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Does Affinity Country Really Matter? Re-examining the Effect of Consumer Affinity on Consumer Purchase Intention

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ABSTRAK

Saat ini afinitas konsumen secara teratur memiliki peran penting dan berpengaruh positif terhadap niat beli produk yang dibuat di negara afinitas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh afinitas konsumen terhadap niat beli dengan melibatkan kepercayaan produk sebagai variabel mediasi. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kuantitatif dengan pendekatan survey cross sectional. Penelitian ini melibatkan 311 responden sebagai subjek. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner kemudian diolah menggunakan metode partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) untuk mengevaluasi pengaruh afinitas konsumen dan kepercayaan produk terhadap niat beli. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa afinitas konsumen berpengaruh negatif terhadap niat beli tetapi berpengaruh positif terhadap kepercayaan produk. Sedangkan kepercayaan produk berpengaruh langsung dan positif terhadap niat beli. Penelitian ini juga menganalisis pengaruh tidak langsung afinitas konsumen terhadap niat beli melalui kepercayaan produk dan hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa kepercayaan produk terbukti memediasi pengaruh afinitas konsumen terhadap niat beli.

ABSTRACT

Nowadays consumer affinity regularly has an important role and a positive effect on the purchase intention of products made in affinity countries. This study aims to analyses the effect of consumer affinity on purchase intention by involving product trust as a mediating variable. This study is a quantitative study with a cross-sectional survey approach. This study are involving 311 respondents as the subject. The data collected uing questionnaire and then processed using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) method to evaluate the effect of consumer affinity and product trust on purchase intention. The results of this study reveal that consumer affinity has a negative effect on purchase intention but has a positive effect on product trust. Meanwhile, product trust has a direct and positive effect on purchase intention. This study also analyses the indirect effect of consumer affinity on purchase intention through product trust and the results show that product trust is proven to mediate the effect of consumer affinity on purchase intention.

1. INTRODUCTION

A health emergency due to Corona Virus Disaeas 2019 (Covid-19) Indonesia is also experiencing a cosmetic emergency and illegal skincare. At least by the end of 2020 the National Agency of Drug and Food Control (NA-DFC / BPOM) together with the Coordinator for Supervision and Investigator of Civil Servants (Korwas PPNS) of the Polda Metro managed to confiscate illegal cosmetics worth IDR 10 billion, most of which came from South Korea (T. M. Halim & Kiatkawsin, 2021; Yusuf, 2020). The South Korean state and its culture have indeed experienced significant development in the midst of the public, resulting in a "Korean Wave" phenomenon or also known as Hallyu. This is inseparable from the phenomenon of "K-Pop" (a popular Korean pop music group) and Korean drama among young people in Asian countries which have changed from tastes to South Korean-style lifestyles for many Asian (especially young) people over the years. The strength of positive emotion of affinity towards South Korea among people in the region also extends from travel and tourism, electronics, food, to cosmetics (Sukesi & Akbar Hidayat, 2019; Wongtada et al., 2012).

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The phenomenon of "K-Pop" and Korean Drama has also played a very big role in changing the mindset from just decorative make-up to care for perfect and beautiful skin, making South Korea the originator of Beauty SkinCare Make-up (Abdul-Talib & Japeri, 2020; Setyani, 2016). So it is not surprising that many of the skincare products on the market use Korean frills in their products. This concept is then considered as the home origin country, that is, a brand or product which is considered and recognized by the original consumer (made in) from its country of origin (García-de-Frutos & Ortega-Egea, 2015; Rashid et al., 2016; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). And either businesses and consumers often judge brand and products based on their country of origin (Hien et al., 2020; Mandal, 2020). In fact, its influence on consumer decision making is strong and undeniable (Fischer & Zeugner-Roth, 2017; Suh et al., 2015). Therefore, a lot of multinational (MNEs), international and also national companies exert to promote and involve the country of origin for some of their products. Because by linking and connecting the country of origin to their product or brand, companies expect to take advantage of positive perceptive stereotypes that are often affected by the great reputation of the country concerned with the country in the minds of consumers (Bernard & Sarra, 2014; Chen et al., 2011; D'Astous & Ahmed, 1999). Hence from a scientific social psychology point of view, the impact of feeling, sentiments, and thoughts on a certain country is widely studied and examined with respect to behavior, emotions and cognition (Crandall & Sherman, 2016; Fazli-Salehi et al., 2020). And the view of positive emotions in the form of admiration for a foreign country is then referred to in many literatures as an affinity country (Oberecker et al., 2008; Wongtada et al., 2012).

The term affinity refers to a positive attitude or feeling that is favorable and is based mainly on an affective way towards someone or something (de Boer & Schösler, 2016; Jensen-Doss et al., 2018). Therefore, consumer affinity can be interpreted as a consumer's sense of feeling of sympathy, loving, liking, or attachment to a particular (foreign) country, that can represent a prominent and significant predictor of purchasing behavior related to products in the form of services adn goods deriving from related affinity country (Asseraf & Shoham, 2017; Oberecker & Diamantopoulos, 2011; Papadopoulos et al., 2017). A topical topic discussed in cross-cultural marketing research is related to affinity which reflects consumer attitudes towards certain foreign countries and their effect on purchasee behavior (Cakici & Shukla, 2017; Tajfel, 1982) in which purchase intention becomes the preferred matrix to measure it (Cakici & Shukla, 2017; Naseem et al., 2015). Regarding the influence between consumer affinity and purchase intention, according to previous research state that an amount of previous researches on preferences for local or domestic versus foreign products have tended to emphasize either cognitive factors (e.g., state trust) or negative emotions (e.g. animosity) and ignore the role of positive emotions (affinity) (Toffoli et al., 2015). In terms of buying interest, consumers tend to be negative and not intended in buying products from their home countries due to ethnocentrism and animosity and on the contrary, intent to purchase products of goods and services from affinity countries as an output of positive affectional ties with them (Bernard & Sarra, 2014; Oberecker et al., 2008). But even so, previous research suggest that research on the effect of these two variables should be further identified (Oberecker & Diamantopoulos, 2011; Tien, 2018). As a result, a basic literature analysis centered on keywords and study topics was undertaken in order to identify the most relevant areas of research and the primary elements influencing an individual's purchase intention (Prathap & C.C., 2020; Topolšek et al., 2020).

Indeed, theoretically, a person's behavioral intention is highly dependent on their affinity (Cakici & Shukla, 2017; Song et al., 2014). But unfortunately, according to previous research affinity has a different impact on product evaluation and purchase intention (Papadopoulos et al., 2017; Wongtada et al., 2012). Where affinity, as expressed by, is sometimes in line with previous findings and sometimes it does not in affecting purchase intention (Guo et al., 2018; Nes et al., 2014; Oberecker & Diamantopoulos, 2011). So the effect is still unclear unfortunately, the existing research only shows positive results such as research done and there are no comparison results (Bernard & Sarra, 2014; Nes et al., 2014; Oberecker & Diamantopoulos, 2011). For these reasons, this research has an objective to analyses consumer affinity's participation in influencing consumer intention to purchase. In addition, this current research study also presents product trust as a mediating variable to test and evaluate its participation role in mediating the influence of consumer affinity on consumer intention to purchase Skincare Made in South Korea. Meanwhile, besides affinity consumers, product trust is also used as a determining factor of intention and at the same time becomes a mediator variable.

2. METHODS

This study focuses on examining the factors, in this case, customer affinity and trust, that influence Skincare made in South Korea purchase intention. Then, it is clear that this study is a quantitative study with a cross-sectional survey approach. And in this following research, the

questionnaire survey will employ 14 measurement items from a total of 3 constructs. The first construct is consumer affinity as measured by 7 items. The second construct is product trust as measured by 4 items adopted, and the last is the purchase intention construct measured by the 3 items (Bernard & Sarra, 2014; Oberecker & Diamantopoulos, 2011). The questionnaire was then distributed to the research subject (respondents) who have an interest in cosmetics and skincare and live in D.I. Yogyakarta through google form by utilizing a supportive online social media platform to distribute questionnaires to a sample of respondents implementing purposive sampling method.

During the period of 3 month (September 2021 to December 2021), the data collected were 320 respondents. However, 9 of them had to be eliminated because 5 respondents did not meet the predetermined standard criteria and the other 4 did not fill in completely. Therefore, only data from 311 respondents will be processed. The collected questionnaires are then used as the primary source of research for analysis. And for data analysis, this study uses the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) analysis method using the SmartPLS 3.0 application. The PLS model mainly consists of a structural model and a measurement model. Structural model analysis was performed using internal validity and reliability measures. After the structural model is analyzed, the PLS algorithm then uses the t-test and path values for hypothesis verification.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Respondent Profile

The questionnaire is filled out in two phases in this study. In the first stage, respondents were asked to fill out their personal information to find out a description of their personal data and to comply with predetermined criteria. Then the second stage is to contain the research construct along with its items. Therefore, before analyzing further, the respondent's description must first be analyzed. Respondent characteristics is show in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent characteristics

Variable	Description	Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	83	26,69%
	Female	228	73,31%
Age	< 16 years old	11	3,54%
_	17 - 22 years old	57	18,33%
	23 - 28 years old	130	41,80%
	29 - 34 years old	104	33,44%
	> 35 years old	9	2,89%
Residence	City of Yogyakarta	153	49,20%
	Bantul	34	10,93%
	Sleman	101	32,48%
	Wates & Kulon Progo	16	5,14%
	Gunung Kidul	7	2,25%
Employment	Student	121	38,91%
	Private employees	94	30,23%
	Public employees	57	18,33%
	Housewife	33	10,61%
	Unemployment	6	1,93%
Income	≤ Rp. 1.000.000	11	3,54%
	Rp. 1.00.001 - Rp. 1.500.000	27	8,68%
	Rp. 1.500.001 - Rp. 2.000.000	83	26,69%
	Rp. 2.000.001 - Rp. 2.500.000	148	47,59%
	Rp. 2.500.001 - Rp. 3.000.000	29	9,32%
	≥ Rp. 3.000.001	13	4,18%

Base on Table 1, it can be recapitulated that the total respondents in this study were 311 respondents of whom 228 (73.31%) female with 130 (41.80%) people in the age range of 23 - 28 years that residing in City of Yogyakarta of 153 (49.20%) people with employment status as 121 (38.91%) student that have the income range Rp. 2.000.001 - Rp. 2.500.000 of 148 (47.59%) people.

Measurement and Structural Model

In the very first pace of the PLS-SEM analysis technique, The model must be tested or examined. In Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), a model can be said to be a composite or full-structure model if the model meets measurement model and structural model testing. The measurement model is employed to inspect the relationship between indicator variables and their appropriate constructs by firstly testing the reliability and validity of each construct and research item (Hair et al., 2012, 2014; Weston & Gore, 2006). A research construct can be considered reliable if it has a composite reliability (CR) value of ≥ 0.70 on each construct with a standard peritem loading value of ≥ 0.70 . Meanwhile, for the validity test, it is assessed from two sides, from the side of convergent validity and also discriminant validity. In convergent validity, a construct is considered valid if the value shown in average variance extracted (AVE) is ≥ 0.50 in each construct, while in discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion), it is referred from the AVE value of each construct, if it is higher than the squared correlation with any other constructs, then the construct is considered to be valid, if it is lower then the construct is invalid. Measurement model is show in Table 2.

Table 2. Measurement model

Variable	Loading	CR	AVE
Consumer Affinity (X)		0.95	0.75
Consumer Ammity (A)		6	5
I do feel a pleasant feeling towards South Korea	0.900		
I do like South Korea	0.863		
I do feel of sympathy towards South Korea	0.868		
I am really captivated by South Korea	0.851		
I do love South Korea	0.867		
I do feel attached to South Korea	0.838		
South Korea does inspire me	0.893		
D		0.90	0.71
Product Trust (Z)		8	1
Skincare made in South Korea is obviously to be reliable	0.868		
Skincare made in South Korea can be trusted at times	0.821		
Skincare made in South Korea always meets my expectations	0.854		
I can always trust Skincare made in South Korea to be lovely	0.829		
•		0.92	0.79
Purchase Intention (Y)		0	3
It is incredibly possible that I would like to buy Skincare Skincare made in	0.887		
South Korea			
I will definitely try Skincare made in South Korea	0.888		
I will purchase Skincare made in South Korea the next time I need it	0.896		

From Table 2, It can be derived that the entire construction is reliable and valid. Because the CR value shown is ≥ 0.70 in each construct along with the peritem loading value ≥ 0.70 . while the validity value also shows that the overall construction in this study shows the AVE value ≥ 0.50 in convergent validity which is also proven by the AVE value of each construct which is higher than the squared correlation with any other constructs as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Discriminant validity

	1	2	3
Consumer Affinity	0.869		
Product Trust	0.654	0.843	
Purchase Intention	0.143	0.453	0.890

Furthermore, which is also the second pace in the PLS-SEM analysis method is to assess the structural model of this research by determining the hypothesized relationship between latent variables (Hair et al., 2014; Weston & Gore, 2006). The criteria is to evaluate the value of the provisions below: Determination coefficient (R²). The R² is applied to determine and measure the predictive accuracy of the research model provided that it is accepted with a predictive accuracy level which is substantial (0.75), moderate (0.50), or weak (0.25). The results of this research data processing report that R² in purchase intention is 0.246 which means that it is in weak criteria while on product trust is 0.427 which means that it is still in a moderate criteria. The effect size (f²). The f² is applied to determine how much the effect of

the endogenous variables on exogenous by being determined based on the criteria in the form of having a small (0.02), moderate (0.15) and large (0.35) effect. The results of this research data processing report that the effect of consumer affinity on purchase intention has only 0.054 a small effect. At last, there is a large effect on the effect of consumer affinity on product trust of 0.746. Meanwhile, also the effect of product trust on purchase intention with an f^2 value of 0.300 which mens still in moderate effect. cross-validated redundancy (Q^2). The Q^2 is applied d to indicate the predictive capability of the model provided $Q^2 > 0$ is indicative of predictive relevance with 0.15 (weak), 0.15 (moderate) and 0.35 (strong) level of of predictive relevance degree. In the results of this study, the value of Q^2 shows 0.568 which means that the endogenous construction in this study shows the predictive relevance of the strong path model. The summary of hypotheses results is show in Table 4.

Table 4. The summary of hypotheses results

Relationship (Hypotesis)		T Value
Consumer Affinity \rightarrow Purchase Intention (H ₁)	0.268	3.726*
Consumer Affinity \rightarrow Product Trust (H ₂)	0.654	14.453*
Product Trust \rightarrow Purchase Intention (H ₃)	0.628	9.766*
Consumer Affinity \rightarrow Product Trust \rightarrow Purchase Intention (H ₄)	0.411	8.180*

Notes: *Significance at (ρ =0.01);

Based on Table 4, it shows that consumer affinity towards purchase intention has a negative effect (β = -0.268), which means that H₁ is rejected because it is not proven. Meanwhile, consumer affinity on product trust has a positive direct effect (β = 0.654) as well as the direct effect of product trust on purchase intention (β = 0.628). Therefore, both H₂ and H₃ are accepted. As for the mediation effect, using the method of that the evidence for a mediation effect is most potent when there is an indirect effect but no direct effect; it is called "full mediation." When there are indirect and direct effects, it is called "partial mediation." Then the summary of relationships assessment is show in Table 5.

Table 5. The summary of relationships assessment

Path	Direct Effect		Indirect Effect		Total Effect	
raui	В	T Value	β	T Value	β	T Value
Consumer Affinity → Purchase Intention	-0.268	3.726*	0.411	8.180*	0,654	17,065*
Consumer Affinitity → Product Trust	0.654	14.453*	-	-	0,143	2,152**
Product Trust → Purchase Intention	0.628	9.766*	-	-	0,628	10,508*

Notes: *Significance at (ρ =0.01); **Significance at (ρ =0.05);

Base on the research findings shown in table 5, there is no direct effect of consumer affinity on purchase intention and there is a direct effect between consumer affinity on product trust and product trust on purchase intention and also a positive value of the indirect effect of consumer affinity on purchase intention through product trust (β = 0.411). Therefore H4 is accepted because it is proven. Then the final stage is to appraise the results of the path coefficients that represent the hypothetical relationship that connects the constructs as show in Figure 1.

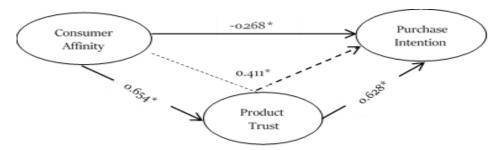


Figure 1. Summarized Result of Direct and Indirect path between the variables tested

Discussion

In the theory of social identity theory, there is a clear discrepancy between one's behavior towards in-group (ethnocentrism), consumer emotional, normative and cognitive attitudes toward products from domestic country (Lee et al., 2020; Nes et al., 2014; Watchravesringkan, 2011; Xin & Seo, 2019), and out-group, which is from different foreign country (affinity) (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2020; Guo et al.,

2018; Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015). In this current study, consumer affinity is an out-group that focuses on products from outside (South Korea) to explain consumer affinity preferences which are then associated with consumer intentention behavior to buy affinity products from South Korea. In addition to consumer affinity, this current study also tries to examine as well as duscuss about the role of the product trust element construct on purchase intention. From the 4 hypotheses that are proposed, only three are accepted (H₂, H₃ and H₄) and one is rejected (H₁). The results of data processing in the hypothesis analysis provide the first empirical evidence of this study which shows a negative value on the direct effect of consumer affinity on purchase intention. Therefore, the H₁ suggested in this study in the form of "Consumer affinity has a direct and positive effect on purchase intention" is not accepted because it is not proven (Baron & Kenny, 1986; R. E. Halim & Zulkarnain, 2017). This evidence is clearly in line with the study of previous research state inconsistent and completely contradicts the results of the majority of several previous empirical studies done by (Bernard & Sarra, 2014; Nes et al., 2014; Oberecker et al., 2008; Oberecker & Diamantopoulos, 2011; Wongtada et al., 2012).

The trust in skincare products made in South Korea shows that consumers have a good quality perception of those products. Products that are perceived to have good quality by consumers tend to meet consumer expectations so that they can make consumers intended to purchase those products (Pavlou et al., 2007; Prathap & C.C., 2020). The theory is then proven in this study where product trust has a positive effect on purchase intention. Therefore, the H3 proposed in this study "Product trust has a direct and positive effect on purchase intention" is accepted because it is proven. The result of this evidence is consistent with and in line with any other previous empirical research results (Chinomona et al., 2013; Curvelo et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019; Wu, 2013).

Moreover the results of this study also show that product trust plays a significant role in mediating the influence of customer affinity on purchase intention after assessing the effect of mediation. Therefore, the H4 proposed in this study "Consumer affinity has an indirect and positive effect on purchase intention through product trust" is accepted because it is proven (Guo et al., 2018; Oberecker et al., 2008; Tien, 2018). Indeed, according to previous researcher consumers will be more likely to buy products from affinity countries when faced with several products because of their high trust (R. E. Halim & Zulkarnain, 2017). In addition to consistent with the results of the previous research this finding also suggests that product quality is an important key in mediating the influence of consumer affinity for purchase intention (Guo et al., 2018; Wongtada et al., 2012). So that when consumer affinity towards South Korea is high, consumer trust in the quality of the country's products will also be good, which in turn will encourage the willingness and desire of consumers to buy. As stated by previous study that the trigger for consumers to purchase products from affinity countries is based on a high level of trust in their affinity countries (Wongtada et al., 2012).

Overall, this study provides important knowledge about how consumer attitudes towards a country can influence their purchase intention. Although the results of this study are quite different from a number of other previous studies where consumer affinity has a negative effect on consumer purchase intention. But still, it cannot be denied that the findings of this research become additional knowledge in the marketing field, especially in international marketing. In addition, this study also provides important implications for managers and also becomes an additional reference for other researchers in the future. Based on the overall results and discussion above, this research can imply managerially that brands or national and international companies struggle and compete to achieve a competitive advantage in attracting consumers to purchase their products to drive company sales. And tapping into the positive stereotypes of the country of origin or affinity country is often considered the most effective and efficient strategy. Therefore, the results and findings of this study will provide new implications that are very important and beneficial for managers or marketers. Marketers (especially those who market international brands) will benefit from understanding the drivers of positive emotions in the form of consumer affinity for foreign countries towards purchase intentions. Apart from that, marketing practitioners will also benefit more from the findings of this study by understanding the importance of consumer trust in products as a mediator of those results.

But, despite everything, the author would like to emphasize that this study has some limitations that must be considered. This study only examines constructs viewed from consumers' positive emotions towards foreign countries (consumer affinity). Many other constructs related to affinities, such as affinity marketing, cultural affinity, and intercultural communication affinity, have not been studied further. Involving the cognitive side such as state trust and negative feelings towards a country such as an animosity or other country-related variables such as consumer ethnocentrism and national identity will also be a fascinating topic for other researchers in the future to evaluate how consumers behave towards a country and its effect on purchase intention as important index to predict consumer behavior. Beside that this study only has access to the Special Region of Yogyakarta with relatively small sample size.

Undoubtedly, access to a broader area and a larger sample will be of great use to other researchers as we advance to evaluate how consumers behave differently in different regions and different countries. Moreover, this research only focuses on the domain of skincare products made in South Korea (Nature Republic) and not on domains and brands from other foreign countries that also have a good reputation and are better known in beauty products such as France (L'oreal), Japan (Bioré, SK-II), or also Indonesia, which has a reputable local skincare brand that competes with international brands (Wardah, Purbasari, Mustika Ratu). And of course, many more gaps can be developed for further research.

4. CONCLUSION

This research ultimately concludes that consumer affinity does not have a direct positive influence on Skincare products made in South Korea purchase intention. This finding is fascinating because it strongly contradicts many previous studies. Nevertheless, consumer affinity still has a positive and significant impact on product trust. In the end, product trust has a positive and significant effect on Skincare products made in South Korea purchase intention, which then simultaneously mediates the influence of consumer affinity on Skincare products made in South Korea purchase intention. Nevertheless, the results and findings of this study will provide new implications that are very important and useful for managers or marketers. Marketers (especially those who market international brands) would benefit from understanding the drivers of positive emotions in the form of consumer affinity for foreign countries for purchase intention. In addition, marketing practitioners will also benefit more from the findings of this study by understanding the importance of consumer trust in the product as a mediator of these results. Thus, this study suggests that consumer affinity research needs to be enriched in different contexts and cultures and situations in the future.

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