

An Empirical Study of Pakistani People's Attitude Towards US Products: The Role of Animosity, Consumer Ethnocentrism, Country of Origin Effect, Susceptibility to Normative Influence and National Identification

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Abstract: This research investigates Country of origin effect, Consumer Ethnocentrism, Animosity, Susceptibility to Normative Influence and National identification's impact on US Product judgment and Willingness to buy US products by Pakistani consumers. This study involves in-depth understanding of above mentioned phenomenon from secondary sources as well as measurement of these variables through primary data collection from Pakistani consumers. The research methodology consists of quantitative techniques and data collection from 240 respondents on summated/likert scale by developing standard questionnaire. Correlation and regression are run to test the hypothesis. The results suggested that despite of animosity feelings, strong national identity and ethnocentric beliefs; US products are still judged positively by Pakistani consumers' thus increasing willingness to buy US products. Country of origin effect is also seen as an important consideration while purchasing foreign product. Susceptibility to Normative Influence is also found to be an imperative deliberation in this regard.

Key words: Pakistani consumers • US products • Quantitative techniques • Data collection

INTRODUCTION

According to Reefer and Diamantopoulos [1], tensions among countries are present throughout the world which stem from territory disputes (e.g. India and Pakistan both demanding the Kashmir region), economic arguments (e.g. the European Union's recent introduction of import limits for China-made clothing), diplomatic disagreements (e.g. France's and Germany's disagreement with the USA on the issue of the US intervention in Iraq), or religious conflicts leading to cool relations between countries. These bilateral disputes are affecting consumers' behaviour towards products of companies from the offending nations.

Country of origin effect is becoming a strong point of debate in every level of social class and becoming important aspect of culture in developing countries despite of some very strong western brand preferences. Hill stated in 2002 as cited by [2] "Culture is made up of many different components, such as language, religion, values and standards". So, it is hard for marketers to influence every segment of market to enable their brand to be perceived positively.

According to Riesman 1953; Hofstede 1991; Sheth, Mittal and Newman 1999 as cited by [3], the literature tends to refer to those who believe in Eastern or "Asian values" as putting more emphasis on interpersonal communications, respect for elders and strong hierarchical social structure. On the other hand, Western culture is often portrayed as less centred on interpersonal communications, less hierarchical and more youth-oriented. But the difference in culture between East and West and its implications on consumer behaviour is far beyond this point.

Animosity towards foreign products is becoming an important aspect of culture in developing countries despite of many efforts by developed countries to neutralise the situation. Some authors believe that consumers from emerging countries are more sensitive to country of origin and ethnocentrism [4] but the validity of this argument needed to be tested in Pakistan.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of country of origin effect, animosity, ethnocentrism, susceptibility to normative influence and national identification on product judgement and willingness to buy US products. This study will help to explore that how

these variables are affecting foreign product purchase in Pakistan. This area is quite uncharted in case of Pakistani consumers. The overall aim is to examine the effect of these phenomena for the Pakistani consumers and develop better understanding regarding their attitude towards foreign products.

The overall aim is to examine the effect of country of Origin effect, consumer ethnocentrism, animosity, susceptibility to normative influence and national identity for the Pakistani consumers and develop better understanding regarding their attitude towards US products.

Literature Review

Country of Origin (COO): Samiee (1994) as cited by Hammin and Elliott [8] defined the country stereotyping effect or COO effects as “any influence, positive or negative, that the country- of manufacture might have on the consumer’s choice processes or subsequent behaviour”. COO image has also been defined as “the overall perception consumers form of products from a particular country, based on their prior perceptions of the country’s production and marketing strengths and weaknesses” (Roth and Romeo, 1992 as cited by Zhang, 1996). Zhang, 1996 also suggested that the COO effect may vary with different products with product presentation effecting its perception.

COO effect may be created from consumer experience when they are visiting the country, knowledge regarding the country, political beliefs, or more general ethnocentric tendencies [5]. Country of origin effect refers to the extent to which the place of manufacture influences product evaluations, so favourable country perceptions lead to favourable inferences about product attributes and subsequent favourable evaluations [6]. But the weight given to COO is not universal [7] and collectivist-individualist characteristics in culture heavily influence COO perceptions (Hofstede, 1990 as cited by, 16).

In some instances, people may simply base their evaluations of a product on the reputation of its country of origin independently of other considerations however it will be impacted by how other information about the product is processed [4].

In this context, our first series of hypothesis are regarding COO, which are:

H1(a): Country of origin positively influences Pakistani consumer’s judgement about US products

H1(b): Country of origin positively influences Pakistani consumer’s willingness to buy a product from USA.

Consumer Ethnocentrism (CE): As cited by Nijssen and Douglas in 2004, LeVine and Campbell (1972) defined consumer ethnocentrism as when “the symbols and values of one’s own ethnic or national group become objects of pride and attachment, whereas symbols of other groups may become objects of contempt”. As cited by Bahae and Pisani [8], Shimp and Sharma [9] defined consumer ethnocentrism as “the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products”. As cited by Klein et al.[7], Brislin (1993) defined CE as “people viewing their own in-group as central, as possessing proper standards of behaviour and as offering protection against apparent threats from out-groups”.

Consumer ethnocentrism implies that purchasing imports is wrong, not only because it is unpatriotic, but also because it is detrimental to the economy and results in the loss of jobs in industries threatened by imports [8]. As cited by Ang et al. [10], Levine and Campbell (1972) stated that symbols and values pertaining to one’s national group hold a place in one’s pride and attachment, while symbols of other groups may become objects of contempt.

Feelings of ethnocentrism can only play a role when a domestic brand is available [11] and to less ethnocentric consumers, foreign products tend to be evaluated based on merit without consideration for where they were made [10].

As cited by Ang et al. [10], Sharma et al. (1995) [12] stated that inferences regarding a foreign country are extended to evaluations of the products it produced, especially when consumers believe that their personal or national well-being is threatened by such products. Purchasing imported products is wrong because, in customer’s minds, it hurts the domestic economy, causes loss of jobs and is plainly unpatriotic; and is objects of contempt to highly ethnocentric consumers [9].

A study by Verlegh [13] shows that the biasness towards home country is driven by (at least) two distinct motives. The first motive is consumer ethnocentrism. This motive is of economic nature and reflects consumers’ desire to protect the domestic economy. The second motive national identification is of socio-psychological nature. It reflects the desire for a positive national identity, created by a need for self-enhancement and this motive is stronger than the former one. But this varies over time and influenced by situational determinants [13].

But this is for sure that preference for domestic products tends to be weaker in economically underdeveloped countries. And in developing economies,

products from developed countries are viewed more favourably than their own country [14].

Ethnocentrism affects not only consumer beliefs, but also the way perceived quality of domestic and foreign products are evaluated, COO affects the evaluation of specific product attributes (attribute-specific) [15]. But Wong *et al.* [16] negated it and proved that in China, consumers' level of ethnocentrism did not have a direct effect on perceived product quality or purchase intentions.

Second Series of Hypothesis Are Regarding Consumer Ethnocentrism, Which Are as Follows:

H2(a): Consumer ethnocentrism in Pakistan is negatively influencing consumer's judgement about US products

H2(b): Consumer ethnocentrism in Pakistani consumers is negatively influencing willingness to buy products from US

Animosity: Consumer animosity -defined as anger related to previous or an ongoing political, military, economic or diplomatic event that has found to effect consumer purchase behaviour or "remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political, or economic events" [7, 17]. Past or current animosity between countries can significantly reduce the sales of one nation's products in the other aggrieved nation and include ongoing political disputes and festering wounds left over from war [18]. If people feel animosity toward a country as a result of its political or social policies, they may react negatively to the products it produces [4]. Consumer animosity is completely divorced from consideration of product quality and reaction is developed just due to anger over the foreign country's past or current actions [14].

This phenomenon is very important for marketing managers and they must measure level of animosity to their company's home country before entering foreign market as people who feel animosity toward a country may tend to avoid purchasing its products independently of their perception of the products' quality [4]. Whether animosity feeling is consistent or varies is debatable. According to Hong and Kang (2006) [4], feelings of animosity toward a country may only be experienced when situational factors call attention to factors that give rise to these feelings.

But most scholars agree that animosity is a multi-dimensional construct that involves different levels of intensity and is country-specific and even low level of animosity can affect consumer response [19].

H3 (a): Animosity towards US is negatively influencing Pakistani consumer's judgement about the product/s from US

H3(b): Animosity towards US is reducing willingness to buy the product/s from US

Susceptibility to Normative Influence: Susceptibility to normative influence is defined as a measure of the degree to which a person is influenced by real or imagined others, specifically with regard to his or her consumption choices [20]. As cited by Rozario and Choudhury in 2000, Susceptibility to interpersonal influence has long been recognised as a trait that varies across individuals and is believed to be an aspect of McGuire's (1968) general construct of influenceability [21]. Normative Influence is one of the type explained by them and it is defined as "influence from another agent with whom he identifies or who mediate reality for him" and in this situation, an individual adopts a certain behaviour because doing so allows him to act as if he actually were the agent that he identifies with or as if he were in a reciprocal role relationship with him [22].

Interpersonal influences play a major role in shaping consumer choice decisions and while all consumers are susceptible to interpersonal influence, people differ in the extent of their susceptibility to interpersonal influence, with some individuals being chronically more susceptible to social influence than others [23]. As cited by Mourali *et al.* [23] the way individuals relate to the group is not only affected by individual-level differences, it is also systematically influenced by cultural and societal values and norms (Hofstede, 2001, Markus and Kitayama, 1991, Triandis, 1989)"

So, our fourth series of hypothesis are regarding susceptibility to normative influence, which are:

H4(a): Susceptibility to normative influence is positively affecting US product judgement in Pakistan

H4(b): Susceptibility to normative influence is increasing willingness to buy products from US

National Identity: National identity is defined as the extent to which a given culture recognises and identifies with a set of focal elements that set it apart from other cultures by exhibiting greater complexity and variation in the institutions of those aspects than others [24]. The focal elements logically fall into the domain of ethnic

core, which can be used to discern and contrast the key phenomenon from the college of global community to marketing/consumer behaviour perspective [25]. There are a relatively limited number of unique elements, which sets the culture apart and enables it to exist, associated with any given culture which make up its national identity [26].

Keillor [24] revealed that elements that characterize national identity serve to tie sub-cultures together with national boundaries and conceptualized national identity as a multidimensional construct reflected in four latent constructs i.e.

- National Heritage (Historical figures and events in history)
- Cultural Homogeneity (Sense of cultural uniqueness)
- Belief System (degree to which individual beliefs in a religious sense plays role in facilitating individual cultural participation)
- Consumer ethnocentrism (make evaluations using one's own cultural perspective)[24].

So, based on above discussion, our fifth series of hypothesis are regarding national identity, which are:

H5(a): National identity in Pakistan is negatively influencing US product judgement

H5(b): National identity in Pakistan is decreasing willingness to buy product from US

Hypothesis: Finally on basis of results from previous studies as well as general perception in Pakistan, the hypothesis which is linking product judgement and willingness to buy is:

H6: Product Judgement is positively influencing Pakistani consumer's willingness to buy US products.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

An empirical investigation is made using primary data. A completely standardized and structured survey was conducted. A sample of 240 respondents is selected though non probability sampling e.g convenience sampling. Questionnaire consists of 42 questions covering dependent & independent variables. Certain profile questions are also the part of the questionnaire. All the questions are rated on ordinal or attitudinal scale where 1 represents "strongly disagree" & 5 "strongly agree".

Results were analyzed using standard methods of regression and correlation between or among the variables. Correlation analysis shows the degree of relationship among variables while regression analysis helps to determine causation due to variables. Descriptive statistics are also employed for means and frequencies computations. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and MS Excel also gave a helping hand in this regards.

RESULTS

Frequencies: Table shows the frequencies of variables on 5 likert scale. 123 customers are neutral in their willingness to buy US products, meanwhile 121 customers agree that product judgment accounts to purchase US products.

Product Scale	Willingness to Judgement (PJ)	Willingness to Buy (WIL)	Country of Origin (COO)	Consumer Ethnocentrism (CE)	Consumer Animosity (ANI)	Susceptibility to Normative Influence (SNI)	National Identification (NID)
1	0	2	0	0	7	0	0
2	21	68	22	24	30	25	18
3	67	123	76	75	68	52	50
4	121	44	83	83	92	86	117
5	31	3	59	58	43	77	55
Total	240	240	240	240	240	240	240

	PJ	WIL	COO	CE	ANI	SNI	NID
PJ	1						
WIL	-0.43826	1					
COO	0.526929	-0.42603	1				
CE	-0.25729	0.578928	-0.29585	1			
ANI	-0.35106	0.54473	-0.35629	0.571056	1		
SNI	0.415848	-0.22108	0.327016	-0.0489	-0.12615	1	
NID	-0.23972	0.318553	-0.32281	0.291088	0.251335	-0.05597	1

Reliability Levels (Coefficient Alpha): Cronbach's alpha value is calculated to test the reliability of all variables. Coefficient Alpha for COO, CE, PJ, WIL, ANI, SNI and NDI is 75%, 78%, 48%, 57%, 80%, 82% and 74% respectively. Cronbach's alpha is highest for SNI and ANI among all the variables.

Correlation Analysis: The correlation analysis among all variables (dependant and independent) is as follows:

Table shows that product judgment has positive and moderately strong relationship with country of origin (COO) & susceptibility to normative influence (SNI) having correlation coefficient +0.52 & +0.41 respectively. While willingness to buy has moderately strong positive relationship with country of origin (COO) and animosity (ANI) meanwhile weak relation with national identity (NI). Country of origin and susceptibility to normative influence are in weak positive relation with each other as their correlation coefficient is +0.32. Consumer ethnocentrism and animosity are positively related with each other because their correlation coefficient is + 0.57. So, their relationship is strong. Consumer ethnocentrism and national identification are positively related with each other as their correlation coefficient is + 0.29. But, their relationship is weak. Animosity and National Identification are positively related with each other because their correlation coefficient is + 0.25. It means that with increase in ANI, NID will also increase but their relation is very weak. Susceptibility to normative influence and national identification are negatively related with each other as their correlation coefficient is - 0.05. So, almost no relation exists between them.

Regression Analysis: As already mentioned, in this study total seven variables are used. Two of them are dependent variables i.e. product Judgement (PJ) and willingness to buy (WIL) while, five independent variables were studied i.e. Country of Origin effect (COO), Consumer Ethnocentrism (CE), Animosity (ANI), Susceptibility to Normative Influence (SNI) and National Identification (NI).

The following table shows the regression of first dependant variable i.e. product judgement.

Regression Model (1) PJ-COO: Model (1) of Table 1 shows the relationship between product judgement (PJ) and country of Origin effect (COO). COO has positive impact on PJ and the coefficient of COO is significant at 1% level. It means that if COO increases by one unit, then on average PJ increases by 0.41 units keeping other

things constant. This model shows that the relation between COO effect and PJ is quite significant as and COO effect influences product judgement for Pakistani consumers.

Regression Model (2) PJ-CE: Model (2) of Table 1 shows the relationship between product judgement (PJ) and consumer ethnocentrism (CE). CE has negative impact on PJ and the coefficient of CE is significant at 1% level. It means that if CE increases by one unit, then on average PJ decreases by 0.19 units keeping other things constant.

Regression Model (3) PJ-ANI: Model (3) of Table 1 shows the relationship between product judgement (PJ) and animosity (ANI). ANI has negative impact on PJ and the coefficient of ANI is significant at 1% level. It means that if ANI increases by one unit, then on average PJ decreases by 0.24 units keeping other things constant.

Regression Model (4) PJ-SNI: Model (4) of Table 1 shows the relationship between product judgement (PJ) and susceptibility to normative influence (SNI). SNI has positive impact on PJ and the coefficient of SNI is significant at 1% level. It means that if SNI increases by one unit, then on average PJ also increases by 0.30 units keeping other things constant.

Regression Model (5) PJ-NID: Model (5) of Table 1 shows the relationship between Product Judgement (PJ) and National Identification (NID). NID has negative impact on PJ and the coefficient of NID is significant at 1% level. It means that if NID increases by one unit, then on average PJ decreases by 0.19 units keeping other things constant.

When Willingness to Buy (WIL) is the Dependant Variable:

The following table shows the regression of second dependant variable i.e. willingness to Buy.

Regression Model (6) WIL-COO: Model (6) of Table 2 shows the relationship between willingness to buy (WIL) and country of origin effect (COO). COO has negative impact on WIL and the coefficient of COO is significant at 1% level. It means that if COO increases by one unit, then on average WIL decreases by 0.31 units keeping other things constant.

Regression Model (7) WIL-CE: Model (7) of Table 2 shows the relationship between willingness to buy (WIL) and consumer ethnocentrism (CE). CE has positive impact on WIL and the coefficient of CE is significant at 1% level.

Table 1:

Product Judgement (PJ)	Regression Model (1)	Regression Model (2)	Regression Model (3)	Regression Model (4)	Regression Model (5)
Country of Origin (COO)	0.4142 (0.0000)	-	-	-	-
Consumer Ethnocentrism (CE)	- (0.0000)	-0.1902	-	-	-
Animosity (ANI)	- (0.0000)	-	-0.2466	-	-
Susceptibility to Normative Influence (SNI)	-	-	-	0.3064 (0.0000)	-
National Identification (NID)	-	-	-	-	-0.1901 (0.0001)
Constant	1.9147 (0.0000)	3.9187 (0.0000)	4.0744 (0.0000)	2.1893 (0.0000)	3.9757 (0.0000)
R square	0.2776	0.0661	0.1232	0.1729	0.0574
F-Statistic (P-Value)	91.4821 (0.0000)	16.872 (0.0000)	33.4547 (0.0000)	49.7628 (0.0000)	14.5101 (0.0001)

Table 2:

Willingness to Buy (WIL)	Regression Model (6)	Regression Model (7)	Regression Model (8)	Regression Model (9)	Regression Model (10)
Country of Origin (COO)	-0.3112 (0.0000)	-	-	-	-
Consumer Ethnocentrism (CE)	-	0.3979 (0.0000)	-	-	-
Animosity (ANI)	-	-	0.3556 (0.0000)	-	-
Susceptibility to Normative Influence (SNI)	-	-	-	-0.1514 (0.0005)	-
National Identification (NID)	-	-	-	-	0.2348 (0.0000)
Constant	3.5371 (0.0000)	1.1891 (0.0000)	1.3725 (0.0000)	3.0474 (0.0000)	1.6568 (0.0000)
R square	0.1815	0.3351	0.2967	0.0488	0.1014
F-Statistic (P-Value)	52.7769 (0.0000)	119.9793 (0.0000)	100.4194 (0.0000)	12.2307 (0.0005)	26.8789 (0.0000)

It means that if CE increases by one unit, then on average WIL also increases by 0.39 units keeping other things constant.

Regression Model (8) WIL-ANI: Model (8) of Table 2 shows the relationship between willingness to buy (WIL) and animosity (ANI). ANI has positive impact on WIL and the coefficient of ANI is significant at 1% level. It means that if ANI increases by one unit, then on average WIL also increases by 0.35 units keeping other things constant.

Regression Model (9) WIL-SNI: Model (9) of Table 2 shows the relationship between willingness to buy (WIL) and susceptibility to normative influence (SNI). SNI has negative impact on WIL and the coefficient of SNI is significant at 1% level. It means that if SNI increases by one unit, then on average WIL decreases by 0.15 units keeping other things constant.

Regression Model (10) WIL-NID: Model (10) of Table 2 shows the relationship between willingness to buy (WIL) and national identification (NID). NID has positive impact on WIL and the coefficient of NID is significant at 1% level. It means that if NID increases by one unit, then on average WIL also increases by 0.23 units keeping other things constant.

CONCLUSION

Majority of Pakistani consumers judge US products positively in terms of quality and reliability but only 19% of population is willing to buy US products. The rest of population was either not willing or neutral in their intention to buy US products. Furthermore, more than half of the populations (60%) feel that country of origin is an important consideration while making purchase decision and almost same ratio of population is highly ethnocentric

towards Pakistan and realize that Pakistani products should be preferred and purchased despite of foreign products.

Additionally, more than half of the population feels animosity towards the US being a country as a whole but at the same time ratio of susceptibility to normative influence (being influenced by friends, family and social group) is also very strong (68%) and due to high product judgement towards US products, this might lead to conflicting purchase behaviour with animosity feelings pushing to avoid US products but susceptibility to normative influence encouraging to buy US products.

National Identification is also found to be very strong (72%). Thus joined with strong consumer ethnocentrism, purchasing behaviour towards US products by Pakistani consumers becomes more complex phenomenon.

Evaluation from the correlation and regression show the following results about the hypothesis.

- H1(a) is accepted and conclude that COO does have an impact on US product judgment.
- H1(b) is rejected and conclude that country of origin is not sufficient enough to determine willingness to buy US products.
- H2(a): Consumer ethnocentrism in Pakistan is negatively influencing consumer's judgment about US products. This is confirmed from our findings so H2(a) is accepted but the strength of influence is very weak
- H2(b) is rejected and conclude that consumer ethnocentrism is positively influencing willingness to buy. It is clearly observed that despite of being high on ethnocentrism, still Pakistani people are willing to buy US products.
- H3(a): Animosity towards US is negatively influencing Pakistani consumer's judgement about the product/s from US. This is confirmed from finding so, we accept H3(a).
- H3(b): Animosity towards US is reducing willingness to buy the product/s from US. This is not confirmed by the findings so H3(b) is rejected
- H4(a): Susceptibility to normative influence is positively affecting US product judgment. This is confirmed from the findings so, H4(a) is accepted.
- H4(b): Susceptibility to normative influence is increasing willingness to buy products from US. This is not confirmed from the findings so H4(b) is rejected.

- H5(a): National identity in Pakistan is negatively influencing US product judgment. This is confirmed from the findings so, H5(a) is accepted.
- H5(b): National identity in Pakistan is decreasing willingness to buy product from US. This is not confirmed from the analysis so H5(b) is rejected.
- H6: Product Judgment is positively influencing Pakistani consumer's willingness to buy US products. This is also not confirmed from the analysis so H6 is rejected and conclude that US product judgment is not sufficient enough to necessarily influence willingness to buy US products.

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