

Ethnocentrism among Iranian Consumer with Different Consumption Habits

Bahram Ranjbarian

Department of Management, University of Isfahan, Iran

Tel: 98-311-793-2612 E-mail: Bahram1r@Yahoo.com

Mojtaba Barari (Corresponding author)

Faculty of Management, Marketing Management, University of Tehran, Iran

Tel: 98-911-718-0719 E-mail: Mojtaba_Barari@Yahoo.com

Kazem Zabihzade

Department of Management, University of Isfahan, Iran

E-mail: Zabihzadeh62@Yahoo.com

Received: February 10, 2011 Accepted: July 11, 2011 doi:10.5539/ijms.v3n3p30

Abstract

This study seeks to understand consumer ethnocentrism (CE) among Iranian consumers and investigates its relationship with some consumption habits such as need for uniqueness, role-relaxed consumption, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, attention to social comparison information and status consumption. The study analyzed findings gathered from 723 students of University of Isfahan. Results indicate that the consumer need for uniqueness, role-relaxed consumption and status consumption are negatively related to CE but surprisingly Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence was positively related to CE and relation between attention to social comparison information and CE was not significant. Also women compared with men and younger consumers compared with the elder consumers exhibit greater CE. Consumer tendency toward ethnocentrism also varies between different cultural groups.

Keywords: Consumer ethnocentrism, Consumer need for uniqueness, Role-relaxed consumption, Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, Attention to social comparison information, Status consumption, Iran

1. Introduction

Globalization of economy has resulted in the increased competition among domestic and foreign goods and services (Netemeyer, 1991). Globalization is due to a host of factors including worldwide investment, production and marketing, advances in telecommunication technologies and the internet, increases in world travel and the growth of global media (Alden, 2006). Consequently consumers are becoming more aware of products and services available throughout the world. In addition to that, consumers are increasingly exposed to products from different countries (Wong et al., 2008). In this situation international marketing researchers have long been concerned with determining whether consumers are predisposed to a preference for domestic products, as opposed to foreign products (Evanschitzky et al., 2008). It seems that in some developing countries, foreign products are evaluated positively and they are considered good potential markets for the exporting countries. Usually in the developing countries such as Iran there are extensive policies which aim to support the domestic industries, while the markets are filled with different foreign brands. The important issue would be the Iranian consumers' tendency towards purchasing the domestic or foreign goods despite the fact that buying foreign made products are unpatriotic and can harm the domestic economy (Javalgi, 2005). In this regard the consumer ethnocentrism is an index which investigates the consumer's tendency towards buying a foreign good instead of the domestic product. It renders a basis for the comparison of the tendency of a nation towards buying the foreign products. Regarding its significance, it is introduced as the most enduring forms of non-tariff barrier (Shankarmahesh, 2006). Even though it is an important issue limited comprehensive research was done to

investigate this concept in Iran. The present study seeks to investigate the ethnocentrism in Iran to picture a more precise image of Iran's ethnocentrism, and also tries to investigate the relation of this index with some other concepts for more comprehensive understanding of the issue. Some of these concepts which has been studied by other researchers include Cultural openness (Shimp and Sharma, 1987 and Sharma et al., 1995 and Suh and Kwon, 2002), World mindedness (Rawwas et al., 1996 and Balabanis et al., 2001), Patriotism (Han, 1988 and Sharma et al., 1995 and Klein and Ettenson, 1999 and Balabanis et al., 2001), Conservatism (Sharma et al., 1995 and Balabanis et al., 2002), Collectivism (Nishina, 1990 and Strutton et al., 1994 and Sharma et al., 1995), Animosity (Klein et al., 1998), Materialism (Clarke et al., 2000), List of values (Clarke et al., 2000), Salience (Olsen et al., 1993), Dogmatism (Shimp and Sharma, 1987 and Caruana, 1996). Most of the researches in this field have investigated the same concepts in relation with ethnocentrism; however, it seems that the level of the consumers' ethnocentrism in a country can be different with respect to their own consumption habits. Thus, for better understanding of the concept, the present study investigates the relationship between the Iranian university students' ethnocentrism with five consumption variables; namely, consumer need for uniqueness, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, role-relaxed consumption, attention to social comparison information, and status consumption.

The aim of present study can be divided into two parts, first is to investigate the Iranian consumers' ethnocentrism and its differences with relation to demographic character and, second is to investigate the relationship between Iranian's ethnocentrism with five consumption habits; namely, consumer need for uniqueness, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence, role-relaxed consumption, attention to social comparison information, and status consumption. The conceptual model of study is shown in figure 1.

2. Background and hypotheses

2.1 Consumer ethnocentrism (CE)

The term originated from a general concept of ethnocentrism, which was introduced by Sumner (1906). He introduced this concept as: the view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all the others are scaled and rated with reference to it. Ethnocentrism is not only applicable to tribes and nations but reveals itself in all kinds of social groups, developing into family pride, sectionalism, religious prejudice, racial discrimination, and patriotism (Sharma et al., 1995). Consumer ethnocentrism focuses on the responsibility and morality of purchasing foreign-made products and the loyalty of consumers to the products manufactured in their home country (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Huddleston (1995) adds to this definition, "Ethnocentrism implies that purchasing imports is wrong, not only because it is unpatriotic, but also because it is detrimental to the economy and results in the loss of jobs in industries threatened by imports." Indeed Consumers tend to distinguish between products of the home country and those of the foreign countries and avoid buying foreign products due to nationalistic reasons (Shankarmahesh, 2006). This concept results from the fear of harmful effects that imports may have on the economic situation of the individual and the individual's society. This fear causes individuals to refrain from purchasing imported products and to exert pressure on other society members to refrain also (Sharma et al., 1995). Research indicates Iranian ethnocentrism and their openness to foreign-made products is low (Bahae and Pisani, 2009). The measurement of CE was made possible with the development of the CETSCALE (Consumer Ethnocentric Tendencies Scale) by Shimp and Sharma (1987). The CETSCALE consists of 17 items which measure the tendency of consumers to act consistently towards foreign and domestic products.

2.2 Consumer need for uniqueness (CNFI)

Tian et al. (2001, p. 52) defined the CNFI as the trait of pursuing differences relative to others through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's self-image and social image. This concept is conceptualized with three dimensions: (1) creative choice counter-conformity; (2) unpopular choice counter-conformity; and (3) avoidance of similarity. First, consumers may seek a creative choice by making a product selection that is acceptable yet original, novel, or unique from the choices made by others. Consumers identified as market mavens (Solomon and Rabolt, 2004) are part of this group. Thus, brand names that can offer some distinguishing attributes (e.g. unique features, exclusivity, and prestige) appeal to consumers who demonstrate this type of consumer behaviour (Knight and Kim, 2007). As a second option, consumers may make an unpopular choice, by making a product selection that is considered unacceptable and is thus rarely chosen by others. These consumers are not concerned about the others' criticism; in fact, they tend to make purchase decisions that others might consider to be bizarre (Knight and Kim, 2007).

Third, consumers may avoid similarity to the larger group by pursuing a minority choice that is considered acceptable or good and is frequently selected by others but is not typically owned by the group (Tian and

McKenzie, 2001). Consumers in this group tend to select products or brands that are not likely to become too popular, but that will distinguish them from others. To avoid similarity with others, consumers may develop a variety of strategies. For instance, they may purchase discontinued styles, shop in vintage stores, or combine apparel in unusual ways (Knight and Kim, 2007). Consumers establish their uniqueness through various uniqueness-seeking behaviours in response to environmental inputs that increase or decrease their perceptions of similarity to others (Tian et al., 2001).

Consumers who have high level of motivation to be unique are more likely to accept the new brands and products than the ones who have lower level of such motivations (Amaldoss and Jain, 2005). In addition, consumer's motivation for uniqueness causes him to avoid following some social norms (Clark et al., 2007). It seems that these people are concerned with consuming the products which render a uniqueness image of them; no matter the product is a foreign or a domestic one. But in Iran, the domestic products are used by individuals from any social level, so it is hard for an individual who want to make a kind of choice which makes him unique, but using imported brands which a lot of people cannot afford or do not tend to buy, is considered as better choice for the consumers who seek to be unique. On the other hand, these consumers do not pay attention whether it is right and moral to buy foreign products which have domestic substitutes or not. As a result, we proposed:

H₁: Consumer need for uniqueness is negatively related to consumer ethnocentrism.

2.3 Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII)

This concept is a measure of the degree to which a person is influenced by real or imagined others, specifically with regard to his or her consumption choices (Kropp et al., 2005). This construct is multidimensional and consists of normative and informational influences (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955; Bearden et al., 1989). Informational influence refers to the influences which affect accepting information obtained from others as evidence about reality (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955; Burnkrant and Cousineau 1975; Bearden et al., 1989). Informational influence can be a consequence of either a search for information from informed others or from observation of others' behaviour (Park and Lessig 1977). It also reflected in the desire to obtain objective information about products and brands (Netemeyer et al., 1992). Normative influence is related to individuals' attempts to conform to the expectations of another person or group (Deutsch and Gerard, 1955; Burnkrant and Cousineau 1975). Normative influences can further be subdivided into value expressive and utilitarian influences (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Park and Lessig 1977; Bearden et al., 1989). Utilitarian influences are reflected in individuals' attempts to comply with the expectations of others to achieve rewards or avoid punishments (Bearden et al., 1989). Or an individual's willingness to conform to the expectations of others in making purchase decisions (Kropp et al., 2005). Value expressive influences the individual's desire to enhance his self-image by association with a reference group (Bearden et al., 1989) or an individual's need to use a product and/or brand in order to identify with or enhance their image in the eyes of significant others (Kropp et al., 2005).

Interpersonal influences plays a major role in shaping consumer decision (Ranjbarian and Barari) and consumers who considered being highly susceptible to interpersonal influence usually buy the kinds of products which they feel, would cause a positive association of them for others, but avoid buying the products which would cause a negative evaluation of others from them (Netemeyer et al., 1992). In other words, they buy the products according to the others' ideas (Lascu and Zinkhan, 1999). Since the studied population of present study was young university students and it seems they are highly susceptible to interpersonal influence they must be less attentive to ethnocentrism values. Indeed consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII) can act as a variable which predict the extent that an individual follows ethnocentric norms. Thus it can be expected that the ones who have high rate of CSII, show lower rate of ethnocentrism in their choice and purchase of the products.

H₂: Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence is negatively related to consumer's ethnocentrism.

2.4 Role-relaxed consumption (RRC)

According to this concept an individual focuses on the utilitarian aspects of a product rather than the superficial aspects (Kahle, 1995a). These consumers purchase the products for their intended use rather than the prestige or status the product might convey (Clark et al., 2007). Role-relaxed consumption does not seek social approval of his or her purchases and is not very concerned with what other consumers think (Goldsmith and Clark, 2008). Indeed role-relaxed consumer is suggested as the one who is low on susceptibility to interpersonal influence (Kahle, 1995b). Indeed role-relaxed consumers make purchase decisions based on utilitarian product attributes rather than the impression that the product will make on other consumers (Clark et al., 2007).

These consumers are less susceptible to interpersonal influence than non role relaxed consumers (Kahle, 1995a) and they will have more concern for economic value and quality and less concern for style, beauty and fashion (Kahle, 1995b). Thereupon they try to maximize relation between price and quality in specific product (Kahle, 1995a). As a matter of fact, there is common believe among Iranian consumers that quality of imported products is better than the domestic ones. Those consumers who can afford want to have quality products they choose importing product to enjoy their quality. It can be concluded that these consumers, when considering their responsibility to local producer and also prefer to have quality product, they tend to choose the foreign products. Thus we proposed that:

H₃: Role-relaxed consumption is negatively related to consumer ethnocentrism

2.5 Attention to social comparison information (ATSCI)

Consumers often conform to the product decisions of peers and others in a variety of situations. Some consumers are more predisposed than others toward conformity, a trait known as attention to social comparison information (Bearden and Rose, 1990; Lennox and Wolfe, 1984). This tendency to comply with group norms (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975) necessitates monitoring or observing of others for acceptable social cues (Bearden and Rose, 1990; Lennox and Wolfe, 1984). Bearden and Rose (1990, p. 461) recognized that consumers with a high propensity to conform act on the social cues available at the time a purchase or consumption decision is being made and illustrated that such subjects are more likely to conform to the decisions of other consumers, regardless of whether those consumers are physically present or not. The ATSCI is the general tendency to conform and has been found to be related to fear of others' evaluation (Bearden et al., 1990). ATSCI is correlated with two factors of social anxiety: fear of negative evaluation and neuroticism (Lennox and Wolfe, 1984).

Consumers who are sensitive to social comparison information are aware of and apprehensive about others' reactions; they strongly care about what other people think about them (Bertrandias and Goldsmith, 2006). As was mentioned for the CSII, considering the predominant attitude among young Iranian adults, those who graded high on ATSCI scale in the field of consumption tend to use the foreign products which are in contrast with the values of ethnocentrism. Consequently, it can be assumed that:

H₄: Attention to social comparison information is negatively related to consumer ethnocentrism

2.6 Status Consumption (SC)

Eastman et al. (1999) define status consumption as the motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through the conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer and symbolize status both for the individual and surrounding significant others (Eastman et al. 1999), regardless of that consumer's objective income or social class (Shukla, 2010). This concept is more associated with increasing the status of both the consumer and the significant others around them (Goldsmith and Clark, 2008). It is described as an enduring individual difference present at different levels in different consumers (Clark et al., 2007). Status consumption is different from conspicuous consumption. Conspicuous consumption is indeed the purchase of high priced products to convey wealth and status to others (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004) while status consumption is a desire for buying something that represents status to both the individual and to surrounding significant others (Eastman et al., 1999). This concept is also different from materialism because in materialisms, goods are acquired for their own sakes (Clark et al., 2007). Status consumption will actively seek information from others about prestigious products and brands (Clark et al., 2007). Empirical research into status consumption is minimal and most discussions involve claims about status-seeking motives based on sociological or economic theory regarding why consumers pay more for status goods (Goldsmith et al, 2010).

Consumer in developing countries perceived product quality and symbolic benefits that consumers expect from imported products will counteract the influence of their ethnocentrism (Wang and Chen, 2004). The Iranian consumers, especially the young ones, dramatically tend to use the foreign products for the sake of prestige. It is evident that, using the foreign made products specially the ones with prestigious country of origin and those which are from the countries which are well known for their quality provide better stance and prestige for the consumers. Consequently, this intensive desire for the prestigious products will result in the neglecting of ethnocentrism in choosing the products. Thus we proposed that:

H₅: Status consumption is negatively related to consumer ethnocentrism

2.7 Gender and CE

Studies of consumer ethnocentrism indicate that the degree of women's ethnocentrism is higher than men's (Sharma et al., 1995 and Bruning, 1997). The underlying logic is that women are more conservative, conformist (Eagly, 1978; Han, 1988) and collectivistic about maintaining social harmony and positive feelings among group

members. Even though, there are also some contradictions among findings. For instance, some researchers showed that men's ethnocentrism is higher than women's (Hult & Keillor, 1999 and Bannister and Saunders, 1978) or some implied that there was no significant difference between men and women in this regard (Caruana, 1996). Thus it is assumed that:

H₆: Women consumers exhibit greater ethnocentric tendency than men consumers.

2.8 Age and CE

A number of researches indicate that there is a positive relationship between the CE and age (Klein and Ettenson, 1999 and Ruyter et al., 1998 and Caruana, 1996). This is due to the fact that older people have more ethnocentric tendencies than younger people, because they are generally more conservative and less inclined toward imports (Javalgi, 2004). But, similar to the gender variable, some researchers showed a negative relationship between age and ethnocentrism (Schooler, 1971 and Bannister and Saunders, 1978) and some researchers showed that there is no meaningful relation between these two variables (Sharma et al., 1995 and Balabanis et al., 2002). Regarding what has been said, it is assumed that:

H₇: Consumer's age is positively related to its ethnocentrism level.

2.9 Marital status and CE

Marital status is a variable which has been under researched compared with other demographic variables in the field of CE. However, the previous researches indicated that marital status does not affect the CE (Caruana, 1996). However in Iran, due to the family structure and the great influence that family has on the individual's life style, there is difference between the singles' and the married' ethnocentrism. Compared with the single individuals, the married ones are more conservative in making a choice and are more concerned with the consequences of their decisions. Thus we proposed that:

H₈: Married consumers exhibit greater ethnocentric tendencies than single consumers.

2.10 Cultural groups and consumer ethnocentrism

A culture can be divided into sub-cultures based on age, geographic regions or ethnic identity. Within these divisions, there are even greater similarities in people's attitudes, values and actions than within the broader culture (O'Shaughnessy, 1995; Dibb et al., 1997). A number of studies have investigated the differences between cultural groups from the point of ethnocentrism (Fraser and Fraser, 2002). It seems that in the country where there are many subcultures, there are clear consumption differences among these subcultures. Thus it can be expected that different subcultures exhibit different degree of ethnocentrism. Thus we proposed that:

H₉: Consumer ethnocentrism varies for different Iranian cultural groups.

3. Methodology of research

3.1 Sample and administration

The study conducted in spring 2010 at University of Isfahan. The population of the study was comprised of the enrolled students of the University of Isfahan. The questionnaire of the study after being pretested with a group of sixty has been distributed among students of the general courses where the students are from different levels and majors of study. The survey questionnaire was distributed personally or through the internal mail at the University of Isfahan. The respondents were debriefed about the objectives of the research and were informed that the returned questionnaires would be treated confidentially. Another characteristic of this group which made them suitable for the present study was that the students were gathered from different parts of the country with different cultures and ethnic groups. Answering to the questionnaire was preformed voluntarily. Selecting such a population made it possible to have a greater access to the individuals with different cultural and consumption patterns from different parts of Iran. 1000 questionnaires were distributed. 751 of them were returned (makes a 75 % response rate) among which 732 were useful. We suppose, promising to report the results of research lead to high return rate of questionnaires. The data gathering method was categorized random sampling. Demographic characteristics of the participants who returned the completed questionnaires are summarised in table 1.

3.2 Research Instrument

The data gathering instrument was a questionnaire divided into 2 parts. Part A gathered data about demographic characteristics such as age, marital status, sex, and cultural group. Part B included constructs measuring the research variables and consisted of closed-end questions. They were measured on a 5-point-likert scale. Measurement of these constructs was shown in table 2. Construct reliability or internal consistency was assessed by computing Cronbach's alpha. Table 2 shows the result of the Construct's reliability.

4. Results

The analysis was structured into two parts. The first section is the investigation of Iranian ethnocentrism and consumer ethnocentrism differences with regard to gender, age, marital status and cultural groups which they belong to (H_6 , H_7 , H_8 and H_9). In the second part, the hypothesised relationships of consumer ethnocentrism with studied consumption habits were tested (H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 , and H_5). In the first part, in order to have an overall understanding of the ethnocentrism situation among Iranian students, the overall degree of ethnocentrism and its variation with in different demographic groups has been investigated. The results indicate that the average level of ethnocentrism among the participants was ($m=2/2513$, $SD=1/34308$) which was less than the average limit. In order to test hypothesis 6, independent samples T-test was used to compare mean of CE for women and men. The result is indicating difference of CE in relation to gender was found to be significant ($p < .05$) and mean value of CE for women was (2.7821), and for men was (2.6104). For hypothesis 7, the results indicate that the Correlation between age and CE is negative ($r = -0.164$) and significant ($p < 0.5$). Indeed older consumers exhibited more ethnocentric tendencies than younger consumers. This rejects our hypothesis and indicates a positive relation between age and ethnocentrism. Also to test the differences of CE level between single and married consumers (hypothesis 8) independent samples T-test was used. The results indicated difference of CE level was found not to be significant ($p > .05$). The mean value of CE for married consumers was (2.7778), and for single consumers was (2.6920). To test hypothesis 9, one-way ANOVA test was used, which compared the mean values of CE for different cultural groups that differences in CE among different cultural groups were found to be significant ($p < .05$). In order to examine the hypothesised relationships of 1 to 5, a bivariate correlation approach was employed. The aim of this approach is to provide quantitative value of correlation coefficients for relationships between sets of variables. Data were normal so Pearson's coefficient was computed. Table 3 showed results of this analysis. With reference to table 3, the results reveal that the relationship of CNFU with CE was found to be negative ($r = -0.147$) and significant ($p < .05$), but the relationship of CSII with CE is positive ($r = 0.134$) and significant ($p < .05$). As table 3 indicates, the relationship between RRC and CE was found to be negative ($r = -0.089$) and significant ($p < .05$), the relationship between ATSCI and CE is positive ($r = 0.131$) and not significant ($p > .05$), but the relationship between SC and CE is negative ($r = -0.164$) and significant ($p < .05$). The overall results of examining the hypotheses are shown in table 4.

5. Discussion

The objective of the this study was to investigate the relationship between some consumption habits, such as need for uniqueness, susceptibility to interpersonal influence, role relaxed consumption, status consumption, and also the gender, age, marital status, and cultural groups with the consumer ethnocentrism among Iranian consumers. Based on the results of our study on 732 consumers, only three out of nine studied hypotheses were not supported by the acquired data. The results related to the relationship between consumer need for uniqueness (CNFU) and consumer ethnocentrism (CE) was negative and significant. In fact, the individuals with higher degree of need for uniqueness were less inclined to consider ethnocentric norms in buying the products. In this regard, Batra et al. in their study which conducted Among Indian university students, found that there exists a positive relationship between CNFU and the preference to buy American products rather than Indian ones (Batra et al., 2000). Also Solomon believes that younger generation, e.g., teenagers and college students have a strong desire to be unique and express their individuality (Solomon, 2003).

Also the results of the study showed that a positive significant relationship exists between consumer's susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII) and CE, contradictory to what was expected and proposed. Probably it is due to limited age span of the studied population which most of them were young adults and as the results showed they expressed low ethnocentrism and also as Solomom (2003) suggested younger generation have greater desire for uniqueness and less attention they pay to social comparison information and they are less influenced by others. The results show that there exists a negative significant relationship between consumer's status consumption habit and CE. It means the more consumers are status oriented the less ethnocentrism they are, or the consumers who seek prestige they are less ethnocentrism. These consumers seek the kinds of products that help them gain prestige. One of the important sources to gain prestige is using the foreign products. In addition to that in developing countries the consumers consider the foreign products as status symbols (Wang and Chen, 2004). In fact, the positive image of imported products as well as the negative attitude towards to domestic products for gaining prestige, cause the consumers to be less inclined in considering ethnocentrism in their attempts to be prestigious. Also, the relationship between ASCI and CE was not significant.

The interesting results are in the field of the very low ethnocentrism grades among the Iranian consumers. However, regarding the present status in Iran these results are expectable. Indeed this investigation suggests that Iranians young people are very open to foreign products. The results also indicate a negative relationship

between consumer role relaxed consumption (RRC) and CE. As was mentioned before, these consumers focused on the utilitarian aspects of a product rather than the superficial aspects and tried to maximize relation between price and quality in specific product. Country of origin (COO) effect suggests that consumers' perceptions about imported products and their attributes are affected by this concept. Indeed COO cue helps consumers to make inferences about quality, and affects their beliefs about product attributes (Han, 1989). Also consumer will tend to purchase a product made in a technologically-advanced country if he or she judges its quality as better than that of merchandise produced in a less-developed country (Wang and Chen, 2004). Consequently, considering the low quality and high price of the products, this type of consumers tends to buy foreign products regardless of ethnocentrism.

Regarding the men and women's difference with regard to ethnocentrism, the results indicate that the degree of women's ethnocentrism is higher than men's. Therefore it can be mentioned that women are more sensitive towards ethnocentrism in their commercial choices. Therefore, women are more conscious than men in buying a foreign product and consider it is wrong and against patriotism. The results also show that the age of the participants in the present study has a negative meaningful relationship with ethnocentrism, the higher their age is, the less will be their ethnocentrism. This result is contrary to our hypothesis. This contradiction can be verified by pointing to the fact that in the present study majority of the respondents were young adults and the variation of age among them was limited and this make the result somehow subjective.

Finally, some interesting results were obtained about the individual's ethnocentrism with regard to their ethnic groups which they belonged to. The results indicate that the degree of individuals' ethnocentrism varies between different ethnocentric groups. As a result, different ethnocentric groups in Iran have different patriotic feelings towards choosing local products. As the results of the study indicate the degree of ethnocentrism among Iranian young consumers is low. Therefore, it can be said that the Iranian consumers are not biased towards Iranian products compares with the foreign ones and usually think of the imported products as an alternative. This issue put the domestic producers in weaker competitive advantage. This issue would damage the domestic industry particularly those which have a lot of imported alternatives. So, the foreign firms consider Iran's market as a valuable opportunity. There also exist a lot of variations among Iranian consumers with regard to their ethnocentrism based on the different consumption habits and demographic variables. These results render more understandings of Iranian consumers' ethnocentrism for the researchers, marketers and firms.

6. Limitations

Of course, findings of this study are also subject to some limitations. Though the population studied was big, all the participants were from the students of the University of Isfahan and they were in particular age range and were among the educated type of people. These would pose some limitations for generalizing the results of the present study to the whole society. The general limitations of the questionnaire-based approach have to be taken into consideration. A questionnaire may appear realistic but is not necessarily compatible with the reality of individual participants.

References

- Alden, D. A., Steenkamp, Jan-Benedict, E. M., & Batra, R. (2006). Consumer Attitudes toward Marketplace Globalization: Structure, Antecedents, and Consequences. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 23 (3), 227-39.
- Amaldoss, W., & Jain, S. (2005). Pricing of conspicuous goods: a competitive analysis of social effects. *Journal of Marketing*, 42, 30-42.
- Bahae, M., & Pisani, M. J. (2009). Are Iranian consumers poised to buy American in a hostile bilateral environment?. *Business Horizons*, 52, 223—232.
- Balabanis, G., Diamantopoulos, A., Mueller, R. D., & Melewar, T. C. (2001). The impact of nationalism, patriotism and internationalism on consumer ethnocentric tendencies. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 32 (1), 157-75.
- Balabanis, G., Mueller, R., and Melewar, T. C. (2002). The relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and human values. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 15 (3/4): 7-37.
- Bannister, J. P., & Saunders, J. A. (1978). UK consumers' attitudes towards imports: the measurement of national stereotype image. *European Journal of Marketing*, 12, 562-70.
- Batra, R., Ramaswamy, V., Alden, DL., Steenkamp, J-BEM., & Ramachander, S. (2000). Effects of brand local and non-local origin on consumer attitudes in developing countries. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 9(2),

83–5.

- Bearden, W. O., & Etzel, M. J. (1982). Reference group influence on product and brand purchase decisions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9, 83–194.
- Bearden, W. O., & Rose, R. L. (1990). Attention to social comparison information: an individual difference factor affecting consumer conformity. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (4), 461-72.
- Bearden, W.O., Netemeyer, R.Gn., & Teel, J. E. (1989). Measurement of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15, 473–481.
- Bertrandias, L., & Goldsmith, R. E. (2006). Some psychological motivations for fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management*, 10, 25-40.
- Bruning, E. R. (1997). Country of origin, national loyalty and product choice: the case of international air travel. *International Marketing Review*, 14 (1), 59.
- Burnkrant, R. E., and Cousineau, A. (1975). Informational and normative social influence in buyer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 2, 206-215.
- Caruana, A. (1996). The effects of dogmatism and social class variables on consumer ethnocentrism in Malta. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 14 (4), 39.
- Clarka, R. A., Zbojab, J. J., & Goldsmith, R. E. (2007). Status consumption and role-relaxed consumption: A tale of two retail consumers. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 14, 45–59.
- Clarke, I., Shankarmahesh, M. N., & Ford, J. B. (2000). Consumer ethnocentrism, materialism and values: a four country study. *AMA Winter Educators' Conference Proceedings*, San Antonio, TX.
- Dibb, S., Simkin, L., Pride, WM., & Ferrell, OC. (1997). *Marketing: Concepts and Strategies*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Duetsch, M., & Gerard, H. B. (1955). A study of normative and informational social influence on individual judgment. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 51, 629–636.
- Eagly, A. H. (1978). Sex differences in influenceability. *Psychological Bulletin*, 85 (1), 86-116.
- Eastman, J. K., Goldsmith, R. E., & Flynn, L. R. (1999). Status consumption in consumer behavior: scale development and validation. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 7 (3), 41–52.
- Evanschitzky, H., Wangenheim F. V., Woisetschlager, D., & Blut, M. (2008). Consumer ethnocentrism in the German market. *International Marketing Review*, 25 (1), 7-32.
- Goldsmith, R. E., & Clark, R. A. (2008). An analysis of factors affecting fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 12(3), 308-322.
- Goldsmith, R. E., Flynn, L. R., & Kim, D. (2010). Status Consumption and Price Sensitivity. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 18(4), 323–338.
- Han, C. M. (1988). The role of consumer patriotism in the choice of domestic versus foreign products. *Journal of Advertising Research*, June/July, 25-32.
- Han, C. M. (1989). Country image: halo or summary construct?. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 26, 222-9.
- Huddleston, P., Good, L. K., & Stoel, L. (2001). Consumer ethnocentrism, product necessity, and Polish consumers' perceptions of quality. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 29(5), 236-246.
- Hult, G. T. M., Keillor, B. D., & Lafferty, B. A. (1999). A cross-national assessment of social desirability bias and consumer ethnocentrism. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 12 (4), 29-43.
- Javalgi, R. G., Pioche, Khare, V., Gross, A. C., & Scherer, R. F. (2004). An application of the consumer ethnocentrism model to French consumers. *International Business Review*, 14, 325-44.
- Kahle, L. R. (1995a). Observations: role-relaxed consumers: a trend of the nineties. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 35, 66-71.
- Kahle, L. R. (1995b). Observations: role-relaxed consumers: empirical evidence. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 35, 59-62.
- Klein, J. G., & Ettenson, R. (1999). Consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentrism: an analysis of unique antecedents. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 11(4), 5.

- Klein, J. G., Ettenson, R., & Morris, M. (1998). The animosity model of foreign product purchase: an empirical test in the People's Republic of China. *Journal of Marketing*, 62(1), 89-100.
- Knight, D. K., & Kim, E. K. (2007). Japanese consumers' need for uniqueness Effects on brand perceptions and purchase intention. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 11(2), 270-280.
- Kropp, F., Lavack, A. M., & Silvera, D. H. (2005). Values and collective self-esteem as predictors of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence among university students. *International Marketing Review*, 22(1), 7-33.
- Lascu, D. N., & Zinkhan, G. (1999). Consumer conformity: review and applications for marketing theory and practice. *Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice*, 7(3), 1-12.
- Lennox, R. D., & Wolfe, R. N. (1984). Revision of the self-monitoring scale. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46, 1349-69.
- Netemeyer, R. G., Bearden, W. O., & Teel, J. E. (1992). Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence and attributional sensitivity. *Psychology & Marketing*, 9(5), 379-394.
- Netemeyer, R. G., Durvasula, S., & Lichtenstein, D. R. (1991). A cross-national assessment of the reliability and validity of the CETSCALE. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28(August), 320-327.
- Nishina, S. (1990). Japanese consumers: introducing foreign products/brands into the Japanese market. *Journal of Advertising Research*, April/May. 35-45.
- O'Cass, A., & McEwen, H. (2004). Exploring consumer status and conspicuous consumption. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 4 (1), 25-39.
- Olsen, J. E., Granzin, K. L., & Biswas, A. (1993). Influencing consumers' selection of domestic versus imported products: implications for marketing based on a model of helping behavior. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 21 (4), 307-21.
- O'Shaughnessy, J. (1995). *Competitive Marketing: A Strategic Approach*. London: Routledge.
- Park, C. W., and Lessig, V. P. (1977). Students and housewives: differences in susceptibility to reference group influence. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 4, 102-110.
- Ranjbarian, B., and Barari, M. (2010). Locus of Control and Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence among Iranian university students. *Journal of International Marketing & Marketing Research*, 35(2), 77-87.
- Rawwas, M. Y. A., Rajendran, K. N., & Wuehrer, G. A. (1996). The influence of worldmindedness and nationalism on consumer evaluation of domestic and foreign products. *International Marketing Review*, 13(2), 20-38.
- Ruyter, K. D., Birgelen, M. V., & Wetzels, M. (1998). Consumer ethnocentrism in international services marketing. *International Business Review*, 7, 185-202.
- Schooler, R. D. (1971), "Bias phenomena attendant to the marketing of foreign goods in the US", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 2, pp. 71-80.
- Shankarmahesh, M. N. (2006). Consumer ethnocentrism: An integrative review of its antecedents and consequences. *International Marketing Review*, 23(2), 146-172.
- Sharma, S., Shrimp, T. A., & Shin, J. (1995). Consumer ethnocentrism: A test of antecedents and moderators. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23(1), 26-37.
- Shimp, T. A., & Sharma, S. (1987). Consumer ethnocentrism: Construction and validation of the CETSCALE. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 27, 280-289.
- Shukla, P. (2010). Status consumption in cross-national context Socio-psychological, brand and situational antecedents. *International Marketing Review*, 27 (1), 108-129.
- Solomon, M. (2003). *Conquering Consumerspace: Marketing Strategies for a Branded World*. New York: AMACOM.
- Solomon, M. R., & Rabolt, N. J. (2004). *Consumer Behavior in Fashion*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.
- Strutton, D., Pelton, L. E., and Lumpkin, J. R. (1994). Internal and external country of origin stereotypes in the global marketplace: effects and implications for the domestic promotion of US automobiles. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 7(3), 61-77.
- Suh, T., & Kwon, I. W. G. (2002). Globalization and reluctant buyers. *International Marketing Review*, 19(6),

663.

Sumner, W. G. (1906). *Folkways: The Sociological Importance of Usages Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals*. Ginn & Co., New York, NY.

Tian, K. T., & McKenzie, K. (2001). The long-term predictive validity of the consumers' need for uniqueness scale. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 10(3), 171-93.

Tian, K. T., Bearden, W. O., and Hunter, G. L. (2001). Consumers' need for uniqueness: scale development and validation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28, 50-66.

Wang, C., & Chen, Z. X. (2004). Consumer ethnocentrism and willingness to buy domestic products in a developing country setting: testing moderating effects. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 2(6), 391-400

Wong, D. H., Rexha, N., & Phau, I. (2008). Re-examining traditional service quality in an e-banking era. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 26(7), 526-545.

Zarkada-Fraser, A., and Fraser, C. (2002). Store patronage prediction for foreign-owned supermarkets. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 30(6), 282-99.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Demographics	Frequency	Percent
Age :		
Under 20	67	9.2
20-24	413	56.4
25-29	189	25.8
30-34	57	7.8
35-39	6	0.8
40+	0	0
Sex:		
Male	279	38.2
Female	453	61.8
Marital Status:		
Single	665	90.8
Married	120	9.2
Cultural group:		
1:Lor	101	13.8
2:Balouch	9	1.3
3:Kord	58	7.9
4:Arab	5	0.7
5:Fars	431	58.8
6:Gilak	16	2.2
7:Tabari	39	5.3
8:Azari	67	9.2
9:Others	6	0.8

Table 2. Measures used in the study and results of the construct's reliability

Variable	No. of items in original constructs	No. of items in adapted constructs	Resource of Measures	Cronbach's alpha
CE	17	8	This scale consists of 17 items, developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987) which measures the tendency of consumers to act consistently towards foreign and domestic products	0.927
CNFU	15	12	This scale originally has 15-item, developed by Tian et al. (2001) that measures the extent to which an individual tends to use product and brand purchases to distinguish themselves from social norms.	0.772
CSII	12	8	The original scale has 12 items developed by Bearden et al. (1989) that measures the extent to which individuals are influenced by real or Imagined others, specifically with regard to their consumption choices.	0.831
RRC	7	5	The original scale has 7 items developed by Kahle (1995a) that measures the extent to which individuals ignore interpersonal influences in making product and brand decisions and prefer substantive product attributes to stylistic product attributes	0.748
ASCI	13	8	This scale has been developed by Lennox and Wolfe (1984). Originally it has 13 items that measures the extent to which individuals are sensitive to social comparison cues regarding their product choices	0.782
SC	5	5	This scale that has 5 items and was developed by Kahle (1995) to measure the extent to which the individuals strive to improve their social status through conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer or symbolize status both to the individuals and to surrounding significant others.	0.841

Table 3. Correlation between CE and consumption habits

Variable	Correlation with CE <i>r</i>	Significance <i>p</i>
CNFU	-0.147	0.000
CSII	0.134	0.000
RRC	- 0.089	0.019
ATSCI	0.031	0.221
SC	- 0.164	0.000

Table 4. Result of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Relation	Result
H ₁	CNFU with CE	Accepted
H ₂	CSII with CE	Rejected
H ₃	RRC with CE	Accepted
H ₄	ASCI with CE	Rejected
H ₅	SC with CE	Accepted
H ₆	Gender with CE	Accepted
H ₇	Age with CE	Rejected
H ₈	Marital status with CE	Rejected
H ₉	Cultural group with CE	Accepted

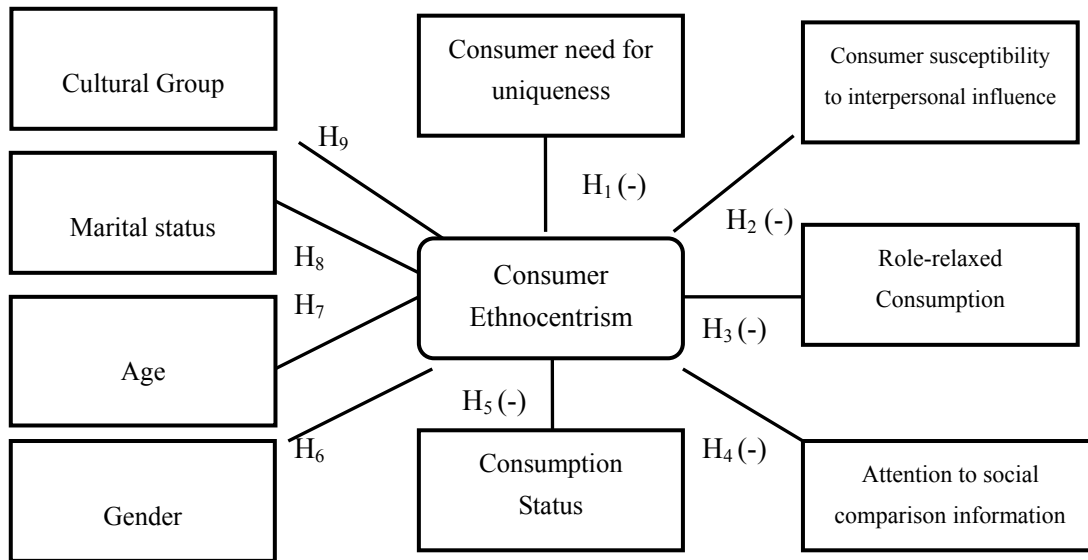


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the research