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## Consumer Ethnocentrism: Empirical evidence from Ghana

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### Abstract

The study examines consumer ethnocentrism in Ghana. The specific objectives were to ascertain the factors that control purchase decision in Ghana; the perceptions on foreign – made – products; the implications of purchasing and foreign made products; and consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale. The study was both qualitative and quantitative. Convenience sampling technique was used in selecting 480 respondents for the study. Percentages, mean and standard deviations were used in assigning meaning to data. A test of reliability was also conducted using the Cronbach's alpha analysis. The study revealed that Ghanaian consumers had some level of ethnocentrism when it comes to the patronage of foreign made products. However, quality, packaging and price are the major reasons they sometimes opt for foreign products. Consumers acknowledged that, buying foreign products hurts the local business, decreases value of the Cedi and make other countries richer. Although some studies have been conducted on the effects of high imports, the study on consumer ethnocentrism in the case of Ghana is unique.

**Keywords:** Consumer, ethnocentrism, perception, purchase, Ghana

### 1. Introduction

The availability of wide range of goods and services (from domestic and foreign markets) to the 21<sup>st</sup> century consumer, makes them very sophisticated. The emergence of globalization and liberalization policies across countries, leading to the reducing barriers of export and import, has also made it easier for international trade. Globalization provides greater market opportunity to firms all over the world (Teo *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[45]</sup>. However, these trade liberalizations which are meant to benefit both developed and developing countries, does not realized that dream. This is basically due to the inability of firms in developing countries to produce in large quantities (as well as meeting international standards) to export to the developed markets (Bamfo, 2012) <sup>[12]</sup>. Developing countries therefore tend to be highly import reliant. And the influx of these foreign products on the developing markets, make competition very keen (Kamaruddin *et al.*, 2002) <sup>[26]</sup>. The attitudes and preference of consumers towards these foreign products has also drawn attention in recent years (Bamfo, 2012; Eryigit and Kavak 2011) <sup>[12, 19]</sup>. And one of the main determinants of consumers' preference for foreign products is ethnocentrism (Samiee, 1994; Eryigit and Kavak 2011) <sup>[37, 19]</sup>. According to Levine and Campbell (1972) <sup>[30]</sup>, ethnocentrism represents symbols and values of one's own ethnicity or nationality that becomes objects of pride and attachment whereas symbols of other groups may become objects of contempt. Ethnocentrism is thus greater when consumers associate their own country's product with higher value, at the expense of others (Huddleston *et al.*, 2001) <sup>[24]</sup>. The increased number of cross-national tourism, education and advancement of communication networks like television and internet, have impacted consumer preference in developing countries such as Ghana (Saffu and Walker, 2006). As indicated by Opoku and Akorli (2009) <sup>[33]</sup>, the study of consumer ethnocentrism is still relevant as consumers' perceptions toward a country, their culture and products keep changing. This study thus sought to assess consumer ethnocentrism Ghana. The Ghanaian market was also studied because of the disproportionate trade imbalances.

### 2. Literature review

#### 2.1 The concept of consumer ethnocentrism

The concept of ethnocentrism was a sociological phenomenon introduced by Sumner in

1906, to distinguish the feeling of belongingness by in-groups as against the out-groups. Ethnocentrism has also been viewed as a psychosocial concept which is crucial at the personal level and the universal culture and it forms the universal predisposition for people to view their social-analytic frameworks (Levine and Campbell, 1972) <sup>[30]</sup>. In general, there is a perception that one's group is the best and tend to reject any other culture which is dissimilar and inconsiderably embrace people from the culture which is similar to their own (Booth 1979; Worchel and Cooper 1979) <sup>[11, 47]</sup>. The in-groups become attached and proud to their groups, their symbols and other objects and look down upon that of the out-groups (Levine and Campbell 1972) <sup>[30]</sup>. Consumer ethnocentrism is the perception consumers' have about the ethical appositeness of patronizing foreign products in order to ensure the survival of their in-group (Sharma and Shimp, 1995) <sup>[40]</sup>. Consumers who are ethnocentric tend to place high value on and support domestic products, and place low value on and avoid purchasing foreign products. This is because they believe that by purchasing imported products would lead to the collapse of the domestic industries and increase unemployment which could hurt the domestic economy (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Sharma *et al.*, 1995; Vida and Reardon, 2008) <sup>[41, 40, 46]</sup>.

## 2.2 Consumer animosity

According to Klein *et al.* (2006), consumer animosity is a notion to portray undesirable feelings of consumer in connection to foreign unfriendly occurrences between countries. Consumer animosity is higher when it is perceived that an international country can destroy their own nation. A study by Ettenson and Klein in 2005 prove that, animosity stems from political conducts, and consumers on the other hand disapprove of foreign occurrences. Klein *et al.* (2006) <sup>[28]</sup> also describe consumer animosity as the residue of hatred connected to old or current political, military or economic occurrences. The displeasure toward an international nation results in consumers to refraining from product made by that nation. The decision not to patronize the products is therefore not dependent on product quality or features, but a mere dislike of the country of origin. A consumer who is angry will not defame the image of that particular nation's products, but they merely frown against buying them (Klein, 2002; Klein *et al.*, 2006) <sup>[28]</sup>.

Ethnocentrism and animosity are likely to have some influence on the conduct of consumers which is advanced by logical and emotional expressions (Balabanis *et al.*, 2002; Ang *et al.*, 2004; Russell and Russell, 2006) <sup>[4, 3, 35]</sup>. However, Klein (2002) <sup>[28]</sup> in her further studies drew distinction between animosity and consumer ethnocentrism. She stated that, animosity was connected with making a choice from products from diverse international nations whereas consumer ethnocentrism relates to choosing a locally made products either than foreign made products.

## 2.3 Consumer attitude

Consumer attitude is a kind of psychosomatic propensity that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993) <sup>[17]</sup>. The results from attitude which is affective, cognitive or behavioural responses relate to the process of evaluation (Frewer *et al.*, 2003) <sup>[21]</sup>. Attitude is also the learned

predisposition to behave in a continuously favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a particular object (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1997) <sup>[38]</sup>. Ajzen and Fishbein in 1980 mentioned that attitude has relation with a person's intention which also determines how a person behaves. Attitudes are basically revealed when it comes to religion, politics, food, music, clothes, and so on (Bearden *et al.*, 1995; Kotler, 2004) <sup>[6, 29]</sup>. It influences the mind to like or dislike an item and to decide to walk away from or towards it. Attitudes lead people to behave in a fairly consistent way towards similar objects. Boone and Kurtz (2004) <sup>[10]</sup> indicated attitudes as tolerating pleasant or unpleasant emotions and evaluations toward some items. As attitude progresses, individuals become used to them, thereby making it difficult to change (Berkowitz *et al.*, 2000) <sup>[8]</sup>, and values and beliefs which are learned shape our attitude.

## 2.4 Consumer behavior

Consumer behaviour considers how people take personal decisions on how and what to spend their resources like time, effort and money on (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1997) <sup>[38]</sup>. It was also defined a study which involves various stages from the time people or a person chooses, make use of or discard a product, service, experience or idea in order to meet needs and wants (Solomon, 1996) <sup>[42]</sup>. Belch (1978) <sup>[7]</sup> emphasized consumer behavior in a formal way, by defining it as the stages and operations persons involve in when it comes to looking for, choosing, buying, using, assessing and discarding of products and services in order to meet their needs and wants. Two types of consumer behaviour exist, i.e. cognitive and experience-oriented consumer behavior (Ugala, 2001). Consumers with cognitive behaviour are logical and rational consumers while experience oriented consumers have more emotional reason to want to purchase a product (Bamfo *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[13]</sup>. Dalqvist and Linde (2002) <sup>[15]</sup> characterized consumer behaviour into four i.e. rational, learned, unconscious and social behavior.

## 2.5 The country-of-origin effect and consumer ethnocentrism

The concept of "made in" which means the country of origin effect, has basically been considered as the favourable or unfavourable effect that a country where a product was produced has on the stages involve in consumer decision making (Elliott and Cameron, 1994) <sup>[18]</sup>. According to Cordell (1992) <sup>[14]</sup>, country-of-origin is an intrinsic signal that serves to reduce a danger or good signal for consumers. The intrinsic indicators like design and taste are the tangible attributes that is compared to the extrinsic indicators like price and brand name which are the intangibles attributes of the product (Bilkey and Nes, 1982) <sup>[9]</sup>. The debate of country of origin is ongoing with some researchers raising doubt about the essence of country- of- origin in decision making of consumers (Hugstad and Durr, 1986; Mitchell and Greatorex, 1990; Elliott and Cameron, 1994) <sup>[25, 31, 18, 18]</sup>. Other studies (such as, Opoku and Akorli, 2009; Bandara and Miloslava, 2012; Okpara and Onah, 2013; Stere and Trajani, 2015) <sup>[33, 5, 32, 43]</sup> have shown that the country- of- origin has a significant influence in the consumer decision making process as compared to product attributes like quality, brand image and price.

Agarwal and Kamakura (1999) <sup>[1]</sup> stated that, the reality of a product quality depends on the country-of-origin. However, they indicated that the influence of country-of-origin has an

opposite relation with the large amount of information on other variables. Thus the deciding on whether or not to buy is influenced in different ways by the characteristics of the country-of-origin. The effect of country-of-origin is not absolute, but depends on the situation, the individual consumer, the time of buying and the kind of product (Dodds *et al.*, 1991) <sup>[16]</sup>. As indicated by Balabanis *et al.* (2002) <sup>[4]</sup>, the country-of-origin and related effects are accompanied with various emotive and normative attributes which was inferred from concepts like psychology and sociology which is the origin of ethnocentrism and animosity.

**3. Methodology**

The study was descriptive in nature, by presenting the attitude of Ghanaian consumers towards foreign made goods. Primary data was collected by the administration of questionnaire. The respondents were given a scale of 1-Strongly disagree to 7-Strongly agree, to respond to items in Table 2 to Table 5. The population comprised residents of Kumasi metropolis, the second largest city in Ghana. In this study, convenience sampling technique was used for the selection of 480 consumers. The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS v.20. Percentages, mean and standard deviations were used in making meaning from the data gathered. A test of reliability was also conducted using the Cronbach’s alpha analysis. From the analysis, the Cronbach’s alpha for all the dimensions were greater than 0.7, indicating the data was reliable for the purposes of this analysis.

**4. Results and Discussion**

**4.1 Demography of Respondents**

The demographic background of the respondents include gender, age, average monthly income and educational level. The percentages are represented in Table 1. The study comprises 62.9% as males and 37.1% as females. The age group of 18-29 represented 50.6% of the respondents, the age group of 30-39 represented 39.4%, the age group of 40-49 represented 9.0% and the age group of 50-59 also represented 1% of the total respondents.

From the analysis, 0.98% have been receiving an average monthly income which is below GHC100, 9.98% received GHC100-200 as their average monthly income, 20.81% have been receiving GHC300-499, 24.15% of the respondents received GHC500-699 as average monthly income, and 44.07% also received an average monthly income of GHC700 and above.

The distribution on the educational level of respondents indicates that, Higher National Diploma (HND) educational level had the highest number of respondents representing 26.04%, followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree level indicating 25.83% of the respondents. The third educational level group with the 23.12% were 1<sup>st</sup> Degree holders and Senior High School (SHS) educational level represented by 20.83% and with the

least percentage among the total respondents were Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) educational level respondents representing 4.17%. This finding indicates the diversification of the respondents of the study’s educational background and could understand the response of Ghanaian consumers to foreign-made-products.

**Table 1:** Demographic variables

Demographics	Responses	Percentages (%)
Gender	Male	62.9
	Female	37.1
Age	18-29 years	50.6
	30-39 years	39.4
	40-49 years	9.0
	50-59 years	1.0
Average monthly income	Below 100	0.98
	100-200	9.98
	300-499	20.81
	500-699	24.15
	700 or Above	44.07
Education	SHS	20.83
	HND	26.04
	1 <sup>st</sup> Degree	23.12
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Degree	25.68
	PhD	4.17

**4.2 Factors that control purchase decision**

Table 2 represents the item statistics of the variables that measures the factors that control purchase decision. From the table, the highest ranked determinant for purchase decision was product information availability. A mean of 5.01 indicates that the respondents agree to that assertion. This finding affirms the assertion by Rao and Sieben (1992) that the intention of the consumers purchasing will be influence by the knowledge of the product they have. The second most important determinant of purchase decision was familiarity with the product, with a mean score of 4.75 (agree). The country – of – origin effect was the third most important determinant of purchase, with a mean score of 4.63 (agree). The findings on the country-of-origin affirms the assertion of past studies (such as, Opoku and Akorli, 2009; Bandara and Miloslava, 2012; Okpara and Onah, 2013; Stere and Trajani, 2015) <sup>[33, 5, 32, 43]</sup> that the kind of beliefs that consumers have and how they perceive that country turns to affect the assessments or evaluations they make during their purchase. The consumers were indifferent with regards to being adventurous on new products. The mean score of 4.3 indicates an indifferent attitude towards being adventurous. This however contradicts Hawkins *et al.* (1980) <sup>[43]</sup>, who stated that, consumers sometimes curiously search for products which are new to them to compare with what they have been using in order to satisfy their curiosity. The Ghanaian consumers were also indifferent with regards to having so much trust in foreign goods, compared to the local ones.

**Table 2:** Factors that control purchase decision

Criteria	Mean	Std. Deviation
Your decision to buy products is influenced by the information you have about the product.	5.01	2.04
You only buy products that you are familiar with.	4.75	1.99
In buying a particular product, you consider where (that is country of origin) it is coming from.	4.63	2.01
You are the type of person who always want to taste something new.	4.30	1.91
Most of your basic needs can only be addressed by purchasing foreign-made products.	3.79	2.01

\*Cronbach’s alpha .739

**4.3 Perceptions on foreign-made-products**

Table 3 represents the item statistics of the variables that measures the perception on foreign-made-products. With a mean of 5.03, the respondents agreed that the design of foreign products looks better than the locally manufactured products. Also, respondents agreed that foreign products have higher quality compared to locally made products. It was also agreed that, foreign products offer a lot of features; are more innovative; perform better; can easily get spare parts/accessories; and last longer. The findings of this study do affirm to the assertion made by Garvin (1984) [22] that consumers in their decision to purchase a particular product consider the quality of that product. He gave the quality dimensions as Performance, Features, Reliability, Conformance, Durability, Serviceability, Aesthetics and

Perceived Quality. This results were also consistent with other past researchers (such as, Opoku and Akorli, 2009; Okpara and Onah, 2013) [33], who also found quality, packaging, performance as the major determinants in the choice of foreign made products. Consumers were however indifferent on the affordability of foreign made products. This is so because the affordability of product depends on the product category. There are some products categories for which foreign made are more expensive, and there are some product categories for which foreign made are cheaper. For example, imported textiles from China are cheaper than the locally manufactured textile like GTP. In the pharmaceutical industry however, imported ones are more expensive compared to the locally manufactured ones.

**Table 3:** Perceptions on foreign – made – products

Criteria	Mean	Std. Deviation
The design of foreign products looks better.	5.03	1.773
Foreign products have high quality.	4.98	1.803
Foreign products offer a lot of features.	4.94	1.87
Foreign products are more innovative.	4.91	1.856
Foreign products perform better.	4.76	1.881
You can easily get spare parts/accessories for foreign products.	4.67	2.01
Foreign products last longer.	4.6	1.946
Foreign products have relatively lower prices.	3.55	1.99

\*Cronbach’s alpha .841

**4.4 Implications of Purchasing Foreign – Made Products**

From Table 4, consumers agreed that, buying foreign products collapse the local firms. The cost of production in Ghana is very high compared to the cost of doing production in countries such as China. Imported good are therefore able to compete favourably and sometimes outwit the local products in terms of price affordability. This significantly affects the local firms, and a classical example is the ATL that has collapse mainly due to the importation of more affordable textiles from China. This finding was consistent with that of Okpara and Onah (2013) [32], who found that over reliance on imported goods kills the local firms in Nigeria. This was why the government prohibited the importation of shoes, to save the local shoe manufacturers in Nigeria. Overreliance on foreign goods and trade imbalances has undoubtedly been a major cause of the devaluing Ghana Cedi. Importing from other countries also means wealth and employment creation for those counties, at the expense of the importing country. Over reliance on foreign products kills local business initiatives, as many potential entrepreneurs see no motivation in developing product that cannot compete favourably with imported products. The consumers agreed that, buying foreign made products also worsens the country's financial position. Having imports outweigh exports means the importing country must make more payment than receipts, leading to a cyclical effect. Payments of imported goods are made with international currencies like Dollar and Pound Sterling. As the demand for these currencies increase, the value of the local currency reduces, meaning more of the local currency must be exchanged for fewer of the foreign currency. When these goods are finally imported, importers

take into consideration the exchange rate in the pricing of the product. This makes the prices of imported goods naturally go up when exchange rates are high, and vice versa. High prices leads to high inflation in the importing country, and this becomes more severe in periods where the exchange rates keep rising at a fast rate (sometimes on a daily basis). Purchasing more foreign products also makes importing country less self-dependent. As stated earlier, much importation kills business innovation, thereby leading to a cycle of constant importation, as this makes more economic sense in the short run. Over reliant on imported goods means employment generation for the country of import. All the labour that will have been needed to manufacture the goods locally will be made redundant due to importation.

In a bid to protect the local industry, the Government of Ghana launched a 20 million Broiler Project with the aim of reducing importation of poultry by 40% by the end of next year, 2016 and save this economy about US\$150 million. There has been a statistics which indicates a fall of 30% in the importation of poultry from \$208.7 million to \$149 million. This is helping local poultry farmers to increase their produce in the local market (State of the nation address of Ghana, 2015). Again, the GH¢51 million support to some of the local pharmaceutical companies to expand their operations, retool their factories and obtain critical certification to enable them meet international export standards. The government has established partnership with some local pharmaceutical companies like Dannex and DanAdams to help create employment for Ghanaian youth (State of the nation address of Ghana, 2015).

**Table 4:** Implications of purchasing foreign – made products

Criteria	Mean	Std. Deviation
Buying foreign products collapses local businesses.	5.59	1.956
Relying more on foreign products has been a cause of the decreasing value of the cedi.	5.55	1.709
Buying more foreign products makes other countries richer.	5.5	1.853
Buying foreign products kills local business initiatives.	5.24	1.739
Buying foreign products worsens the country's financial strengths.	5.09	1.877
Buying foreign products makes the country less independent.	5.07	1.841
Relying more on foreign products has been a cause of the increasing inflation rate in the country.	5.03	1.801
Buying foreign products is a source of unemployment in this country.	5.00	1.845

\*Cronbach’s alpha .883

**4.5 Consumer Ethnocentrism Tendencies Scale**

Table 5 presented the results of the Consumer Ethnocentrism Tendencies Scale (CETSCALE) in Ghana. The results indicates that, consumers agreed that there should be control measures on all imports (mean score of 5.61). Consumers also agreed that made in Ghana products must be purchased to keep the nation thriving. No matter the cost, consumers agreed to support made in Ghana goods. It was agreed that foreign products should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into the country. This will also help to protect the local companies, as was done in Nigeria (by banning the importation of foreign shoes). The consumers suggested purchasing only foreign made products which cannot obtain within the country (mean score was 5.21). Unless out of necessity, very little trading or purchases must be encouraged from other countries. Consumers agreed on purchasing products manufactured in Ghana instead of letting other countries get rich out of us (mean score = 5.07). It was agreed that, Ghanaian people should always buy made-in-Ghana products instead of imports and it is always best to purchase Ghanaian products. It was further agreed that, Ghanaians should not buy foreign products because this hurts business and causes unemployment; Ghanaian products must be considered first and foremost; Ghanaian consumers who purchase products made in other countries are responsible for putting their fellow Ghanaians out of work; it was not right to purchase foreign products, because it puts Ghanaians out of job; and a real Ghanaian should always buy made-in-Ghana products. Consumers were however indifferent that, purchasing foreign products

is considered unpatriotic; and foreigners should not be allowed to put their products in our market.

During the era of the Ex-President J. A. Kuffour, he introduced the concept of “Friday Wear”. This policy was meant for all Ghanaians to put on locally manufactured dress with a local textile on Fridays irrespective of the occasion. This was highly welcomed, and has become part of the Ghanaian culture. Corporate institutions now have their own fabrics with their names and logos printed on it, and mostly won on Fridays. As cited by Bamfo in 2012 [12], the government of Ghana has proposed five concepts of national orientation of which the first pillar among the five pillars of this orientation is ‘Proud to be Ghanaian’. This orientation places emphasis on how important it is to for Ghanaians to be proud of their national heritage and in Ghanaian products and so purchase products which are made – in – Ghana (www.ghana.gov.gh).

The findings are in line with results of past scholars (such as, Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Sharma *et al.*, 1995; Vida and Reardon, 2008) [41, 40, 46] who indicated that, consumers who are ethnocentric tend to place high value on and support domestic products, and place low value on and avoid purchasing foreign products because they belief that by purchasing imported products would lead to the collapse of the domestic industries and increase unemployment which could hurt the domestic economy. Respondents were however indifferent to the assertion made by Schooler (1965) [39], who stated that consumers become unpatriotic if they purchase foreign-products.

**Table 5:** Consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale

Criteria	Mean	Std. Deviation
There should be control measures on all imports	5.61	1.537
Buy made-in-Ghana products. Keep Ghana working	5.5	1.801
It may cost me, but I prefer to support Ghanaian products	5.35	1.760
Foreign products should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into Ghana	5.27	1.814
We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country	5.21	1.805
We should purchase products manufactured in Ghana instead of letting other countries get rich out of us	5.07	1.671
There should be very little trading or purchasing of products from other countries unless out of necessity	4.94	1.836
Ghanaian people should always buy made-in-Ghana products instead of imports	4.85	2.267
It is always best to purchase Ghanaian products	4.65	1.971
Ghanaians should not buy foreign products because this hurts business and causes unemployment	4.47	2.012
Ghanaian products first, last and foremost	4.44	1.929
Ghanaian consumers who purchase products made in other countries are responsible for putting their fellow Ghanaians out of work	4.38	2.206
It is not right to purchase foreign products, because it puts Ghanaians out of job	4.28	2.005
A real Ghanaian should always buy made-in-Ghana products	4.23	2.032
Purchasing foreign products is un-Ghanaian (Unpatriotic)	3.87	2.008
Foreigners should not be allowed to put their products in our market	3.82	2.167

\*Cronbach’s alpha .896

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

The study revealed that Ghanaian consumers had some level of ethnocentrism when it comes to the patronage of foreign made products. However, quality, packaging and price are the major reasons they sometimes opt for foreign products. Consumers acknowledged that, buying foreign products hurts the local business, decreases value of the Cedi and make other countries richer.

It was recommended that, there should be an economic research body that can encourage and give advice to local entrepreneurs on their produce especially the quality of the content and their packaging in order to attract Ghanaians to purchase the locally-made-products. The government of Ghana should provide subsidies to local manufacturers, which will help to reduce their operating cost thereby charging relatively low prices on their produce to attract more patronage.

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