

## MANIFESTATIONS OF SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN THE RESEARCH OF CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM

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**Annotation.** The paper deals with the socio-psychological factors characterizing the trends of consumer ethnocentrism, which are most often used in consumer eccentricity studies, describing the main trends. The main focus is on patriotism, nationalism, conservatism, xenophobia, cultural openness, collectivism, individualism, secularism, offset product preferences. Although a large number of consumer ethnocentric research tools have been developed, practice has shown that the studies lack of the well-defined socio-psychological factors that need to be included in the content of research tools, what would allow to describe the essential conception of consumer cognitive ethnocentrism. *The aim of this paper* is to identify socio-psychological factors that are commonly used in consumer ethnocentric studies to characterize the underlying trends. *The method of work* – is systematic comparative analysis of scientific literature. The analysis of scientific literature revealed that in order to purposefully manage consumer ethnocentrism, it is important to include socio-psychological factors in empirical research instruments: patriotism, nationalism, conservatism, xenophobia, cultural openness, collectivism, individualism, secularism, preferences for offshore products.

**Keywords:** consumer ethnocentrism, socio-psychological factors, psychometric characteristics.

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### INTRODUCTION

Research on consumer ethnocentrism is becoming increasingly important in understanding the behavioral and purchasing patterns of different cultures and in developing international marketing strategies appropriately. National, patriotic and ethnocentric feelings or mood affect the evaluation of products, the decision to buy and the market in a certain direction (Shankarmahesh, 2006; Kreckova et al., 2012). It cannot be disputed that, along with growing nationalism, with emphasis on cultural and ethnic identity, consumer ethnocentrism is a strong force in a global business environment. It is also important that ethnocentrism is a tendency to look at the perspective of one culture, referred to as the attitude where "our group is the center of the universe" / "one's own group is the center" and with which other groups are compared.

Watson and Wright (2000) state that consumer eccentricity is closely related to the behavior of consumer purchasing. It is considered to be an important factor determining the unwillingness of consumers to buy foreign products and also determines the qualitative evaluation of foreign products (Kreckova et al., 2012). Knowledge of consumer ethos is crucial for marketing and communication strategies (Chrysochoidis et al., 2007). According to the research results of Luque-MartóÁnez et al., (1998), it is claimed that consumer ethnocentrism does not have an insurmountable effect on consumer perception and choice. It is believed that marketing and communication tools are capable of stimulating consumer ethnocentrism or, conversely, allowing it to be replaced.

A number of studies have been carried out to reveal the trends in consumer ethnocentrism. In the scientific literature the results of studies on consumer trends are dominated, which were carried out in the United States (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Herche, 1992; Nielsen & Spence, 1997; Brodowsky et al., 2004; Neese & Davis, 2017) and Europe (Javalgi et al., 2005; Evanschitzky et al., 2008; Kreckova et al., 2012; Alsughayir, 2013; Zalega, 2017). Analyzing consumer ethnocentric research in Lithuania, the research on consumer ethnocentrism and perception of the country of origin (Mockaitis & Šalčiuvienė, 2005) and evaluation of the impact of consumer ethos on the selection of organic products can be pointed out (Urbonavičius, Dikčius, Petrauskas, 2010).

Researchers from different cultures have shown that ethnocentrism is a universal phenomenon, but there are differences between the degrees of ethnocentrism expressed by consumers. The resolution and nature of ethnocentrism largely depends on the historical, cultural and social characteristics of the country (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Neese & Davis, 2017), the social structure of consumers, which develops together with economic, political and demographic factors (Matić, 2013).

This means that the relationship between socio-psychological factors and consumer ethnocentrism in a particular country needs to be adjusted in the context of the environment. It is argued that cultural attributes and consumer values play an important role (Spillan & Harcar, 2012), the availability of alternative products, the level of perception of product importance (Javalgi et al., 2005; Kreckova et al., 2012), the overall economic situation in the country (Van der Waal & Burgers, 2011). Consumer ethnocentrism can be of a certain scale, situational, dependent on the manifestation of consumer behavior (Luque-MartóÁnez et al., 1998).

Scientists' suggested ethnocentric evaluation tools for users in different cultures. For example, CETSCALE is considered a valuable tool for organizations and researchers helping to analyze and segment the market at different levels (internal or international), and design marketing-mix activities (Luque-MartóÁnez et al., 2000). The CETSCALE was found to be reliable across the different cultures where it was tested (Luque-Martizez et al., 2000). In the analysed studies, CETSCALE has been found to be reliable and validated in the case of Germany, France, Japan, the United States (Netemeyer et al., 1991), in the case of Spanish consumers (Luque-MartóÁnez et al., 2000), in the case of Chinese consumers (Evanschitzky et al., 2008). In order to avoid administrative difficulties in the investigation, only a part of CETSCALE was used in Taiwan.

Still, the practice shows that the content of the instruments in a certain scope and content in the different cultures is different, so far, there are no well-defined sociopsychological factors, the study of which is an essential image of the knowledge of consumer ethnocentrism and which must be included in the content of research instruments. It is assumed that the criteria that characterize sociopsychological factors included in the most often empirical studies are the unified system necessary for the conceptual knowledge of the phenomenon.

This paper does not seek to analyze in detail the socio-psychological factors of consumers in different countries and the relationships between users of ethnocentrism. *The aim of this study* is to identify socio-psychological factors that are commonly used in consumer ethnocentric research in describing key trends. *The object* is socio-psychological factors in consumer ethnocentric research. *Method of work* – is systematic comparative analysis of scientific literature.

## CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM AS THE OBJECT OF MARKETING INVESTIGATIONS

The consumer's attitude to foreign products has been the focus of consumer behavior and international marketing for many years. From the sociological theories, marketing specialists developed the concept of consumer ethnocentrism to determine if this feature influences on consumer behavior. Consumer ethnocentrism is defined as “the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality of purchasing foreign-made product and the loyalty of consumers to the products manufactured in their home country.” (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). The main aim of psychologists and sociologists in researching the phenomenon of ethnocentrism was to find out the reasons of individual self-identification with his group, while the marketing researchers were concerned about the problem of consumers negative reaction to foreign products (Luque-Martinez et al. 2000, Neese & Davis, 2017).

The first influence of ethnocentrism on consumer behavior was studied by T. A. Shimp and S. Sharma (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). They derived the consumer ethnocentrism from the psychological concept of ethnocentrism, associated with individual-level personal systems, as well as with more generalized social and cultural analytical structures, and described the beliefs of American consumers about the morality and suitability of purchasing foreign products (Vaitkevičius et al., 2013).

According to Shimp and Sharma (1987), an ethnocentric user believes that buying foreign products damages his country's economy and contributes to the increase of the number of jobless people. This behavior is not patriotic. Ethnocentrism is a provision that shows the difference between local and foreign trade groups (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000, Neese & Davis, 2017).

Scientists are trying to distinguish the characteristics of users who are based on ethnocentric tendencies, because their knowledge is important for the formation of communication programs.

According to Vaitkevičius and others (2013), Matich (2013), ethnocentric users are characterized by the following features:

- they resist imported goods as they believe they are destroying the country's economy and causing unemployment,

- think that the acquisition of imported goods is an expression of non-patriotism,
- exclude domestic goods and their accessories and general quality of domestic goods and devalue imported goods,
- feel loyal to local brands.

There are a number of studies that have confirmed the tendency of ethnocentric users to prioritize their country rather than imported products. Even during the economic crisis, when food prices fell sharply, more than two thirds of consumers firstly valued the freshness and quality factors. Having analyzed the results of the research which was carried out in Czech Republic, it turned out that even 81 per cent of the respondents believed that Czech products are of higher quality than foreign ones. Czech consumers prefer to choose their country's products (research was conducted during the economic crisis), mostly of food products: 84 per cent for beer, 83 per cent for meat and meat products, 78 per cent for milk and its products and only 5 per cent of cosmetics (Kreckova et al 2012). According to the survey carried out in the Czech Republic (2012), older respondents, i.e., over 55, are the top priority for local food products (79 per cent). Younger users from 15 to 35 years old also tend to give priority to local foods (67 per cent). 97 per cent of the respondents indicated that freshness and quality are the essential criteria for choosing a product.

As regards the Lithuanian consumer attitudes and factors influencing shopping, the results of empirical research show that ethnocentric consumers tend to buy Lithuanian products that are produced in Lithuania, although they are mostly food products. Non-ethnocentric consumers value Lithuanian food, but in their opinion they are not interested in buying all Lithuanian products; new things must be tested to meet their needs. In addition, according to the respondents, there are a number of goods that the Lithuanian producers do not produce or cannot produce qualitatively, which also affect the opinion of the respondents (Mockaitis & Šalčiuvienė, 2005, Šmaižienė & Vaitkienė, 2014).

The epoch of consumer ethnocentrism research began around the world after the creation of CETSCALE in 1987. Despite the fact that measures to assess the attitude towards the foreign goods already existed (for example, in the Reirson's (1966) scale), Shimp, Sharma (1987) were the first to provide accurate scoring psychometric characteristics. This instrument allows the more accurate understanding of consumer purchasing behavior (Mangale et al., 2011) and helps measuring the consumer trends in ethnocentrism. The use of CETSCALE and psychometric properties have been validated in many different cultures (Luque-Martinez et al., 2000, Shankarmahesh, 2006, S. Bandyopadhyay, 2012).

The comparative analysis of the ethnocentrism of different countries and consumers in these countries were quite different. For example, when applying the scale in the developed countries (USA, France, Germany and Japan) with a large and wide local market and lower import volumes, it turned out that consumers' ethnocentricity according to CETSCALE and the tendency to buy local products are considerably higher than in the less developed countries (Pranulis & Mockaitis, 2004).

The content of the instrument must be in line with the culture of the country, its lifestyle, and therefore the translation and adaptation of the instruments will not necessarily have the same structure of factors (Shimp & Sharma, 1995). The article further analyzes the socio-psychological factors that were most often included in the CESTSCALE structure.

## **SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING ON THE CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM**

Consumer ethnocentrism, as a phenomenon in itself, accumulates many other socio-psychological provisions that make up the content of ethnocentrism itself. Socio-psychological factors are important predictors and explain consumer intentions better than demographic (Mockaitis et al. 2013, Šmaižienė & Vaitkienė, 2014).

Most often, socio-psychological factors are analyzed in consumer ethnocentric research: patriotism, nationalism, conservatism, xenophobia, cultural openness, collectivism, individualism, worldliness, preferences for foreign products (Balabanis et al. 2001, Reardon, 2008, Fischer et al., 2009, Van der Waal & Burgers, 2011, Seidenfuss, et al., 2013).

Patriotism is positively related to consumer ethnocentrism and is considered as an effective mechanism for domestic consumption (Reardon, 2008). In scientific research on consumerism, patriotism is often expressed in the belief that the purchase of local products can help protect the local economy (Siemieniako et al., 2011). Han (1988) found that the influence of consumer patriotism on consumer choice was greater than that of products manufactured in different countries. Campbell and Khanna (2015) study

showed that ethnocentrism is directly related to patriotism. Patriotism plays a strong role as a mediator between ethnocentrism and the intention to buy. People who are more concerned about product features are neglect patriotic and move towards foreign products.

The influence of patriotism is due to the country's historical development and may vary from country to country (Balabanis et al., 2001). Different Lithuanian generations were born and grew up in unequal political - economic conditions, therefore they characterize by a significant differentiation of values (Astra, 2006). In terms of consumer patriotism, the results of empirical research indicate that the older a person is, the more expressed his patriotism was. The patriotism of the retirement age is higher than others, both in expressing views and in contributing to specific work. Patriotism rejects the idealization of the nation and reflects a constructive and critical view of it. Literature studies suggest that patriotism is one of the main indicators of consumer ethnocentrism, which is closely related to demographic characteristics of consumers.

In order to maintain national identity and ensure security due to the effects of the increasing globalization, the nationalist ideas do not lose their significance (Balabanis et al. 2001). Nationalism is strongly expressed in countries of growing economics (Auruškevičienė et al., 2012) and in the developed countries (Altintas & Tokol, 2007). According to the results of the research carried out in Turkey, in the Czech Republic, nationalism determines the specific impact of consumer ethnocentrism (Balabanis et al., 2001). Subsequent studies also provided similar results (Kwak et al., 2006, Neese & Davis, 2017). Nationalism is important for the consumer to make decisions about the purchase of local or foreign products, especially those that are considered main products in the domestic market (Altintas & Tokol, 2007). According to Altintas and Tokol (2007), the other major factor is conservatism. The study of scientific literature lets state that nationalism can be closely related not only to demographic but also to economic indicators, and therefore it is considered to be an important indicator of consumer ethnocentrism.

Conservatism emphasizes the importance of the group against the individual, the maintenance of the status quo and the avoidance of behavior that disturbs the traditional order. The main categories of conservatism are security, social order and obedience (Vaitkevičius et al., 2013). Conservative individuals tend to foster traditions, support social institutions that have experienced trials and changes in time. The extreme form of conservatism can manifest itself as religious intolerance, the use of strict rules, punishment or antihedaism (Sharma et al., 1995). In Lithuania, the generation that grew up in the Soviet era and the younger generation, which did not experience the repression of Soviet times, are different in their behavior, interpretation of the concepts of nationality. If the older Lithuanian representatives associate these concepts with tradition, traditional culture, the younger ones emphasize the concepts of homeland love and patriotism (Astra, 2002). The results of the authors' research suggest that conservatism is also increasing with the increase in the level of consumer ethnocentrism. According to Javalgi et al. (2005), it can be argued that the greater level of consumer ethnocentrism exists, the more they admit strict norms, cherish the traditions, the more they resist to great changes, what can only be implemented gradually.

According to Vaitkevičius et al. (2013), ethnocentrism is doing both an interconnecting and a disruptive influence on groups; therefore, this concept fits perfectly with the concept of xenophobia, which is seen as a source of discrimination. Xenophobia can be interpreted as erroneous beliefs that lead to a lack of trust, frustrating trade and partnership among groups (Altintas & Tokol, 2007). Xenophobia, as a functional feature, is treated in the logical form of ethnocentric behavior, prevention of disintegration, fearing the negative influence of foreigners on their cultural values. Xenophobia, as a functional feature, is treated in the logical form of ethnocentric behavior, prevention of disintegration, fearing the negative influence of foreigners on their cultural values (Altintas & Tokol, 2007). Xenophobia is described as a fear or a negative attitude towards those who are genuinely or deliberately different from the person or group to which they belong. Ethnocentrism manifests itself as a kind of protectionism, while xenophobia leads to a lack of trust. It can be assumed that xenophobia, like ethnocentrism, has a strong connection with stereotypes and prejudices that are every bit reinforced by transforming (replacing) phenomena of reality.

Altintas and Tokol (2007) observe that the negative attitude towards foreign products is closely related to the lack of cultural openness. The influence of cultural openness on consumer ethnocentrism is evaluated in different ways. Part of the authors did not find any negative cultural openness and the connection between

consumer ethnocentrism in their research (Vida et al., 2008, Javalgi et al., 2005). Meanwhile, Sharma et al. (1987), Kreckova et al. (2012), Nazari et al., (2012) believes that cultural openness has a negative relationship with consumer ethnocentrism. Their conclusions are based on the previous studies of the effect of origin of the country. They argue that the more consumer recognizes other cultures, the more he tends to buy foreign products.

Cultural openness is interconnected with secularism (Shankarmahesh, 2006). Secularism helps consumers not only to learn foreign brands, but also influence consumer preferences and desire to buy foreign products. Crawford and Lamb (1982) investigated the effect of secularism on the willingness of buyers to buy foreign professional consumer products. They found that individual attitudes toward foreign countries are related to the personal desire to buy products from a country that the consumer values positively. The direct influence of secularism on consumers' willingness to buy products from neighboring countries was proved by Lee and Chen (2008). Lee and Chen (2008) concluded that consumers with a high degree of secularity provide preferences for foreign products (Parts & Vida, 2013).

People who have collective inclination, think they are related, and try to adapt their behavior to prevailing social norms, while individualists usually behave according to their personal needs and desires (Vaitkevičius et al. 2013). It is acknowledged that the choice of the user can be determined by dominant individualistic or collectivist values (Fischer, 2011). The general tendency is that more collective-minded consumers are more ethnocentric as they combine action with their social group. Individualists (or representatives of indigo-dominant cultures) behave in the way they benefit themselves, and therefore, ethnocentric features are less expressed in their actions.

Lee et al. (2010), who have studied Mozambican consumers, identified a positive link between ethnocentrism and preferences for local products. The higher ethnocentric identity appeared, the higher preferences for national brands were expressed. When the level of ethnocentrism is on the rise, consumers' attitudes towards the local brands become more favorable (Erdogan & Sett, 2010). The results of the Turkish survey also showed that consumers with a high ethnocentric level take greater account of the country of origin choosing the product and preferences to local products than those who are low in ethnocentricity.

*To sum up, it can be claimed that the research examples show that socio-psychological factors are used to determine the level of consumer ethnocentrism. The main ones are patriotism, nationalism, conservatism, xenophobia, cultural openness, collectivism, individualism, secularism, preferences for foreign products. Depending on the country's culture, economic situation, availability for alternative products, typological features of the ethnocentric users will vary. By using the socio-psychological factors mentioned above, it can further be explained the intentions of the users and selected the various means of forming the opinion.*

## CONCLUSIONS

Consumer ethnocentrism is widely considered in marketing research to find out the typological features of ethnocentric users. Their knowledge is important in marketing and communication programs and in order to influence on consumer behavior.

In essence, consumer ethnocentrism is a psychological construct that describes person's tendency to strongly identify himself with his group or culture.

Consumer ethnocentrism, as a phenomenon, accumulates many other socio-psychological factors, of which in the scientific research essential are patriotism, nationalism, conjectivism, xenophobia, cultural openness, collectivism, individualism, secularism, preferences for foreign products. Examining the above factors would allow targeted management of consumer ethnocentrism. The analysis of scientific literature has led to the conclusion that the mentioned psychosocial strains affect demographic and economic factors and form a unified system of cognition of consumer ethnocentrism. The practical benefit of this study is the fact that the information collected will help researchers better select the criteria for consumer ethnocentrism, and will enable for a more precise description of the sociopsychological picture of consumers.

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