

Are Males and Elderly People more Consumer Ethnocentric ?

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This paper explores the relationship between demographic variables and consumer ethnocentrism. A sample of 204 consumers was interviewed over a two-month period through a structured questionnaire administered through personal and telephone interviews. Consumer ethnocentrism was measured by the CETSCALE and the research hypotheses were rejected for the occupation, education and income variables. Gender and age were the only two significant demographic variables that were positively related to consumer ethnocentrism. Mauritians who were more ethnocentric were the males and those in the age group 50 – 59 years old.

Field of Research: Marketing

1. Introduction

As global and economic changes occur, consumer purchasing patterns are expected to shift dramatically as more products become available due to globalisation. Imported products, previously unavailable to the average consumer are now becoming more popular. It is thus important to understand the ethnocentric tendencies of Mauritian consumers as these attitudes may influence consumers' purchase decisions of imported products. This study will specifically explore the degree to which demographic variables have an effect on consumer ethnocentrism in Mauritius. Traditional demographic variables such as occupation, gender, age, education and income can be used as bases for segmenting a market. The purpose of market segmentation would be to identify the taxonomy of consumption patterns by dividing a market into several homogeneous sub-markets. Marketers would then be able to formulate product strategies, or product positions, tailored specifically to the demands of these homogeneous sub-markets. With this in mind, this research sets out to explore the degree to which demographic variables have an effect on consumer ethnocentrism in Mauritius.

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2. Literature Review

Sumner (1906) first introduced ethnocentrism as a sociological concept that refers to a tendency to regard the beliefs, standards, and code of behaviour of one's own as superior to those found in other societies. It can encourage cohesion and solidarity among group members and may also contribute to attitudes of superiority, intolerance, and even contempt for those with different customs and ways of life (Booth, 1979; Levine & Campbell, 1972; Wagley, 1993; Worchel & Cooper, 1979). Ethnocentric individuals will prefer their own way of life over all others and will prefer domestic goods over foreign ones. Highly ethnocentric consumers feel that purchasing imports is wrong, not only because it is unpatriotic, but also because it is detrimental to the economy and will result in loss of jobs in industries threatened by imports. Highly ethnocentric consumers compare and over-evaluate locally made products more favourably than foreign products. In other words, highly ethnocentric consumers hold patriotic prejudices against imports. On the other hand, highly non-ethnocentric consumers judge foreign products solely based on their attributes and/or view them as better because they are not produced in their own country (Durvasula, Andrews, & Netemeyer, 1997).

The CETSCALE (Consumer Ethnocentric Tendencies Scale) was designed by Shimp and Sharma (1987) to measure consumer ethnocentrism and since then, it has become a very popular and accepted means of measuring consumer ethnocentrism across nations and different cultures. The authors used the term 'tendency' because it refers to the more general notion of the disposition to act in some consistent fashion toward domestic products as compared to foreign products. The CETSCALE consists of 17 items scored on a seven-point Likert-type format measuring consumer ethnocentrism and it satisfies the reliability criterion of at least 0.5 (Sharma, 1996). Netemeyer, Durvasula, & Lichtensein (1991) also found strong support for the CETSCALE's factor structure, reliability and nomological validity of the scale across four countries, namely Germany, the USA, Japan and France. They reported high alpha levels as 0.91 to 0.95 across these four countries. Marks and Tharp (1990) and Tharp and Marks (1990) also found that the CETSCALE had a high degree of internal reliability. Another study by Nielsen and Spence (1997) reported stability of the scales' scores over a two-month period.

Studies that examine the product perceptions and judgements of consumers in developing countries and newly emerging economies are relatively scarce (Kaynak & Kara, 2002). The purpose of this study was to explore consumer attitudes in a developing country, namely Mauritius, and to understand the effect that demographic variables have on the degree of consumer ethnocentrism of Mauritians. Several variables have been identified in the literature as influencing consumer ethnocentrism which, in turn, plays a mediating role between these variables and the attitudes of consumers in buying foreign-made goods. Demographic dimensions have received broader acceptance and lend themselves easily to quantification and easy consumer classification when it comes to identifying homogeneous consumer markets and some

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demographic variables, namely social class, age, gender, income and education level will now follow.

Social class has been defined by Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1993) as homogeneous and relatively permanent divisions in a society in which individuals and families sharing similar values, interests and behaviour can be categorized. Consumers usually buy brands of products and services that they associate with the social classes they belong to. These decisions directly influence whether consumers buy foreign-made products or domestic ones. Social classes and status systems are present everywhere. Gilbert and Kahl (1982) identified nine variables that determine social class, namely economic variables (income, occupation and wealth), interaction variables (association, socialisation and personal prestige), and political variables (class consciousness, mobility and power). Typically, occupation is the best indicator of social class. The work one does often reflects one's education and affects one's lifestyle and consumption, as well as neighbourhood choice and type of family house.

In most studies, age has been consistently significantly and positively related to attitudes towards products. Younger consumers were found to be more open and positive towards foreign products (Schooler, 1971; Tongberg, 1972; Wall, Heslop, & Hofstra, 1988; Wang, 1978). McLain and Sternquist (1991) also obtained similar results and found older consumers to be more ethnocentric than younger consumers. Along the same line, Han (1988) found that "patriotic" consumers were older than less "patriotic" consumers. Shimp and Sharma (1987) found that the effect of age varied by social class and that only older working class individuals manifested ethnocentric tendencies. Mixed findings were obtained by studies analyzing gender as a correlate in consumer ethnocentrism research. Han (1988) found women to be more patriotic and more patriotic consumers are less likely to choose foreign products. Women exhibited greater ethnocentric tendencies than men (Good and Huddleston, 1995; Nielsen and Spence, 1997; Sharma, Shimp, & Shin, 1995). Other studies found no relationship between sex and degree of ethnocentrism of consumers (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; McLain and Sternquist, 1991). On the other hand, females were found to rate foreign-made products more favourably than men by several studies (Dornoff, Tankersley, and White, 1974; Schooler, 1971; Wang, 1978; Johansson *et al.*, 1985).

Han (1988) and McLain and Sternquist (1991) found no relationship between income level and ethnocentrism. Income level was however found to be directly related to positive attitudes towards foreign products by Wang (1978) and Wall *et al.* (1990). Along the same line, Wall and Heslop (1986) found that consumers were less like to buy domestic products if they had higher incomes. Similarly, according to Sharma *et al.* (1995), there was a negative relationship between ethnocentric tendencies and income group. Education enjoys fairly consistent results as a correlate with perceptions of products. McLain and Sternquist (1991) found that ethnocentric tendencies were higher when the level of education was lower. Likewise, studies by Anderson and Cunningham (1972), Dornoff *et al.*(1974), Schooler (1971), Wall and Heslop (1986) and Wang (1978) found that the higher the level of education of consumers, the higher was the tendency to rate foreign or imported products favourably. Han (1988), in contrast, found

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no significant relationship between consumer patriotism and education. The following research hypotheses were developed based on the above discussion.

H1₀: There is no significant relationship between occupation and consumer ethnocentrism.

H1₁: There is a significant relationship between occupation and consumer ethnocentrism.

H2₀: There is no significant relationship between age and consumer ethnocentrism.

H2₁: There is a significant relationship between age and consumer ethnocentrism.

H3₀: There is no significant relationship between gender and consumer ethnocentrism.

H3₁: There is a significant relationship between gender and consumer ethnocentrism.

H4₀: There is no significant relationship between income level and consumer ethnocentrism.

H4₁: There is a significant relationship between income level and consumer ethnocentrism.

H5₀: There is no significant relationship between the level of education income level and consumer ethnocentrism.

H5₁: There is a significant relationship between the level of education and consumer ethnocentrism.

3. Methodology

A structured questionnaire was designed based on the literature review on consumer ethnocentrism. Consumer ethnocentrism is a psychological construct representing how consumers view products made locally in their own country as objects of pride and identity versus those made abroad. Operationally, this was measured by the consumer ethnocentrism scale, CETSCALE (Shimp and Sharma, 1987), which was used and validated in several previous studies (Good and Huddleston, 1995; Watson and Wright, 2000; Supphellen and Rittenburg, 2001). This instrument consisted of 17 seven-point Likert-type scales described by 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 7 "Strongly Agree". Higher scores on this scale indicate that respondents believe in the appropriateness of purchasing locally made products while lower scores indicate a higher willingness to purchase products manufactured in other countries.

There were two sections in the questionnaire. Section A included the 17-item CETSCALE designed by Shimp and Sharma (1987), which was modified to fit the Mauritian context with a seven-point Likert scale where 1 is "Strongly Disagree" and 7 is "Strongly Agree". The rest of the questionnaire explored the demographic profiles of consumers in terms of occupational status, gender, age, education and monthly household income. The questionnaire was developed in English and was initially administered to a group of ten Mauritian consumers to pilot test it for clarity, comprehension and consistency. Following some suggestions, minor adjustments and improvements were made to the questionnaire. For example, the statement 'Imports should be curbed' was changed to 'Restrictions should be put on all imports' because respondents could not understand what the word 'curbed' meant.

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The personal interview and telephone interview techniques were used to collect the data. Interviewers administered questionnaires to males and females over 18 years of age and who did their shopping at supermarkets and/or hypermarkets. Most questionnaires were administered through personal interviews carried out at supermarkets and hypermarkets and the rest of questionnaires were administered through telephone interviews by dialing telephone numbers at random from the Mauritius Telecom Phonebook. The data collection took place over a two-month period and the sample size was 500 consumers. 204 fully completed responses were obtained, representing a response rate of 40.8%.

4. Findings and Discussion

The demographic and socio economic characteristics of the sample of respondents who participated in this study are shown in Table I. Most of the participants in the survey lived in the urban region (61.8%) while the rest (38.2%) were from the rural region. 49% of the respondents were male and 51% were female consumers. Most of the respondents were married with children (62.3%). The majority of the consumers (27.9%) came from the age group 18-29 years old followed by those in the age group 30-39 years old (24%). The majority of interviewees (34.8%) had a gross monthly household income before income taxes of below Rs 10,001 – Rs 20,000 followed by those whose monthly household income ranged between Rs 20,001 – Rs 30,000 (27%) and 45.6% of them held administrative, managerial, professional and executive positions in their jobs. 30.4% of the respondents had completed secondary education while 27% were holders of an undergraduate degree. The majority of respondents belonged to the Hindu community (50%) followed by the Muslim community (25%). The gender, ethnic and urban distribution in the sample corresponded to a high degree to the distribution of these groups in the population of Mauritius and it can be deduced that the sample chosen was quite representative of the population of consumers in Mauritius for these demographic variables in particular.

As far as inland shopping was concerned, 72.5% of respondents did their shopping at supermarkets, 64.2 % at hypermarkets and 35.3% at specialised shops. The proliferation of supermarkets and hypermarkets offering a wider range of facilities and acting as a one stop shop with many shopping outlets for customers could explain the high preference of respondents for these shopping locations. Moreover, shopping is no longer a difficult task in the wake of globalisation and technological advancement. 40.7% of respondents did their shopping abroad while 31.4% used the Internet as a shopping tool. 95.1% of respondents preferred to buy imported products and 69.6% preferred to buy products produced locally under license. 54.9% only preferred to buy locally manufactured goods.

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Table I: Demographic Variables (n = 204)

Demographic Variables	Percentage (%)
(a) Region	
Urban	61.8
Rural	38.2
(b) Gender	
Male	49
Female	51
(c) Marital Status	
Single	23
Married without children	8.3
Married with children	62.3
Widowed/Divorced/Separated	6.4
(d) Age	
18-29 years old	27.9
30-39 years old	24
40-49 years old	21.1
50-59 years old	23.5
60 years or older	3.4
(e) Occupational Status	
Clerical/Factory Worker/and other White Collar Jobs	17.6
Administrative/Managerial/Professional/Executives	45.6
Retired/Student/Housewife	18.6
Self-Employed	10.8
Others	7.4
(f) Education	
Primary	8.3
Secondary	30.4
Diploma	17.2
Undergraduate degree	27
Postgraduate degree	17.2
(g) Ethnic Group	
Hindu	50
Muslim	25
Chinese	15.2
Other	9.8
(h) Monthly Expenditure on Shopping	
Below Rs 5,000	23
Rs 5,001 – Rs 10,000	28.4
Rs 10,001 – Rs 15,000	25
Rs 15,001 – Rs 20,000	13.2

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Above Rs 20,000	10.3
(i) Monthly Household Income Before Taxes	
Below Rs 10,000	11.3
Rs 10,001 – Rs 20,000	34.8
Rs 20,001 – Rs 30,000	27
Rs 30,001 – Rs 40,000	16.7
Above Rs 40,000	10.3

Measurement of consumer ethnocentrism

In this study, consumer ethnocentrism represents the beliefs held by Mauritian consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign made products. Consumer ethnocentrism was measured by the CETSCALE developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987) as shown in Table II. The scale is a measure of buying intention (tendency) and is thus related to the more general notion of a disposition to act in some consistent fashion towards foreign products.

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Table II: Consumer Ethnocentrism Means and Standard Deviations (SD)

Variable No	Items	Mean	SD
3	Buy Mauritian-made products. Keep Mauritius working	4.70	1.493
16	We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country	4.05	1.923
8	We should purchase products manufactured in Mauritius instead of letting other countries get rich from us	3.73	1.759
2	Only those products that are unavailable in Mauritius should be imported	3.72	1.840
13	It may cost me in the long run but I prefer to support Mauritian products	3.55	1.415
4	Mauritian products, first, last and foremost	3.54	1.463
9	It is always best to purchase Mauritian products	3.47	1.691
1	Mauritian should always buy Mauritian products instead of imports	3.44	1.628
10	There should be very little trading or purchasing of goods from other countries unless out of necessity	3.33	1.617
11	Mauritians should not buy foreign products, because this hurts Mauritian business and causes unemployment	3.19	1.615
6	It is not right to purchase foreign products because it puts Mauritian people out of a job	3.10	1.690
15	Foreign products should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry in Mauritius	2.87	1.624
7	A real Mauritian should always buy Mauritian products	2.84	1.829
12	Restrictions should be put on all imports	2.61	1.418
14	Foreigners should not be allowed to put their products on our markets	2.56	1.425
17	Mauritian consumers who purchase products made in other countries are responsible for putting fellow Mauritians out of work	2.56	1.499
5	Purchasing foreign-made products is anti-Mauritian	2.49	1.650
	Average Mean Score	3.28	

The ethnocentrism measure used consisted of an inventory of 17 attitudinal statements with a Likert scale where '1' represented "Strongly Disagree", '7' meant "Strongly Agree" and '4' meant "Neither Agree nor Disagree". The average mean score across all 17 items as shown in Table 2 was 3.28, indicating that Mauritians were not highly ethnocentric with regards to the purchase of "foreign" or "Mauritian" products. The highest rating (4.70) was for statement no. 3, "Buy Mauritian-made products. Keep Mauritius working", while the lowest (2.49) was on item no. 5, "Purchasing foreign-made

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products is anti-Mauritian". However, since the standard deviations of these statements were all above one, such opinions were widely shared.

A reliability analysis was then conducted on the 17-item CETSCALE and a Cronbach alpha of 0.9030 was obtained suggesting high internal reliability of the scales of these items since this value was higher than 0.50 as recommended by Sharma (1996). This compares very favourably with earlier tests of the scale that reported alphas ranging from 0.886 to 0.95 (Kucukemiroglu, 1999). Based on the results of the reliability analysis, it could be assumed that all 17 items used were measuring the same construct (ethnocentrism) and that a summative measure could be used to represent the ethnocentrism score of the respondents.

Relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and demographic variables

According to the literature review, many variables influence consumer ethnocentrism which, in turn, plays a mediating role between these variables and the attitudes of consumers in buying foreign-made goods. Based on the above discussion, several hypotheses involving demographic variables and consumer ethnocentrism were thus developed and tested. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses. Separate ANOVAs were computed for each demographic variable as shown in Table III.

Table III: Analysis of Variance by Demographic Variable

Demographic Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Occupation	3.613	4	0.903	0.866	0.486
Age	17.424	4	4.356	4.472	0.002
Gender	9.143	1	9.143	9.137	0.003
Income	9.208	4	2.302	2.267	0.063
Education	9.747	4	2.437	2.406	0.051

H1₀: There is no significant relationship between occupation and consumer ethnocentrism.

H1₁: There is a significant relationship between occupation and consumer ethnocentrism.

At a significance level of 0.486, the null hypothesis H1₀ was accepted implying that there is no relationship between occupation and consumer ethnocentrism.

H2₀: There is no significant relationship between age and consumer ethnocentrism.

H2₁: There is a significant relationship between age and consumer ethnocentrism.

Here, the significance level of the test was 0.002. The null hypothesis H2₀ was therefore rejected and hypothesis H2₁ was accepted, implying that there is a relationship between age and consumer ethnocentrism. As age of Mauritian consumers went up, the ethnocentrism score was higher (3.05 for the age group 18 – 29 years old versus 3.54

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for the age group 50 – 59 years old). These findings were consistent with McLain and Sternquist (1991)'s study.

H3₀: There is no significant relationship between gender and consumer ethnocentrism.

H3₁: There is a significant relationship between gender and consumer ethnocentrism.

With a significance value of 0.003, the null hypothesis H3₀ was rejected and the alternative hypothesis H3₁ was accepted. There was thus a significant relationship between gender and consumer ethnocentrism. Mauritian males were more ethnocentric than their female counterparts since the mean score for males was 3.49 and that of females was 3.07. A number of studies (Dornoff, Tankersley, & White, 1974; Schooler, 1971; Wang, 1978) had indicated that females tended to rate foreign products more favorably than men implying that women may have lower scores on ethnocentrism and the results of this study supported similar findings.

H4₀: There is no significant relationship between income level and consumer ethnocentrism.

H4₁: There is a significant relationship between income level and consumer ethnocentrism.

The null hypothesis H4₀ was accepted since the significance value was 0.063. Therefore, there is no relationship between income level and consumer ethnocentrism. Similar findings were obtained by Han (1988) and McLain and Sternquist (1991).

H5₀: There is no significant relationship between the level of education and consumer ethnocentrism.

H5₁: There is a significant relationship between the level of education and consumer ethnocentrism.

The null hypothesis H5₀ was accepted since the significance value of the test is 0.05. There is no significant relationship between the level of education and consumer ethnocentrism. This result supported the views of Han (1988) who did not find any significant link between consumer patriotism and education.

In summary, the hypotheses were rejected for the occupation, education and income variables. Gender and age were the only two significant demographic variables. Males and those in the age group 50 – 59 years old were found to be more ethnocentric.

5. Implications and Conclusion

The consumer ethnocentrism concept can help understand how consumers compare foreign-made products with those manufactured locally. It also helps to identify which factors have a direct bearing on the levels of consumer ethnocentrism. The CETSCALE instrument developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987) was applicable and successfully tested in Mauritius. The scale's psychometric properties offered general support for its applicability to a developing economy. This study can be valuable to local institutions, the government and the international marketers by providing empirical information about

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competitive positions of the products originating from different countries, ethnocentrism levels of Mauritian consumers, and several ideas on how to improve the effectiveness of marketing practices in the Mauritian market. Of all the demographic variables considered, the results showed that consumer ethnocentrism was higher among the males and elderly people.

One implication which emerged from this study was the need for local manufacturers to promote their product. Sensitization campaigns to buy Mauritian should be targeted at all the segments and in particular at younger people and women so as to arouse their patriotic feelings through the use of nationalistic appeals in their communication strategy. These campaigns should be sustained over time. In addition to advertising campaigns, the importance of purchasing 'Made in Mauritius' products to support the local industry and protect local employment especially in times of recession should be emphasized. Local manufacturers and entrepreneurs should also engage in brand development, innovation, product and quality improvement including industrial re-engineering and design capacity. They need to develop the required competitiveness to meet local and international standards and expectations. This would both be in the interest of local consumers and to Mauritius. Mauritian consumers appear to be looking for quality, innovativeness and value for money products. Consumer ethnocentrism would be high on the agenda of Mauritian consumers only if the right viable substitutes are locally available to them.

Although this research attempted to reach some conclusions representative of the general public, this study had a few limitations pertaining to the relatively small sample, reluctance of some respondents to reveal their true income and some respondents wishing to explain their true feelings, perceptions and beliefs rather than just ticking the point on the scale that they believed most matched their opinion. Though demographic data is crucial to a successful segmentation strategy, it is insufficient on its own. Future research could include lifestyle questions that could be addressed and used to enhance segmentation and targeting. Bearing in mind that Mauritius consists of a multi-racial population, a sample drawn from each of the ethnic group, which is also a demographic variable, could assess the impact of culture on consumer ethnocentrism especially for products coming from countries with similar cultural background.

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