

Consumers' Perceptual Differences in Buying Cosmetic Products: Malaysian Perspective

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Abstract: The objective of this study was to investigate effect of country image, product knowledge and patriotism on purchase intention in the context of buying cosmetic products. This study presented descriptive data analysis of demographic factors in the research instrument after data collection and described the relationship between the sample and population in terms of characteristics. The research presented personal data of 196 customers. The findings showed that, from the country perspective, patriotism has a high influence on the intention of customers to purchasing cosmetic products.

Key words: country of origin, purchase intention, country image, product knowledge, Patriotism

INTRODUCTION

The present era is time of globalization and companies are trying to win in this competitive market. This viable market creates many challenges for marketers because they are faced with customers who are more aware about products and know what they like to buy [1, 2]. Therefore, they do not buy without first thinking and evaluate before deciding to purchase. In choosing between foreign or domestic products, many aspects are considered before deciding to buy [3]. As shown by this research, there are several factors which influence customers' purchase intention, one of the most important of which is country of origin that has been the subject of many studies over years [4].

Country of origin was a remarkable topic for marketing experts and surveyors in the 1960s and scholars have claimed that concentrating on distinctive alternatives for people in whole the world is one of the accomplishment features for them [2, 5]. "COO" is the usual abbreviation for country of origin, that mentions to the country that accumulates a product or brand with which it is correlated [6-8]. People usually have positive feeling about some countries for special products like Italian shoes, Japanese electronic appliances and German cars [9-11].

"Malaysia has one of the wildest developing economies in Asia with a GDP of approximately US\$7,945 in 2008". Malaysia's economy rests upon a positive basis in a mixed economy that includes strong manufacturing, services and agricultural, industries. In 2008, this economy raised by 4.6%, that has been the nethermost proportion since 2003 and was due to the global economic turn-down. Also, it has a young population with around 63.6% aging between 15 and 64 years of old. Therefore, it is obvious that Malaysian citizens are not an exception to this issue and this factor which named as country of origin have an important role in buying products itself [12] (Choy, 2004). Various elements have a relationship to country of origin like : country image, patriotism and product knowledge; however, this study only examined the effect of these three variables on consumer purchase intention among Malaysian citizens in cosmetic industry.

Cosmetic industry has significantly grown and there are many well-known cosmetic industries in the world. In Malaysia, "The number of consumers who spend money and time on personal care products, like toiletries and cosmetics, has grown at a rate of more than 40% for the duration of the last few years, The marketplace for personal care has varied in recent years in Malaysia. In these days trend of buying has changed because of

broad access to shops. In addition, some local brands like Mary Kay and Stila have changed the trend of Malaysian consumers in buying [13, 14]. There are many cosmetic brands from different countries in Malaysia, such as Garnier [15] from France, Nivea from Germany, Body Shop from England and many others. These countries have begun to increase their business in Asia as it has the potential to give them the maximum volume of sales for their manufactured goods. Products' originality, which refers to the country in which it is manufactured, is a parameter that customers consciously or unconsciously consider as a purchase intent and the main indicators for evaluating domestic and foreign products [7].

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Purchase Intention: Purchase intention means making decisions on acting or an action that shows a person's manners in terms of a particular product. Studies have shown that customers' purchase intention about a product is determined by their attitudes and beliefs [16].

Further scholars have supposed that purchase intention is "when we think about something and then we will buy" and is defined as the emotion or perceived possibility of buying the products which are promoted; furthermore, purchase intention demonstrates rank of faithfulness to products. Other researchers like Daneshvary and Schower (2000) consider that purchase intention has a correlation with demographic parameters like, profession, age, gender and education [16].

In this modern era, business market is very competitive and there are numerous narrative ideas that have come to the market and attracted purchasers. So buyers have many substitutes for buying; nevertheless, there are many factors which influence products' success and customers' purchase intention. Marketers also concluded that intent is different from attitude. Although attitude stands for valuation of products, intention is people's enthusiasm in the sense of their conscious behaviour. There is an additional explanation which declares purchase intention as person's knowledge to make an effort for buying a brand [17, 10].

Country Image: Country image is one of the principal variables tested by academics based on extraneous products in worldwide business and consumer behaviour researches [18]. Nagashima [19] defined country image as "a stereotype, special image and standing which buyers have on their mind about an exact country [2]. There are many diverse works on this issue, which causes

misinterpretation for the investigators [20]. Moreover, numerous scholars have considered country image is concerned with products' characteristics [16]. Scholars have demonstrated that country image is like brand image and is categorized in the country of origin group. Martin and Eroglu (1993) added that macro-point of sight can be defined as largely data and descriptive of beliefs which are gathered from a specific country [21]. Additionally, they argued that country image has three technological, political and economic subsets. Nagashima [19] described country of image as "people's idea about products of a special country" [22-24]. Competition has become tighter and, for being different from other competitors, country image is one of the most significant factors which created a distinction between goods and services. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that country image is able to affect consumers' opinion about origins of products in different categories and purchase decision [25, 22]. Roth and Romeo (1992) added that country image can be described as opinions and beliefs of people about a special country according to previous experience and strong or weak marketing of those products. They also believed that country image has four aspects; first, "*design*" which means colours and fashion. Second, "*innovativeness*" which means methods of technology and engineering, third "*workmanship*" which is manufacturing superiority and standard and finally "prestige" that is the standing of a brand and reputation of status [26, 27].

Country Image and Purchase Intention: Marketers' specialists suppose that country image has an influence on making decision making and product assessment [19, 28, 29]. They have shown effect of country of origin and examined the way country image can control customers' judgment about quality of manufactured goods [30, 20]. In addition, scholars have represented that products' features and customers' information about source of the manufacturing country have an effect on purchase intention. There is a relationship between cognitive country image and purchase intention. Several scholars consider that country image has an indirect persuade on purchase intention. When people are familiar with the product, they have a propensity to use country of origin as a date for intent of purchase [31].

H1: There is a significant relationship between country image and purchase intention of cosmetic products among student citizens in Malaysia.

Product Knowledge: Theory of product knowledge has been considered in different fields of social sciences. Scholars believe that having information about objects and people influences customers' information processing [32-35]. They have also defined product knowledge as a total awareness which contains data about fundamental characteristics of various products and brands [36]. Some researchers have separated product knowledge into three other segments of experience knowledge, attribute knowledge and brand knowledge [37].

Product knowledge is described as memories which are on people's mind and other scholars have added that product knowledge has a relationship with consumers' knowledge, realization and self-assurance [38, 7, 39]. An academic supposed that customers' product knowledge is one of the most outstanding approach which has an effect on all parts of the decision making process and people with dissimilar levels of product knowledge differ in their understanding about them. Moreover, there is one more product knowledge which is called self-perceived knowledge and has a direct positive relationship with purchase intention [40].

Product Knowledge and Purchase Intention: Finding a relationship between product knowledge and country of origin has been one of the aims of researchers for many years [41, 42]. Previous studies have shown that country of origin is a complex subject and several moderators and variables which have effect on it and product knowledge is one of the variables which definitely has an important role on extrinsic cues. Relationship of product awareness and country of origin depends on the theories made by academics according to how purchasers rely on country of origin as a product evaluator for purchase decision. When researchers studied effect of country of origin on buying behaviour, country of origin was defined as a halo, with which people were not familiar and used it as an indicator for product evaluation. It shows that, when people have little data and information about products, they use country of origin as an indirect impervious [42]. Furthermore, country of origin is not a completely independent factor for products. For instance, Afghanistan is an underdeveloped country; when people hear about its products, unconsciously, a low level of quality comes to their mind; however, rugs of Afghanistan are very famous because of high quality and value. To put all the things into consideration, consumers' knowledge about country of origin of products can have a significant influence on their perception about products' brand, which can be positive or negative; [43, 44].

H2: There is a significant relationship between product knowledge and purchase intention of cosmetic products among student citizens in Malaysia.

Patriotism: Other independent variable should be think through it, in country of origin perspective is patriotism. Theory of this issue has been represented in literature of governmental sciences and global businesses. Adorno [1] discussed about healthy and ethnocentric patriotism. when someone likes his/her country and has prejudice about it, it called ethnocentric patriotism; however, a healthy person has no prejudice [1]. Several scholars have improved that patriotism consists of encouraging feelings besides loving people of their identifiable country; in this case, national power and governance are not essential. Another description of patriotism is being ready to give up for the country. Patriotism is not correlated with negative feelings [45]. It is some exhilarating feeling that people have about their own country and it is not to refute other countries. According to other researchers, patriotism is a respectable and optimistic feeling about homeland and it is a capability to view across the boundaries and feel concerned about supra nation. Moreover, it is an expressive logic about outmoded customs, symbols and values of national characteristics and has a relationship with comprehensible reflections of personal benefits besides all the emotional feeling toward one's nation (Meier-Pesti and Kirchler 2003; [46]).

Patriotism and Purchase Intention: Investigating consumers' ethnocentrism and animosity is increasingly growing in the literature of consumers' behaviour (Shimp and Sharma 1987). Scholars believe that it hurts economy, reduces employment and it is an unpatriotic action. On the other hand, customers who are not ethnocentric tend to buy foreign and imported products. There have been studies on Asian countries like China, Indonesia and Malaysia. The study about Malaysia showed that married Malay women had higher tendency to be ethnocentric than men. Researches have also shown that Malaysians have high tendency to local foods in contrast to domestic cars and computers [47].

There are many instruments for measuring consumers' ethnocentrism, one of the most wellknown of which is CETSCALE. This tool have been used and tested by many researchers who have confirmed its validity and reliability in many countries like Indonesia, Greece, Korea, Spain and Malaysia. Results of CETSCALE have demonstrated that customers' ethnocentrism is a good

predictor for their perception in purchasing domestic brands. Moreover, researchers have added that customers look for the same culture even in purchasing foreign products, which is called cultural similarity. Studies have shown that a large segment of young Malaysian customers tend to purchase domestic brands; as a result, marketers should consider this issue as an important factor for customer evaluation and purchase intention [48, 49]. Literature review has shown that ethnocentrism has an influence on customers' awareness about value of overseas products and also purchase intention [50]. Ethnocentrism and patriotism have a straight relationship with consumers' insight about purchase intention, country of origin despite quality of products and price [48, 51-55]; as a result, patriotism has a negative consequence on consumers' purchase intention and evaluation [51].

H3: There is a relationship between patriotism and purchase intention of cosmetic products among student citizens in Malaysia.

Research Methodology: A quantitative approach, survey, was used in this research and data collection was performed by a questionnaire. The purpose of this research was to develop a quantitative way for identifying e-marketing promotion tools and their influence on perceptual differences of Malaysian young generation. Type of investigation was casual and unit of analysis was youth students who lived and studied in Cyberjaya city of Selangor, Malaysia, were between 18 to 35 years old, used the Internet on a daily basis for checking emails or social networks like Facebook, Twitter or Linked-in and applied cosmetic products every day.

The nature of this research was based on hypothesis testing to establish causal relationships between independent variables and the dependent variable. It was a quantitative research which was designed to address all the objectives of this study. A quantitative approach, survey, was used in this research and data collection was performed by a questionnaire. Research philosophy was utilized with a quantitative approach Survey method that use in this research is via questionnaire in aim of data collection. The purpose of this section of research is to develop a quantitative research to investigate the influence of country of origin on customer purchase intent in the cosmetic industry in Malaysia. The nature of this research will be on hypothesis testing to establish causal relationships among dependent variable and independent variables.

Sample and Data: Primary and secondary types of data collection were performed; primary data collection included distributing questionnaires among the participants to understand their perception about each type of e-marketing promotions. Secondary data contains a variety of sources like magazines, websites, books and online databases including science direct, emerald, Proquest, Ebsco, etc.

The research was undertaken on university students in Cyberjaya, who were samples using cluster probability sampling method.

The participants, who used cosmetic products on a daily basis, were educated enough to understand the questionnaire. Cluster sampling which is a subcategory of probability sampling method was used to investigate opinion of students about effect of country of origin on consumers' purchase intention in terms of cosmetic products. All the participants were students who studied in Cyberjaya city of Selangor, Malaysia. 300 questionnaires were distributed among students who were studying in Multimedia University and Limkokwing University, Cyberjaya city, Selangor province, Malaysia, who had a daily experience of using cosmetic products.

Measurement Scale: In this research, a questionnaire was designed with five-point Likert scale.

Sample Size and Location: Population of data sampling included young university students, between 18 to 35 years old who were both male and female in Cyberjaya City of Malaysia. According to neocyber.com.my, population of university students was about 13000 students. This figure included entire students in 4 universities of this city: Limkokwing University, College of Creative Technology and Cyberjaya, Multimedia University, University College of Medicine. The purpose of this research was to examine influence of country of origin on customers' purchase intention in terms of cosmetics among student citizens in Cyberjaya city. The number of students in Cyberjaya was about 13,000 according to Wikipedia. According to Morgan (1970), N=13000 Cyberjaya students and n=300 students; so, 300 was the sample size of this research. Therefore, 300 questionnaires were distributed among the students studying in Multimedia University and Limkokwing University, Cyberjaya city, Selangor province, Malaysia, who had daily experience of using cosmetic products.

Table 1: reliability test

Reliability analysis	Cronbach's alpha
Country image	0.705
Product knowledge	0.723
Patriotism	0.628
Purchase intention	0.680

Validity and Reliability: A pilot study was performed to assess reliability and validity of the survey questionnaire. This pilot study was done on 35 students from different universities in Cyberjaya on the Internet using online SurveyMonkey tool. Suggestions and comments of these applicants were incorporated, estimated and put into the research prior to generating the final survey questionnaire. Finally, reliability test was done by analyzing those data using Cronbach's alpha. The most frequent measure of reliability test is internal consistency. For testing consistency, the researchers used Cronbach's alpha. Range of Cronbach's alpha is from 0.0 to 1.0. If it is close to 1, it shows that the items have high internal consistency. If it is 0.08, it is considered good; if 0.07, acceptable and, below this range, it is weak [56]. The result of this test showed that the questionnaire was reliable.

Tables 1 which is the details demonstrating reliability test of this research according to Cronbach's alpha for each dependent and independent variable are given in the following

Result and Analysis: To analyze the collected data on purchase intention, SPSS (ver. 14.0) was applied. All the data were considered at 95% of confidence level.

Intention was analyzed using three dimensions of country perspective toward purchasing cosmetic products. Considering conceptual definition for the importance of intention, three components of country image, product knowledge and patriotism were included. The factors influencing purchase intentions of customers were measured by 24 items. All these responses were captured through 5-point Likert type statements. Table 2 is present the correlation as below:

Pearson correlation was applied to investigate strength and significance of the independent and dependent variables.

The correlation table shown in Table 2 demonstrated that all the factors had a direct relationship with purchase intention of consumers toward buying cosmetic products.

Among all the constructs, no relationship or negative relationship was found between country image and patriotism. All the constructs had significantly positive significant relationship with the dependent variable of purchase intention.

Coefficient Model: The model was in the form of an equation that contained coefficient of the independent variables. In the above table, b indicates individual contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable.

It also shows the relationship between the predictor and outcome.

Thus, the following equation is obtained from the table:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + e$$

$$Y = 1.745 + 0.124 (\text{country image}) + 0.98 (\text{product knowledge}) + 0.225 (\text{patriotism}) + e$$

According to the above estimated equation, for b₁, coefficient of the independent variable (country image) demonstrated that, when there was one unit of increase in image of country, 12.4% increase occurred in intention of customers towards buying cosmetic products from that country. Thus, there was a positive relationship between country image and purchase intention towards buying cosmetic products.

Similarly, for b₂, coefficient of the independent variable (product knowledge) indicated that, when there was one unit of increase in product knowledge, there was 9.8% of increase in the intention of customers towards buying cosmetic products from that country. This result showed a positive relationship between product knowledge and purchase intention of customers towards buying cosmetic products. Less influence of product knowledge was found towards intention of purchasing cosmetic products. Also, major concern for patriotism was observed when buying cosmetic products. In total, there

Table 2: Correlation analysis of the variables

	Variables	Country image	Product knowledge	Patriotism	Purchase intention
1	Country image	1.00			
2	Product knowledge	0.287**	1.00		
3	Patriotism	-0.230	0.117	1.00	
4	Purchase intention	0.193**	0.231**	0.360**	1.00

Table 3: Summary of results of hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Correlation coefficient	Decision
H1: There is a positive relationship between country image and purchase intention.	0.124 (0.020)	Significant and support
H2: There is a positive relationship between product knowledge and purchase intention.	0.098 (0.035)	Significant and support
H3: There is a positive relationship between patriotism and purchase intention.	0.225 (0.000)	Significant and support

Table 4: Regression Analysis of the Variables

Independent Variables	Unstd. Beta	Std. Beta	t	Sig. Value	VIF
Constant	1.745		7.290	0.000	
Country Image	0.124	0.053	2.337	0.020	1.094
Product Knowledge	0.098	0.046	2.118	0.035	1.108
Patriotism	0.225	0.043	5.277	0.000	1.018

R = 0.434, R-Square = 0.189, Adjusted R Squared = 0.176, F = 14.871, Sig. F = 0.00

was 22.5% of influence of patriotism on purchase intention of customers towards buying cosmetic products. The three above-mentioned hypotheses were examined using a sample of 196 respondents and statistics were achieved from accidental respondents. The highest goal of this study was to survey strength of purchase intention variables using country perspectives like country image, product knowledge and patriotism which shows in Table 3.

There were two levels of statistical analysis which were conducted in two different steps. The first level involved descriptive statistics of basic characteristics of the data while the second level involved regression analysis between the dependent and independent variables.

Based on the conducted test, all the hypotheses were accepted. All the outcomes of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 4. Regression test also proved that all the three variables influenced the dependent variable of purchase intention for buying cosmetic products. Even though the analysis was significant, the variables were not able to explain intention of purchase for cosmetic products [57].

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this research was to examine the relationship among three constructs of country perspectives (country image, product knowledge and patriotism) and purchase intention in the context of buying cosmetic products. Individual role of country image, product knowledge and patriotism on purchase intention of consumers for buying cosmetic products was also investigated [58]. The findings showed that patriotism had high influence on intention of customers for purchasing cosmetic products from the country perspective. Here, all the three variables of country perspective had a positive relationship with intention of purchasing cosmetic products [59-61].

Regarding strength of the study methodology, the data collected for describing purchase intention and country perspective in the literature and survey inquiry forms exceeded a minutest standard of validity and reliability analyses, which led to the making reliable and accurate findings. This research introduced descriptive data analysis for the demographic factors in the research instrument after data collection and described the relationship between the sample and population in terms of characteristics (age, gender, education, ethnicity and income). The study presented personal data of 196 consumers that had experience of buying cosmetic products in advance.

Tables of results from SPSS were used to show basic statistical relationships. Reliability was discussed based on Cronbach's Alpha test (Cronbach's Alpha was .60) to determine internal consistency of the measurement scale. The results indicated that the measurement instrument was satisfactorily reliable and valid. Preliminary examination of the correlations was conducted, which indicated that most of the variables had significant correlation. Descriptive analyses using simple statistical indicators like mean and standard deviation provided more insights into the respondents.

CONCLUSION

Numerous subjects, companion with the restrictions of this research, need further research, which should deliberate on a bigger sample size and more variables.. The possible impact of country of origin, purchase intention of customers and low involvement is another area to be explored as a consideration of relationship between consumers' involvement and transnational brands. It is also very valuable if further research could be conducted in other countries. A comparison of different consumers' perceptions, cultures and expectations in other countries could greatly increase knowledge and assist marketers to more efficiently organize their marketing strategies and usage planning.

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