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## ETHNOCENTRIC BEHAVIORS OF MIGRANT GROUPS: THE IMPACT OF ACCULTURATION, ETHNIC IDENTITY AND RELIGION<sup>1</sup>

Nurdan Sevim \* and Elif Eroglu Hall\*\*

\*School of Applied Sciences, Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University, Bilecik, Turkey

\*\* Faculty of Business Administration, Anadolu University, Eskişehir, Turkey

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### Abstract

*Immigrants with different needs, wants and consumption patterns constitute big consumer groups in various parts of the world. Immigrant consumers when immigrated to another country may maintain their original consumption culture, may adopt the home country's consumption culture or may express a hybrid consumption culture. The aim of the study is to explain theoretically the ethnocentrism of immigrants. This study' is based an empirical study currently being done. The following is a comprehensive review broadly examining ethnocentric behaviors of migrant group, and more specially, acculturation, ethnic identity and religion.*

Keywords: Ethnocentrism, Acculturation, Ethnic Identity, Religion

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Immigrant consumers tend to display a unique consumption behavior that combines the cultures of their home and the host country (Penaloza, 1994). In understanding immigrant consumers' consumption behavior, little attention has been paid to investigating the impact of ethnocentrism. In immigrant consumer ethnocentrism, the availability of the products belonging to the origin culture in the host country may increase the ethnocentrism levels of the immigrants. When an individual finds him/herself surrounded by a dominant culture other than the one he/she grew up in, that individual will simultaneously experience a desire to maintain some aspects of his original culture and adapt some aspects of the dominant culture. Acculturation, ethnic identity and religion are three constructs that go hand in hand and need to be examined together in order to accurately identify their influence on the ethnocentric consumer behavior.

### 2. EVALUATION OF IMMIGRANT ETHNOCENTRIC BEHAVIOR THROUGH THE ACCULTURATION, ETHNIC IDENTITY AND RELIGION

The consumer ethnocentrism concept in general expresses the level of influence of national feelings on the opinions of consumers in purchasing products and services. According to Shimp

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& Sharma (1987); consumer ethnocentrism is expressed as the unwillingness of the consumers to purchase foreign products because they feel that the local economy will be influenced negatively in case they purchase non-domestic products. And this causes the consumers to tend for domestic products. Similarly, many consumers believe that it is ethical to purchase the products of their home countries (Özer & Dovganiuc, 2013).

The available experimental researches emphasize the significance of a series of psychological factors such as cultural openness, patriotism, collectivism/individualism, materialism, dogmatism, hostility and nationalism regarding ethnocentric behavior (Sahak, 2010).

In immigrant consumer ethnocentrism, the availability of the home country products is of great significance. As it has also been stated in the Watson & Wright (2000) research, when the home country products are not available in the market, the ethnocentric consumers no longer have a chance not to choose the products of other countries. For example, consumer ethnocentrism has been examined from the product perspectives such as product category by Sharma et al., (1995); Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, (2004), product availability by Watson & Wright (2000), price by Lantz & Loeb (1999).

As it can be understood from the scopes of the above mentioned studies, there are various dimensions to consumer ethnocentrism. The consumption behaviors based on the ethnocentric attitudes of immigrants who have crossed the borders and have migrated to different countries may vary depending on the acculturation, ethnic identity and religion.

### **2.1. Consumer Acculturation and Consumer Ethnocentrism**

Acculturation, one of the cultural change dimension, includes the learning of the host society's cultural standards. Acculturation include changes in behavior patterns, such as goods purchased, language, and food.

Acculturation was first defined as, “those phenomenon which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, et al.,1936). Acculturation is a subset of socialization by which individuals learn, adopt and become familiar with the society's norms, rules and expectations. Acculturation particularly necessitates a newcomer, a stranger rather than a person born in the community learning the structure of social values. In many acculturation studies conducted, it was examined how the changes occurred related to psychological and socio-cultural adaptation of migrants and those residing in a place for a short time, containing international students, expatriate workers, business travels.

Penolosa (1994) defined the consumer acculturation as general process of the transition and adaptation of the people coming from another country to the cultural consumer environment of the country they came. This process is composed of three stages. Movement, translation and adaptation. Movement stage includes physical movement of an individual from one country to another. Translation stage includes the fact that the transiting individual confronts and learns a large number of new behaviors about the host country's culture. Lastly, adaptation phase includes the changes in individual's behavior shown during the transition from previous culture to the new one. In translation phase, Penolosa (1994) stated that people coming to the new culture might confront with nine different cultural features related to the consumption such as housing,

shopping, language, food, clothing, automobiles, telephones, financial services, and the media belonging to the foreign culture.

When immigrants crossed borders and started to live in a new home country, they took their cultures to their new homes. Naturally, the new home has its own culture. In the literature, the general process of movement and adaptation to one consumer cultural environment by members of another consumer culture is known as consumer acculturation (Penaloza, 1990).

The dual pull of two cultures will affect consumer acculturation processes and outcomes in the following ways:

- 1) Immigrants internalize the stigma of being the mainstream's other.
- 2) They may denounce themselves and their culture, decreasing their differences by assimilating product in attempt to fit in.
- 3) They may ignore or reject pressure to assimilate, cultivating instead social structures within which aspects of their previous culture are maintained.
- 4) They may reject aspects of their culture of origin and/or immigration and may express combinations of these strategies (Wamwara-Mbugua, 2003).

In recent years, to investigate the changes in consumer identity of the immigrant affected by the cultural change arising out of the increase of long- or short- time migration experiences, has become an important issue in the field of consumption and consumer behaviors. It has been started to utilize the concept of acculturation very often in consumption and consumer studies with the aim of understanding and explaining the change especially in migrant groups consumption behavior and patterns with respect to short-time migration, and in migrant consumers with respect to long-term migration. The common point of all acculturation definitions made in the acculturation studies carried out in the area of consumption and consumer, is the process of change occurring in the individual who directly gets into touch with a new culture with respect to consumption. The definitions of acculturation taking part in the literature of consumption are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Definitions of Acculturation Taking Part in the Literature of Consumption**

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
Padilla 1980	Acculturation is a process of adaptation by adapting to a host culture or borrowing the behaviors of that culture
Penaloza 1990 and 1994	Acculturation is a process of adaptation to the cultural environment of the destination country by those who come from another country
Laroche et al 1998	The process of adoption and embracing the behaviors of the host culture
Laroche and Cleveland 2007	The process of learning and adaptation to the norms and values of a culture that is rather different from the culture in which the individuals were born and grew up
Resource: Compilation	

The consumer acculturation has been defined as “a concept that ensures cross-cultural interaction and adaptation and entails the assimilation into a new culture, sustaining the old culture and the perseverance with both origin culture and host culture” (Penaloza and Gilly, 1999). While the acculturation is a more general concept, the consumer acculturation bears a more specific meaning because of being considered within the consumption process.

Berry’s (1997) model of acculturation modes, which integrates the identity and intergroup components of intercultural contact. Berry argued that answers to questions about the importance of cultural maintenance and intergroup relations can be juxtaposed to identify four strategies used by individuals engaged in intercultural contact: integration (both cultural maintenance and intergroup relations are important), assimilation (only intergroup relations are important), separation (only cultural maintenance is important), and marginalization (neither are important).

Acculturation modes that influence immigrant consumption behaviors are foreseen to create differences also in immigrant consumer ethnocentrism. With regard to the choice of acculturation modes, from a social psychology perspective, assimilation and integration are believed to increase the 'fit' between the acculturating individual and the new context. In contrast, separation and marginalization are viewed as conflicting strategies that seem to lead to acculturative stress (Berry, 1997). However, unlike other aspects of behavior, consumers have a freedom in their

buying decision, so assimilation, integration and separation can all be considered as possible choices of acculturation among the acculturating group (Sahak, 2010).

## **2.2. Ethnic Identity and Consumer Ethnocentrism**

Generally, identity is a concept rooted in answers to such questions as “What am I?” and “What am I not?” (Brand, et al., 1974). It is used to refer to an individual’s sense of who she/he is (Shapiro and Dashefsky, 1974; Frideres and Goldenberg, 1982). Ethnic identity is used in the analysis of consumption as an indicator for the consumption behavior of ethnic minorities. Hence, those members of an ethnic minority who have a very strong ethnic identity will also differ in their consumption behavior compared to the mainstream society, as the ethnic identity also influences the way of life in the mainstream society and therefore e.g. their eating habits. Among the various cultural dimensions of ethnic identity on food preferences are one of the most widely accepted dimensions (Driedger, 1976; Phinney, 1990; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1992). Ethnic identity reflects the retention of behaviors and attitudes of the culture of origin. This retention should presumably be evident across many aspects of behavior which include food consumption (Laroche et al., 1993).

Identity is a phenomenon emerging from the seek an answer of human beings for the question of “who am I?”, updated by re-defining requirements with any long-term displacement of humans, especially when staying side by side with different identities. The immigrant identity revealed by this update is reproduced in an integration and assimilation process. One of the most prominent factors of acculturation process to which the immigrant individuals are exposed when they come to a new society is the commitment to their ethnic identity.

The ethnic identity is a concept determining the immigrants are members of which ethnic group and defining the characteristics of that ethnic group such as origin, colour, language, religion. The ethnic identity has been conceptualized as continuous fundamental aspect of the ego including emotions about being member of an ethnic group and feelings and attitudes about the membership (Phinney, 1996). The ethnic identity is linked to the history of the individual, like in other identities. Ethnic identity is used in the analysis of consumption as an indicator for the consumption behavior of ethnic minorities. Hence, those members of an ethnic minority who have a very strong ethnic identity will also differ in their consumption behavior compared to the mainstream society, as the ethnic identity also influences the way of life in the mainstream society and therefore e.g. their eating habits.

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## **2.3. Religious Attitudes and Consumer Ethnocentrism**

Religion plays a central role in the daily life of immigrants. Many immigrants rely on spiritual resources and religious practices throughout the various stages of the migration process, from

decision making about migrating, to enduring the stress of migration, to making sense of their life experiences. Upon arriving in their new country, immigrants search for structure through which they can achieve a sense of certainty and security in life. Religion provides a social system allowing immigrants to meet their needs for structured human relationships. Religion can give structure to the lives of immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds, providing a “common peoplehood” and can be more powerful than common language or national feeling in adapting to the new country (Steffen and Merrill, 2011).

Religion influences consumer attitudes and behaviors in general (Delener, 1994; Pettinger et al., 2004), and personally their food purchasing decisions and eating habits (Mullen et al., 2000; Blackwell et al., 2001). The level of compliance with the rules set by religions varies in levels of individuals (Abdul et al., 2009). Generally, individuals who have high religiousness levels also have high loyalty to traditional values (Delener, 1994).

The intensity of an individual’s religious faith expresses the religiousness of that individual. There are two different approaches to the measurement of religiousness in the literature. In the first approach, Allport and Ross (1967) have measured religiousness in two dimensions as introverted and extroverted (Mokhlis, 2009). Although religiousness was thought to be a single dimensioned structure that includes the participation or contribution of an individual to a religion, researches have demonstrated that a single dimension is inadequate in interpreting religion meaningfully (Bergan, 2001; Kennedy and Lawton, 1998). On the other hand, religiousness has been claimed to be a three-dimensional structure, as the cognitive, behavioral and emotional aspects, in the second approach. The real purpose of this approach is to measure the reaction responses of the individual in the thought, behavior and emotion dimensions, as an expression of his evaluation of a tendency (Onay, 2001).

Introverted religiousness in the two-dimensional structure expresses the significance and meaning of life, while extroverted religiousness dimension displays religiousness as a social order (Donahue, 1985). In the three-dimensional structure; the “cognitive aspect” is the individual’s faith in God and assumptions arising from this faith; the “behavioral aspect” includes all behaviors made as a result of his faith, for example practices such as performing prayer, going to church, fasting, pilgrimage, etc., and the “emotional aspect” is the individual’s psychological state regarding his beliefs and practices, expectation of success, protection, heaven or concern for damnation, punishment and hell from God. Actually, the introverted religiousness dimension in the two-dimensional religiousness approach corresponds to the cognitive aspect, and the extroverted religiousness dimension corresponds to the behavioral aspect in the three-dimensional approach. Therefore, cognitive, behavioral and emotional aspects are believed to be influential in the density of religiousness.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Today, people are living in a culturally dynamic society. Individuals are causing cultural change by moving the values of the culture of the places they go together while moving from one culture to another. When to go to a country with a different culture, exposure to cultural change.

In today's world where ecological, demographic, political and educational connections are increased, the migration international cooperation have changed the culture being considered as single point of contact having pressed in national borders and certain ethnic groups. Therefore, the culture transformed to a more open and harmony-oriented concept transformed have turned the differences and contrasts between nations and ethnic groups in a clearer, more conducive and multicultural, intercultural contact. The culture has been influenced by dynamics such as migration and global media flows. Today, the immigration appears as a process that materializes with a much wider variety and within different information networks. Long- or short-time migration is a case faced by many countries. Individuals always change places between different countries continuously for the purpose of working, getting education, making commerce or travelling for sightseeing. Today's migration is more common and less intense due to the possibilities for going from a place to another place more quickly. The cultural changes arisen out of the increase of migration experiences are explained by acculturation, ethnic identity, religion.

This research contributes to an understanding of in immigrant consumer ethnocentrism theoretically and based an empirical study. Apparently, there is much more work to be done to uncover all aspects of immigrant consumer ethnocentrism. Investigating these topics from different perspectives or frameworks could add new knowledge to the existing body of knowledge. This theoretical paper will support future research in theory development and theory testing to immigrant consumer ethnocentrism. This study offers considerations for marketers and guiding principles to help build successful strategies.

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