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Willingness to buy foreign products in relation to ethnocentric tendencies and worldminded attitudes of consumers

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate how consumer ethnocentrism and worldmindedness change consumer attitudes, and how domestic product judgment moderates this relationship. Associated hypotheses are tested with data collected with a field survey of a sample of 292 consumers in Çanakkale. The research illustrates the worldmindedness construct with recognized consumer ethnocentrism notion. Results reveal that consumer ethnocentrism is negatively related to willingness to buy foreign products, and domestic product judgment does not have significant moderating effect in this relationship. Worldmindedness, on the contrary, is not related with willingness to buy foreign products, but domestic product judgment has a significant moderator role on the relationship between worldmindedness and willingness to buy foreign products. At the end, the research findings are discussed and also future research opportunities are presented.

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Keywords: Consumption Theory, Consumer Ethnocentrism, Worldmindedness, Domestic Product, Foreign Product

1. Introduction

It is well known for a long time that consumers do not only follow economic reasons in their consuming decisions but it is also about identities, culture, values, worldviews and group memberships. In this sense, consuming behaviour is sometimes against economic reason. Being defined as a rational activity by classical economy, consuming behaviour is to be referred as means of a complex process based on various irrational attitudes since Marx pointed out the notion of fetish-meta.

French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu offered the term "social capital" to make sense of human behaviour, which is not only about material capital. There is a social background of what we do and how we do. Therefore consuming behaviour is also a subject of both economical and cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984: 114). Furthermore, Featherstone (2005: 39), emphasizes symbolic meanings carried by products as main determinant of consuming

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behaviour. In other words, consumer products are not only subject of their "functional" qualities but also they may show strong symbolic functions, with the possibility of getting ahead of material functions as well.

As objects becoming symbolic indicators to be consumed (Baudrillard, 2011), it is not the satisfaction of abiding needs of human nature or biology, but communication tools and social manifestation of the individuals in societal context, modern consuming theory explains (Stevenson, 2008: 249-250). Thorstein Veblen's "The Theory of the Leisure Class" in 1899 and Georg Simmel's "The Metropolis and the Mental Life" in 1903 were the firsts to draw attention to this phenomenon. Such interest on group relations of consuming behaviours are scholarly studied via purchase models and tendencies in marketing and consumer research (Cross, 2000), pointing out that consumers regulate their social structures through consumption choices (Crockett & Wallendorf, 2004).

Consumers' attitudes towards domestic and foreign products have vastly been in consideration in the literature based on worldviews, political views and sociological notions. Onay (2005) lists antecedents of country origin effect as country images and characteristics, brand attitudes, product knowledge and characteristics, culture, consumer characteristics and consumer ethnocentrism. Shankarmahesh (2006) mentions worldmindedness as a factor of consumer attitudes in regard to consumers ethnocentrism and socio-psychological factors related. This viewpoint leads to understand the aspects of consumer behaviours from another angle. Convenient to the literature (Herche, 1992; Lantz & Loeb 1996), it is claimed in this study that worldviews are significantly influential on consumer tendencies. This study hereby associates worldmindedness and Shimp and Sharma's (1987) conception of consumer ethnocentrism to consumers' willingness to buy foreign products. It is likewise presented in the literature that quality and perception of domestic products and domestic economies are critically effective in this respect (Jo, 1998; Wang & Chen, 2004; Klein, Ettenson & Krishnan, 2006). Therefore domestic product judgment is hereby considered to have a moderating effect on the relationships stated.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Consumer Ethnocentrism

Sumner (1911: 13) has defined ethnocentrism as "the technical name for (...) view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, all others are scaled and rated with reference to it". As for consumer ethnocentrism is a notion to be determinant on negative consumer attitude about foreign products, and an adaptation of the Sumner's sociologic conceptualization (Klein, Ettenson & Morris, 1998; Evanschitzky, Wangenheim, Woisetschlaeger & Blut, 2008).

Ever since the beginning of the twentieth century, country-of-origin studies, in sense of consumers' fondness to products via origin-country, occupy an important place in consumer literature. As a domestic/group based subsequent concept, consumer ethnocentrism was defined as a set of negative "beliefs (...) about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products" (Shimp & Sharma, 1987: 280). Ethnocentric consumer tendencies and country-of-origin attitudes have been studied with various conceptions in interdisciplinary contexts to determine the antecedents.

Consumers' behaviour to purchase domestic goods to protect self-group interests, reveals the conflict between maxim of economy and emotional dimension of such tendencies. This conflict can be traced in purchase of domestic products over foreign products, and even in shopping from own sub-group. On the other hand, consumers may also think that shopping from their own group, purchasing domestic products, will eventually benefit them in a long run, since it is perceived as a way to support their own economic interests. This understanding presents the normative dimension of domestic product favouring and refusal of foreign products (Shankarmahesh, 2006).

A significant relationship between emotional and normative dimensions of consumer ethnocentrism can be found in conceptualization of Shimp and Sharma (1987). Factors like perceived threats to national economy and characteristics of consumers have a modifier effect on consumers' tendencies act to preserve national economy, thus purchase of domestic products over foreign products (Axelrod & Hammond, 2003; Shankarmahesh, 2006). Moreover, as Balıkçıoğlu, Koçak and Özer (2007) examplfy, boycotting efforts against foreign products might be successful even boycotting reasons have no rational ground.

Antecedents of consumer ethnocentrism has been vastly studied over the terms of political attitudes as patriotism, nationalism and political conservatism. Both nationalists and ethnocentric consumers are presented to have negative tendencies against foreign products (Demirbağ, Sahadev & Mellahi, 2010). Therefore, the notion of national loyalty effects consumers to perceive purchasing of foreign products as a "wrong" behaviour to avoid (Baughn & Yaprak, 1993). Thus, consumers with ethnocentric tendencies have less tendency to buy foreign products (Evanschitzky et al., 2008), and vice versa (Wall & Heslop, 1986).

H1a: Consumer ethnocentrism tendency is negatively related to willingness to buy foreign products.

Country of origin, related to worldview of the consumer, has a direct effect on consumer behaviour (Herche, 1992). Lantz & Loeb (1996) states that the attitudes towards a specific country or nationalistic tendencies of consumers are determinants of foreign product refusals. On the other hand, Erdmann (2008) relates product judgment to foreign product choice more than consumers' irrational attitudes. It has been appointed by Klein, Ettenson and Krishnan (2006) that domestic product judgment is rather effective on purchase of foreign products by ethnocentric consumers. Therefore, how ethnocentric consumers perceive their national products has a moderator effect on their tendency to buy foreign products.

H1b: Domestic product judgment has a moderating effect on the relationship between consumer ethnocentric tendency and willingness to buy foreign products.

2.2. Worldmindedness

Political frame created by Adorno (2011) and Kosterman and Feshbach (1989) have been the main sociological source of current literature on country-of-origin oriented consumer research. Though in some research apart from political attitudes, state of mind, as another level of study, has been associated with consumer willingness to buy foreign products (Rawwas, Rajendran & Wührer, 1996; Balabanis, Diamantopoulos, Mueller & Melewar, 2001; Shankarmahesh, 2006; Audi, 2009; Al Ganideh, Farhan, el Rafae & Omari, 2012). These studies go beyond political determinism as a tool, and improve the psychometric understanding of the consumer attitudes. In addition, Jost, Napier, Thorisdottir, Gosling, Palfai and Ostafin (2007) stated that political conservatism has psychological antecedents such as anxiety, uncertainty and perception of threat. Thus, economical conservatism and openness to foreign product purchase should be referred as means of psychological anxiety and way of understanding the world surrounding the self.

Sampson and Smith (1957: 99) defines worldminded person "who favors a world-view of the problems of humanity, whose primary reference group is mankind, rather than" national identities. Such concept differ from international-mindedness, in a value oriented frame of reference on a universal understanding of humanity. As for Shankarmahesh (2006: 149) describes, worldmindedness is "a state of mind" and "there is a theoretical possibility that a person can be 'worldminded' even without interacting with other cultures". It is therefore clear that worldmindedness, as being member of a group of all humanity, rejects the understanding of others from other nations or groups to pose a threat.

As a concept close to internationalism (Balabanis et al., 2001) and cultural openness (Shankarmahesh, 2006), worldmindedness differ from both of them in definition, though it has been studied in a way it shows parallels with the concepts in terms of having a better attitude towards foreign products. Skinner (1988) argues that individuals are indoctrinated in society; as in patriotic societies support nationalist tendencies and humanitarian societies support worldminded attitudes. Though worldmindedness is not the exact opposite of nationalism or consumer ethnocentrism (Rawwas et al., 1996), yet shows low correlation (-.18) between internationalism and nationalism in the research of Kosterman and Feshbach (1989).

Al Ganideh et al. (2012) asserts that worldmindedness has a negative effect on consumer ethnocentric tendencies on a socio-psychological level. Rawwas et al. (1996) describes worldminded individuals as who has a more positive view of foreign products. Since perception of foreign products as a threat does not apply to worldminded individuals, it is more likely to establish a positive relationship between worldmindedness and foreign product choice.

H2a: Worldmindedness is positively related to willingness to buy foreign products.

Balabanis et al. (2001) states certain views of domestic products do not have to correlate with foreign product choices. Lack of emotional approach of worldminded customers' towards foreign products, relates willingness to buy foreign products to evaluation of products. As Rawwas et al. (1996) stated, worldminded consumers do not act biased to national products. Therefore, domestic product judgment has an effect on worldminded consumers' willingness to buy foreign product.

H2b: Domestic product judgment has a moderating effect on the relationship between worldmindedness and willingness to buy foreign products.

3. Method

Research model is presented in Figure 1. While consumer ethnocentrism and worldmindedness are independent variables, domestic product judgment is the moderator variable and willingness to buy foreign products is the dependent variable in this study.

3.1. Measures

To collect the data to test the research hypothesis' a five-point Likert questionnaire was set containing the 6-item short version of CETSCALE (Consumer Ethnocentrism Tendency Scale) from Shimp and Sharma (1987), 7-item worldmindedness scale from Rawwas et al. (1996) and 5-item domestic product judgment scale and 6-item willingness to buy foreign products are adapted from Klein et al. (1998).

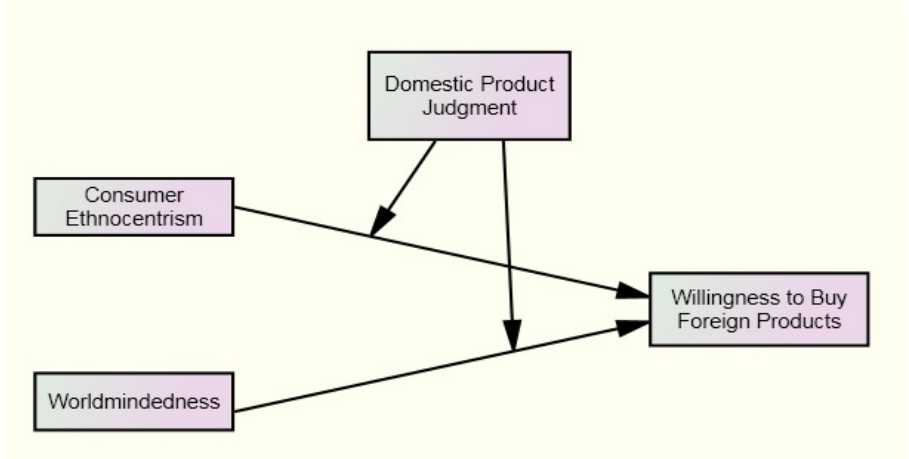


Figure.1 Research Model

3.2. Sample and Data Collection

The questionnaire was applied face-to-face to inhabitants of city of Çanakkale in various public locations. We have collected 292 valid forms to gather the data to analyse, using a convenience sampling technique. Demographics of the participants are presented in Table 1. As 31,5 % of the participants earn 500 Turkish Liras and less, and 27,4 % between 501 and 1000 Turkish Liras, it is clear that majority of the participants have quite low income. Low income might be linked to the age range, since participants are densely young; 39,4 % of the participants are younger than 25 years old; 26 % between 25 and 35. Last of all 54,5 % of the participants are female and 45,5 % are male.

Table 1. Demographics

Income (monthly)	Freq.	(%)		Gender	Freq.	(%)		Age	Freq.	(%)
500 TL and below	92	31,5		Female	159	54,5		Below 25	115	39,4
501-1000 TL	80	27,4		Male	133	45,5		25-34	76	26
1001-1500 TL	51	17,5		**Total**	292	100		35-44	49	16,8
1501-2000 TL	33	11,3						45 and above	38	13
2001 and above	36	12,3						n/a	14	4,8
Total	292	100						**Total**	292	100

3.3. Data Analysis and Findings

Exploratory factor analysis model with Varimax rotation was performed on 24-item questionnaire, hence 4 items were removed. Exploratory factor analysis results and provided reliability is shown in the following tables.

Table 2. Worldmindedness

Items	Factor loadings	**Cronbach Alfa (α)**
I find imported goods more desirable than domestically produced products	,498	,623
All national governments should be abolished and replaced by one central government	,749	
It would be better to be a citizen of the world than of any particular country	,698	
My quality of life would improve if more imported goods were available	,669	
We should permit foreigners to immigrate here even if it lowers our standard of living	,527	
Total Variance Explained: 40,448		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,675
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Sq.	167,69
	Df	10
	Sig.	,000

Table 3. Consumer Ethnocentric Tendencies

Items	Factor loadings	**Cronbach Alfa (α)**
Only those products that are unavailable in Turkey should be imported.	,589	,848
Turkish products, first, last and foremost.	,791	
We should not buy foreign products, because this hurts Turkish business and causes unemployment.	,806	
It may cost me in the long run but I prefer to support Turkish products	,803	
Turkish consumers who purchase products made in other countries are responsible for putting their fellow citizens out of work.	,731	
A real Turk should always buy Turkish products	,812	
Total Variance Explained:	57,67	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		,860
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Sq.	660,20
	Df	15
	Sig.	,000

Table 4. Domestic Product Judgment

Items	Factor loadings	**Cronbach Alfa (α)**
Turkish products are carefully produced and have fine workmanship.	,778	,859
Turkish products usually show a very clever use of color and design.	,822	
Turkish products are usually quite reliable and long-wearing.	,897	
Turkish products are usually a good value for the money.	,856	
Total Variance Explained:	70,49	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		,806
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Sq.	533,45
	Df	6
	Sig.	,000

Table 5. Willingness to Buy Foreign Products

Items	Factor loadings	**Cronbach Alfa (α)**
I would feel guilty if I buy a foreign product. (R)	,840	,821
I would never buy a foreign product. (R)	,744	
Whenever possible, I avoid buying foreign products. (R)	,842	
I don't like the idea of owning foreign products. (R)	,787	
If two products were in equal quality, I would 10 % more for the Turkish product. (R)	,601	
Total Variance Explained:	58,98	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		,813
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Sq.	512,74
	Df	10
	Sig.	,000

Results of correlation analysis is presented in Table 6. Highest correlations are determined between consumer ethnocentric tendencies and domestic product judgment (0,566) and consumer ethnocentric tendencies and willingness to buy foreign products (-0,555). Also domestic product judgment is found to be correlated with willingness to buy foreign products (-0,371) on 0,01 level of significance.

Table 6. Correlations

Variables		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
1	Worldmindedness	1			
2	Consumer Ethnocentric Tendencies	-,214**	1		
3	Domestic Product Judgment	-,138*	,566**	1	
4	Willingness to Buy Foreign Products (r)	,132*	-,555**	-,371**	1
*0,05, **0,01 level of significance					

Regression models has been conducted with SPSS in order to test the hypothesis' and results are as follows There is a significant negative relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and willingness to buy foreign products (β = -0,507). Hypothesis 1a is therefore supported as presented in table 7. In the second step to test the moderator effects of domestic product judgment, the interaction effect of ethnocentrism and domestic product judgement (CETxDom.Pro.J.) were included in the model. There is no significant change in R square (ΔR^2= 0,002) between step 1 and step 2. Therefore Hypothesis 1b is rejected.

Table 7. Regression Analysis of Consumer Ethnocentrism and Willingness to Buy Foreign Products, Using Domestic Product Judgment as Moderator Variable

Variables	**Step 1**		**Step 2**	
	β	**t-value**	**β**	**t-value**
CET	-,507	-8,557**	-,390	-2,787**
Dom.Pro.Judg.	-,084	-1,426	,044	,291
CETxDom.Pro.J.			-,222	-,926
R^2	,313		,315	
Δ R^2	,313		,002	
Δ F	65,500**		0,857	

* p < 0,05 ** p < 0,01

As seen in table 8, R^2= 0,144 and 14 % of the variance in willingness to buy foreign products is explained by independent variables in the model. Domestic product judgment has significant relation (β= -0,360; p<0,01) with willingness to buy foreign products, however the there is no significant relation between worldmindedness and willingness to buy foreign products (β= 0,082). Therefore Hypothesis 2a is rejected. In the second step to test the moderator effects of domestic product judgment, the interaction effect of worldmindedness and domestic product

judgement (WMxDom.Pro.J.) were included in the model. There is significant change in R square between step 1 and step 2 (ΔR^2= 0,016).

Table 8. Regression Analysis of Worldmindedness and Willingness to Buy Foreign Products, Using Domestic Product Judgment as Moderator Variable

Variables	Step 1		Step 2	
	β	t-value	β	t-value
WM	,082	1,486	,465	2,696**
Dom.Pro.Judg.	-,360	-6,542**	,006	,038
WMxDom.Pro.J.			-,508	-2,342*
R^2	,144		,161	
Δ R^2	,144		,016	
Δ F	24,315**		5,486*	

* p < 0,05 ** p < 0,01

4. Conclusion

It has been determined in the study that ethnocentric tendencies of consumers are related to reluctance to buying foreign products (H1a). This result is consistent with the offered construct by Shimp and Sharma (1987) and further studies (Klein et al., 1998; Shankarmahesh, 2006; Al Ganideh et al., 2012). Consumer nationalism as a symbol of national identity grows at the same time with the globalization and borderless new economic phenomenon (Wang, 2005). During this struggle, Mangnale, Potluri and Degufu (2011) states, ethnocentrism manifests itself with symbolism in cultural and economical ways. Ethnocentric consumers show group cohesion whether rationally justified or not (Axelrod & Hammond, 2003), and this is an important concern for firms in the age of globalization.

It is argued in the literature that domestic product judgment has an effect on consumers' reluctance to foreign products. When consumers value their own country products less, they are expected to have more will to purchase foreign products in general (Balabanis et al., 2001; Klein et al., 2006). Types of products and specific properties of the countries also have significant effect on product judgment effect on consumer tendencies (Wang & Chen, 2004; Shankarmahesh, 2006). In this research, domestic product judgment did not show significant effect on the relationship between consumers ethnocentric tendencies and willingness to buy foreign products (H1b). Due to limitations of the study, we do not have any implications about this result. Product based research might provide further information in this regard.

Results show that worldmindedness is not related to consumer attitudes in a negative way of patriotic attitudes, as worldminded consumers are not more prone to purchase foreign products (H2a). This result is consistent with the previous research conducted by Balabanis et al. (2001), in which Turkish and Czech consumers' worldminded views were not related to ethnocentric consumer tendencies. However, in Rawwas et al. (1996), worldminded consumers were found to fancy foreign products more strongly than others. This relationship might be tested again in different perspectives to understand whether worldmindedness has an effect on different aspects of consuming behaviour. On the other hand, worldminded consumers are found to be guided by product judgments in this study. Domestic product judgment's moderation effect on willingness to buy foreign products statistically shows significance unlike worldmindedness' effect itself; meaning domestic product judgment is not supported as a moderator in this respect (H2b).

Another implication can be reached in this study is that patriotic and non-patriotic attitudes are not exact opposites. It was also stated by Kosterman and Feshbach (1989), but worth to note that when patriotic consumers tend to be reluctant to foreign products, it does not mean non-patriotic consumers tend to buy foreign products. As Jost et al. (2007) stated, conservative attitudes are related to psychological cases. Therefore there is no base for absence of such stance to create any opposites. In a sociological level, habitus, as Bourdieu (1984) described, assists scholars to form

another way of understanding how this process works. What a person does, how he thinks, feels and perceives beings around him is a reflection of an unconscious set, namely habitus. In this sense, Skinner's (1988) assertion on indoctrination by society means ethnocentric consumer tendencies are designed frames of society. Limitations of this research prevents further implications on the topic whereas using different data sources and using limitations like product types and consumer groups may lead to extensive conclusions.

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