

The Effect of Country of Origin Image, Ethnocentrism, and Religiosity on Purchase Intentions : An Empirical Investigation on Bangladeshi Consumers

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Abstract

This research endeavour was undertaken in order to understand the effect of three different aspects namely, Country of Origin, Ethnocentrism, and Religiosity on Bangladeshi consumers' intention of purchasing imported or foreign products. At the initial stage of the study, 260 questionnaires were given out to Bangladeshi consumers in the cities of Dhaka and Chittagong. However, out of the 260 questionnaires, 230 were validated and tested for the purpose of statistical analysis. Descriptive analysis was conducted first in order to assess the demographic characteristics of the respondents, after which, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted, and finally, the hypotheses were tested, and the proposed model was verified through the application of structural equation modelling (SEM). The findings demonstrated that Country of Origin Image, Ethnocentrism, and Religiosity significantly affected Bangladeshi consumers' intention of buying imported products. The findings generated from this study will provide useful information to marketers who are selling imported or foreign products in the Bangladeshi market as well as help them in developing effective marketing strategies. At the same time, this study is also a meaningful contribution to literature, given the scarcity of research studies on this topic pertaining to Bangladesh.

Keywords: country of origin, ethnocentrism, religiosity, purchase intention, foreign products

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From a marketing standpoint, in the era of today's consumer-oriented marketplace, a thorough understanding of what affects consumers' choice has become a necessity for marketers. This is mainly because consumers' acceptance along with their purchase of products are critical factors that do not only help companies to sell products in a particular market(s), but also determine their long-term survival in a highly competitive marketplace (Abunasr, 2007). Therefore, in order to increase their customer base, companies are not only focusing on the domestic markets ; rather, they are going global. Selling products to both local and foreign consumers has become a strategy that is widely undertaken by companies. Thus, global presence through the distribution of products across countries has evolved as a common approach in the age of today's competitive business environment (Lee, Kim, Pelton, Knight, & Forney, 2008 ; Sarwar, Azam, Haque, Sleman & Nikhashemi, 2013).

International expansion has dramatically ameliorated over the past decades due to globalization as well as liberalization of trade. Therefore, over the past years, international trade among countries has increased to a large

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extent. The increase in transfer of products from one country to another has been beneficial for both the companies and consumers. It has allowed companies to expand their presence internationally and broaden their customer base. At the same time, it has also widened consumers' selection by providing them with the option of choosing from a wide variety of products coming from different countries (Ahmed, Anang, Othman, & Sambasivan, 2013). As a matter of fact, nowadays, many companies from developed nations are moving into and are selling their products in the markets of developing countries for the reason that the markets of the developed countries are already saturated. Therefore, currently, foreign products from developed countries are widely available in the markets of the developing countries (Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp, & Ramachander, 2000). As a result, today's consumers in developing countries have a wide range of foreign products to choose from (Essoussi & Merunka, 2007) than ever before as the local markets are permeated with abundant foreign products. This, in turn, is providing consumers with the opportunity of choosing from a broad variety of products (Kaynak & Kara, 2002).

Bangladesh is one of the developing countries that has been actively taking part in international trade through the means of import and export. The consumer market of Bangladesh has drastically changed over the past years. Currently, a wide array of foreign products are available in the Bangladeshi market, particularly consumer durable goods. Over the past years, the country has been actively importing consumer durable goods, mainly automobiles and home appliances such as refrigerators, microwaves, washing machines, and televisions. Therefore, Bangladeshi consumers have the opportunity to choose from a wide variety of non-local products.

Despite the wide availability of foreign products in the Bangladeshi market, a review of prior literature has proven that very little is known about Bangladeshi consumers when it comes to their purchase of foreign products. As a matter of fact, with the wide variety of foreign products in the local markets, Bangladeshi consumers of this modern era are becoming more and more critically judgmental and selective in making their purchases. As a result of this, from a marketing standpoint, it has become ardently important to understand the underlying motives that drive Bangladeshi consumers' intention of buying foreign products. Therefore, in light of the above background, this study focuses on consumers' purchase intentions of foreign products. More specifically, it is an attempt towards exploring the factors that are affecting consumers' purchase intention of foreign products, particularly in the context of Bangladeshi consumers.

Literature Review

(1) Purchase Intention : Many researchers have noted that consumers' purchase intention is reflected in how willing they are in making purchases of certain products (Alex & Thomas, 2014; Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991; Grewal, Monroe, & Krishnan, 1998; Kumar & Anand, 2013; Lin & Chen, 2006; Tabassi, Esmaeilzadeh, & Sambasivan, 2012). From the same perspective, Saurabh and Mahajan (2013) pointed out that besides willingness to buy, purchase intention can also be considered as consumers' likelihood of making purchases in the future as well as their repurchase intentions.

Nasri and Charfeddine (2012) noted that intention is the result of consumers' attitude as well as subjective norms. Alex and Thomas (2014) also stated that purchase intention was a consequence of two aspects - namely consumers' perception along with their emotional feelings. Hence, it is a common behaviour among consumers to base their intention of purchasing products by associating the products with feelings and memories they have about the countries from where the products come from (Gadhavi, Shukla, & Patel, 2014; Tabassi et al., 2012). Theoretically, these perceptions and feelings are considered to be the cognitive and affective components of attitude (Sohail & Sahin, 2010).

(2) Country of Origin : Several researchers have noted that country of origin is the place where the corporate headquarters of a company, a product, or a brand is located (Ha- Brookshire & Yoon, 2012; Kim & Pysarchik, 2000; Thanasuta, Patoomsuwan, Chaimahawong & Chiaravutthi, 2009; Wang & Yang, 2008). This is because consumers have a high propensity of associating foreign products with their original home countries, even though

the product at hand may not have been manufactured in the firm's home country (Ahmed, Johnson, Yang, Fatt, Teng, & Boon, 2004). Therefore, researchers have stated that country of origin of Microsoft is the U.S. (Ahmed et al., 2004); products from Toyota and Honda are Japanese; whereas, Marks & Spencer items are British (Shergill & Tong, 2007). Thus, researchers claim that country of origin did not lose its importance in the era of a globalized marketplace; rather, its effects are still prominent since consumers continue using it in judging a product's image (Dikcius & Stankeviciene, 2010; Ha- Brookshire & Yoon, 2012) and their perceptions as well as evaluation of products vary in accordance with the products' country of origin, and more importantly, the image associated with the country (Laroche, Papadopoulos, Heslop, & Murali, 2005).

Roth and Romeo (1992) investigated congruency amid product category, and image of the country was a crucial factor that affected consumers' purchase intentions of foreign products. They demonstrated that consumers revealed higher willingness to purchase German cars in comparison to Hungarian cars, as Germany has a higher image in producing cars. Similarly, in investigating Georgian consumers' preference of products made in the European Union member countries, it was examined by Apil and Kaynak (2010) that product country fit has an impact on consumers' choice of foreign products. Likewise, in the context of Australian consumers, Dagger and Raciti (2011) revealed that when there is a favourable match between a country and a particular product category, consumers are more inclined toward purchasing that country's products. The findings of Josiassen and Assaf (2010) and Wang and Yang (2008) illustrated that country of origin image transfers a favourable effect on consumers' intention of buying imported products.

➤ **H1:** Country of origin image has a positive effect on intention to purchase imported products.

(3) Ethnocentrism : Ethnocentrism is solely a social factor that revolves around the notion that individuals tend to perceive their own group (known as in-group) as superior (Sumner, 1906). Ueltschy (1998) further added that ethnocentric individuals tend to perceive the world based on their own values and judge others in accordance to their own perceptions; they have the tendency of rejecting the ideas that are dissimilar to their ideas; whereas, blindly embracing the ones that are in harmony with theirs (Anand, 2013; Ha- Brookshire & Yoon, 2012; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Stereotyped beliefs are usually formed due to the prevalence of ethnocentric behaviour among individuals, and they are favourably associated with their own group and unfavourably towards the other group (Balabanis, Diamantopoulos, Mueller, & Melewar, 2001; Siemieniako, Kubacki, Glinska, & Krot, 2011; Zolfagharian, Saldivar, & Sun, 2014).

Past studies provide evidence of various kinds of socio-psychological antecedents that lead to the formation of ethnocentric behaviour namely, nationalism, patriotism, and internationalism (Atlintas & Tokol, 2007; Balabanis et al., 2001; Ma, Wang, & Hao, 2012; Sharma, Shimp, & Shin, 1995; Saurabh & Mahajan, 2013; Vida, Dmitrovic, & Obadia, 2008; Zolfagharian et al., 2014).

The study conducted by Nguyen, Nguyen, and Barrett (2008) in the context of Vietnam further disclosed that when consumers were ethnocentric in nature, they possessed the tendency of negatively judging foreign products, which increased their likelihood of buying local products. As a matter of fact, consumer ethnocentrism is one of the leading factors that positively influences consumers' preference of domestic products in comparison to foreign products (Saffu, Walker, & Mazurek, 2011; Shankarmahesh, 2006). A line of past studies found that ethnocentrism indeed carries an unfavourable effect on consumers' intention or their willingness of purchasing foreign products (Bandyopadhyay, Wongtada, & Rice, 2011; Kaeni & Heidarzadeh, 2014; Tabassi et al., 2012; Zolfagharian et al., 2014).

➤ **H2:** Ethnocentrism has a negative effect on intention to purchase imported products.

(4) Religiosity : Decisions made by humans in their daily lives are guided by their religion (Hanazee, Attar, & Alikhan, 2011). It was explained by Mukhtar and Butt (2012) that religion's impact varies from individual to individual in accordance to their religiosity. Mukhtar and Butt (2012) mentioned that individual's religiosity can be

seen in the extent to which they are religious. Researchers have noted that religiosity encompasses two aspects namely, religious commitment and religious affiliation (Ma et al., 2012; Mokhlis, 2009; Salman & Siddiqui, 2011).

Past studies have indicated that consumers' consumption habits are a result of their religious beliefs (Swimberghe, Sharma, & Flurry, 2009). Wilkes, Burnett, and Howell (1996) studied religiosity's influence on consumers' shopping habits. It was asserted by them that consumers with higher religiosity made less usage of credit, and they further added that religious consumers had a higher preference for local brands. The relationship between religiosity and consumers' shopping behaviour was also studied by Mokhlis (2009) in the context of Malaysian consumers. The findings of the study demonstrated that religiosity is a strong indicator of consumers' purchases as consumers' purchase of products varies according to their level of religiosity. McDaniel and Burnett (1990) examined how religiosity influenced consumers' evaluation of retail stores. The findings of the study revealed that religious commitment played a more influential role than religious affiliation in consumers' evaluation of retail stores. Alam, Mohd, and Hisham (2011) and Kaeeni and Heidarzadeh (2014) investigated that Muslim consumers, particularly in Malaysia, gave significant importance to Islamic values and principles in their purchase of products.

Recently, the effect of religiosity was also studied in the context of purchasing foreign products. It was discovered by Mukhtar and Butt (2012) that religiosity was one of the factors that was inversely associated with consumers' intention of buying imported products. In other words, the findings of their study indicated that the higher the religiosity, the lower was the intention of buying foreign products. Similarly, Tabassi et al. (2012) and Yousaf and Malik (2013) disclosed that consumers' religiosity was adversely affiliated with their intention of buying foreign goods.

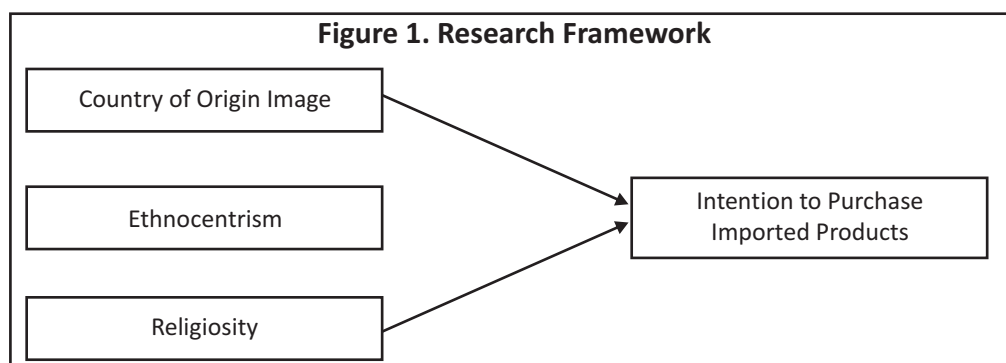
➡ **H3:** Religiosity has a negative effect on intention to purchase imported products.

Framework of the Research

A framework has been developed for the research based on the theories derived from the literature review. The framework was developed to investigate the factors that may affect Bangladeshi consumers' intention to purchase foreign or imported products, and it comprises of three independent variables (country of origin image, ethnocentrism, and religiosity) and one dependent variable (intention to purchase imported products) as depicted in the Figure 1.

Methodology

This research is a quantitative descriptive study that sought to gather data regarding the intention to purchase



imported products among Bangladeshi consumers. This study began in the middle of March 2014 and persisted till the end of October 2014. In order to conduct this research, survey strategy was employed. The sampling technique that was used for this research is convenience sampling. This is because it allows easy access to respondents, and hence, makes it easier for the researcher to conduct the research within a limited timeframe. One of the major advantages of this particular sampling technique is that it allows researchers to collect data in a fast as well as efficient manner (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Hence, this technique enabled us to complete the research successfully and also fulfills the purpose of the research accordingly.

Self-administered questionnaires were used as the key source for collecting the primary data. Primary data was collected by distributing a set of questionnaires to Bangladeshi residents in shopping malls located in the cities of Dhaka and Chittagong. The first page of the questionnaire included a cover letter that explained what the study was about ; in addition, it also provided the respondents an assurance that all their personal information will be kept confidential. At the same time, it also gave the respondents detailed instructions regarding how the questions needed to be answered. As stated by Sekaran (2003), in order to minimize the probability of getting biased responses, it is important for researchers to give clear and detailed instructions as well as assure confidentiality. The covering letter was followed by a self-administered survey that included 5 sections. Section A captured the background information of the respondents and the other sections comprised of questions pertaining to each of the variables of the study (intention to purchase imported products, country of origin image, ethnocentrism, and religiosity) on a 7 point rating scale, where 1 designated *strongly disagree* and 7 designated *strongly agree*.

A total of 260 questionnaires were distributed to a sample size of 260 respondents who voluntarily and willingly took part in the survey. Data from the respective respondents were collected within a period of two weeks between July 2014 and August 2014. From the 260 questionnaires received, 30 questionnaires had to be discarded because they were either improperly answered or contained missing data. Finally, a sample of 230 respondents was used for data analysis. We used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and structural equation modeling (SEM) to conduct a quantitative data analysis. SPSS was employed in order to analyze the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to run exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Later, SEM was run in order to test the hypotheses and verify the fitness of the proposed model.

Data Analysis and Results

✎ **Demographic Profile of the Respondents :** After the data is entered, using the SPSS software, the first task of data analysis is to conduct a descriptive statistics. This analysis is used in this research to analyze the demographic details (gender, age, and race of the respondents). Descriptive analysis covers percentage, frequency, mean, and standard deviation of the data, which will be represented according to the demographics of the data sets of the respondents.

The demographic section of the questionnaire consisted of questions about the respondents' gender, age, religion, educational level, monthly income, and occupation. Regarding the demographic details of the respondents, 63% of the respondents were men and 37% of the respondents were women.

In terms of age, majority of the respondents fell in the age group of 20-29 years, which makes up a total of 44.8%, followed by respondents in the age group of 30-39 years (23%) ; 13.5% of the respondents were in the age group of 40-49 years ; and 13 % of the respondents were below the age of 20 years. In addition, respondents in the age group of 50-59 years comprised of 3.5% of the total respondents, and the age group of 60-69 years was represented by 2.2% of the respondents. As for religion, majority of the respondents were Muslim (80.9%), followed by Hindus (13.5%). Buddhism and Christianity were represented by 3.5% and 2.2% of the respondents, respectively.

Statistics revealed that most of the respondents had a monthly income below Taka 15,000 (41.3%) ; 20% had an income of Taka 15,000-29,999 ; 12.2% made an income of Taka 30,000-44,999 ; whereas, 12.6% made Taka 45,000-59,999 ; 7.0% of the respondents had an income of Taka 60,000-74,999 ; 1.7% had an income of Taka

75,000-84,999 ; and finally, 5.2 % of the respondents had an income of above Taka 85,000. With reference to the respondents' demographic profile, majority of the respondents were educated upto the master's level (35.7%) followed by honours (27.4%), HSC (20.4%), SSC (13.9%), and lastly Ph.D. (2.6%). Occupation wise, 39.5% of the respondents were company employees, followed by students (27.4%) ; 13.9% indicated that their profession was business ; academics made up 10.9% of the respondents ; government employees made up 4.3% ; homemakers and retirees made up 1.7% and 0.9%, respectively ; lastly, 1.3% of the respondents indicated that they were employed in some other profession.

✎ **Factor Analysis :** Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was computed in order to assess the correlation matrices for factor analysis. From a statistical perspective, it is important to compute KMO because it determines whether the data is suitable for running factor analysis. KMO value ranges from 0 to 1, whereby it is essential to have a KMO value of 0.60 or more in order to conduct factor analysis, and if researchers fail to achieve this particular value, then the variables that have attained the lowest anti-image must be dropped until the KMO value reaches 0.60 (Hair et al., 2010). For this study, the results of both the tests revealed that the results are significant, indicating that we could proceed with factor analysis as illustrated in the Table 1.

All the items were placed under their respective constructs in order to determine their loadings. According to Hair et al. (2010), a minimum loading value of 0.5 is obligatory for a loading to be considered very significant. The statistical results revealed that the number variance explained by the three respective factors of the study is 66.074%. The Table 2 provides an illustration of the factor loadings of the items and demonstrates how they are

Table 1. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.824
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1.791E3
	Df	105
	Sig.	.000

Table 2. Results of Factor Analysis

Item	(F1) EN	(F2) CI	(F3) RL
	Alpha= .894	Alpha= .840	Alpha = .857
CI1 Country of origin image indicates technological advancement.	.814		
CI2 Country of origin image indicates good designing.	.844		
CI3 Country of origin image indicates economic development.	.868		
CI5 Country of origin image indicates creativity in workmanship.	.822		
CI7 Country of origin image indicates prestige.	.751		
EN1 Bangladeshi should only buy Bangladeshi made products.		.798	
EN2 Should import only products that are unavailable in Bangladesh.		.822	
EN3 Bangladeshi products first, last, and forever.		.836	
EN6 Bangladeshi should support Bangladeshi products.		.696	
EN8 A real Bangladeshi should always buy Bangladesh made products.		.736	
RI1 Religious beliefs influence choice of foreign products.			.759
RL2 Religious obligations are considered.			.848
RL4 Participating in religious programs.			.766
RL5 Reading religious books and magazines.			.798
RI7 Take advice from others from religious affiliations.			.689

Table 3. CFA Results for the Measurement Models

Name of Category	Required Value	Comments
Unidimensionality	Factor loading for each item ≥ 0.60	The required level is achieved.
Validity		
Convergent Validity	Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ≥ 0.50	The required level is achieved.
Construct Validity	All fitness indexes for the models meet the required level.	The required level is achieved.
Discriminant Validity	Correlation between exogenous constructs is ≤ 0.85	The required level is achieved.
Reliability		
Internal Reliability	Cronbach alpha ≥ 0.70	The required level is achieved.
Construct Reliability	CR ≥ 0.60	The required level is achieved.
Average Variance Explained (AVE)	AVE ≥ 0.50	The required level is achieved.

associated with a particular factor. A look at the Table 2 shows that all the three distinct dimensions; Country of Origin Image (*CI*), followed by Ethnocentrism (*EN*), and lastly, Religiosity (*RL*) have successfully loaded under different factors and attained loadings higher than the cut of value of 0.5.

↳ **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)** : According to Brown (2006), in order to evaluate the fitness level of models, it is essential to use certain fitness statistics commonly known as goodness of fit indices (GOF). These different fitness statistics fall under three categories namely; absolute fit ; incremental fit ; and lastly, parsimonious fit (Brown, 2006; Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2011). Brown (2006) stated that from the three categories of fitness mentioned above, a researcher should consider employing a minimum of one type of index from each of the respective categories. Under such circumstances, the indices that are recommended to be used are *RMSEA*, *GFI*, *CFI*, and *chisq/df*, as these indices are the most widely used by researchers (Zainudin, 2012). The acceptable values for each of these indices fall under different ranges. First of all, according to Hair et al. (2010), the acceptable range for root mean square error of approximation, abbreviated as *RMSEA*, is 0.05 to 1.00, whereby *RMSEA* is acceptable as long as it is less than 0.08. In case of comparative fit indices, widely known as *CFI*, values greater than 0.90 reflect an acceptable level of fitness, and anything greater than 0.95 indicates good fitness ; similar requirements also hold true for goodness of fit index (*GFI*), whereby its range varies from 0 to 1, where any value greater than 0.90 is considered to be an acceptable level of fitness and values greater than 0.95 are good. Lastly, *chisq/df* (chi square/degree of freedom) should generally be within the range of 3 to 5 in order to be considered acceptable, however, any value less than 3 is an indication of good fitness (Zainuddin, 2012).

It has been suggested by scholars (Hair et al., 2010 ; Kline, 2011; Sarwar, 2013; Zainudin, 2012) that before modeling the structural model, a researcher needs to address the issues of unidimensionality, validity, and reliability. Based on these suggestions, this study conducted CFA for the measurement model to address the issues of unidimensionality, validity, and reliability. The results are depicted in the Table 3.

As depicted in the Figure 2, it can be seen that the requirements for each of the fitness indices that has been employed in order to evaluate the structural model has been achieved as the *RMSEA* = .067, *GFI* = .956, *AGFI* = .936, *CFI* = .978, *Normed Chisq* = 2.342, indicating that the model provides an adequate representation of the phenomenon being investigated.

Hypotheses Testing

The three respective hypotheses of the study have been attested through the application of structural equation modelling. The Table 4 provides an illustration of the final model. It can be seen that among the three hypotheses, none of them have been rejected as they are all significant. The first hypothesis (H1) states that country of origin

of buying imported products. This respective hypothesis was not rejected as the level of significance = .003 ($p \leq 0.05$). Studies conducted by Mukhtar and Butt (2012), Tabassi et al. (2012), and Yousaf and Malik (2013) also revealed that religiosity had a negative effect on intention to purchase imported products.

Managerial Implications and Conclusion

From a managerial perspective, this study suggests that if a product is associated with a country that does not have a favourable image, then marketers must focus on other aspects of the product rather than its origin. Secondly, with reference to the results of the study, it can be observed that ethnocentrism and religiosity had unfavourable or negative effects on Bangladeshi consumers' intention of buying imported products. Under such circumstances, marketers must take certain initiatives for eliminating the effects of these two aspects. In order to minimize the negative effects of ethnocentrism, marketers must strive towards giving local appeal to their foreign products. This can be done by hiring Bangladeshi celebrities for advertising foreign products. By associating the products with well-known individuals the Bangladeshi consumers admire, marketers will be able to localize the products. At the same time, another strategy that can be undertaken by a marketer under such circumstances is the creation of joint venture with local companies. Lastly, to minimize the adverse effect of religiosity, it is essential for marketers to respect the religious beliefs of the consumers. Therefore, marketers must pay attention to the consumers' religious values when developing their marketing strategies.

To sum up, the study at hand attempted to offer a framework for understanding how different factors affected consumers' intention of purchasing foreign products, with specific reference to Bangladeshi consumers. It is anticipated that the findings that have been generated from this study will aid marketers in gaining an accurate understanding regarding how these factors affect Bangladeshi consumers, which, in turn, will facilitate them in creating lucrative strategies for successfully selling foreign products.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

Like every other research, the present research also has certain limitations that must be addressed. The limitation of this research is related to the issue of generalizability of the findings. Since this research focuses on Bangladeshi consumers, the results that have been attained cannot be generalized for consumers from other countries. Thus, it is anticipated that in the future, a framework of this research will be studied in the context of other new countries - by taking a larger sample size - where this issue has not been studied yet. At the same time, it is also hoped that future researchers will extend the framework of this research by adding actual purchase behavior as well as by including the effect of several mediating variables such as brand image, quality, price, as well as product knowledge.

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