

CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM, ITS ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES TO CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARDS DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN MADE PRODUCTS: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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Consumer ethnocentrism has been posited as an important determinant of consumer attitudes towards domestic and foreign made products in international marketing. The present paper is an attempt to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the concept and its operationalisation in terms of 'consumer ethnocentric tendency' (CET). Various antecedents that influence the intensity of consumers' ethnocentrism have been identified and their influence on consumer ethnocentrism discussed. The paper reviews side by side major consequences of consumer ethnocentrism in the form of consumer attitudes towards and intentions to purchase 'foreign made products'. Drawing upon the growing literature in the field, an integrated but simplistic model of consumer ethnocentric tendency has been proposed to facilitate researches in the field and gain from such information for improved international marketing decision making.

Key words: Consumer ethnocentrism, Antecedents, Consequences

The accelerated pace of globalization during the last two decades has brought about a paradigm shift in the intensity as well as nature of competition in the markets the world over. With the opening of the economies and reduction in trade barriers, more and more foreign made products are making inroads into domestic territories. Advances in telecommunications (like direct television broadcast from satellite), widespread use of internet, greater mobility and increased consumption propensity are amongst other major factors that have paved way to the increased market potentials for the foreign made products and global brands in the domestic markets. Sensing the increased market potentials, more and more firms have started embarking on plans to enter international markets and gain from economies of scale and scope. Ever increasing promotion and market presence of foreign made products and global brands such as LG, Daewoo, Whirlpool, Ford, Dell, Hitachi, Akai and Sony in the category of durable products category; and Colgate, Pepsi, Coke, Britannia, Wockhardt, Pigeon, Reebok, Adidas and Lee in non-durable product category in the markets across the globe bear a clear testimony to this phenomenon.

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Notwithstanding this visible trend towards globalization of market place and craving for foreign made products among the consumes the world over, it is not uncommon to discern an opposite and equally important phenomenon of boycotts and protests against foreign made products among the consumers as well as governments in both the developed and developing countries. Frequent release of patriotic advertisements in the press and other media, organization of rallies and campaigns by the arousing sentiments against foreign products and creation of a guilty feeling among the consumers for behaving unpatriotically if they purchase imported products are a pointer to the antipathy present in the marketplace against the foreign made products and global brands. Referred to as '*consumer ethnocentrism*', this attitude acts as a major deterrent to the acceptance and purchase of foreign products. The international marketers cannot afford to be oblivious of the presence of ethnocentric tendencies present among the consumers. They need to proactively investigate this aspect and ascertain factors that attenuate or mitigate this antipathy towards foreign made products. They also need to assess as to how ethnocentricity varies across different types of consumers and how does ethnocentricity affects consumer disposition and purchase of foreign products. These types of investigations can greatly help the international firms in segmenting the markets based on consumer ethnocentric tendencies and evolving accordingly marketing strategies that can cope with ethnocentric challenges in the foreign markets.

This paper aims at providing a theoretical framework for understanding the concept of consumer ethnocentrism and proposing an integrated but simplistic model for understanding its 'antecedent and consequence' relationship. First the concept of consumer ethnocentrism is discussed and then a framework for understanding its antecedents and consequences is presented. The next two sections delve into an analysis of various antecedents and consequences of consumer ethnocentrism. The influence of select mediating and moderating variables on the relationship of consumer ethnocentrism with consequences is discussed next. The final section is devoted to the summarization of the discussion in the paper and its managerial and research implications.

CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM: ITS MEANING, NATURE AND OPERATIONALISATION

The term '*consumer ethnocentrism*' owes its origin to the general concept of *ethnocentrism* introduced as a socio-psychological concept by Sumner (1906). In view of its derivation from the generic term '*ethnocentrism*', it will in the fitness of things that we first discuss meaning and nature of the more generic term, and then delve into a discussion of a specific type of ethnocentrism, namely '*consumer ethnocentrism*', that is focus of analysis in this paper.

Ethnocentrism

As a concept, ethnocentrism focuses on “*we group*” feelings. Sumner (1906) has defined it as “...the view of things in which one’s own group is the centre of everything and all others scaled and rated with reference to it...Each group nourishes its own pride and vanity, boasts itself superior, exalts its own divinities and looks with contempt on outsiders.” Continuing with Sumner’s conceptualisation but viewing it in terms of an individual, Adorno et al. (1950) defined an ethnocentric person as one who tends to be ‘ethnically-centred’, i.e., an individual who strongly accepts the culturally ‘alike’ and reject the culturally ‘unlike’. It may be pointed out here that ethnocentrism is an evaluative construct, referring to an attitude that evaluates all other cultures by the standards of one’s own culture (Nguyen et al., 2008).

The ‘*ingroup*’ constitutes the centre of the concept and acts as a point of reference for making judgment about other ‘*outgroups*’ (Balabanis et al., 2001). The ethnocentric feelings are not just confined to tribes and nations, but exhibit themselves in all kinds of group behavior, resulting into feelings of family pride, sectionalism, religious prejudice, racial discrimination and patriotism. It is in fact the ethnocentric attitude among the group members that enhances group’s solidarity, conformity, co-operation, loyalty and effectiveness, thereby ensuring very survival of the group and its culture (Sumner, 1906; Murdock, 1951; Rosenblatt, 1964; Sharma et al., 1995). Delving further into a discussion of its role, Sharma et al. (1995) state that ethnocentrism helps not only differentiating various groups, but also in perceiving events (economic, political and social) in terms of group’s own interest, seeing one’s own group as centre of universe and its way of life superior to all others, suspecting and disdaining other groups, viewing one’s own group as superior, stronger and more honest, and viewing other groups as inferior, weaker and more dishonest

Sumner (1906) posited ethnocentrism as a two dimensional concept, comprising of an unfavorable attitude towards outgroups and a favorable attitude towards ingroup. These biases often result into formation of ‘stereotypes’ (i.e., beliefs or images about persons which are often untrue) in the minds of members of the ingroup build around the general notion of superiority of the ingroup over outgroups. More specifically speaking, such stereotypes take the form of negative stereotypes for outgroups and positive one’s for the ingroup. Since the focus of discussion in the present paper is on a given nation *vis a vis* other foreign nation(s), the term ‘ingroup’ in the context of this paper refers to one’s own country and its people as a whole rather than specific groups within the nation. The term ‘outgroup’ implies foreign nation(s) and people thereof.

Ethnocentrism, Patriotism and Nationalism

The ethnocentric feelings towards ingroup (own country), as described above, have often been confused and used interchangeably with two closely related terms, namely 'patriotism' and 'nationalism'. No doubt these terms substantially overlap in their meanings and domain; there exists a subtle difference among them conceptually as well as in terms of different kinds of attitudinal and behavioural consequences arising there from.

This difference was for the first time brought to fore by Kosterman and Feshbach (1989) and can be traced back to the work of Adorno et al. (1950). Adorno et al. (1950) made use of the terms 'healthy patriotism' and 'ethnocentric patriotism' to highlight the difference between the terms 'ethnocentrism' and 'patriotism'. While a healthy patriotism implies one's love for one's own country without prejudice to other countries; ethnocentric patriotism (also referred as 'pseudopatriotism') involves a person's blind attachment to one's own national cultural values and rejection of other nations as outgroups. Attachment to one's own country is said to be blind when it is based on an uncritical acceptance of ingroup norms and outright rejection of other nations as outgroups. A healthy patriotism, on the other hand, is not related with such a bias against outgroups.

Almost a similar inference emerges about the difference between ethnocentrism and patriotism when one looks at the explanation provided by Kosterman and Feshbach (1989). Kosterman and Feshbach (1989), preferring use of term 'nationalism' (as against 'ethnocentric patriotism'), have held the view that while patriotism involves strong feelings of attachment and loyalty to one's own country without corresponding hostility towards other nations, nationalism (similar to Adorno's ethnocentric patriotism) encompasses beliefs that one's own country is superior and should be dominant, thus implying a denigration of other nations.

We thus find that while the term 'ethnocentrism' comes closer to the term 'nationalism' in as much as both the terms involve two types of feelings amongst its citizen – firstly the positive ones towards one's own country, and secondly the negative feelings about other countries; the term 'patriotism', on the other hand, is simply a unidimensional concept in so far as it entails only the former type of feelings, i.e., positive feelings about one's own country. Though it appears counter-intuitive for the patriotic persons not to be holding negative feelings towards other nations, the contradiction is more apparent than conceptually tenable. As Balabanis et al. (2001) point out, a favorable attitude towards one's country need not be associated with negative attitudes towards other countries. And this is what precisely and conceptually holds true for the persons with patriotic feelings.

Consumer Ethnocentrism: The Construct and Its Operationalisation

Having discussed the concept and nature of ethnocentrism, let us now turn our attention to the term 'consumer ethnocentrism'. Consumer ethnocentrism can be viewed as a special form of ethnocentrism as applicable to the domain of consumer behaviour, or more generically specially speaking, to the domain of economics and business. Shimp and Sharma (1987) have defined consumer ethnocentrism as a "unique economic form of ethnocentrism that captures the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products." An ethnocentric consumer views purchasing imported products as unpatriotic act as such purchases hurt the domestic economy and results in job losses (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). In a way, consumer ethnocentrism, also referred to as consumer ethnocentric tendency (CET), indicates "a general proclivity of buyers to shun all imported products irrespective of price or quality considerations due to nationalistic reasons" (Shankarmahesh, 2006).

It may be observed here that, like the basic term 'ethnocentrism', consumer ethnocentrism is a two dimensional concept and entails two types of feelings – a positive one towards one's own country products and a negative feeling towards the foreign made products. Ethnocentric consumers, therefore, tend to evaluate their own country's products highly and/or positively and devalue the imported products, thus reflecting a bias in their evaluations of and intentions to buy local and foreign products (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Klien et al., 1998; Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004; Nguyen et al., 2008)

A review of the past studies in the field point to certain characteristics features of the concept that aid in developing a more comprehensive understanding of consumer ethnocentrism concept and its nature. The key characteristics of the concept as highlighted in the works of Crawford and Lamb (1981), Shimp and Sharma (1986), Sharma et al. (1995) and Shankarmahesh (2006) are as follows:

- Consumer ethnocentrism is a general tendency of feelings among the consumers about the domestic and foreign products. It refers to consumers' feelings in totality as opposed to some specific attitude.
- It results from the perceived love and concern for one's own country and the fear of losing control of one's economic interests in the country due to the harmful effects that imports might bring to one self and countrymen.

- It has an ethical dimension which says that buying imported goods is unpatriotic as it causes plight of fellow countrymen who are rendered jobless.
- It is inelastic with respect to price or other product related attributes.
- Ethnocentrism is a universal phenomenon that is deeply rooted in inter-group relations. In a way, it is part of human nature which the individuals learn as part of the socialization process in their early childhood.
- Overall, consumer ethnocentricity in a social system is measured through aggregation of individual tendencies.
- Ethnocentrism is not confined to consumer products alone. It rather extends to industrial goods as well.
- Consumer ethnocentrism can prevail at the individual as well as subculture and national levels. Not only individuals, but the cultural sub-groups such as tribes and social groups; but also the nation or society as a whole can depict a proclivity to avoid imported products. It is also not uncommon to discern consumer ethnocentrism getting institutionalised at the national level by way of government procurement policy that unduly favours domestic companies and products. Not surprisingly, consumer ethnocentrism at the national level been dubbed as a new form of protectionism. Acting somewhat similar to non-tariff barriers, it represents 'cross-currents' of globalization.

Notwithstanding its anti-globalisation nature, CET does serve psychological and social functions. Like ethnocentrism, consumer ethnocentrism gives an individual a sense of identity, feeling of belongingness and an understanding of what purchase behavior is acceptable or unacceptable to the ingroup.

In view of its importance in shaping consumer perceptions of foreign products and demand for such products, consumer ethnocentrism has drawn considerable attention of the researchers in the past. Though the studies examining the impact of consumer ethnocentrism dates back to early seventies, the credit for making a maiden attempt to provide a comprehensive operationalisation of the construct and offer a reliable and valid scale to measure consumers' ethnocentric tendency goes to Shimp and Sharma (1987)¹. CETSCALE, as it has been named by them, is a 17-item scale, with each item scored on 7-point Likert-type formats (strongly agree= 7, strongly disagree = 1). Table 1 lists the seventeen scale items as applicable in the Indian context.

Table 1

Operationalisation of Consumer Ethnocentric Tendency Construct in Indian Context: CETSCALE

Item^{1, 2}

1. *Indian* people should always buy *Indian*-made products instead of imports.
2. Only those products that are unavailable in *India* should be imported.
3. *Buy Indian*-made products. Keep Indian working
4. *Indian* products first, last and foremost.
5. Purchasing foreign-made products is un-*Indian*.
6. It is not right to purchase foreign products because it puts *Indian* out of jobs.
7. A real *India* should always buy Indian-made products
8. We should purchase products manufactured in India instead of letting other countries get rich off us.
9. It is always best to purchase *Indian* products.
10. There should be very little trading or purchasing of goods from other countries unless out of necessity.
11. *Indian* should not buy foreign products because this hurts Indian business and causes unemployment.
12. Curbs should be put on all imports.
13. It may cost me in the long-run but I prefer to support *Indian* products.
14. Foreigners should not be allowed to put their products on our markets.
15. Foreign products should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into *India*.
16. We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country.
17. Indian consumers who purchase products made in other countries are responsible for putting their fellow Indians out of work.

Source: Shimp, T. and S. Sharma (1987), "Consumer ethnocentrism: construction and validation of the CETSCALE", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 24 (August), p. 282.

Notes: 1. For using the scale in the context of other countries, substitute the word 'India' and 'Indian' (shown in italics here) with the concerned country name/its nationals.

2. A 7-point Likert type scale (strongly agree = 7 to strongly disagree = 1) was used for eliciting responses from the consumers to teach of the items in the scale. Total score of a respondent will range from 17 to 119.

The CETSCALE has been validated internationally in several studies (e.g., Netemeyer et al., 1991; Durvasula, et. al.,1997; Shimp and Sharma, 1987, and Sharma et al.,1995) and it, in its original as well as condensed form, continues to be a prominent scale among the marketing researches to measure consumer ethnocentric tendency in many countries.

CET AND IT'S ANTECEDENT AND CONSEQUENCE RELATIONSHIP FRAMEWORK

No doubt consumer ethnocentrism is a universal phenomenon, the people and nations do differ in terms of degree of their ethnocentric tendencies and consequent behaviours. Literature in the field is replete with researches examining various factors that affect degree of ethnocentric tendencies among the people and outcomes thereof. Based on these studies, conceptual models have been proposed to understand the linkages of antecedents and consequences to CET. The model suggested by Sharma et al. (1995) constitutes the first major attempt to put forward an integrated framework for analysing consumer ethnocentrism and its antecedents and consequences (see Table 2). The major problem with this framework, however, has been its selective coverage of both the antecedent and consequence variables. The models proposed by Kaynak and Kara (2002) and Shankarmahesh (2006) are more comprehensive one as these cover a wider gamut antecedents and consequence variables that have come to increasingly used in researches in the recent past (see Table 2). The framework put forward by Shankarmahesh in 2006 appears to be most promising, but it too suffers from the flaw that it does not include a major psychographic factor, viz., lifestyle, as an antecedent in the model.

Table 2

Variables studied in the important research work on consumer ethnocentrism

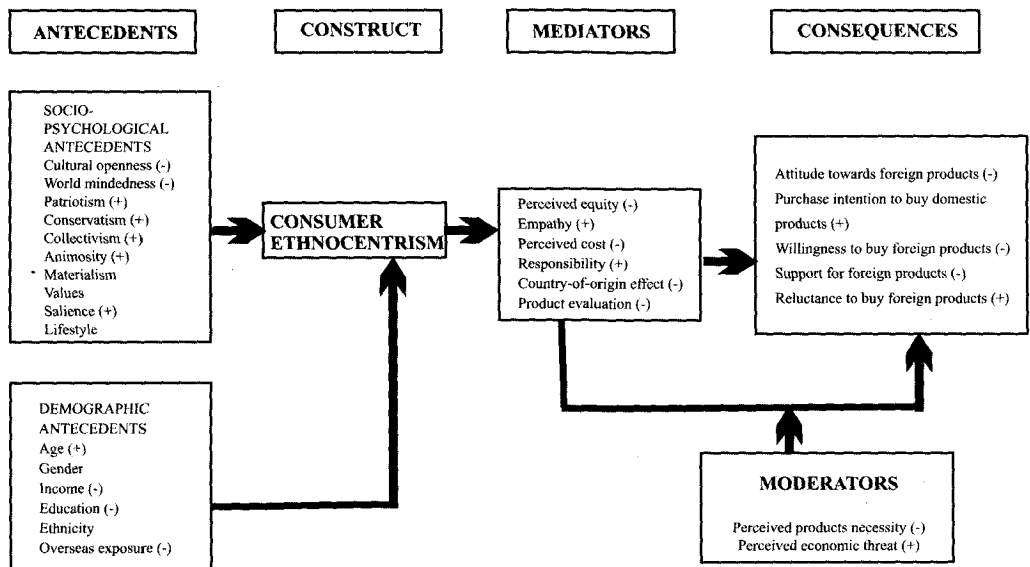
Sharma, Shimp and Shin (1995)	Kucukemiroglu (1999)	Shankarmahesh (2006)
Construct: <i>consumer ethnocentric tendency (CET)</i>	Construct: <i>consumer ethnocentric tendency (CET)</i>	Construct: <i>consumer ethnocentric tendency (CET)</i>
Antecedents: Social-psychological factors - Openness to foreign culture - Patriotism - Conservatism - Collectiveness/ individualism	Antecedents: Lifestyle factors Demographic and socio-economic factors -Age - Income - Marital status - Education - Gender	Antecedents: Social-psychological antecedents - Cultural openness -World mindedness - Patriotism - Conservatism - Collectivism - Animosity - Materialism

<p>Demographic factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Age - Gender - Education - Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Occupation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of values (external and internal values) - Salience - Dogmatism Economic antecedents - Capitalism - Stages of economic development - Improving national economy - Improving personal finance Political antecedents - Propaganda - History of oppression - Outgroup size - Leader manipulation Demographic antecedents - Age - Gender - Income - Education - Race - Social class
<p>Consequences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitude towards importing products 	<p>Consequences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitude towards importing products 	<p>Consequences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitude towards foreign product - Purchase intention - Support for foreign product
<p>Moderators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceived product necessity - Perceived economic threat 		<p>Moderators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceived product necessity - Perceived economic threat - Cultural similarity
	<p>Mediator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country-of-origin effect 	<p>Mediators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceived equity - Empathy - Perceived cost - Responsibility - Country-of-origin effect - Product evaluation

Sources: Sharma, S., Shimp, T. A. and Shin, J. (1995), "Consumer ethnocentrism: a test of antecedents and moderators," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 23 (Winter), pp. 26-37; Kaynak, E. and Kara, A. (2002), "Consumer perception of foreign products – an analysis of product-country images and ethnocentrism", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 36, No. 7/8, pp.928-49; Shankarmahesh, M. N. (2006), "Consumer ethnocentrism: an integrated review of its antecedents and consequences", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 146-72.

Figure 1 in the paper presents an adapted version Shankarmahesh's (2006) antecedent-consequence relationship framework. It is a modified version because of certain additions and deletions made into it. In the first instance, it includes the 'lifestyle' variable as an antecedent to CET. Consequences construct has also been expanded by roping in tow more consequence variables, viz., 'willingness to buy foreign products' and 'reluctance to buy foreign products' as have been examined in past studies. A few variables suggested in the Shankarmahesh's (2006) model, viz., economic and political antecedents and the 'cultural similarity' based moderator, have been dropped from the framework primarily due to the reason that these variables have not been much researched and investigated in the past studies.

Figure 1: Consumer Ethnocentrism – Antecedent-Consequent Relationship



Source: Adapted from Shankarmahesh (2006).

The framework proposed here suggests that the construct 'consumer ethnocentric tendency' is neither the result of one single variable nor it leads to only one consequence. It is rather a result of amalgam of a variety of socio-psychological and demographic influences such as cultural openness, worldmindedness, patriotism, conservatism, collectivism, animosity, values, salience, lifestyle, age, gender, income, education, ethnicity, and overseas experience. Consequencewise too, it is not a uni-consequence construct and can result in various outcomes such as consumers' attitude towards foreign products, purchase intention for domestic products, willingness to buy foreign products, support for foreign products and reluctance to buy foreign products. The figure alongside depicts a few mediating (via., perceived equity, empathy, perceived cost, responsibility, country-

of-origin effect and product evaluation) and moderating (perceived product necessity and perceived economic threat) variables that explain and influence the relationship between CET and consequences.

ANTECEDENTS TO CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRIC TENDENCY

In the context of consumer ethnocentrism, antecedents can be construed as all those variables that either foster or discourage consumers' ethnocentric tendency. In the marketing literature, a variety of factors ranging from socio-psychological antecedents to economic, political and demographic antecedents have been proposed and as well as empirically analysed in the past studies (for a comprehensive review of all such variables, see Shankarmahesh 2006). The present paper, however, focuses only select socio-psychological and demographic antecedents which have been more widely tested in the past researches. An overview of these two types of antecedents and their influence on consumer ethnocentrism is provided in the succeeding paragraphs.

Socio-Psychological Antecedents

Cultural Openness

Cultural openness refers to willingness of the people of a particular culture to interact with people from other culture(s) and experience their values and artifacts (Sharma et al., 1995; Shankarmahesh, 2006). Overseas exposures and visits can greatly add to one's cultural openness. Such interactions with other cultures tend to reduce one's prejudices to other cultures. It has, therefore, been posited that the consumers who are familiar with and open to foreign culture would exhibit less ethnocentric tendency than those who are less open.

Worldmindedness

Worldmindedness is a state of mind wherein humankind in general acts a primary reference group as opposed to one's own nation. It is characterised by consumers' interest in and knowledge of international affairs and respect for 'world spirit' (Gomberg, 1994; Rawwas et al., 1996). While the concept of worldmindedness is close to the term 'geocentrism' (i.e., looking at the world as a global village), it differs from the construct 'cultural openness' (i.e., opportunities to interact with different cultures) discussed above. It is quite possible that a person might be worldminded despite having little or no opportunities to interact with other cultures. Empirically, while Rawwas et al. (1996) have found a negative relationship between worldmindedness and CET, no such significant relationship has been found by Balabanis et al. (2001) between the CET and internationalism - a construct similar to worldmindedness.

Patriotism

As pointed out earlier, patriotism refers to one's love for or devotion to one's own country (Sharma et al., 1995). In a study assessing influence of affective and cognitive factors on consumer purchase decision, Han (1988) found patriotic emotions (an affective factor) to be playing a significant role in product choice. Cognitive factors comprising of consumers' perceptions of product quality and serviceability of foreign and domestic products, on the other hand, were found exerting a limited influence. Based on the findings of their empirical study, Good and Huddleston (1995) concluded that if the country has a history of being oppressed, occupied, conquered nation; then its people tend to have stronger patriotic emotions for their own country, and these emotions eventually get translated into a higher preference for the domestically made products. The studies by Sharma et al. (1995) and Klein and Ettenson (1999) do lend support to the hypothesis that a positive relationship exists between patriotism and consumer ethnocentric tendency. In a similar vein, Balabanis et al. (2001) found consumer ethnocentric tendency to be resulting from patriotic feelings in the case of Turkish people and nationalistic feelings in the case of people from Czech Republic. Likewise, Chen (2009) too has found more patriotic Indonesian consumers to be having negative attitude towards American products.

Conservatism

Conservatism can be defined as a tendency to follow and cherish existing patterns, traditions, social institutions, and desire to maintain status quo. This is manifested in the form of religious intolerance, adherence to strict rules, punishment and anti-hedonic outlook (Wilson and Patterson, 1968; Sharma et al 1995; Balabanis et al., 2002). Examining effect of conservatism on Turkish consumer's ethnocentric tendency, Altintas and Tokol (2007) found conservative persons as being more ethnocentric towards European products.

Collectivism-Individualism

The collectivists are the persons who subordinate their personal goals to the group goals and take into consideration effect of their actions on the larger group or society (Sharma et al., 1995). Because of their tendency to consider effects of their behavior on society, collectivists feel themselves responsible for others' social conditions, and they have been found to be more ethnocentric in past studies (Nishina, 1990; Sharma et al., 1995). The individualists, on the other hand, tend to be more open-minded and see society as a means to achieve their personal goals (Shankarmahesh, 2006). Such people therefore, are expected to be less ethnocentric in their consumption behavior.

Animosity

Simply speaking, animosity means hatredness, illfeelings, hostility, enmity, bitterness acrimony towards others. Linking animosity to consumer ethnocentrism, Klein et al. (1998) rightly point out that “the remnants of antipathy related previous or ongoing military, political or economic eventsaffect consumers’ purchase behavior in international market place.” It, however, may be noted here that while the feelings of animosity are country specific, CET is indicative of consumers’ negative attitude towards imports in general rather than from a specific source. Klien et al. in their study did find a positive relationship between animosity and consumer ethnocentrism.

Materialism

Materialism refers to the importance that people attach to worldly possessions. For the highly materialistic persons, possessions assume a central place in their life and act as the most important source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Belk, 1985). One of the motives underlying the craze for possessions among the materialistic persons is that they view material possessions as ‘substitutes for their lack of satisfying inter-personal relationships’ (Rindfleisch et al., 1997) and rely on it as a means ‘to enhance their sense of belonging’ (Shankarmahesh, 2006). Belk (1984) conceptualized materialism as a three dimensional construct comprised of possessiveness, envy and non-generosity components, representing three types of feelings respectively, viz., feelings of one’s attachment to or affiliation with the objects, one’s feelings about the objects in others’ possessions and one’s willingness to share with or give items to others. From a dimensional perspective, concept of consumer ethnocentrism runs parallel to the concept of materialism in as much as it too is comprised of similar components, viz., possessiveness, envy and need to identify with a larger group and defend one’s ego (Rosenblatt, 1964; Shankarmahesh, 2006). The empirical evidence in respect of relationship between the two constructs is somewhat mixed. While study by Clarke et al. (2000) points to a positive relationship between materialism and CET, Kongsompong et al. (2010) in their recent study found less materialist persons were more ethnocentric in their consumption behavior.

Values

Values can be defined as specific and preferable end state of existence or specific mode of conduct for living one’s life (Kahle, 1983; Shankarmahesh, 2006). Values can be of two types: internal values as related to aspects such as self respect and self fulfillment, and external values pertaining to desires such as having fun and enjoyment in life and being well-respected (Kahle, 1983). A past study does point to a positive relationship

between external values and consumer ethnocentric tendency (Clarke et al. 2000), plausibly due to the reason that individuals seeking fun and enjoyment in life are essentially hedonists, i.e., outward oriented and materialistic; and as such they are ethnocentric too as observed by Clarke et al. (2000) in their empirical study referred to above in the context of materialism. However, not much can be said about the relationship of internal values with ethnocentrism as this aspect has not been investigated by the researchers in the past.

Salience

Salience can be defined as a perceived threat to domestic workers and industries. Higher the perception of threat from foreign competition to the domestic workers, more the people are expected to be ethnocentric in their consumption behavior (Rosenblatt, 1964). This is plausibly due to the moral dimension entailed in the ethnocentrism concept. Ethnocentric persons tend to feel morally obliged to safeguard the interests of ingroup from actions or artifacts of outgroup. Avoidance or boycott of foreign made products connotes feelings of 'helping' attitude towards fellow workers in the ingroup. Olsen et al. (1993) studied the salience effect through their helping behavior model and observed a positive relationship between salience and consumer ethnocentric tendency. Sharma et al. (1995) too examined the influence of salience on attitude towards imports. They, however, employed salience as a moderating rather than an antecedent factor in their analysis and found perceived threat (or salience) to be exerting a strong and positive influence on the relationship between consumer ethnocentricity and attitude towards imports.

Lifestyle

Lifestyle refers to the way of living of a group of people or society. Life style researches, also referred to as psychographics, make use of AIO scales that delve into activity, interest and opinion (AIO) dimensions of the people's life and reveal as to how people spend their leisure time, what interests they pursue and what opinions they hold about phenomena surrounding their lives. It is expected that people pursuing different types of lifestyles to be differing in terms of their attachment to the ingroup/outgroups and their ethnocentric feelings. Past attempts to examine the impact of lifestyle dimensions on ethnocentrism reveal that consumers who are fashion conscious, leader oriented, carefree and practical in life are in general less ethnocentric than those who are community oriented, health conscious, and cost aware and family oriented (Attempts by Kaynak and Kara, 2002; Kucukemiroglu, 1999).

Demographic Antecedents

Various demographic factors such as age, gender, education, income and ethnicity have also been posited as antecedents of consumer ethnocentrism in the past studies. An overview of the relationship of the demographic factors with the consumer ethnocentrism is provided below.

Age

Older people in general have been posited as being more conservative, patriotic and averse to foreign culture. Having witnessed the wars and ravages of military occupation such as those observed during the Indo-China and Indo-Pak war periods, the older people in general tend to hold the feeling of pride in their own country, and hence tend to be more patriotic and ethnocentric (Klein and Ettenson, 1999). Increased cosmopolitanism of younger generation, on the other hand, manifests itself into a favorable attitude towards imports (Sharma et al., 1995; Shankarmahesh, 2006). Though it is argued that a positive relationship exists between age and CET, yet empirical support is somewhat mixed. While the results of some empirical studies weigh heavily in favor of the aforesaid propositions (Schooler, 1971; Caruana, 1996; Klein and Ettenson 1999), findings of other studies reveal no significant relationship between age and CET (Sharma et al 1995).

Gender

Majority of the empirical studies support the proposition that women tend to be more ethnocentric than men (Sharma et al 1995; Bruning, 1997; Kucukemiroglu, 1999). This probably is due to the reason that females by nature are more conservative, patriotic and concerned about preserving social harmony, thus having more positive feelings about the members of ingroup (Sharma et al., 1995).

Education

Most of the research studies on consumer ethnocentrism have found that educated people are less conservative and have less ethnic prejudice. Consequently, it has been hypothesised in the marketing literature that educated people will be less ethnocentric and will not be having negative attitude towards imports (Sharma et al., 1995). The empirical studies do point to a negative relationship between consumers' level of education and their ethnocentric tendencies (Ray 1990; Caruana 1996; Klein and Ettenson, 1999).

Income

Income has been empirically found to be negatively related to CET in the past studies (Sharma et al 1995; Bruning, 1997). The plausible explanation seems to be that with rise

in income people are more likely to travel abroad, buy and consume foreign products and thus get exposed to and more opened to foreign culture (Sharma et al., 1995).

Ethnic Group

According to Ouellet (2007), dominant majority cultures in countries with multi-cultural groups are likely to be more ethnocentric than the non-dominant minority sub-cultures. Past studies, however, fail to lend credence to this proposition. While a few studies (e.g., Klein and Ettenson, 1999; and Piron, 2002) have found no significant relationship of race to ethnocentric tendencies, studies by Zarkada-Fraser and Fraser (2002) reveal minorities as being less ethnocentric than majority ethnic group. A recent study by Rose et al. (2009) too reports somewhat mixed results. Examining ethnocentric tendency among two sub-cultures (Arabs and Jewish Israelis) with respect to their attitude towards foreign products (made in UK and Italy), the study finds that though the animosity is stronger among Arab Israelis than Jewish Israelis towards products from UK, the two subcultures did not differ significantly with respect to their ethnocentric tendencies.

CONSEQUENCES OF CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRIC TENDENCY

Outcomes of ethnocentric tendency have been operationalised and labeled differently by different researchers and these range from terms such as purchase intentions (Han, 1988) to willingness to buy domestic product (Olsen et al., 1993), willingness to buy foreign product (Klein et al., 1988), attitude towards foreign products (Sharma et al., 1995), and support for foreign products (Zarkada-Fraser and Fraser, 2002). These outcomes and their relationships to consumer ethnocentrism are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Attitude towards Foreign Products

An attitude is defined as enduring perceptions, feelings and predispositions towards a phenomenon or an object. In the context of present paper, it refers to the consumers' general impression about foreign products. The study by Sharma et al. (1995) found consumer ethnocentric tendency being negatively related to attitude towards foreign products.

Intention to Purchase Domestic Products

Intention to purchase domestic products in the context of present paper can be defined as a person's desire to purchase products made domestically in one's own country. Empirically, the studies show a positive relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and intention to purchase domestic products (Han, 1988; Herche, 1992).

Willingness to Buy Foreign Products

Willingness to buy a foreign product can be viewed as the counterpart of the 'intention to purchase domestic products' as examined above. As the ethnocentric consumers are averse to outgroups and hold negative attitudes towards foreign products, they are expected to be less willing to purchase foreign products. The past studies show an inverse linkage between consumer ethnocentric tendency and willingness to buy foreign products (Klein et al., 1988; Suh and Kwon, 2002).

Reluctance to Buy Foreign Products

Reluctance to buy foreign products can be viewed as an antonym of 'willingness to buy foreign products' construct, and it as such is expected to be high among the consumers with greater ethnocentric feelings. This is so because ethnocentric consumers tend to feel guilty in buying foreign products, hence they are more likely to avoid buying foreign-made products. Suh and Kwon (2002) empirically showed a positive relationship between consumer ethnocentric tendency and reluctance to buy foreign products.

Support for Foreign Products/ Retail Outlets

This construct connotes consumers' activism in favour of foreign products as manifested in activities such as patronization of products made in foreign countries or foreign retail outlets. Lower the consumer ethnocentrism, higher is the expected consumer support and activism for foreign products and retail outlets. The study by Zarkada-Fraser and Fraser (2002) provide empirical evidence to a negative relationship between CET and support for foreign retail outlets.

INFLUENCE OF MEDIATING AND MODERATING VARIABLES ON CONSEQUENT BEHAVIOR OF CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRIC TENDENCY

Ethnocentric tendency affects consumer behavior not only directly, but also indirectly via the effects of mediating variables. Furthermore, the relationship between CET and consequence can get altered due to the presence of some moderating variables. Notwithstanding a lack of consensus among the researches in treatment of certain variables as mediating or moderating variables, the following paragraphs attempt to delineate the influence of select mediating and moderating variables on the 'CET and consequence' relationship under discussion in this paper.

Mediating Variables

Mediating variables are the variables through which the influence of an independent variable gets passed on to the dependent variable. In the context of consumer ethnocentrism, perceived equity, empathy, cost, responsibility, county-of-origin effect and foreign product evaluation have been posited as possible mediators between the consumers' ethnocentric tendency and their willingness to buy foreign products (Olsen et al., 1993; Klien et al, 1988; Shankarmahesh, 2006).

Perceived Equity

Perceived equity refers to consumer perceptions of likely positive or negative impact of international competition on domestic industries vis-à-vis foreign firms (Shankarmahesh, 2006). Since the ethnocentric consumers view international competition as being unfair to domestic industries, consumer ethnocentricity is theoretically expected to be having a negative impact on consumers' perceived equity, thus inducing consumers to avoid foreign products and prefer instead the domestic products. Investigating the impact of this variable, Olsen et al (1993) did find an adverse impact of CET on perceived equity which in turn accentuated consumers' willingness to buy domestic products.

Empathy

Empathy can be defined as the ability of a person to perceive the situation from others point of view. Greater the ethnocentric tendency, more the consumers are likely to have empathy towards the fellow workers, and hence greater is the likelihood among them to go in for domestic products. Olsen et al. (1993) found this variable to be exerting a positive effect on consumer ethnocentric-consequent relationship.

Perceived Cost

Perceived cost is the cost that the consumers perceive they are incurring on purchase of domestic products. Even if the prices of domestic products are relatively higher than those of foreign products, the ethnocentric consumers view them as not being high in view of the need for making a sacrifice to help the plight of fellow workers. Such lower cost perceptions in turn have been posited to be positively influencing consumers' intentions to purchase domestic products (Olsen et al., 1993). The hypothesis is in tandem with one of the properties of consumer ethnocentric behavior, i.e., consumer ethnocentrism is price-inelastic in nature, implying thereby that paying higher costs for domestic products does not matter much to the consumers high in ethnocentric tendency so long as such acts result in help to workers in the ingroup.

Responsibility

Responsibility here implies a feeling of obligation among the consumers to help their ingroup members (i.e., countrymen). Olsen et al. (1993) proposed that as the perceived equity decreases, consumer's perceived responsibility increases, inducing them make more purchases of domestic products.

Country-of-Origin Effect

Country-of-origin effect or country stereotyping effect refers to the impact that generalizations and perceptions about a particular country have on consumers' evaluation of that country's products and/ or brands (Schooler, 1965; Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Samiee, 1994). This is also referred as country image or made-in phenomenon. Initially, most of the country-of-origin studies were undertaken in the developed countries, notably, US and Europe. The common finding was that consumers evaluate products of their own countries' (being developed ones) superior to those of less developed countries (Bilkey and Nes, 1982 and Samiee, 1994). Ethnocentrically too, these customers have been found to be holding high opinions about their own country products and depict stronger purchase intentions. But the same does not hold true for the consumers in developing who due to underdeveloped nature of their countries are more likely to perceive their own country's product negatively in comparison to the imported products. Ethnocentrically, however, they are likely to undervalue the imported products and overvalue their domestic products, thus showing a higher preference for domestic products. Though theoretically country-of-origin effect has been posited as an important mediating variable (Durvasula et al., 1997; Shankarmahesh, 2006), the past few empirical studies (e.g., Han, 1988) fail to come up with clear findings as to how the CET-consequence relationship gets mediated through country-of origin effects. Further researches are called for in the area to understand the true nature of mediating role of country-of-origin effect on consumers' ethnocentrism relationship with their willing to purchase domestic/ foreign products.

Foreign Product Evaluation

Product evaluation refers to the consumers' judgment of imported product attributes and quality. It has been posited in the marketing literature as a consequence of CET and also as a mediator to the relationship of CET with intention to purchase foreign products. In their empirical study, Shimp and Sharma (1987) found ethnocentric consumers tending to evaluate foreign products adversely. Klein et al. (1998) too examined the mediating effect of adverse foreign product evaluation to the relationship between consumer ethnocentric tendency and purchase intention for domestic products and came up with the results consistent with those of Shimp and Sharma (1987).

Moderating Variables

While the mediating variables help explaining the mechanism of relationship between the antecedent and consequence (i.e., how the independent variable exerts influence on the dependent variable), the moderating variables serve the purpose of explaining as to when the relationship between independent and dependent variable is more likely to exist/change. Sharma et al. (1995) investigated the impact of two moderating variables, viz., perceived product necessity and perceived economic threat, to the relationship between CET and consumer attitudes towards foreign products.

Perceived Product Necessity

A product is perceived to be necessary if it is indispensable for the consumers in their life. According to Sharma et al (1995), the relationship between foreign products and CET is likely to be stronger for such foreign products which are perceived as unnecessary.

Perceived Economic Threat

Conceptually, the term 'perceived economic threat' is same as the term 'salience' discussed earlier. While salience has been used mainly as an antecedent in literature, Sharma et al (1995) posited perceived economic threat (labeled as salience by other researchers) as a moderator to 'CET and consequence' relationship and found CET to be negatively influencing the attitude towards foreign products primarily for such foreign products that were perceived to be threatening to the domestic economy and/or workers.

CONCLUSIONS, MARKETING STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCHES

Consumer ethnocentrism refers to the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness and morality of purchasing foreign-made products. Though it is a universal phenomenon, the extent and nature of consumer ethnocentric tendencies differ across people, cultures and nations. A variety of factors act as antecedents to consumer ethnocentrism and these include: cultural openness, worldmindedness, patriotism, conservatism, collectivism, animosity, values, salience, lifestyle, age, gender, income, education, ethnicity, and overseas experience. Consumer ethnocentric tendencies exert considerable influence on consumers' intention to purchase domestic products, attitude towards foreign products, willingness to buy foreign products, support for foreign products and reluctance to buy foreign products. A few moderating and mediating variables operate side by side that influence the CET-consequence relationship.

Knowledge of consumer ethnocentrism and its antecedent-consequence relationship is important not only to the academicians and researcher, but it can be of great help to the marketers as well in understanding the market dynamics and formulating appropriate marketing strategies. By researching the foreign markets from the point of view of consumer ethnocentrism and its antecedents, international marketers can identify the market segments that are less ethnocentric and can thus serve as more promising markets for their products. Since such customers are expected to be objective in their product evaluations, communication campaigns highlighting the virtues of the foreign products can be helpful in wooing and retaining these customers. Approaching ethnocentric consumers call for a different strategy. As the ethnocentric customers tend to be averse to purchase of foreign products for the reason that imported products can cause losses to the domestic workers and industries, international marketers need to consider mitigating such feelings by way of communicating to these customers that the consumption of foreign product is not economically harmful to their country and fellow workers. Demonstrating as to how the foreign products under consideration are contributing to the betterment of the domestic economy and fellow workers can go a long way in lessening the proclivity present among them against the imports.

Ethnocentric information can also be of immense importance to the international retailers or domestic retail store chains that specialise in imported products. Based on such a information, management of these stores can decide as to which groups of customers are more likely to be favourably disposed to foreign products and where in the country such stores need to be located.

Even the domestic marketers can gain considerably from ethnocentric market insights. In the wake of increasing threats to their products from foreign competition, they can think of targeting their products to customers who are more ethnocentric and more likely to patronise the domestically made products. By harping upon their patriotic and nationalistic sentiments, these marketers can to some extent ward off the limitations of lower quality perceptions and higher prices of their products.

Investigation of consumer ethnocentric tendencies and its linkage to purchase intention is relatively a recent phenomenon in the developing countries. Most of these researches have been so far conducted in the developed countries. It is high time that such researches are initiated in the developing and emerging market economies too to benefit the marketers as well as the policy makers. What is needed is to undertake more comprehensive studies using the integrated framework such as the one put forward in the present paper so that information can be gained not only about the core ethnocentric construct, but also about its antecedents and various consequences that the marketers can make use of in evolving more effective marketing strategies in future.

Note

1. Though a few scales existed at that time - notably the one developed in by Reirson (1966) that was used by the researchers in early seventies (e.g., Dornoff et al., 1974); these were not as comprehensive, reliable and valid as the CETSCALE developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987).

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