



Investigation of Ethnocentrism Effect on Turkish Textile Image and Consumer Purchase Intention: Isfahan and Tabriz Cities as a Case Study

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Abstract

Cultural factors such as ethnocentrism and cultural stereotypes also play a prominent role in consumers' perceptions of brands. This paper examines the impact of ethnocentrism on the image of Turkish textiles and the purchase intention of these goods among Isfahan and Tabriz citizens. The population of this research is residents of Isfahan and Tabriz cities. This study's hypotheses are examined using structural equation modelling through PLS software. The results showed that ethnocentrism has a significant relationship with the product image, but these results were inconsistent in Isfahan and Tabriz cities. On the other hand, the relationship between ethnocentrism and the cognitive image was confirmed. However, the result was not approved for the affective image in both cities either.

Keywords: Ethnocentrism, Cognitive Image, Affective Image, Product Image, Purchase Intention



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I. Introduction

The growth of global competition has made companies explore approaches to gain a competitive advantage. One of which is to identify proper target markets. Selecting the right target markets can create opportunities, and the wrong choice is costly and disadvantageous. Identifying target markets while a company tries to export goods and services to other countries is an important decision. Because selling goods overseas to potential customers is different from what the company does in their local markets concerning paying necessary attention to the needs of the potential customers. Consumers' needs are usually shaped by their culture and lifestyle. Those companies that are incapable of detecting global opportunities cannot succeed in global markets as well as domestic ones.

On the other hand, consumers have different cultures, values, and tendencies. To succeed, a company should consider cultural and ethnic differences, which are some of the necessities for entering foreign markets (Svensson, 2002). People of every country, region, or group have unique lifestyles which affect their purchase preferences among a diverse range of products and services (Gonzalez & Bello, 2003). Awareness of consumer lifestyle leads to the development of new marketing ideas. Lifestyle refers to behavioral and individual characteristics with cultural and social roots, such as age, gender, ethnicity, social group, and religion. Ethnicity is also considered as one of the aspects of lifestyle (Mensah, Bahhouth & Ziemnowicz, 2011). Ethnocentrism is often expressed in social groups as an attempt to express identity, loyalty, and group survival (Brkic, Corbo & Berberovic, 2011). Ethnic behaviors within the group boundaries are defined by one or more visible attributes such as language, accent, religion, and physical characteristics (Hammond & Axelord, 2006). International marketing researchers have long been concerned with determining whether consumers are inclined towards a preference for domestic products instead of imported products. Empirical studies have consistently confirmed the existence of "domestic-country bias," manifested in stronger product preferences and intentions to buy homemade products (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999).

Unlike other studies, this study seeks to answer whether historical ties, geographical proximity, and ethnic origins lead to a different response for imported products. In other words, in a multi-ethnic country such as Iran, which side, whether ethnic roots or political boundaries play a dominant role in choosing products? To find this answer, the two cities of Isfahan and Tabriz were examined, and the reaction of the people of these two cities to Turkey's textiles and clothes was studied. The main point of this choice was the geographical, ethnic, and linguistic closeness of Tabriz citizens to the Turkish people, which lacked these potentials in Isfahan.

II. Theory and Hypothesis

The conceptual foundations of the proposed model and the related hypotheses (Figure 1) are borrowed from three research streams: Consumer ethnocentrism (De Nisco, Mainolfi & Marino, 2016; He & Wang, 2014; Sharma, 2014; Zolfagharian, Saldivar & Sun, 2014; Evanschitzky et al., 2008; Hamin & Elliot, 2006; Javalgi, Khare & Scherer, 2005; Moon & Jain, 2002) product image (Papadopoulos, Elliot & De Nisco, 2013; Wang et al., 2012; Zolfagharian & sun, 2010; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Martin & Eroglu, 1993) and country image (De Nisco et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2012; Maher & Carter, 2011; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009; Laroche et al., 2003).

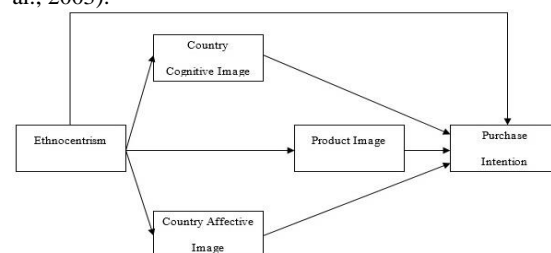


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Research

Source: Authors' own compilation

According to the conceptual model, the study encompasses five constructs: 1) Ethnocentrism, 2) Cognitive Image, 3) Affective Image, 4) Product Image 5) Purchase Intention. The following section discusses the constructs, hypotheses, and related backgrounds.

Ethnocentrism

Globalization does not ignore ethnicity and regional cultures, but has strengthened the emergence of frameworks for non-national collective identities, most notably ethnic identities. The global community has entered the third millennium, while ethnic, racial, and linguistic identities have become increasingly important. Therefore, it is safe to say that almost all world nations face ethnic movements (Ahmadi, 2005). Evidence suggests that ethnic diversity is a global reality. According to some scholars, Iran has a multi-ethnic society, and about fifty percent of its population is non-Persian citizens (Maghsoudi, 2001). This means that half of the people have different languages, cultures, and ethnicities, which are valuable assets for them. Ethnocentric people strongly

support their traditions, symbols, and products related to their culture (Kwak, 2008). Sumner introduced the first official definition of ethnicity in 1906. From his point of view, ethnocentrism is a belief that people of a specific group put themselves at the center of everything. Also, everything is measured and calculated compared to their group (Sumner, 1906). This definition was revised to represent people's belief that their cultures and values were superior to others outside the group (Hooghe, 2008; Bennett, 1993). Each group is proud of itself, boasts its superiority, and belittles people from outside (Nguyen, Nguyen & Barrett, 2008).

Overall, higher ethnocentric people are more likely to have unpleasant cross-cultural interactions because their ethnocentric perception prevents them from comprehending alternative cultural experiences (Moss & Marx, 2011). Consumer ethnocentrism was first introduced as "Beliefs held by American consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products" (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Highly ethnocentric consumers are unwilling to buy products and services produced in other countries (Jin et al., 2014). Ethnocentric individuals tend to accept things culturally similar and reject things culturally unfamiliar (Liu et al., 2006). On the other hand, some researches show that consumers in developing countries have various degrees of attachment toward domestic products (Batra et al., 2000; Schooler & Wildt, 1968).

In contrast to other studies (Jimenez & Martin, 2010; Moon & Jain, 2002), this study seeks to evaluate consumer ethnocentrism among different ethnic groups in Iran toward a specific country and product. This study has the following hypotheses:

H1t: Tabriz citizens' ethnocentrism affects their image of Turkish textiles.

H1i: Isfahan citizens' ethnocentrism affects their image of Turkish textiles.

H2t: Tabriz citizens' ethnocentrism influences their intention to purchase Turkish textiles.

H2i: Isfahan citizens' ethnocentrism influences their intention to purchase Turkish textiles.

H3t: Tabriz citizens' ethnocentrism affects their cognitive image of Turkey.

H3i: Isfahan citizens' ethnocentrism affects their cognitive image of Turkey.

H4t: Tabriz citizens' ethnocentrism affects their affective image of Turkey.

H4i: Isfahan citizens' ethnocentrism affects their affective image of Turkey.

Country Image (Cognitive and Affective) & Product Image

The marketing literature often evaluates the country image as a multi-dimensional (cognitive and affective) structure (Heslop et al., 2004; Papadopoulos, 2000). Differentiation between cognitive and affective country image is essential because people concurrently may hold inconsistent cognitive and affective evaluations of a specific country (Wang et al., 2012). Recent findings (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998) has shown this inconsistency between cognitive and affective country image. This research subscribes to the view that a country image is composed of two components (affection and cognition) independent of each other (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009). However, country image studies typically have only evaluated the cognitive aspects of

products (Pappu, Quester & Cooksey, 2007; Kaynak & Cavusgil, 1983). Recent studies have shown that the affective image, besides the cognitive dimension, has a practical side, which includes consumer sentiment towards a specific country. Researchers believe that considering cognitive and affective country image in studies will lead to a better understanding of consumer perceptions about the country's image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Nevertheless, the affective image in marketing literature needs to be discussed. The cognitive country image refers to the customer's perception of the level of economic development, the standard of living, and improvement in the field of industry and technology of a particular country. Also, affective image involves the consumer's assessment of the level of social and political liberties in a particular country and the positive and negative feelings toward a particular country (Wang et al., 2012).

On the other hand, the country image is separate from the product image (Pappu et al., 2007). Product image refers to consumers' image of products from a specific country (Parameswaran & Pisharodi, 1994; Roth & Romeo, 1992). Subsequently, country image implies an attitude toward a specific country and its citizens. However, the product image is an attitude toward that country's products. Studies about the country of origin usually measure the amount of product image by considering factors such as labor, innovation, and technology that affect the quality of the product (Elliot & Cameron, 1994; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993; Johansson, Douglas & Nonaka, 1985). Also, studies confirmed that the product image affects consumers' perceived product quality (Ittersum, Candel & Meulenberg 2003). Researchers have concluded that the image of a producer country generally affects the person's assessment of a product, a particular class of product, and a brand name (Liefeld, 1993). The country image and product image may affect each other and may have different effects on product assessment and consumer purchase intentions (Samiee, 2010). The product image refers to the general beliefs of consumers about a particular country's specific products (Nagashima, 1977). For instance, those products made in Japan are considered durable products, and those produced in Germany are considered products with precision labor. These informational structures can be stored in consumers' memory and are known as objective knowledge. Subjective knowledge also refers to consumers' knowledge about a specific product (Lee & Lee, 2009). Generally, these associations about a particular country are triggered when the consumer becomes aware of the country of origin of a specific product (Hamzaoui & Merunka, 2006).

The present study holds that the country image consists of two components (affect and cognition) independent of each other (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009). Also, there is a relationship between these variables and product image as well as purchase intention. Thus, this study also includes the hypotheses below:

H5t: The cognitive image of Tabriz citizens about Turkey has an impact on their Turkish textile image.

H5i: The cognitive image of Isfahan citizens about Turkey has an impact on their Turkish textile image.

H6t: The affective image of Tabriz citizens about Turkey has an impact on their Turkish textile image.

H6i: The affective image of Isfahan citizens about Turkey has an impact on their Turkish textile image.

H7t: Tabriz citizens' image of Turkish textile affects their purchase intention.

H7i: Isfahan citizens' image of Turkish textile affects their purchase intention.

III. Methodology

Sampling and Data Collection

Data were collected in two major cities from various geographic regions with different ethnic and native languages in Iran. Isfahan (located in the center of Iran, where the native language is Persian or Farsi) and Tabriz (situated in the North West where the native language is Azeri). The samples were taken among the citizens of these two cities in shopping malls. One major mall was selected from each of these two cities in Iran. Customers were randomly approached and asked to participate in the study. In total, 680 questionnaires were distributed, 340 questionnaires for each city. However, 19 questionnaires in Tabriz and 26 questionnaires in Isfahan were ignored from the analysis mainly because they were incomplete. In the end, 635 questionnaires were used in the final analysis. A profile of the sample of respondents is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample Profile

	Isfahan	Tabriz
Gender		
Female	167 (56.1%)	167 (52%)
Male	138 (43.9)	154 (48%)
Age		
18-29	168 (53.5%)	166 (51.7%)
30-39	68 (21.7%)	65 (20.2%)
40-49	43 (13.7%)	52 (16.2%)
50-59	24 (7.6%)	30 (9.3%)
+60	11 (3.5%)	8 (2.5%)
Education		
Master or higher	21 (6.7%)	32 (10%)
Bachelor	79 (25.2%)	93 (29%)
College	35 (11.1%)	60 (18.7%)
Diploma	140 (44.6%)	100 (31.2%)
High school degree or less	39 (12.4%)	36 (11.2%)
Total	314 (100%)	321 (100%)

Source: PLS Software Output

The native languages of these two cities are completely different. Tabriz citizens speak Azeri, which is very similar to the language of Turkey, while Isfahan citizens speak Farsi, which does not have any similarity to Turkish. Also, the significant history between Tabriz and Turkey as well as the geographic distance between these two cities (275 km) provide considerable opportunity for citizens of Tabriz and Turkey to have an enormous amount of economic and cultural exchanges, which Isfahan citizens are deprived of.

Measure

The questionnaire was developed by adapting measurements from various studies. Measures of ethnocentrism (Klein, Ettenson & Morris, 1998) are six items. The cognitive image (Parameswaran & Pisharodi, 1994) and affective image (Wang et al., 2012) constructs each consist of four items. The measures for product image construction consist of five items (Wang et al., 2012). The measures for purchase intention construct consist of three. The items for each construct and their scale of measurements are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of Measurement Model for the cities of Isfahan and Tabriz

Model Construct	Measurment ent item	Tabriz				Isfahan			
		Loading	C.R.	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Loading	C.R.	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Ethnocentrism	Ethno1	0.766				0.504			
	Ethno2	0.783				0.867			
	Ethno3	0.841	0.892	0.543	0.82	0.492	0.751	0.444	0.75
	Ethno4	0.730				*			
	Ethno5	0.687				0.729			
	Ethno6	0.680				*			
Cogn1	0.741	0.748							
Cogn2	0.793	0.817							
Country Image(cognitive)	Cogn3	0.806	0.858	0.603	0.78	0.769	0.838	0.565	0.74
	Cogn4	0.764				0.666			
	Affe1	0.747				0.727			
	Affe2	0.518				0.788			
Country Image(affective)	Affe3	0.308	0.761	0.457	0.75	0.813	0.845	0.577	0.76
	Affe4	0.861				0.708			
	PI1	0.848				0.810			
	PI2	0.821				0.827			
Product Image	PI3	0.653	0.880	0.598	0.83	0.653	0.859	0.554	0.80
	PI4	0.797				0.808			
	PI5	0.730				0.793			
	Pur1	0.761				0.776			
	Pur2	0.916				0.872			
Pur3	0.819				0.893				

* deleted because of low loading C.R. composite reliability AVE: average variance extracted

Source: PLS Software Output

IV. Results

A two-step approach was used in this study (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In the first step, we assessed the convergent validity and reliability (Table 2). In the second step, the discriminant validity was calculated (Table 2). Convergent validity can be approved if the loadings are more significant than 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1991), the AVE is more significant than 0.5 (Fornell & Lacker, 1981), and C.R. is more significant than 0.7 (Gefen, Straub & Boudreau, 2000).

Also, discriminant validity was tested (Table 3 and Table 4). The average variance shared between each construct and its measures should be more significant than the variance shared between the construct and other constructs (Fornell & Lacker, 1981). The correlations for each construct are less than the square root of the average variance extracted by the indicators measuring that construct, indicating adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity of Constructs in Tabriz

	1	2	3	4	5
Ethnocentrism	0.73				
Cognitive image	-0.16	0.77			
Affective image	-0.07	0.51	0.68		
Product image	-0.26	0.56	0.44	0.77	
Purchase intention	-0.23	0.46	0.46	0.71	0.84

Source: PLS Software Output

Table 4: Discriminant validity of Constructs in Isfahan

	1	2	3	4	5
Ethnocentrism	0.67				
Cognitive image	-0.23	0.75			
Affective image	-0.08	0.45	0.76		
Product image	-0.15	0.55	0.41	0.74	
Purchase intention	-0.03	0.49	0.47	0.55	0.85

Source: PLS Software Output

In the next step, the structural model was tested. The results are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Hypotheses Tests

Test results of hypotheses in Tabriz city				
Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	t-value	Supported
H _{1i}	Ethno → Product image	0.18	3.87	Yes
H _{1s}	Ethno → Purchase intention	-0.04	1.07	No
H _{1c}	Ethno → Cognitive image	0.16	2.65	Yes
H _{1a}	Ethno → Affective image	-0.07	0.87	No
H _{1v}	Cognitive image → Product image	0.43	7.64	Yes
H _{1v}	Affective image → Product image	0.21	3.51	Yes
H _{1v}	Product image → Purchase intention	0.70	18.80	Yes
Test results of hypotheses in Isfahan city				
H _{1i}	Ethno → Product image	-0.02	0.42	No
H _{1s}	Ethno → Purchase intention	0.05	0.81	No
H _{1c}	Ethno → Cognitive image	-0.23	3.80	Yes
H _{1a}	Ethno → Affective image	-0.08	1.21	No
H _{1v}	Cognitive image → Product image	0.45	9.23	Yes
H _{1v}	Affective image → Product image	0.20	3.90	Yes
H _{1v}	Product image → Purchase intention	0.55	10.16	Yes

Source: PLS Software Output

H1t: Tabriz citizens' ethnocentrism affects their image of Turkish textiles.

The value of the beta coefficient for this hypothesis is 0.18, which means that 18% of the changes in the image of Turkish textiles are related to the ethnocentrism of Tabriz citizens. Since the calculated value of t for this hypothesis is 3.87, it can be inferred that there is a positive and significant relationship between the ethnocentrism of the Tabriz citizens and the image of Turkish textiles.

H1i: Isfahan citizens' ethnocentrism affects their image of Turkish textiles.

In the case of first hypothesis, since the calculated t value of this hypothesis is 0.41 and lower than 1.96, it can be argued that people's ethnocentrism in Isfahan does not affect their image of Turkish textiles. Previous research has shown that ethnocentrism can be developed so people have a positive image of products from similar countries in which some bonds can be generated (Watson & Wright, 2000). This point is in line with Tabriz's hypothesis about the image that people have of Turkish textiles.

H2t: Tabriz citizens' ethnocentrism influences their intention to purchase Turkish textiles.

In the case of second hypothesis, since the calculated value of this hypothesis is 1.07 and lower than 1.96, it can be said that people's ethnocentrism in Tabriz does not affect their intention to purchase Turkish textiles. *H2i:* Isfahan citizens' ethnocentrism influences their intention to purchase Turkish textiles.

Concerning this hypothesis, since the calculated value of t for this hypothesis is 0.81 and less than 1.96, it can be said that people's ethnocentrism in Isfahan does not affect their intention to purchase Turkish textiles.

H3t: Tabriz citizens' ethnocentrism affects their cognitive image of Turkey.

The value of the beta coefficient for the third hypothesis is 0.16, which means that 16% of Turkey's cognitive image changes are related to Tabriz citizens' ethnocentrism. Since the calculated t value of this hypothesis is more significant than 1.96, it can be calculated that there is a positive and significant relationship between the Tabriz citizens' ethnocentrism and the cognitive image of Turkey.

H3i: Isfahan citizens' ethnocentrism affects their cognitive image of Turkey.

The value of the beta coefficient for this hypothesis is -0.23, which means that 23% of the cognitive image changes are related to the ethnocentrism of the Isfahan citizens'. Since the calculated value of t for this hypothesis is 3.80, it can be said that there is a negative and significant relationship between the Isfahan citizens' ethnocentrism and the cognitive image of Turkey.

The results of this hypothesis are consistent with recent studies (Bandyopadhyay, 2012). As it turned out in this study, ethnocentrism has a negative relationship with the image of other countries. Our study also confirms the results of this study.

H4t: Tabriz citizens' ethnocentrism affects their affective image of Turkey.

H4i: Isfahan citizens' ethnocentrism affects their affective image of Turkey.

These two hypotheses were rejected according to the results (Table 5). It can be said that Tabriz and Isfahan citizens' ethnocentrism does not affect the affective image of Turkey.

H5t: The cognitive image of Tabriz citizens from Turkey has an impact on their Turkish textile image.

The value of the beta coefficient for the fifth hypothesis is 0.43, which means that 43% of the changes in Turkish textile image are related to the cognitive image of Isfahan citizens from Turkey. Since the calculated t value of this hypothesis is 7.64 and higher than 1.96, it can be calculated that there is a positive and significant relationship between the cognitive image of Tabriz citizens from Turkey and the Turkish textile image.

H5i: The cognitive image of Isfahan citizens from Turkey impacts their Turkish textile image.

The value of beta coefficient for this hypothesis is 0.45, meaning that 45% of changes in Turkish textile image is related to cognitive image of Isfahan citizens on Turkey. Since the calculated t value of this hypothesis is 9.23, it can be said that there is a positive and significant relationship between cognitive image of Isfahan citizens from Turkey and the Turkish textile image.

The results of this hypothesis are consistent with the findings of another study (Wang et al., 2012). They stated that a cognitive image of the country has a positive relationship with a product image.

H6t: The affective image of Tabriz citizens from Turkey has an impact on their Turkish textile image.

H6i: The affective image of Isfahan citizens from Turkey has an impact on their Turkish textile image.

These two hypotheses were also approved and accepted according to the results of the beta coefficient and t (Table 5). The results of these hypotheses are consistent with the findings of Wang et al. (2012) and Albarracín & Kumkale (2003).

H7t: Tabriz citizens' image of Turkish textiles affects their purchase intention.

H7i: Isfahan citizens' image of Turkish textiles affects their purchase intention.

Also, these two hypotheses were accepted (Table 5). The results of these two hypotheses are consistent with the findings of Ghazali et al. (2008) and Lin & Chen (2006).

V. Discussion and Managerial Implications

The primary purpose of this paper was to empirically analyze the ethnocentrism among citizens of two culturally different cities in Iran and their reaction to foreign products. The evidence collected for this study

shows that the cultural similarity between Tabriz and Turkey plays a prominent role in the reaction of the Tabriz people toward Turkish products. Also, they are more eager about Turkey's culture and products (cognitive and product image) than Isfahan citizens. Also, their approach towards that culture is much friendlier than Isfahan citizens (H1t, H3t, H1i, and H3i). These hypotheses show that the reaction of Tabriz citizens to Turkey and its textile is quite positive. However, Isfahan citizens are not so positive about Turkey's textiles and Turkey itself as a country due to the historical and cultural differences, as is shown in Table 5, even though these two hypotheses (ethnocentrism effect on the cognitive image and product image) were accepted. However, the effect was negative, which is a considerable result in this study.

On the other hand, H5, H6, and H7 were accepted in both cities. Cognitive and affective images of Turkey in both cities separately have a direct and positive effect on the product image. Likewise, product image in both cities strongly and directly affects purchase intention. According to the results of this research, following suggestions can be made for the managers:

- Managers should pay attention to ethnic differences throughout the country. Consumers with various ethnic origins tend to have biases toward imported products.
- Individuals or companies who are trying to start a business in different parts of the country or even in foreign countries should be familiar with the culture and ethnocentrism level in these areas, because a higher ethnocentrism level will affect their behavior and they are more likely to buy products that are produced in their own culture or region.
- It is also important to point out that when consumers are dealing with a product that they do not know much about its quality, they first notice the country that manufactures that specific product. Then, consumers try to follow the clues, perceptions, and feelings towards that manufacturing country. Tabriz citizens show a more positive reaction to Turkish textiles due to ethnic and historical similarities. Nevertheless, such a reaction was not seen among the people of Isfahan. Therefore, companies that want to export their products and services to different countries must consider these similarities and differences in their target market. Besides, in multi-ethnic countries such as Iran, each region with different cultures may react differently to imported products and services.

VI. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Undoubtedly, every research is confronted with limitations that may affect the results. Understanding these constraints facilitates a better interpretation of the results. The present study also has some limitations.

The first limitation of this research is to examine the provided model only for Turkish textiles. In other words, respondents are asked about a single product to express their opinion. Respondents have also expressed their feelings and perceptions only about Turkey, which is also a restriction. Researchers in future research can explore consumer attitudes toward different product categories or brands of Turkey or other countries whose products are common in the Iranian market.

This study was conducted in the city of Isfahan and Tabriz, which has yet to address other cultures and other regions of Iran that have different languages and cultures. In future studies, this model can be used to assess

ethnocentrism in different parts of Iran, such as western regions, southern regions or other places with unique cultures and languages.

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