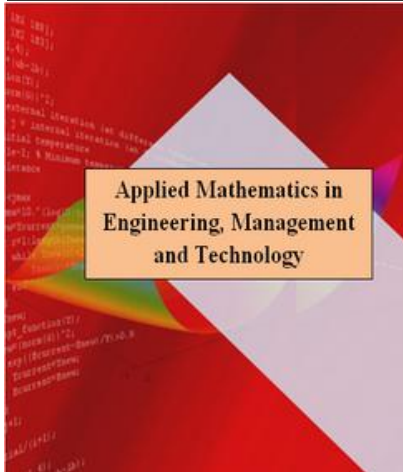


Effect of consumer ethnocentrism and product knowledge on Country-Of-Origin and purchase intention

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Abstract

Present descriptive survey type study is an attempt to define the very impact of consumer's ethnocentrism and product knowledge on product's country of origin and purchase intention. The statistical population consists of consumers of home entertainment appliances of Tehran City out of which 262 persons were chosen through simple random sampling as research sample. A 28-item questionnaire was distributed among them which measured four variables i.e. imported product purchase intention (PI), ethnocentrism (E), imported product knowledge (FPK), and country of origin (COO) (shim & sharma 1987; chang & ching ching 2004; lascu & babb 1995; Okechuku & wang 1988). Its validity and reliability was approved by elite professors and applying Alpha Chronbach. LISREL software was utilized for hypothesis testing. Furthermore, correlation and simple linear regression were applied for data analysis and hypothesis and model testing. It was revealed that ethnocentrism leaves negative effect upon purchase intention but product knowledge

has positive effect on country of origin and purchase intention.

Keyword:consumer ethnocentrism, country of origin, product knowledge, purchase intention.

1.Introduction

Globalization is one of the issues widely discussed by the researchers in international business and international marketing area nowadays. According to Griffin and Pustay (2007), globalization can be defined as the inexorable integrations of markets, nation-states and technologies in a way that enables individuals, corporations, and nationstates to reach around the world further, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before (Mohammad Shah,Khairul, 2012).

consumer purchasing patterns are expected to shift dramatically as more products become available due to globalisation. Imported products, previously unavailable to the average consumer are now becoming more popular. It is thus important to understand the ethnocentric tendencies of Mauritian consumers as these attitudes may influence consumers' purchase decisions of imported products (Ramsaran-Fowdar, 2010).

With the advent of globalization consumers are increasingly confronted with foreign products and services. But some negative attitudes towards foreign products can arise from several factors such as previous or ongoing political, military, economic, or diplomatic events (Pai,Sundar, 2014). Wars between and within countries, historical events from the past, regime shifts and clash of arms

not only influenced the political and diplomatic relations of nations, but also have an impact on international trade between countries (YÜCE, 2014).

But,Access to information, higher levels of education and technological progress have also made it possible for consumers to become more aware of the products and services available throughout the world. As a result, the significance of products' country of origin (COO) in influencing consumer behaviour is increasing rapidly; this calls for the formulation of better marketing plans, strategies and policies by companies of both domestic and international origin . Important factors that affect consumers' purchasing intention on the basis of COO include "consumer ethnocentrism", a term coined by Shimp and Sharma (1987), and "knowledge of foreign products". Although, assessments concerning the intention to purchase, using COO, become easier with easier access to information, the impact of ethnocentrism remains. Therefore, this paper investigates the important inter-relationships between COO, purchase intention, ethnocentrism and product knowledge to identify a pattern in the Iran context (Bamber et al., 2012).

2. Literature Review

consumer ethnocentrism

The term "consumer ethnocentrism" is adapted from the general concept of ethnocentrism introduced in 1906 by Sumner (Shimp and Sharma, 1987).

Sumner (1906) first introduced ethnocentrism as a sociological concept that refers to a tendency to regard the beliefs, standards, and code of behaviour of one's own as superior to those found in other societies. It can encourage cohesion and solidarity among group members and may also contribute to attitudes of superiority, intolerance, and even contempt for those with different customs and ways of life (Ramsaran-Fowdar, 2010).

Ethnocentrism has a negative influence on the evaluation and purchasing intentions of consumers, although that may vary within cultures and between different country-of-origin products (Akdogan and Ozgener, 2012).

Shimp and Sharma (1987) apply ethnocentrism to the study of marketing and consumer behavior. They defined consumer ethnocentrism as a belief held by consumers on the appropriateness and indeed morality of purchasing foreign-made products. Consumer ethnocentrism implies the normative belief that purchasing domestic products is more beneficial than purchasing foreign goods (Akdogan and Ozgener, 2012).

As demonstrated by Shimp and Sharma (1987), who first posited the construct of the consumer ethnocentrism, or "CET", in some instances consumers avoid buying foreign products because it is considered morally wrong, not only because it is unpatriotic, but also because it hurts the national economy and determines the loss of jobs due to increased imports (Kaynak and Kara, 2000). Such consumers tend to distinguish between products of the in-group (home country) and out-groups (foreign countries) and, consequently, to consider foreign products' purchases to be incorrect due to perceptions of losses to the national economy. Ethnocentric consumers show a physiological aversion to most foreign products (Kaynak and Kara, 2000).

Country of origin

The entire literature concerning the COO effect suggests that consumers' perceptions about imported products and their attributes are affected by the country of origin and related to CE. The country of origin, as an information cue, activates various ethnocentric or not beliefs and the antecedent knowledge of consumers, which subsequently affect the interpretation and evaluation of product attributes. The phenomenon of evaluating products based on judging the country of origin is called COO effect (Chrysochoidis et al., 2007).

The Country-of-Origin of products is operationalized in this study and communicated through the phrase, "Made in" as an external cue of product quality to consumers, while other studies have used the terms "Country of assembly" and "Country of manufacture". According to the literature, Country-of-Origin directly influences consumers' perception of product quality, attitudes, behaviors, and purchase intention (Kalicharan, 2014).

Han (1989) attempted to explain COI effects through the halo and summary construct models. This is similar to the role played by prices in helping consumers infer the quality of a product when other relevant information is lacking. Consumers' product evaluations depend on consumers' familiarity with the product. Familiarity with the product is high for established brands, resulting from experience with or marketing communications about the product. High familiarity reduces the impact that country-of-origin information may have on product evaluation. When consumers are not familiar with the products of a country, the country image acts as a "halo" that directly affects consumers' beliefs about these products and indirectly affects the overall evaluation of them through these beliefs (Apil, 2006).

According to Darley and Lim (1994) and Katsanis and Thakor (1997), country-of-origin is often seen as a product attribute by consumers, thereby influencing their perception of quality. This finding is supported by Cordell (1991), who concluded that many consumers use country-of-origin as an attribute when deciding between alternative and competitive products. Country-of-origin is a salient attribute that has a significant effect on consumers' perception when they are informed that the product was manufactured in a country known for high-quality products (Kalicharan, 2014).

product knowledge

As Alba and Hutchinson (1987) point out, consumer knowledge should be regarded as a multidimensional construct where different types of product-related experience lead to different dimensions of knowledge. These dimensions of knowledge have different effects on product evaluations and choice behaviour, depending on the specific situation and task at hand. Several important distinctions must be made between dimensions of consumer knowledge. The first distinction is between product related experience and product knowledge. Product knowledge is the cognitive representation of product-related experience in a consumer's memory, which is likely to contain knowledge in the form of coded representations of brands, product attributes, usage situations, general product class information, and evaluation and choice rules (Bamber et al., 2012).

In the same vein, we can expect a negative relationship to emerge between product knowledge and fluctuations in favorable and unfavorable attitudes toward a product. Thus, low-knowledge consumers who have little ability to process intrinsic product information will more heavily depend on their perception of stereotypical information regarding the country of origin when conducting their product evaluation. As a result, low-knowledge consumers may evaluate a product made in a country with a high image more favorably than high-knowledge consumers. In addition, they may evaluate a product made in a country with a low image more unfavorably than high-knowledge consumers (Moon, 2004).

purchase intention

The existence of buying bias on domestic products was already proved in former studies. But few studies clarify the affecting mechanism between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention. Since consumer ethnocentrism is a variable relating with culture, it is appropriate to take into Ajzen and Fishbein's model when exploring the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intentions on domestic products. The consumers with higher consumer ethnocentrism have better attitude toward domestic products. When consumers have positive product attitude, it means that they judge the products better and have stronger purchase

intention. On the other hand, the subjective norm is a personal internal trait which reflect one's nature, while consumer ethnocentrism only represent one's attitude toward purchasing foreign products. Hence consumer ethnocentrism has no direct impact on subjective norm (Jianlin et al., 2010).

Herche (1992) found that consumer ethnocentrism can predict consumers' preferences to buy domestically produced goods instead of foreign and that the ethnocentric tendencies are better predictors of purchase behavior than demographic or marketing mix variables. The construct of consumers' ethnocentrism relies on the presumption that the consumers' patriotic emotions

will have significant effects on attitudes and purchase intentions. Therefore, Shoham and Brenečić (2003) reported that consumer ethnocentrism had a significant impact on consumers' intentions to purchase domestically produced goods. Many other studies have examined the impact of consumer ethnocentric tendencies on purchase intentions (Renko et al., 2012).

In the case of foreign products, several studies have investigated the relation of consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention of foreign products (Balabanis and Deamantopoulos, 2008; Herch, 1992; Lantz and Loeb, 1996; Netemeyer et al., 1991; Sharma et al., 1995). Klein, Ettenson and Morris (1998) investigated Chinese consumers and their propensity to purchase Japanese durable goods. Their results support that consumer ethnocentrism is influential on the purchase of foreign products. Several studies have found support for negative impact of consumer ethnocentrism on their evaluation of foreign products. On the other side, several studies have provided evidence which support a positive impact of consumer ethnocentrism on their purchase intention of domestic products (Fakharmanesh and Ghanbarzade Miyandehi, 2013).

Connected with objective 1 are six hypotheses as shown in Figure 2:

- H1 - Respondents who are more ethnocentric will be COO sensitive
- H2 - Respondents who are ethnocentric will display low purchasing intention for foreign products
- H3 - Respondents who have high FPK will be COO sensitive
- H4 - Respondents who have high FPK will display high purchasing intention for foreign products
- H5 - There is no correlation between FPK and Ethnocentrism
- H6 - Respondents who are COO sensitive will display high purchasing intention for foreign products

The six hypotheses were investigated using Pearson's correlation.

3. Research Conceptual Model

The present study was inspired by David Bamber et al. (2012) study carried out in India. Thereby, the impact of two exogenous variables (consumers' ethnocentrism and product knowledge) upon mediator variable (the product's country of origin) and the dependent variable (purchase intention), as well the effect of mediator variable i.e. product's country of origin on dependent variable i.e. purchase intention were probed. The statistical population included home entertainment appliances' consumers in Tehran City. To this end, 262 persons were chosen as sample through simple random sampling and necessary data was gathered through a 28-item questionnaire. Conceptual model was analyzed by structural equation modeling. Due to the abundance of items measuring customers' ethnocentrism and product's country of origin, partial least squares model was utilized and required analysis was accordingly done. Analyzing findings of model, three types of indexes were considered.

1- Model's Goodness of Fit

Measures of goodness of fit of structural equation modeling based on analysis of variance assessed the ability and strength of predicting relationship between items and variables and inter-variable relationships. Outer model fitting index equal to 0.988 and critical ratio equal to 54.158 supported the significance of relationship between items and variables. Inner model fitting index equal to 0.851 and critical ratio 27.825 supported the significance of relationship between independent and dependent variables of the model. The results of model's goodness of fit measures are represented in table 1.

Table 1: Fitting Indexes of Research Conceptual Model and the Results of Statistical Analysis

index	GoF	Standard error	Critical ratio (CR)	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower bound	Upper bound
Absolute	0.417	0.025	16.797	0.371	0.477
Relative	0.850	0.036	23.872	0.731	0.860
Outer model	0.998	0.018	54.158	0.951	1.000
Inner model	0.851	0.031	27.825	0.744	0.861

2) Validity and Reliability Assessment of Measurement Model:

Measurement model assessed the reliability and validity of measurement instruments through different indexes. All applied indexes supported the reliability and validity of instruments used for measuring variables. Following, considerable details regarding these measurement instruments are explained;

1. Validity of Measurement Instrument: standardized loadings of each item related to the presumed variable were over 0.70 and critical ratios estimated for them were over 1.96 which is indicative of the significance of standardized loadings of all items. Cross loadings of each variable's items showed the highest relationship in comparison with other variables' items; thus, cross loadings is sufficiently supported. Average variance extracted (AVE) of all four variables i.e. customers' ethnocentrism, customers' product knowledge, product's country of origin, and purchase intention is over 0.50 which supports convergent validity and the square of correlation between variables was lower than AVE which is supportive of discriminant validity. Consequently, the validity of variable measurement instruments was confirmed. The validity results of measurement instrument are represented in table 2 and 3.

Table 2: the Results of Convergent and Discriminant Validity of Instruments Measuring Variables of Research Conceptual Model

Model Variables		ETHN	KNOW	COO	PI	Mean Communalities (AVE)
Ethnocentrism	ETHN	1	0.024	0.050	0.116	0.604
Product Knowledge	KNOW	0.024	1	0.075	0.167	0.732

Country of Origin	COO	0.050	0.075	1	0.172	0.634
Purchase Intention	PI	0.116	0.167	0.172	1	0.706
Average Variance Extracted	AVE	0.604	0.732	0.634	0.706	0

Table 3: the Results of Factorial and Cross-loadings Validity of Measurement Instruments of Conceptual Model Variables

variables		Cross-loadings (Monofactorial manifest variables)				Correlations (Dimension)		
Latent	Manifest	ETHN	KNOW	COO	PI	Standardized loadings	Standard error	Critical ratio (CR)
ETHN	et1	0.749	-0.244	0.081	-0.348	0.749	0.025	29.757
	et2	0.754	-0.223	0.160	-0.252	0.754	0.029	25.742
	et3	0.753	-0.191	0.166	-0.262	0.753	0.025	29.967
	et4	0.770	-0.135	0.130	-0.257	0.770	0.022	35.363
	et5	0.742	-0.124	0.165	-0.234	0.742	0.026	28.597
	et6	0.746	-0.112	0.201	-0.206	0.746	0.026	28.900
	et7	0.762	-0.153	0.190	-0.252	0.762	0.019	40.507
	et8	0.772	-0.106	0.140	-0.307	0.772	0.020	37.994
	et9	0.770	-0.038	0.283	-0.216	0.770	0.020	38.823
	et10	0.773	-0.026	0.186	-0.230	0.773	0.026	29.717
	et11	0.813	-0.072	0.190	-0.257	0.813	0.018	46.108
	et12	0.778	-0.064	0.170	-0.279	0.778	0.030	26.063
	et13	0.904	-0.091	0.168	-0.330	0.904	0.009	103.297
KNOW	kn1	-0.123	0.807	0.227	0.362	0.807	0.021	38.252
	kn2	-0.171	0.842	0.196	0.338	0.842	0.029	28.573
	kn3	-0.141	0.907	0.237	0.374	0.907	0.014	66.909
	kn4	-0.095	0.863	0.270	0.323	0.863	0.017	49.354
COO	co1	0.147	0.209	0.802	0.287	0.802	0.021	38.405
	co2	0.195	0.215	0.857	0.367	0.857	0.016	52.533
	co3	0.167	0.275	0.790	0.404	0.790	0.022	36.277
	co4	0.165	0.187	0.746	0.296	0.746	0.030	24.771
	co5	0.228	0.157	0.761	0.257	0.761	0.030	25.457
	co6	0.220	0.216	0.837	0.298	0.837	0.021	40.337
	co7	0.124	0.243	0.775	0.376	0.775	0.026	29.410
PI	pi1	-0.314	0.349	0.353	0.854	0.854	0.018	47.277
	pi2	-0.326	0.327	0.335	0.902	0.902	0.013	67.672
	pi3	-0.215	0.289	0.383	0.793	0.793	0.028	28.211
	pi4	-0.281	0.402	0.328	0.808	0.808	0.022	36.083

2. Measurement Instrument Reliability: Alpha Chronbach and Dillon-Goldestein indexes of all four variables are over 0.70 which proves the internal consistency and of measurement instruments. Each variable had an eigenvalue over 1 and factor 2 for all of them was below 1 which supports the one-dimensionality of the structure of all four model variables. Thus, the reliability of measurement instrument was approved. The measurement instrument reliability results are depicted in table 4.

Table 4: the Reliability Results of the Model's Measurement Instrument through Three Different Methods

Eigenvalues	D.G. rho (PCA)	Cronbach's alpha	Dimensions	Latent variable
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Factor 2	Factor 1				
0.916	7.848	0.952	0.945	13	ETHN
0.479	2.930	0.916	0.877	4	KNOW
0.690	4.443	0.924	0.904	7	COO
0.503	2.826	0.906	0.860	4	PI

2) Structural Model Assessment: the structural part of the model supports the significant effect of all assumed paths in the conceptual model. The impact factor of customers' ethnocentrism on product's country of origin equal to 0.262 and critical ratio equal to 3.822 supported direct impact and impact factor of customers' ethnocentrism on purchase intention equal to -0.294 and critical ratio equal -5.811 supported indirect impact significantly. Impact factor of customers' product knowledge on product's country of origin equal to 0.321 and critical ratio equal 6.463 is indicative of direct impact and impact factor of customers' product knowledge on purchase intention equal to 0.353 and critical ratio of 9.467, have supported direct impact significantly. Furthermore, impact factor of product's country of origin upon purchase intention equal to 0.358 and critical ratio of 8.394 have supported direct impact significantly and the correlation between customers' ethnocentrism and their product knowledge is direct and significant.

The proposed model is composed of two equations. Therefore, there are two coefficients of determination. Coefficient of determination for customers' knowledge about product's country of origin is 0.146 which shows it is determinable by customers' ethnocentrism (0.058) and their product knowledge (0.088). Coefficient of determination of purchase intention is 0.393 which demonstrates it is determinable by three variables i.e. customer's ethnocentrism, their product knowledge, and their knowledge of the country of origin. Among these, knowledge of product's country of origin (0.149) enjoys higher share than product knowledge (0.1444) and customers' ethnocentrism (0.100) and evidently the share of product knowledge is more than customer's ethnocentrism.

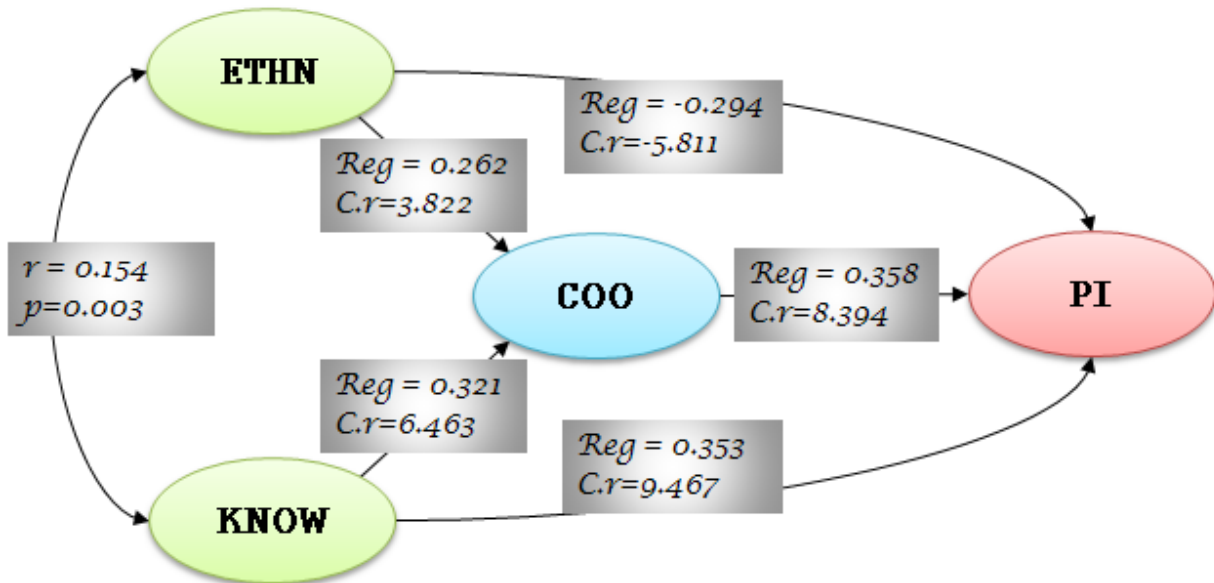
Redundancies (Q2) for mediator variable i.e. knowledge of product's country of origin is 0.093 and it is 0.2777 for dependent variable i.e. purchase intention. It is positive so it approves that the structural model has good quality and it is acceptable and shows the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Importance coefficient of customers' ethnocentrism and their product knowledge in projection of knowledge about product's country of origin is over 0.80 which shows that these two variables are of critical importance in projecting knowledge about the product's country of origin. Besides, the importance coefficient of customers' ethnocentrism, their product knowledge, and their knowledge about product's country of origin in projecting purchase intention is over 0.80 which means these three variables are of capital importance in projecting product's purchase intention. The findings out of the structural part of model are represented in table 5 and chart 1 to 3.

Table 5: Impact Factor, Coefficient of Determination, Redundancies, Importance, and Statistical Analysis Indexes of Research Model

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Coefficient of Estimation	Error of Estimation	Critical Ratio	Redundancies and Importance Indexes		Testing of Determination		
					Redundancies	Importance	Variable Share	Equation Share	Critical statistics
ETHN	COO	0.262	0.069	3.822	0.093	0.894	0.058	0.146	3.423
KNOW		0.321	0.050	6.463		1.096	0.088		
ETHN	PI	-0.294	0.051	-5.811	0.277	0.874	0.100	0.393	9.907

KNOW		0.353	0.037	9.467		1.049	0.144		
COO		0.358	0.043	8.394		1.066	0.149		
Equation 1	COO = 0.262027102132209*ETHN+0.32137617689222*KNOW								
Equation 2	PI = -0.29360642074282*ETHN+0.352534405624455*KNOW+0.358132175325444*COO								

Chart 1: Impact Factor, Statistical Analysis Indexes of Research Conceptual Model Paths



KNOW=Knowledge, ETHN=Ethnocentrism, COO= country of origin PI=Purchasing Intention
 Goodness of fit index: Relative=0,850, Outer model= 0,998, Inner model= 0,851

Results

These findings and estimated indexes point out the fact that higher ethnocentrism of customers augments their knowledge about the product's country of origin and reduces their purchase intention; whereas, higher product knowledge of customers increases their knowledge about the product's country of origin and their purchase intention. Besides, better knowledge of the product's country of origin, boosts customers' purchase intention. Therefore, the results of structural dimension of the model support all hypotheses proposed about the statistical population of home entertainment appliances' consumers. It was also found out that besides direct impact of customers' ethnocentrism and their product knowledge upon purchase intention, indirectly and through gaining knowledge about the product's country of origin, purchase intention is as well influenced. Indirect impact of ethnocentrism upon purchase intention equals 0.094 and indirect impact of product knowledge on purchase intention equals 0.115. Hence, the overall impact of ethnocentrism on purchase intention totals -0.200 and the overall impact of gaining knowledge about the country of origin upon purchase intention is 0.468.

Discussion and Conclusion

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, important changes have occurred worldwide. Not only the Berlin Wall, but also technological improvements such as the Internet affected businesses as befits humans. Globalization bias presents considerable challenges and opportunities for international marketers. The relaxation of trade policies has provided consumers with more foreign product choices than ever before (Wang and Chen, 2004). As a developing country with young population, Iran has also taken her share from this metamorphosis and winds of

globalization. This has been accelerated by the imports of foreign products. There have been great changes in consumer behavior because of this acceleration. Some economical and political crisis has also brought reactions. Therefore, it is very important to study consumers' ethnocentric tendencies and factors which affect their buying preferences and buying behavior. This paper seeks to examine Effects of Consumer Ethnocentrism and product knowledge on Country of origin and purchase intention.

All research hypotheses are supported. Accordingly, those customers who are ethnocentric, are sensitive to country of origin and show less purchase intention for imported products. Furthermore, imported product knowledge affects on purchase intention and sensitivity to country of origin. This outcome agrees with Byeong-Joon Moon (2004) "*the Effects of Consumer Ethnocentrism and Product Knowledge on Consumers' Utilization of Country-of-Origin Information*" and George Chryssochoidis et al. "*Impact of country, country-of-origin (COO) effect beliefs and Ethnocentric food evaluation of attributes on Greek consumers' product and product*". It is as well relatively in line with David Bamber et al "*Product Knowledge, Ethnocentrism and Purchase Intention: COO Study in India*". David Bamber stated in his study that those who are ethnocentric are not sensitive to country of origin; however, present study found that ethnocentric people are sensitive to country of origin and this factor affects directly on imported product purchase intention.

This research scrutinized home entertainment appliances' consumers in Tehran city and it was demonstrated that those consumers who enjoy higher knowledge regarding the imported product, are sensitive to country of origin and show more purchase intention for imported products. It is to be noted that the kind of product chosen for this study may have impacted on research outcome since the quality, technology, and price of home entertainment appliances imported to Iran are far better than Iranian counterparts. On the other hand, Iran does not produce a wide range of such products but imports foreign ones of different brands and different countries. These all overshadow Iranian types and foster purchase intention and positive attitude toward foreign commodities.

It is recommended that future studies choose another product and investigate the effect of culture, demographic variables such as education and income level upon consumers' attitude toward imported products and its ultimate influence on domestic economy and market. It is also suggested that the relationship between ethnocentrism and demographic variables be inspected.

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