

The Effect of Patriotism and Consumer Ethnocentrism on Consumer Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

The growth of international trade and business has contributed to the availability of various ranges of products from different national origins throughout the world. This has resulted in greater interest in examining consumer attitudes towards products of different countries. The attitude of consumers in a country surely will have an impact on the purchase intention of products from foreign countries. However, most research have been conducted in large industrialized countries such as the United States of America (US), France, Germany and Japan that have large internal markets and a wide range of domestic alternatives or brands in most product categories and little attention had been given on developing and less-developed countries. Therefore, this study attempted to identify whether the negative attitudes towards foreign made products by consumers in developing country, namely Malaysia, will have an impact on their purchase willingness and actual purchase behavior.

Keywords: Patriotism, Consumer Ethnocentrism, Product Judgment, Purchase Willingness

1. INTRODUCTION

Negative attitudes towards foreign products can arise from a number of sources. For examples, Han (1988) argues that patriotism affects consumers' attitudes towards foreign made products. Equally, consumers may have strong feelings of patriotism and pride in domestic products and consider it wrong, almost immoral to buy foreign products (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). In the study conducted by Shimp and Sharma, they called the negative attitudes towards purchasing foreign made products as consumer ethnocentrism construct.

Shimp and Sharma (1987) had developed the measurement that can measure consumers' ethnocentric tendencies called CETSCALE (Consumer Ethnocentric Tendencies Scale). It consists of seventeen items which measure the tendency of consumers to act consistently towards foreign and domestic products. Such tendencies may precede attitudes, but they are not the equivalent of attitudes, which tend to be object specific. Purchasing imported products is held to be

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wrong in that it potentially harms the domestic economy, causes loss of jobs, and is unpatriotic. In addition, to the extent that domestic products are viewed as superior, products from other countries (i.e. from outgroups) are objects of contempt to highly ethnocentric consumers.

The studies in examining the attitudes of consumers towards foreign products had demonstrated statistically and theoretically significant results. For example, in consumer ethnocentrism study, it was found that it has negative influenced on the attitudes of consumers towards foreign made products (for example, Kaynak and Kara, 2002; Hamin and Elliot, 2006; Russell and Russell, 2006; and Nakos and Hajidimitriou, 2007). Researcher also found that the patriotism of consumers plays a significant role in making choice between local and foreign products (for examples, Vida and Dmitrovic, 2001; Wang and Chen, 2004; and Javalgi, Khare, Gross and Scherer, 2005).

Therefore, it is very interesting to investigate either the patriotism and consumer ethnocentrism among Malaysian Muslim consumers will negatively influence their attitudes towards the US made products. Based on previous research, the literature review on the related constructs will be discussed and the relationship among them will be presented as well as the development of the hypotheses will be performed. Thus, the effects of patriotism and ethnocentrism on the product judgment and the purchase willingness among Malaysian Muslim consumers will be answered by this research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In an effort to examine attitudes of local consumers towards foreign made products, a thorough examination of the relevant literature is required. The topic of consumer ethnocentrism is well established. However, for patriotism, little focus has been given by the researchers. Even though it is not relatively new, more empirical studies needed to relate patriotism and the consumers' attitudes towards foreign made products.

2.1 Consumer Ethnocentrism

The general concept of ethnocentrism has been used to describe the sociological concept of an individual versus the out-group identification since the term was introduced into the social science language by Sumner (1906). He defines ethnocentrism as when one's own group is seen as the centre and a reference for all others. Sumner (1906) suggests a two dimensional structure of ethnocentrism: an unfavourable attitude towards the out-group as well as a favourable attitude towards the in-group.

For Shimp and Sharma (1987), the concept of consumer ethnocentrism represents the beliefs held by the US consumers about the appropriateness of purchasing foreign made products. Highly ethnocentric consumers tend to perceive that purchasing foreign made products is wrong because it will hurt the domestic economy, it will promote unemployment, and unpatriotic action. On the other hand, for non-ethnocentric or low-ethnocentric consumers, products from other countries are evaluated on their own merits without consideration for where they are made. Therefore, for this group, the country of origin of the products is not an important consideration to be made (Shimp and Sharma, 1987).

Since the introduction of the CETSCALE, researchers all over the world are using this construct measurement in order to understand the effect of consumer ethnocentrism on the attitudes of consumers towards local versus foreign made products. Researchers from developed countries (e.g. Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004; and Klein, 2002) to developing countries (e.g. Abdul Razak, Safiek and Md Nor, 2002; and Kaynak and Kara, 2002) to the less developed countries (e.g. Agbonifoh and Elimimian, 1999; and Hamin and Elliott, 2006) are adopting the study to measure the ethnocentric tendency of consumers in a particular country and whether it will influence the attitudes of consumers on foreign made products.

The consumer ethnocentrism areas and scopes studied by the previous authors have been quite diverse. For example, there has been one cluster looking at the effects of ethnocentrism on foreign direct investment (Zhao and Zhu, 2000). Then there was a cluster of research successfully trying to link ethnocentrism and lifestyles (Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu and Hyder, 2000). Regionally, specific studies in consumer ethnocentrism study have been conducted in developed countries, developing countries, the less developed countries, the transition economic countries, and across Europe, America, Asia as well as Africa (for examples, Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004; Ettenson and Klein, 2005; Hamin and Elliott, 2006; and Kinra, 2006).

Furthermore, some of the studies reveal that consumer ethnocentrism is more obvious for consumers in developed countries compared to consumers in developing countries due to the availability and the quality perception of locally made products (e.g. Wang and Chen, 2004). In the countries where the measurement of consumer ethnocentrism has been found to be reliable and the mean scores were basically high, for example, the US, France, Germany and Japan, were typically highly developed countries, with low levels of foreign imports, and a large internal market (Balabanis et al., 2001).

Besides, the effects of consumer ethnocentrism from the cross-cultural perspective were also examined by the researchers. For example, Balabanis, Diamantopoulos, Mueller, and Melewar (2001) examined consumer ethnocentrism in a cross-cultural context by comparing Turkish and Czech

consumers. Vida and Fairhurst (1999) reported significant differences in consumer ethnocentrism across the four countries investigated. The main objective of Vida and Fairhurst study is to investigate consumer ethnocentricity in four Central Europe countries, i.e., Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Estonia.

The ethnocentrism construct was also found to be heavily linked with the national identity construct (Phau and Chan, 2003; and Zarkada-Fraser and Fraser, 2002). National identity refers to how societies relate to their own unique characteristics (Thelen and Honeycutt Jr., 2004). For example, Phau and Chan (2003) have used consumer ethnocentrism as one of the dimension to measure national identity construct. They use four East Asian countries, i.e., South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Singapore. The result shows that higher level of consumer ethnocentrism indicates higher level of national identity among consumers.

Generally, the result of the consumer ethnocentrism studies suggests that highly ethnocentric consumers tend to reject foreign made products and favour locally made products (e.g. Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004; Ettenson and Klein, 2005; and Hamin and Elliott, 2006).

2.2 Patriotism

According to Kosterman and Feshbach (1989), patriotism is a strong feeling of attachment and loyalty to one's own country without the corresponding hostility towards other nations. Genuine patriots love their own country, its culture, and its traditions, but do not reject other countries; they feel other cultures and traditions are equally legitimate to their own (Barnes and Curlette, 1985).

The patriotic campaigns have continued and were given even more weight since the economic crisis that hit several Asian countries in 1997. Campaigns such as "Thai Buy Thai" encouraged the purchase of locally made products to help the severely-hit Thai economy (Ang et al., 2004). The campaign tries to use the patriotic appeal to help local manufacturers to encounter economic recession and hoping that consumers will become more patriotic and buy locally made products.

A number of researchers have examined how patriotism can influence the preference and evaluation of consumers of foreign products compared to the local products. Some researchers have shown that patriotic sentiments can affect the evaluation and selection of imported products (Han, 1988; Okechuku, 1994). Researchers also argue that the level and effect of patriotism on consumer behaviour differs between countries (Balabanis et al., 2001). Patriotic emotions affect attitudes about products and purchase intentions. Consumers from a wide range of countries have been found to evaluate their own domestic products more

favourably than they do foreign ones (for examples, Han, 1988; Nielsen and Spence, 1997; Kucukemiroglu, 1999; Vida and Dmitrovic, 2001; Javalgi et al., 2005).

Wang and Chen (2004) conducted a study to examine the effect of patriotism on consumer behaviour in the Republic of China. Their study focused on the preference for branded goods made in developed countries. They found that consumers expressed their patriotism through consumerism. Wang and Chen considered patriotism in China as “real and strong” but the moderating factors such as conspicuous consumption are also strong. Chinese consumers are no less patriotic than US consumers but they face a dilemma in that they “know” that foreign brands are “better” and this moderates their patriotic sentiment by choosing to place personal status ahead of “national pride”.

However, Hooley, Shipley and Krieger (1988) found that British cars were purchased by their consumers primarily due to the patriotic sentiment and cheap price and not on other motives such as reliability, quality, stylish, sporty and value for money. They suggested that British manufacturers should use the patriotism element in their marketing programme in order to defend against import penetration. It shows that patriotism does have an effect on the attitudes of consumers in purchasing foreign made products. Therefore, it is very interesting to see whether the patriotic element of Malaysian Muslim consumers can influence their attitudes.

2.3 Product Judgment

Consumers nowadays are inundated with imported products from developed countries such as Japan, the US and the UK, as well as from developing countries such as China, India and Thailand due to the trade liberalization and globalization. Due to the variety of foreign made products in local market, it has increased the interest of researchers to study the attitude of local consumers towards foreign made products. Previous studies covered various ranges issues such as judgment or evaluations of foreign products coming from developed and developing countries, sentiment towards domestic products, effects of foreign products towards domestic economy and local manufacturers as well as other issues (for examples, Schaefer, 1997; Hsieh, 2004; and Ettenson and Klien, 2005).

Specifically, in examining the literature on foreign product judgment, several important viewpoints of research can be identified. It is widely examined by researchers in their study related to international marketing and consumer behaviour, especially in the construct of country of origin studies (for examples, Hsieh, 2004; Schaefer, 1997; and Cai, Cude and Swagler, 2004).

However, little attention has been given to developing countries, where, in some product markets, no domestic brands or alternatives are available (Nijssen and Douglas, 2004). The kind of research normally conducted in developed countries such as in the US and European countries. Therefore, it is important to understand how consumers in developing countries like Malaysia judge imported products. The results might not concur with studies conducted in developed countries. It is suspected that factors such as religion, social cultural, standard of living and economic condition have a lot of impact on the attitudes of consumers.

2.4 Purchase Willingness

Nowadays, consumers have a range of options while purchasing products. Therefore, some factors might influence their decision to purchase or not to purchase the products. From the country of origin studies, consumers who receive product information for the purpose of making a purchase decision are likely to interpret the attribute information in terms of pre-existing concepts that have positive or negative implications for the product quality (Hong and Kang, 2006). Consequently, the general assessment and evaluation of the products will lead to the willingness or intention to purchase such products. Positive judgment and evaluation will positively influence the willingness and vice versa.

The construct of purchase willingness of foreign made products is receiving attention from researchers in the country of origin effect, consumer animosity, consumer ethnocentrism and patriotism research. Purchase willingness will normally consider the consequence effects of foreign product judgment (Klein, Ettenson, and Morris, 1998). For example, Javalgi et al. (2005) studied the effect of consumer ethnocentrism and purchase willingness. In another study, Nakos and Hajidimitriou (2007) emphasized that the positive assessment of foreign made products will positively influence their willingness to purchase them. Therefore, the current study also used purchase willingness as the consequence effect of patriotism, consumer ethnocentrism and product judgment.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Based on the review of literature the framework of this study is as presented in Figure 1.

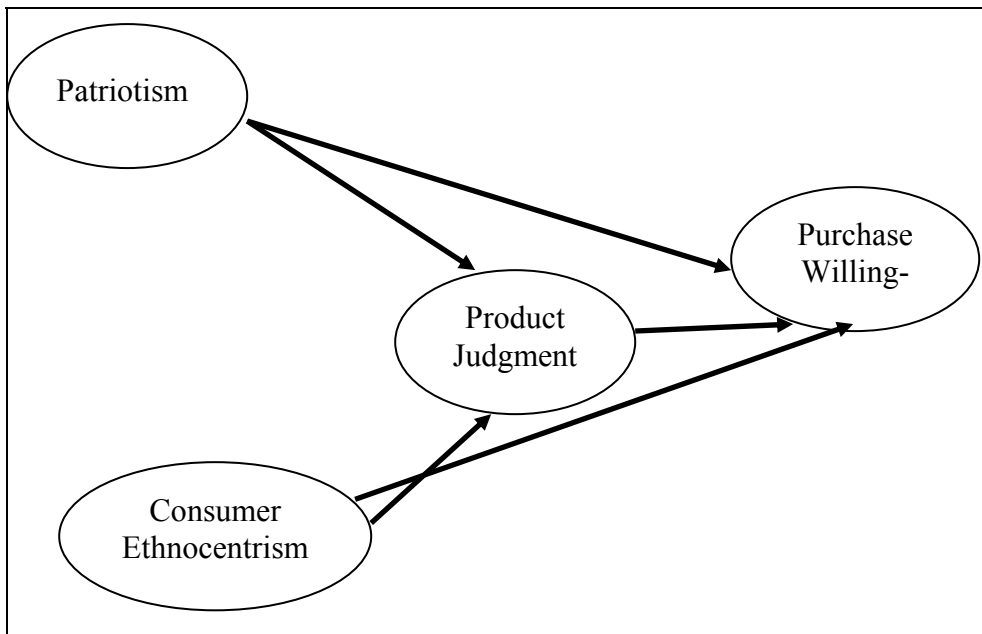


Figure 1: Research Framework

2.6 Hypothesis

The research is generally to examine the effect of patriotism and consumer ethnocentrism on product judgment and purchase willingness among Malaysian Muslim consumers towards the U.S. made products. In addition, the effect of product judgment on purchase willingness also included. Based on previous literatures discussed earlier, the following hypotheses are derived:

H1: Patriotism will have negative effect on US product judgment.

H2: Consumer ethnocentrism will have negative effect on US product judgment.

H3: Patriotism will negatively relate to purchase willingness of the U.S made products.

H4: Consumer ethnocentrism will negatively relate to purchase willingness of the U.S. made products.

H5: Positive relationship between the U.S. product judgment and consumer purchase willingness of the U.S made products.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted using the survey approach with a multiple choice questionnaire requiring respondents to give fixed responses to the statements or questions asked. As a result, it will accomplish the objectives of the research and answer the issues raised and problem statements put forward through careful analysis. The survey design will also help the researcher to achieve the objectives of the research and testing all the hypotheses.

Questionnaire was used to solicit information from respondents. It would be a self-administered and drop-off method of survey where short interview also involved. This is to make sure that the respondents fulfilled all the requirements or required criteria. The respondents gave time allowance for a careful answering. Respondents were assured anonymity and all the response will be kept strictly confidential.

In the current study, the samples throughout Peninsular Malaysia were gathered with the use of the quota sampling procedure discussed above in order to ensure that the country samples were reasonably representative of their respective populations. Three criteria were selected as the basis of the quota, i.e., gender, income and geographical location/area. A four clustered area, i.e., Northern, Central, Southern and East Coast were identified and in each cluster, two cities selected.

The cities selected were Kota Bahru in Kelantan, Kuala Terengganu in Terengganu, Kangar in Perlis, Alor Setar in Kedah, Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya in Selangor, Bandar Melaka in Melaka and Johor Bahru in Johor. This is due to the assumption that the consumers from urban areas have a basic knowledge of foreign products (for example, where are the products made). With that knowledge, they will have a clearer direction of how to evaluate the products and to answer the questionnaire. Previous research (e.g., Wang and Chen, 2004) also used consumers living in the countries' major cities for the reason that they were expected to be more familiar with foreign products.

Out of the 1,000 questionnaires distributed, 710 were received back within the period of twelve weeks, making it about 71 percent response rate. Only 663 of the respondents completed the entire questionnaire. For the incomplete questionnaires, most of the incomplete sections come from the questions about the religiosity and the demographic profile. After deducting the unusable questionnaires, only 663 questionnaires were coded and could be used for further data analysis. As such, the usable rate for the questionnaire was 66.3 percent.

All the constructs in this study, which were from established scales were measured using 7-point, Likert scale type items anchored by 1 = strongly

disagree and 7 = strongly agree. The measurement items of patriotism were adapted from a study conducted by Kosterman and Feshbach (1989). For consumer ethnocentrism construct, the items were adapted and modified from CETSCALE, developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987). For the product judgment and purchase willingness, the questions were adapted from the study conducted by Darling and Arnold (1988). All the items then modified to fit the current research background.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The data collected were analyzed using two stages; first, using SPSS version 12 on analyzing the ethnocentric tendencies among Malaysian Muslim consumers in comparison to respondents from other countries. Secondly, AMOS version 6 was used in testing the hypotheses in the current study.

4.1 Consumers' Ethnocentric Tendencies

In order to make comparisons, between Malaysian Muslims consumers' ethnocentric tendencies and consumers from other countries, the mean score of CETSCALE were used. The total possible CETSCALE score varies between 17 and 119, due to the use of the seven-point scale. The mean scale value of CETSCALE is taken as the indicator of the intensity of consumer ethnocentrism; a higher mean scale value indicates higher ethnocentric tendencies (Hamin and Elliot, 2006).

Table 1: Comparison Results of CETSCALE Mean by Country

Authors	Country	Respondents	Mean
Shimp and Sharma (1987)	US	Students	51.92
	Detroit	General population	68.58
	Carolinas	General population	61.28
	Denver	General population	57.84
	Los Angeles	General population	56.62
Durvasula et al., (1997)	US	Students	50.24
	Russia	Students	32.02
Watson and Wright (1999)	New Zealand	General population	62.21
Good and Huddleston (1995)	Poland	General population	69.19
	Russia	General population	51.68

Sharma et al., (1995)	Korea	General population	85.07
Caruana (1996)	Malta	General population	56.80
Hult et al., (1999)	USA	Students	61.50
	Japan	General population	40.10
	Sweden	General population	38.40
Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998)	Belgium	General population	28.70
	Great Britain	General population	30.29
	Greece	General population	37.84
Brodowsky (1998)	US	General population	61.68
Acharya (1998)	Australia	Students	56.40
Hamin and Elliot (2006)	Indonesia	General population	74.50
Current Study	Malaysia	Muslim Consumers	79.64

Source: Hamin and Elliot (2006).

From Table 1, the total mean value for Malaysian Muslim consumers was 79.64. The result was then compared with others results conducted by other researchers from several countries. The mean value scores of previous literature were range from 32.02 (Russian) as the lowest mean score 85.07 (Korean) as the highest score. Obviously, from the results, Malaysian Muslims were among the highest in terms of their ethnocentric tendencies. The nearest mean value score by other country was Indonesia, where the mean score was 74.50, which was slightly lower than current study.

2.2 Hypotheses Testing

As recommended by Hoyle and Panter (1995) and Anderson and Gerbing (1988), SEM must have two-step analytic procedure, measurement and structural model. In the measurement model, the fit of the indicators to the construct was assessed. This is important to ensure the unidimensionality of the constructs. Each construct in the model was analyzed separately. All the items use as indicators must have significant path from the construct and the residuals must be low. The entire fit index must indicate a good level of model fit.

Table 2: Results of Measurement Model

Construct	χ^2	df	p-level	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI
Patriotism	49.332	20	0.000	0.047	0.982	0.967	0.949	0.928
Consumer Ethnocentrism	197.991	65	0.000	0.056	0.956	0.939	0.934	0.920
Product Judgment	50.513	20	0.000	0.048	0.981	0.966	0.951	0.931
Purchase Willingness	8.732	5	0.120	0.034	0.995	0.984	0.997	0.994

Results presented in Table 2 shows that all the constructs indicated high level of model fit as all the criteria yield the desired results. As the results show that the value of GFI, AGFI, CFI, and TLI are all well above 0.90 and RMSEA is below 0.08, it could be concluded that unidimensionality exists for the constructs of this study. Therefore, it proceeded to examine the model paths or structural model.

The structural model was formed to test the hypotheses of this study. The hypotheses were between the independent variables and the dependent variables. The results of structural model shows that the model achieved a good level of fit ($\chi^2 / df = 1.970$; p-level = 0.000; RMSEA = 0.038; GFI = 0.916; AGFI = 0.904; CFI = 0.908; and TLI = 0.900). Basically, all the values indicate that the model demonstrates a reasonable fit. Therefore, the results from this structural model can be used for subsequent analysis. Results of the hypotheses are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of Hypotheses Testing using Structural Model

	Hypotheses	Std Reg. Weight	Sig.
H1	Patriotism → Product Judgment	0.033	0.549
H2	Consumer Ethnocentrism → Product Judgment	-0.366	0.000
H3	Patriotism → Purchase Willingness	0.059	0.127
H4	Consumer Ethnocentrism → Purchase Willingness	-0.694	0.000
H5	Product Judgment → Purchase Willingness	0.216	0.000

From the table above, 3 hypotheses are supported and significant at 0.05 level and 2 hypotheses are not supported. For Hypothesis 1 (Patriotism → Product Judgment) the results show that patriotism does not negatively influence the consumers' judgment on products since $p > 0.05$. This hypothesis was rejected. As such it can be concluded that patriotism among Malaysian Muslim consumers does not affect their judgment of US made products. Possibly, highly patriotic consumers might love their country very much, but at the same time they do not reject products from foreign countries.

For Hypothesis 2, it is significant at the 0.001 level. It shows that the level of consumer ethnocentric tendencies among Malaysian Muslim consumers will have a negative relationship with the judgment of US made products. Generally, it can be said that the higher the consumer ethnocentrism, the lower the judgment on attributes of the U.S. made products.

In terms of the relationship between patriotism and purchase willingness (Hypothesis 3), the results indicated that no significant relation between them since $P > 0.05$. Therefore, the hypothesis that argued the negative relationship between patriotism and purchase willingness is rejected. Patriotic consumers do not reject foreign made products and do not affect their willingness to purchase foreign made products.

In Hypothesis 4, it was hypothesized that consumer ethnocentrism will have a negative effect on purchase willingness of Malaysian consumers towards the purchase of U.S. made products. The hypothesis is accepted since the p -value < 0.05 , and it was significant at 0.001 level. As expected, the results show that consumer ethnocentrism not only affected the judgment of U.S. made products but also the consumers' willingness to purchase such products.

Finally, Hypothesis 5 was developed primarily to see the effects of the judgment on US made products by respondents towards the purchase willingness of such products. Practically, if consumers judge or evaluate one product positively, their willingness to purchase will also be high. The result shows that a significant positive relationship was found between US products judgment and the willingness to purchase products made in the US from the perspective of Malaysian Muslim consumers. It was significant at the 0.001 level. As such, Hypothesis 5 was accepted. As expected, the result suggests that consumers who have high expectations of the products from the US will also have a higher willingness to purchase such products.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As we can see the results of Table 1, Malaysian Muslims scores quite high in the CETSCALE. It shows that they have high ethnocentric tendencies. In fact, they are ranked second after Korean population. However, this result could not be generalized as ethnocentric tendencies of Malaysian Population since the study only concentrated on Muslim consumers as the population. The overall population of Malaysia generally consists of 3 major ethnic groups, i.e., Malay (60%), Chinese (30%) and Indian (10%). Malays are normally Muslim, Chinese are normally Buddhist and Indians are normally Hindu. Therefore, the current study cannot generalize the result as the current study population does not cover the whole population of Malaysia.

For the patriotism among consumers, the results in Hypotheses 1 and 3 indicated that the patriotic emotion among Muslim consumers in Malaysia does not influence their attitudes towards foreign made products, particularly the U.S. made products in the current study. This argument can be supported by the studies conducted by Lim and Darley (1997), and Wang and Chen (2004), where they argued that consumers might love their country but it will not negatively influence their attitude towards foreign made products.

For consumer ethnocentrism, it was found that the ethnocentric tendencies among consumers can negatively influence their attitudes towards foreign made product. Both hypotheses, i.e., Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 4 were significant at 0.001 levels. Highly ethnocentric consumers tend to reject foreign made products.

For example, studies conducted by several researchers in the developed and developing countries, i.e., Shimp and Sharma (1987) in the US; Javalgi et al. (2005) in France; Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2004) in the UK; Hamin and Elliott (2006) in Indonesia; and Abdul Razak et al. (2002) in Malaysia have illustrated that consumers with ethnocentric tendencies tend to have negative attitudes towards foreign made products. They found that the more ethnocentric a consumer is, they will have less favourable on foreign made products. Consistent with previous literature, the current study also found that highly ethnocentric Muslim consumers in Malaysia will negatively affect their judgment of US made products as well as their willingness to purchase U.S made or foreign made products.

Finally, in the relationship between products judgment and purchase willingness, the current study found a significant positive correlation between them. Positive judgment towards foreign made products indicated positive purchase willingness of foreign made products. For comparison, previous studies, for example, Javalgi et al. (2005); Klein et al. (1998); Nijssen and Douglas (2004); and Nakos and Hajidimitriou (2007) found that product judgment is a strong indicator of

purchase willingness. Positive judgment of foreign made products will directly influence their willingness to purchase foreign made products. Therefore, the current study result is consistent with previous studies. In Malaysia, if consumers positively judge the products, their purchase willingness will also be high.

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