

Gender Difference in Consumer Attitude towards Purchasing Made in Malaysia Products

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ABSTRACT

Country of Origin (COO) which considered as the “Made –In” product statement has a major effect on consumer buying decision, thus it becomes one of area of interest in consumer behavior studies. The objectives of current study are to investigate the effect of consumer knowledge about products, companies’ reputation on the attitude towards purchase of Made in Malaysia Products (MMP); to evaluate the moderating influence of gender on the determining factors of made in Malaysia products among Malaysia University’s local students. Participants for this study contained of Malaysian universities’ students in Klang Valley area. The multi-stage random sampling method was employed for selecting the participants, whereas self-administered questionnaire was applied for collecting data. Furthermore, using AMOS, a multi-group analysis was applied in investigating the gender influence on the hypothesized model. The current research findings present that knowledge about products is a strongest predictor of the college students’ attitude toward MMP and gender has a considerable moderating influence on the company’s image and attitude towards purchasing MMP.

Keywords: Country of Origin (CoO), Made-in-Malaysia Product (MMP), knowledge about product, companies’ reputation, gender

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia aspires to become a developed nation by the year 2020, thus her tremendous effort in maintaining good performance of the economy. As part of the global economy, Malaysia has been exporting goods to other countries in the world, besides importing goods and services from abroad. In 2011, Malaysia’s total imports was estimated at RM574.23 billion (USD136.72 billion), and that China contributed 13.2% to that amount (MATRADE, 2011). Chinese-made goods are relatively cheaper than local products, thus, they become competitors to Malaysian-made products (MMP). In the context of MMP, consumers considers various factors before purchase such as period of advertisements of branded companies and build their trusts that home made goods have high excellence quality to compare with worldwide items. Thus, companies information such as their reputation impacts consumers attitude towards buying their goods (Lew & Sulaiman, 2014). However, for price conscious consumers, cheaper goods would definitely become the choice. Thus, MMP has to compete in terms of both price and quality to capture the local market share and to penetrate market abroad.

In order to boost the domestic demand for MMP, the “*Belilah Barangan Buatan Malaysia*” (Buy Malaysian Goods) campaign was launched by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad in the 1990s. Unfortunately, despite the campaign been in place for more than 25 years, its impact on the purchase of Malaysian products is not widespread among Malaysians (Lew &

Sulaiman, 2014). Some Malaysian consumers are not receptive to locally made goods. They perceived MMP were sold at a slightly cheaper price than other alternatives to reflect its inferior quality (Rezvani et al., 2012). Despite facing challenges from local consumers, Malaysian marketers are trying to make MMP more appealing to consumers abroad as well. Thus far, MMP with equivalent and suitable quality to be exported to developed countries were developed through research and development and that the MMP were portrayed as such. In order to ensure MMP are well received by both local and foreign consumers, a better understanding of consumer decision-making related to MMP especially among the young generations of different gender is vital and potentially valuable to both marketing practitioners and academics. This is especially existing literature demonstrated the young generation, specifically Generation Y was dubbed as significant segment due to size as well as because of their way of life and utilization propensities (San Lim, Omar, & Thurasamy, 2015). In 2010, Gen Y accounts for eleven million persons which are forty percent of population in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2011). Therefore, the current paper's objectives are: to examine the influence of consumer knowledge about products, companies' image on the attitude towards purchase of Made in Malaysia Products (MMP); to evaluate the moderating influence of gender on the determining factor of made in Malaysia products among local college students in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Country of Origin

CoO (Country of Origin) defines as "the picture, stereotype and reputation that consumers and businessmen attach to product of particular country" (Nagashima, 1970). According to Ghazali, Othman, Yahya, & Ibrahim (2008), CoO has arisen to become an influencing factor in consumers' buying behavior. The image of CoO plays an important role in perceptions of consumers toward brands and products which further affects purchase intention (Godey et al., 2012). CoO can possess a negative/positive influence on consumer decision, regarding to any effect which the manufacture country has on the buyers' perception. In the currently competitive market, every company has a chance to join to the universal market; therefore, the access to foreign produces is enhanced. In this condition, the role of the CoO is rather important than earlier that just the domestic products were available. Nowadays, the manufacture location may affect the insights in people's evaluation of the products' quality. Consequently, since the quantity of global companies come greater than before through globalization, additional research was necessary about the customer's performance in order to lead managers and marketers in the global market. One of the most significant topics that have been considered in previous studies for several years is customer behavior, which is capability of affecting CoO from a different viewpoint. One of these viewpoints is that customers use CoO basically as a meter amongst lots of attributes of a product for evaluating it. Another perspective is that customers maybe use the "halo effect" according to CoO for their buying behavior. This plays also a significant role in customer mind while choosing among wide-ranging of produces. Individuals have a specific attitude towards their buying behavior and the factors that effect on it. Individuals who are living in the common country and possessing similar views and beliefs even have dissimilar purchasing behaviors. According to what researches have verified previously, country of origin still has impact on this matter (Ghazali, et al., 2008).

Researchers such as Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) considered buying decision can be measured as a valuation of the act of purchasing, or "psychological condition which shows a special insight towards specific behavior". Zendejdel and Paim (2012) supposed the source of purchaser attitude is relative to buying decision based on purchaser attitude. Chen and Lin

(2006) earlier came to conclusion that country of origin relates directly to the purchase decision (Wang, Sun, Lei, & Toncar, 2009). However, consumer purchase is influenced by both internal factors such as consumer character and personalities and external factors such as social context and the cultural values that they are part of (Godey et al., 2012). In the context of consumer purchase specifically with regards to CoO, factors such as gender, knowledge about the products and companies reputation are relevant to the current research, thus, elaborated in the next section.

Knowledge about Products

Previous literature (Ghazali et al., 2008) showed information about product occupy important situation in purchaser behavior researches. Product knowledge refers to the information and memories that are in individuals minds about a specific product (Brucks, 1985). Previous literature indicated that product knowledge is influential to consumer behavior such as when making decision (e.g. Phau, Chao, Josiassen, Lukas, & Whitwell, 2008), information search (e.g. Zhu, 2004) and Intention to purchase (e.g. Laroche, Nepomuceno, & Richard, 2010). In the realm of consumer decision and in the in the context of CoO, Josiassen (2008) confirmed that CoO is part of consumer knowledge about the product usable in making purchase decision. Specifically, CoO is used as an indicator in the product evaluation in a situation where consumers has little or no knowledge/information about the product (Phau et al., 2008).

According to Lee (2013) consumer product information has an effect on the period of making buying intentions and also in searching for this knowledge. Phau et al. (2008) came to conclusion that the CoO of goods has a connection with the information that the consumers have around the goods. Moreover, they concluded that customers with less information use the CoO as a sign for evaluating the products more than other factors. The reason of this attitude is being their less knowledge around manufactured products (Phau et al., 2008). Other researches have revealed that the technical justice degree be influenced by the level of people knowledge about the goods. Researches show that consumers with little degrees of knowledge and knowledge tend to trust on practical equality for purchasing decision rather than other factors (Laroche, Vinhal Nepomuceno, & Richard, 2010).

The literature shows, buyer knowledge about the product is the key theme in customer behavior studies. From the data regarding to product information, researchers have come to conclusion that product information plays a significant role in making decisions according to earlier experience.

Reputation of Companies

The company name's effect, or what that often is defined as commercial reputation, could be predicted further central issue when upper degrees of service exist. In lots of business markets a huge service constituent exists for the products' practical potentials. Therefore, the reputation of the supplier has a significant influence. Reputation of company has been described generally as the long period arrangement of the investors' valuation around "what is the firm?", "how well does the firm meet its' conforms and commitments to investors' prospects?", and "how well does the firm's general presentation fit with its social and political environment?" (Logsdon & Wood, 2002). Hence, reputation of company (shared) has been introduced as "a specific feed-back type got by an organization from its investors, regarding to the reliability of that organization's identity claim" (Logsdon & Wood, 2002). Cretu and Brodie (2007) investigate the hypotheses about the effects of company reputation and brand's image on customers' perceptions of service and product quality, the research outcomes show the brand image has a further and particular effect on the consumers' insights

of product and quality of service whereas the reputation of company possesses a wider effect on insights of customer loyalty and value.

Gender and its Moderation Effect on attitudes towards MMP

Though many researches have revealed women and men have dissimilar attitudes to online buying and also have diverse buying behavior (Rodgers & Harris, 2003; Slyke, Bélanger, Johnson & Hightower, 2010; Weiser, 2000), little has watched deeply at the dealings of gender and other features that affect shopping behavior (Zhang, Lee, Cheung, & Chen, 2009). On practical and theoretical areas, it is essential to comprehend how gender alterations work in association with other alternatives. Gender differences in market touch consumers' general behavior and attitudes and degree of trust (Lian & Yen, 2014; Zhang et al., 2009). Men and women have been found to process information in an unexpected way Peter, Olson, and Grunert (1999) identified value material possessions in an unexpected way, buy distinctive things for diverse reasons and approach the shopping task differently (Seock & Bailey, 2008). According to current confirmed variances, it is suggested that gender has moderating influences on the profit oriented behavior.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for current research draws on the TRA (theory of reasoned action) which has been used broadly to describe how customer intent toward brands/products. Buying intentions are psychological states or decision to acts that show the people insight to involve in a specific behavior (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). TRA proposes that a person's buying decision towards a brand/product is confirmed by his attitudes along with the beliefs of the observed ease of use and influences (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975; Carr & Sequeira, 2007). Therefore, if a country has a positive imagination on exact dimensions of product category, which are crucial to classification of products, then customers would observe these products more positively. According to TRA, Roth and Romeo (1992) found that these positive attitudes would consequence in greater buying intention to produces of certain classification from a certain country. Hsieh & et al. (2004) added that customer's attitudes to CoO image can touch their brand buying intention. Consequently, by supplying experimental signal of catering services and insurance in Taiwan, Lin and Chen (2006) in a new experimental research also suggest that CoO image is positively and considerably related to customer's buying intention. Adapting the TRA as the basis of this study, the framework of the research is presented in Figure 1.

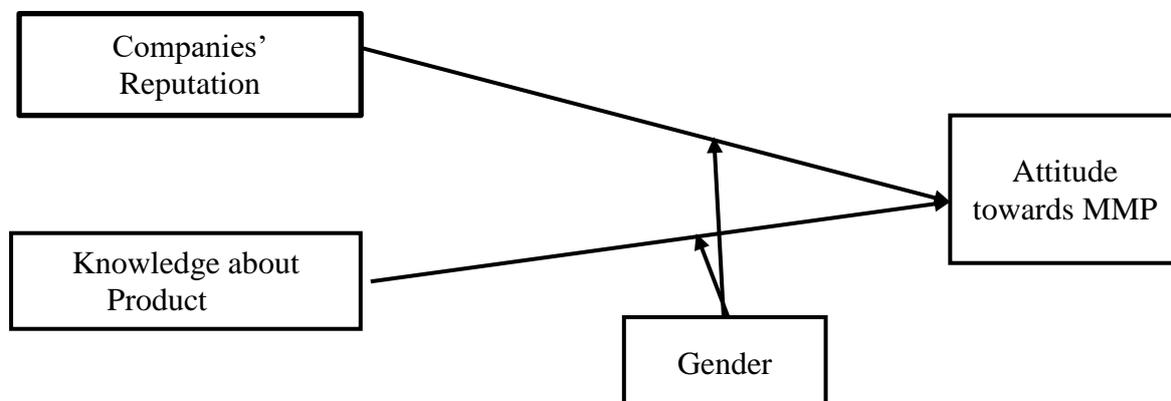


Figure 1: Framework of Research

HYPOTHESES

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. Consumers' beliefs about products knowledge have a positive effect on their attitudes towards MMP Product.

H2. Consumer beliefs about companies' reputation have positive effect on their attitudes towards MMP products

H3: Gender moderate the relationship between products knowledge and attitudes toward MMP products

H4: Gender moderates the relationship between company's reputation and attitude towards MMP products.

METHODOLOGY

The data were obtained from a study on "the Generation Y lifestyles" conducted in 2014 among college students in higher learning institutions within the area of Klang Valley. This area comprised of both Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya and its adjoining cities in the state of Selangor. The study utilized the multistage sampling technique. The sampling frame for the study was college students aged between 18 and 25 years old which fall within the Generation Y's age cohort. In the first stage, public and private institutions of higher learning within the Klang Valley areas were identified. From the list, five institutions of higher learning which consist of 3 public and 2 private universities were randomly selected. Thus, an approximately 1000 adult participated in the study. For the purpose of this study, only Malaysian students selected as respondents. Sampling of students from institutions of higher learning within the Klang Valley is reasonably sufficient for the purpose of the study as students come from all over Malaysia. As such, selected respondents will not necessarily represent Gen Yers who resided in the Klang Valley (only).

Data Analyses

The study utilizes SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) in order to test research hypotheses. SEM was chosen as the most suitable analyses for this study because it is able to reduce measurement error, test latent (unobserved) and manifest variables independence relationships and assess simultaneous overall tests of model fit. According to Bentler and Chou (1987), in order to enhance accuracy of results, they explained that for interpretable and meaningful values for SEM the ratio of 5–10 subjects are used in each estimated parameter rule in order to evaluate the sample size. CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis) was first run in order to examine the model of measurement and confirmed the dimensions for all items in the survey and the second step were to specify and assess the structure model. The specific criteria for global fit indices of measurement model assessment display that the model of measurement presents a suitable fit between data and proposed measurement model. The second purpose of measurement model is to evaluate the instrument's construct validity by conducting both divergent and convergent validity. It can be evaluated by using all constructs' composite reliability (C.R>0.7), high factor loadings (= 0.5), (Hair, 2010) and AVE (Average Variance Extracted) should be higher than 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) to indicate high convergent validity. Results of convergent validity testing showed that reliability scores of latent constructs meet fit criteria.

The AVE values it can be concluded that an average variance extracted and construct reliability for all constructs are met the criteria (table 1). Finally, measurement model was used to demonstrate the set of construct between variables.

Table 1: Average variance Extracted and Construct Reliability of Study Instruments

<i>Construct</i>	<i>No Item</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>CR</i>
Companies reputation	4	0.54	0.82
Product Information	4	0.50	0.80
Attitude towards MMP	5	0.50	0.82

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The consequences of the proposed fundamental model test showed that the model closely appropriate for the data (See Table 3 More specifically, The RMSEA value was equal to the suggested level of .08 for a reasonable fit at .080 (Browne & Cudeck, 1992) The CFI value met the desired level of .90 for a reasonable fit at .929 (Bentler & Bonnett, 1980). However, the CFI and TLI values were higher than the recommended levels of .92 and .91, for a reasonable fit at .90 (Bentler & Bonnett, 1980; Kline, 2011), respectively.

Hypothesis H1 predicts that companies reputation is associated with attitude toward MMP ; As shown in Table 2, in the research relationship, it can be seen that companies reputation significantly influences attitude towards MMP ($b = .9, p < .05$). The result of this study is in line with Cretu & Brodie (2007) findings which that the company's reputation will have significant effect on consumer behavior towards purchasing their products.

Hypothesis H2 predicts that knowledge about products will influence attitude towards MMP ($b = .32, p < .01$). As shown in (Table 4), the data supported positive influences of information about products and companies reputation towards purchase MMP products.

This result confirms previous (Ghazali et al., 2008; Lee, 2013) works on CoO, which suggest that the role of relationship between products image and consumer behavior toward CoO .

Table 2: Results of the Predictors on Outcome

		<i>B</i>	β	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>C.R.</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Results</i>
MMP<---	Companies Reputation	.059	0.9	.029	2.040	.041*	Supported
MMP<---	Product Knowledge	.235	0.32	.036	6.548	***	Supported

Noted: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.5$.

Gender: Results of Moderation Test

To evaluate if gender moderate the relationship between the chosen predictors with attitude towards MMP products, a two-group test was applied. Therefore the research subjects were separated to two groups, first group including male participants and second female participants. In order to attain the self-control result, criteria 1 Hair (2010), was employed which mentioned the path is moderator if: Beta for first group is significant while beta for second group is non-significant and beta for both group are significant. However one is positive while the other is negative. Table 4 shows the regression results gender. Gender was found to have a moderating influence on the connection between knowledge about products and attitude towards MMP ($\beta = .416, p < .05$). Applying in-gender reversions, the positive knowledge's coefficient about product towards MMP was found to be significant for female consumers than male. These findings are consistent with (Coley & Burgess, 2003) that

women regularly evaluate the products before buying but men have rather direct shopping objectives. This information will help the firms to better understand the actual needs and wants of the customers. Consequently, it would help them to target the correct consumers and further increase their sales. Additionally, though companies' reputation was not found to differ when gender was considered moderator.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The study confirmed that consumers' perception of knowledge about products, companies' reputation are determinants of their attitudes towards MMP. Assumed the consequences were constant with current concepts, the research model has been applied to represent customers' buying behaviors was suitable. It was understood that attitudes of Malaysian customers towards made in Malaysia products is at a level that will help the improvement of local manufacture. Countries require their people, mostly developed countries, to be ethnocentric highly in their attitude to the local productions. However, the effort of enhancing ethnocentrism among Malaysia consumers requires a concerted effort from various parties – i.e. the manufacturer, the government and the consumer itself. Specific to the local manufacturer, in order to improve consumer perception of local products, local manufacturer must seriously improving the quality of their products. Not only that will lead to a more favorable view among local consumers, but improving the standard will enable them to favorably compete with the customers from other parts of the world. In addition, industries should find ways in order to decrease their price of productions to reduce the costs of their produces to competitive levels with those who are coming from overseas. Besides, levels of production should increase particularly regarding to electronic goods and food in order to decrease the customer dependence on imported electronics and food.

Table 3: Results of Moderation Effect of Gender on the Hypothesized Model

As for the government, it should revamp the campaign of “buy made in Malaysia goods” and manufacturing must cooperate with the government in this regard. There should be operational use of social media to sensitize and educate the citizenry on the necessity to support made in Malaysia productions because it directly effects on economic development

<i>Construct</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>CRforDifference</i>	<i>Results</i>
Companies Reputation					Supported
Female	.221	-.140	.328	-.977	
Male	.140	.160	.280	1.081	
Information about products					Non-significant
Female	-.076	.416	.007*	2.716	
Male	.218	.251	.092	1.683	

of the country.

The consumer need to be educated so that they understand the importance of supporting local products and that they should actively giving feedbacks to local manufacturer to improve their product quality. This is especially important among the young generation as they provide potential markets for local products.

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