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Ethnocentrism in the Virtual World: When Nationalism Influences Purchase Intention in Video Game

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Abstract

Ethnocentrism is significant in numerous marketing research and implementation tactics for corporations and related agencies. This study contextualizes ethnocentrism in the video game industry, where game goods are infused with a nation's art and culture. This study aims to construct and test the coherence of a causal link model between ethnocentrism, attitudes, and purchase intention of virtual goods and in-app purchases of gaming items and the adulteration of national art and culture by the nation's people. Consumer Ethnocentrism affects Consumer Attitude and Purchase Intention, but there is no indirect effect via consumer attitude on purchase intention. This study advised business owners to use national art and culture as a strategy for game development and to produce game business products.

Keywords: Ethnocentrism, Video Game, Purchase Intention, Virtual World, Cultural Virtual Goods

Introduction

Currently, the distribution and servicing of game products are expanding steadily. It is also a phenomenon that plays an essential role in life and altering the culture of individuals' everyday lives Kshetri (2009), where the growth trend of the video game business is noted to increase annually from the two superpowers, China and the United States (Kshetri, 2009; Palma-Ruiz et al., 2022; Schaap, 2010). It is partially attributable to electronic sports (e-sports) competitions (Palma-Ruiz et al., 2022). From the current income of $151.06 billion, the trend will continue to expand over the following five to seven years, and it might increase by 12.9% in 2027. (Primasari, 2022).

The research of Khaled and Iskandar in 2022 indicated that many game providers offer free-to-play games and generate income through in-app purchases or auxiliary services purchased by users or players. This type of technique provides a substantial amount of revenue. In-app purchases of game products are the primary source of income for game suppliers. The number of games accessible for download on the iOS mobile app store is more significant than 1,000 (Apple, App Store online section in January 2022), ignoring the vast majority of alternative download methods.

A free-to-play game service strategy is a popular and widely used business model in the competitive game industry in which customers of the game service can

access the game and the service for free. Still, the service provider provides a marketing method to drive the purchase intention of virtual goods or other related value-added services in users or gamers (Alha et al., 2014). The nature of this free-to-play game service strategy can be found on all game product platforms, including console games, computer games, and mobile games. Still, the most frequently seen are Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO) games, social media games, shooting games, and casual games found in the form of applications on mobile devices or tablets (Alha et al., 2014; Klein et al., 2006), which generates revenue for all game providers, e.g., in iOS mobile. (Rintala et al., 2013). In addition, the information of in-app and virtual goods trading services on the Valve company's stream community market generates and supplies a well-known game distributor that generates a substantial amount of revenue from the sale of virtual goods and additional content that complements various game products (STEAM by Valve Corporation, accessed online January 2022) and is also a significant revenue generator for other game providers (Ho & Wu, 2012).

As depicted in Figure 1, each nation's native art and culture are included in the game's aspects to make them more authentic.

Figure 1 Game products containing Japanese national symbol adulteration

Culture can be viewed as a marketing commodity, particularly in Traditional Cultures that, via the process of Cultural Commodification, are changed into a cultural product that attracts customers (Lind & Barham, 2004).

Adopting the culture and business strategy of game products to assist the game industry and game creators in the country by combining it with the country's long-

cultivated national values can result in economic and social progress. This gives operators a business model to build a revenue-generating strategy and sustain their business inside the gaming ecosystem. Consequently, the researcher is interested in studying the model of customer ethnocentrism on attitude and purchase intention of in-app purchase on free-to-play games that were developed and designed with the national culture and art using population and sample data in Thailand to create a strategic model of virtual goods and in-app purchase of game products that are infused with the national art and culture of the nation's people.

Literature review

Currently, gaming products are a viral medium Quandt (2015), followed by the introduction of competitive video games with comparable prize money and viewership to traditional sports (Quandt, 2015). From an academic standpoint, Lokhman et al. (2018) identifies the number of published academic articles with important e-sports content in the study of Social Sciences and Business Administration. Ethnocentrism has been cited in the literature as a significant factor influencing purchase intent, particularly for items or services produced by people in one's own country (Bizumic, 2018; Dogan & Yaprak, 2017; Suryaningsih, 2020). Ethnocentrism is typically viewed in two forms: "Political perspective of customers" (Political) and "Symbolic perspective" (Symbolic), instances of which can be observed in the product category of Thailand's game products, which were invented or developed by Thai people, as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Game products that are adulterated with

The work of Sjöblom and Hamari (2017), which compared the definitions of the two terms, reveals a striking distinction between e-sports and traditional sports: "traditional sports" is the creation of competitive activities that take place in the real world, whereas "e-sports" is the creation of competitive events that take place in the virtual world using electronic devices and computer systems. Additional material, components, and virtual goods are made accessible to players and users of general and e-sports competition games to generate revenue for operators and license holders. In so-called Virtual Worlds, where players are represented by fictional characters (Bishop, 2009), games and e-sports tournaments occur. The player can choose decorations, customize their surrogate's look by changing clothes, and alter the atmosphere. In 1906, the scholar Sumner initiated the academic discussion of ethnocentrism (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). In 1976, social scientists Lewis and Lyn conducted a study. They discovered that Consumer Ethnocentrism is involved in marketing operations and has emerged as a concept known as Consumer Ethnocentrism Javalgi et al. (2005) with the basic idea that people with high ethnicity have the idea of supporting their ethnicity.

There is a comparison in the way of not wanting to be acted by other ethnic groups or in a way that suppresses or exploits their ethnic group. It bases its purchase selections on the provenance or country of manufacture of particular products (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Shoham et al., 2016). In 1987, Shimp and Sharma (1987) devised a customer ethnocentrism scale and investigated the degree to which ethnocentrism influences consumer purchase intention; this measurement was eventually refined into the California Ethnocentrism Scale. It seeks to quantify the purchase or consumption of items by "consumers" for marketing research on consumer behavior. The preceding is an economic view of ethnocentrism. Still, it can also have symbolic interpretations, such as Edwards and Kilpatrick (1948) study that describes one element of ethnocentrism, nationalism, and divides it into two dimensions: "Political Consumer Nationalism," which focuses on the national economy, and "Symbolic Consumer Nationalism," which focuses on the expression of patriotism through self-

identification or conspicuous consumption. In addition, as previously indicated, a gaming product is a form of "media" product. Research incorporating various media items, such as films representing their nationality, will motivate consumers with intense ethnocentrism to give more to these works. In addition, some games provide the opportunity to design digital goods or in-app game products through design contests or propose design solutions (Steam, 2022, retrieved from https://www.dota2.com/workshop/?l=thai; Garena Online Thailand, 2020, retrieved from https://rov.in.th/articles/mister.rov). Consumer attitudes are still widely studied today (Han & Nam, 2019a; Sean Lee et al., 2019; Makanyeza & Du Toit, 2017; Rambocas & Mahabir, 2021; Thomas et al., 2020; Wilkins et al., 2019), which was discovered to have a direct influence on purchase intention of product or other types of products among consumers Han and Nam (2019a) research has been conducted on this variable in the context of game products, notably involving virtual items or In-app purchases in free-to-play games. According to the available study, attitudes significantly impact purchasing intentions. A broad spectrum of negative social perceptions and attitudes regarding game products exists. As the game is excessively addictive, there may be an abundance of medical literature on gaming activity addiction, such as Lemmens et al. (2009); Weinstein (2010) research on play-related symptoms and behavior. In addition, a substantial corpus of literature is devoted to a clinical study of the illness. The dissemination of negative news about users of game products, whether through online news websites or the publication of unfavorable game content by various news agencies, is another evident component. These may impact the support and development of game goods as well as other firms in the game ecosystem, resulting in a potential loss of chances for knowledge development and economic growth in the game industry in each country (Kotler & Kelly, 2009; Wu & Lo, 2009).

Several kinds of literature have investigated ethnocentrism, attitude, and purchase intention, such as the studies of Akdoğan et al. (2012); Blazquez-Resino et al. (2021); Erdogan and Uzkurt (2010); Guo and Zhou (2017); Ishii (2009); Seulgi Lee et al. (2017); Maksan et al. (2019); (Shoham et al., 2016), and others, which prompted the researcher to apply the concepts to

H1 Consumer ethnocentrism has a positive influence on attitude toward the in-app

purchase and virtual goods on free to play a game that was developed and designed with the national culture and art by Thai people

H2 *Consumer ethnocentrism has a positive influence on purchase intention of in-app purchases and virtual goods on free to play a game that was developed and designed with the national culture and art by Thai people*

Consumer attitudes today are still widely studied Han and Nam (2019b); Kiriri (2019); Sean Lee et al. (2019); Makanyeza and Du Toit (2017); Rambocas and Mahabir (2021); Thomas et al. (2020); (Wilkins et al., 2019), which was found to have a direct influence on purchase intention of product or other types of products on consumers. In the context of game products, little investigation of this variable has been identified, notably addressing virtual items or In-app purchases on free-to-play-the-game. From the literature, investigations have established that attitudes majorly affect purchasing intentions. In the context of game products, there is a wide spectrum of unfavorable social perceptions and attitudes about this type of product. This may be because there is a lot of medical literature on gaming activity addiction, such as Lemmens et al. (2009); Weinstein (2010) literature on play-related symptoms and behavior as the game is too addictive. A vast body of literature also studies the illness's clinical trials. Another evident component is the communication of negative news about users of game products, whether it be news on online platforms or the release of negative game content from various news organizations. These may affect the support and development of game products and affect other businesses in the game ecosystem, potentially causing a loss of knowledge development opportunities in the game industry and opportunities for economic growth of the game industry in each country (Kotler & Kelly, 2009; Wu & Lo, 2009). Howard and Gengler (2001) came up with evaluating consumer attitudes towards a product. Qin et al. (2019) used it to design the product with the adulteration of faith, traditions, and cultural values directly associated with this research study. Such literary instruments focus on the emotional or feeling component of the customer, which is analogous to the work of Alha et al. (2014), in which the term "attitude" refers to the measurement and weight of feelings. It is found to be understood and measured in this fashion. Several studies have investigated how attitudes positively influence consumer purchase intentions, such as Sean Lee et al. (2019); Maksan et al. (2019); Meng and Choi (2016); Pöyry et al. (2021); Um

(2021) allow the researcher to apply hypotheses in the context of in-app purchase and virtual goods in free-to-play game business as follows:

H3 *attitude has a positive influence on purchase intention of in-app purchase and virtual goods on free to play a game that was developed and designed with the national culture and art by Thai people*

Research Methodology

The research population consisted of members of the general public who are interested in viewing and following the news, are gamers or participate in e-sports competitions, are familiar with virtual goods, and are familiar with the use of virtual goods design in conjunction with national art and culture. The researcher employed quota sampling by identifying the type of game to be played on each platform, i.e., PC, Console, and Mobile. Both portable and connected consoles are compatible with television equipment. The researcher utilized a convenience sample from each country region with provincial representatives. A questionnaire was employed to collect data for the investigation. Total data was obtained from 385 individuals, plus an additional 15 individuals to prevent incomplete data or data loss, for a total of 400 individuals. Hair et al. advised a reasonable sample size ranging from 200 to 400 samples following Nattaya Pattapisetwong Primasari (2022), who explored the estimation of sample sizes utilized in structural equation model analysis.

This study is quantitative. The study was conducted by collecting secondary data from literature reviews, concepts, theories, documents, and related research, as well as primary data from the instrument using questionnaires as a data collection instrument, and then analyzing the data statistically with the statistical package for social science research. Include inferential statistics, i.e., the use of structural equation modeling methods for Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of all variables in the conceptual framework of this research, and perform path analysis to test hypotheses and explain both direct and indirect influences between variables.

Using closed-ended questions, the research instrument was a questionnaire used to collect data based on textbook and literature reviews connected to the research.

The questions used to measure the level of customer ethnocentrism it was

developed and applied from the "Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale: CETSCALE)," which was based on a study by Herche (1992); Klein et al. (2006); Shimp and Sharma (1987); Suryaningsih (2020), and adjusted to be the questionnaire that was a specific measurement at the game product, with the questions used to measure the level of customer ethnocentrism of the samples in As for the questions used to measure the level of attitude, they were devised and implemented based on the research of Gwinner and Swanson (2003); Howard and Gengler (2001); Qin et al. (2019); Silvera and Austad (2004), and Spears and Singh (2004). The questions used to measure the level of purchase intent were devised and implemented based on the research of Spears and Singh (2004), Sean Lee et al. (2019); Primasari (2022); Silvera and Austad (2004); Suryaningsih (2020)

The Cronbach's Alpha test of reliability revealed that the questionnaire employed as the instrument in this study yielded test results for consumer ethnocentrism, attitude, and purchase intent that exceeded the 0.70 standards. This research instrument, a questionnaire, was capable of measuring the data confidently.

From the literature study and variable selection, Figure 3 depicts the conceptual framework for the investigation.

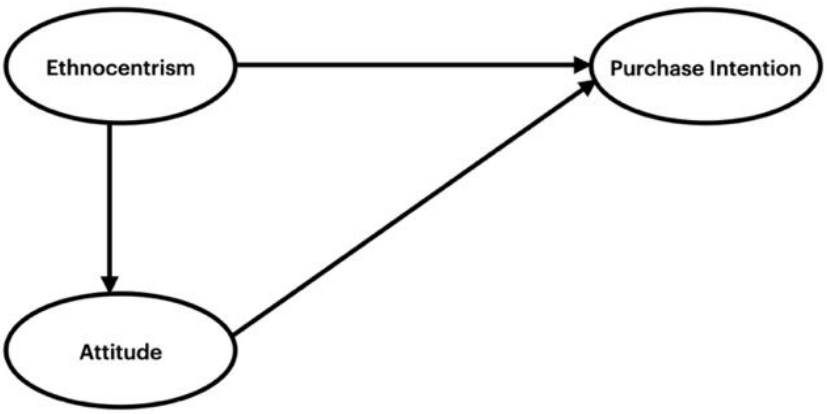

Figure 3 Conceptual framework for research

Research Results

The questions 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, and 14 that had factor loadings of less than

0.6, namely 0.59, 0.29, 0.48, 0.59, 0.58, 0.41, and 0.45, were removed from the model for factor analysis. Subsequently, it was determined that question 3 of the attitude questions had a factor weight of less than 0.6, which was 0.50; therefore, it was removed from the model. Lastly, it was determined that item 2 of the purchase intention question had a factor weight of 0.59 or less. Thus the researcher deleted this observed variable and conducted a new statistical analysis. Questions 8, 10, and 12 had factor loadings of 0.58, 0.56, and 0.58 for the question about client ethnocentrism. Regarding the question on attitude and buying intent, no observed variables had factor loadings below an acceptable level. The researcher then deleted the observable factors and re-analyzed the data, leaving 12 observed variables, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Factor Loadings

Observable variable	Factor loading
Buying products made by foreigners is not the nature of x people.	0.80
Only specific game-related products that cannot be produced locally should be imported.	0.68
Buying products by x people allows x to develop more careers and jobs.	0.66
Real x people should buy products made by x people together.	0.61
X people who buy a game product from a foreign developer are considered to have contributed to the loss of x people or x game developer and the opportunity to make money and lose their job.	0.79
This game is satisfying/dissatisfying. (positive and negative)	0.82
This game is interesting/uninteresting. (positive/negative)	0.74
This game is good/bad. (positive/negative)	0.74
This game is attractive/unattractive. (positive/negative)	0.77
I definitely will buy this game. / I definitely won't buy this game. (positive/negative)	0.63
I see myself buying this game product soon.	0.84
Buying this game is what I will do.	0.83
I want to buy this game compared to other game products.	0.78

Initially, this study included 22 questions. According to Table 4, the researcher retrieved 13 legitimate questions from the statistical analysis of factor loadings of more than 0.6 (Chin et al., 1997; Hair et al., 2006). In addition, the researcher performed a

reliability test by calculating the composite reliability for all variables, the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: shows the statistical values used in the reliability test of the instrument.

Latent Variables	#Items	Composite Reliability	AVE
Consumer Ethnocentrism	5	0.836	0.507
Attitude	4	0.852	0.590
Purchase Intention	4	0.856	0.600

All composite reliability results in Table 2 ranged between 0.836 and 0.856, which is an acceptable level for internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951). Convergent Validity was also investigated, and it was determined that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each observed variable (Latent Variables) ranged from 0.506 to 0.600, with all values over 0.50. It demonstrated that each question could measure variables with an adequate degree of precision (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

For confirmatory factor analysis, the researcher performed the confirmatory factor analysis of the structural equation model and found that the model was consistent with the empirical data at a reasonable level, with a CMIN/DF of 2.479, GFI of 0.944, NFI. of 0.933, RFI of 0.915, IFI of 0.959, TLI of 0.948, CFI of 0.958, and RMSEA of 0.62. This satisfies the harmonious standard of the structural equation model

Table 3: shows the results of the confirmatory factor analysis.

Name of Index	Output	Acceptable values	References
CMIN/DF	2.479	Less than 5	Loo & Thorpe (2000)
GFI	0.944	Greater than or equal to 0.8	Cheng, Shih-I (2011)
NFI	0.933	Greater than or equal to 0.9	Bentler (1999)
RFI	0.915	Greater than or equal to 0.9	Bentler (1999)
IFI	0.959	Greater than or equal to 0.9	Bentler (1999)
TLI	0.948	Greater than or equal to 0.9	Bentler (1999)
CFI	0.958	Greater than or equal to 0.9	Bentler (1999)
RMSEA	0.062	Less than or equal to 0.08	Hair et al. (1998)

The hypothesis was accepted at the 0.05 level of statistical significance, with a p-value of 0.001 and a factor loading of 0.541, based on the results of testing Hypothesis 1: "Consumer ethnocentrism has a positive influence on attitude toward

the in-app purchase and virtual goods on free to play games developed and designed with the national culture and art by Thai people." The hypothesis was accepted at the 0.05 level of statistical significance, with a p-value of 0.001 and a factor loading of 0.258 in the test of hypothesis 2: "Consumer ethnocentrism has a positive influence on purchase intention of in-app purchase and virtual goods on free-to-play games developed and designed with Thai national culture and art." At the 0.05 level of statistical significance, the p-value for the third hypothesis test, "Attitude has a favorable influence on purchase intention of in-app purchase and virtual goods on free-to-play games made and designed with the national culture and art by Thai people," was 0.290. Table 4 displays the statistical significance level of the outcomes of hypothesis testing.

Table 4: shows the results of the statistical hypothesis test and the statistical significance level.

Hypothesis	**C.R.**	**p-value**	**Results**
Consumer Ethnocentrism → Attitude	8.791	0.001**	Accepted
Consumer Ethnocentrism → Purchase Intention	3.463	0.001**	Accepted
Attitude → Purchase Intention	1.058	0.290	Rejected

By optimizing the structural equation model, the researcher obtained a model of customer ethnocentrism on attitude and purchased intention of in-app purchase on free play the game developed and designed with the national culture and art of Thai people, as shown in Figure 4.

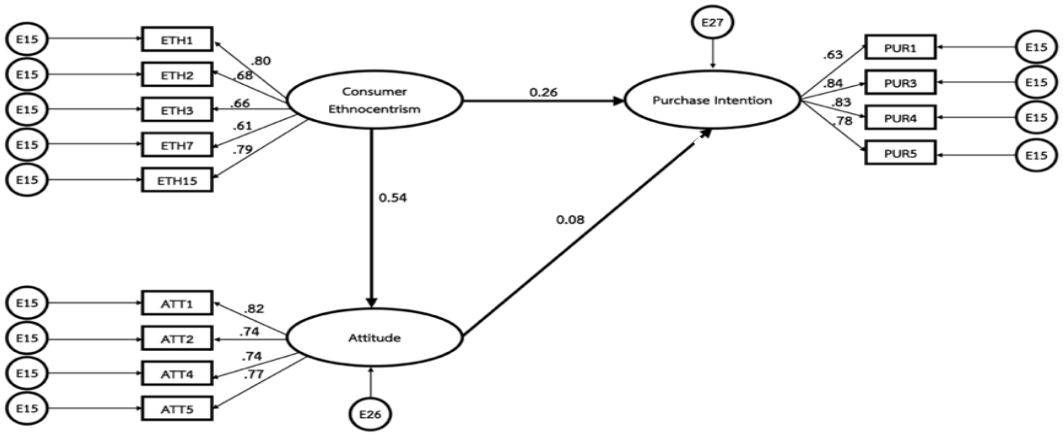

Figure 4: The Structural Model

As for the results of the path analysis, both direct effect, indirect effect, and total effect, it was found that customer ethnocentrism had a direct influence on attitudes with the effect size equal to 0.541, no indirect impact, and the total effect was 0.541. Attitude directly influenced purchase intention with an effect size of 0.076 (not statistically significant), no indirect effect, and a total effect of 0.076. Customer ethnocentrism had a direct influence on purchase intention with an effect size of 0.258, an indirect impact on purchase intention with an effect size of 0.041, and a total effect of 0.299, which is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: shows the results of the Path Analysis.

Path Analysis	**Direct Effect**	**Indirect Effect**	**Total Effect**
Consumer Ethnocentrism → Attitude	0.541	-	0.541
Attitude → Purchase Intention	0.076	-	0.076
Consumer Ethnocentrism → Purchase Intention	0.258	0.041	0.299

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated that the structural equation model was consistent with the empirical data to a high degree, as well as the results of the structural equation modeling method's hypothesis

testing. Consistent with the findings of Erdogan and Uzkurt (2010); Sean Lee et al. (2019), who studied the effect of customer ethnocentrism on attitudes, the result of this hypothesis test indicates that customer ethnocentrism has a positive impact on the attitude towards products made by the people of the nation or products produced by the consumers themselves. Changing consumer attitudes is essential to the consumer's decision to purchase contaminated products (Seulgi Lee et al., 2017). Product identity, cultural resources utilized in its production or creation, and aesthetic appeal. These will be incorporated into an attitude that leads to commercial results, thereby boosting the level of consumer ethnocentrism or gaming product marketing strategy. Marketing will also gain from virtual goods or in-app features that combine Thai art or culture with a sizeable ethnic target audience. Also consistent with Blazquez-Resino et al. (2021); Guo and Zhou (2017); Maksan et al. (2019); Shoham et al. (2016) is the Hypothesis test. The influence of consumers on the purchase intention of products that are relevant to their nationality or produced by their nationality is beneficial. This is visible in a wide range of literature and real-world circumstances, particularly in in-game products. As a case study in Thailand, there is support and assistance for purchasing virtual goods and in-app purchases on free-to-play games developed and designed with the national culture and art by Thai people, such as Home Sweet Home, which features character designs based on Thai beliefs and creates virtual goods for players to purchase online (Steam, browse online April 2022). By allowing consumers in the regions where the game is launched to participate in the design of in-app, it generates support from consumer groups in the area and the government of that country, and it can also increase the sales of virtual goods and in-app purchases following the cultural traditions and festivals of the local peoples. January 2022; Arena of Valor Game Products.) Obtainable online at https://rov.in.th/hero/airi)

From the test of hypothesis 3, it was determined that attitude did not have a direct positive effect on purchase intention, which contradicts the findings of Sean Lee et al. (2019); Meng and Choi (2016); Pöyry et al. (2021); Schaap (2010); Shankarmahesh (2006). Maksan et al. (2019) highlight the need for a more in-depth

examination of virtual goods within video games and the available video game in-app. In terms of direct influence from that attitude, it may differ from other sorts of goods or products, presumably because virtual goods or in-app video games contain a "rarity" component relevant to "Social Self-Image Expression." It may be why a positive attitude towards video games alone is insufficient to predict in-app and virtual goods purchase intentions (Ho & Wu, 2012). Models derived from the research of Ho and Wu (2012) demonstrate several additional factors that have a distinct impact on in-app purchases and virtual goods in online games. The study of in-app purchases and virtual goods necessitates a more specialized literature evaluation on the research of customer attitudes about gaming product purchase intention.

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