RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE INFLUENCE OF CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM ON PURCHASE INTENTION—— AN ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL BRAND

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ABSTRACT

Consumers are driven by both ethnocentric feelings and rational product evaluation when deciding to purchase domestic products. This paper examines the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention, while also considering certain demographic characteristics as moderating variables. It is to be found that age and income moderate the effect of ethnocentrism on purchase intention, highlighting the need for companies to tailor marketing strategies to different age and income groups. To appeal to nationalistic consumers, companies should enhance the national image and cultural significance of domestic products. Utilizing consumer ethnocentrism in the marketing process can help increase market share and bolster the strength of domestic brands. Overall, these findings suggest that companies should take a nuanced approach to marketing domestic products and consider the various factors that influence consumer decision-making.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of consumer behavior research, consumer ethnocentrism is often an essential factor that cannot be overlooked when consumers are making product choices. The concept of consumer ethnocentrism was first proposed by Shimp and Sharma in 1987. They believe that ethnocentrism is a psychological characteristic of people that is reflected in their consumption behavior. It can be understood as the belief that one's own culture is superior to others, with their own nationality at the center, and a sense of pride and achievement associated with it. In other words, ethnocentrism refers to the belief that one's own culture is superior to others, with their own nationality at the center, and a sense of pride and achievement associated with it (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Current research on ethnocentrism has penetrated into the field of consumption, and studies have found that ethnocentrism will affect people's consumption attitudes. Therefore, when domestic and foreign products have no significant differences in price and quality, nationalism will determine and influence consumer purchasing behavior. Therefore, companies can develop marketing strategies based on consumer ethnocentrism. In consumer behavior research, purchase intention is the primary factor that influences consumer purchasing behavior, especially in today's new economic normal and the rise of digital economy. Therefore, studying the relationship between different dimensions of consumer ethnocentrism and product purchase intention is of great importance. Most existing studies on the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention in the academic field treat ethnocentrism as a moderating variable and examine its impact on consumer purchase behavior (Wang Haizhong, 2003). However, based on the definition of ethnocentrism, this variable may directly affect consumer purchase intention. Therefore, this article takes ethnocentrism as an independent variable and purchase intention as the dependent

variable, selects well-known regional agricultural product brands in the international agricultural market, explores the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on the purchase intention of domestic and foreign regional agricultural product brands, and further analyzes the differences in demographic characteristics of consumers' ethnocentric consumption behavior.

Literature Review and Research hypothesis

The effect of consumer ethnocentrism to purchase intention: Consumers with nationalistic tendencies often believe that purchasing foreign products will harm the domestic economy and cause a decline in domestic employment rates. Therefore, they view buying foreign products as an inappropriate and unethical behavior (Sharma S., et. al., 1995). When faced with domestic and foreign product choices, nationalistic consumers usually prioritize collective interests and patriotic sentiment over factors such as product price and quality (Sharma P., 2015). This lack of flexibility in their perception of foreign products increases the probability of choosing domestic products and rejecting foreign products in their purchase decisions, reducing the actual ownership of foreign products and influencing consumer product evaluations (Ahmed, Z., 2013).Previous studies have also indicated that nationalistic attitudes are negatively related to consumer willingness to buy foreign products (Maintt, S.L., 2012; Wang, H.Z., et. al., 2005) and positively related to consumer willingness to buy domestic products (Josiassen A., 2011; Wu, J.L. and Zhu, L., 2010; Nguyen T.D., 2008). Clearly, nationalistic tendencies have an impact on consumer purchasing behavior. Based on the above analysis, we propose the first research hypothesis:

H1: Consumer ethnocentrism significantly affect purchase intention.

The moderating effect of gender on consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention: Multiple studies have indicated that gender has a

direct impact on consumer purchasing intentions (Verkuyten, M., 2005). Men and women demonstrate different preferences and behaviors when shopping. Specifically, women tend to prioritize product utility and value, while men prioritize product appearance and performance. Additionally, gender may also affect consumers' ethnocentrism. Compared to women, men are more likely to display ethnocentric behavior and thinking (Lee, M., & Mathur, S., 2001). Therefore, some male consumers may exhibit a stronger purchasing intention when a product or service emphasizes its ethnicity, while women may not be affected in the same way. Based on this, we propose the second research hypothesis:

H2: Gender moderates the effect of consumer ethnocentrism on purchasing intention.

The moderating effect of age on consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention: Consumer age has been found to influence their purchase intention (Gong, M., Zhang, J., & Huang, Y., 2016). Different age groups of consumers tend to exhibit different shopping preferences and consumption behaviors. For instance, young people are more concerned about fashion and brands, while older people focus more on the practicality and value of products. Additionally, age may also affect consumers' ethnocentrism tendencies. Compared to younger consumers, older consumers are more likely to exhibit ethnocentric behavior and thinking (Lee, Y. K., & Lim, C., 2018). This trend may be related to their upbringing, cultural identity, and historical experiences, among other factors. Specifically, older consumers are more susceptible to the influence of ethnocentrism factors than younger consumers, which may have a stronger impact on their purchase intention. Therefore, we propose the third research hypothesis:

H3: Age moderates the influence of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intention.

The moderating effect of education on consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention: The moderating effect of educational background on the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention is complex. Firstly, educational level may influence consumers' attitudes towards their own ethnicity. Consumers with higher levels of education tend to be more open-minded, inclusive and diverse. They may be more likely to accept and appreciate cultural products and services from other ethnicities, resulting in less ethnocentric tendencies (Chung, K. H., & Lee, S. H., 2016). Secondly, educational level may affect consumers' product demands and preferences. Consumers with higher levels of education tend to have independent thinking and higher quality standards. They focus more on the quality and practicality of products rather than choosing to purchase them solely based on their ethnic origins (Yun, Z. S., & Kim, Y. K., 2018; Hwang, J., & Kim, J. E., 2019). Based on this, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Educational level moderates the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intention.

The moderating effect of income on consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention: Income is one of the important factors that affect the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention. It may influence consumers' demand and preference for ethnic products. Consumers with higher income levels are usually more capable of purchasing expensive and high-quality products and services. They may prefer to choose high-quality ethnic products from their own country, thus showing a higher degree of ethnocentrism (Han & Ryu, 2009). Income levels may also affect consumers' acceptance of multiculturalism. Consumers with higher income levels usually have more open and diverse ways of thinking. They may be more willing to try and accept products and services from other cultures, thus showing less ethnocentrism (Huang & Huddleston, 2009). Income levels can also influence consumers' purchase intention and consumption behavior. Consumers with higher income levels are usually more capable of spending more, and they

may be more willing to purchase expensive and high-quality products and services, thus showing a higher level of purchase intention (Kim, Lee, & Park, 2009). Based on this, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Income level moderates the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intention.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

After conducting a review of domestic and international research literature on consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intentions, and considering the characteristics of the research subjects, we selected the Northeast rice regional agricultural brand. Northeast rice, a highly popular rice brand in the Chinese market, has its own special group of consumers. Almost all men, women, and children who enter supermarkets are familiar with the brand, as it is closely associated with their daily lives. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part 1 asked respondents to answer questions on consumer ethnocentrism, which were adapted from Shimp and Sharma's (1987) well-established scale. The five questions included were "It is always best to purchase domestic products,""We should not buy foreign products because it hurts domestic business and causes unemployment,""I prefer to support domestic products,""Foreigners should not be allowed to put their products on our markets," and "We should only buy products from foreign countries that we cannot obtain within our own country."Part 2 focused on purchase intention and included a scale adapted from the works of Traditional Zhang et al. (2014), Kim et al. (2014), and Moon et al. It uses five items to measure purchase intention for agricultural regional brands, including high purchase intention for the product, willingness to recommend the product or service to others, repeat purchase, willingness to buy other products from the same regional brand, and willingness to only purchase this regional brand. Part 3 measured demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, income, and educational attainment. The first two sections were administered using a 5-point Likert scale, with five attitudinal variables ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Prior to administering the questionnaire, a pre-survey was conducted, and the questionnaire was refined based on issues identified in the pre-survey and suggestions made by experts to ensure that the structure and wording of the questionnaire were reasonable. For data analysis, we used SPSS 26.0 and structural equations.

Data collection

The data for this study was collected using the online research platform "Questionnaire Star," which generated web links and QR codes as a linking channel for the questionnaire. As the study focused on brands and their positioning types that are common in everyday life and can be perceived by all types of consumers, the subjects were not restricted. To incentive participation, subjects who completed the questionnaire were offered a monetary reward. A total of 612 questionnaires were collected for the study. Table 3-1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The majority of the respondents (229 or 37.4% of the total) were aged between 18-25. The second largest group of respondents (185) belonged to the age group of 26-35, which is 30.2% of the total respondents. This means that almost 70% of the total respondents belonged to the age group of 18-35. Out of the total respondents (612), 47.2% were male and 52.8% were female. The table also illustrates the academic qualifications of the participants. The majority of the respondents (433) had a higher education level qualification (undergraduates). The second highest value was for college education level, with 144 respondents, which represents 23.5% of the total. In total, 94.3% of respondents achieved higher education qualifications in the country. This suggests that the majority of these respondents belong to the income level of 3000RMB to 10000RMB per month.

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=612)

Category		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	male	289	47.2	47.2	47.2
	female	323	52.8	52.8	100.0
	Total	612	100.0	100.0	
Age	under 18	66	10.8	10.8	10.8
	18-25	229	37.4	37.4	48.2
	26-35	185	30.2	30.2	78.4
	36-45	99	16.2	16.2	94.6
	over 45	33	5.4	5.4	100.0
	Total	612	100.0	100.0	
Income Level	under 3000	37	6.0	6.0	6.0
	3001-6000	394	64.4	64.4	70.4
	6001-10000	107	17.5	17.5	87.9
	over 10001	74	12.1	12.1	100.0
	Total	612	100.0	100.0	
Education Level	postgraduates	15	2.5	2.5	2.5
	undergraduates	433	70.8	70.8	73.2
	college	144	23.5	23.5	96.7
	high school or under	20	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	612	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1. Reliability analysis

variable	Corrected item-total correlation (CITC)	Cronbach's α
purchase intention	0.671	0.757
consumer ethnocentrism	0.652	

Table 4.2. AVE and CR validation

Factor	AVE	CR
Purchase intention	0.736	0.933
Consumer ethnocentrism	0.697	0.919

Table 4.3. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Component	Factor loading coefficient	Common degree (variance of common factor)
	Factor 1	
Consumer ethnocentrism	0.742	0.551
Purchase intention	0.887	0.787
Characteristic values (initial)	2.089	-
% of variance (initial)	69.618%	-
Cumulative % (initial)	69.618%	-
characteristic values (rotation)	2.089	-
% of variance (extraction)	69.618%	-
Cumulative % of variance (rotation)	69.618%	-
KMO	0.752	-
Bartlett's Test	93.563	-
df	3	-
P-value	0.000	-

In summary, results reveals that the majority of the respondents are: young, highly qualified and belong to upper middle income groups of the country. It is also evident that there is a good balance of male and female respondents of current study. This socio-demographic information is vital as it might have strong influence on consumer purchase behaviour.

Data Analysis

Reliability and validity: Table 4-1 presents the results of the reliability test for the variables using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results show that all variables had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above the critical value of 0.6 and the combined reliability CR was above 0.8. This indicates a high level of reliability for the scales and statistics used in the study. Moreover, Table 4-2 shows that the mean extracted variance (AVE) values for all variables were above 0.6, indicating high discriminant validity of the variables. AVE (Average Variance Extraction) and CR (Combined Reliability) were used for the convergent validity (convergent validity) analysis; AVE>0.5, CR>0.7 indicate high convergent validity; validation factor analysis

(CFA) was conducted in this paper toward 2 factors. Table 4-2 shows that all the AVE values are greater than 0.5 and the CR values are higher than 0.7, which means the data have good convergent validity. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted and 2 factors were extracted. The variables have significant factor loading of above 0.6, and the eigen values are larger than 1. Principal component analysis method and factor extraction method of maximum likelihood method were adopted. The results of exploratory factor analysis showed that the scale structure was stable and balanced. As the table 4-3 shows, KMO=0.752>0.7, P=.000<0.05, results show that the data are suitable for further data analysis.

A factor extraction method with principal component analysis and orthogonal great rotation was used to extract 2 factors according to Kaiser's criterion, retaining question items with factor loading greater than 0.60 and no cross-factor loadings to obtain a scale structure with four factors and 16 items, which cumulatively explained 69.618% of the variance proportion. The results of the exploratory factor analysis indicate that the scale structure is stable and relatively balanced.

Table 4. 4 Model Goodness-of-fit Indices

indicators	χ^2	df	p	CMINχ^2/df	GFI	RMSEA	RMR	CFI	NFI	NNFI
criteria	-	-	>0.05	<3	>0.9	<0.10	<0.05	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9
value	103.880	34	0.000	3.055	0.859	0.144	0.097	0.924	0.893	0.900
Other index	TLI	AGFI	IFI	PGFI	PNFI	SRMR	RMSEA 90% CI			
criteria	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	<0.1	-			
value	0.900	0.772	0.925	0.531	0.675	0.065	0.112 ~ 0.175			
Default Model: χ^2(45)=969.239, p=1.000										

Table 4.5. Regression analysis of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intention

Regression analysis result (n=612)						
	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
constant	1.291	0.245	-	5.275	0.000**	-
consumer ethnocentrism	0.527	0.096	0.485	5.496	0.000**	1.000
R^2	0.236					
Adjusted R^2	0.228					
F	F (1,98)=30.211,p=0.000					
D-W value	2.018					
Dependent variable : purchase intention						
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01						

Table 4. 6 Regression analysis of gender

The results of adjustment effect analysis of gender			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
constant	2.532** (26.784)	2.532** (26.681)	2.530** (26.490)
consumer ethnocentrism	0.527** (5.496)	0.530** (5.496)	0.534** (5.477)
gender		0.096 (0.501)	0.098 (0.507)
consumer ethnocentrism*gender			-0.077 (-0.385)
R^2	0.236	0.238	0.239
Adjusted R^2	0.228	0.222	0.215
F value	F (1,98)=30.211,p=0.000	F (2,97)=15.115,p=0.000	F (3,96)=10.038,p=0.000
$\triangle R^2$	0.236	0.002	0.001
$\triangle$F value	F (1,98)=30.211,p=0.000	F (1,97)=0.251,p=0.618	F (1,96)=0.148,p=0.701
Dependent variable: purchase intention			
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01			

Model fit test: In this study, the great likelihood method was employed to fit the statistical data and theoretical model. The obtained coefficients and significance of the direct action paths are presented in Table 4-4. The goodness of fit coefficients, including the chi-squared degrees of freedom ratio (x2/df), comparative fit index (CFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), normalized fit index (NFI), and root mean square error values were all found to be in the best quality range. This indicates that the model fitting results meet the original requirements of the model and are able to effectively test and explain the paths of the concerned variables.

Hypothesis test: The regression results in Tables 4-5 demonstrate that a linear regression analysis was performed, using consumer ethnocentrism as the independent variable and purchase intention as the dependent variable. The model equation was derived as: purchase intention = 1.291 + 0.527* consumer ethnocentrism. The model R-squared value was 0.236, indicating that 23.6% of the variation in purchase intention could be explained by consumer ethnocentrism. The F-test was significant (F=30.211, p=0.000<0.05), confirming the meaningfulness of the model and suggesting that consumer ethnocentrism has an impact on purchase intention. The regression coefficient for consumer ethnocentrism was 0.527 (t=5.496, p=0.000<0.01), which means that consumer ethnocentrism has a significant positive influence on purchase intention. Therefore, the research hypothesis H1, which states that consumer ethnocentrism significantly affects purchase intention, is supported. To summarize, Tables 4-6 present the results of the moderating effect analysis. Model 1 shows that consumer ethnocentrism has a significant effect on purchase intention (t=5.496, p=0.000<0.05). Model 2 adds the moderating variable (gender) and shows that gender does not have a

significant effect on purchase intention (t=-0.704, p=0.482>0.05). Model 3 adds the interaction term and shows that the interaction term between consumer ethnocentrism and gender is not significant (t=-0.385, p=0.701>0.05), indicating that gender does not moderate the effect of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intention. Therefore, the research hypothesis H2 is rejected. The results presented in Tables 4-7 demonstrate that consumer ethnocentrism significantly affects purchase intention. Moreover, the interaction effect between consumer ethnocentrism and age is significant (t=-0.479, p=0.033<0.05). Hence, the research hypothesis H3, which states that age moderates the influence of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intention, is supported. From Tables 4-8 it is concluded that consumer ethnocentrism affects purchase intentions, the interaction term between consumer ethnocentrism and education does not show significance (t=-0.720, p=0.473>0.05) and consumer education does not moderate the effect of ethnocentrism on purchase intentions The effect of ethnocentrism on purchase intention is not moderated by consumer education. Therefore, the hypothesis that H4: Educational level moderates the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intention is rejected.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Consumer ethnocentrism refers to the tendency of consumers to prefer domestically produced products over imported products. This preference can stem from a variety of factors, including the belief that domestically produced products better represent the country's image or offer better value for money.

Table 4. 7. Regression analysis of age

The results of adjustment effect analysis of age			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
constant	2.532** (26.784)	2.532** (26.648)	2.539** (26.317)
consumer ethnocentrism	0.527** (5.496)	0.528** (5.430)	0.530** (5.425)
age		-0.010 (-0.098)	-0.014 (-0.140)
consumer ethnocentrism*age			-0.053 (-0.479)
R^2	0.236	0.236	0.238
Adjusted R^2	0.228	0.220	0.214
F value	F (1,98)=30.211,p=0.000	F (2,97)=14.958,p=0.000	F (3,96)=9.969,p=0.000
$\triangle R^2$	0.236	0.000	0.002
$\triangle$F value □	F (1,98)=30.211,p=0.000	F (1,97)=0.010,p=0.922	F (1,96)=0.229,p=0.033
Dependent variable: purchase intention			
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01			

Table 4.8. Regression analysis of education

The results of adjustment effect analysis of education			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	2.532** (26.784)	2.532** (26.647)	2.526** (26.436)
consumer ethnocentrism	0.527** (5.496)	0.526** (5.455)	0.514** (5.231)
education		-0.006 (-0.033)	-0.025 (-0.132)
consumer ethnocentrism*education			-0.174 (-0.720)
R^2	0.236	0.236	0.240
Adjusted R^2	0.228	0.220	0.216
F value	F (1,98)=30.211,p=0.000	F (2,97)=14.952,p=0.000	F (3,96)=10.091,p=0.000
$\triangle R^2$	0.236	0.000	0.004
$\triangle$F value □	F (1,98)=30.211,p=0.000	F (1,97)=0.001,p=0.974	F (1,96)=0.518,p=0.473
Dependent variable: Purchase intention			
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01			

Table 4.9. Regression analysis of income

The results of adjustment effect analysis of income			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
constant	2.532** (26.784)	2.532** (26.878)	2.532** (26.740)
consumer ethnocentrism	0.527** (5.496)	0.527** (5.523)	0.527** (5.482)
income		-0.148 (-1.300)	-0.148 (-1.291)
consumer ethnocentrism*income			-0.008 (-0.070)
R^2	0.236	0.249	0.249
Adjusted R^2	0.228	0.233	0.225
F value □	F (1,98)=30.211,p=0.000	F (2,97)=16.057,p=0.000	F (3,96)=10.596,p=0.000
$\triangle R^2$	0.236	0.013	0.000
$\triangle$F value □	F (1,98)=30.211,p=0.000	F (1,97)=1.690,p=0.197	F (1,96)=0.005,p=0.044
Dependent variable: purchase intention			
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01			

From Tables 4-9 it is concluded that consumer ethnocentrism affects purchase intention, the interaction term between consumer ethnocentrism and income shows significance (t=-0.070, p=0.044<0.05) and consumer education does not moderate the impact of ethnocentrism on purchase intention. Accordingly H5: income moderates the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on purchase intention hypothesis is supported.

CONCLUSION

Notably, consumer ethnocentrism has been found to have a positive effect on purchase intention, as it influences consumers' decisions when considering factors such as price, quality, and brand image. Interestingly, the moderating effect of demographic factors on the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention

has been found to be complex. While gender and education do not appear to directly moderate this relationship, age and income do. It is important to note that the relationship between gender and consumer ethnocentrism may be more nuanced than previously thought, as gender may not necessarily represent the strength of an individual's identification with their ethnic group or associated consumer demand. Similarly, while educational attainment may be related to an individual's values, attitudes, and consumption behavior, it does not necessarily reflect whether an individual will consider their ethnic group in consumption decisions. In contrast, age and income are more likely to be related to consumer ethnocentrism. For example, younger individuals may be more focused on their ethnic group, while higher income individuals may be more able to express support for their own ethnic group in their consumption. As such, age and income may

influence individuals' consumption behavior and demand for ethnic group products and services, thereby moderating the role of ethnocentrism in influencing purchase intentions. Overall, the findings suggest that consumer ethnocentrism has a significant positive effect on purchase intention, and that age and income may moderate this relationship. Further research is needed to fully understand the complex interplay between demographic factors and consumer ethnocentrism, and how this may influence purchase behavior.

Limitation and implication

From a theoretical perspective, investigating the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on the willingness to purchase domestically produced products can contribute to a more thorough understanding and explanation of consumer behavior decision-making. This analysis can uncover the reasons and psychological mechanisms that drive consumers to select domestically produced products, providing a foundation for the development of relevant consumer policies and marketing strategies. In terms of practical applications, the examination of consumer ethnocentrism's influence on the purchase intentions of domestically produced products can guide enterprises in designing appropriate product strategies regarding pricing, promotion, and distribution to enhance the market share and competitiveness of domestic products. This research can also offer critical insight to government agencies as they create relevant industrial and export policies. It is important to note that this study used a questionnaire survey method, which may lead to inaccuracies in comparison to actual purchasing behavior. Future research may consider using more varied and innovative research methods such as experimental methods and field surveys to improve the external validity of the study. Additionally, this study did not examine the influence of brand awareness and reputation on purchase intentions, nor did it examine the relationship between multidimensional consumer ethnocentrism and the purchase intentions of foreign products. Therefore, future research could refer to the above ideas and enrich the theoretical model of this study.

Acknowledgments

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