

Antecedents of consumer behavior and foreign product evaluation among consumer

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Abstract: The emergence of globalization has united the market worldwide and eventually change the design in which consumer behave and evaluate abundance of product choices available to them. This study is to support the existing study to identify the antecedents of consumer behavior and foreign product evaluation among consumer. Primary data for the study was collected by means of self-administrated questionnaire from 384 consumers in Miri between the age range of 20 to 40 years old and above and supported by sufficient number of secondary data from previous thesis, journal and books. Through the study, hypotheses relationships and objectives were tested through Correlation Coefficient analysis. The finding shows that only cultural factor does not have significant relationship with foreign electronic product evaluation as the other factors which are attitude, family and group and country of origin has significant and positive relationship with foreign electronic product evaluation. Meanwhile, result constructed through multiple regression analysis proven that attitudes has tremendously affect consumer foreign electronic product evaluation in Miri. Accordingly, some recommendations for future are included with respect to the finding of this study.

Key words: Foreign product; Attitude; Family; Country of origin

1. Introduction

Consumer is the king of market and all the marketing activities of all the business and industrial enterprises of today go around the habits, tastes, preferences, perception and attitudes of consumers (Gera, 2014). Hence, more and more marketers put priorities in identifying the design of consumer behavior as it is a never ending processes and crucial for marketers to stay in the same path with the changes in consumer behavior to ensure for product or service's success especially for foreign product. Consumers are shaped to some extent by the environment in which consumers live and consumers influence environments through consumer behaviors in turn (Blackwell et al., 2006). Since consumers are the most important factor for business continuation, the understanding of consumer behavior is one key element in preparing marketing strategy (Sakpichaisakul, 2012). That the reason in present marketing scenario, the study of consumer behavior has become essential (Brosekhan and Velayutham, 2002). As the emergence of globalization continuously to dominance the market, it has become increasingly essential for marketers to study the consumer behavior towards foreign product as well as how this will influence product evaluation among consumer. Thus, companies operating in today's highly internationalized markets consider product

differentiation the key priority in pursue to attain a constant competitive advantage in challenging global environment (Baker and Ballington, 2002). In addition, Gera (2014) state that to understand the effects of brand image and country of origin, researchers and marketers should be familiar with the buying behavior of consumers. In this study, the factors that would like to be investigated for its relationship with consumer behavior are culture and subculture, attitude and family and group influence factor and country of origin. The reason for narrowing the scope of study to these factors mainly because this study want to precisely understand how these factors will influence consumer behavior especially towards foreign product evaluation. For this study, the population was the residents of Miri City which according to Peter Sibon (2012) is 300, 543. Miri was selected as this city has shown rapid development which helping Miri to catch up with Kuching and Sibiu. The rapid development of Miri since its elevation to city status in 2005 may replace Kuching as the new state capital for Sarawak (New Straits Times, September, 5, 2014).

2. Literature review

Consumer behavior was defined as "the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behavior and environmental events by which human being conduct the exchange aspects of their lives" (Bennett, 2009). In marketing, consumers are always being the great interest to marketers as they are the

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most important component for business continuation. As being defines by Solomon (1995), consumer is the study "of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires". Therefore, though consumer behavior is complex, yet the knowledge of consumer behavior is essential. The reason is "the answers are often locked within the consumer's head" (Kotler et al., 2008). In addition, consumer behavior is a dynamic process, because of the continuous changes in ideas, perceptions and activities of consumers as an individual or in a group (Olson and Peter, 2008). Besides, consumer behavior of every individual is different from other depending on buying choices which is influenced by buying habits and choices that are turn tampered by psychological and social drivers that affect purchase decision process (Brassington and Pettitt, 2000). Hence, marketers have to think and feel from the view of their consumer and understand the pattern on how they blend with internal and external environment surrounding them as a way to precisely satisfy their customers.

In the early stages, consumer behavior was taken as buyer behavior that reflects the interaction between consumer and produces at the same time of purchase but now marketers recognize consumer behavior as ongoing process not only what happens at the time when consumer gives money and gains some goods or services (Solmon, 1996). Therefore, marketers tend to deliver excellent post purchase experiences to their consumers as they realize that the process does not end at the transaction between goods and money but ongoing which will inject intention to repurchase in future. Besides, ensuring the product or service meet consumer expectation is important as it will generate consumer to spread positive word of mouth to other consumer. After purchasing the product, the buyer will take further action to the marketer based on his satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Kotler et al., 2008).

2.1. Antecedents of consumer behavior and foreign product evaluation

2.1.1. Cultural factor

Culture is a base for our values, behaviors, priorities and certain perceptions towards different products (Domie, 2013). As being defined by Assael (1992), culture is the values, norms and customs that a person learns from society and results in common patterns of behavior within the society. Based on the study conducted by Lamb, Hair and Daniel (2011) the underlying elements of every culture are the values, language, myths, customs, rituals, laws, and the artifacts, or products that are transmitted from one generation to the next. In addition, cultures also consist of subcultures which also impact behavior. Previous study conducted by Durmaz (2014) with objective to investigate the effect of cultural factors on consumer behavior proves that cultural does

mainly affect behavior because part of the respondent agreed that culture certainly affect their behavior as a consumer. Moreover, culture is created and learned which familiarity to the culture will increases the odds that it will be the mechanism that affect our behavior as a consumer. This is supported by Kotler and Armstrong (2010) and Solomon (1996), culture is constantly developing processes and the beliefs, values, views and social; systems change with time as well.

2.1.2. Attitude factor

Attitude is not enduring and changing over time. It structure the way consumer think, believe, feel and respond to the internal and external environment. Besides, understanding consumer attitude is important for marketers as new products emerge in the market or existing product's future demand can be predicted by measuring consumers' attitude (Blackwell et al., 2001). Moreover, in today's turbulent market, the attitude of consumers is a subject matter of great concern for marketers today because an order from this base can be crucial with regards to choosing the right marketing strategy and also making business activities successful (Solomon, Marshal and Stuart, 2008). Prior study conducted by Gera (2014) find that in order to develop effective marketing and communication strategies within and across national boundaries, marketers need to understand varying attitudes and perception of consumers towards products of clearly identifiable country of origin. As globalization proceeds and the world economy are changing, it is recognized that assessing consumers' attitudes towards domestic and foreign product is of a great necessity (Netemeyer et al., 1991). Indeed, to date there are more study revolve around attitude of consumer as it urges marketers to understand the dimension of consumer's attitude precisely in order to meet the expectation from their consumer not only in the present but as well as in the future.

2.1.3. Family and group factor

Family as a consuming and decision making unit is a central phenomenon in marketing and consumer behavior (Ommuri and Gentry, 2000). This is because consumer behavior is influenced not only by consumer personalities and motivations, but also by the relationships with families (Durmaz, 2014). Furthermore, Durmaz and Zengin (2011) conclude in their study that it provides a tremendous advantage for marketers to know the family structure and its consumption characteristics. This is mostly because each of the family members plays different roles during decision making and the ability of the marketer to understand the process in which different type of consumer behavior merge in order to mingle with each other will grant the marketer market leader position. In the other hand, group influence consumer behavior by they observe each other and take cues how to behave to fit and please

each other in the group (Solomon, 1996). This means members in group particularly learn and adopt with the behavior those synonyms with the group image in order for them to feel that they are belonging to that group. As being confirmed by Kotler (2002), people at this stage aim to accomplish the group expectations and adjust their behavior in order to suite their status and role.

4. Country of origin facto

Country of Origin effect has been widely discussed topic in the marketing literature for many years (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). Gera (2014) agreed by added that country of Origin is an important factor that affects consumers opinion towards product quality thus has received considerable attention in internal marketing research. Basically, consumers evaluate product on the basis of information cues that are divided into intrinsic and extrinsic. However, previous study carried out by Ahmed et al., (2004) state that consumers often use extrinsic cues (e.g. product nationality) as an indicator of quality. Whereas studies on product nationality as a quality cue have generally focused on the image of the country (where the product was made) in the consumer evaluation process, the emphasis of consumer ideologies has been on the mindset and value system of the consumer, their geographical location, their cultural and ethnic environment and the impact on the decision making process and outcomes (Vida, 1996). Nevertheless, country of origin as a potentially powerful image variable may be used in order to gain competitive advantage in international marketing. Study by Bennett et al., (2004) conclude that because of the increasing globalization of markets and increase use of interest-based communication a greater exposure to country of origin cues exists, so as the volume of international trade grows the importance of country of origin issues appears to be growing. This proves that country of origin plays a major role in having the product accepted in a different world market.

2.1.5. Foreign product evaluation

The introduction of global product that continuously dominance the market has urge the marketers to closely identify the consumer behavior towards foreign product and how it will influence product evaluation among consumers. This leads to local firms that wish to compete well in the midst of competition among foreign product must have a better understanding on consumer behavior and the way in which it leads to product evaluation process. Gera (2014) added by understanding the effects of brand image and country of origin, marketers should be familiar with the buying behavior of the consumers. Moreover, consumer tends to have contradicted behavior towards foreign product and they commonly have different product appraisal among one and another. International empirical

studies concerning the influence of country of origin in the evaluation of various products by consumers reveal mixed and sometimes contradictory results, possibly due to the different combination of products, samples and countries where the studies were conducted (Kaynak and Kara, 2002). For instant, previous study by Jap (2013) stated that Chinese consumers preferred foreign over local brands for luxury products because by doing so, those Chinese consumers will receive immediate social acceptance and face (or mianzi) up to the level of the social status they wish to achieve (Jap, 2010). In the other hand, study conducted by Maheswaran (1994) conclude that in case of existence of unambiguous information for a specific product, experienced consumers base their choices upon the evaluation of specific product attributes, whereas less experienced consumers rely on the country of origin. Similarly, Gera (2014) state that people often in absence of information about product associate product quality by that country image. Consequently, many countries concentrate in creating and polishing their image in the eyes of the world in order to attain an image that are linked to high quality, low risk involved by the consumer and in the long run goal, able to gain market leader position. Thus, the study of Country of origin believed to have significant effect towards consumer evaluation in the process of purchasing product in the market. Hence, country of origin effects on consumers' evaluation of products has been of interest to researchers since the 1960s (Schooler, 1965). Gera (2014) supported by confirmed that country of origin is an important factor that affects consumer or opinion towards product quality.

The above discussion indicates that this study may elect to examine the hypotheses from antecedents of consumer behavior and foreign product evaluation in order to improve current understanding on the relationship of the variables with foreign product evaluation. For the purpose of the study, the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypotheses (1): There is significant relationship between cultural factors towards foreign product evaluation.

Hypotheses (2): There is significant relationship between attitude factors towards foreign product evaluation.

Hypotheses (3): There is significant relationship between family and group factors towards foreign product evaluation.

Hypotheses (3): There is significant relationship between countries of origin factors towards foreign product evaluation.

The selection of these hypotheses is based on Kotler et al., (2008) cultural, social, personal and psychological factors are the main characteristics that influence the consumer behavior to ensure the result gather are align with the purpose of the study. As being stated by Watson and Wright (2000), goods from countries, which are similar to the home country, will be favored over products from countries which are rather different from the

domestic one. However according to Gaedeke, 1973; Wang and Lamb, 1983; Toyne and Walker, 1989, there is a positive correlation between the level of economic development of a particular country and the quality evaluation of its product. Thus, the hypotheses are developed based on previous study and adopted with current market trend.

4. Data and measurements

4.1. Data

For the study, we used descriptive design which consists of surveys and observation but this study was only concentrate on survey method. Robson (2002) stated that descriptive research accurately describes a person's view, occurrences or situation. Thus, this study described its target respondents precisely in which only behavior of young adult and adult towards foreign product were taken into consideration as well as it determined in what way the four factors which were culture and sub culture, attitude, family and group influence and country of origin affected consumer behavior in term of foreign product evaluation. In addition, through causal research how culture and sub culture, attitude, family and group influence factor and country of origin (independent variables) will affect consumer behavior were determined and eventually further impacts of consumer behavior towards foreign product evaluation (dependent variable) among consumers in Miri were identified as well. As for the purpose of this study, the most efficient survey method to be used is questionnaire. The sample size of 384 young adult and adult respondents was abstract from population and sample size table construct by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Thus, Self-administrated questionnaire was distributed to the respondents associated to the study which was young adult and adult consumers in Miri that divided into rural, sub-urban and urban area. In addition, the questions in the questionnaire were adopted from previous research to ensure the validity and reliability of the data that will be collected. Furthermore, there was no pilot test conducted as the questionnaire was adopted from previous studies and there was no missing values made by some earlier respondents in which justified the clarity of the questions. Given that the study only focus on young adult and adult, the responses from unrelated respondents and invalid feedbacks were excluded from the data.

4.2. Measurements

4.2.1. Antecedents of consumer behavior

To measure antecedents of consumer behavior towards foreign product which consist the combination of culture and subculture, attitude, group and family influence and country of origin, we used interval scale which represented by the Likert

scale based questions which were range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This study used a 5 – point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree so that the result achieved were reliable and valid as well as achieving the overall aims of the study.

4.2.2. Foreign products evaluation

In order to measure foreign product evaluation among young adult and adult in Miri, the study also used interval scale which represented by the Likert scale based questions which were range from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

4.2.3. Background variables

In the study, we include background variables which consisting questions regarding the socio-demographic information and the purchasing pattern of the respondents. The purpose of this section was to determine the demographic background and the current behavior of the respondent in purchasing foreign product. Gender was measure by male and female (1=male) while age was assessed in years. Religion was measure by the main religion in Miri which were Muslim, Christian, Buddha and others. In addition, race also assesses by the main races in Sarawak which were Malay, Iban, Chinese, Orang Ulu and Others. Educational level among respondents was measure which doctoral degree was the highest level after secondary level. Occupation was measure by student, employed, unemployed or self-employed in order to identify the respondents' profession. Furthermore, marital status of the respondents also assessed in order to identify if the respondents were single, married, divorce or widow. To asses monthly income, the range was from below RM 1000 until RM 5000 and above as the indicator. In the other hand, residential area was measure by rural, sub urban and urban.

5. Method

For the purpose of the study, the hypotheses were tested using correlation coefficient. The relationship between antecedents of consumer behavior and foreign product evaluation was examined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients (simple bivariate correlation) theory by Cohen (1988). Through this method, the data collected will determine the degree of correlation among the variables that are under study. Based on Cohen (1988), the degree of correlation among the variables can range from small correlation, medium correlation and large correlation.

6. Results

Based on the Table below, the result has proved that cultural and foreign product evaluation among

consumers in Miri has a medium and negative correlation relationship. This means, cultural and foreign product evaluation has a negative and insignificant relationship ($p=0.344$) with regards to consumer in Miri. Based on the finding, correlation is not significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Thus, hypotheses 1 (There is significant relationship between cultural factor and foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri) is rejected. Next, we turned to the finding on hypotheses 2. The result shows that attitude and foreign electronic product evaluation among consumers in Miri has a large and positive correlation relationship answered as Table below shows that these two variables has a positive relationship ($p<0.01$). Furthermore, correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) also shows that hypotheses 2 (There is significant relationship between attitude and foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri) is accepted. In term of family and group factor, the result shows that there is a positive relationship between these two variables ($p<0.01$). Furthermore, correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Therefore, a hypothesis 3 (There is significant relationship between family and group and foreign product

evaluation among consumer in Miri) is accepted. Besides, positive word of mouth and evaluation from family and group about a particular product will motivate the consumer to have the same opinion towards the product accordingly. Lastly, the result on final hypotheses shows that Country of Origin and foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri had a medium and positive correlation relationship. Thus, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Therefore, a hypothesis 4 (There is significant relationship between Country of Origin and foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri) is accepted.

7. Conclusions and discussion

In this study, we aim to improve existing research regarding antecedents of consumer behavior and foreign product evaluation. Through the study, we identified several hypotheses to be studied for the purpose of the research. Eventually, the research produces these findings.

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation Coefficients of antecedents of consumer behavior and foreign

		Foreign Product Evaluation
Cultural	Pearson Correlation	-0.048
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.344
	N	384
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	0.610**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	384
Family and Group	Pearson Correlation	0.255**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	384
Country of Origin	Pearson Correlation	0.442**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	384

Notes: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

First, with regard to the relationship between culture factor and foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri, we found out that the cultural and foreign product evaluation among consumers in Miri has a medium and negative correlation relationship (as being measured by correlation coefficient). This means, cultural and foreign product evaluation has a negative and insignificant relationship with regards to consumer in Miri. Based on the finding, correlation is not significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Thus, hypotheses 1 (There is significant relationship between cultural factor and foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri) is rejected. Even

though the study conducted by De mooij (2010) confirmed that culture is one of the most important underlying determinants of consumer behavior, the finding of this study proved that it not affecting foreign product evaluation among consumer in miri as long as the product able to satisfy their need. This might due to consumers in Miri were globalized as Suh and Kwon (2002) stated that people globalized

in fill extent open to other cultures. Second, the relationship between attitude factor and foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri was studied by the same method.

Based on the result derived through the study, it has proved that attitude and foreign electronic product evaluation among consumers in Miri has a large and positive correlation relationship. Therefore, a hypothesis 2 (There is significant relationship between attitude and foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri) is accepted. This finding is positively align with De mooij (2011) finding by stated that the behavior of the consumers can be predicted from their attitudes towards product, service and brands and a purchase prediction is derived from a positive attitude. Furthermore, this result is also associated with the finding from the previous study by Blackwell et al., (2001) in which understanding consumer attitude is important for marketers as new product emerge in the market or existing product's future demand can be predicted by measuring consumers' attitude.

Similarly, the study shows that family and group and foreign product evaluation among consumers in Miri had a small and positive correlation relationship. Thus, a hypothesis 3 (There is significant relationship between family and group and foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri) is accepted.

Through this finding, we can identified that the positive influence from family and group will leads to positive foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri and this finding eventually answered one of the objectives for this study which is to identify the relationship between family and group and foreign product evaluation. The finding of this study is supported by the previous study conducted by Nayeem (2012), Asia-born consumers are more brand conscious and involve a number of family or friends in their decision making. For country of origin, it is identified that Country of Origin and foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri had a medium and positive correlation relationship. Therefore, a hypothesis 4 (There is significant relationship between Country of Origin and foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri) is accepted.

The result of this study is supported by other study conducted by Sohail (2005), Malaysia consumers are likely to use country of origin of a product such as cue for evaluate products from different countries based on different product dimension. . Based on the finding of this research, it yields promising possibility for future research that can be more competent, conclusive and informative. Therefore, future studies should be conducted in larger scale or different environment so that catalysis towards favorable consumer behavior or evaluation towards product can be identified. As being stated by Gabriel & Lang (1995), the scope of the consumer behavior literature, borders on being "unmanageable". Gera (2014) also stated that to understand the effects of brand image and country of origin, researchers and marketers should be familiar with the buying behavior of consumers. Likewise, future research can also eliminate factor that is not related and added other factors that is relevant to current trends in the market. For instance, in this research cultural is the factor that least affecting foreign product evaluation among consumer in Miri. Therefore, cultural can be excluded in the future study so that the reliability and significant of the study can be improve. Thus, it is preferable to eliminated cultural in the future so that conclusive research can be produce. Furthermore, other factors can be added in the future study so that the nature of consumer behavior and foreign product evaluation can be identified better.

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