Ethnicity, Consumer Animosity and Preferences: A Case in Malaysia

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Abstract: The importance of the concept of consumer animosity in the field of international research is increasingly. This study aims to test the significant differences between ethnic groups on their consumer animosity and their preferences towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin associations. Therefore, measurements that measure consumer animosity towards European countries, Singapore and USA that fit in Malaysia context were developed. The samples of this study were students in Penang and the sampling method was convenience sampling. Usable responses were 255 responses. SPSS version 17 was used data analysis purpose. The results of this study revealed that consumers with different ethnic groups displayed difference level of consumer animosity and preferences towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin, significantly. These findings brought some insights to market practitioners, where marketers of domestic and foreign brands are encouraged to take ethnicity, consumer animosity and product category in their consideration when designing marketing programmes. Research contributions, limitations and suggestions for future studies were discussed.

Key words: consumer animosity; ethnicity; brand' country of origin; students in Penang; preferences towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin associations

JEL codes: M

1. Introduction

Nowadays, Malaysian consumers are increasingly exposed to and choosing from a wider range of products, brands, quality and process (Mokhlis, 2009). However, in this age of globalization, tensions stem from territory disputes, economic arguments, diplomatic disagreements or religious conflicts are presented throughout the world (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). Thus, Leong et al. (2008) pointed out that it is necessary for marketers to have a better understanding of foreign consumer reactions towards their brands in this expanding globalization era. Moreover, Bhaskaran and Sukumaran (2007) pointed out that researchers study on the influence of nationality while ignoring the sub-cultures within countries. Therefore, this study seeks to test the significant differences between ethnic groups on their consumer animosity and preferences towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin among students in Penang.

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1.1 Malaysia in Context

The economy of Malaysia record one of Asia's best, while Malaysia's per capita GNP reached US$3,640 in 2001 (Naguib & Smucker, 2009). Malaysia is a multiracial country with the total population of Malaysia of 28.31 million in 2009 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). There are three major ethnic groups in Malaysia, with the largest group of Malay and other indigenous people (65.1%), followed by Chinese (26%) and Indian (7.7%) (Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008).

Muslim is one who practices Islam (Fam et al., 2004), while Malay was defined as the people who speak in Malay, lead the Malay way of life and is of the Islamic faith, and endogamy seems to be the rule (Asmah, 1983; Run, 2007). The trade winds brought the Indian and Chinese traders to Malaysia, along with their cultural and religious, social and political influences (Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008). Besides, British colonization in mid-1800s attracted migrants from Southern China and South India (Bhaskaran & Sukumaran, 2007). The Chinese in Malaysia, descendents of the sojourners, came to Malaysia from China in the late nineteenth century (Selverajah & Meyer, 2008). They are mainly immigrants from the southern part of coastal provinces of China (Lee & Tan, 2000; Run, 2007), such as Fujian, and Hainan. Majority of them are multilingual where they can speak in Malay, English, Mandarin and their respective dialect (Lam & Yeoh, 2004). Initially they were serving as labour force in tin mining and railway construction; however they have developed in Malaysia's businessman (Soontiens, 2007). According to Selvarajah and Meyer (2008), the large-scale mobilization of Indians to Malaysia commenced in 1870 when British controlling Malaya, which happen during the colonization of European in Asia. They were mainly Tamil or Hindu origin, and worked in the plantation and building of country's transport systems.

The Malays are recognized as *Bumipytras,* son of soil, and have a privileged position in Malaysian society, where their position is protected by the Constitution (Selverajah & Meyer, 2008). The Malaysian government is sensitive to the need of the Muslim majority, while promoting religious freedom and it strive to offer products and services that conforming to Islamic principles (Salleh et al., 1998). Many countries have introduced policies that assist the mainstream indigenous communities, including Malaysia (Bhaskaran & Sukumaran, 2007). During the adoption of laissez-faire economic model in Malaya, the Chinese became intermediaries to foreign companies and several large Chinese enterprises grew and diversified business in construction, plantation, trading, finance and other sectors. They highlighted the economic power of the Chinese minority has fostered nationality based affirmative economic policies to assist the Malays, where the new economic policy (NEP) was introduced and the government provide a wide range of generous incentives to the Malays as well as help to increase their role and position in the country economy.

Different ethnic groups hold different values of life. In the cross-cultural comparison study that undertaken by Rashid and Ibrahim (2008); the Malays were characterized as a group that valued self-respect or face, politeness, sensitivity to feelings and relationship. Besides, the Chinese uphold the value of hard work or diligent, pragmatic, wealth or prosperity, face, harmony and risk taking. Lastly, the Indians also value face, as well as fear of God, sense of belonging, "karma", champion of causes and filial piety. They believed that Chinese and Indian Malaysian still upholding similar fundamental values with Chinese in China as well as Indian in India, respectively. However, it is also believed that their cultural beliefs and practices also shaped by the interaction with other ethnic groups as well as the presence of British.

The multi-ethnicity background of Malaysia brought many challenges as well as market opportunity to marketers of both local and foreign brands. Within one nation, consumers in different ethnic act response differently to different marketing strategy and product cue. *Halal*, which means permissible", is one of the most important

concepts in Islam that covers slaughtering, storage, display, preparation, hygiene and sanitation aspects (Shafie & Othman, 2006). *Halal* logo plays a crucial role for Malay Muslim consumers in Malaysia. The introduction of halal logo has generated more awareness among Malay Muslims about the importance to make consumption that follow Islamic guidelines and principles, where it provides an avenue for manufacturers to indicate their target consumers that their products are *halal* and shariah-compliant, and meet the Islamic standard (Shafie & Othman, 2006). For example, all fast-food businesses in Malaysia are gazette under Malaysia law to serve only *halal* food and non-alcoholic beverages (Salleh et al., 1998). In the study of Shafie and Othman (2006) that investigated the impact of halal phenomenon to the consumers in Malaysia, 89% respondent indicated that *halal* logo played role in their purchase decision. However, the effect of *halal* logo might do not have any impact on Chinese and Indian Malaysian's purchase decision.

Other than that, Chinese have different preferences as compared with consumers from another ethnicity, as in a similar fashion, Chinese are more readily accept goods colour or packaged in red or gold colours that signify good luck and prosperity (Salleh et al., 1998). Furthermore, they tend to show favourable behavioural intentions for the Bahasa Malaysia advertisements, as compared with Chinese language (Run, 2007). Nonetheless, the dominant ethnic group of Malaysia, Malay, reacted similarly to Chinese when viewing a Chinese advertisement, but they tend to react negatively to Chinese language advertisement. The study of Ong and Tan (2010) revealed that Malays were less likely to travel by Air Asia as compared to Chinese.

1.2 Penang in Context

The focus of this study was Penang students, as Penang achieved the highest economic growth, which is 9.9% and recorded the second highest GDP per capita, at RM30, 490 in year 2009 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2009). Moreover, Penang continues to be an attractive foreign direct investment destination, and this prove by the evidence that Pulau Pinang recorded its highest investment growth in the manufacturing and service related sectors in 26 years (Penang State Government Official Portal, 2007). Indeed, Penang students were selected as the sample of this study as Verlegh and Steenkamp (1999) identified that there were no statistically different effects between the studies using student samples as compared to those studies using consumer samples. Moreover, they represent the young consumers group that have been a growing population (Ramly et al., 2008).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Animosity

Consumers might avoid products from the offending nation because of exporting nation has engaged in military, political, or economic acts, which consumers difficult to forgive, where Klein et al. (1998) regarded this as consumer animosity, which relate tensions between nations to consumers' buying behaviour (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). Klein et al. (1998) refers consumer animosity as the remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political or economic events that will influence consumers' purchase behaviour in international marketplace. For example, Ahmed and d'Atous (2008) found that Taiwanese's displayed some animosity towards China. In their research conducted in China, Klein et al. (1998) found that Chinese consumers demonstrated animosity towards Japanese products because of cruelties committed by the Japanese during their occupation of China. This animosity influenced their actual purchase decision, but did not influence their judgment of Japanese products as Japanese products were still evaluated better than local products.

Consumer animosity a construct different with consumer ethnocentrism, a construct that introduced by

Shimp & Sharma (1987) that refers to the belief held by consumers about the appropriateness and morality of purchasing foreign-made products. In their proposed animosity model, Klein et al. (1998) proposed consumer animosity influenced willingness to purchase directly; whereas consumer ethnocentrism has direct and indirect (through product judgments) impacts on willingness to purchase foreign products. They found consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentrism were different constructs, but the effect of animosity on consumer preferences existed even when consumer ethnocentrism held constant.

Consumer ethnocentrism is a construct about consumers' general beliefs about buying foreign products, whereas consumer animosity is a country-specific construct (Klein et al., 1998). High ethnocentric consumers perceived imported goods as inferior but perceived own products favourable. They tended to purchase domestic products instead of foreign goods, as they believed they purchase of imported goods will bring negative outcome to their country. Nonetheless, high animosity consumers might be able to accept imported products from foreign countries generally, but reject products from certain countries. They recognize the quality of products from dislike nations, but tended to reject their products (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007).

There are four types of consumer animosity, namely national stable animosity, national situational animosity, personal stable animosity and personal situational animosity. National stable animosity arises from general historical background; national situational animosity temporarily arises caused by specific circumstance; personal stable animosity refers to the general negative feeling due to personal experience; and lastly, personal situational animosity refers to temporary negative sentiments caused by specific circumstance (Ang et al., 2004). For example, "Japan is taking advantage of Malaysia" (national stable animosity); "Japan s taking advantage of Malaysia during Asian economic crisis" (national situational animosity); "I feel upset towards the Japanese" (personal stable animosity); and, "I feel angry towards Japan for occupying Malaysia during World War II" (personal situational animosity).

2.2 Inter-Nation Conflicts

There are some conflicting issues between Malaysia and these countries, and the Malaysian governments and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) have initiated some policies and campaigns that ban products from the abovementioned nations that influenced the purchase decision of Malaysian, such as Buy British Last Policy, Boycott Danish Products Campaign, Boycott Dutch Products Campaign and Boycott US Product Campaign. (Please refer Appendix for further information). This study seeks to examine consumer animosities of Penang students towards European countries, Singapore and USA, and significant differences between different ethnic groups.

3. Methodology

This is a cross-sectional study. Data collection method was self-administered survey, where a structured questionnaire was distributed to students in Penang. The sampling method was convenience sampling. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, and the usable responses of this study were 255 responses.

A questionnaire was designed to collect data needed. The questionnaire consisted 3 parts. The first part was designed to collect socio-demographic related information. Questions consisted age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, education and household income. Second, the questionnaire was designed to capture respondents' consumer animosity related information. A total of 15 items, based on economic, political, religion, military and social issues, were developed to measure subjects' national situational animosity level towards Europe countries, Singapore and USA, which were 5 items, 3 items and 7 items, accordingly. A five point Likert-scale ranging from

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree was used to measure consumer animosity level.

The measure was developed after a discussion with a Professor of Marketing and nine PhD students from internationalization research cluster. Some corrections were made after a second and third discussion with a Professor in Finance and Economic and an expert in Political science. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure consumer animosity. A pilot study was conducted before the launch of data collection activity to check the content reliability of the measure. A total of 55 questionnaires were distributed to 55 Universiti Sains Malaysia students age ranged from 16 to 30 years old. A total of 52 questionnaires were usable responses. Reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) for consumer animosity was.87. This value indicated good, where Sekaran (2003) suggested reliability coefficient above .80 considered good.

Lastly, the questionnaire was designed to capture respondents' preferences towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin associations. The measure consisted 5 products categories, namely fashion apparels and textiles, electrical goods and appliances, chocolate/confectionery's products, dairy goods and healthcare products, while the brands' countries of origin included Malaysia, Singapore, Holland and Malaysia. A five point Likert-scale ranging from 1 = least preferred to 5 = most preferred was used to capture respondents' preference towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin associations. Moreover, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 was used to analyze the data of this study.

There were five stages of data analysis process. First, frequency analysis was undertaken to measure respondents' socio-demographic background. Second, reliability analysis was conducted to measure the Cronbach's alphas of the measure of national situational animosity. Third, descriptive analysis was undertaken to measure the mean values and standard deviations of the overall measure of national situational animosity as well as its single items. Fourth, the analysis of compare means, namely one-way ANOVA was used to test the significant differences of consumer animosity between three ethnicity groups, namely Malay, Chinese and Indian. Lastly, one-way ANOVA was undertaken to test the significant differences between ethnic groups on their preferences towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin associations.

4. Results and Findings

Table 1 presented respondents' profile, which contained their age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, education and household income. Most of the respondents aged 21-25 (69.8%), female (60.4%), Chinese (38.2%), single (96%), tertiary degree's holders (60.8%) and household income RM1001 but less than RM3000 (41.3%).

Next, the Cronbach's alphas, mean values and standard deviations of the overall measure of consumer animosity and based on nation as well as its every single item were presented in Table 2. The Cronbach for overall measure of consumer animosity (15 items) was .92, which indicated good content reliability. Moreover, the Cronbach's alphas for consumer animosity towards Europe countries (5 items), Singapore (3 items) and USA (7 items) were .81, .76 and .87, accordingly. These coefficient reliabilities were accepted.

The mean value for the overall measure of national situational animosity was 3.44 and the standard deviation was 0.76, while the mean values and standard deviations for their animosity towards Europe countries, consumer animosity towards Singapore and consumer animosity towards USA were 3.47 (0.80), 3.37 (0.78) and 3.41 (0.85), respectively. These results imply that respondents displayed relatively high consumer animosity, indeed their posed highest animosity towards Europe countries, followed by USA and Singapore.

Table 1   Sample Characteristics

Socio-demographic	Categories	Frequency (n = 255)	Percentage (%)
Age	16-20	49	21.8
	21-25	157	69.8
	26-30	19	8.4
Gender	Male	89	39.6
	Female	136	60.4
Ethnicity	Malay	65	28.9
	Chinese	86	38.2
	Indian	74	32.9
Marital status	Single	216	96.0
	Married	9	4.0
Education	Secondary	48	21.4
	Tertiary	137	60.8
	Postgraduate	40	17.8
Household income	RM 1000 and below	92	40.9
	RM 1001 but less than RM 3000	93	41.3
	RM 3000 and above	40	17.8

Table 2   Mean and Standard Deviation of Consumer Animosity

No.	Item	Mean value	Standard deviation
1	I feel angry that some European countries discriminates immigrants in their countries.	3.59	1.01
2	I feel upset that the European NGOs are blaming Malaysia for destroying the environment by planting oil palm trees.	3.52	1.01
3	I feel angry towards some European countries for their negative perception about Islam.	3.52	1.06
4	I resent the European Community for banning the import of our marine-based products.	3.38	1.22
5	I am very upset that the European Community has introduced measures to discriminate our palm oil products.	3.32	0.89
	Europe countries	**3.47**	**0.80**
	Cronbach's alpha	**5 items**	**0.81**
1	I resent the World Court's decision in granting the legal right over the PulauBatuPutih (PedraBranca) to the Singapore.	3.52	1.05
2	I resent the way Singapore government has occasionally trespassed into Malaysian territory.	3.33	1.03
3	I am unhappy towards the way Singapore government treats Malaysia over the water issue.	3.24	0.99
	Singapore	**3.37**	**0.78**
	Cronbach's alpha	**3 items**	**0.76**
1	I am unhappy with the US want to control Malaysian economy with their unfair terms through Malaysian-United States Free Trade Agreement (MUSFTA).	3.54	1.12
2	I resent towards the US for accusing Malaysia as a transit of human trafficking.	3.52	1.16
3	I feel angry towards the US for supporting the Zionist regime in Israel.	3.49	1.08
4	I am unhappy with the Americans as they are responsible for a lot of the world economic problems.	3.47	1.10
5	I resent the US for imposing unreasonable restriction on the issuance of VISA for visitors from the Muslim countries.	3.42	1.20
6	I feel angry whenever the US gets involved with other countries' internal affairs.	3.41	1.09
7	I feel upset that the Americans are exporting American culture to other countries through television, movie, music, etc.	3.02	1.16
	USA	**3.41**	**0.85**
	Cronbach's alpha	**7 items**	**0.87**
	Overall	**3.44**	**0.76**
	Cronbach's alpha	**15 items**	**0.92**

Note: 5-point scale ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

The mean value for the measure of consumer animosity towards Europe countries ranged from 3.32 to 3.59, where item "I feel angry that some European countries discriminates immigrants in their countries" recorded the highest mean value, while item "I am very upset that the European Community has introduced measures to discriminate our palm oil products" recorded the lowest mean value. Moreover, the mean value for the measure of consumer animosity towards Singapore ranged from 3.42 to 3.53. Item "I resent the World Court's decision in granting the legal right over the PulauBatuPutih (PedraBranca) to the Singapore scored the highest mean value, nonetheless item "I am unhappy towards the way Singapore government treats Malaysia over the water issue" noted the lowest mean score. In terms of consumer animosity towards USA, respondents scored the highest mean value for item "I am unhappy with the US want to control Malaysian economy with their unfair terms through Malaysian-United States Free Trade Agreement (MUSFTA)", nevertheless item "I feel upset that the Americans are exporting American culture to other countries through television, movie, music, etc." scored the lowest mean value.

Subsequently, the results of one-way ANOVA that test the significant different differences between ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese and Indian) and their consumer animosity level were presented in Table 3. Significant differences were found between groups on overall consumer animosity as well as their animosities towards European countries, Singapore and USA. In terms of overall consumer animosity, the mean values for Malay was 3.86, followed by Indian (3.37) and Chinese (3.18), where the mean value was 17.42. The mean score for Malay, Chinese and Indian for their animosity towards Europe countries were 3.80, 3.23 and 3.47, respectively, while the F-value was 10.35. Next, the mean values of consumer animosity towards Singapore for Malay, Chinese and Indian were 3.72, 3.10 and 3.36, accordingly. F-value was 11.26. Subsequently, the mean values for Malay, Chinese and Indian on their animosity towards USA were 3.91, 3.14 and 3.30, accordingly, where the F-value was 18.74.

In addition, Duncan's range test was undertaken to capture the significant differences between three ethnic groups. The results of Duncan's range test revealed that Malays are significant different from Chinese and Indian, where Malay demonstrated significant high overall animosity and animosities towards Europe countries, Singapore and USA, as compared to Chinese and Indian. In general, Table 3 showed that Malay presented the highest consumer animosity, followed by Indian, while Chinese displayed the lowest level of consumer animosity.

Table 3   One- way ANOVA: Ethnicity and Consumer Animosity

Consumer animosity	Ethnicity			F-value	Duncan's range test
	Malay (G1) (n = 65)	Chinese (G2) (n = 86)	Indian (G3) (n = 74)		
Overall consumer animosity	3.86	3.18	3.37	17.42*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Consumer animosity towards Europe countries	3.80	3.23	3.47	10.35*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Consumer animosity towards Singapore	3.72	3.10	3.36	11.26*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Consumer animosity towards USA	3.91	3.14	3.30	18.74*	G1 vs. G2 & G3

Lastly, one-way ANOVA was undertaken to test the significant differences between ethnic groups and their preferences towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin associations. The results of analysis were presented in Table 4. In terms of fashion apparels and textiles, Indian (3.73) showed significant high preferences towards brands from USA, followed by Chinese while Malay displayed the lowest preferences. The F-value was 6.26. However, Malay demonstrated significant high preferences towards Malaysian brands, followed by Indian and Chinese, where the F-value was 7.08. The results of Duncan's range test revealed that Malay significance different from Chinese and Indian on their preferences towards fashion apparels and textiles from

USA and Singapore; nonetheless Chinese significance different from Malay and Indian on their preferences towards Malaysian brands.

Chinese (3.83) showed the highest preferences towards electrical goods and appliances from USA, followed by Malay (3.65), while Indian (3.23) showed the least preferences. The F-value was 5.56 and significant. Besides, Indian (3.64) showed the highest preferences towards Malaysian brands, followed by Malay (3.22) and Chinese (2.98), where F-value was 7.06. The results of Duncan's range test revealed that Indian was significance different from Malay and Chinese on their preferences towards the brands of electrical goods and appliances from USA and Malaysia; nonetheless, Malay was significance different from Chinese and Indian towards brands from Holland and Singapore.

Table 4   On-way ANOVA: Ethnicity and Preferences towards Different Product Categories-Brands'
Countries of Origin Associations

Preferences towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin associations	Ethnicity			F-value	Duncan's range test
	Malay (G1) (n = 65)	Chinese (G2) (n = 86)	Indian (G3) (n = 74)		
Fashion (apparel & textiles)					
USA	3.17	3.72	3.73	6.26*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Malaysia	3.60	2.91	3.26	7.08*	G1 & G3 vs. G2
Holland	2.78	3.15	3.09	2.60	-
Singapore	2.62	3.33	3.30	10.59*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Electrical goods and appliances					
USA	3.65	3.83	3.23	5.56*	G1 & G2 vs. G3
Malaysia	3.22	2.98	3.64	7.06*	G1 & G2 vs. G3
Holland	2.89	3.22	2.91	2.39	-
Singapore	2.77	3.35	3.11	5.66*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Chocolate/confectionery's product					
USA	2.97	3.88	4.07	18.10*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Malaysia	3.29	2.87	3.23	2.41	-
Holland	2.89	3.80	3.61	12.58*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Singapore	2.49	3.23	3.45	13.72*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Dairy products					-
USA	2.97	3.57	3.55	5.88*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Malaysia	3.80	3.59	3.41	2.64	-
Holland	3.89	3.35	3.14	3.43*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Singapore	2.57	3.22	3.20	8.47*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Healthcare product					
USA	3.80	4.01	3.85	.87	-
Malaysia	3.55	2.93	3.69	10.24*	G1 & G3 vs. G2
Holland	2.89	3.52	3.47	8.14*	G1 vs. G2 & G3
Singapore	2.78	3.50	3.68	14.70*	G1 vs. G2 & G3

Note: 5-point scale ranged from 1 = least preferred to 5 = most preferred

In terms of chocolate/confectionery's product, significant differences between ethnic groups were found on

their preferences towards brands from USA, Holland and Singapore, where the F-values were 18.10, 12.58 and 13.72, accordingly. The results of Duncan's range test showed that Malay was significance different from Chinese and Indian on. However, no significant result was found on their preferences towards chocolate/confectionery's product from Malaysia.

Significant differences were found on preferences towards the brands of dairy products from USA, Holland and Singapore, where the F-values were 5.88, 2.64, 3.43 and 8.47. The results of Duncan's range test exhibited that Malay significance different from Chinese and Indian on USA and Singaporean brands; while Indian significance different from Malay and Chinese on their preferences towards Malaysian brands.

In terms of healthcare products, significant results were found on respondents preferences towards Malaysian, Holland and Singaporean brands, where the F-values were 10.24, 8.14 and 14.70, accordingly. Nonetheless, no significant result was found on USA brands. Moreover, the results of Duncan's range test indicated that Malay was significance different from Chinese and Indian on their preferences towards Holland and Singaporean brands; nevertheless Chinese was significance different from Malay and Indian on their preferences towards Malaysian brands.

Overall, Malay displayed the least preferences towards foreign brands but prefer domestic brands the most. For example, Malay prefer local brands while least prefer foreign brands in the cases of fashion apparels and textiles, chocolate/confectionery's products, dairy goods and healthcare products, with the exception of brands of dairy goods from Holland where they prefer the most as compared with Chinese and Indian. On the other hand, Chinese presented the least preferences towards home grown brands, in the cases of fashion apparels and textiles, electrical goods and appliance, chocolate/confectionery's products and healthcare products. Additionally, Indian demonstrated the least preferences towards domestic brands of dairy products, while they tended to display least preferences towards the brands of fashion apparels and textiles, electrical goods and appliances, chocolate/confectionery's product and healthcare products from Holland.

5. Discussions and Implications

This study aimed to test significant differences between ethnic groups on consumer animosity and their preferences towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin associations. This section will discuss consumer animosity of students in Penang, followed by the significance difference between ethnic groups on their consumer animosity and preferences.

In overall, students in Penang displayed relatively high consumer animosity; particularly they demonstrated the highest animosity towards European countries, followed by USA and Singapore. These results imply that students in Penang are sensitive to the international issue, especially conflict between nations. Marketers of the brands from these countries must take these results into account in the design and formulation of international marketing strategies, especially when they targeting or aim to target these groups of consumers. High animosity consumers tend to reject products/brands from dislike nations.

Additionally, in terms of consumer animosity based on ethnicity, Malay students tended to demonstrate the highest animosities, namely overall consumer animosity, consumer animosity towards Europe countries, consumer animosity towards Singapore and consumer animosity towards USA. Nonetheless, Chinese students exhibited the least level of consumer animosity. Indeed, Malay students were significance different from Chinese and Indian samples.

Marketers of brands from these countries are encouraged to mask their brands' countries of origin information when targeting Malay students, as their origin information will bring negative outcome on consumers' purchase decision. However, they are encouraged to associate their brands with favourable country image or focus on product attribute-related information when marketing their brands to this segment. On the other hand, when targeting Chinese students, marketers of brands from these nations are encouraged to incorporate their brands' countries of origin information in their marketing communication, as this segment displayed moderate animosity level towards Europe countries, Singapore and USA, particularly lower level of animosities towards Singapore and USA. Indeed, the brand origin information might bring favourable outcome on the purchase decision of this segment. Additionally, marketers are also encouraged to incorporate the brand origin information when targeting Indian students, as they hold relatively low animosity as compared with the Malay segment.

Marketers are encouraged to consider product category and brand's country of origin cues when targeting different ethnic groups. Students are significance different on their preferences towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin associations. Malay students were significance different to Chinese and Indian samples in most of the cases. Indeed, Malay students tended to display the highest preferences towards Malaysian brands, while Chinese students showed the least preferences towards home grown brand in all product categories, with the exception of dairy products when Indian prefer the least. Therefore, marketers of domestic brands that target Malay students are encouraged to incorporate brand origin information when marketing their brands/products, as this will bring positive impact on consumer purchase decision. Nonetheless, marketers that targeting Chinese and Indian students are encouraged to focus on product attribute-related information and dissociate their brands with its origin, as their brand origin information will bring negative outcome on the purchase decision of these segments.

Furthermore, in terms of foreign brands, students in Penang tended to display highest preferences towards brands from USA, with the exception of dairy products for Malay students. Moreover, the preferences towards brands from Holland and Singapore for three ethnic groups were based on product categories. For example, Malay samples showed higher preference towards Holland brands rather than Singaporean brands in the cases of fashion apparels and textiles as well as electrical goods and appliances, nevertheless Chinese and Indian samples prefer brands from Holland rather than Singaporean brands. These results brought some insights to marketer of brands from these nations, where they are encouraged to design different marketing strategies that based on product categories when targeting different segment, but not standardized their international marketing strategies.

It s believed that consumer animosity of all three ethnic groups are related with their preferences towards different product categories-brands' countries of origin associations. For example, Malay students displayed the highest animosities level, while Chinese students showed the least consumer animosity. Therefore, Malay students demonstrated the highest level of preferences towards home grown brands in most of the cases; nevertheless, Chinese students displayed the least preferences towards domestic brands. Consequently, marketers should take all these three information, namely ethnicity, consumer animosity and product category, into their considerations when formulating and designing marketing strategies and programmes. It is believed that the missing of either one consideration will results unwanted outcome on consumer attitude, behaviour as well as purchase decision.

6. Contributions, Limitations and Recommendations

This study contributes to the body of knowledge by incorporate ethnicity and product categories in the study

of consumer animosity. Previous studies studied examined the concept of consumer animosity generally based on nationality (e.g., Klein et al., 1998; Klein & Ettenson, 1999; Leong et al., 2007; Wansink et al. 2009; Funk et al., 2010; Smith & Li, 2010), but did not further explore consumer animosity based on ethnic group within a nation. Indeed, the results of this study revealed that consumers within a nation displayed significantly different level of consumer animosity. Additionally, they displayed different level of consumer animosity towards different dislike nations.

This study is not without limitations. This study focused only on ethnicity and consumers' preferences, but not their actual purchase decision. It is believed that different ethnic groups might significance different on their actual purchase behaviour. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to extend this study by examining ethnicity and consumers' actually purchase decision. In addition, they are also encouraged to explore the relation between ethnicity, consumer animosity and actual purchase decision.

Moreover, this study revealed that different ethnic groups presented significance different level of consume animosity towards different countries. However, this is not sufficient in providing a comprehensive picture how ethnicity works on consumer animosity. Hence, future researches are called to examine the mediating role play of two concepts, namely worldmindedness and national identification. It is believed that consumers in different ethnic group with different level of worldmindedness and national identification will demonstrate different level of consumer animosity. Indeed, these affect their attitude and behaviours towards the dislike nations.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix

Buy British Last Policy initiated by the Malaysian government in 1981, when the UK press, *Financial Times*, reported the US government and companies used alleged tactics to win a Malaysian contract. Besides, Boycott Danish Products Campaign launched by NGOs in 2006 when Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, abuse Islam by publishing twelve cartoons ridiculing Prophet Muhammad (The Brussels Journal, 2006). In 2008, Boycott Dutch Products Campaign was initiated, as a Dutch legislator posted a film that portrayed Islam as a violent religion (Kuwait Times, 2008). As a result, Malay Muslims were called to boycott Dutch-made products (The Star, 2008). In addition, Boycott US Product Campaign was initiated in 2009, as US support Israel that mounted the offensive in Gaze (BBC News, 2009). A boycott list includes over 150 products ranging from food and beverage to household and skincare items were introduced (Asia Pacific News, 2009). Indeed, there are also some boycotts from European Union to Malaysia. The European Union has initiated a ban on palm oil products from Malaysian in 2007 that resulted by some sensitive ecosystems issue, where they claimed Malaysian oil palm plantations cause to global warming by cutting down forest (The Star, 2007). Additionally, they initiated a ban on Malaysia seafood in the following year, where they found some Malaysian companies lack in health standards and practices set by the European Union (The Star, 2009). Moreover, the conflicting issues between Malaysia and Singapore related to the political right of PulauPutih (PedraBranca), water issue as well as territory issue.