, theory of the country-of-origin (COO) is useful to take into the consideration. According to the Ittersum et al. (2003), Pharr (2005) the first studies how country of origin affects consumer’s point of view on a product have been started to examine from 1965. Since then the country-of-origin concept is still being one of the most studied fields concerning the consumer behaviour (Papadopolous and Heslop, 2002; Peterson and Jolibert, 1995; Pharr (2005). To describe it in short: country of origin concept explores how consumers perceive products when knowing where they were made and how this effects (if effects) their purchase decisions.

It is important to mention that theory analysed here is not another attempt to explore this phenomenon. In this case the findings in country-of-origin field are perceived as a helping hand in order to understand how consumers perceive shop window displays. What is more, “existing culture-based consumer behaviour theories cannot satisfactorily explain all mainstream consumers’ behavioural responses to the cultural meanings of brands that can emerge in a multi-cultural marketplace” (Kipnis et al., 2013, p. 233). Due to the purpose of this research connected to the global brands (that in a way connects to the country of origin), it is chosen to consider the country of origin theory as one of the elements rather than the main reason of customer’s perception.

1.6 Problematization and relevancy

Taking into the consideration that culture surrounds people everywhere, it has a big impact on them the question rises how this affect consumption. Islamic culture has certain set of rules based on Quran that effect everyday life of Muslim. This mainly reflects through Halal products. “Halal is any object or an action which is permissible to use or engage in, according to Islamic law. The term covers and designates not only food and drink but also all matters of daily life” (Wikipedia, 2014a). Thus, how does Muslim culture take other cultures’ attributes into their life? What about fashion and apparel? How this knowledge can help in theory and practice?

The research on this topic would contribute to understanding consumer who lives in Muslim culture in a better way, would give guidance for international companies whether they should
change their visual merchandising strategies in order to be more successful in the region or consumers just do not care about that. Ng (2010, p. 186) says that “successful penetration of overseas markets requires a good understanding of the impact of culture on people’s cultures’ purchasing behaviour”.

This research as well would contribute in filling the gap in literature connected to the window display influence literature. Ability to find, understand and explore the reasons why consumer is willing to enter or avoids particular environments suggest wide variety of studies connected to the shop window displays (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1977). Found results can be used not only in consumer behaviour and visual merchandising field. This kind of studies would help retailers to understand what consumers are looking for. Display type is a personal factor because visual attitudes are highly influenced by individual differences and contextual factors (Holbrook, 1981). Oh and Petrie (2011) say that with this kind of knowledge retailers can strategically plan the placement of particular display types by accounting for motivations of their target shoppers and their cognitive load influenced by surrounding environments. What is more, maybe retailers would be more willing to use adaptation technique in every country/culture if they would know that investment is worth money and time in order to be more profitable, attractive and grow and they would know what exactly consumers are willing to see.

1.7 Purpose

The purpose of this work is to investigate is there any tendency how Islamic consumers respond to the international window displays in order to understand if there is a need to adapt visual merchandising strategies depending on a country/culture. The analysis is based on sample group of Saudi Arabia’s consumers and their attitudes towards local and international shop window displays.

1.8 Research questions

The main questions to be answered:

- Do consumers from Saudi Arabia see any difference in window displays of international and local brands?
- Do international companies operating in Saudi Arabia make adaptations to the local culture (seen from the point of consumer)?
- What is Saudi Arabia consumers’ opinion regarding international and local retail shop window displays?

1.9 Overview

In order to fulfil the purpose of this work and answer the research questions some not standard approach/thinking was acquired. To start with, all studies involving culture or cultural aspects are quite difficult to outline and explain. For the sake of keeping this work definite, it was decided to narrow down possible theories to few. The country of origin and visual merchandising theories were chosen as those which can be combined together with a possible and interesting outcome. Based on the purpose and theories a methodology for studying consumer response on international window displays had to be outlined. It includes thoughts how self-completed questionnaire was formed, spread out, why for analysing data it
was necessary to use mix of methods. Next chapter discusses mentioned above theories more thoroughly.
2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

For the reason that Islamic marketing is very wide topic by itself which discusses everything connected to Muslims everyday life, it will not be discussed further. The purpose of Islamic marketing in this work is to be a wide field to which the knowledge gotten from COO and visual merchandising theories and this work’s research should be added. Thus, in this chapter only theories of country of origin and visual merchandising will be discussed further and points where they collide will be revealed.

2.1 Country of origin

Consumers often link products and countries using their knowledge of the country and its reputation regarding the design, manufacturing and branding (Usunier and Cestre, 2007). Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) suggests that country of origin is not different from other extrinsic cues like price, brand name and retailer reputation and in addition to its role as a quality cue, country of origin has symbolic and emotional meaning to consumers. Alden et al. (2000) also mention exoticness and authenticity. The idea about the cues was noticed even earlier by Olson. In his work he explains that country of origin can be exploited without changing the product itself (physically), it is regarded as an extrinsic cue (Olson, 1972).

The ones who were exploring in a more detailed way the relationship between what are the customer preferences for a country’s products and what were the attitudes on country’s culture, economics and politics were Roth and Romeo (1992). A bit later according to Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) such authors as Ger and Askegaard came up with the findings that this kind of link is very much influenced by product-country images. Those are the images of people, culture, products or national symbols that we see in our head when we think of a certain country.

Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999, p. 525) also noticed that people made up their mind about the products of a certain country according to the images that they already had in their mind and they consisted of the “widely shared cultural stereotypes”. Though they added that people were also influenced by such aspects as the economy and work conditions (workforce) of the certain country. This is what they say (1999, p.537):

“Symbolic and emotional associations with country of origin constitute the affective aspect. Consumers relate country of origin to status, identity, national pride and past experiences. Normative aspects of country of origin relate to “customer voting”. The decision to purchase or avoid a country’s products can be regarded as a vote pro or contra the policies and practices of the country. ”

It cannot be omitted that talking about the COO theory it is important to mention not only how consumers perceive other countries production, but also how do they feel about products made locally. “A particularly salient norm is the norm to buy domestic” (Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999, p. 537). Continuing with the idea of the sentence which has been just cited, earlier works also were investigating this theme. Shimp (1987) named it as consumer ethnocentrism and found that it influences purchasing behaviour of the most of customers. Fournier (1998) states that COO and national identity are much interconnected and that is why consumers can have deep emotional relation to particular products or brands. In the next chapter it will be discussed about the elements of the COO.
2.2 Influences on consumer’s opinion

What are the factors that affect or create consumer’s opinion on products that are made locally or in other countries? This is an important thing to consider and one of helping hands to understand the consumer’s perception on window displays. This idea is connected to the fact that usually shop window displays are filled with the products and elements that easily can be related to the factors of affecting.

The country of origin is not only linked with the quality as Botschen and Hemetsberger (1998) notices, but also with the feelings or memories. More often people show emotional associations connected to the particular country, including personal experiences and affect toward a country, through gestural tasks and responses (Diamantopoulos and Herz, 2013). Besides that, when forming marketing strategies, companies also have to keep in mind that historical relations and events happening at the present are the elements influencing consumer’s perceptions and attitudes of antipathy (Chand and Tung, 2011). Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) notice that strong emotional and affective meanings are created during direct and indirect experiences and they affect how consumers identify brand or product. According to them, direct experiences include having holidays abroad, interaction with foreigners, while indirect ones are perceived through mass media, education or art. Also it is important to add social media that is very influential recently.

Maheswaran and Chen (2006,2009;2013,p.155) explore the “complex associations consumers have toward countries including both product performance-based cognitive associations and product-unrelated emotional associations based on factors that are external to the company such as political, cultural, and other macro factors”. They have created sort of guidelines named “Nation Equity” (NE) that helps to examine those associations.

To start with, authors try to explain what connotations are related to performance and emotion equity. Performance equity consist of “consumers’ experience and knowledge about the performances of products originating from certain countries, but it is also important to pay attention to “performance inferences based on the level of economic development, or the comprehensiveness of physical, legal, and financial infrastructures” (Chen and Maheswaran, 2013, p.173). Even more interesting factor is emotional equity that shows what attitude customer has about country. Those feelings can be formed by such components as culture, religion, politics, values that person has (Chen and Maheswaran, 2013). This is what previously mentioned authors say:

“The emotional equity helps to see the synergy between the country and individual and has big impact on how the product is perceived (not necessarily meaning product quality). In other words, the country-related emotions are believed to be incidental to the product, but often exhibit a carry-over effect on the product evaluations.” (Chen and Maheswaran, 2013, pp.173-174)

Talking more on emotional equity it is worth to discuss such complex influencer as culture. This term and attempt to understand it carries very complex and broad perception with multiple connotations (Wallerstein, 1990). When talking about consumer behaviour and culture, Nisbett et al. (2001) have found that individualistic and collectivistic cultures have different approaches. The same results were found by Ng (2010) who was also exploring how culture influences decision making and brand dilution by taking into the consideration Eastern
and Western culture. It was found out that Eastern people (collectivistic culture) are more likely to take into consideration average of performance and emotion equity equally when making decisions. Meanwhile Western people who are considered to represent individualistic culture will make a decision according to the factors (emotion or performance) that are more influential during the exact moment of decision making (Chen and Maheswaran, 2013).

Diamantopoulos and Balabanis (2008) suggest that more or less consumers know the country of origin of the brand. The information about COO can be gathered from advertisements, labels, WOM (word of mouth) or brand’s attributes. What has to be taken into the consideration is that “different consumers are likely to have different country images and differ in terms of which specific country they (incorrectly) might associate a brand with” (Diamantopoulos and Balabanis, 2008, p.49). However Diamantopoulos and Herz (2013) in their work are discussing the fact if country of origin usage is a controlled process that consumer is attuned. They say that usage of COO cue can occur unconsciously. The automatic processing can be turned on by small information cue that activates specific associations and trigger internally stored stereotypes (Diamantopoulos and Herz, 2013). Based on this, authors claim that brand evaluation can be influenced by the country stereotypes even when there is not enough information about the brand and consumer is told that country of origin has no impact on the brand.

Talking further about how consumers perceive brands related to country of origin effect, Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) consider that multinational production can be used as in favour of the brand as consumers usually are not aware where the product is manufactured and more rely on where from the brand is originated.

Though, while talking about the country-of-origin concept, we have to be aware that we are living in the global world and obviously, it has an influence on this theory as well. In “Nation equity: integrating the multiple dimensions of country of origin effects” Chen and Maheswaran (2013) notices that recently there are a lot of discussions whether the country of origin theory still has an effect. This is questioned due to the globalization process that has started few decades ago. Its role in the country of origin theory is discussed in the next chapter.

2.3 Globalization

Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) explain a term “country of origin” as something implying that products are (at least for the largest part) produced in a single country. In the “global era”, however, manufacturers are spreading out their activities over a larger number of countries, which gives rise to multi-national production. This also reflects on the researches that are based on country-of-origin theory. Pharr (2005) notices that important changes in structure of international markets and business models lead people who are researching COO topic to question if it is still relevant. Chen and Maheswaran (2013) as well mention that two rather opposite conclusions are reached in the country of origin literature and authors divide those into two camps: authors that argue in favour of country of origin still being an important aspect how consumer perceives the product and those who say that the country of origin is less and less important.

Taking into the consideration global sourcing, it becomes more and more complicated to identify a real country of origin because product’s components can be manufactured in completely different countries than the product is aggregated (Clarke et al., 2000) as many
products nowadays have dual or multinational origins (Michael et al., 2008). This is influenced by new markets that develop in a fast pace, companies’ goal to lower the production costs. The spread is also due to the advances of the technology such as Internet or ability to travel more easily all over the world and government policies that support global trade (Chen and Maheswaran, 2013). What is more, globalization stimulated the bigger part of international companies to change their approach towards marketing strategies. The traditional multi-domestic approach when local products are promoted at their country of origin has changed into the global approach when companies use the same promotion strategy all over the world with small adjustments depending on local markets in the counties (Kotabe and Helsen, 2010).

Kipnis with co-authors (2013) claim that global culture is a link between people of different countries and consumers think of brand globalness as evidence that they are part of it. “It has transnationally shared symbols, images, models of lifestyle and consumption that originated from the West (predominantly the USA)” (Kipnis et al., 2013, p. 239). Though, mentioned before authors argue that global or international culture is too easily identified with the term of Western culture. Thus, they suggest their own definition of global culture:

“Ideology which is regarded by consumers as a set of trans locally universal values, beliefs, lifestyle, material objects (products) and symbols that are developed through contributions from knowledge and practices in different parts of the world, are present, practiced and used across the world in essentially similar manner and symbolize an ideological connectedness with the world regardless of residence or heritage” (Kipnis et al., 2013, p. 240).

This is good point to reconsider if term of Western culture is not used too much when referring to the global or international and creates confusion for the researchers as well.

When asked directly, most consumers state that they do not know and do not care where a brand actually comes from. American Marketing Association says that “many scholars have argued that in times of a melting global economy, the country-of-origin, thus, the country from which a brand comes from, has become more and more irrelevant for consumers (2013, p. 147). Kapferer (2008) claims that it is much better to have the same easily recognizable image all over the world (for a company). In that case, wherever consumer would go the quality and brand will be found the same.

Though Diamantopoulos and Sichtmann (2013) argue this by saying that consumers’ perception of quality is more connected to the country of origin of the brand but not to the globality of it. Pharr (2005) notices that consumers are more focused on the information about the brand such as where from it comes than in which countries product’s parts were manufactured, where the product was designed and etc. The same thought is provided by Chen and Maheswaran (2013) who say that due to globalization there is a wide assortment of products and consumer has difficulties to get relevant information about the quality. This is why consumer is more likely to rely on the COO. This implies a thought that country of origin is still important feature even though we live in the global world.

The discussion about globalization of the brands and country of the origin importance also raise the question that is discussed by Iversen and Hem (2011) in their work “Reciprocal transfer effects for brand extensions of global or local origin: evidence from Norway”.
Authors were trying to find out how global brands are taken into consideration by consumer to local brands. They conclude that “global and local origin associations influence the pre-brand image and thereby drive the forward spill over effect on the attitude towards the extension of the parent brand” (Iversen and Hem, 2011, p.399).

There is one more argument in favour of why country of origin is still important to know for the customer. Based on people’s thinking process, it is found that people keep their memories not only in verbal form (words), but also using imagery. Especially personal memories or emotions are often memorized as images. People are not only talking, but also making pictures and their combinations. They “build their brand image using pictures words and thereby communicate memory content and country-specific associations which would not be accessible with traditional methods” (American Marketing Association; 2013, p.147). This gives some things to consider such as importance of visual merchandising and shop window displays. Further the theories on window displays and visual communication will be revised.

2.4 Visual merchandising

As stated before, there are not so many wide researches that focus on the visual merchandising and store window displays (WD). “The purpose of visual merchandising is to attract, engage and give the proper motivation to the customer, having sales as the final result” (Opris and Bratucu, 2013, p.51). Though, from what it is said, it can be understood, that visual merchandising has an important role. For example Derbiax and Abeele (1985) already were discussing that to influence the consumer (cognitively, emotionally or artificially), marketers use store environment as an element that increases or reduces consumers’ awareness about the product. Shop window displays are designed purposefully to produce emotional effects in order to increase sales. Looking at them involves desire and immediacy or, in other words, a hedonistic consumption. It can be defined as consumer behaviour when it is affected by different emotional experiences when purchasing products (Christopoulou, 2011). Oh and Petrie (2011, p.28) says:

“The visual appeal of the store front, window displays, and overall building facade enable consumers to form quick impressions about a store to determine whether they enter a store or not. After all, if consumers are not interested in a store conveyed to them through exteriors such as window displays, the consumer will be unlikely to enter the store to shop or make purchases.”

While listing visual merchandising literature, it can be seen that country of origin theory and visual merchandising theories have the same meeting points such as culture, values, cues, environment, etc. “Consumers’ responses can be affected by cultural difference and cultural difference is important to influence store atmosphere evaluation” (Law et al., 2012, pp.115-116). What is more, Law et al (2012, p. 126) adds that “consumers like to see visually stimulating displays and in-store highlights, but close attention should be paid to the symbolic values of the display content”. Sen and others (2002, p.285) say that “retailers may be most successful in drawing customers into the store if they focus on communicating cues that allow consumers to infer fit and store image information”. What is more, if symbols used in shop window display will be misinterpreted, they can cause totally opposite or different response from cultural groups (Law et al., 2012).
Kjeldgaard et al. (2006) notices that products that have universal functions are less expected to correspond to the local values, but when product is more likely to cause social and cultural experience it is important to take into consideration local context. “Effectiveness of store window displays can be tied into visual stimuli characteristics used to induce positive approach behaviours” (Oh and Petrie, 2011, p.28).

For products that are related to aesthetic and social elements, the degree of perceived localness becomes a crucial point when talking about how the product will be accepted by the consumer. When forming and designing a retail environment, retailer should consider wisely usage of colour, graphics and other elements in the context of culture and symbols as those elements influence emotions and approach-avoidance behaviour of the customer (Mehrabian, 1974).

Talking about the stimuli, Mehrabian and Russel (1974) developed the Information Rate Scale (IRS) to assess the physical properties of a composition and to understand the content. They demonstrated that the information rate of stimuli influences emotional responses of organism (pleasantness, arousal, and dominance), which determines the response as approach-avoidance behaviours toward the stimuli. This model assumes that consumers' emotional responses to a physical environment mediate the influence of the environment on their behaviours (Babin et al., 2003). If customers are satisfied with the experience that they have got, they will have positive attitude towards the retailer, will buy its products and will be loyal to the retailer (Mower et al., 2012).

Additionally, the environmental preference theory assumes that the motivation for approaching an environment changes, as does the diagnosticity of the information in the scene. Subsequently, it can be assumed that perceptions of environmental stimulus and their influences on approach of the environmental stimulus depend on perceivers' motivation and their resource constraints (e.g., time pressure, cognitive load) to process information. The environmental preference theory can be useful to find out what influence shop window display has on consumer’s wish to enter the store (Oh and Petrie, 2011) and descriptive studies demonstrate that the usage of window displays and an increase in sales are interconnected (Park et al., 1989).

Using shop window displays, consumers are able to collect the information that is necessary to decide if consumer will enter the store for shopping (Mower et al., 2012). Retailers benefit from creating window displays that are aesthetically interesting and inform consumers about the products it sells and attractive window displays are more important for apparel retailers and their image (Mower et al., 2012). The influence of window displays, particularly relative to other marketing actions, is likely to depend on various characteristics of the consumer, the product category, the retail context, and the shopping task (e.g. shopping goal, planned versus unplanned task). “However, an understanding of this potentially complex relationship between window displays and shopping decisions is predicated on evidence of its existence” (Sen et al., 2002, p.277). Their arrangement depends on composition with regard to colour schemes, materials, cultural or seasonal themes, harmony, balance, variety, and effective details to convey meaning. To add more, well designed shop window displays can be seen as exhibitions of various objects and this helps consumers to exercise their taste (Christopoulou, 2011). In the Figure 2 below there are given shop window display descriptions according to Li and Cassidy (2010).
What is more, consumers expect a visual display that fulfils social rules. “This is a fundamental requirement that encourages them to further investigate other elements of a display (Law et al., 2012, p.120). A good retail environment design should contain an appropriate degree of arousal in order to activate affective pleasure (Spies et al., 1997). Thus, when creating the store atmosphere, retailers also design a retail environment (Derry et al., 2012, Law et al., 2012). Retailer looking to draw consumers into the store through its window displays may need to be mindful of what merchandise it displays because this information also constitutes a direct incentive for store entry. “In making decisions about what merchandise to display, stores may need to consider which of its two roles they want to focus on, particularly if these roles are at odds with each other in terms of the specific items of merchandise to be displayed (Sen et al., 2002, p.288).

When seeing visual merchandising from consumers’ perspective, it highlights the appeal and image of a shop (Law et al., 2012). Oh and Petrie (2011, p. 27) claim that:

“Merchandise-focused displays are intended to sell merchandise quickly through a straightforward presentation of what merchandise a store sells while gaining a high amount of traffic. In contrast, artistic displays focus on communicating the store's image and often use implicit messages that shoppers have to interpret. These two broad types of visual displays are used without understanding their effectiveness in specific contexts.”

If window displays are designed strongly, they are able to attract customers’ attention, make them curious and interested in window displays, translate brand’s image and the most important they would attract buyers (Oh and Petrie, 2011).
Consumers with medium levels of knowledge are not only more likely to acquire product category information from store windows but also more likely to make a purchase decision based on these windows. To the extent that preferences vary with product knowledge (e.g., in categories such as cameras), retailers can best use windows to stimulate sales by displaying products in their windows that are most preferred by, or “fit” best with, the segments that have medium amounts of category knowledge. More generally, “if retailers are able to correlate such knowledge with demographic or behavioural measures, and those with medium levels of knowledge represent a lucrative market segment, then retailers who use windows primarily to increase sales can gear their displays mainly to this, most susceptible, segment (Sen et al., 2002, p. 286)”.

Next chapter will explain how country of origin and visual merchandising theories mentioned above could be combined.

### 2.5 Interaction between theories

In order to understand how mentioned above theories can work together and at which point some similarities can be seen the chart was created. It helps to visualize and easier comprehend what outcome could be gotten from this combination and how it relates to the purpose and research questions of this work.

The main purpose is to find a touch point what aspect relates all of those theories. As it can be seen from the Figure 3, COO and visual merchandising theories are connected. They have the general meeting points such as cues. In case of this work cues can be defined as symbols, stereotypes, status, identity, culture and etc. These are the elements that cause consumer’s emotions, memories and arousal when they are intending to or buying products.

Most cues can be easily defined, for example obvious symbols like usage of flag in order to understand where from is the garment. Other symbols can be less obvious, but somehow subconsciously person understands them. Every surrounding has plenty of symbols and shop window displays are good example. It is bit more difficult when it comes to culture, but there are general ideas or stereotypes that help to distinguish one culture from another. While looking at the shop window display person can get a feeling that for example it is Scandinavian style which most of the times is connected to the minimal and practical style of clothing. This is what is necessary in case of this work in terms of understanding what means to be global or international and is it important is to adapt this to the culture.
What is more, consumer’s perceptions, cognitive and emotional reactions can be product and non-product related. All these reactions are influencing consumer’s opinions and perceptions. Sometimes this can be done consciously and sometimes subconsciously. Nevertheless, all actions by consumers towards purchase of products, entering shop, noticing shop window display, completing questionnaires, explaining why he made one or another buying decision goes as a feedback back to the researchers working on COO and visual merchandising fields or companies implementing and changing their marketing strategies. Regarding the globalization matter in country of origin theory, author believes that it is one part among many country-of-origin related theories. Though, globalization in COO topic is also the one that over crosses the traditional boundaries of COO theory.

In the following chapter it will be explained the methodology part of this work. The main focus is on how the research was conducted and questionnaire was formed.

3. METHODOLOGY

As the purpose of this work is “to investigate is there any tendency how Islamic consumers respond to the international window displays in order to understand if there is a need to adapt visual merchandising strategies depending on a country/culture”. The methodology part focuses on what means were taken to form the questionnaire, gather the valid data and to evaluate the results. To start with, in order to know how to conduct the research it was necessary to find out if there were any similar researches done and how they were handled. Due to that, it was necessary to look for articles and other works related to the research idea.
of this work. This information is given in chapters named “Pre-test” and “Theories for methodology”. After this, the following chapter explains why and how questionnaire was chosen and formed as well what was the purpose of asked questions. Chapter ‘Data collection and sample” gives an overview on how the questionnaire is spread out and who are respondents after which validity and reliability are discussed.

3.1 Pre-test

This work is not the first attempt to explore connection between customer’s culture and shop window displays. Imtiaz and Gaurilcikaite (2013) had conducted pre-test study which explored whether consumers are able to identify any cultural differences from retail store window display.

To answer this question, authors have used an interview. Interviewees were from different European countries or outside Europe but now living in Western culture. Six pictures of retail shop window displays taken in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon were shown to the respondents. Pictures contained local and international brands and respondents did not know where they were taken. Then interviewees were asked five questions about what they notice in those window displays, what kind of feelings they have after seeing them, if they are able to relate those window displays to any culture. Open questions were used in order not to push respondents into any frames hoping that answers will also give broader picture on how consumers perceive shop window displays. After answering those questions, respondents were asked three extra questions that contained information where from those shop window display pictures were taken. This was done on purpose to test if this knowledge would help consumers to see or find any differences. Also, respondents were explained what for these interviews were conducted just after interview was completed. All answers and explanations of interviewees were written down on the paper using key words. Though, it is important to notice that even though interview was the best option to collect the date in their work, Imtiaz and Gaurilcikaite (2013) found it difficult to decode and interpret the answers of the respondents.

The findings showed that respondents were not able to see any clues or symbols of the Middle East (Islamic) culture in the windows displays. Authors decided that this was due to the fact that “global brands are operating the same way all over the world and do not adapt to the culture of certain country in a very detailed way” (Imtiaz and Gaurilcikaite, 2013). These findings can be based on the discussion in the theoretical part about the globalization and country of origin importance in the global world. Supporting ideas of Clarke at al. (2000), Michael et al. (2008) that consumers are not able to distinguish where from the product comes anymore and Kotabe and Helsen (2010) who say that companies adapt their marketing strategies on global basis.

Therefore, taking into consideration what was found by Imtiaz and Gaurilcikaite (2013) the idea to find out how consumers of other culture than Western perceive international shops’ window displays. Saudi Arabia was chosen because of the interesting cultural position that it has nowadays. Which can be described like that: “despite the adoption of a more modern outlook these days, religion and patriotism govern Saudi life”(World Trade, 2010).

Upcoming part of the methodology is about articles and theories that helped to form the questionnaire.
3.2 Theories for methodology

Before talking further about the questionnaire, it is useful to get to know what researches are done in field and how they influenced the decisions made while conducting this work.

Some similarities of the idea how consumer from different culture sees product can be found in Varman and Costa (2012) work where authors examine the American marketing of non-Western craft products. Their data collection was made using different types of methods (observation, consumer review analysis, in-depth interviews) and in various forms (data from Internet and catalogues, transcripts from interviews). Their findings reveal that “the marketer draws upon temporal and geographic backwardness and isolation; psychological remoteness and cultural difference and COO theory from its inception is inflected with a particularized vision of progress through development discourse and has privileged the West” (Varman and Costa, 2012, pp. 240-265).

Another work that could support this research is about understanding of how the complex cultural identity discourses in diversifying sociocultural contexts affect interpretation of brand meanings by locally born consumers (Kipnis et al., 2013). Authors posit that “in a multicultural marketplace, mainstream consumers' identities may evolve over time to internalize multiple diverse cultures” (Kipnis et al., 2013, p.231). The theoretical framework that Kipnis et al. (2013) provide suggests some useful insights when forming the questionnaire.

When forming questions about the shop window displays, the article of Opris and Bratucu (2013) was useful with the insights on the tools used to create a successful shop window display. Authors mentioned such elements as:

- Colours;
- Graphical information;
- Technology;
- Story creation;
- Seasonal influence;
- Trend reflecting elements.

What is more, based on the work of Li and Cassidy (2010, p.3) these key aspects of window displays were also used when creating questionnaire for this research (see Figure 4).
This information was used when forming questions about consumer and shop window displays. The next part of the methodology will explain the main matters connected to the questionnaire.

3.3 Questionnaire

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected at the same time using open-ended and close-ended questions in self-completed questionnaire. The mix of qualitative and quantitative methods was used based on Bryman (2012) mentioning, that quantitative approach is good when showing regularities and qualitative approach is able to show social processes. What is more, it is important to understand, that using mix of research methods also can have completely different outcome from what was expected. What is more, “social-scientists now believe there is no major problem area that should be studied exclusively with one research method” (Terrell, 2012, p. 258). Thus, the result analysis will be done using qualitative and quantitative data combination and analysing the content of it.

3.3.1 Closed questions

Considering that the questionnaire has open-ended and close-ended questions, two types of analysis were used:

- Statistical analysis for closed questions.
- Content analysis for open questions.

Based on the description of statistical analysis in the Encyclopedia of Case Study Research, it is researcher’s helper when explaining quantitative findings in the case study. There are few techniques that can be used such as descriptive techniques and inferential techniques. Though,
due to the size of this research (which is sixty one respondents) it is considered be too little to use inferential technique.

On the other hand, descriptive techniques help present the collected information in summary fashion, such as tables, graphs, and central tendency indices, or to reflect embedded patterns within data (2009) even when the sample size is not so big. Argyrous (2000) also provide similar explanation of descriptive statistics that is the numerical, graphical, tabular techniques for organizing, presenting and analysing data. Author notices that those techniques helps to perceive and process information easier and the results can be provided in more convenient and understandable ways (Argyrous, 2000).

Descriptive statistics is a tool that helps to sum up the research data, but it is necessary to keep in mind that it is dependent on the research question (Argyrous, 2000). Due to not a big sample that was collected for this work and research questions that ask more general information regarding shop window displays, it was chosen to use these descriptive statistics elements:

- Frequency tables (that show how many times the value repeats),
- Relative frequency tables (that show the percentage or proportion of the value taking into the consideration the total number of them).
- Graphs (let visually see the main features of the data (Argyrous, 2000)). Types of graphs used in this work are pie, bar chart.

This analysis was used for the quantitative part of the questionnaire and now it will be discussed the qualitative part of it.

### 3.3.2 Open ended questions

Content analysis as a tool to analyse data was chosen due to its flexibility when research goals and objectives are different (Marsh and White, 2006). “This research technique enables to use replicable and valid inferences from meaningful matter to the contexts of their use and with this can provide new insights, mention facts, give new knowledge” (Krippendorff, 2004). Bryman (2012) seconds and mentions that this method can be applied to different forms of information that is not structured. Author notices that even though content analysis is considered as systemizing and categorizing tool that quantifies content, it can be used with other approaches as semiotics and ethnographic content analysis. Additionally, content analysis is used when it is necessary to find hidden meaning and what context is taken into the consideration when analysing the data (Bryman, 2012).

In case of this work, content analysis would help understanding responses gotten from consumers of Saudi Arabia in the context of globalization, culture, and shop window displays importance/influence. The analysis of this work was done by using elements of quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Quantitative was used to count how many respondents had chosen to use certain words or which words were more often used when responding to the open-ended questions because frequency of some words usage can be an important indicator (Bryman, 2012). Speaking about qualitative elements, they are not so clear though existing in analysis and formation of the questionnaire.

Now practical matters of questionnaire will be described. To start with, based on the pre-test study of Imtiaz and Gaurilcikaite (2013) findings and notices it was decided to create the self-
completed questionnaire with open, closed and multiple choice questions (according to Bryman (2012)):

- Open questions purpose in this case would be exploratory, in order to see if it would give other, maybe even unexpected responses.
- Closed questions are easy to explore and decode also they are easier to be answered. Also given answer options were coded in terms of window displays and what influence they cause for respondents as a part of content analysis methodology.

The questionnaire’s purpose is to help answer the question how the consumer from Saudi Arabia perceives international apparel brand shop window displays.

It was decided to use a self-completed questionnaire. This decision was made taking into the consideration the distance between geographical locations of the respondents and the author of this work. Respondents have to be from Saudi Arabia while the author is writing this work in Sweden. Bryman (2012) mentions that it is easier to administer this type of questionnaire and it can be spread to wider audience. Nevertheless it is important to mention, that self-completed questionnaire has its disadvantages as well. Bryman (2012) mentions that it cannot probe or prompt, just few open-ended questions can be asked, there should not be too much questions (otherwise respondent will get tired answering), more risk, that necessary data will be missing.

Moreover, it was decided that to conduct the online questionnaire will be more effective. This is due to the fact that to fill in the online questionnaire takes less time, while an interview takes much longer. What is more it is more convenient for the respondents and also people are less tensed to answer the questions when they are incognito (Bryman, 2012). It would also be more difficult to find people willing to participate in an interview.

In their pilot study Imtiaz and Gaurilcikaite (2013) also noticed a contradiction of interview as a method of collecting data. Interview was chosen as an option not to limit what respondents were saying. Though, authors found it difficult to make respondents speak more and at the same not guide or give clues what was expected to be heard from them. Thus it was decided that using some open and multiple choice questions would be guidance necessary for the respondent but at the same time would leave a choice.

### 3.3.3 Questions for questionnaire

Based on discussion above, questions of the questionnaire can be divided into three groups:

- Questions helping to answer about consumer and window displays (Group 1);
- Questions helping to answer about consumer and country of origin (Group 2);
- General questions (Group 3).

In the Table 1 questions of the questionnaire are given with the explanation what was the purpose of asking them as well as to which category of mentioned above they are related.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Purpose of the question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Assumption/Reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Do you follow fashion news?</td>
<td>Assumption that those who follow fashion news are more aware of information related to shop window displays and country of origin of their favourite apparel company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>If you have answered yes to previous question, could you specify how often do you read news about it in magazines, blogs and social media?</td>
<td>Assumption that those who follow news more often are more aware of the information related to the previous question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Are you more interested in local brands or international (the name on a particular product that is known and used in more than one country)?</td>
<td>To know if consumer prefers global or local concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Do you know where from are the international brands that you are interested in?</td>
<td>To know if consumers are aware about country of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>If you are more interested in the international brands, is it because of?</td>
<td>To know the reasons why international brands are more appealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>If you are more interested in the local brands, is it because of?</td>
<td>To know the reasons why local brands are more appealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>How often do you go shopping per month?</td>
<td>Assuming that the more often person goes shopping, the more he/she is exposed to shop window displays and how they change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>You go shopping when (please choose one option that is the most suitable for you)</td>
<td>Assuming that those who go when they need something or have nothing to do, etc. pay more attention to the shop window displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>How often do you travel abroad?</td>
<td>To know how often consumer visit other cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>You go abroad for (please choose one option that is the most suitable for you).</td>
<td>To see how many people go abroad only for shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>If you travel abroad do you visit stores?</td>
<td>Assuming that consumers while shopping notice shop window displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>If you travel abroad just for shopping, could you specify what the reasons are?</td>
<td>To know the reasons of shopping abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Did you notice if your favourite international brand’s shop window display differs in your home country and abroad?</td>
<td>To know if customer notice any difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>When going for a shopping do you pay attention to window displays of the store?</td>
<td>To know how much consumer pays attention to the window displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Does it happen that you enter shop just because of its window display?</td>
<td>This shows that shop window display attracts consumer’s attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>What attracts your attention in the window display?</td>
<td>Reasons, symbols, elements what attracts attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>When you intentionally look at the international brand window display, what information do you expect to get?</td>
<td>To know how to improve window displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>In your opinion how useful and informative for you are your favourite international brand’s shop window displays?</td>
<td>To know what possible changes could be done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>In your opinion how useful and informative for you are your favourite local brand’s shop window displays?</td>
<td>To know what possible changes could be done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>If you would have an opportunity to change a window display of your favourite international brand. What would you change in the window display?</td>
<td>To know how to improve window displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>What is your gender?</td>
<td>Assuming that male and female answers will have difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>What is your occupation?</td>
<td>In order to notice if there was any significant difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>For how long are you living in Saudi Arabia?</td>
<td>To know how many consumers are real Saudi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>What is your age?</td>
<td>To know what age groups were covered while spreading questionnaire through Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>What is your educational background?</td>
<td>In order to notice if there was</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next chapter will provide information about sample and how the data was collected for this research.

### 3.4 Data collection and sample

The questionnaire was spread out with the help of person living in Saudi Arabia, who shared the online questionnaire using social media.

Twitter was used as the main channel to spread out the questionnaire. This media had been chosen because there are more than 5 million active Twitter users in Saudi Arabia. According to the Social Clinic research “The State of Social Media in Saudi Arabia 2013”, Twitter highly penetrates in Saudi Arabia “placing the country on top Twitter user penetration per internet capita”(TheSocialClinic, 2013). Thus, it was decided that it will be the best way to reach the audience and share the questionnaire. Here is how the questionnaire was spread out:

**Figure 5 Twitter post asking to fill in the questionnaire**

In the picture above (Figure 5) it can be seen how the tweet looked like. It also had got 12 retweets and comments such as “thank you”, “done”. Some of the respondents were curious why Saudi Arabia was chosen for this kind of research. What is more, there were also few comments regarding the language: “I do not know English”, “Why not to write the questionnaire in Arabic?”

The questionnaire was completed by 61 people living in Saudi Arabia. From whom 75% were the locals, 20% were living in Saudi Arabia for 10-20 years and 5% were living more than 20 years (see Table 2 below). This shows that all respondents are very well acquainted with the Islamic and the country’s where they live culture and customs.
The age of respondents varied between under 25 to 36-45. This is explainable due to the fact that questionnaire was spread through the Twitter and older generations are not so keen on using social media and new technologies. This is also supported by the research, that the biggest social media users in Saudi Arabia in 2013 were 18-25 and 25-35 age groups(TheSocialClinic, 2013). One more thing that has to be considered in this research is the average age of the respondents. The channel through which the self-completed questionnaire was spread out was Twitter. It was already mentioned before that the most of the people using Twitter in Saudi Arabia is younger audience. As a result, it may not reflect the ideas and wishes of other age groups (especially older ones).

The biggest part of people who answered the questionnaire were students (34 out of 61 respondents), 21 respondents was working, while 6 of all respondents had chosen “other” option. This option was left in case if people are neither studying nor working.

Dividing respondents according to the gender, 42 of 61 respondents were women and 19 were men.

3.5 Validity and reliability

Talking about the validity and reliability, such important aspect as dependence on a researcher has to be taken into the consideration. When talking about the evaluation of the study, Bryman (2012) notices that a lot depends on the researcher in terms how he or she sees research fitting into the context.

It is difficult to measure the reliability or validity of this work due to the lack of researches on this kind of topic. This work could be more part of validity itself in terms that formed questionnaire is the first step trying to set the boundaries of consumer’s opinions and cultural aspects through shop window displays. It is sort of first step for possible doctoral studies’ research. What is more, it is crucial to understand that the findings from this study do not claim to be typical answers applicable to all possible consumers of Saudi Arabia. For that goal, it is necessary to have bigger and wider sample group. Nevertheless, the results can be considered as an indicator helping to see if there is any tendency that could be investigated more thoroughly and further in the whole Islamic world (Islamic countries).

To make sure that questionnaire was really answered by Saudi Arabians, the questionnaire contained question for how long respondents are living in Saudi. The majority of them replied that they are native (see Table 1). This approves that results are valid to claim they are from Saudi. Those few who answered that they are living more than 10 or 20 years author also considers as valid due to the fact that living for a long time in country you assimilate in a way to the culture of it. What is more, the questionnaire was spread out through Twitter using

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of time Living in Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am native</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arabic language (see Figure 5). This also gives reliability that if not native at least people who know Arabic can understand what they are asked to do.

Talking about the validity that the wider audience was reached, respondents had to mention their age, occupation. One of the helping hands to spread the questionnaire was Twitter account (as mentioned above the most used social media in Saudi). These aspects at the same time give validity (age varies from under 25 to 35-45), but as well make some limitations (wider spread audience, but only the one which uses modern technologies). Another important aspect was to be sure that both genders responded the self-completed questionnaire. That is why there were a question asked what the gender of the respondent is.

If the ecological validity would be taken into the consideration of this work, it should be said that this work has limited ecological validity. This is due to the fact that respondents were provided with the questionnaire where most of the questions were close-ended with already constructed possibilities to choose the answer. This makes the answers less natural. Though there are also open-ended questions that support the idea of higher level of ecological validity. Qualitative research is more influential than quantitative when considering the term of ecological validity (Bryman, 2012).

For instance in order to confirm predictive validity, it would be useful and even necessary to repeat the questionnaire (research) after some time using the same way of data collection. This would also help to answer the question of the reliability of this work. If this research would not have external validity, it could be assumed that this research is applicable just to the 61 respondent who answered the questionnaire and no one else.

One more thing to mention is the reliability of results from the open-ended questions. As known, some respondents usually are a bit lazy to answer this type of questions. In this case there were also some respondents who did not answer those questions, the answers were considered as not valid. The responses “I do not know” were also considered doubtful to discuss.

The next chapter will provide the results of the self-completed questionnaire about the consumers of Saudi Arabia and their thoughts on shop window displays.

4. RESULTS

Typical browser or window shopper is a woman (Kuruvilla and Joshi, 2009) and the majority of respondents from Saudi Arabia were women. Though, the answers from men cannot be omitted as they are also very important. The fact mentioned above, implied the thought that woman pay more attention to the shop window displays while browsing. Based on that, further analysis will be made taking into the consideration male, female and total responses. This was done to see the pattern on shop window displays comprehension by gender as well as by culture that surrounds respondents. Questions of the questionnaire can be found in the appendix and at in the results part they are grouped according to the theories that they support.

In this part only data retrieved from the questionnaire will be provided while discussion part will include the elaboration on what that data means.
4.1 Consumers and window displays

When asked, 93% of Saudi Arabia women who answered the questionnaire pay attention to shop window displays (question #15) and enter the shop just because of its shop windows display (question #16). While 84% of Saudi Arabia males pay attention to the shop’s window display just 74% of them are willing to enter the shop just because of it.

Continuing with the survey, when asked 75% of respondents follow fashion news. Out of those answers, 95% of women are following fashion news, while only 32% of men do that.

Figure 6 Question #15 and #16 answers by gender

Figure 7 Question #1 males responses
Connected to this question it was asked how often do respondents read and search for fashion news.

Ninety percent of respondents answered that they pay attention to the shop window displays while shopping, out of that percentage 60 percent go shopping once or less per month, 33% go shopping 2-3 times per month, leaving 3-5 time per month and 5 times and more per month with 4% each. In the chart below it can be seen how frequency of shopping differs if we divide respondents according to the gender. The main tendency of shopping frequency is the same for the males and females and it is 2-3 times per month or once or less per month. Otherwise than men, women have chosen other options as well.
Figure 10 Question #7 females and males responses

Talking about who is paying more attention to the shop window displays male or female, charts below indicate that woman do (93%). But males’ result is not so different (84%).

Figure 11 Question #15 females’ responses
Thirty eight out of 55 respondents that pay attention to the shop window displays answered that they go shopping more often when they need something, leaving other options significantly less. Eight of 55 people go shopping when they have nothing to do, 6 go when there is a sale, one shops when the season is changing and 2 of the respondents have chosen “other” option. And again, reasons for going shopping have the same tendency between men and woman (see Figure 13 below).

Answering the question how often people go abroad, 71% of the respondents answered that they travel abroad once a year or less, 26% travel 2-5 times a year, and just 3% travel abroad more than 5 times a year. The same tendency is observed when dividing answers according to the gender of the respondents.
Eighty seven percent of the people that travel abroad visit stores there. This tendency can be applied for Saudi Arabia men and woman when looking into results according to the gender (see Figure 15).
Out of all travelling Saudi Arabia people, 88% like international brands more than local ones (74% of male respondents and 91% of female respondents).

![Pie chart showing responses to question 3 for males](chart16)

**Figure 16** Question #3 males’ responses

![Pie chart showing responses to question 3 for females](chart17)

**Figure 17** Question #3 females’ responses

In the chart below (Figure 18) it can be seen what the reasons of travelling abroad are. Most of the consumers (44 respondents) travel abroad for vacations, 13 of them are travelling. There were three people who travel abroad for business purposes and only one person is going just for the shopping.
In the chapter below the results of the questions connected to the country of origin theory are provided.

### 4.2 Consumers and country of origin

The Figure 19 shows that 39 out of 61 respondents know the country of origin, 18 do not care about it and just 4 do not know the COO of international brand. When talking about gender division, it also can be seen that most of males and females both know country of origin of the brand. Almost 30% of respondents claim not to care about the origin of the international brands and it is more than those who do not know at all brand’s COO.

**Figure 19 Question #4 responses**

#4. Do you know where from are the international brands that you are interested in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I do not care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When asked what makes consumers of Saudi Arabia more interested in international brands the majority of respondents identified style of clothes. The second most frequent answer was that being more interested in global brands shows respondent’s status in the society. Some also mentioned that personality behind the brand makes international brands more attractive to them. In the Figure 20 below can be seen answers from men and women. Besides above mentioned reasons, one male identified that international brand’s message that is translated is closer to his point of view. Females have chosen option “Other” and when asked to specify, pointed out that quality of international brands is better.

![#5. If you are more interested in the international brands, is it because of:](image)

**Figure 20 Question #5 males and females responses**

Only four respondents identified that they are more interested in the local brands (Figure 21). What is more, more males than females are interested in local brands. As reason why, males had chosen willingness to support local companies, style of clothes and that local brand showed his status in society. The only female who prefers local brands is willing to support them.

In the next part of analysis it will be talked about what opinions consumers have about shop window displays.
4.3 Opinions on shop window displays

To start with, thirty three people (54%) answered that their favourite international brand’s shop window displays differ at home country and abroad. When results are separated according to gender it can be seen an interesting finding. The results are almost opposite to each other when counted. Males tend not to notice difference in shop window displays as much as women do. Just 37% of male respondents see the difference while female respondents’ percentage is 62%.
This is what all Saudi Arabia consumers mention as differences:

- Firstly majority talks about variety of clothes displayed in shop windows and notice that in Saudi Arabia shop window displays are more conservative, having limited choices of products and just few new collections.
- Some of the respondents named Saudi Arabia shop window displays of international brands having outdated style;
- Another notice is that shop window displays are more attractive abroad in terms of colour choices, design, quality of clothes, pictures, creativity and arrangements;
- One of the respondents mentioned that there are no female model pictures in the shop window displays in Saudi Arabia;

Out of all male respondents there were seven who notice that the same international window displays differs abroad and in their home country. These are few thoughts on cultural differences in shop window displays:

- “In Saudi every shop put in their mind that Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country so they won't sell very short dress or short trousers or any cloth that Muslim people won't wear. Also they put in their mind that Saudi Arabia has a really hot weather most of the year so normally most of the year shops sell summer clothes.”
- “Collections are different in Saudi Arabia. Out of Saudi Arabia the collections are newer than the collections here in Saudi Arabia and out is more beautiful than here. The brands ignore the Saudi's market and the people’s need and what Saudi women need. Although Saudi women are interested in fashion and they are rich also.”
- “Sometime I don't find the specific things that I saw in display windows abroad and that makes me depressed.”
- “Clothes that are too revealing are not to be displayed in the shop windows in my country (Saudi Arabia). No specific decorations for Christian holidays such as Christmas.”
- “They show very little of their new collections in Saudi!”
Out of all options in question “What attracts your attention in the window display?” the most of the respondents mentioned such elements as clothes, themes of window displays, sales information. Besides that, brand name is also one of the elements that attract consumer’s attention. Nevertheless, colours were also mentioned as important element.

Chart below (see Figure 24) gives an overview which features were the most popular choices between man and woman of Saudi Arabia. The first thing that both mentioned was clothes, colours, brand name. What is more, respondents also mentioned that sales information attracts their eye in shop window displays and themes used in shop window displays. Only women notice mannequins’ positions in the shop windows.

![Figure 24 Question #17 females and males responses](chart.png)

Besides of the elements that attract consumers they were also asked what information they expect to get from the shop window display (Figure 25).
The main information that consumers of Saudi Arabia are willing to find are Clothing style, price ranges, general impression. There were few differences between males and females responses. Slightly more men were expecting to get country of origin information from the international brand shop window displays, but they were not completely interested in what culture window displays represent. Contrarily, women were interested in both recognizing the culture and country of origin. To add more, women are more into seeing information about the trends.

When respondents answered question above, they were asked to tell their opinion about how useful are their favourite international and local brand’s window displays. These questions were given in order to find out which window displays were seen more positively. Twenty three of sixty one people did not respond to the question about international brand shop window display at all or did not know what to respond, or their answers were not valid. Five of respondents said that they are not useful at all, while the rest thought that window displays were useful and wrote their thoughts about that. Question about local brands was not answered by twenty six people, ten respondents said that local brand’s shop window displays are not useful, rest provided more information.

Additionally, men again were not so responsive about answering those open-ended questions as women were. Those, who answered, were eleven males. Five of them told that international shop window displays were not useful for them and the rest told they were useful (below in the Table 3 you can see what they told). Talking about local brands it can be seen the same tendency among the males. Out of twelve males who responded, half told that local window displays are not informative or useful at all. Regarding the answers of woman, just five of forty two said that international shop window displays are not useful or they do not know and nine told the same about the local brands’ shop window displays.
Some of the valid and more interesting answers on both questions are given below in the table (both answers in a row are from the same person).

Table 3 Females and males responses on international and local WD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>INTERNATIONAL BRAND SHOP WINDOW DISPLAYS</th>
<th>LOCAL BRAND SHOP WINDOW DISPLAYS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“Important but not always, sometimes I don't notice it.”</td>
<td>“Not very important.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“Just follow a new fashion. The rest is good…”</td>
<td>“Have a modern decoration and suitable styles.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“Getting idea of the new trends.”</td>
<td>“Getting idea of the clothes styles that local brand offer.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>“Very useful and it gets my attention from the first glance.”</td>
<td>“It lacks the essentials of any professional global brand.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>“It helps in choosing the clothes that I will choose up to 40%”</td>
<td>“Not useful and not informative at all.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“If it's sale, I avoid going inside.”</td>
<td>“I don't care about local brands. Bad quality and high prices.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“Not so much, just to get an idea in what's new and if they have sales.”</td>
<td>“Not so much, just to get an idea in what's new and if they have sales.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>“I think it does not benefit much.”</td>
<td>“I do not know.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“It is pretty important to attract a shopper by displaying the best they have.”</td>
<td>“I only shop at local brands for special occasions! I just go to shops I trust they have what I'm looking for.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“It shows a lot about season, trends and price.”</td>
<td>“It shows a lot about season, trends and price.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“Of course it's important because it shows the best pieces and may be the best selling. Always.”</td>
<td>“Ummm there are beautiful local brands shop window displays but it's a lack of designers and artists and of course it is few.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“Very informative.”</td>
<td>“Not very useful.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“It's not really that useful but it gives a good shopping experience.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>“It provides me with information about how recently arrived the clothes, whether if there is sales or not and the quality of clothes.”</td>
<td>“It provides me with information about how related to my culture the clothes are and how the clothes are designed (Artistic approach).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“Well to an extent.”</td>
<td>“Not very informative.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>“I think brand's shops display its clothes following the culture of the country for example here in Saudi Arabia we prefer the long clothes and clothes which don't appear a lot of body. And also put the weather and the people's custom in their mind.”</td>
<td>“The same as previous question.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides those questions, there was also interesting to know what changes customers would like to make on the retail shop window displays. Respondents were mentioning that they would add more colours “I'll make it more attractive by colours.” Consumers of Saudi Arabia were willing to have more modern shop window displays “The background, colours, the manners of show. It's traditional we need the modern way. New and strange ideas of showing.”, “Add more life to it. Colours, lights and moving objects!” Not one mentioned usage of lights and LED technology “I would like make it simple and beautiful but with new technology like LED or like that.” One of the respondents had really an artistic idea: “I saw once in a shop window as if (it was) part of Museum. I like it so much. So probably I'll do same idea as part of Museum or Statue with little of change or embodiment of my favourite seasons.” And again there were consumers that wanted to see prices displayed in the shop windows: “written information about the prices of the products that are displayed “or those who were willing to show wider range of clothes, “more collections to satisfy more people”, style of clothes and brand. The next part will shortly discuss the results retrieved from the questionnaire.
5. DISCUSSIONS

Questions about if Saudi Arabia consumer pays attention to window displays when going for a shopping and does it happen that person enters the shop just because of WD were asked to get information how many people (if at all) do that. The majority answered positively allowing the claiming that Saudi Arabia consumers are relevant for this research. What is more, it also gives a sign that it is important and worth to develop visual merchandising policy in the shop when it is opened in a new country.

Does consumer follow fashion news and how often he or she does that were asked on purpose assuming that in fashion news there are also articles about windows displays. Thus people following fashion news probably also get more information about new interesting or creative shop window displays. Though this assumption is questionable due to the fact that 41% of the respondents follow fashion news randomly and making logical assumption it is less likely that they get the information on apparel shop window displays than those 33% who do it every day. This suggests a thought that it is not necessarily that fashion followers are more conscious about shop window displays that those who do not follow fashion news at all or do it randomly. Moreover, this helps to indicate focus group for future researches on this topic.

As it can be seen from the charts (see Figure 7, Figure 8), females are much more engaged into reading fashion news than male are. The most of woman answers were divided between reading news about fashion randomly and doing that every day (38% each). Out of 19 male respondent just 6 follow fashion news and majority of them do it randomly. This is strongly connected to the Islamic culture where woman and man roles are divided. When compared, there are very few women who work instead of staying home and taking care of the family. This suggests an assumption that it could be the reason that woman follow fashion news more because they have time. Nevertheless, they are the ones who need to look after kids and dress them. From answer of this sample group a thought comes that when investigating matters related to the fashion, Saudi woman may be more relevant to focus on.

Question in the survey about the frequency of shopping per month was asked as an indicator how often consumer is exposed to the shop window displays. Assuming that the more often you go shopping the more often you see different shop window displays. Another question about if the customer pay attention to the shop window display was asked in order to see if there is a link in between those two questions. From the results of the questionnaire (see Figure 10, Figure 11, Figure 12), it is considered not enough to agree that shopping frequency and paying attention to the shop window displays are strongly interconnected. This also helps when forming a focus group for future researches.

Similar assumption of linking two questions from the questionnaire, as just mentioned above, was made connecting the question about paying attention to the shop windows displays and question when respondents go shopping more often. Taking into the consideration that most of the people go shopping when they need something (see Figure 13), it can be assumed that consumers (male and female) are paying more attention to the shop window displays in order to get some information and find what they need. This gives indications for the companies what information it is important to provide for the customers in shop window displays. Besides, an assumption can be made that when talking about different culture, different outcome and needs of a customer may be indicated.
Another set of questions regarding window displays was set to see if the travelling abroad and connection between liking international brands more than local ones are related. Thoughts of Anderson and Cunningham that are cited by Chen and Maheswaran (2013) were taken into consideration. Authors say that consumers who know more international products and go more often abroad are more positive about the foreign production. For this purpose following questions were asked: how often do you travel abroad; what for do you travel abroad; if you travel abroad do you visit stores? From the results of the questionnaire (see Figure 14, Figure 16, Figure 17, Figure 18), can be assumed that they partly support the fact mentioned by Chen and Maheswaran. This conclusion is based on that there is the linkage between traveling abroad and being more in favour for international products. Travelling individuals are exposed to bigger variety of products, symbols and naturally assumption comes that they are able easier to compare the differences. Also this means that they prefer to have the same variety and quality in their home country and they are expecting more from local companies. Nevertheless, it is necessary to be objective and say that, in author’s opinion, it is not enough from this work to completely confirm that the frequency of travelling abroad and more positive attitude towards international shop window displays exist. This as well suggests a possible research related to travellers and their attitude towards international brands versus local brands. Though, as it is seen from the answers, most of the people when being in other country for vacation or traveling, visit stores. Interesting fact to mention, out of all respondents, just one (it was female) indicated that she is travelling abroad just for shopping. When asked to indicate what the reasons are for that, she explained that she travels abroad for shopping to see different choices than those which are in the Saudi Arabia. This indicates that even though consumers from the sample group are more in favour of international brands they do not do major attempts to reach bigger variety of products abroad. They are somehow satisfied of what they find in their country. One important thing to consider is how these results could be influenced when online shopping numbers would be known as this work includes only brick and mortar shopping.

Continuing with the country of origin theories, results from this questionnaire supports Diamantopulous and Balabanis (2008) thoughts. Retrieved results confirm that most of the consumers know the origin of the international brands that they are interested in (Figure 19). What is more, good performance of well-known brands all over the world may not only relate to the dominancy of the brand but also to the country-of-origin and that implies that “the level of familiarity with a country's brands may affect the success of the strategy” (Mittelstaedt et al., 2004, p.23) . It is also interesting, that when asked about why they are interested in international brands most answered that it is due to the style of clothes and that wearing international brands show their status in society. Not even one of the respondents has chosen country of origin as on option why they are interested in international brands (see Figure 20). This also provides a paradox that even though consumers in this sample are aware of the country of origin, they did not indicate country of origin as a reason why they choose particular brand. Then term international or global comes into the light and suggests that the main focus on future research should be done with those elements. This is a very interesting finding regarding the fact that more than half of respondents claimed that they know the country of origin of the brand. This partly supports thoughts of Diamantopoulos and Herz (2013) that consumer is not always aware of the cues that can trigger internally stored stereotypes in the country of origin recognition process. What is more, Liefeld (2004) in his work says that consumers are not so keen on using the country of origin as an information cue when buying products or goods. Based on that, some improvements regarding the interaction of theories have to be done.
When taking into the consideration results from Figure 16 and Figure 17, 85% of all respondents are interested more in the international brands than the local ones. International brands give globally shared consumption meanings, images, narratives, behaviour and makes “Glocal culture” consumption (Kipnis et al., 2013). As previously mentioned authors explain, this make consumers feel as citizens of the global village, consumers see the brand more positively and this triggers bigger chances that they will buy. Out of the 4 respondents that answered that they are more interested in local brands, two as a reason of interest named willingness to support their own country’s brand, one liked style of the clothes and one indicated that liking local brand showed person’s status in society. Taking into the consideration research about relationship between the brand and consumer made by Fournier (1998), national identity and country of origin are very closely related. Could the assumption be made that very few of respondents were more interested in local brands due to the historical and cultural heritage of Saudi Arabia? Taking into the consideration the fact that even though Saudi Arabia is united, it consists of many provinces, tribes having different customs, culture, etc. thus in a way a place with many national identities in united country.

The outcome of research encourages reconsidering the position of some elements’ place and importance in Figure 3. After getting results that respondents from Saudi Arabia did not emphasize the importance of the country of origin and were focused on international brands, globalization theory comes on the spot. Instead of being the part of COO theory in this work, it becomes more independent element. What is more, it still has connection with both visual merchandising and COO theories.

The dilemma if country of origin is still relevant in the global world discussed in the theoretical part indicates that it is a part of country of origin theory. At the same time, consumers’ wish to see less adapted shop window displays of international brands show that they are thinking in terms of globalization and having the same everywhere. Additionally, many times while talking about “global” synonym “international” is used.

Figure 26 shows new position of the globalization theory and importance in the context of this work.
In the next part of this discussion, some thoughts about the consumers’ opinions on shop window displays are provided. Here could be noticed that men are very short with their answers and notice that variety, style, colours are different. On the contrary, women are more explanatory about this matter.

From answers retrieved from open-ended questions, it is clear that even though international brands operate and have global approach, they still do some adaptations to the certain market (especially if it is Saudi Arabia with its culture). Kipnis et al. (2013) on their findings on culture-based brand meanings based on positioning and consumer response mentions term “glocal culture”. Then global appeal is integrated with the local specifications. This helps customer to understand brand’s position in international market and also makes customer see brand in more positive and relevant way in local context. Due to the fact (with all the respect to people and culture of Saudi Arabia) that the sample of Saudi Arabia was taken to analyse in this work due to the big differences between Saudi(Islamic) and Western (global) culture, very important and interesting conclusion follows. Answers of consumers from sample group in Saudi Arabia indicate that they are willing to have less culture aware international shop window displays. This also means that they are completely fine and more willing to have

![Reconsidered interaction between theories. Made by author](image)
globalized approach and companies willing to operate in that region would gain more when being unique, modern and having the same range as out of Saudi Arabia.

Out of all options in question “What attracts your attention in the window display?” the most of the respondents mentioned those features (based on Opris and Bratucu, 2013, pp. 51-56):

- Clothes. “The most simple and efficient way to attract customers into a store is to use must-have season clothes” (Opris and Bratucu, 2013).
- Themes of window displays. “The main purpose of a dramatic window is to shock consumers, to start rumours, to ask questions or to create other strong reactions” (Opris and Bratucu, 2013). Here seasonal window displays could also be mentioned even though there were just few people who said that it attracts their eye. Necessary to take into the consideration that Saudi Arabia has warm climate and does not celebrate most of the Western culture festivals.
- Sales information. Sales are put on shop window displays to create the assumption that all the clothes or products in the shop are with discount (what is not always true) (Opris and Bratucu, 2013). Obviously with the intention to attract customer’s attention.
- Brand name. “Retailers use a brand dedicated window to attract attention on a certain brand, but also mix brand windows, to create universal trends” (Opris and Bratucu, 2013).
- Colors. Opris and Bratucu (2013) mention that colors are one of the key points to have favourable shop window display. Also they notice that in the international context it is difficult to use colours. As an example they take white colour that in Muslim countries means mourn and death, but in other countries can mean purity.

It gives an impression what elements are very important for consumers from Sample group. What is more, those features give indications for companies which feature of window displays should be elaborated and continuously improved.

The consumer of Saudi Arabia is expecting to see information of clothing style, trends and brand range in the windows and is completely understandable because then consumer knows what range of clothes shop has, what is the current fashion. Those elements are important to show and work on in order to make client satisfied. What is more, consumers were willing to see not only sales or other promotions information, but also prices in the international brand shop window displays. This means that price may be an important indicator to enter or not to enter the shop for the customer. It may be that need for this kind of information is related to efficiency and saving time while shopping. Respondents did not emphasize so much their expectations to see country of origin, culture, brand’s message, number of items and artistic or practical approach in the international apparel brand shop window displays. It is necessary to mention that this question had quite a lot of options to choose from. This was made taking into the consideration that shop window displays can have all this information at once. Though, it can be possible that there were too many options (see Figure 25) for respondents to choose from and they were lazy to be completely honest by choosing the first options.

From answers retrieved analysing open questions, it is obvious that there are plenty different opinions about how Saudis see shop window displays. Though most of the respondents identify the main purpose of shop window displays which is that they are useful in showing fashion trends, clothing range and sales information. As discussed earlier, more customers of Saudi Arabia give bigger importance to the international brand’s shop window displays than
the local ones. They say that local brands are lacking designers and artists, “essentials of any professional global brand”, nevertheless reflects the culture in which they are created. From answers information how to improve shop window displays can be absorbed. These answers also supported the theoretical information systemized by Li and Cassidy (2010) in their article “Optimum visual angle for fashion retail window display” (see Figure 2).

After reconsidering questionnaire results’ influence on the theoretical part, Table 4 provides the main findings of the conducted survey and discussion with respondents from Saudi Arabia.

Table 4 Concluding ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typical browser is woman</td>
<td>93% of woman from the sample group pay attention and are willing to go into the shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of following fashion news is connected to getting more information about shop WD</td>
<td>95% of woman and 32% of men from the sample group follow fashion news. Most of them do it randomly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping frequency creates possibility to be more exposed to the shop WD and makes consumer pay more attention to them</td>
<td>93% of woman and 84% of men from the sample group pay attention to the WD and most of them are going shopping once or less and 2-3 times per month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying attention to shop WD is connected to the reason why consumers are shopping.</td>
<td>The most of males and females from the sample group are shopping when they need something, thus it is assumed that they also look more attentively to the shop window displays to find what they need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going abroad frequency is connected to the better recognition and more positive view of international brands’ shop WD.</td>
<td>Consumers (males and females) from the sample group travel abroad once a year or less, but when they do, they visit stores. 90% of females and 73% of males are more positive about international shop WD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing country of origin of the brand is one of the reasons why people like international brands.</td>
<td>53% of males and 69% of females from the sample group know the COO of their favourite international brand and both name as main reasons style of clothes and that it shows status in society. There was not even one answer that country of origin is the reason of being interested in international brands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More consumers are interested in international than local brands.</td>
<td>91% of Saudi Arabia women and 74% of men from the sample group are in favour of international brands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers notice difference between international and local WD.</td>
<td>If taken Saudi Arabia consumers from the sample group, they notice difference. If dividing into the gender, most of the men do not notice while most of the women notice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The consumer of Saudi Arabia from the sample group, especially females, notice shop window displays and they are one of the reasons why consumers are willing to enter the shops. To add more, Saudis who participated in the survey are more positive about the international shop window displays than the local ones. Nevertheless, even though they know
the country of origin of the international brand that they like, this is not one of the reasons why international shop window displays are more in favour than local ones.

This is just the small part of the possible discussion on the theme of country of origin, visual merchandising theories and consumers’ opinions around them. Below the conclusions about this work are given.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Taking into the consideration what was discussed throughout all the work, it is time to make conclusions and answer the research questions. In order to make it easier to comprehend the information figure and table with the main ideas of this work are provided.

From the result analysis, it is obvious that an assumption of tendency could be about consumer of Saudi Arabia (at least from the sample group). They notice differences between international and local shop window displays and say that international shop window displays are:

- More professional;
- More up to date when talking about the fashion trends;
- More informative.

Consumers also notice that international brands make adjustments to the Saudi Arabia culture when organizing their shop windows. They may be not so easy obvious to the people from other countries (see Pre-test chapter), but native inhabitants notice them. They mention that adaptation reflects through not exposing very short and provocative clothes in the window displays or not showing woman images in them.

International shop window displays are more likely to attract the consumer with their colours, themes, range of clothing, information about sales and prices. This gives slight overview on what managerial solutions could be made by shops.

Besides the answers into the questions, the information about what the consumer of Saudi Arabia is and what expectations they have concerning international brand shop window displays. Saudi Arabia consumer from the sample group seems to be xenocentrist. They are the ones, who “have aspiration towards foreign products and preferring them to the local ones” (Kipnis et al., 2013, p.246). Though as Kipnis et al (2013) argue, this does not explain if it is connected to the general preferences, or culture-specific ones.

Making the conclusions and answering this work’s research questions it can be said:

- Consumers of Saudi Arabia that have answered the questionnaire notice differences in shop window displays of local and international brands.
- It was found out, that international brands make certain adaptations when considering visual merchandising theory in Saudi Arabia.
- Saudi Arabia’s consumer from the sample group is more in favour of international shop window displays that are outside their country. They claim that in Saudi Arabia they are outdated, have fewer choices and styles of clothes, and are not so creative. They are willing to have the same ones as in so called Western world without adaptations to their culture.
7. LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH AND IMPLICATIONS

As any work, this research also has its own limitations. To start with, the first limitation is the lack of researches combining such variables as consumer behaviour, culture and shop window displays influence together. Works and theories concerning the shop window displays, their effect on consumers and their buying are quite scattered. This makes difficulties to find the suitable theories for this kind of research. Thus further studies in this field would broaden the sight and would help to create a theoretical foundation.

The same can be mentioned while talking about the formation of the questionnaire. There should be more pre-tests in order to find the right combination of questions for the questionnaire and their relativity should be tested using bigger sample of respondents.

The second limitation is the language barrier. Even though Saudi Arabia people know English language well, still this is not native language. Thus there is a possibility of misunderstanding what was asked of respondents to do. To add more, some answers were given in Arabic, thus there is a possibility of inaccuracy in translating those answers. Nevertheless if the questionnaire would be translated into Arabic, it would include a wider range of community groups living in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Not all people answered the question what they would change in shop window displays if they would have an opportunity. 25% of answers were not valid, 10% did not know what they would change and 20% would not change anything, rest 45% of answers provided their ideas. Thus, there should be made improvements to gather better quality information from the open-ended questions. For instance, self-completed questionnaire could be combined with the interview and observation methods.

Moreover, it could be considered the fact that results of this research could be bias to some degree due to majority of females who answered the questionnaire.

Considering future implementations, this work could be starting point in future research considering cultural reflections on shop window displays. There is still too little information how they are influencing consumer decisions. As mentioned before, it would not only add new information to the visual merchandising but also to Islamic marketing field that is gaining importance nowadays. Nevertheless, this kind of studies not necessarily has to be conducted using Saudi Arabia or the Middle East sample. There a plenty of emerging markets such as Brazil, China, India. In addition, it would be interesting to compare countries that belong to so called Western culture with each other.

Taking the idea of cultural reflections in retail elements and their influence on customers, the research can be expanded having in mind other retail instruments. For example, there could be research how important it is culturally adapt web pages and other online retail channels and do consumers notice and need that. This field, connected to the cultural studies and consumer behaviour has a lot of possibilities.

What is more, further researches would help to develop the questionnaire helping companies to get information whether consumers in different countries are willing more to have culturally adapted or internationally adjusted shop window displays, what consumers are looking for in the shop window displays. This could be helpful for an international company in order to have better performance in different countries. What is more, when having this
information there could be possibility to save company’s money because visual merchandisers would know what the consumers’ needs are and could be more precise about the company’s expenses on shop window displays.

When talking about Saudi Arabia and shop window displays there, international companies could carry out some actions based on the findings of this work. To start with, a lot of consumers were saying that collections feel like outdated when compared to the same company’s shops abroad. There is a possibility that due to the hot climate of the country companies are not so much advertising autumn-winter collections in Saudi Arabia. Though if they would do that there is a possibility that consumers would not mention that there are only old collections in their country. Secondly, companies, operating in the Middle East should have well knowledge of the regulations concerning what can be exposed in the shop window displays (regarding the culture, laws, religion) and adapt WD as close to the ones that are in the Western world as possible. Finalising, one notice can be given. Companies that would consider Saudi Arabia as the third world country where they can send all old collections would make a mistake, because consumers are using social media, traveling. They are up to date with the fashion and they are craving to have all the newest items at their place.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE
How Saudi Arabia consumer perceives international apparel brands through shop window displays?

I am a student at Boras Textile School in Sweden. At the moment I am writing my master thesis about consumer behaviour in Saudi Arabia. I would kindly appreciate your help answering few questions that would help me to understand if consumers in Saudi Arabia pay attention to the international shop window displays. It will take 10-15 minutes. Thank you!

General information about shopping

1. Do you follow fashion news?
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. If you have answered yes to previous question, could you specify how often do you read news about it in magazines, blogs and social media?
   a. Every day
   b. Every month
   c. When season changes
   d. Before new year is coming
   e. I do it randomly

3. Are you more interested in local brands or international (the name on a particular product that is known and used in more than one country)?
   a. I am more interested in local brands
   b. I am more interested in international brands
   c. Cannot tell

4. Do you know where from are the international brands that you are interested in?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I do not care

5. If you are more interested in the international brands, is it because of:
   a. It shows my status in society
   b. Style of clothes
   c. Country of origin
   d. Message that brand communicates is closer to my point of view
   e. Personality behind the brand (e.g. famous designer, celebrity, etc.)
   f. Other (please specify)

6. If you are more interested in the local brands, is it because of:
   a. I am willing to support my country’s companies
   b. It shows my status in society
   c. Style of clothes
   d. The message that they communicate is closer to my culture
   e. Personality behind the brand (e.g. famous designer, celebrity, etc.)
   f. Other (please specify)
7. How often do you go shopping per month?
   a. Once or less
   b. 2-3 times
   c. 3-5 times
   d. More than 5 times

8. You go shopping when (please choose one option that is the most suitable for you):
   a. You need something
   b. Have nothing to do
   c. It is sale
   d. Season is changing
   e. Other (could you specify?)

9. How often do you travel abroad?
   a. Once a year or less
   b. 2-5 times a year
   c. More than 5 times

10. You go abroad for (please choose one option that is the most suitable for you):
    a. Travelling
    b. Vacations
    c. Business
    d. Just for shopping
    e. Other (please specify)

11. If you travel abroad do you visit stores?
    a. Yes
    b. No

12. If you travel abroad just for shopping, could you specify what the reasons are?

13. Did you notice if your favourite international brand’s shop window display differs in your home country and abroad?
    a. Yes
    b. No

14. If you answered “yes” to previous question, could you specify what is it that differs?

15. When going for a shopping do you pay attention to window displays of the store?
    a. Yes
    b. No

16. Does it happen that you enter shop just because of its window display?
    a. Yes
    b. No

17. What attracts your attention in the window display?
    a. Clothes
    b. Themes of window displays
    c. Seasonal windows display (spring, summer, etc.)
    d. Festive and cultural windows displays
    e. Sales information
    f. Mannequins positions in the shop window
    g. Brand name
    h. Personalities that owe the shop
i. Colours
j. Other (please specify)

18. When you intentionally look at the international brand window display, what information do you expect to get?
   a. Price ranges
   b. Brand range
   c. Clothing style
   d. Trends
   e. Country of origin
   f. Affordability
   g. Sales or special promotions
   h. General impression
   i. What culture it represents
   j. Who is the customer
   k. Brand’s message
   l. How many items are shown
   m. Artistic approach
   n. Practical approach
   o. Other (please specify)

19. In your opinion how useful and informative for you are your favourite international brand’s shop window displays?

20. In your opinion how useful and informative for you are your favourite local brand’s shop window displays?

21. If you would have an opportunity to change a window display of your favourite international brand. What would you change in the window display?

22. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female

23. What is your occupation?
   a. Studying
   b. Working
   c. Other

24. For how long are you living in Saudi Arabia?
   a. I am native
   b. Less than 10 years
   c. 10-20 years
   d. More than 20

25. What is your age?
   a. Under 25
   b. 25-35
   c. 36-45
   d. 46-55
   e. 56 or more

26. What is your educational background?
   a. Arts, fashion and design
   b. Engineering
c. Economics and finances
d. Management and marketing
e. Medicine
f. IT
g. Media and communication
h. Other