Consumer Ethnocentrism and Attitude Toward Domestic Product in Pekanbaru

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to discover high school student ethnocentrism and their attitude toward domestic product. Identifying these factors are very important for marketers in design their marketing program. Based on consumer ethnocentrism questionnaire (CETSCALE) developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987), 17 questions were given to the student from one private high school in Pekanbaru City, Riau Province. Moreover, question about their attitude, preference, and the reason to choose domestic product also being questioned. About 118 students participated in this study. The data collected was analyzed through qualitative and quantitative method. The result showed that this study provides support for the CETSCALE's reliability and validity. Mean score on the CETSCALE is 57.20, which is indicating a moderate level. From the question about country of origin, approximately 60.2% respondents pay attention to the product country of origin. In relation to the price, 55.1% would buy the domestic product if the price between the domestic and foreign product is the same. On the other situation 71.2% respondent would buy the domestic product if the price is cheaper, contrary to only 23.7 % respondent that keep buying domestic product even the price is higher. It is important to note that even they have high ethnocentrism score, not all of them willing to buy domestic product when the price is higher. We also gave them opened question asking about what kind of product and services they prefer domestic made. Nearly 50% mentioned clothes or dress and many respondents refer to specific kind of clothes or motive such as Batik. Food is chosen by at least 66% respondent as domestic product they prefer. The most reasons are the cheap prices, same quality, delicious taste for food, and proud to consume the domestic product. We may conclude that respondent were ethnocentrism at certain product but still considering the price to make a buying decision.

Key words: Attitudes, Country of Origin, Domestic Product, Ethnocentrism, Preferences.

Introduction

Consumers nowadays have various products and services available to satisfying their needs. This products and services could come from around the world since the era of globalization has begun. This situation of course would boost the competition among the producers. From consumer point of view, it increased their bargaining power to buy products and services, but for producer it increased the competition and potentially decreased their market share. Indonesia as the fourth largest population in the world is behemoth target market for product and services from around the world. The impact of globalization and information from net quicken product acceptance by the Indonesian people. Moreover, the perception of good quality from imported product made Indonesia people as potential consumer for foreign brand and product made in out of Indonesia. This situation could give negative impact to local producer. Some free trade agreements prohibited protection in term of tariff and quota from government to the local producer. So that, to increase local producer competitiveness, besides producing better goods and services, there was request from government and the producer to love Indonesian products and services. This paper tried to find out how much the Indonesian, specifically students in this research, prefer Indonesian product and services. Using CETSCALE develop by Shimp and Sharma (1987), 17 questions of consumer ethnocentrism were given to the students in section two, and the section three of the questionnaire struggled with their intention to buy based on the price and what kind of Indonesian product they prefer to buy and the reasoning of doing so. Applying high school student as a respondent is based on suggestion from the previous study to see whether this scale is applicable to the other group of respondent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The trend of globalization around the world has increased the competition among the producers. Consumers now face an expanding choice of purchase option. Hence, the marketer in every firm, both domestic and foreign,

should give great concern on tools for assessing consumer attitudes and preferences. From a cross-national perspective, two issues are paramount in such an effort. The first is the need of reliable and valid measurement to obtain accurate information pertaining to consumer attitudes and evaluation of product. Because the quality of measurement can affect the accuracy and quality of cross-national decision making, establishing the psychometric properties of cross-national measurement is important. A second issue is the scope of international consumer research. Before, most studies have focused just on the views of US consumers.² But nowadays, research about consumer ethnocentrism quite a lot. Research by Ramsaran-Fowdar was done for Mauritians, while Watson and Wright (1999) surveyed on New Zealand consumer. Moreover, Bandyopadhyay and Muhammad examined South Asia – India and Bangladesh consumer, and Ghazali, Othman, Yahya, Ibrahim (2008) tested it on Malaysian. For Indonesian consumer it was explored by Hamin and Elliot (2006)

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to believe that one's ethnic or cultural group is centrally important, and that all other groups are measured in relation to one's own. The ethnocentric individual will judge other groups relative to his or her own particular ethnic group or culture, especially with concern to language, behavior, customs, and religion. These ethnic distinctions and sub-divisions serve to define each ethnicity's unique cultural identity.³

In particular, the concept of ethnocentrism is a sociological concept that refers to a tendency to regard the beliefs, standards and code of behavior of one's own as superior to those found in other societies. Ethnocentrism which has historically received a good deal of attention by sociologists and psychologists is now becoming important in the marketing literature (Shimp 1984). Globalisation has made the role of so-called 'consumer ethnocentrism' a significant factor in marketing. In a study that examined the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and evaluations of foreign sourced products, Lantz and Loeb (1996) found that highly ethnocentric consumers have more favorable attitudes toward products from culturally similar countries. Yet, this finding, as well as most, if not all, of the research that has examined the country of origin effect, is only applicable to decision situations in which a domestic alternative is available. Regardless of the product category examined and the consumer population studied, the decision situation has always included a domestic alternative within the consideration set.

Ethnocentrism is a nearly universal syndrome of attitudes and behaviors. Behaviors associated with ethnocentrism include cooperation with members of the in-group, but not out-groups. A great deal of laboratory and field work has been done on in-group/out-group processes. Axelrod and Hammond (2003) resumed the most important and empirically well-validated findings about in-group/out-group processes. They are the following:

- 1. When individuals see themselves as members of an in-group they are more likely to contribute to collective welfare even at the cost of individual advantage. Indeed, group affiliation is central to identity formation and identity politics.
- 2. The most trivial and arbitrary distinction is enough to trigger behavior favoring the in-group, even when self-interest and reciprocity do not apply. Categorization and stereotyping on the basis of group labels can be rapid and automatic, even preconscious, although their overt manifestations may be changeable.
- 3. Both in-group favoritism and out-group hostility tend to be stronger in competitive situations or in the presence of external threats. However, in-group favoritism is likely to evolve only when affiliation with the ingroup generates valuable resources or scarce social goods, or allows more effective response to external threats.
- 4. Categorization of people into groups tends to be based on factors that are perceived to be similar within groups, and different between groups. The factors on which groups are differentiated may often be related to the differential value of group memberships for social and economic interests.
- 5. People validate their membership in an ethnic group by pointing to some set of attributes, usually overt cultural traits, that members believe they share in common. Some authors argue that the importance of markers that are both easily visible and difficult to imitate may mean that physical/biological characteristics are preferred to cultural traits as a basis for group differentiation.
- 6. Group membership boundaries become increasingly salient the closer the spatial contact between groups.

7. In-group favoritism and out-group hostility (xenophobia) are somewhat different processes and appear to be empirically uncorrelated. Out-group hostility need not result from in-group favoritism, and in-group favoritism is not a necessary concomitant of out-group hostility.

Part of the problem has to do with ethnocentrism, the polar opposite of cultural relativism. Both concepts, ethnocentrism and cultural relativism, can be placed as polar ends of a continuum, each reflecting a different approach, either as exclusive or inclusive; a different mindset either closed or open to differences, and an attitude and behavior that is either insensitive or sensitive to another culture. Figure 1 depicted the continum between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism.

Figure 1 Continuum of Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

There are three levels of ethnocentrism: a positive one, a negative one, and an extreme negative one. The positive definition defines ethnocentrism as "the point of view that one's own way of life is to be preferred to all others". There is nothing wrong with such feelings, for "it characterizes the way most individuals feel about their own cultures, whether or not they verbalize their feeling". It is ethnocentrism that which gives people their sense of people hood, group identity, and place in history—all of which are valuable traits to possess. Ethnocentrism becomes negative when "one's own group becomes the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it". It reaches its extreme negative form when "a more powerful group not only imposes its rule on another, but actively depreciates the things they hold to be of value". Apartheid, the holocaust, and the genocide of the American Indian are all examples of this third level of ethnocentrism.

Numerous studies have been carried out all over the world to explore the ethnocentrism of local customers. Ramsaran-Fowdar (2010) collected previous research done by several researchers. Social class has been defined by Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1993) as homogeneous and relatively permanent divisions in a society in which individuals and families sharing similar values, interests and behavior can be categorized. Consumers usually buy brands of products and services that they associate with the social classes they belong to. These decisions directly influence whether consumers buys foreign made products or domestic ones. Social classes and status systems are present everywhere. Gilbert and Kahl (1982) identified nine variables that determine social class, namely economic variables (income, occupation and wealth), interaction variables (association, socialization and personal prestige), and political variables (class consciousness, mobility and power). Typically, occupation is the best indicator of social class. The work one does often reflects one's education and affects one's lifestyle and consumption, as well as neighborhood choice and type of family house.8

Another research found that younger consumers were found to be more open and positive towards foreign products (Schooler, 1971; Tongberg, 1972; Wall, Heslop, & Hofstra, 1988; Wang, 1978). McLain and Sternquist (1991) also obtained similar results and found older consumers to be more ethnocentric than younger consumers. Along the same line, Han (1988) found that "patriotic" consumers were older than less "patriotic" consumers. Shimp and Sharma (1987) found that the effect of age varied by social class and that only older working class individuals manifested ethnocentric tendencies. Mixed findings were obtained by studies analyzing gender as a correlate in consumer ethnocentrism research. Han (1988) found women to be more patriotic and more patriotic consumers are less likely to choose foreign products. Women exhibited greater ethnocentric tendencies than men (Good and Huddleston, 1995; Nielsen and Spence, 1997; Sharma, Shimp, & Shin, 1995). Other studies found no relationship between sex and degree of ethnocentrism of consumers (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; McLain and Sternquist, 1991). On the other hand, females were found to rate foreign-made products more favourably than men by several studies (Dornoff, Tankersley, and White, 1974; Schooler, 1971; Wang, 1978; Johansson *et al.*, 1985).9

Study on gender and age revealed that those factors were significant demographic variable that were positively related to consumer ethnocentrism. Mauritians who were more ethnocentric were the males those in the

age group 50-59 years old. 10 A research on Indonesian consumer ethnocentrism used collected data from a survey sample found that the overall level of consumer ethnocentrism is notably high. 11 Moreover, investigation by Watson and Wright (1999) suggested that cultural similarity is an important consideration for highly ethnocentric consumer in the evaluation of foreign product. 12 The current relevance of the ethnocentrism problem can be clearly seen when looking at the emerging nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments in many countries and regions of the world. This process is especially true for the formerly centrally-governed countries of Eastern Europe. For this reason, it seems advisable to integrate ethnocentrism in the international corporate strategy development process. Depending on the level of ethnocentrism within several stakeholder groups, international corporations will have to develop specific business strategies (Sinkovics and Holzmüller, 1994).13

Attitudes

Consumer attitudes are a composite of a consumer's (1) beliefs about, (2) feelings about, (3) and behavioral intentions toward some object - within the context of marketing, usually a brand or retail store. These components are viewed together since they are highly interdependent and together represent forces that influence how the consumer will react to the object. Figure 2 explained the interrelationship among the components.¹⁴

Figure 2
Interrelationship between Belief, Affect, and Behavioral Intention

The first component is *beliefs*. A consumer may hold both positive beliefs toward an object (e.g., coffee tastes good) as well as negative beliefs (e.g., coffee is easily spilled and stains papers). In addition, some beliefs may be neutral (coffee is black), and some may be differ in valance depending on the person or the situation (e.g., coffee is hot and stimulates—good on a cold morning, but not good on a hot summer evening when one wants to sleep). Note also that the beliefs that consumers hold need not be accurate (e.g., that pork contains little fat), and some beliefs may, upon closer examination, be contradictory (e.g., that a historical figure was a good person but also owned slaves). The second component is affect/feeling. Consumers also hold certain feelings toward brands or other objects. Sometimes these feelings are based on the beliefs (e.g., a person feels nauseated when thinking about a hamburger because of the tremendous amount of fat it contains), but there may also be feelings which are relatively independent of beliefs. For example, an extreme environmentalist may believe that cutting down trees is morally wrong, but may have positive affect toward Christmas trees because he or she unconsciously associates these trees with the experience that he or she had at Christmas as a child.

The last component is behavioral intention. The behavioral intention is what the consumer plans to do with respect to the object (e.g., buy or not buy the brand). As with affect, this is sometimes a logical consequence of beliefs (or affect), but may sometimes reflect other circumstances—e.g., although a consumer does not really like a restaurant, he or she will go there because it is a hangout for his or her friends.

Allport (1935) defined attitude as: "A mental and neural state of readiness, which exerts a directing, influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related". According to Schultz and Zelezny (2000), "attitudes of environmental concern are rooted in a person's concept of self and the degree to which an individual perceives him or herself to be an integral part of the natural environment". In conclusion, attitude represents what consumers like and dislike. 15 Consumers often do not behave consistently with their attitudes for several reasons: 16

- 1. Ability. He or she may be unable to do so. Although junior high school student likes pick-up trucks and would like to buy one, she may lack a driver's license.
- 2. Competing demands for resources. Although the above student would like to buy a pickup truck on her sixteenth birthday, she would rather have a computer, and has money for only one of the two.
- 3. Social influence. A student thinks that smoking is really cool, but since his friends think it's disgusting, he does not smoke.
- 4. Measurement problems. Measuring attitudes is difficult. In many situations, consumers do not consciously set out to enumerate how positively or negatively they feel about mopeds, and when a market researcher asks them about their beliefs about mopeds, how important these beliefs are, and their evaluation of the performance of mopeds with respect to these beliefs, consumers often do not give very reliable answers. Thus, the consumers may act consistently with their true attitudes, which were never uncovered because an erroneous measurement was made.

Even some consumers prefer global or foreign products and view them as symbols of status others exhibit strong preferences for domestic-made products and have negative attitudes towards foreign or imported products. Such negative attitudes towards foreign products can arise from a number of sources. Consumer may think product from certain countries were inferior, they have negative image of the countries, feeling wrong to buy foreign product, immoral, the foreign product did not have local standard, the process of the product did not environmental friendly, or because of the issue of boycotting for certain countries.

Consumers' attitudes toward imports from various countries can vary significantly from one country to another. Even consumers in the same country can have significantly different perceptions of the country-of-origin. It follows that it is necessary to identify country-of-origin impacts on each country that a firm is considering exporting to and doing this on a timely basis. In general, a product is analyzed along two kinds of variables:17

- 1. Intrinsic variables (e.g.: taste, design, performance, etc.) which are an integral part of the product.
- 2. Extrinsic variables (e.g.: price, brand, warranty, country of origin etc.) which are potential sources of information to the consumer before consumption.

There are several guidelines in considering the country of origin:18

- 1. Consumers in developed countries have a general preference for domestic products.
- 2. Consumers do not use the country of origin as an isolated evaluation criterion.
- 3. The influence of country of origin tends to be stronger when the consumer is not familiar with the product or manufacturing company.

A research by Alvensleben and Schrader (1998) using conjoint analysis revealed that food product of the own region are preferred to products with an unknown origin. Majority of the consumers was willing to pay more for a product of the own region than for products with an unknown origin. The regional preference is higher for fresh products than for preserved food. Another study found that individual with high level of ethnocentrism will have more favorable attitude toward products imported from culturally similar countries (US and Germany) than products from culturally dissimilar countries (Italy and Singapore). The same result for product where domestically manufactured goods are unavailable. Consumer with high ethnocentrism will have more favorable attitudes toward products imported from culturally similar countries than products from culturally dissimilar countries. This study also found that ethnocentrism consumer will be more willing to purchase products imported from culturally similar countries. In the case of there were domestically manufactured goods are unavailable, the individual high level of ethnocentrism will be more willing to purchase products imported from culturally similar countries than from culturally dissimilar countries.

An increasing in economic condition or wealth tends to change the consumer behavior. Moreover, the vast amount of transportation services make people more mobile to move from one to the other countries. One of the reasons for people going abroad is to shop for their needs. An increasing number of out-shopping to other countries has become a growing concern among retailers in border areas. The research on shopping behavior and attitudes of Singaporean in neighboring Malaysia found that foods, beverages and grocery products are the most commonly out-shopped items. Usually, consumers engage in out-shopping primarily for economic reasons, and they do not experience a lack of national pride or low consumer ethnocentrism.²¹ Similarly, research in China found that price is still a hurdle that prevent Chinese consumer from mass consumption of foreign product.²²

DATAAND METHODOLOGY

There were four sections in the questionnaire. Section I explored demographic profiles in term of gender and age. Section II included the 17-item CETSCALE designed by Shimp and Sharma (1987), which was modified to five-point Likert scale where 1 is "Strongly Disagree" and 5 is "Strongly Agree". Section III measured the consumer attitude toward foreign product based on the product prices. The rest of the questionnaires were opened questions asking about what kind of domestic product and services they prefer and the reasons to choose it. The questionnaire distributed are self-administered, which means that there is no interviewer asking or guiding the respondents throughout the questions, instead the respondents will themselves read and answer the questionnaire. The drop off method was used where the questionnaires are dropped off at every class to be picked up later. The population is one private high school students about 425 students. By using Slovin's formula with the margin of error 10%, the sample is about 81 students. 118 fully completed responses were obtained and then analyzed using SPSS 17.

FINDINGAND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile

Diagram 1 depicted the percentage of respondent's gender. The number of male and female participated in this study was almost equal. There are 57 male respondent (48.31%) participating in this study and 61 female respondent (51.69%) participating in this study.

Diagram 1 Respondent Data Based on Gender

The student's age involved in this study was range between 16-18 years old. The complete data in percentage is shown in Diagram 2. Based on t test, it was found that there was no significant differences level of ethnocentrism between male and female. From the Diagram 2 showed the respondent age. we can look that the majority respondents is 17 years old and only 3.39% reach age of 18 years old.

Diagram 2
Respondent Data Based on Age

Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale

Several researches stated that the scale that used to measure consumer ethnocentrism is valid and reliable.²³ This study also found that the CETSCALE was reliable with Cronbach Alpha reliability score was 0.829. Mean score on the CETSCALE is 57.20 which indicating a moderate level of ethnocentrism. Table 1 and 2 demonstrate the reliability statistic and the mean score of the CETSCALE.

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Table 2 Mean Score

Mean score and standard deviation on the CETSCALE is M = 57.20 SD = 8.51. A study by Shimp and Sarma (1987) was conducted in four area of study. Mean scores and standard deviations on the CETSCALE for the four geographic areas are Detroit M = 68.58, SD = 25.96; Carolinas M = 61.28, SD = 24.41; Denver M = 57.84, SD = 26.10; and Los Angeles M = 56.62, SD = 26.37. The mean score in this study is in the range of mean score from the original study.

Consumer's Attitude

Section III of the questionnaire was the question about consumer's attitude to buy a product based on prices. Respondent was given four questions and being forced to answer in yes or no choice. Diagram 3 illustrated the respondent's answer. About 60.2% respondents considering the country of origin when they want buy a product or service, while 39.8% did not consider the country of origin of the product and service. Consistent with previous studies by Sedláková (2006), more than half of the respondents (57.8%) from Slovak pay attention to country-of-origin on the products.24 Indonesian and Malaysian are country with several similarities in their culture, and in this case it was found that the Malaysian consumer moderately agrees that it is important for them to look for country of origin information in purchasing a product.25

Diagram 3
Summary of Respondent's Attitude

The next question asking about whether they prefer domestic, in this case Indonesian, product if the price is the same with product from abroad. More than half respondents prefer Indonesian product than foreign. This percentage is lower comparing to younger Slovak consumer. Sedláková (2006) found that if the domestic and foreign products had the same prices, the 88% of the respondents would prefer domestic products.26 However, if the price for the domestic products was higher than for foreign product, only 41.2% respondents would prefer the products from their home country. Consistent with previous result, Indonesian consumer showed the lower percentage. There were only 23.73% respondents who keep buying domestic even the price is higher. And the vast percent of them (76.3%) did not want to buy domestic product if the price is higher. Contrary to the case before, more than 70% prefer Indonesian when the price was cheaper. This finding supports the study of consumer behavior done by Piron (2002) and Wei (2008). Piron (2002) found that usually consumers engage in out-shopping primarily for economic reasons, and they do not experience a lack of national pride or low consumer ethnocentrism. Similarly, Wei (2008) conducted research in China and found that price is still a hurdle that prevent Chinese consumer from mass consumption of foreign product. Although Chinese consumers may prefer high-quality imported products, they do not blindly buy Western; rather they seek quality at a good price.27 Another study found that the average Malaysian consumer did not consider the country of origin aspect to be high on their list in deciding to purchase a product. Other product dimensions take precedence, especially the product quality, the technological prowess, and its price.

Research by Wong, Polonsky, and Garma 2008 found that the three COO sub-components did not influence young Chinese consumers' evaluation of product quality or purchase intentions. In addition, consumers' level of ethnocentrism also did not have a direct effect on perceived product quality or purchase intentions. There was only one statistically significant interaction effect between ethnocentrism and country of parts for one of the two products. As such, COO dimensions and young Chinese consumers' ethnocentrism appears to have limited influence on their assessments of product quality or purchase intentions. This may occur because young Chinese consumers perceive that hybrid products are the norm for high involvement products in China as these products are all these consumers have experienced.28

This study also investigated the preference of Indonesian product. Approximately 66% of respondent mentioned the food. The kinds of Indonesian food they prefer are rice, corn, instant noodle, biscuit, nuts, meat ball, seafood, traditional cakes, sate (skewered pieces of meat roasted over coals), etc. Almost a half of them favored Indonesian clothes/dress and specifically with Batik motives. The other things are shoe, jacket, handy craft, accessories, art product, and the Indonesian song and dances. The reasons of doing so are cheaper prices, the taste is more delicious, guaranteed ingredients and unique, halal (Islam allowed), proud to Indonesian product, good quality and compete to the foreign product, support Indonesian producers, love and preserve Indonesian product, habits, reduce unemployment. These responses are similar in some points to the responses from Slovak younger consumer - the flavour, freshness, no genetic modified products, the warranty of the production and the fact that the production of the domestic products supports the Slovak economy.

From the list of Indonesian product they prefer, we can see that many of that products are low involvement product category. Research showed that under high involvement conditions, buyers decision process are thought to proceed through extended decision-making, a series of sequential stages involving information search and evaluation of criteria.²⁹ Product such food and clothes usually did not need extended decision making such as electronic, automotive, or the other high price product. These kinds of low product involvement maybe also influence their purchase behavior. This is consistent with the finding that price really determine whether they will spent their money to buy domestic or foreign product.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The result of this study indicated that the level of high school student ethnocentrism is in moderate level (57.20). The CETSCALE by Shimp and Sharma (1987) used in this study is supported for the reliability and validity. There were almost equal number between male and female and from the t test it was found that there were no significant differences on level of ethnocentrism between male and female. Similar with several previous studies, respondent in this study considering country of origin toward product purchased. It is important that even they have high level of ethnocentrism it did not mean they will be loyal to Indonesian product. Price is one of dominant factor influencing their attitude toward product. Their preferences to Indonesian product are only in limited kind of product. Majority preferences were in Batik and traditional food. This is the indication that for

product needed high technology, Indonesian product is not their choice. So that for Indonesian producers for high technology manufactured good, it was a big challenge to win the competition.

A possible limitation in this study is the sample almost homogeny in demographic characteristic. Future research should deal with various demographic characteristic to have deep understanding about ethnocentrism, because in some studies, different demographic characteristic result in different outcome. Besides, a research in specific products with high technology (electronics, car, motorcycle, etc) should be done to understand how the respondents perception, preferences, attitude, willingness to buy, and purchase intention on that specific product. In this study, the respondent was freely to mention some variety of products they keep in mind. The finding of such study will bestow further insight into usefulness of consumer ethnocentrism in expanding the marketing mixes strategies.

The CETSCALE used in this study has several potential uses for marketing manager. It can be used to tracking periodically about consumer behavior – how present and prospective consumers feel about purchasing domestic versus foreign, designing customized marketing mixes, segmenting, targeting, and positioning the product, producing new product, and the other purposes.

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Julina dan Bambang Kariyawan: Consumer Ethnocentrism and Attitude Toward Domestic Product in Pekanbaru

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