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CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM AND PRODUCT BIAS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK INTEGRATING SOCIO- PSYCHOLOGICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, AND DIGITAL MEDIA INFLUENCES

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Abstract:

In the age of globalization and digital connectivity, consumers are increasingly exposed to both domestic and foreign products, making product evaluations complex and shaped by more than price and quality. One important behavioral pattern is product bias, where consumers favour or reject products based on country of origin rather than objective attributes. This concept paper explores the influence of socio-psychological factors (such as national pride, cultural attachment, and perceived threats to local identity or economy), demographic variables (age, gender, education and income), and digital media influence (social media usage, influencer content) on product bias. Previous research has considered these factors in isolation, this study integrates them into a single conceptual framework, highlighting their combined effect on consumer ethnocentrism and product bias. The paper contributes theoretically by advancing an integrated perspective on identity, social influence, and digital exposure, while also offering practical implications for marketers and policymakers in industries where cultural perceptions strongly affect purchase decisions. Future research directions are suggested, particularly cross-cultural and generational studies, to explore the evolving impact of digital ecosystems on identity-driven consumer behaviour.

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This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Keywords:**

Product Bias, Consumer Ethnocentrism, Social Identity, Digital Media Influence, Cross-Cultural Consumer behaviour.

Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected global economy, consumers are frequently presented with choices between domestic and foreign products. While product quality, price, and brand reputation are important, purchasing decisions are often influenced by psychological and cultural perceptions. Cultural influences are among the broadest and deepest factors affecting consumer behaviour. These include societal norms, values, and collective mental programming, which shape how consumers perceive and respond to products (Golchha & Nagariya, 2025). Psychological elements such as attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and emotions significantly impact consumer choices. These factors are intrinsic and form part of the psychosocial influences on purchasing behaviour (Golchha & Nagariya, 2025). One such influence is consumer ethnocentrism, which refers to the belief that buying domestic products is a way to support the national economy, and that purchasing foreign goods is inappropriate or even harmful. Consumer ethnocentrism captures the belief that buying foreign-made goods is not only inappropriate but also morally wrong, as it is perceived to harm the domestic economy and cause job losses (Huang et al., 2020). This mindset can lead to product bias, where the perceived origin of a product becomes more important than its actual attributes or value.

Consumer ethnocentrism is shaped by various socio-psychological factors, such as national pride, cultural identity, and perceived economic threat. Consumer ethnocentrism, the preference for domestic products over foreign ones, is a significant factor influencing consumer behavior across various markets. This phenomenon is driven by socio-psychological factors such as national pride, perceived superiority, and familiarity with local products, particularly in emerging markets (Kinawy, 2025). In contrast, consumers in developed markets, who are more exposed to international brands, may exhibit a greater openness to foreign products, often influenced by psychological factors like self-expression and the symbolic value associated with these brands (Kinawy, 2025).

Understanding these nuances is crucial for businesses aiming to tailor their marketing strategies effectively. At the same time, demographic variables like age, education level, income, and geographic location may influence how individuals perceive and act upon these ethnocentric beliefs. For instance, research conducted in Slovakia and the Czech Republic found that age significantly impacts consumer ethnocentrism, although the direction and strength of this influence can vary by culture (Čvirik, 2021). The impact of income on ethnocentrism appears to be less consistent. In Zimbabwe, income was found to have an insignificant influence on consumer ethnocentrism (Muchandiona et al., 2021). For instance, older or less urbanized populations may exhibit higher levels of ethnocentrism compared to younger, more globally exposed individuals. In today's digital age, another important factor influencing consumer behavior is digital media. The widespread use of social media, online marketing, and digital influencers has transformed how consumers perceive products and make purchasing decisions.

In developing countries like India, digital platforms influence luxury brand purchases by connecting consumers to global reference groups, thereby affecting their brand choices and promoting openness to global brands (Jain & Schultz, 2019). Digital platforms can either reinforce ethnocentric attitudes by promoting national campaigns and local pride, or they can encourage openness to global brands through exposure to diverse consumer experiences.

Despite the importance of these factors, Existing studies have often examined socio-psychological (such as patriotism or cultural identity), demographic (such as age, income, education), and digital media factors independently in relation to consumer ethnocentrism (Budiarti et al., 2022; Kvasina et al., 2018; Egea & Frutos, 2021), without fully exploring how these dimensions interact to influence product bias. This indicates a clear research gap in understanding the combined or synergistic effects of these variables on consumer behaviour in a digitally connected marketplace. Therefore, this concept paper aims to propose an integrated conceptual framework that links these dimensions to provide a more holistic understanding of consumer behavior. The integration of these diverse factors into a comprehensive framework provides valuable insights for marketers to segment markets more effectively and develop targeted communication strategies that resonate with different consumer segments (Goel et al., 2025). Studying this topic is important because it can offer meaningful insights for businesses, marketers, and policy makers. A deeper understanding of these factors can help in designing effective marketing strategies, promoting local products, and addressing challenges in consumer perception within an increasingly competitive and globalized marketplace.

Problem Statement

Despite the growing interest in consumer behavior research, a key problem remains, current literature often treats socio-psychological, demographic, and digital media influences in isolation, resulting in fragmented insights that do not fully capture the complexity of modern purchasing behavior. In practice, these factors are deeply interrelated and collectively shape how consumers perceive and evaluate products, especially in relation to their national origin.

Consumer ethnocentrism, the preference for domestic products over foreign ones, significantly influences consumer behavior across various markets. This phenomenon is driven by socio-psychological factors such as national pride, perceived superiority, and familiarity with local products (Goel et al., 2025; Kinawy, 2025). Ethnocentric consumers tend to view foreign products as inferior or culturally inappropriate, which can lead to unfair rejection of high-quality international offerings, while overestimating the value of domestic alternatives. This behavior has direct implications for businesses trying to enter or grow in foreign markets. Understanding the underlying causes and effects of consumer ethnocentrism is crucial for businesses aiming to tailor their marketing strategies effectively in both emerging and developed markets.

Studies show that demographic factors like age, gender, income, and education can significantly influence levels of ethnocentrism. For example, older or less globally exposed populations often exhibit stronger bias toward domestic products. In contrast, younger generations, especially those active on social media may adopt a more global consumption mindset. Similarly, higher income and education levels can either amplify or mitigate these tendencies depending on the context (Čvirik, 2021; Inoni & Okorie, 2024). These demographic variables help segment the market, allowing businesses to develop targeted marketing strategies that resonate with specific consumer groups.

The growing influence of digital media adds further complexity, as consumers now navigate an environment saturated with culturally diverse messages, targeted ads, and real-time product reviews that may either reinforce or weaken ethnocentric attitudes. The advent of digital media and globalization has added new dimensions to consumer ethnocentrism. While digital media can expose consumers to a broader range of foreign products, it can also reinforce ethnocentric attitudes by promoting nationalistic content (Kara et al., 2024). Moreover, globalization has led to a more complex consumer decision making process, where ethnocentrism interacts with other factors like brand image and perceived product value (Kara et al., 2024; Trivedi et al., 2024). Understanding these dynamics is essential for businesses to navigate the global market effectively.

However, few existing studies have attempted to combine these diverse elements into a single conceptual framework. Without such integration, marketers, global brands, and policymakers lack a clear roadmap for addressing product bias or crafting effective messaging strategies that resonate with different consumer segments. This study seeks to develop a conceptual model that captures the interplay of socio-psychological factors, demographic profiles, and digital media influences in shaping consumer ethnocentrism and product bias. By doing so, it aims to provide clearer insights into consumer decision making across cultural and national boundaries in an era of rapid globalization and digital influence. Businesses must consider these elements to develop effective marketing strategies that cater to ethnocentric consumers while also leveraging the opportunities presented by globalization and digital media. With that, they can better position their products in both domestic and international markets.

Research Objectives

This concept paper aims to explore how socio-psychological, demographic, and digital media factors influence consumer ethnocentrism and product bias in the global marketplace. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the influence of socio-psychological factors on consumer ethnocentrism and product bias.
2. To analyze the role of demographic variables in shaping levels of ethnocentric attitudes and product bias.
3. To investigate the impact of digital media influences on consumer ethnocentrism and product bias.
4. To propose an integrated conceptual framework that explains the relationship and interaction between socio-psychological, demographic, and digital media influences in shaping consumer ethnocentrism and product bias.

Literature Review

Consumer Ethnocentrism

Consumer ethnocentrism refers to the tendency of individuals to favor locally made products over foreign alternatives, shaped by national pride, cultural identity, and the belief that supporting domestic goods is morally and economically beneficial (Farah & Mehdi, 2021; Jurdi & Houjeir, 2020). These attitudes influence product evaluations and lead to product bias, especially when local products are perceived as more trustworthy (Vabø & Hansen, 2016; Huddleston et al., 2001). This study proposes a conceptual framework integrating three key drivers of consumer ethnocentrism: socio-psychological, demographic and digital media influences. These three dimensions collectively offer a comprehensive understanding of the

drivers of consumer ethnocentrism and their impact on product bias in today's connected marketplace. Consumer ethnocentrism continues to play a significant role, especially in local product preference and moderating behaviour in online purchase settings. Heng (2024) found that consumer ethnocentrism moderates the relationship between influencer source credibility, parasocial interaction, and purchase intention for young adults.

In recent years, digital consumer behaviour has undergone rapid evolution due to greater technology penetration, social media ubiquity, and the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Sharma et al. (2023) demonstrates that consumer decision processes are no longer strictly linear which is from awareness to purchase, but involve iterative feedback loops among digital touchpoints. Supported by Müller-Pérez et al. (2023), which indicates that post-pandemic, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and digital lifestyle traits strongly influence repurchase intentions, especially among digitally native user segments.

Socio-Psychological Factors

Socio-psychological factors significantly shape consumer behavior through the lens of consumer ethnocentrism, which reflects the belief that purchasing domestic products is morally right and economically beneficial, while foreign goods are viewed as undesirable (Budiarti et al., 2022; Kvasina et al., 2018). Rooted in cultural identity, national pride, group affiliation, and perceived economic threats, this mindset influences consumers to favor local products, often perceiving them as superior despite higher prices or limited innovation (Bryła, 2021; Hsu & Nien, 2008). Ethnocentric attitudes are influenced by demographics such as age, income, education, and patriotic sentiment, and are often stronger in collectivist cultures where loyalty to the nation is emphasized (Egea & Frutos, 2021; Jain & Jain, 2013). Driven by emotional attachment and a sense of civic duty, consumer ethnocentrism promotes product bias, shapes market preferences, and enhances local brand loyalty (Ibrahim Abdel-Aziz, 2024).

Demographic Factors

Consumer choices are influenced not only by price or product quality but also by demographic factors such as age, gender, education, income, and geographic context (Shili & Sohaib, 2025). Individuals with higher education levels often prefer branded or high-quality products, while those with lower income or education may opt for affordable or local alternatives (Král' et al., 2020; King et al., 2021). Income and marital status further shape preferences (Thapa, 2021; Chattaraj et al., 2018). These traits also impact consumer ethnocentrism, where loyalty to domestic products reflects national pride or economic concern (Eroglu et al., 2024). Older consumers generally show stronger ethnocentric attitudes, whereas younger individuals tend to favor global brands due to broader cultural exposure (Čvirik, 2021; Pentz et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2022). Gender and cognitive differences influence product engagement, particularly in high-value markets like luxury goods (Bigne et al., 2024; Arribas-Ibar et al., 2025). Recognizing these demographic patterns allows businesses to tailor strategies that align with consumer identity and preferences (Valášková et al., 2018; Král' et al., 2020).

Digital Media Influences

Digital media significantly influences consumer behavior, particularly in shaping product preferences tied to consumer ethnocentrism. Social media platforms and online channels help shape perceptions based on cultural identity and national pride, enabling businesses to align marketing with both local values and global trends (Sharma, 2024). Digital influencers play a key role in this process, especially among younger consumers who trust their endorsements, with some promoting local products to reinforce national loyalty (Kanwar & Huang, 2022;

Hapsari et al., 2024). A study by Permatasari & Wahyudi (2024) on social media influencers' impact on purchasing decisions highlighted that influencers are perceived as more authentic than traditional celebrity ambassadors because they continuously engage with their audience. The "parasocial relationships" those followers develop with influencers make their endorsements feel more sincere and less like a transactional promotion. In addition, a recent study in Malaysia by Azhar et al., (2025) shows that authenticity, expertise, transparency and emotional appeal are key dimensions by which influencer trust is built, and that lack of disclosure undermines effectiveness of influencer campaigns. Effective digital marketing involves optimizing content delivery to match consumer preferences, increasing engagement and reducing product bias (Zhang, 2023). While digital platforms broaden access to information, they can also reinforce existing preferences through algorithmic filtering, limiting exposure to foreign products and deepening ethnocentric attitudes (Alam et al., 2024; Gelovani et al., 2025; Marres, 2017).

Understanding consumer ethnocentrism requires a multidimensional approach that considers the socio-psychological, demographic and digital media influence shaping product preferences. These factors not only drive loyalty toward domestic goods but also contribute to selective perceptions of product quality and value. As digital media continues to shape consumer exposure and engagement, the impact of influencers and algorithm-driven content becomes increasingly significant in reinforcing or reshaping ethnocentric attitudes. Recognizing these patterns allows marketers, policymakers, and businesses to respond more effectively to consumer expectations, balance national identity with global integration, and address product bias in a more informed and strategic manner.

The Propose Conceptual Framework

This concept paper is primarily underpinned by the Consumer Ethnocentrism Theory (Shimp & Sharma, 1987), which posits that consumers perceive the purchase of domestic products as both morally appropriate and economically beneficial, while viewing foreign goods as potentially harmful to the national economy. Such perceptions often result in product bias, where local products are favoured regardless of their comparative quality or price. Additionally, the study is supported by Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which explains that individuals derive part of their self-concept from group memberships, including national identity. This affiliation encourages preference for in-group (domestic) products, reinforcing feelings of cultural loyalty and national pride. Although digital media is not directly derived from these traditional theories, it is conceptually integrated as a contemporary influence. Digital platforms, particularly social media, play a dual role in reinforcing ethnocentric attitudes through nationalistic content, while simultaneously exposing consumers to global alternatives that may dilute such tendencies. As such, digital media is positioned as a modern contextual factor that interacts with socio-psychological and demographic elements to influence product evaluation and consumer bias. The proposed conceptual framework posits that consumer ethnocentrism is influenced by three primary categories of factors. The first category, socio-psychological factors, encompasses elements such as national pride, cultural attachment, and perceived threats to local identity or economy. These factors are theorized to directly contribute to increased consumer ethnocentrism, thereby fostering product bias. The second category, demographic factors, includes characteristics such as age, gender, income, and education. For example, younger and more educated individuals may demonstrate lower levels of ethnocentrism compared to their older or less-educated counterparts. The third category, digital media influences, refers to the exposure to digital content, including social

media, influencer marketing, and global advertising, which may either mitigate or amplify ethnocentric tendencies.

The proposes that higher levels of consumer ethnocentrism led to stronger product bias, favoring domestic products and rejecting foreign alternatives regardless of their quality or value. Understanding this relationship can provide valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, and businesses aiming to position their products effectively in culturally sensitive or ethnocentric markets.

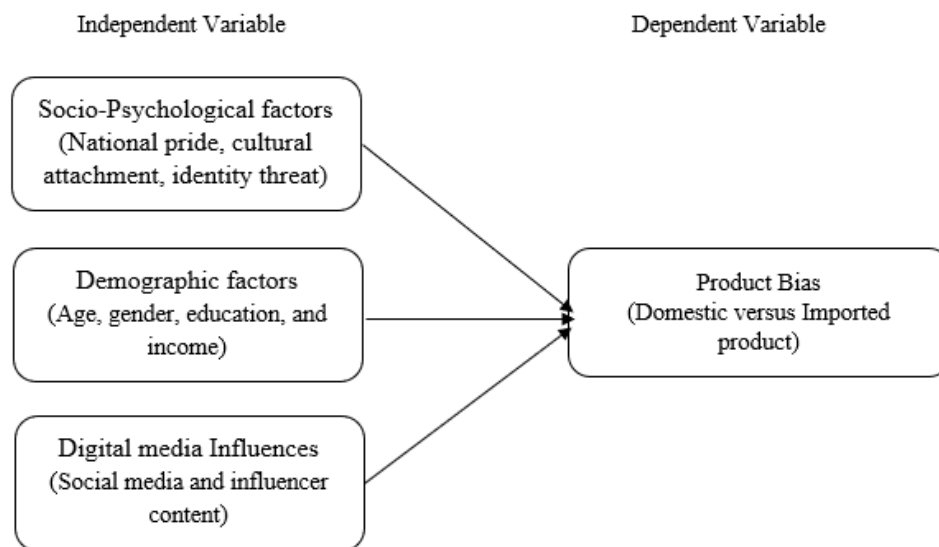


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

Methodology

This study does not involve empirical data collection but proposes a conceptual framework to guide future research. To empirically validate the proposed framework, a quantitative research design is recommended, utilizing a cross-sectional survey approach to collect data from a diverse group of consumers across different demographic backgrounds. A cross-sectional survey design is the most suitable approach for this study because it allows for the collection of data from a large, diverse group of consumers at a single point in time, providing a practical means of capturing variations across demographic, socio-psychological, and attitudinal factors. This design is cost effective, efficient, and particularly appropriate for exploratory studies seeking to empirically validate a conceptual framework without requiring longitudinal tracking or controlled experimentation. A stratified random sampling method is suggested to ensure balanced representation across variables such as age, gender, education level, and geographic location. An ideal sample size of 200–400 respondents would allow for meaningful statistical analysis and generalizability of findings.

Data would be collected through structured questionnaires distributed via online platforms like Google Forms, incorporating established and validated measurement scale such as the Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale (CETSCALE) for consumer ethnocentrism, along with adapted items for product bias, socio-psychological factors, digital media influence, and demographic data. The CETSCALE is a psychometric scale designed to measure the level of consumer

ethnocentrism. It has been widely tested in various parts of the world to understand how consumers' ethnocentric tendencies influence their purchasing decisions (Bawa, 2004).

The collected data would be analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis would include descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing, and inferential techniques such as multiple regression analysis to examine the direct and relationships among the variables within the conceptual framework. This approach enables the assessment of both main effects and interaction effects, providing empirical support for the theoretical propositions outlined in the model. This study acknowledges SEM and PLS-SEM as valuable future extensions. SEM allows simultaneous estimation of measurement and structural models, while PLS-SEM is better suited for smaller samples and non-normal data. After establishing initial relationships through regression analysis, future research may adopt these methods to refine the framework, test mediation and moderation, and strengthen its theoretical and empirical validity.

Discussion and Implications

The proposed conceptual framework offers a comprehensive lens to understand how consumer ethnocentrism and product bias are shaped by the interplay of socio-psychological factors, demographic factors, and digital media influences. It recognizes that consumer decision making is not purely rational but deeply influenced by cultural identity, national pride, and perceived economic threats. Factors that often drive loyalty to domestic products and scepticism toward foreign goods (Bryła, 2021; Farah & Mehdi, 2021). Demographic variables such as age, education level, income, and geographic location further contextualize these attitudes, highlighting generational and social divides in consumer perceptions (Kvasina, Crnjak Karanović, & Tucak, 2018).

Meanwhile, the growing dominance of digital media adds complexity, as consumers are increasingly exposed to global content, influencer marketing, and targeted advertisements that may challenge or reinforce their ethnocentric views (Gelovani et al., 2025; Hapsari et al., 2024). Social platforms can act as both agents of globalization and echo chambers of local cultural values, shaping ethnocentric depending on content exposure (Khare & Kautish, 2021). This framework contributes significantly to consumer ethnocentric theory by integrating these domains into a single model, allowing researchers to explore not just isolated variables, but how they function together in a systemic way. It extends existing models of consumer ethnocentrism such as CETSCALE (Sharma, Shimp, & Shin, 1995) and aligns with emerging interdisciplinary approaches in digital consumer behavior (Marres, 2017). Moreover, it opens new avenues for empirical research across different countries, cultures, and market conditions, offering the flexibility to adapt and test the model in various contexts (Ortega-Egea & García-de-Frutos, 2021).

The practical implications of this framework are most relevant to industries where cultural perceptions and country-of-origin cues strongly shape consumer choices, such as consumer goods, food and beverages, fashion and apparel, and digital commerce platforms. For businesses and marketers in these sectors, the model can inform more nuanced branding and communication strategies that account for cultural sensitivities in target markets. Domestic brands may strengthen their position by aligning marketing messages with national values and identity (Čvirik, 2021), while international brands can benefit from adapting their positioning to bridge cultural and psychological barriers (Kanwar & Huang, 2022; Kara, Prasad, & Spillan, 2024). For policymakers, particularly in emerging markets with strong cultural identity

concerns, insights into consumer ethnocentrism can guide initiatives that support local industries, promote fair competition, and build public awareness about global trade (Goel, Giri, & Sharma, 2025). For consumers, the framework highlights the need for greater awareness of unconscious product biases, encouraging more reflective decision-making in culturally diverse and digitally mediated marketplaces.

Conclusion

It shows that ethnocentric tendencies shaped by a combination of socio-psychological influences, demographic factors, and the digital media influences. Consumers who exhibit strong national pride and a sense of moral obligation to support local products tend to reject foreign goods, often regardless of price or quality. Demographic variables such as age, income, education, and gender further influence these attitudes, revealing segment specific consumer behaviours. Nowadays digital environment, social media and influencers play a dual role which are reinforce ethnocentric sentiments by promoting national pride, and expose consumers to diverse global options, potentially weakening product bias. Understanding these dynamics is essential for marketers, policymakers, and local producers aiming to enhance the competitiveness of domestic brands. This is particularly relevant in developing countries where national identity and economic protectionism remain strong drivers of consumer behavior.

In future research explore consumer ethnocentrism differs across cultural and political contexts, especially by comparing collectivist and individualist societies. This can provide a broader understanding of national identity influences consumer behaviour globally. Additionally, there is a need for longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of digital media factors on ethnocentric attitudes, particularly as social media algorithms continue to shape the content users see. Research should also investigate the role of influencer credibility in reinforcing national loyalty, and digital figures affect trust and engagement with local brands. Another important area for future study is younger generations balance global exposure with national loyalty, as their purchasing behaviours may redefine ethnocentric patterns in the coming years. Furthermore, the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and sustainability initiatives warrants deeper investigation to determine whether preferences for local products are motivated by ethical and environmental concerns or purely by patriotic sentiment. In addition, future research should assess the effectiveness of government policies, marketing campaigns, and educational programs in shaping consumer ethnocentrism and influencing market dynamics. Finally, Future research should empirically test this framework through cross-sectional surveys, with potential extensions using SEM or PLS-SEM to capture complex interactions among variables. Cross-cultural and generational comparisons would further enrich understanding of how digital ecosystems and cultural identity continue to shape consumption patterns in a globalized marketplace.

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