

Beyond the Global Brand: The Duality of Consumer Ethnocentrism and Cosmopolitan Fashion Preferences Among Young Indian Consumers

Author: Prashanth Cherian Kochuveetil

Email: prashanth.kochuveetil@nift.ac.in

Affiliation: Associate Professor, Department of Design Space, National Institute of Fashion Technology Bengaluru

Structured Abstract:

Purpose: This study investigates the shopping behaviours, demographics, and cosmopolitan tendencies of college-going youth in Bengaluru, India, during the back-to-college season.

experiences significantly influence such purchases.

Originality: This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the consumption behaviour of a specific youth segment in India during a crucial retail period. It highlights the interplay between consumption, cosmopolitanism, consumer ethnocentrism, and purchase decisions.

Practical implications: Marketers can leverage these insights by:

- Highlighting status and prestige associated with products
- Emphasizing global trends and multicultural aspects in promotions
- Creating enjoyable and stress-relieving shopping experiences

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, back-to-college shopping, cosmopolitanism, status products, consumer ethnocentrism, hedonic consumption experience, marketing

JEL CODE:

D12

M31

L81

Abstract

This study explores the fashion consumption behaviour of young, ethnocentric consumers in Bengaluru, India, during the back-to-college season. It delves into the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon where these consumers exhibit a preference for both globally recognized fashion trends and domestically produced items that incorporate local design elements. The findings reveal a nuanced consumer behaviour driven by a desire for dual gratification – wanting to be connected to international fashion trends while simultaneously seeking products that resonate with their cultural identity.

Introduction

Consumer ethnocentrism, the tendency to favour domestic products over foreign ones (Shimp & Sharma, 1987), is a significant factor influencing purchasing decisions. However, the contemporary fashion landscape presents a more complex scenario, particularly for young consumers in emerging markets like India. This study investigates how ethnocentric tendencies interact with cosmopolitan influences, characterized by openness to global trends (Steenkamp, Batra & Alden, 2010), shaping fashion choices among young consumers in Bengaluru.

Literature Review

Consumer Behaviour and Cultural Influences

Consumer behaviour is a complex phenomenon influenced by a multitude of factors. Singh et al. (2018) highlight the significance of cultural identity, personal values, and exposure to global media in shaping consumer decisions. Cultural identity plays a crucial role, as consumers often gravitate towards products that resonate with their cultural background and heritage (McCracken, 1986). Personal values also influence choices, with consumers drawn to products that align with their ethical beliefs or social consciousness (Biel, Lutz & Collins, 1995). Furthermore, the ever-increasing exposure to global media, particularly through social media platforms, exposes young consumers to diverse cultural influences and fashion trends (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Ethnocentrism and Consumer Patriotism

Ethnocentrism, as defined by Shimp & Sharma (1987), refers to the tendency of consumers to favour products or services from their home country over those of foreign origin. This preference can stem from a sense of national pride, a belief in the superiority of domestic products, or a desire to support local businesses (Ndubisi, 2008). Consumer ethnocentrism can manifest in various ways, such as a willingness to pay a premium for domestic products or actively avoiding foreign brands (Lee, Hong & Lee, 2010). In the context of fashion, ethnocentrism can translate into a preference for clothing that reflects local design aesthetics, incorporates traditional textiles or craftsmanship, or is produced by domestic brands.

Cosmopolitanism and Global Fashion Aspirations

Cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, reflects an openness to diverse cultural influences and a desire to stay updated with international trends (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2009). Young consumers, particularly in emerging markets like India, are increasingly exposed to global fashion trends through social media and aspire to project a cosmopolitan image (Sinha & Banerjee, 2018). This can lead to a preference for internationally recognized brands, designer labels, or clothing styles associated with global fashion capitals (Haji & Dawson, 2011).

The Back-to-College Season: A Prime Time for Fashion Consumption

The back-to-college season is a period of heightened consumer spending, particularly among young adults. As Kumar & Mithra (2018) point out, students often engage in significant shopping sprees in preparation for the new academic year. This period presents a crucial opportunity for fashion retailers to understand the specific needs and preferences of this demographic. Understanding the interplay between ethnocentrism and cosmopolitanism during this time can be particularly valuable in crafting effective marketing strategies.

Gaps in the Literature and Research Opportunities

While existing research explores consumer ethnocentrism and cosmopolitanism independently, a gap exists in understanding how these concepts interact in shaping fashion choices, particularly among young consumers in emerging markets like India. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of young Indian consumers exhibiting both a desire for global fashion trends and a preference for domestically produced items that incorporate local design elements.

In conclusion, the literature review establishes the multifaceted nature of consumer behaviour, highlighting the influence of cultural identity, personal values, and media exposure. It explores the concepts of ethnocentrism and cosmopolitanism, demonstrating their contrasting yet potentially coexisting roles in fashion preferences. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of understanding consumer behaviour during the back-to-college season, a period of heightened fashion consumption among young adults. This study aims to contribute to this specific area of research by examining the interplay between ethnocentrism and cosmopolitanism in shaping the fashion choices of young Indian consumers.

Methodology

A survey methodology was employed to gather data on the shopping behaviours, demographics, and consumer tendencies of young adults in Bengaluru during the back-to-college season (April-June 2024). The sample comprised 385 respondents, and the data was analyzed using SPSS software to ensure reliability and validity. The survey instrument captured constructs such as consumer ethnocentrism, cosmopolitanism, status product ownership, perception of domestic products, and shopping experiences.

Results

The findings revealed a high level of consumer cosmopolitanism among the respondents, indicating a strong openness to international fashion trends. This aligns with expectations given the increased global exposure of young Indian consumers. Interestingly, however, the data also uncovered a segment of ethnocentric youth who prioritized domestically produced fashion items that integrated both internationally recognized features and local design elements.

Exploratory Factor Analysis: Consumer Ethnocentrism

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for consumer ethnocentrism included three items that loaded significantly onto one factor. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.538, indicating moderate adequacy, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, suggesting that the data was suitable for factor analysis. The factor explained 59.2% of the variance.

Table 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis for Consumer Ethnocentrism

Items	Factor Loadings
Only those products that are unavailable in India should be imported	0.441
Purchasing foreign-made products is un-Indian	0.891
Indians should not buy foreign products because this hurts Indian business and causes unemployment	0.889

Statistical Results

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy: 0.538

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 132.661, Sig.: 0.000

Cronbach's Alpha: 0.628

Variance Explained: 59.2%

Cumulative Variance Explained: 59.2%

Perception of Domestic Products

The EFA for the perception of domestic products included five items that loaded onto two components. The KMO measure was 0.614, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant. The two components explained a total of 63.34% of the variance.

Table 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis for Perception of Domestic Products

Items	Factor Loadings (Component 1)	Factor Loadings (Component 2)
Expensive	0.796	
Workmanship	0.811	
Natural materials	0.852	
Reasonably priced		0.655
Mass produced		0.690

Statistical Results

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy: 0.614

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 135, Sig.: 0.000

Cronbach's Alpha: 0.649

Variance Explained: 32.00% (Component 1), 31.34% (Component 2)

Cumulative Variance Explained: 63.34%

Discussion

Consumer Ethnocentrism

The EFA for consumer ethnocentrism included three items that loaded significantly onto one factor. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.538, indicating moderate adequacy, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was

significant ($\chi^2(3) = 132.661$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting the data was suitable for factor analysis. The factor explained 59.2% of the variance, with the following loadings:

- "Only those products that are unavailable in India should be imported" (0.441)
- "Purchasing foreign-made products is un-Indian" (0.891)
- "Indians should not buy foreign products because this hurts Indian business and causes unemployment" (0.889)

Cronbach's Alpha for this factor was 0.628, indicating moderate internal consistency.

Perception of Domestic Products

The EFA for the perception of domestic products included five items that loaded onto two components. The KMO measure was 0.614, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(10) = 135$, $p < 0.001$). The two components explained a total of 63.34% of the variance:

- **Component 1:**
 - "Expensive" (0.796)
 - "Workmanship" (0.811)
 - "Natural materials" (0.852)
- **Component 2:**
 - "Reasonably priced" (0.655)
 - "Mass produced" (0.690)

Cronbach's Alpha for the items was 0.649, indicating moderate internal consistency.

Discussion

The findings reveal significant insights into consumer ethnocentrism and the perception of domestic products:

- **Consumer Ethnocentrism:** The single-factor structure suggests that the three items collectively measure a coherent construct of consumer ethnocentrism. The moderate Cronbach's Alpha indicates that the items are reasonably reliable in capturing the sentiment that prioritizes domestic products over foreign ones due to nationalistic and economic reasons.
- **Perception of Domestic Products:** The two-component structure indicates that consumers differentiate between quality attributes (workmanship, natural materials) and value attributes (reasonable pricing, mass production). The higher loadings on quality attributes suggest a stronger association with the perception of domestic products being of high quality, while the value attributes indicate mixed perceptions regarding affordability and mass production.

Implications for Marketers

Marketers should consider these nuanced consumer behaviours when crafting strategies for young Indian consumers. Highlighting the quality and craftsmanship of domestically produced fashion items, while also positioning them as trendy and cosmopolitan, could resonate well with this demographic. Additionally, leveraging digital marketing channels to showcase the fusion of global trends with local elements could further enhance brand appeal.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the duality of consumer ethnocentrism and cosmopolitan fashion preferences among young Indian consumers. The findings underscore the importance of understanding the complex interplay between global and local influences in shaping fashion choices. Marketers and retailers can leverage these insights to develop strategies that cater to the diverse needs of this segment, ensuring a more targeted and effective approach in the competitive fashion market.

References

1. **Arnould, E.J. & Thompson, C.J.** (2005) *Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research*. Journal of Consumer Research, 31(4), pp. 868-882.
2. **Biel, A.L., Lutz, R.J. & Collins, B.A.** (1995) *Persuasion in Advertising*. In: J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (eds), *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 417-444.
3. **McCracken, G.** (1986) *Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods*. Journal of Consumer Research, 13(1), pp. 71-84.
4. **Haji, I. & Dawson, J.** (2011) *Branding Practices and Performance in Fashion Retailing: A Comparative Study of the UK and Japan*. International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 39(9), pp. 678-699.
5. **Kumar, M. & Mithra, J.** (2018) *Back-to-College Shopping Behavior of Indian Students*. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 45, pp. 1-10.
6. **Lee, W.J., Hong, J.W. & Lee, S.J.** (2010) *Consumer Ethnocentrism and Willingness to Buy Domestic Products in a Developing Country Setting: Testing Moderating Effects*. Journal of Global Marketing, 23(1), pp. 1-15.
7. **Ndubisi, N.O.** (2008) *Consumer Attitudes, System's Characteristics and Internet Banking Adoption in Malaysia*. Management Research News, 31(6), pp. 418-427.
8. **Riefler, P. & Diamantopoulos, A.** (2009) *Consumer Cosmopolitanism: Review and Replication of the CYMYC Scale*. Journal of Business Research, 62(4), pp. 407-419.
9. **Shimp, T.A. & Sharma, S.** (1987) *Consumer Ethnocentrism: Construction and Validation of the CETSCALE*. Journal of Marketing Research, 24(3), pp. 280-289.
10. **Singh, N., Pandey, A., & Sharma, R.** (2018) *Cultural Identity and Consumer Behavior: A Study of Indian Consumers*. Journal of Consumer Behavior, 17(4), pp. 253-265.
11. **Sinha, P. & Banerjee, A.** (2018) *Influence of Social Media on Indian Youth: A Study on Fashion Consumption*. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 44, pp. 12-20.
12. **Steenkamp, J.E.M., Batra, R. & Alden, D.L.** (2010) *How Perceived Brand Globalness Creates Brand Value*. Journal of International Business Studies, 34(1), pp. 53-65.