



CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM, PURCHASE INTENTION AND SRI LANAKAN YOUNGSTERS

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Abstract

Purpose of doing this study is to identify the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products. Further, this study attempts to identify the impact of gender and house hold income level to the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products. Since the CETSCALE is a standard scale to measure consumer ethnocentrism, it has used in this study. The scale measures 17 attitudes regarding consumer ethnocentrism. Variables to measure purchase intention are product package, Product knowledge, and perceived value. A survey was conducted to collect data with 114 youngsters. Convenience sampling was used in data collection. Regression analysis and chi-square were used to analyse the data. Findings of this study indicate that the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products is positive. Lowest income level shows a significant impact on the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products. In contrast to the other contexts, in Sri Lankan context male youngsters' impact on the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products is stronger and significant than female youngsters. Results of this study are important in managerial decision making for business organizations that produce domestic products for Sri Lankan youngsters. Domestic product marketers have the ability to apply these results in their integrated marketing communication campaigns to attract consumer ethnocentric target groups. Hence, this study provides valuable insight to domestic product producers to boost their industry.

Keywords: Consumer Ethnocentrism; Domestic Products; Purchase Intention; Sri Lankan Youngsters

1. Introduction

Today, national economies turning into global economies and the trend for free trade agreements are becoming more popular. The concept, consumer ethnocentrism, plays a major role in promoting the products in both local and international business arena. Consumer ethnocentrism and country of origin are concepts that marketers should take into account when designing the integrated marketing communication campaigns to persuade customers to purchase domestic products and enjoy competitive advantage over their competitors (Pappu, Quester & Cooksey, 2006; Lee, Hong & Lee, 2003). However, researchers have found that in developing countries consumers highly consider about the rational appeals and the country of

origin has a very little impact (Weerasiri & Dissanayake, 2010). It has identified that the customers in developing countries have negative attitudes towards their local products and products from developing countries. Further, they prefer products from developed countries (Ranjbarian, Rojuee, & Mirzaei, 2010). This is a major problem in building local brands in developing countries (Weerasiri & Dissanayake, 2010). In Sri Lankan context, government policy makers and professionals have identified that it is important to reduce imports to Sri Lanka for the purpose of saving the foreign currency. Therefore, investors are encouraged to invest and boost the local production. Local producers can use consumer ethnocentrism as a means of getting competitive advantage. Sri Lankan government tries to motivate Sri Lankans to buy domestic products. As well as government imposes high taxes on imports to help local producers. Not only that, there are some nongovernmental bodies which provide their assistance to enhance sales of domestic products and they try to add a value to local brands in the light of consumer ethnocentrism. But, in Sri Lankan context a less attention has been paid on this concept by researchers. If empirical investigations have been taken place in Sri Lankan context regarding consumer ethnocentrism, business strategists are benefited by using those findings to create new strategies in their decision making process. According to that, this study focuses on identifying the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products. Youth population of age between 15-29 in Sri Lanka is 4,578,515 (Department of Census and statistics-Sri Lanka, 2001). It is 27% from total population. It is a significant amount from total population of Sri Lanka. Understanding the consumer ethnocentric tendencies of this portion of the population is important for marketers. Therefore, study attempts to identify the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Ethnocentrism (CE) and CETSCALE

Consumer ethnocentrism is derived from the more general concept of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism was originally introduced by Sumner (2002, p. 13) and he argues that, "Ethnocentrism is the technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it". Shimp & Sharma (1987), who extended the concept of ethnocentrism as consumer ethnocentrism and this is widely applied in the field of marketing (Bawa, 2004; Klein, Ettenson & Krishnan, 2006; Martinez, Zapata & Garcia, 2000). Shimp and Sharma (1987) explains consumer ethnocentrism as, "We use the term 'consumer ethnocentrism' to represent the beliefs held by American consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign made products. From the perspective of ethnocentric consumers, purchasing imported products is wrong because, in their minds, it hurts the domestic economy, causes loss of jobs, and is plainly unpatriotic; products from other countries (i.e., out groups) are objects of contempt to highly ethnocentric consumers. To nonethnocentric consumers, however foreign products are objects to be evaluated on their own merits without consideration for where they are made (or perhaps to be evaluated more favourably because they are manufactured outside the United States)" (Shimp & Sharma, 1987, p. 280).

Consumer willingness to purchase foreign products is highly influenced by the consumer ethnocentrism. When purchasing a product, some consumers are less likely to consider products and services from foreign countries (Akdogan, Ozgener, Kaplan & Coskun, 2012). Consumer ethnocentrism is a one factor that influence to the consumer product quality perception. This influence is important for the products which are not necessary to daily life (Huddleston, Good, & Stoel, 2001). Ethnocentric consumers' preference for products from culturally dissimilar countries is very low. It is advisable for importers from culturally

dissimilar countries not to highlight their country of origin (Watson & Wright, 2000). Highly ethnocentric consumers have strong preference to purchase domestic products and they believe domestic products are superior to imported products. Consumer ethnocentrism is the major influencer to the purchase intention. Further, they believe that purchasing foreign products can cause unemployment (Tabassi, Esmaeilzadeh&Sambasivan, 2012).

To measure the Consumer ethnocentrism, in 1987 Shimp& Sharma introduced the CETSCALE. The CETSCALE (Consumer Ethnocentric Tendencies Scale) consists of 17 items which measure the tendency of consumers to act consistently towards foreign and domestic products. These 17 questions measure different 17 attitudes towards domestically made products. CETSCALE has been constructed and distilled through the stages of Domain specification & item generation, two purification studies, refinement and reliability assessment & construct validation to examine the psychometrics of the scale. CETSCALE have tested in different countries to ensure its' reliability, validity and ethnocentric levels in different settings (Bawa, 2004; Klein, Ettenson & Krishnan, 2006; Martinez, Zapata& Garcia, 2000).

AnupamBawa(2004) has studied about Indian Consumers. The Indians' level of consumerethnocentrism is almost similar to a demographically similar group in a developed country like US. Hence, it is wrong to consider consumer ethnocentrism as a phenomenon applied only in developed countries.Recent studies have extended the CETSCLE to transitional economies where consumers seek foreign goods. In contrast to Russia, consumers in China displayed high levels of ethnocentrism. But, both Chinese and Russian consumers believe domestically produced products are inferior to goods produced in specific foreign countries. (Klein, Ettenson & Krishnan, 2006).

2.2 Purchase Intention

Psychologists know that explaining human behaviour and reasons for those are a very complex and difficult process. Cognitive psychologists believe attitudes are a significant factor that shape human behaviour(Bredahl, 2001). Spears & Singh (as cited in Rodriguez, 2008, p.85) define the term purchase intention as "an individual's conscious plan to make aneffort to purchase a brand". Ajzen(1991) has identified three factors which influence to the intention in his "Theory of Planned Behaviour". They are,attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behaviouralcontrol. Further, Ajzen have explained likelihod of performance is high when the intention to perform that particular action is high.According to Ajzen&Fishbein(1977) a particular behaviour is considered as a result of the attitude toward performing that particular behaviour and subjective norm. Further, it provesthat a particular action can be predicted by the attitude toward that act, sincethere is a significantrelationship between intention and behaviour.

A celebrity endorser with a high celebrity status significantly influence to the purchase intention and consumer's attitude towards the advertisement. Experience, knowledge, qualifications and trustworthiness are the qualities of the endorser credibility that affect to attitude towards the purchase intention and advertisement(Rodriguez, 2008). Kim & Chung (2011) suggest that past experience regarding a particular product influence to the purchase intention towards that product. According to Shafiq, Raza & Zia-ur-Rehman's study (2011), customer knowledge about product, celebrity endorsement and product packaging/design have significant relationship with the customer purchase intention.

Consumer ethnocentrism believes the presumption that the consumers' patriotic emotions will have significant effects on attitudes, purchase intentions and consumer behaviour (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). The CETSCALE has identified as a stronger influencer to the import buying behaviour than demographic factors. But, the influence differs depending on the product category (Herche, 1992). In Malaysia, both the brand's country of origin and consumer ethnocentrism have significant impact on the consumer purchase preference (Yeong, Mohamad, Ramayah & Omar, 2007). In Iran, studies have found a significant relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and tendency to purchase domestically made clothes (Ranjbarian et al., 2010). According to the literature, it is hypothesised as,

H₁: The relationship between Consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products is positive.

The constructs; product knowledge, product package and perceived value have been used for the purpose of measuring the purchase intention (Shafiq, Raza & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2011; Kuo, Wu & Deng, 2009).

2.3 *Product Package*

A primary function of product package is to provide the protection for the product until consumers use it (Prendergast & Pitt, 1996). Further, product packages attract consumers and strengthen the product image. Product packaging is an important factor that influence to the purchase intention. Consumers make decisions based on the package. They see the product is also high in quality if the package reflects a high quality. Package size, shape, graphics, colors used and information on the package are the sub elements of packaging that influence on purchase intention (Silayo & Speece, 2004). Vermeir & Verbeke (2006) have identified that package is one of an important factor that consumers take into account in their purchase decisions. Moreover, packaging has three main functions in marketing. They are Containment, Communication and Protection and preservation. In brand literature, packaging considered as an important brand tool (Underwood & Klein, 2002). Packaging is very important in building the brand and it affects to customer purchase intention as it signals the brand image and company identity (Kumar, 2006).

2.4 *Product Knowledge*

Four major types of knowledge have identified in the literature; situational, conceptual, procedural and strategic knowledge (Jong & Ferguson-Hessler, 1996). They have introduced a new concept in Knowledge as knowledge-in-use. It describes knowledge in terms of type and quality of knowledge. Qualities of the knowledge are level, structure, modality and generality. When making a purchase of a product, customers rely on their knowledge in deciding what product to purchase. Customer knowledge has identified as an important factor that influence to the customer responses in purchasing (Jayachandran, Hewett & Kaufman, 2004). Brand knowledge among customers should be improved to have high purchase intention among customers (Khan, Ghauri & Majeed, 2012).

2.5 *Perceived Value*

Researchers have identified that perceived value is the difference between what customers receive in a transaction and what they pay in return for that (Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991). When price increases the perceived value decreased. Further they have proved that brand name and store name also make a significant impact on perceived value. Perceived value has been identified as an influencer to the customers' post purchase behaviour. It is an immediate antecedent to the purchase intention (Oh, 1999). Grewal, Krishnan, Baker & Borin (1998) demonstrated that price discounts, price and brand's perceived quality make significant influences on perceived value. When perceived value increases customers' purchase

intention also increases. Kuo, Wu & Deng (2009) have proved the positive relationship between Perceived value and purchase intention.

2.6 Demographic Variables

A key finding by Wall and Heslop (1986) is that Canadian consumers have faith on Canadian-made products and want to believe Canadian goods cater for their needs and wants. Women are especially positive toward Canadian products. Watson & Wright (2000) explained that female, older & low educated people are the most ethnocentric respondents in New Zealand. There is a significant relationship between gender and consumer ethnocentrism in Korea. Specially, females have exhibit greater consumer-ethnocentric tendencies than men (Sharma et al., 1995). Based on the literature, following hypothesis has been drawn.

H₂: Female Sri Lankan youngsters' impact on relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention of domestic products is more significant than male.

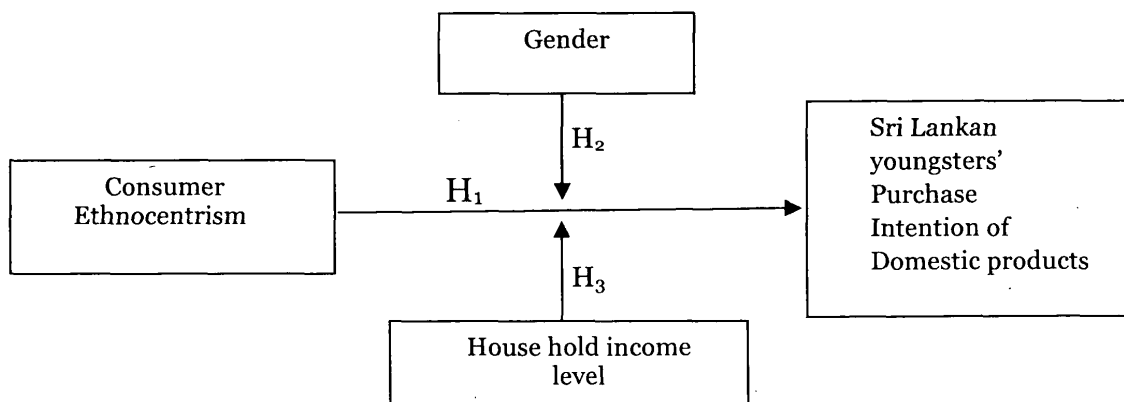
In India, demographic variables had failed to explain the consumer ethnocentrism in a satisfactory way. Only income and SEC (Social Economic Classification) were related to consumer ethnocentrism in the sample of senior secondary school students. Education is related to consumer ethnocentrism in the sample of university students (Bawa, 2004). Watson & Wright (2000) noted that, When income level increases consumers' level of ethnocentrism had decreased. Sharma et al. (1995) have identified a negative relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and income level. When income level increases Consumer ethnocentric tendencies decreases. According to the prior researches it has hypothesised as,

H₃: Higher the household income level, relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products is negative.

3. Methodology

This study examines the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products. Conceptual framework of the study is given in figure 1. In the literature, a positive relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention has already been established. Hence, this study endeavours to identify that proved relationship in Sri Lankan context regarding Sri Lankan youngsters.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Consumer Ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan Youngsters' Purchase Intention of Domestic Products.



Purchase intention is dependent on the consumer ethnocentrism. Basically, in testing consumer ethnocentrism Shimp & Sharma's (1987) CETSCALE which consisted of 17 attributes has been used. In

measuring purchase intention; product knowledge, product package and perceived value have been used based on the Shafiq, Raza & Zia-ur-Rehman's (2011) study and Kuo, Wu & Deng's (2009) study. Thus, this study operationalize the purchase intention with these constructs; product knowledge, product package and perceived value. Gender and house hold income level are used as the control variables.

The data for the study were collected through a questionnaire survey. The questionnaires were distributed among the sample of 170 respondents. Sample composition in terms of gender and income level is given in the table 1. Response rate was 67%. This questionnaire consisted of three segments. Segment "A" addressed the consumer ethnocentric tendencies. Segment "B" addressed the purchase intention while segment "C" consisting of demographic variables. Likert scales anchored with five points ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree has used.

Table 1: Gender and House Hold Income Cross Tabulation

	Lower than 15000	Between 15001- 50000	Between 50001- 100000	Total
Female	17	34	13	64
Male	13	28	9	50
Total	30	62	22	114

Youth in Sri Lanka is defined as those ages between 15-29 years (Gunatilaka et al., 2010, p. 243). Accordingly, for the data collection purpose, the people between ages of 15 to 29 was considered as the youth. According to that, the sample of the study consisted of 114 Sri Lankan youngsters between the ages of 15 to 29. Respondents were selected by using convenience sampling method. Demographic profile of the sample is given in the table 1. It has categorized by the gender and income groups. Since most of them have finished off their secondary education, they have moved away from their houses to get tertiary education or employment. These respondents do purchases on behalf of their food, clothing, stationeries and other necessary items by their own and they can influence to the family purchase decisions since family members believe that they are educated and knowledgeable. The young population who is still studying are occasionally doing purchases and specially, they influence on family purchase decisions. Hence, this sample provides valuable information on Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention on domestic products.

4. Data Analysis and Hypotheses testing

4.1 Reliability and validity of the Study Variables

To analyze the collected data this study has employed chi-square and regression analysis. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability have assessed the reliability of this study. Below given table 2 provides the overall reliability and validity values for the study variables. According to the results, study variables exhibited a good level of reliability and validity.

Table 2: Overall Value of the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability for the Study Variables

Study Variable	Cronbach's alpha value	Composite Reliability
Consumer Ethnocentrism	0.7309	0.8045
Purchase Intention	0.6426	0.7816

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses have tested by using linear regression and chi-square.

H₁: The relationship between Consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products is positive.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R ²	T value	Beta value
Consumer Ethnocentrism	Purchase Intention	0.239	7.455	0.489

This "t value" of 7.455 shows a significant relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention. Beta value of the relationship is 0.489. This beta value confirms the positive relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention. Thus, higher the level of consumer ethnocentrism leads to higher the intention to purchase domestic products.

H₂: Female Sri Lankan youngsters' impact on relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention of domestic products is more significant.

Table 4: Relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention of domestic products

Gender	Pearson Chi- square	Assymp. Sig. (2 sided)
Female	304.036	0.145
Male	328.199	0.017

According to the Pearson chi-square figures, males' impact on relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention of domestic products is more stronger than females' impact on the relationship. Furthermore, based on assymp. Sig. value of 0.017 only the males' impact is significant.

H₃: Higher the household income level, relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products is negative.

Table 5: Relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products

House hold income	Pearson Chi- square	Assymp. Sig. (2 sided)
Less than 15000	155.536	0.088
Between 15001-50000	284.929	0.823
Between 50001- 100000	149.111	0.192

Based on the Pearson chi-square and assymp. Sig. values of each income group, lowest income level of less than 15000 is the income level which has a significant impact on relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Purpose of this study is to identify the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products. Furthermore, in the conceptual framework two control variables (gender and house hold income level) have identified to compare and identify the significance levels of each control variable.

As hypothesized H_1 and H_3 have accepted. H_2 have rejected. According to that, this study also confirms the finding of Shimp & Sharma (1987). A significant positive relationship between independent variable and dependent variable is clearly visible. Thus the relationship between Consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products is positive. Highly ethnocentric young consumers have a positive purchase intention towards domestic products. When considering about the demographic factors which are considered as the control variables, as hypothesized lowest income level shows a significant impact on the relationship between Consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products. Lowest income earners are the income group who seeks the domestically made products among all three income groups. This result is consistent with the Watson & Wright's study results (2000).

H_2 regarding the impact of gender on the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products has rejected in this study. It has identified that Sri Lankan male youngsters' impact on the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products is stronger and significant than female youngsters' impact. Accordingly, this is a place where Sri Lankan context differ from other countries. Literature says that females are more ethnocentric than males (Wall & Heslop, 1986; Watson & Wright, 2000). However, Sri Lankan customers are different from customers in other countries. Price consciousness is considered as a characteristic of females than males (Wells & Lo Sciuto, 1966). In Sri Lanka lots of low price Chinese products are highly available in the market. Therefore, it can be a reason for females' insignificant relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and Sri Lankan youngsters' purchase intention of domestic products. It is a researchable topic for future researches and identifying the reasons for this behaviour can be an advantage to the local product marketers.

6. Managerial Implications

Results of this study are important for managerial decision making of business organizations that produce domestic products for Sri Lankan youngsters. This study shows a significant positive relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention. Domestic product marketers should use this relationship in marketing their products to local market. They can apply this relationship in their integrated marketing communication (IMC) campaigns to attract consumer ethnocentric target groups for their products. This adds a competitive edge to their product categories when competing with the imported products. Future researches on this topic can investigate the reasons for males being more ethnocentric than females. Because, it is worthy to identify those reasons since in other countries females are the high ethnocentric group.

When designing marketing strategies for domestically produced products decision makers should take into account that lower income earning youngsters are the group that makes a significant impact on consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention. Accordingly, they should focus their IMC campaigns more on lower income earning youngsters than high income earning youngsters. Impact of gender on relationship between

consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention shows that male youngsters are more ethnocentric. Female youngsters' impact is not significant. Thus, targeting on female youngsters is useless. Best decision is to focus on males in designing their strategies to market domestic products.

7. Limitations

A limitation of this study is the fact that this study focuses on Sri Lankan youngsters. Then, these results can't be applied for all age groups. Another limitation is selecting a convenience sampling to collect data. Further, this study has identified only the impact of consumer ethnocentrism to purchase intention. Future researchers can test the impact of more factors to the purchase intention in different settings with different samples.

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