CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF INFLUENCING FACTORS

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Influencing factors that have emerged onto the forefront of international market research include consumer ethnocentrism (CE) and country of origin (COO), and to a lesser extent, consumer world-mindedness (CW), consumer patriotism (CP), and level of conservatism exhibited by consumers (CC). These factors and their determinants become important to marketers who are always trying to uncover the nature and extent of the influences in order to devise appropriate marketing and advertising plans. Keeping in mind this task of marketers, the study presented here examines the relationships between CW, CP, CC and CE, and in turn, outlines how this might impact COO evaluations and subsequent purchase behaviors.

Based on previous research, it is hypothesized that consumer world-mindedness, consumer patriotism, and level of conservatism will impact consumer ethnocentrism. In turn, it is believed that consumer ethnocentrism affects an individual's COO evaluations and subsequent purchasing behaviors. The following hypotheses are presented:

H1: World-minded consumers are less likely to be ethnocentric. An inverse relationship is expected between consumer's level of world-mindedness and ethnocentrism.

H2: Patriotic consumers are more likely to be ethnocentric. A direct relationship is expected between patriotic tendencies of consumers and their ethnocentrism.

H3: Conservative consumers are more likely to be ethnocentric. A direct relationship is also expected between the extent of conservatism and ethnocentrism exhibited by consumers.

Data was collected through personal interviews with Turkish consumers. The typical respondent was a male head of household. At the end, there were 314 usable questionnaires.

All questions pertaining to the four concepts of interest (CW, CP, CC, and CE) were subjected to a series of translations and back translations by different sets of individuals, including Turkish students studying in the U.S., fluent in both the languages until the judges came to a consensus on the comparability of the original English and final Turkish versions.

Beyond the measures for the constructs, the questionnaire contained demographic information including income ranges, level of education, and age categories.

Analyses of the data lend support to all the hypotheses. In this study, analysis of the data supported the assertion that consumers who are World-minded are less ethnocentric in their views and opinions. These subjects tend to view themselves as citizens of the world rather than of a particular country. Their reference group is humanity rather than a particular ethnic group. But subjects who were highly patriotic tended to be highly ethnocentric and less World-minded. In other words, among the Turkish sample, those who were highly World-minded had lower scores on patriotism. Patriotic subjects tend to put their country above all thereby showing tendencies toward ethnocentrism. Similar to the patriotism factor, conservative respondents also showed propensity to be highly ethnocentric and scored lower in world-mindedness. In conclusion, this study indicates that patriotism, conservatism and ethnocentrism are tendencies that are consistent with each other while being antithetical to world-mindedness.

For the results to be generalizable, this study will have to be replicated in other countries using a more comprehensive set of factors that influence ethnocentrism. This effort, like some in the past, examined the influences in isolation. It is likely that some of these factors might be related to the specifics of COO or such things as the importing nation's culture, economic background, level of economic development, type of product or service, and so on. In any case, many more factors than examined in this study will have to be included in the analysis of relationships. With all the factors assembled, the research should focus on the independent and interactive influences on the ethnocentric tendencies. Of course, the assumption here is that consumers are aware or care about a product's COO. Evidence from the popular media suggests that this phenomenon is crucial only for certain groups of consumers, products, and in certain decision making situations.