

The Relationship of Country Image, Product-Country Image, and Purchase Intention of Korean Products: Focusing on Differences among Ethnic Groups in South Africa*

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to provide practical implications for Korean companies searching for new market opportunities. From the experimental analysis, the impact of country image on product-country image and purchase intention of Korean products are measured. In addition, this study disaggregates the impacts of country image and product-country image and purchase intention among ethnic groups in South Africa for searching further useful implications.

Design/methodology – To examine South African consumers' country image and product-country image towards Korean products, data were collected between June and July 2019 through an online questionnaire, and 335 questionnaires were used for analysis. Firstly, the multivariate analysis was conducted to examine the general tendency of South African consumers' perceptions of country image to Korea, product-country image, and purchase intention among three ethnic group consumers. Then in order to verify the country image model and hypotheses of the study, we analyzed the structural models for each of the three ethnic groups and compared the sizes of the path coefficients for each groups. To compare the difference of path coefficients across ethnic groups, configural invariance, metric invariance, and scalar invariance tests were conducted sequentially.

Findings – In the black and white ethnic groups, the country image had a statistically significant impact on product-country image, but it did not affect the purchase intention to Korean products. The product-country image showed a statistically significant impact on the purchase intention to Korean products in both ethnic group. However, in the coloured ethnic group consumer, the country image had a significant effect on the product-country image, but it did not affect the purchase intention of Korean products. In addition, the product-country image did not have a significant influence on the purchase intention of coloured ethnic group consumers unlike black and white ethnic group consumers. The results of this study suggest that even though differences in terms of the impact of CoI on PCI and PI were investigated for the sample of white, coloured, and black respondents, the groups seemed to respond in a reasonably comparable manner.

Originality/value – South Africa occupies more than 20% of Africa's total GDP in sub-Saharan Africa and is a hub for Southern African logistics as a hub for Korean companies to enter Africa. However, it is rare to find a study focused on the determinants of consumer behavior in South Africa. In particular, this study disaggregates the impacts of country image and product-country image on consumer behavior across ethnic groups in South Africa. Therefore, this study could provide practical implications for Korean firms which desire to diversify their export markets and pioneer future markets.

Keywords: Country Image(CoI), Ethnic Groups, Product-Country Image(PCI), Purchase Intention, South African Consumers

JEL Classifications: M16, M31

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1. Introduction

Recently, Korean companies are making an attempt to preemptively advance into emerging markets. Korean companies have faced difficulties in export to major exporting target countries such as China, USA, and Japan because of various political, economic, and diplomatic problems. Therefore, emerging markets like the BRICS countries are receiving a lot of attention as alternative markets, to cope with various current external environmental changes. In other words, Korean companies are paying much greater attention to entering emerging countries to diversify their export market and pioneer future markets. Especially, African countries have not received much attention from Korean companies because of their low economic development caused by various political, ethnic and historical problems. However, some African countries such as South Africa, Egypt and Nigeria have recently shown high economic growth rates, and Korean companies are entering these countries due to their relative political, economic stability and geographical advantages. In particular, this study focuses on South Africa, as the country is considered the south gate for the African continent, and Korean companies are entering into African through South Africa in full swing.

Korean companies are building their own position in the South African market, mainly by large corporations such as Samsung and LG and Hyundai Motor. However, apart from the interest or favorable response to the brands themselves, South African consumers' country image of Korea or image of Korean products are veiled. Therefore, based on prior studies indicating that a country influences the perception of product attributes as a halo (Erickson et al., 1984) or as a summary construct concept (Han Choong-Min, 1989), this study intends to empirically analyze if the image of Korea actually affect the attitude and purchase intention to Korean products in South Africa. The halo effect model and the summary construct model are the representative theories that explain the country image effect. Among them, the halo effect model is often reflected in the product evaluation of the country, which is perceived as a relatively advanced country. Specifically, the first purpose of this study is to verify whether the country image of Korea has a halo effect on the purchase behavior of Korean products in the South Africa. In addition, this study pays attention to the fact that South Africa is a multi-ethnic country with various ethnic compositions. South Africa has 11 official languages, and the main ethnic groups are Black, White, Coloured, and Asian (KOCIS, 2019). As South Africa is such an ethnically diverse country, we decide to examine whether diverse ethnic groups have different image perceptions on Korea or Korean products, and if the diverse ethnic groups have different effects of CoI. In more specific standings, we investigate whether there are significant similarities and/or differences between ethnic groups in terms of country image on Korea during the evaluating or purchasing of Korean products. The investigation of the behavior of different ethnic groups in South Africa responds to appeals by researchers that ethnicity should be considered in future consumer behavior studies (Burton, 2000).

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to understand the differences of the image perception on Korea and Korean products among ethnic groups and analyze the research model based on the ethnic groups in South Africa. An investigation into the elements of ethnicity will provide valuable information to local and international marketing managers and could prove to be especially valuable in terms of the development of more effective marketing strategies for South African consumer markets. Through this, the current study is expected to provide practical implications for companies targeting South Africa to establish more detailed and sophisticated marketing strategies. In addition, this study is also expected to present academic implications through its expansion of the context of the country image study into an emerging market such as South Africa, and empirically tests the study model.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis

2.1. South Africa

South Africa is an emerging market with a population of about 55 million and a per capita GDP of about \$ 6,500, located at the southernmost point of the African continent. South Africa has a growing middle class with purchasing power due to rapid population growth and urbanization. Hughes, McEwan and Bek (2015) notes that since 1994 the black middle class in South Africa has grown significantly. South African middle classes are diverse and include a large proportion of white South Africans (both affluent and very affluent), 'Black Diamonds' or very-affluent black individuals, and an emerging group of black professionals and white-collar employees in both the public and private sectors. However, the gap between rich and poor is still very large. Additionally, South Africa is one of the world's most resource-rich countries, holding supplies of many mineral resources, including oil, natural gas, coal and uranium. When it comes to consumption patterns, South African consumers prefer traditional means of shopping. The online market has been sluggish due to a low internet penetration rate and high internet usage fees in South Africa. However, the online market is growing rapidly as the number of internet users increases since 2009. As a result, offline purchasing still, as with many other African nations, dictates shopping habits in South Africa.

For many Korean firms, South Africa has emerged as an important market. Several factors have led to this, including the fact that South Africa occupies more than 20% of the total GDP of sub-Saharan Africa and it is a hub for African logistics. South African consumers generally make positive evaluations of Korean electronic products and their perceptions towards Korean automakers, especially for small cars, which are improving. As a result, other Korean products might expect to receive the same positive evaluation. Therefore, South Africa can be regarded as a potentially critical market for Korean exporting companies in terms of export market diversification and investment.

Although few studies exist on South African consumers' country image of Korea or Korean products, recent reports from the Korean Culture and Information Service shows that country image perceptions of South African consumers toward Korea may be understood in a fractional way (KOCIS, 2019). The survey was conducted in October 2018, comprising of 15 countries; China, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, India, Australia, UAE, USA, Mexico, Brazil, UK, France, Germany, Russia, and South Africa. The survey on country image of Korea were collected through an online which included 500 respondents from each country. The survey results showed that 85.6% of South African respondents have a positive image towards Korea. The most influential factors for positive country image formation on Korea were 'modern culture', 'economic level', and 'Korean products and brands'. South African consumers' most frequently purchased Korean 'home appliances' products, followed by 'mobile phone', 'food', 'contents', and 'automobiles' (KOCIS, 2019).

2.2. Country Image

Country image is frequently discussed in explaining the decision-making process that consumers evaluate and purchase foreign products (Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu and Hyder, 2000; Martin and Eroglu, 1993; Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009). Country image is defined as the total of all descriptive, inferential, and informational beliefs about a country (Martin and Eroglu, 1993). There is a continuing debate among researchers as to whether to conceptualize the country image as cognitive dimension as well as emotional dimension.

The studies that approached the national image as the 'cognitive structure of prior

knowledge (schema)' or as the 'accumulated belief in the total characteristics (stereotype)' explained the country image as a cognitive factor for consumer purchasing decision making. For example, Nagashima (1970) defined the country image as 'the imagery, reputation, stereotypes that consumers perceive about a product from a specific country', and he indicated that the country image could be formed by various factors such as product, politics, economy, tradition, culture of the country. However, images have not only cognitive aspects but also affective, and many studies in advertising and service areas insists that affective factors can lead to stronger responses than cognitive factors (Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009).

Schooler (1965) suggested that consumers' country image perception to a specific country of origin affects the consumer product evaluation and purchase intention, and named it 'country-of-origin effect'. Numerous studies have examined whether country of origin acts as a cognitive cue to assess product attributes since the Schooler's study. The representative theories that explain the country of origin effect are halo effect model and summary construct model. Halo means that general views on a particular object affect the assessment of the object, and refers to the tendency of people to form a favorable and negative attitude toward a certain object and then evaluate the specific actions on the object based on their attitude (Thorndike, 1920). The basic assumption of halo effect model is that if there is a lack of experience or information about products of a country, the cognitive reasoning about the quality of the product from the country image of the product is made, and the product attribute is evaluated based on the cognitive reasoning. On the other hand, the summary construct model explains that the impressions and experiences on a country accumulates and forms various beliefs about the product attributes of the country, and these beliefs are integrated into an irrational form and used as summarized information in the product evaluation. The summary construct model is similar to the halo effect model on the assumption that the country image affects the product evaluation in a single cue, but it shows difference in that the belief in product information is summarized into the country image and the country image directly affects the consumer's attitude (Rha et al., 2012). Generally, halo effects are mainly applied to explain the country image effects of developed countries, whereas the summary construct model is mainly applied when consumers don't have enough information of a specific country because of geographical and cultural distances. Han and Terpstra (1986) have defined the country image as a general products quality perception of consumer, and they indicated that the country image would be used as important information in the consumer decision making process. Knight and Calantone (2000) also indicated that country image perception provides a theoretical framework for analyzing the relative importance of country of origin information when compared with other external or internal cues. However, the consumers' cognitive country image perception does not involve the process of evaluation, so it is difficult to explain the behavioral response of consumers.

Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) suggested that it is desirable to examine the country image through Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)'s attitude theory to complement these limitations. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined attitude as a psychological (behavioural) tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular object, and the tendency were thought to display expressive behavior that truly reflects their own attitudes. And the concept of attitude to a specific country means whether the evaluation of the country is favorable or unfavorable. In addition, the attitude includes not only cognitive but also affective and conative aspects such as purchase intention. In country image studies, attitude theory can be a powerful theoretical framework because it can explain (1) what kind of belief or emotion (attitude) consumers have about the country, (2) how such country image affects the evaluation of the country or product, and (3) how the country image interacts with other components (ethnocentrism,

geocentrism, animosity, etc.) typically mentioned in the country of origin studies.

Consumers generally think of a cognitive country image as a proxy for inferring the quality of a product when they don't have enough information about a product. In this situation, the belief or attitude toward a specific country could affect the evaluation and purchase intention of the product (Han Choong-Min, 1989; Han Choong-Min and Terpstra, 1988; Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009). Many empirical study on Korean country image of foreign consumers shows that positive country image of Korea increases the intention to visit Korea and increases the favorable image of products and the purchase intention of Korean products (Lee You-Kyung, 2010; Lee You-Kyung and Robb, 2016; Mendbayar et al., 2018). And recent studies have found that there were different effects between the cognitive country image such as technological or economic development state and the affective country image such as preference for the culture. In other words, consumers' purchase intentions are not only influenced by cognitive product evaluations, but also influenced by affective evaluations of specific countries (Wang, Barnes and Ahn, 2012). Especially, Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) found that affective country image such as attachment and preference have a great influence on the immediate purchase intention of foreign products. However, it is true that numerous previous studies on CoI have focused primarily on the cognitive component of a country image (Heslop et al., 2004). We predict that is because of the difficulties of consumers to form affective country image of the target country if they lack of knowledge or experience because of the physical and cultural distance.

Schooler (1965) had firstly conducted the empirical study of product-country image (PCI), then he found the country origin of a product might affect consumer evaluations on that product. Schooler (1965)'s study could be seen as a beginning of the study of country of origin (COO) effect. The COO topic proliferated into various directions. The early COO studies perceived COO as an information cue which consumers can use in the purchase decision process (Steenkamp, 1990), and later scholars examined the impacts of additional consumers' demographic or psychographic factors on the COO effect (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004). Other COO studies have focused on the distinction among the constructs of COO and country of manufacture (COM), country of assembly (COA), and country of design (COD) (Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). Contemporary research into the concept of COO has extended recent knowledge in both the cognitive and affective processing components (Laroche et al., 2005; Pappu, Quester and Cooksey, 2007; Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009). The proposition of the PCI study model is that the product image might be impacted by the image of the country from which the product originates. For example, German automaker brands like Mercedes Benz, BMW, or Audi could be affected by favorable country image, because Germany is well known as a country with high mechanical technology. That being said, such favorable brand/product image would result in a favorable consumer attitude and consumption behavior. Both of the halo effect perspectives (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Han Choong-Min and Terpstra, 1988) and the summary effect perspective (Johansson, 1989), as previously mentioned above, have conclusively propositioned that country image could affect consumers' product-country image. Therefore, we assume that country image (CoI) of Korea will increase favorable product-country image (PCI) and purchase intention (PI) to Korean products in South Africa. From the discussion and the literature review presented above, we suggest H1, H2, and H3 as follows.

H1: Country image has a positive impact on product-country image.

H2: Country image has a positive impact on purchase intention.

H3: Product-country image has a positive impact on purchase intention.

2.3. Differential Impacts of Country Image across Ethnic Groups

Contemporary research into the concept of CoI has also grown in its understanding of how CoI may influence the evaluation, and purchasing decisions of consumers. Especially, in multi-cultural nations, researchers have investigated inter-ethnic group differences between sub-cultures (Piron, 2002). Studies investigating ethnicity have, however, provided mixed results (Shankarmahesh, 2006). Rossiter and Chan (1998) argue that ethnicity is such a clear and relevant causal construct in business and consumer behavior that it cannot be disregarded in current research. As country image studies continue to grow in popularity, a theme followed in this study is the extent to which ethnicity plays a part in the purchasing and evaluation process of consumers. Customers have many choices for buying products, however, many elements have an effect on product success and customer purchase intention when ethnicity is involved.

Studies have shown that country image can influence customer opinion and evaluation about a product (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993). Studies show that as an extrinsic cue, country image helps people in judging and making decisions. As a result, evaluating extrinsic cues is more convenient than intrinsic attributes, and the effect is involuntary on people's evaluation (Dagger and Raciti, 2011). In seminal work on the topic in South Africa, Kamwendo et al. (2014) found that with regards to ethnicity, certain groups reacted differently when evaluating domestic and foreign products. They found that certain ethnic groups displayed varying level of patriotism and ethnocentric tendencies towards products which differed greatly with regards to ethnicity. Their results found that black respondents provided ethnocentric responses towards foreign products, while white and coloured respondents were more open to the idea of foreign products. Several of these findings were echoed by Muposhi et al. (2018) in a study on the purchasing habits of Chinese apparels in South Africa. They found that ethnicity played a part in the ethnocentric behavior of South African consumers with regards to foreign products.

The perception of consumers, country of origin and perception of a country, all influence the customer purchase intention (Wang et al., 2012). Purchase intention, or the decision to act and show an individual's behavior according to the products (Wang and Yang, 2008) has a relationship with factors such as culture (Chen et al., 2011). This cognitive country image can influence the product image related with the country, and may have an indirect influence on purchase intention or directly predict customer thoughts and preferences between country image and purchase intention (Chen et al., 2011). The intention to purchase is primarily channeled through consumers' perceptions. In particular, cognitive CI is perceived to influence the image associated with a country (Laroche et al., 2003). This in turn, acts as an important cue that influences perceived product quality, leading to purchase intention. Due to South Africa's rich cultural and political history, it is assumed that different racial groups within the country could potentially respond differently to particular marketing strategies. For example, Radder, Li and Pietersen (2006), found that white and coloured South Africans were found to be more price-conscious and individualistic in nature when making product evaluations and purchasing products, in the results of a study focused on three major race groups in terms of their CoI.

In certain situations, information may be viewed as a relevant product attribute, which influences consumers' evaluations through affective and behavioral intentions processes (Johansson, 1989). In the case of affect, a product's country of origin may evoke positive or negative feelings of emotion. Whether the consumer likes the product will then depend in part, on their feelings toward the sourcing country. It is important to remember that the image of one country could be heavily reflected by the affective component, while the image

of another country could be based more on a cognitive component. When an affective component is considered, country image should have a greater impact on product evaluation than on product beliefs. Klein et al. (1998) noted that in situations when cognitive CoI and affective CoI are inconsistent, purchase intention or ownership of a foreign product are highly associated with emotions towards a particular country, which may well be independent from consumer quality evaluations. This consumer affection may block out other information processing (Wyer et al., 1999).

Klein et al. (1998) found that with regards to emotional and behavioral intentions, social norms can defame certain country products. In the family structure of black South Africans, a collective tendency often referred to as the spirit of 'Ubuntu' exists (Theron and Theron, 2010). This attitude geared towards collectivism made black people more brand conscious, displaying higher levels of ethnocentricity than other race groups towards foreign products. As such, it is assumed that affective CoI will influence product evaluation and purchase intention. Based on the above discussion, we suggest the study question as below:

Study Question 3. What are the differences among three ethnic groups consumers of black, white and coloured in the path of the country image model proposed in the study?

2.4. Study Model

The purpose of this study is to verify a structural model for the relationship of country image (CoI), product-country image (PCI), and purchase intention (PI) of Korean products in South Africa, and to find what distinctions among the ethnic groups in South Africa. The following study questions and hypotheses were set up based on the literature review and theoretical considerations.

Study Question 1. What is the overall level of the country image toward Korea, the product-country image, and the purchase intention to Korean products of South African consumers?

Study Question 2. What is the structural impact of South African consumers' country image on the product-country image and purchase intention?

H1: Country image has a positive impact on product-country image.

H2: Country image has a positive impact on purchase intention.

H3: Product-country image has a positive impact on purchase intention.

Study Question 3. What are the differences among three ethnic groups consumers of black, white and coloured in the path of the country image model proposed in the study?

Fig. 1. Study Model

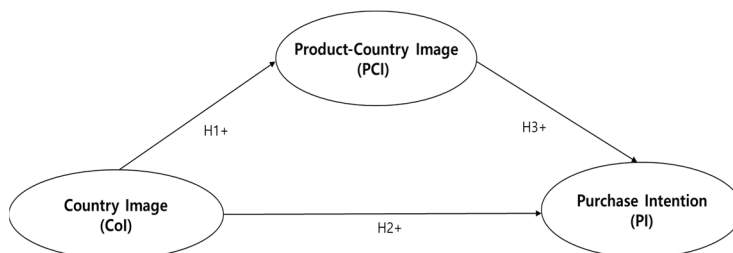


Fig. 1 shows the study model. This study suggests study hypotheses based on literatures and previous studies about country image, product-country image, and purchase intention.

3. Data Collection and Measurements

3.1. Data Collection

A questionnaire was developed which was used to collect primary data for this study. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part included questions relating to country image(CoI), product-country image(PCI), and purchase intention(PI) of Korean products. To measure these questions, a seven-point, Likert scale was used, with options ranging from 1, representing “strongly disagree”, to 7, representing “strongly agree.” The second part of the questionnaire comprised of various demographic data, which included respondents “gender, age, gross personal income and education levels.”

Once the initial questionnaire was developed and completed in English, it was translated into Xhosa and Afrikaans in an effort to boost the response rate and reliability of the respondents answers (Many South Africans do not speak English as a first language). This was achieved with the assistance of independent translators. After the translation of the questionnaires into Xhosa and Afrikaans, they were translated back to English to ensure conceptual equivalence. Thereafter, a pilot study was performed (10 respondents per language) to identify and eliminate possible interpretation problems (response error). After the pilot study was completed, the questionnaire was edited to incorporate the feedback from those individuals who answered the pilot study.

To examine South African consumers’ country image and attitude towards South Korean products, data were collected between June and July 2019 through the use of an online questionnaire. In addition, convenience sampling was performed employing an intercept technique. The intercept technique encouraged consumers near various shopping centers to complete a structured self-administered questionnaire. In total, 420 questionnaires were administered. After accounting for incomplete responses to some parts of the questionnaire, outliers, and unengaged responses, 335 questionnaires were considered valid for analysis.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

Characteristics	<u>White</u>		<u>Coloured</u>		<u>Black</u>	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Gender						
Male	51	43.6	70	67.3	43	37.7
Female	66	56.4	34	32.7	70	61.4
Missing variable	-	-	-	-	1	.9
Age						
under 20yrs	9	7.7	6	5.8	14	12.3
20-29yrs	11	9.4	13	12.5	19	16.7
30-39yrs	50	42.7	37	35.6	30	26.3
40-49yrs	11	9.4	11	10.6	12	10.5
50-59yrs	21	17.9	21	20.2	28	24.6
above 60	15	12.9	16	15.4	11	9.7

Table 1. (Continued)

Characteristics	White		Coloured		Black	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Education						
some secondary school	13	11.1	6	5.8	14	12.3
matric completed	22	18.8	22	21.2	13	28.9
some college	39	33.3	16	15.4	34	29.8
associate degree	12	10.3	15	14.4	21	18.4
Bachelor's degree	18	15.4	45	43.3	12	10.5
graduate or professional degree	13	11.1	0	.0	0	.0
Income						
under R3,000	11	9.4	9	8.7	17	14.9
R3,000-R5,999	8	6.8	12	11.5	14	12.3
R6,000-R9,499	21	17.9	44	42.3	21	18.4
R9,500-R14,999	13	11.1	11	10.6	20	17.5
R15,000-R19,499	9	7.7	22	21.2	32	28.1
R19,500-R24,999	18	15.4	3	2.9	6	5.3
above R25,000	37	31.6	3	2.9	4	3.5

Note: Total gross personal income (before deductions) per month.

3.2 Measurement

The operational definition and measurement instruments for the main constructs of the study are as follows: First, the country image was conceptualized as 'the degree of cognitive judgment on the level of economic and technological development of Korea'. The measurement instrument was composed of 4 items, 'Korea is an economically well developed,' 'Korea has high living standards,' 'Korea has advanced technology,' and 'Korea has a good standard of life' (Martin and Eroglu, 1993). Second, product-country image is measured using items adapted from Leong et al. (2008). The PCI captured perceptions of workmanship, color, design, reliability, and. The measurement instrument was composed of 4 items, 'Korean products imported from Korea are generally of good quality,' 'Korean products imported from Korea are generally produced with care,' 'Korean products imported from Korea are generally well designed,' and 'Korean products imported from Korea generally offer good value for money.' (Leong et al., 2008). Third, the purchase intention to Korean products was conceptualized as 'intention to purchase Korean products voluntarily and actively', and the 4 items were reversely measured as 'I would never buy that was made in Korea,' 'If buying products, I will not buy Korean made products,' 'I do not like the idea of owning products that was made in Korea', and 'whenever possible I will avoid buying products that was made in Korea' (Wang et al., 2012). All questions were measured by a 7-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree; 7: strongly agree).

4. Results

4.1. Variance Test and Correlation Analysis of Variables

The multivariate analysis was conducted to examine the general tendency of South African

consumers' perceptions of country image to Korea, product-country image, and purchase intention among three ethnic group consumers. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2.

The country image to Korea among three ethnic groups consumers in South Africa is more than average, showing that the South African consumers generally have a positive image toward Korea. Particularly, the coloured consumers showed the highest country image toward Korea among the three ethnic groups, however the difference among the three ethnic groups was not statistically significant. This shows that South African consumers recognize Korea as an economically and technologically advanced country. However, in the black and coloured ethnic groups, the purchase intention was lower than product-country image, which can be predicted that there may be factors that hinder the image of Korean products from being connected to purchase intention in these two ethnic groups.

As a result of post-hoc test, the white ethnic group consumers showed more positive product-country image and higher purchase intention to Korean products than the consumers of the black and coloured ethnic groups. The results show that the white ethnic group consumers have the most favorable attitude toward Korean products.

Table 2. Variance Test Results

Ethnic Groups	Country Image	Product-country Image	Purchase Intention
Black (N=114)	4.66(1.19)	4.34(1.21)	3.51(1.23)
White (N=117)	5.15(1.24)	4.76(.99)	5.43(1.70)
Coloured (N=104)	5.23(1.14)	4.32(1.36)	3.36(1.49)
Total (N=335)	5.00(1.22)	4.48(1.205)	4.13(1.76)
F	.875	6.005**	11.895***

Table 3 shows correlation matrix. We use the Pearson correlation coefficient to examine the strength and direction of the linear relationship between variables. The correlation coefficient ranges in value from -0.25 to 0.56 which indicates that the values are significant at $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed). Although, it shows some low Pearson correlation coefficients among variables in some ethnic groups, it does not mean that no relationship exists between the variables. The variables may have a nonlinear relationship. The variables may have a nonlinear relationship. To check for nonlinear relationships among variables, we do multivariate statistical analysis using Structural Equation Modeling. Detailed correlation analysis results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis Results

	<u>Black</u>			<u>White</u>			<u>Coloured</u>		
	COI	PCI	PI	COI	PCI	PI	COI	PCI	PI
Country image (COI)	1.00			1.00			1.00		
Product-country image (PCI)	.35**	1.00		.56**	1.00		.31**	1.00	
Purchase intention (PI)	-.25**	-.38**	1.00	.36**	.28**	1.00	-.24**	-.21**	1.00

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), N = 335.

4.2. Validity and Reliability Test of Measurement Items

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 12 items to explore the measured variables in the study. Three principal component factors were extracted due to them having

a cut-off factor loading of 0.6 and an Eigen-value greater than 1. Country image (CoI) accounted for 18.03%, 18.83% and 18.89% of the total variance, product-country image (PCI) accounted for 25.56%, 17.50%, and 28.63% of the total variance, while Purchase Intention (PI) accounted for 17.88%, 18.74%, and 21.07% of the total variance, for each black, white, and coloured ethnic groups. The rotated component matrix of the factor analysis is listed in Table 3. Regarding construct reliability of the four factors, all Cronbach's alpha exceeded the threshold value of 0.7. This provides acquiescent evidence for the high reliability of the constructs listed above.

Table 4. Validity and Reliability Test Results

	Black			White			Coloured		
	COI	PCI	PI	COI	PCI	PI	COI	PCI	PI
Cronbach alpha	0.71	0.72	0.73	0.83	0.75	0.94	0.70	0.73	0.08
COI1	0.72	0.31	-0.07	0.76	0.15	0.25	0.83	0.10	-0.11
COI2	0.69	0.01	-0.18	0.80	0.12	0.12	0.61	0.07	-0.07
COI3	0.71	0.01	-0.06	0.71	0.22	0.32	0.63	0.03	-0.12
COI4	0.71	0.19	-0.01	0.82	0.10	-0.01	0.74	0.26	-0.03
PCI1	0.13	0.71	-0.08	-0.12	0.59	0.22	0.09	0.69	-0.16
PCI2	0.23	0.61	-0.35	0.40	0.69	0.09	0.18	0.71	-0.02
PCI3	0.04	0.76	-0.12	0.58	0.67	0.02	-0.02	0.76	-0.11
PCI4	0.13	0.72	-0.05	0.26	0.80	0.04	0.19	0.75	-0.01
PI1	-0.10	0.03	0.77	0.16	0.09	0.91	-0.17	-0.15	0.69
PI1	0.15	-0.34	0.63	0.15	-0.02	0.89	0.03	-0.13	0.87
PI3	-0.19	-0.07	0.69	0.09	0.19	0.89	-0.19	0.04	0.76
PI4	-0.14	-0.22	0.78	0.16	0.16	0.88	-0.05	-0.08	0.81
Eigen-value	2.16	2.26	2.27	3.07	2.10	3.44	2.15	2.249	2.53
Variance(%)	18.03	18.83	18.89	25.56	17.50	28.63	17.88	18.74	21.07

4.3. Results of Structural Equation Modeling Analysis

In order to verify the country image model and hypotheses of the study, we analyzed the structural models for each of the three ethnic groups and compared the sizes of the path coefficients for each groups.

As a result of the structural equation model for black ethnic group, most of the fitness indexes met the standard values ($\chi^2 = 71.39$ (df = 51), $p < .001$; GFI = .91, AGFI = .86, NFI = .80, RMR = .16, RMSEA = .05). The hypothesis test results are shown in Table 4. The country image of black ethnic group consumers has a significant positive effect on the product-country image, but has no significant direct effect on purchase intention. In addition, product-country image showed a positive effect on purchase intentions to Korean products.

According to the results of the study, although the country image had a positive impact on the product-country image, the country image could not increase the purchase intention to Korean products. In addition, we found that the product-country image could increase the purchase intention. It was confirmed that improving image of Korean products is more effective than the improvement of country image in order to increase consumers' intention to buy Korean products in black ethnic group consumers.

The fit of the structural model to the white ethnic group was also good ($\chi^2 = 80.88$ (df = 51), $p < .001$, GFI = .90, AGFI = .85, NFI = .91, RMR = .16, RMSEA = .07). As shown in Table 4, the country image of white ethnic group consumers had a statistically significant impact on product-country image, but it did not affect the purchase intention to Korean products. The product-country image showed a statistically significant impact on the purchase intention to Korean products.

The fit index of the structural equation model of coloured ethnic group consumer was found to be acceptable ($\chi^2 = 97.92$ (df = 51), $p < .001$, GFI = .87, AGFI = .79, NFI = .75, RMR = .22, RMSEA = .09). In the coloured ethnic group consumer, hypothesis 1 was supported but hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3 were rejected. In other words, the country image had a significant effect on the product-country image, but it did not affect the purchase intention of Korean products. In addition, the product-country image did not have a significant influence on the purchase intention of coloured ethnic group consumers unlike black and white ethnic group consumers. It can be predicted that forming a positive image of Korea would be an effective marketing method to increase positive image of Korean products.

Based on the results of the path analysis using the SEM, it was found that the country Image (CoI) toward Korea had a significant positive effect on the product-country image (PCI) to Korean products in the all three ethnic groups. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported. However, hypothesis 2 was rejected because the country image toward Korea had no statistically significant influence on the purchase intention (PI) of Korean products in all three ethnic groups. Lastly, the impact of PCI on PI of Korean product was found to have a positive effect in black and white ethnic groups. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is partly supported.

Table 5. Structural Equation Modeling Results of COI Effects

Path	Black			White			Coloured		
	Estimate	C.R.	P	Estimate	C.R.	P	Estimate	C.R.	P
COI => PCI	0.71	3.08	.002	0.23	2.48	.013	0.68	2.45	.014
COI => PI	0.07	0.30	.764	0.42	0.57	.572	0.28	1.41	.157
PCI => PI	0.63	3.32	.000	0.72	2.90	.004	0.35	1.07	.284
Model Fit	χ^2 (df)=71.39(51)			χ^2 (df)=80.88(51)			χ^2 (df)=97.92(51)		
	GFI=.91 AGFI=.86			GFI=.90 AGFI=.85			GFI=.87 AGFI=.79		
	NFI=.80 RMR=.16			NFI=.91 RMR=.16			NFI=.75 RMR=.22		
	RMSEA=.05			RMSEA=.07			RMSEA=.09		

4.4. Comparison of SEM Results among Three Ethnic Groups

Fig. 2 summarizes the results of country image model of South African consumers, and shows the comparison of the impacts of country image on product-country image and purchase intention to Korean products among the three ethnic groups in South Africa.

To compare the difference of path coefficients across ethnic groups, configural invariance, metric invariance, and scalar invariance tests were conducted sequentially (Bentler, 1990; Byrne, 2003; Gregorich, 2006; Milfont and Fischer, 2010; Runyan et al., 2012). As a result of the configural invariance test whether the overall factor structure stipulated by the measurement fits well for all groups in the sample, the configural congruity was confirmed because the goodness-of-fit indices of comparative fit index (CFI) and RMSEA's were acceptable. Next, the test for metric invariance examined whether the factor loadings were equivalent across the groups by verifying the χ^2 difference between the unconstrained model

and the constrained model with equalization constraints. As a result of the verification, the metric congruity was confirmed because the χ^2 difference between the two models was not statistically significant considering the degrees of freedom. Lastly, scalar invariance was examined by constraining the path between variables of the structural model. As a result, the χ^2 difference between the measurement weight model and the structural weight model was found to be statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that the structure of the groups is the same was rejected. The detailed model fit index is shown in Table 6.

Fig. 2. Comparison of Casual Effects among Constructs across Ethnic Groups

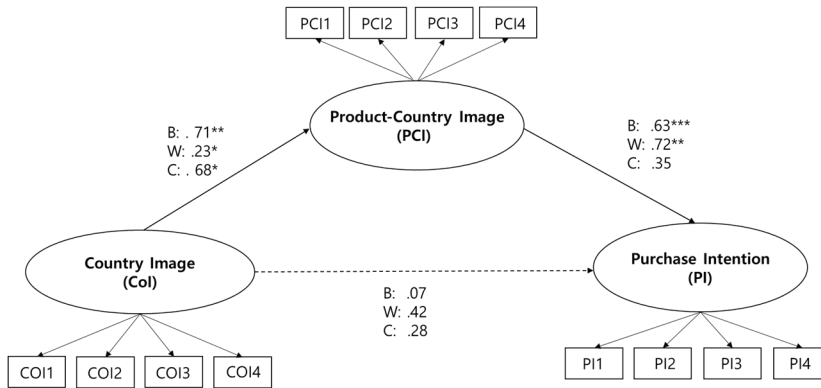


Table 6. Invariance Tests of Increasingly Constrained Models

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$ (Δ df)	p-value
Model 1. Unconstrained	239.85	153	.94	.04		.000
Model 2. Measurement Weight	301.74	171	.90	.05	61.89(18)	.000
Model 3. Structural Weight	340.49	177	.88	.05	38.75(6)	.000

Table 7. Pair Ways Parameter Comparisons

Path	<u>Critical Ratio for Differences between Parameters</u>		
	Black-White	Black-Coloured	White-Coloured
H1. CoI \rightarrow PCI	-1.89*	-.430	.917
H2. CoI \rightarrow PI	-2.409**	1.171	.394
H3. PCI \rightarrow PI	2.790**	3.071***	-.657

Note: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 7 shows the results of comparing the path coefficients among the three ethnic groups. As a result, the influence of CoI on PCI was statistically significant between black and white ethnic group. Although the comparison of the impacts of CoI on PCI between black and white ethnic groups was statistically significant, the path coefficients were not statistically significant in the all three ethnic groups. Therefore, it is difficult to define meanings to the difference of the path coefficient between the two groups. And the impacts of PCI on PI of Korean product was statistically significant between black and white ethnic groups. And the

path coefficient between black and white ethnic groups was also statistically significant. Lastly, the comparison of impacts differences of PCI on PI between black and coloured ethnic groups showed statistically significant, but the path coefficient was not statistically significant between PCI and PI in coloured ethnic group.

5. Conclusion and Implications

5.1. Conclusion

The awareness of country image remains a significant factor to consider when firms partake in cross-border business. From a cognitive perspective, the image consumers hold towards other countries may play an important role in the success or failure of products in the global marketplace. Within these global markets, culture plays an additional role in the continued progress of firms. In societies where various cultural groups exist, the effects of country image may differ greatly. The culturally diverse nature of these types of markets, coupled with rapidly increasing competition, makes it imperative for marketing practitioners to understand culture and reduce multicultural misunderstanding through culturally sensitive marketing strategies. In emerging economies characterized by multiculturalism, such as South Africa, the awareness and understanding of consumers' diverse cultural values and the compatibility of marketing strategies can produce a sustainable competitive advantage for firms.

The results of this study suggest that even though differences in terms of the impact of CoI on PCI and PI were investigated for the sample of white, coloured, and black respondents, the groups seemed to respond in a reasonably comparable manner. The main differences found was that the sample of coloured respondents were less willing to purchase Korean products based on the product image of Korean products, than were white or black respondents. Further results based on the country image towards Korea among three ethnic groups consumers in South Africa showed that consumers commonly had a positive image toward the country of Korea. Predominantly, coloured consumers showed the highest country image toward Korea among the three ethnic groups. These findings confirmed that South African consumers distinguish Korea as an economically progressive and technologically advanced country. White ethnic group consumers showed a positive product-country image and higher purchase intention to Korean products than black and coloured consumers.

Additional findings suggest that black and coloured consumers showed a lower intention to purchase based on product-country image. These findings confirm that there may be factors hindering the image of Korean products from being connected to purchase intention in these two ethnic groups. One reason could be based on the ethnocentric nature of these ethnic groups (Kamwendo et al., 2014). Theron and Theron (2010) found that black South African respondents in particular were very supportive of South African made products. In South Africa, products made in the country carry a "Proudly South African" label. Consumers in the country are encouraged to only buy local in an effort to create jobs. Black respondents, due to their stronger ethnocentric nature, often take it upon themselves to support locally produced products. A further reason for the difference based on purchasing intention may come down to price. Radder et al. (2006) found that in South Africa, coloured consumers were more price-conscious than other ethnic groups. This could support the notion that although coloured consumers view Korea in a positive light, factors such as switching cost may play a more important role in the decision to purchase. This may explain why for coloured respondent's, Korean country image had a significant effect on the product-country

image, but it did not affect the purchase intention of Korean products. Additionally, product-country image did not have a significant influence on the purchase intention of coloured ethnic group consumers unlike black and white ethnic group consumers.

Another factor worth considering, which has been suggested with regards to the contradictory results between ethnic groups in South Africa is the spirit of 'Ubuntu' (Theron and Theron, 2010). Black South Africans are considered extremely collective in nature. Ubuntu is a Nguni Bantu term meaning "humanity." It is often translated as "I am because we are," or "humanity" towards others. This belief is strongly shared among black South Africans and forms the basis of their collective behavior. Therefore, decisions made with regards to purchasing behavior or the perception of other countries may be shared across the wider black population based on Ubuntu. This factor may help explain why the country image of black consumers has a significant positive effect on the product-country image, but no direct effect on purchase intention existed, while product-country image showed a positive effect on the intentions to purchase Korean products.

As a final point regarding ethnic groups in South Africa; Korea's country image of white consumers was found to be statistically significant in impacting product-country image. Moreover, the product-country image showed a statistically significant impact on the intention of white consumers to purchase Korean products. These results may be attributed toward the lower ethnocentric and individualistic nature of white South African groups (Kamwendo et al., 2014). With a traditionally higher economic status in the old South Africa (pre-1994), white South African consumers have been familiar with purchasing of foreign brands for a longer period than other ethnic groups on the country. It is only recently, with the advent of 'Black Diamonds' or black professionals (Hughes, McEwan and Bek, 2015) and white-collar employees in both the public and private sectors that this socio-economic scenario has shifted. As a result, white South Africans may be more familiar with Korea and Korean products. A final point worth mentioning which may, or may not carry any weight regarding the outcomes of the results refers to the past relationship between South Africa and South Korea. As early as the 1990s, Korean companies and their citizens enjoyed privileged status in the old apartheid South Africa. During this time, Chinese and other South East Asian nations were classified as black, or coloured nationals under the old South African government. During the same time, South Korean and Japanese citizens were provided with 'honorary white status' and as such were allowed to work and travel freely. As a result of this, white South Africans may be more familiar with Korea while black or coloured South Africans may hold a certain level of animosity towards the country or products and firms emanating from Korea. Final results from the study show that COI toward Korea had a significantly positive effect on PCI to Korean products in the all three ethnic groups. However, country image toward Korea had no statistically significant influence on the purchase intention of Korean products in all three ethnic groups. Finally, the impact of PCI on purchase intention of Korean product was found to have a positive effect in the black and white ethnic groups. The path coefficients among the three ethnic groups indicate the influence of COI on PCI was statistically significant between black and white ethnic groups.

5.2. Implications

This study yields many significant implications for marketing literature and practice. Globalization and trade liberalization are inevitable trends that organizations need to consider. Firms will continue to have operations in different countries in order to achieve their purposes such as minimizing costs, establishing new markets and achieving competitive advantages. While it remains important for firms customize marketing communication

strategies for ethnic-specific segment markets, it is equally important for marketing practitioners to develop strategies based on the knowledge of prevailing attributes of segment markets. According to the results of the study, although country image had a positive impact on the product-country image, Korea's country image could not increase the purchasing intention towards Korean products. However, this study found that product-country image could increase the intention of South African consumers to purchase Korean products. As a result of these findings it was confirmed that it remains more imperative for Korean firms to improving the image of Korean products than it is to improve country image in order to increase consumers' intention to buy Korean products in South Africa. Importantly however, ignoring the positive image of Korea would be a huge mistake for Korean companies. The current 'Korean wave' of Korean food, K-pop, K-dramas, and humanitarian work around the world has brought much positive publicity to the country. Tapping into positive country, coupled with the workmanship and quality associated with Korean products remains an important marketing strategy. Country image plays an important role in consumers' market behavior. The benefit from promoting information regarding product image when their country enjoys positive stereotypes affords organizations boundless opportunities. Often times, due to the geographical distance between the two countries, South African consumers mistake Korean brands with Japanese ones. This, despite the huge popularity of K-pop in South Africa. As a result, firms are encouraged to continue integrating strategies into their global expansion plans that would incorporate both country and product images. It can be predicted that forming a positive image of Korea would be an effective marketing method to increase positive image of Korean products.

As a closing point, the results confirm that cultural diversity can be analyzed within a multicultural nation and that these results may differ based on the ethnicity of the population group. Based on culture in terms of marketing strategies, it therefore seems that similar strategies could be used by marketing managers for white, coloured, and black South African consumers when dealing with consumer's intention to purchase. However, these strategies should still be differentiated based on the three sub-samples of the study. From a marketing perspective, marketing managers could develop advertising campaigns with nationalistic themes geared at influencing black consumers while focusing on the global appeal of Korean products to influence white and coloured consumers. As South African consumers slowly move to online means of communication, companies could also make use social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to inform consumers of new products, possibly linking Korea's image to that of the products. As mentioned earlier, a large number of South African consumers support the 'Proudly South African' initiative. As a result, Korean companies could benefit from association with South African companies. This has been done with great success by Japanese (Toyota) and German (Volkswagen) firms, who base certain operations in South Africa, and contribute to the betterment of the country.

5.3. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

A possible limitation of this study is the sampling characteristics of the respondents. South Africa is a multi-cultural society with eleven official languages and five racial population groups. As a consequence, the results of this study cannot be generalized to the broader population of South Africa. Additionally, only a limited geographical area was covered during this study, focusing mostly in the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces. Another limitation to the study may be the small sample size collected from different ethnic groups in South Africa. This study collected limited samples from three ethnic groups.

Future research may choose to include additional racial groups and focus on a larger

geographical area. Studies may also focus on larger sample sizes with regards to individual ethnic groups in an effort to gauge more reliable findings.

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