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THE IMPACTS OF WORLDMINDEDNESS AND NATIONALISM ON STUDENTS' ATTITUDE AND PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS PORTABLE CONSUMER ELECTRONICS: A CROSS-NATIONAL STUDY

Abstract:

This study examines the influences of worldmindedness and nationalism on Malaysian and Korean students' attitude and purchase intention, in which their attitude and purchase intention towards various country of origin and brands match on portable consumer electronics. Data collection activities, in which self-administered survey, were done in Republic of Korea (ROK) and Malaysia. The research findings showed that both worldmindedness and nationalism possessed significant influences on students' attitude and purchase intention according to various brands and origin country matches. Interestingly, attitude influenced purchase intention significant positively. Implications to both policy makers and market practitioners are discussed. Lastly, limitations of study and recommendations for future researchers are presented.

Keywords:

Worldmindedness, Nationalism, Attitude, Purchase Intention, Malaysia, South Korea

JEL Classification: M00, M31, M16

Introduction

In the ear of globalization, the brand and product choices that available are increasing to consumers all around the world from time to time. This is resulted by the advancement of the development of information and communication technologies that encouraged the dissemination of information, as well as transportation that ease the mobility of people and goods. In response to these, brand's country of origin (COO) has been the focus of academic researchers since the seminal work of Schooler (1965), and yet now, COO is the mainstream in the field of research in international marketing and consumer behavior (Usunier, 2006). This study would like to investigate two concepts in COO studies, namely worldmindedness and nationalism.

Further, future researchers are encouraged to carry out COO study based on segmentation (Sohail, 2005; Kwok et al., 2006; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2010; Samiee 2010). This is because the critical underlying assumptions of much COO literature is everyone is affected by COO information, and researchers treats all consumers alike (Samiee, 2010). However, the salience of COO effect may vary at consumer level, stated by Roth & Diamantopoulos (2010). Indeed, Wong et al. (2008) highlighted it is important to study young consumers in Asia.

This study aims to examine the influences of worldmindedness and nationalism on the attitude and purchase intention among students in Malaysia and ROK on portable consumer electronics, particularly mobile phone. Indeed, the objectives of this study are to:

    i.   Examine the level of worldmindedness and nationalism among students in Malaysia and ROK

    ii.   Compare the general attitudes among students in Malaysia and ROK towards portable consumer electronics from different countries of origin

    iii.   Compare the purchase intention among students in Malaysia and ROK towards mobile phones from different countries of origin

    iv.   Test the relationships between worldmindedness and nationalism with attitude and purchase intention

    v.   Test the relationship between attitude and purchase intention.

Literature Review

COO is deemed as a popular research topic in the field of research in international marketing and consumer behavior, in which it has recorded more than 1,000 published works in this field of research indicating the importance of COO (Heslop et al., 2008). In COO research, there has been an extensive works on testing its predictors at individual level.

Worldmindedness is refers as a worldview that encompasses cognitive and affective understanding that view the totality of humanity as the primary reference group, instead of any particular countries or regions (Schuerholz-Lehr, 2007). Worldmindedness

individuals are viewed as those who maintained a broad network of links and personal contacts with outside the immediate community (Sampson & Smith, 1957). And hence, they are more interested and knowledgeable in international affairs. Besides, they are more favor in foreign goods (Rawwas et al., 1996).

Whilst, nationalism is viewed as a sentiment of supreme consumer loyalty towards a nation-state. High nationalism individuals view their home country more superior that others, and should be dominant (Balabanis et al., 2001). Besides, they support their country in the areas that there are authoritarian structures between the country and its citizens (Blank & Schmidt, 2003). In terms of its effects on consumer behavior, empirical evidence showed significant influences of nationalism on individuals' attitude, purchase intention, and consumer ethnocentrism (e.g. Rawwas et al., 1996; Balabanis et al., 2001).

This study focuses only on worldmindedness and nationalism, and its impacts on attitude and purchase intention. This is because the study on worldmindedness and nationalism remains scarce, and there is still a lack of studies that explore its relations with attitude and purchase intention. Further, among the outcome variables, researchers tend to assume attitude is the good predictor of purchase intention. This study will also examine the relationship between attitude and purchase intention. Kindly refers Figure 1 for research framework.

Figure 1 Research framework
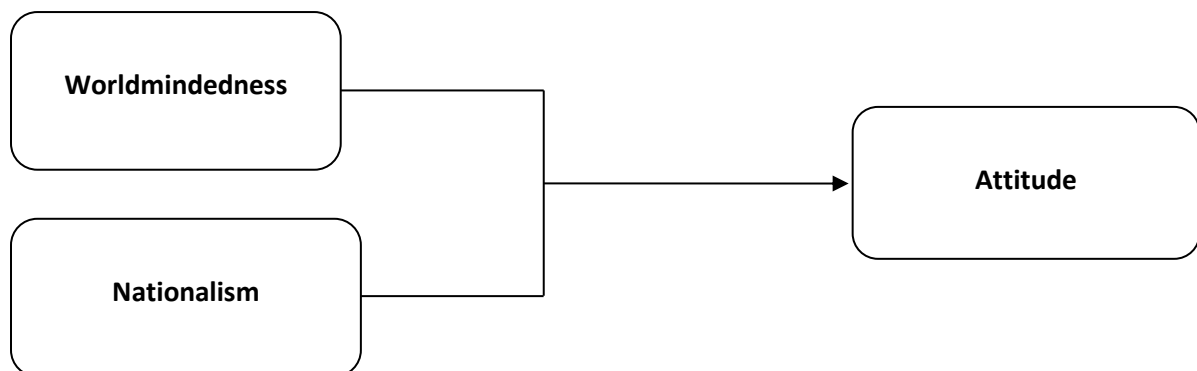
Methodology

The sample of this study is university students in Malaysia and ROK, and convenience sampling was employed. Data collection activity in Malaysia was done in one public university with 150 usable responses, whilst 200 usable responses were collected in 4 universities in ROK. The data collection method was self-administered survey, whereby respondents were requested to fill up a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted 3 parts, whereby the first part was designed to capture respondents'' socio-demographic related information, second part was developed to capture worldmindedness and nationalism. The measure of worldmindedness and nationalism

were adopted from Rawwas et al. (1996), with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Further, respondents' attitude and purchase intentions towards brands from their home country, China, and Japan were capture at the last part of questionnaire. The measure on attitude towards portable consumer electronics was adopted from a 3-item measure of Badri et al. (1995). Next, purchase intention towards homegrown, Chinese, and Japanese brands was measured with a 3-item scale. A 5-point Likert scale was employed to capture questions in Section 2 and 3.

Findings

First, frequency analysis was used to analyze respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. For Malaysian respondents, majority of them aged 21-30 years old (86%), are female (70.7%), single (95.3), and are undergraduate (76.7%); whilst, majority of them aged 21-30 years old (95%), are females (61%), single (99%), and are undergraduate (89%). Next, descriptive analysis was carried out to measure worldmindedness and nationalism of both Malaysian and ROK samples. The results of analysis showed both the Malaysian and ROK samples possessed moderate level of worldmindedness, with the mean of 2.84 and 2.61, accordingly. Interestingly, the results on nationalism showed Malaysian sample presents moderate level of nationalism with a mean value of 2.83, whilst Korean students possess low level of nationalism with a mean of 2.15.

Subsequently, descriptive analysis was also used to capture respondents' attitude towards portable consumer electronics, and also purchase intentions towards mobile phone brands from their home nation, China, and Japan. Figure 2 to Figure 4 illustrated the differences of attitude between students from ROK and Malaysia according to brands' COO. According to Figure 2, Korean students demonstrated significantly more favorable attitude towards portable consumer electronics originated from their home country, as compared to Malaysian students. Significant results were found on all items, namely price, reliability, exclusiveness, workmanship, technical advancement, distribution, inventiveness, pride of ownership, recognisability of brands, varietiness, attention to performance, and clever use of colours.

Figure 2 Differences of Koreans and Malaysians Attitude towards Homegrown Brands
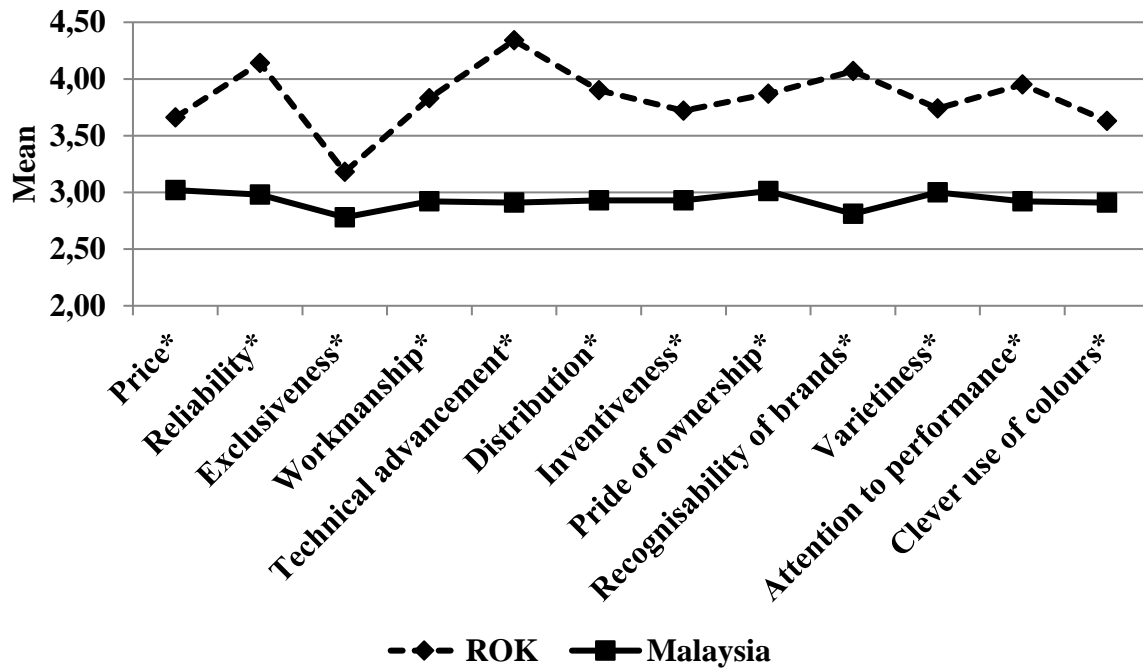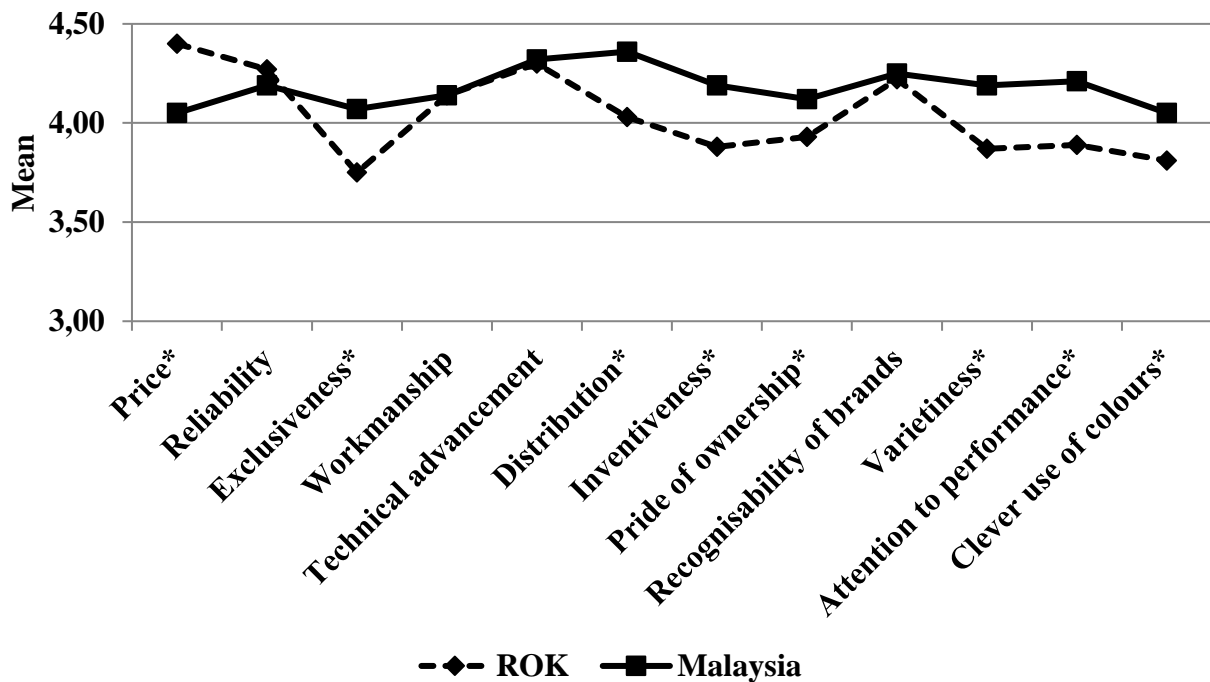

Note. 5-point semantic scale; * = significant

Next, for attitude towards Chinese brands, Malaysian students presented significantly more positive attitude than Korean students, as shown in Figure 3. Similar with the preceding findings, significant results were found on all the 11 items. Figure 4 illustrated the findings on attitude towards Japanese brands. In general, Korean students demonstrated the most favorable attitude towards brands from Japan, followed by their home grown brands, while they showed unfavorable attitude towards Chinese brands, as shown in Figure 5. Besides, Figure 6 illustrated Malaysian students showed the most favorable attitude towards Japanese brands. However, they hold almost similar attitude towards brands from their home country and China.

Figure 3 Differences of Koreans and Malaysians Attitude towards Chinese Brands
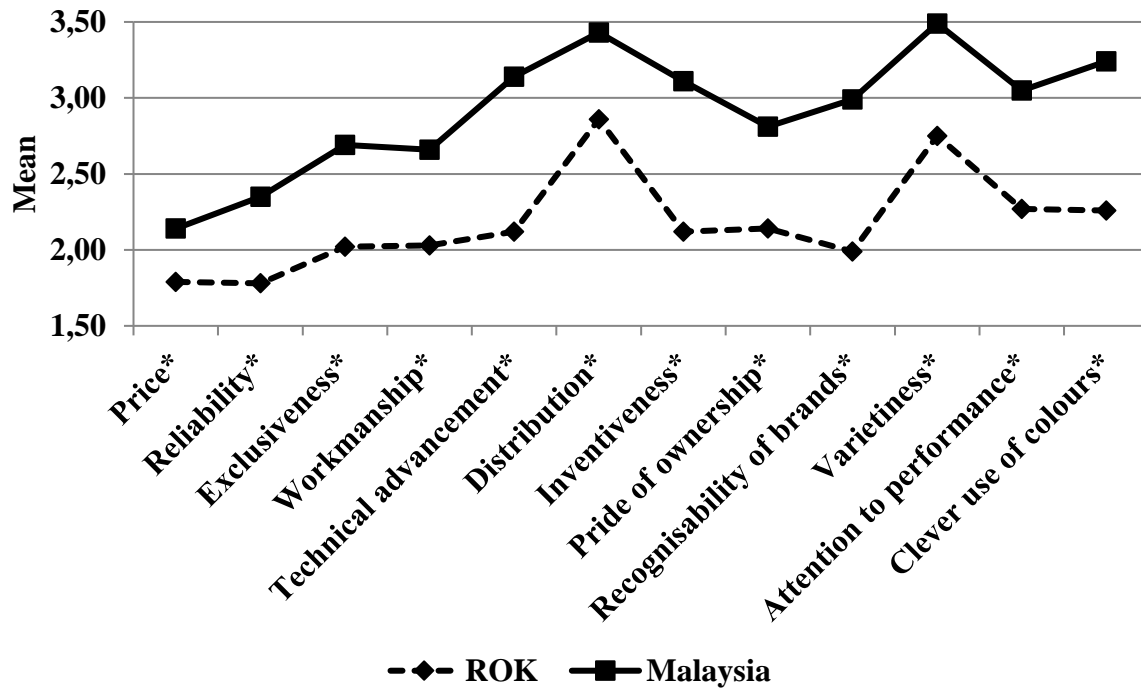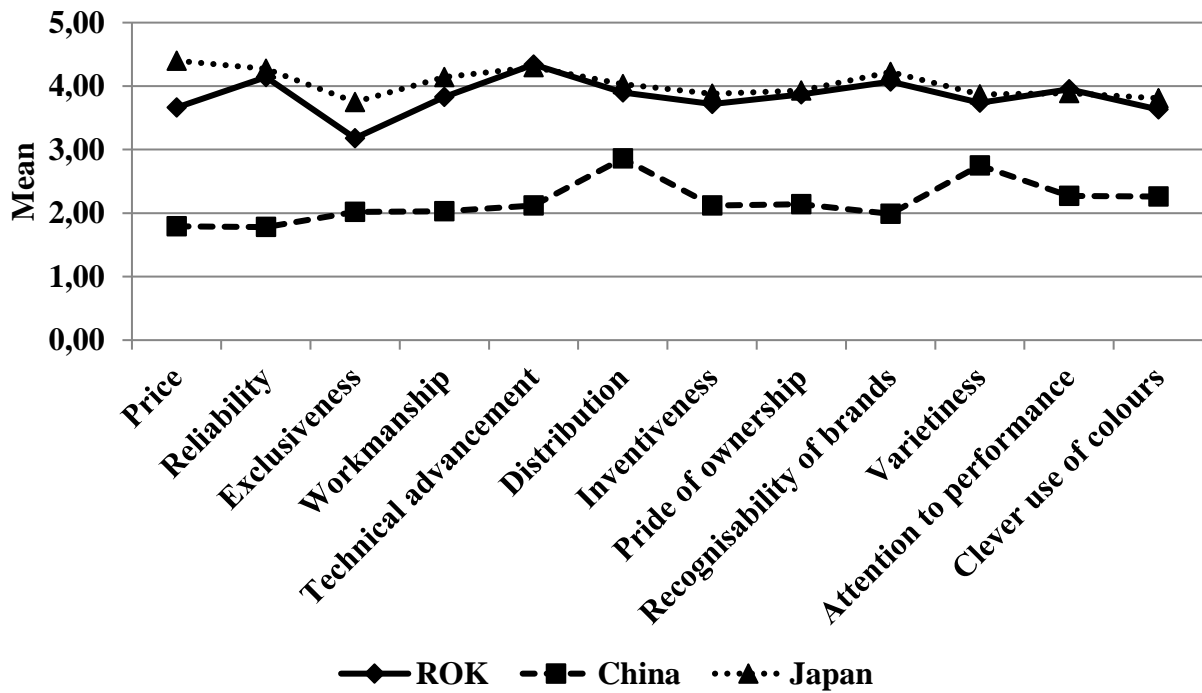

Note. 5-point semantic scale; * = significant

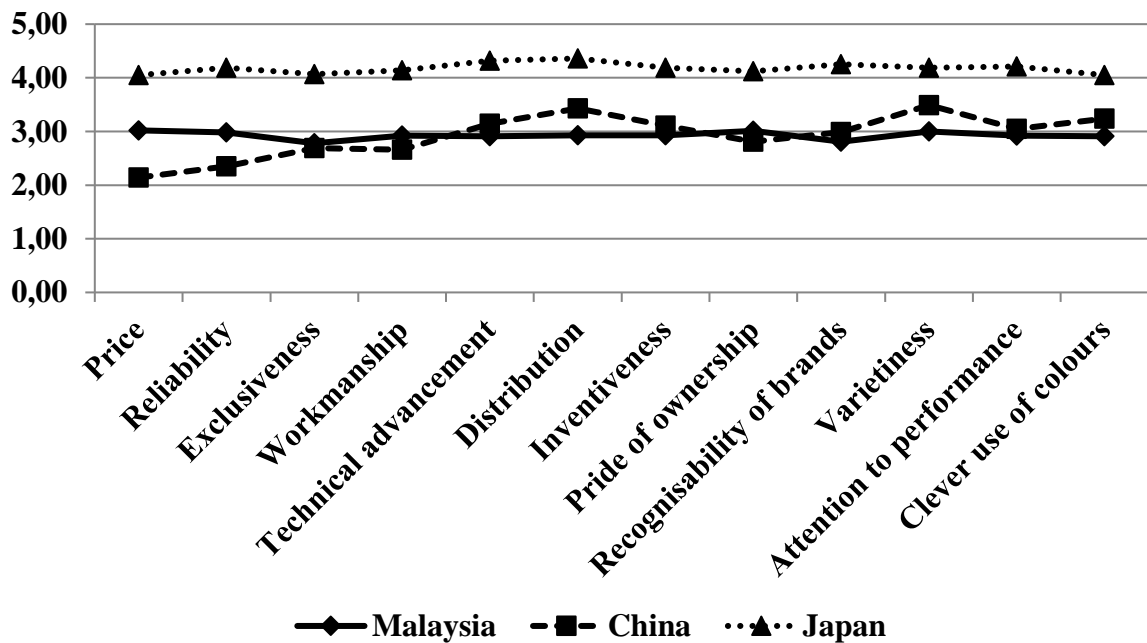**Figure 4 Differences of Koreans and Malaysians Attitude towards Japanese Brands**

Note. 5-point semantic scale; * = significant

Figure 5 Koreans Attitude towards Brands with Different COO

Note. 5-point semantic scale; * = significant

Figure 6 Malaysians Attitude towards Brands with Different COO


Note. 5-point semantic scale; * = significant

After that, Figure 7 illustrated the purchase intention between Korean and Malaysian students on their purchase intention towards mobile phone brands from their home

country, China, and Japan. Korean students showed the highest purchase intention towards their homegrown brands, followed by Japanese brands, and lastly Chinese brands, However, Malaysian students showed the most favorable purchase intention towards Japanese brands, followed by homegrown and Chinese brands. Besides, in terms of purchase intention towards homegrown brands, Korean students possessed greater purchase intention to buy brands from their countries, as compared to Malaysian students. But, Malaysian students showed greater purchase intention on brands from China and Japan as compared to students from ROK.

Figure 7 Differences of Koreans and Malaysians Purchase Intention towards Brands with Different COO
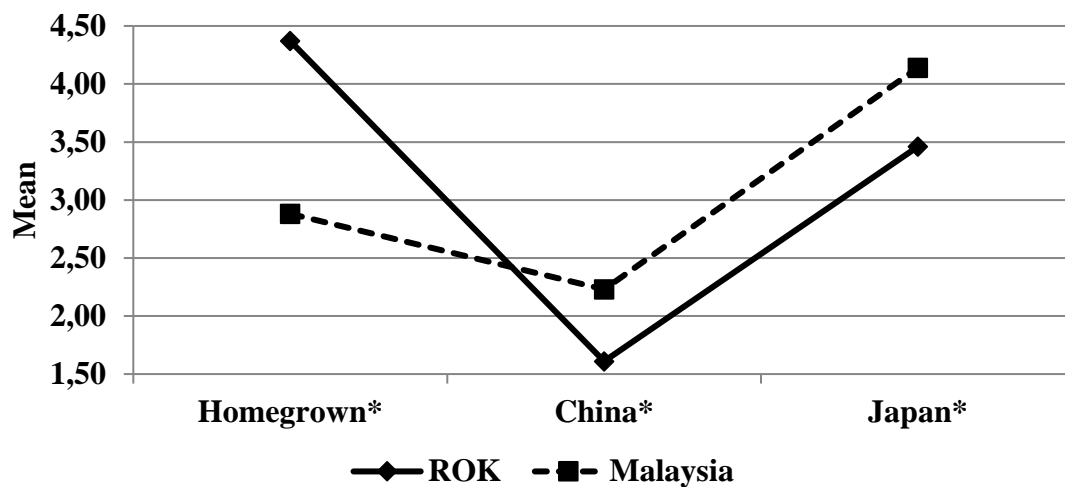
Note. 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; * = significant

After that, multiple regression analysis was run to test the relationship between worldmindedness and nationalism on attitude and purchase intention. For Korean students, the models on attitude towards Chinese and Japanese brands, as well as purchase intention towards ROK and China were significant with the F-value of 3.930, 2.503, 3.172, and 3.165 and significant at $p<.05$. In terms of worldmindedness, significant negative result was found on purchase intention towards homegrown brands (β = -.19, $p < .05$). Nationalism was found to have significant positive relationship with attitude towards Chinese brands (β = .16, $p < .05$), while showed a significant negative relationship with attitude towards Japanese brands (β =- .17, $p < .05$). Besides, it has a significant positive impact on purchase intention towards brands from China (β = .17, $p < .05$).

In terms of Malaysian students, all the models on attitude and purchase intention were supported, with the exception of attitude towards Chinese brands. The models on both attitude and purchase intention towards homegrown brands were significant at $p < .00$ with F-value = 17.61 and 19.97, respectively. Worldmindedness presented significant

negative influence on their purchase intention towards homegrown brands (β = -.22, *p* < .05), which mean the higher the level of worldmindedness the lower their intention to purchase local brands. In terms of nationalism, significant positive relationships were found on attitude towards homegrown brands (β = .44, *p* < .00), purchase intention towards homegrown brands (β = .43, *p* < .00), and purchase intention towards brands from Chinese (β = .22, *p* < .05). However, negative relationship was found on purchase intention towards Japanese brands (β = -.22, *p* < .05), which mean the higher the level of nationalism the lower their intention to purchase brands from Japan.

Subsequently, linear regression analysis was carried out to test the relationship between attitude and purchase intention. The results were presented in Table 1. All the models were supported with *p* < .00, with the exception of the model on purchase intention towards Japanese brands on the Korean sample that significant at *p*<.05. Attitude was found to have a significant positive relationship with purchase intention with β ranging from .19 to .58. In other word, favorable consumers' attitude leads to greater purchase intention, and vice versa.

Table 1 Linear regression analysis: The relationship between attitude and purchase intention

	Purchase intention					
	ROK			**Malaysia**		
	ROK	**China**	**Japan**	**Malaysia**	**China**	**Japan**
Attitude	.406**	.580**	.186*	.538**	.584**	.399**
R²	.165	.336	.034	.289	.342	.159
***F*-value**	39.071**	100.243**	7.057*	60.186**	76.780**	27.950**

Note. * = Significant at .05; ** = Significant at .00.

Discussion and Implications

These findings bring some insights to market practitioners. When employing individual psychographic characteristics termed worldmindedness as the basis of segmentation, marketers of Korean and Malaysian mobile phone brands are encouraged to put more effort in targeting group with low level of worldmindedness. Besides, they can utilize the information pertaining to COO, particularly their home country, in marketing communication. However, when targeting worldminded individuals, they shall highlight product-related attributes such as technical advancement, exclusiveness and inventiveness.

For marketers of foreign brands, they shall utilize localization effect, in which Jin et al. (2006) highlighted consumers tend to associate a brand with the origin country it was developed. But this association will become weaker over time when he brand is

produced locally, and hence consumers tend to perceive a foreign brand with a local origin in this situation.

Further, for Malaysian respondents, their attitude and purchase intention towards homegrown brands were significant positively influenced by nationalism. This has been proven in by empirical evidence that nationalism individuals perceived local goods positively, but perceived foreign products as poor quality (Rawwas et al., 1996). This may due to nationalism respondents perceived the purchase of homegrown brands will leads to economy well-being of their nation and countrymen.

Both Malaysian policy makers and marketers of Malaysian brands could beneficial from the research findings. Policy makers in Malaysia are recommended to promote nationalism spirit amongst its citizens to a higher level, as higher level of nationalism can leads to more favorable attitude and purchase intention to homegrown brands. Subsequently, this will bring positive economic outcome to the country, local entrepreneur and countrymen. Besides, they are also encouraged to re-look at it patronize-domain campaign, namely "Buy Malaysian Products Campaign", which is first launched in 1984 that aims to provide domestic entrepreneurs opportunities to prove their capability in producing quality products.

In co-operation with policy makers in Malaysia, marketers of Malaysian brands should utilize this research finding by highlighting brand origin information in their marketing communication. Besides, they are also encouraged to employ nationalism as a basis of segmentation, whereby they are recommended to target Malaysian with higher nationalism. They shall carry out a research that enables them to identify the socio-demographic traits of high nationalism Malaysians. This effort can help them to reach their target market more accurately.

Besides, nationalism also influenced Malaysians' purchase intention towards brands from China and Japan, in which significant positively influenced their purchase intention towards Chinese brands and affect purchase intention towards Japanese brands significant negatively. Further, nationalism influences the attitude and purchase intention of Korean students towards brands from China significant positively, whilst showed adverse effect on their purchase intention towards Japanese brands.

Interestingly, the findings on Japanese brands are in-lined with previous study, whilst results on Chinese brands are in contradictory with previous work done. This may due to the high nationalism respondents perceived Japanese brands as more competitive to their homegrown brands in producing portable consumer electronics and mobile phone, so the likelihood for the brands from Japan will hurt the economy well-being of their nation and countrymen is higher (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Market practitioners of Chinese brands are encouraged to target nationalism group, whilst marketers of Japanese brands should put more efforts in targeting individuals with lower level of nationalism.

Lastly, attitude towards portable consumer electronics brands demonstrated significant positive effect on purchase intention towards mobile phone brands of both ROK and Malaysian samples in all the cases on homegrown, Chinese, and Japanese brands. This has provides a strong evidence pertaining to the positive influence of attitude towards purchase intention. Marketers are encouraged to bear in mind that all their efforts in promoting a favorable attitude amongst Malaysian and Korean students towards their brands will ultimately bring positive outcome to purchase intention. Therefore, they are encouraged to take an active role play via their participation in local social responsibility, or international cause. It is believed that these efforts will lead to a more positive attitude among students in Malaysia and ROK, which subsequently will brings to a more favorable purchase intention.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study focused only on students sample in Malaysia and ROK, so future researchers shall expand this study by examining the effects of worldmindedness and nationalism in the setting of different segments and different countries. Other than that, they are also encouraged to examine the antecedents of worldmindedness and nationalism, and its effects on brand equity and brand image for brands originated from different origin nations. Besides testing its effects at individual levels, future researchers shall test these concepts at organization level, such as industry buyers' attitude, purchase intention, and actual purchase decision based on different product or service categories.

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