

Consumers' Ethnocentrism and Perception of Country-Of-Origin of Automobiles: Evidence from Nigeria

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Abstract
The Nigerian Automotive Industry is one sector that has recently sprung up as foreign investors are establishing automotive factories coupled with indigenous efforts like the Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing Company at Nnewi, Anambra State. Automobiles are high involvement products that require adequate planning and saving before a purchase decision is made. In arriving at a purchase decision, paramount among the considerations is quality and price. Nigerians high preference for foreign products against locally manufactured ones is a concern to the government and policy makers especially the patronage of locally manufactured automobiles in the face of competing foreign brands. This therefore makes country-of-origin (COO) effects an interesting area for marketing researchers. This study is aimed at understanding the perception of Nigerian automobiles users towards made in Nigeria automobiles. Specifically, it compared country image perception of locally manufactured automobiles against four (4) selected foreign brands and ethnocentric tendencies for the patronage of locally manufactured automobiles. SPSS 21 was used for the analysis which utilised descriptive statistics and ANOVA. The study found that automobiles manufactured in developed economies were rated higher than the ones from developing economies. An interesting finding of the study is that a segment, that is, ethnocentric Nigerians prefer locally manufactured automobiles to foreign ones. It is also revealed that though this segment prefers quality but are willing to pay more in order to sustain the industry for job creation and economic development. It is therefore recommended that the government and industry regulators should provide incentives to the automobiles manufacturers like tax holidays while increasing tax on foreign brands, amidst other recommendations.
Keywords: Ethnocentrism, quality, price, country-of-origin, locally made, product image, perception, automobiles

1. Introduction

In many areas such as social, political, economic and developmental dimensions of the Nigerian entity, it is ostensible the lack of patriotism in the Nigerian project (Odia & Isibor, 2014).The Nigerian business climate is fraught with many challenges especially the preference of Nigerians for foreign products (Oyeniyi, 2009). This challenge has led to the closure of local firms, stifled indigenous initiative and consistent shrinking of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The resultant effect is the skyrocketing unemployment rate, increase in crime wave and the rush into politics as the alternative for survival.

In recent times, however, there have been noticeable turnaround as indigenous entrepreneurs have taken the gauntlet to brace the challenge in investing in the country. The drive to invest in the country, according to Ighomwenghian (2014), has been largely due to friendly economic policies put in place by the Federal Government. Sectors such as telecommunication, energy, agriculture, petroleum, manufacturing and automobiles have all tested entrance of new investors. While other sectors are important, the automobile sector driven by the Nigerian Automotive Industry Development Plan demands closer scrutiny. According to the National Automotive Council (NAC, 2014), the sector is one area the country can reap greatly from. For instance, in 2012, Nigeria imported 400,000 vehicles (100,000 new and 300,000 used) value at N550 Billion ($4 Billion). This huge sum could have gone to the economy if there was a vibrant automotive sector. The industry can generate 70,000 skilled and 210,000 unskilled direct and indirect jobs. NAC (2014) also noted that 490,000 other jobs would also be created in the raw material supply industries.

In the light of this, the effort of Innosson Vehicle Manufacturing company and other vehicle assembling plants such as Toyota, Nissan, Peugeot and Hyundai need to be explored especially how they can compete favourably with those manufactured or assembled abroad. Extant studies on related country of origin studies in Nigeria centred on Nigeria's perception of foreign products (Oyeniyi, 2009), Nigerians perception of made in Nigeria products (Oladele & Arogundade, 2011), Ford Motors Technological Innovation and knowledge transfer in the Nigeria market (Oigiagbe, George & Owoyemi, 2012). No research to the best of our knowledge has studied the perception of Nigerian automobile users of both locally made or assembled and foreign made automobiles. The aim of this study is therefore to quantitatively analyse the country-of-origin perception of Nigerian automobile users and to provide a descriptive analyses of Nigerian automobile users' ethnocentric tendency towards made in Nigeria vehicles. The paper is divided into the following sections: section one deals with the introduction; section two deals with the theory of country-of-origin; section three deals with materials

and methods; section four deals with analysis and results while section five deals with discussion, implication and conclusion.

2. Theory of Country-of-Origin Effects

There is conceptual controversy as to what constitute country-of-origin (COO). The difference underpins Monrai, Lascu & Monrai's (1998) arguement that no acceptable definition exists on COO. However, Samiee (1987, cited in Elliot & Cameron, 1994, p.50) opine that country-of-origin is seen as "any influence, positive or negative, that the country of manufacture might have on the consumer's choice processes or subsequent behaviour. Schoolar's (1965) seminal was the first to quantitatively show that consumers rate products according to their country-of-origin. This theory posits that product evaluation occurs on both intrinsic and extrinsic cues (Magnusson, Westjohn & Zdravkovic, 2011). Intrinsic cues, according to Bloemer, Brijs & Kasper (2009) comprise the cognitive processes which is made up of the physical makeup of the product such as colour, texture, technical specifications, performance, taste and design. Extrinsic cues occur on the external evaluation of the product in such forms as reputation, brand equity, price, brand name and country-of-origin (Bloemer, Krijs & Kasper, 2009).

Many studies have shown that consumers perceive products from developed economies as superior while those from developing economies as inferior (Speece & Nguyen, 2005; Papadpoulos & Heslop, 1993, Dagger & Raciti, 2011). Dagger & Raciti (2011) posit that certain products have been tied to certain countries. For example, Germany for automobiles, Japan for electronics, Italy and France for Fashion and US for services. For this reason consumers develop stereotypes which form a sequence of biases about countries and product originating from them. The existence of these stereotypes and biases makes it difficult for developing countries to produce products that will be seen as possessing superior quality even among their local consumers (Zbib et al. 2010). Empirically, however, Elliot & Cameron (1994) found that country-of-origin was significantly less important as a choice determinant than product quality and price.

2.1 Nigeria Country Image and Made-In-Nigeria Automobiles

The image of Nigeria in the past has been on a downward spiral (Odia & Isibor, 2014). Internationally, Nigerians are perceived as criminals and fraudsters that cannot be trusted (Akunyili, 2009). Even within Nigeria, it is difficult for an average Nigerian to trust a fellow Nigerian. This lack of trust has affected products produced in Nigeria as an average Nigeria has high preference for goods produced abroad even to level of convenience goods. Consequently, some goods manufactured in Nigeria have been tagged as made in a foreign country. For instance, some shoes made in Aba, Abia State, have been tagged "Made in Italy", since Nigerians have high preference for Italian shoes. To restore this confidence, the Federal Government has undertaken several damage control and image boosting strategies like the Heart of Africa (HOA) project and the "Rebrand Nigeria Campaign" through the "Good People, Great Nation" (Odia & Isibor, 2014). The above and other economic catalytic policies such as "YOUWIN", AGROPRENUEUR, Automotive Industrial Master Plan and the rebasing of the country's GDP has positioned Nigeria as an economic hub. Auto assembly plants that were closed such as Peugeot Automobiles, Leyland and ANAMCO have kick-started operation.

New assembly plants have been built and commissioned like Hyundai and Nissan (Ighomwenghai, 2014). Most importantly, wholly-owned indigenous automobile manufacturing plant, Innoson Vehicle Automobile Company Ltd. has not only been opened but is competitively struggling for a shore of the Nigeria and foreign automobile market by producing different ranges of automobiles such as luxurious buses, mini buses, lorries, waste disposal trucks, SUVs and salon cars. One misconception among Nigerians is that those vehicles produced in Nigeria were purchased abroad and repainted. Extant literatures lucidly clarify two concepts in COO studies: manufacturing country and assembly country (Chao, 1998; Srinivasan, Jain & Sikand, 2004). The manufacturing country is the country of design where the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) operate while the assembly country is the country where the final work on the product has been completed. There is no country that serves to provide all the needed parts and components for the manufacture of a given product especially the highly technical ones (Srinivasan, Jain & Sikand, 2004).

2.2 Price, Quality and Ethnocentrism of Nigerian Automobile Users

One important feature of an emerging economy is that they are price sensitive (Rizomyliotis, Ukpabi, Konstantoulaki, Kostopoulos & Lopez, 2014). However, the NAC (2014) submit that automobile firms have moderately priced cars ranging from N1,500,000 – N1,900,000. Besides that, NAC (2014) posits that the Nigerian Automotive Council (NAC) in collaboration with Nigerian banks have introduced vehicle credit purchase schemes at a minimally low interest rate. They also note that the scheme will act as a cushion for existing vehicle owners to trade in their vehicles for new ones. This therefore means that price will not pose a challenge for Nigerians who want to own cars that are made in Nigeria. Safety and product standard are important variables for a viable automotive industry. The collaboration of NAC with the Standard Organisation

of Nigeria (SON) is heart-warming. NAC (2014) states that Nigerian assembly plants are mandatorily directed to obtain ISO 9001 QMS certification within two years of operation. Country ethnocentrism, according to Shimp & Sharma (1987) is defined as a trait-like property of an individual's personality whereby the individual or his group is used as a focal point in judging others. Consumer ethnocentrism makes an individual to value home-made products more than foreign made ones (Krystallis & Chryssochoidis, 2006).

They opine that ethnocentrism varies among product categories with less expensive products having high ethnocentric tendencies. However, Balabanis & Diamanopoulos (2004) posit that country ethnocentrism is a more consistent predictor of preferences for domestic product rather than foreign products irrespective of the product category. Highly ethnocentric consumers question the appropriateness and morality of buying foreign-made products because it hurts the economy and causes loss of jobs (Srinivasan, Jain & Sikand, 2004).

Hypotheses

1. *Automobile users with ethnocentric tendencies will patronise made in Nigeria automobiles than foreign made ones*
2. *Ethnocentric auto users are more concerned with promoting local economy than quality*
3. *Ethnocentric auto users are more concerned in promoting local economy than price*

3. Materials and Methods

While Nigeria was the focal country of study, countries selected for evaluation included USA, Germany, Japan and China and the product was the automobiles manufactured in these countries, see Dagger & Raciti (2011). The study was conducted in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised auto users within the city of Port Harcourt while the sample comprised staff and students of Rivers State Polytechnic, Bori, who own or use cars. Similar study (Tseng & Balabanis, 2011) used students of a tertiary institution in Taiwan. The study was conducted in the month of April, 2015. Since access to the local vehicle licensing authority for a sampling frame proved very difficult, the researchers opted for convenience sampling as suggested by Roth & Diamantopoulos (2009). With convenience sampling, the determination of the population and sampling size through mathematical computation became irrelevant as the researchers did not make use of a sampling frame (see Bhakar, Bhakar & Bhakar, 2013).

The study used structured survey method. The survey comprised two sections: demographic section and Likert-Scale ordered questions. The Likert-Scale questions which measured decision making, quality, price and ethnocentrism were adopted from Krystallis & Chryssochoidis (2006). However, some of the questions were adapted to suit the study as Krystallis & Chryssochoidis (2006) measurement was on convenience goods. The questions were measured on a scale ranging from 5-Stongly Agree to 1-Strongly Disagree. A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed; while 5 were not returned, 4 were badly filled and had missing scores leaving a total of 121 which represent 93% usable response rate. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 2.1) was used. The score for each construct was obtained by computing the mean of all the scales related to the particular construct. Since the study was descriptive, that is to find the differences in perception of Nigerian auto users about made in Nigeria automobiles and imported ones, mean and ANOVA were used; see Tseng & Balabanis (2011).

Ranges of Innoson motors – Wholly made in Nigeria

Vehicle model	IVM TAXI
Length(mm)	3998 4310
Width(mm)	1720
Height	1505
The number or Seats	5
Engine Modle	MITSU BISHI (1.5L)
Calibration Powr(kw)	83
Type of transmission	5MT or 4AT

Vehicle Model	IVMG5
Length (mm)	4640
Width (mm)	1815
Height (mm)	1800
The Number Of Seats	5
Egine Model	MITSU BISHI 4G69S4N (2.4L)
Calibration Power (kw)	100/5250
Fuel Type	Petrol
Drive System	2WD
Transmission	MT (or AT)

Vehicle model	IVM 6540
Length(mm)	5380
Width(mm)	1880
Height	2285
The number or Seats	13–17
Engine Modle	Japan Technology–3RZ (2.7L)
Calibration Powr(kw)	110
Fuel Type	Petrol

IVM CARRIER 4WD

Main performance and parameters

Engine	
Engine model	MITSU BISHI 4G69S4N
Fuel type	Petrol
Power(Kw/rpm)	100/5250
Torque(N.m/rpm)	200/2500~3000
Capacity(L)	2.378
Structure	In–line、Four cylinders、Four–stroke
Max.speed(km/h)	⩾140
Fuelfeed	Separated Sequence MFI Muhipoint Fuel Injection
Compression ratio	9.8:1
Dimensions	
Body dimension(mm) Length x Width x Height	5310x1750x1775
Cargo(mm) Length x Width x Height	1600x1505x480
Wheelbase(mm)	3100
Rated loading capacity(kg)	500
Min.ground clearance(mm)	202
Min.turning diameter(m)	⩽13.5
Weights	
Kerb weight(kg)	1780(4WD)
GVM(kg)	2605(4WD)
Capacities	
Seating capacity(person)	5
Fuel tank capacity(L)	73
Transmission	
Type	5MT
Chassis	
Front suspension	Dual wishbone,torsion barspring
Rear suspension	plate spring
front braking system	Disk
Rear braking system	Drum
Tyre size	235/70R16
Drive system	4WD (or 2WD)

Vehicle model	IVM 6601
Length(mm)	6000
Width(mm)	2050
Height	2680
The number or Seats	23
Engine Modle	Japan Technology–3RZ (2.7L)
Calibration Powr(kw)	110/4800
Fuel Type	Petrol

4. Analysis and Result

The result of the demographic configuration is as shown in Table 1.

Demographics		Frequency	Valid Frequency Percent (%)
Gender	Male	36	29.8
	Female	85	70.2
	19-25	13	10.7
Age	26-35	21	17.4
	36-50	69	57
	51—Above	18	14.9
Education	SSCE	1	0.8
	ND	16	13.2
	B.Sc/HND	60	49.6
	Masters	34	28.1
	PhD	10	8.3
Working Status	Student	8	6.6
	Clerical	12	9.9
	Administrative	43	35.5
	Teaching	38	31.4
	Managerial	12	9.9
	Retired	8	6.6
Preference for automobiles country of Origin	USA	49	40.5
	Germany	20	16.5
	Nigeria	18	14.9
	Japan	24	19.8
	China	10	8.3

Table 1 indicate that 29.8% were male while 70.2% were female. It also shows that age bracket 36-50 (57%) participated more in the study than other age brackets. It further shows that those with B.Sc./HND as their qualification participated more (49.6) than those with other qualifications. Those in the administrative cadre with 35.5% participation topped the working status category. In terms of preference of automobiles, participants preferred USA made automobiles with 40.5% than the rest of the countries. It also showed that automobiles from developed countries (USA, Germany and Japan) were rated higher than those from developing countries (China and Nigeria). This finding is consistent with other studies on preference of automobiles COO (Magnusson, Westjohn & Zdravkovic, 2011; Dagger & Raciti, 2011; Srinivasan, Jain & Sikand, 2004).

Hypothesis Test

To test the first hypothesis, ANOVA test was run as shown in Table 2. Ethnocentric scores ranked Nigeria (M = 3.88, SD = 0.65) higher than US (M = 3.71, SD = 0.76), Germany (M = 3.42, SD = 0.42), Japan (M = 3.44, SD = 0.78) and China (M = 3.86, SD = 0.50). The test therefore accepts Hypothesis 1. The second hypothesis was run to check if ethnocentric auto users are more concerned in promoting local economy than quality. The test was conducted by comparing the ethnocentric and quality mean scores of Nigeria. The result shows that Quality (M = 3.96, SD = 0.66) ranked higher than Ethnocentrism (M = 3.88, SD = 0.65). This indicates that Hypothesis 2 was rejected. Those who preferred made in Nigeria automobiles are not willing to trade quality for ethnocentrism.

Table 2 Perception of automobiles from five countries (One-Way ANOVA)

	USA		Germany		Nigeria		Japan		China		
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	***p-value***
Quality	4.10	0.75	3.85	0.87	3.96	0.66	3.92	0.43	4.03	0.88	0.75
Price	3.61	0.97	3.22	0.73	3.72	0.81	3.57	0.66	3.93	0.93	0.19
Ethnocentrism	3.71	0.76	3.42	0.57	3.88	0.65	3.44	0.78	3.86	0.50	0.04

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; p <0.05

The third hypothesis was run to check if ethnocentric auto users are more concerned in promoting local economy than price. The test was conducted by comparing the ethnocentric and price mean scores of Nigeria as shown in Table 3. The result shows that Price (M = 3.72, SD = 0.81) ranked lower than Ethnocentrism (M = 3.88, SD = 0.65). This shows that the third hypothesis was accepted.

Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation differences for variables

Countries		Quality	Price	Ethnocentrism
USA	Mean	4.10	3.61	3.71
	SD	0.75	0.97	0.76
Germany	Mean	3.85	3.22	3.42
	SD	0.87	0.73	0.57
Nigeria	Mean	3.96	3.72	3.88
	SD	0.66	0.81	0.65
Japan	Mean	3.92	3.57	3.44
	SD	0.43	0.66	0.78
China	Mean	4.03	3.93	3.86
	SD	0.88	0.93	0.50
	Mean	4.00	3.58	3.65

5. Discussion and Implications

The new Automotive Industrial Master Plan has made Nigeria to join the league of vehicle manufacturing countries. The growth of the industry depends on the patronage received especially from the local market. This study sought to find out about the perception of Nigerians towards made in Nigeria automobiles as compared to those manufactured abroad. It also sought to find if there are ethnocentric auto users who are willing to stake their means in order to promote the industry. The study found that automobiles manufactured in the developed economies were rated higher than those from developing countries including Nigeria. However, the study made an interesting finding. It revealed that there are still segments of the Nigeria market who believe in the country and wish to promote the automotive industry by patronising made in Nigeria automobiles above those manufactured abroad. Though these segments believe that made in Nigeria automobiles should carry the right quality, they believe that with the right pricing structure and vehicle credit purchase s schemes, they will patronise made in Nigeria automobiles above those manufactured abroad.

It is therefore important for the Federal Government to continue to provide incentive to the automobile industry as that will help to improve the quality of locally made automobiles. The National Automotive Council should ensure that a synergy exist between banks and the auto manufacturers into promote vehicle financing schemes. This is likely going to encourage these segments and also attract others to patronage these automobiles. Also, imported automobiles should be heavily taxed while tax holidays should be granted local manufacturers. The result found that quality is very paramount to an auto user. Therefore, it is important for the regulatory body to ensure that quality is maintained by ensuring that ISO 9001 as envisaged is pursued vigorously in the industry. With the right framework, the industry is set to compete favourably with other sectors in terms of job creation, contribution to GDP and foreign exchange earnings.

6. Conclusion

Nigeria has joined the league of automobiles manufacturers. While there was a high preference for foreign made autos, some segments of the Nigerian auto market still prefer locally made one. This segment still prefer quality but are willing to pay more in order to promote local economy. The industry regulator and relevant stakeholders should therefore seek to promote quality and provide credit schemes to buyers and tax holidays to the manufacturers as the industry is set to compete favourably with other sectors. Additionally, advertising and other promotional appeals should have at least 80% local content. This is important because ethnocentric consumers will be more pleased to identify more local content in the promotional programme of the vehicle manufacturers.

Limitation of the Study and Direction for Future Research

One limitation of the study is the sample used as it is feared that it may not be a truly representative of the study population. The scales used were adopted from one author which was not cross-checked with another authority. The study from where the scales were adopted from measured convenience goods but this study used it for a high involvement product. Further research is suggested to be directed towards how quality can be perceived in the automobile industry in Nigeria.

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