

Ethnocentrism and consumer evaluations of Czech made yoghurt

Etnocentrismus a spotřebitelské hodnocení jogurtů z české produkce

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Abstract: In identifying perceptions and attitudes relevant to consumer acceptance of goods originating in different countries, it would be extremely helpful for marketers to have a meaningful and consistent measure that they could apply. This study examines to what extent consumer ethnocentrism as measured by the CETSCALE singularly, as well as in concert with selected demographic and psycho-graphic variables, can predict consumers' evaluation of domestic versus foreign produce. The findings indicate that consumer ethnocentrism is a strong and significant predictor of consumer product evaluations. Including the ethnocentrism variable in a set of demographic and psycho-graphic variables significantly improves the predictive ability of the set. Potential applications of the concept include identification of market segments that react more favourably to domestic or foreign produce, developing effective marketing communication strategies, and supporting location decisions for retail outlet sites.

Keywords: CETSCALE, country-of-origin, conjoint analysis, consumer preferences

Abstrakt: Při identifikaci vnímání a postojů relevantních ve vztahu k tomu, jak spotřebitelé přijímají zboží pocházející z různých zemí, by bylo pro pracovníky marketingu mimořádně užitečné mít smysluplné konsistentní měřítko, které by mohli použít. Tato studie se zabývá otázkou, nakolik lze prostřednictvím spotřebitelského ethnocentrismu měřeného konkrétně formou CETSCALE, případně v kombinaci s vybranými demografickými a psychografickými proměnnými, predikovat spotřebitelské hodnocení domácích produktů v komparaci se zahraničními. Výsledky výzkumu naznačují, že zařazení etnocentrických proměnných do souboru demografických a psychografických proměnných výrazně zlepšuje predikativní schopnost souboru. Potenciální aplikace tohoto návrhu je identifikace tržních segmentů, které reagují příznivěji na nabídku domácí či zahraniční produkce, vytvoření efektivních strategií marketingové komunikace a podporu lokálních rozhodnutí týkajících se lokalit maloobchodních středisek.

Klíčová slova: země původu, spotřebitelské preference, etnocentrismus

INTRODUCTION

In order to develop effective marketing and communication strategies within and across national boundaries, marketers need to understand varying attitudes and perceptions of consumers toward products of a clearly identifiable country of origin. In determining perceptions and attitudes relevant to consumer acceptance of national and international goods and services, it would be extremely helpful for marketers to have a meaningful and consistent measure that they could apply (preferably without modifications) to various markets.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Country-of-origin effects. About 60 studies have been published since 1965 examining effects of country-of-origin. While this contribution only provides a brief summary, more extensive overviews can be found at Bilkey and Nes (1982), Papadopoulos et al. (1986), Han and Terp-

stra (1988), Papadopoulos, Marshall and Heslop (1988) or Hausrucking (1993).

All empirical studies have in common that the product attribute "country-of-origin" affects buyers' product evaluation. This has been stated for 1) products in general, 2) selected product categories, 3) specific types of products, and 4) specific brands and labels for business customers as well as for consumer decision makers (Hausrucking and Helm, 1996). More detailed, products from more developed countries are preferred over products from less developed countries (Kaynak and Cavusgil 1983; Ahmed, d'Astous and El Adraoui 1994) suggesting a relationship between the importance of the product attribute "country-of-origin" and the economic state of development of a particular country (Wang and Lamb 1983). Several studies show that consumers in different countries evaluate a particular country-of-origin significantly different (Papadopoulos et al. 1986) but generally prefer domestically made products (Nagashima 1970; Bannister and Saunders 1978; Kaynak and Cavusgil 1983; Ettenson, Wagner and Gaeth 1988). However,

these results have been found to be valid for specific products only; attitudes toward products from a particular country may vary across products (Kaynak and Cavusgil 1983; Garland, Barker and Crawford 1987; Chao 1989). Higher acceptance of products of foreign origin has been found with consumers with a higher income and/or higher education (Wang 1978; Ettenson, Gaeth and Wagner 1988). A country-of-origin's value may change in relatively short time and may be relatively easily affected by other elements of the marketing mix like the price (Schooler and Wildt 1968; Kaynak and Cavusgil 1983). Several authors identified an inverse relationship between conservatism and consumers' attitude toward foreign products (Anderson and Cunningham 1972; Sharma, Shimp and Shin 1995).

Consumer ethnocentrism. The possible impact of personality variables such as dogmatism and conservatism on consumers' evaluations of foreign or domestic products was examined in several studies. While Tongberg (1972) did not find any relationship between the extent of consumer dogmatism and attitudes toward products from different countries, other authors (i.e. Anderson and Cunningham 1972; Wang 1978) identified a negative relationship between conservatism and favorable evaluation of foreign products. In the late 80ies, Shimp and Sharma (1987) developed and validated a highly reliable measure, the CETSCALE. The CETSCALE is a 17-item instrument formulated to measure the concept of consumer ethnocentrism as it exists between regions of the U.S.A. It may also be applicable to the more general situation where a product is produced in one country and marketed in another. Consumer ethnocentrism was defined as "the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness of purchasing products originating in a foreign country" (Shimp and Sharma 1987: 280). The basic premise is that relatively non-ethnocentric consumers are likely to evaluate foreign-made products on the products' own merits (as postulated by the information-processing paradigm, see Bettmann 1978), while relatively ethnocentric consumers will view foreign products as unacceptable because of patriotic reasons (Han 1988). The CETSCALE consists of a series of Likert type sentences for each of which subjects express their extent of (dis)agreement. Testing the scale in several studies (Shimp and Sharma 1987; James and Eroglu 1990) demonstrated a high degree of validity and convergent, discriminant and nomological reliability. From a theoretical perspective, the concept of consumer ethnocentrism can contribute to better understand buyer behaviour of consumers as well as of commercial buyers. Its application can particularly contribute to our understanding of how buyers decide on choosing domestic versus foreign and how individual evaluations are subject to biases. In this context, the CETSCALE would be used as a covariate in country-of-origin experiments as well as a predictor variable in conventional studies in concert with demographic and psycho-graphic measures (James and Eroglu 1990).

STUDY OBJECTIVES

Our study attempts to replicate earlier studies (Shimp and Sharma 1987; James and Eroglu 1990) and to assess the ability of the CETSCALE to predict consumers' evaluations of Czech made yoghurt. Yoghurt was selected as the product category in this study since the perceived country of origin has become the salient issue in the Czech Republic as the market share of domestically made brands continues to decrease. It also seems important to address this issue, since it can be viewed as an example for other agricultural and food products. The main purpose of the investigation was to examine the extent to which consumer ethnocentrism as measured through the CETSCALE can singularly, as well as in combination with selected other variables, predict consumers' evaluations of products perceived to be from a foreign country. The other variables examined were consumer age, purchase frequency and volume (both for yoghurt), and involvement. As a secondary objective this study intended to retest the reliability of the CETSCALE when it was administered to a sample outside the U.S.

HYPOTHESES

Given the findings of our literature review, this study examines the following hypotheses:

- (1) Ethnocentric individuals are more likely than non-ethnocentric individuals to evaluate favourably yoghurt that is perceived as domestic (made in the Czech Republic).
- (2) Older individuals, individuals with a lower involvement, with lower shopping frequency and with a lower shopping volume are more likely than others to favourably evaluate Czech-made yoghurt.
- (3) Ethnocentric individuals are more likely than non-ethnocentric individuals to be older, to shop for yoghurt less frequently and also to purchase smaller volumes at a time.

It is also expected that the CETSCALE prediction of domestic yoghurt evaluation will improve when more demographic and psycho-graphic variables are included in the analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Data were gathered in Brno (second largest city in the Czech Republic) by means of personal interviews with consumers of 14 years and older. A stratified random sampling procedure (age and gender) was employed to mirror Czech population. This procedure was adopted since no other data on yoghurt or food shoppers was available. About 297 of those respondents initially contacted agreed to participate in the survey. Responses were obtained by trained interviewers.

A conjoint experiment (Luce and Tukey 1964; Huber et al. 1993) was used to gather information about consumer

Table 1. Design of the conjoint experiment

Attribute	Attribute levels			
	Russia	Czech Republic	France	Germany
Country-of-origin				
Price per 250 g	7.20 CZK		8.80 CZK	
Flavor	flavored		white/not flavored	
Container material	glass		plastic	
Fat content level	low		natural/full	

evaluations of domestic and foreign made yoghurt. Images of ten yoghurts were displayed (see Table 1 for the design of the experiment). The respective yoghurts were selected to cover the present market and common brands. They were displayed with simplified labels (for the use of pictorial stimuli see Loosschilder et al. 1995). Four countries of origin, two prices, two flavours, two packaging types and two levels of fat content were used. Employing a fractional factorial (orthogonal) design reduced the number of stimuli to be evaluated by the consumers to ten yoghurts (profiling method). Passers-by in a number of stores and supermarkets were selected randomly by interviewers. They were asked to rank the displayed yoghurts according to their preferences. Consumers were also asked about the extent to which they agreed with the 17 items on the CETSCALE. Items were scored on a 7-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". In addition, information was also collected about the respondents' present favourite yoghurt (flavour, brand), age, shopping frequency, and shopping volume. Scores on the 17 CETSCALE items were summarised to create a single variable measuring consumer ethnocentrism.

Another objective of the study was to examine product class involvement as a variable potentially affecting product evaluation. Measurement of this variable was conducted according to Zaichowsky (1985). From suitable items that she identified, three have been selected and adapted for use in this study. The statements were 1) I prefer a particular yoghurt, 2) I am very interested in information about different yoghurt, and 3) There are many differences between yoghurts. Like for ethnocentrism, for the construct involvement mean values have been computed based on the associated items for further use in the analysis.

In this study, the independent variables were customer ethnocentrism, the demographic variables, and the psycho-graphic variable involvement. The dependent variable was consumer evaluation of Czech-made yoghurt (partial utilities of the corresponding attribute level). Four regression analyses were conducted on the data: (1) in the first analysis the relationship between the demographic variables and consumer evaluation of Czech-made yoghurt was examined; (2) the second regression analysis examined the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and consumer evaluations of

Czech made yoghurt; (3) the third regression analysis examined the relationship between consumer involvement and evaluations of Czech made yoghurt; (4) all the independent variables were then entered in a final regression in order to evaluate their collective importance as predictors.

RESULTS

Tables 2 and 3 describe the sample population in terms of consumer preferences for flavours and brands. Table 4 holds the results of the conjoint measurement. Equations 1 and 2 express the underlying concept of total (product) utility and partial (attribute level) utility (Gierl 1995, Green and Srinivasan 1978; 1990 for more details about conjoint measurement):

$$u_s = f(u_{s1}, \dots, u_{sh}, \dots, u_{sH}) \quad \text{Equation 1}$$

with u_s = total utility of (= preference for) object s , and
 u_{sh} = partial utility of attribute h at object s .

$$u_{sh} = f_h(x_{sh}, x_h^*) \quad \text{Equation 2}$$

with x_{sh} = individually perceived level of attribute h at object s ,

x_h^* = individually ideal level of h , and

f_h = evaluative function for attribute h .

According to the findings, the country of origin emerges as the single most important attribute (average importance 35.9). However, the results could be biased by the limited number of product attributes that have

Table 2. Consumer preferred flavors ($n = 235$)

Flavor	%	Flavor	%
Strawberries	20.0	Forest Berries	4.3
White (no flavor)	18.7	Nuts	3.4
Blueberries	9.8	Apricots	3.0
Peaches	7.7	Muesli	2.6
Fruit mix	7.2	Raspberries	2.0
Cherries	6.0	Pears	2.0
Chocolate	5.5	Others	7.8
Total			100

Table 3. Consumer preferred brands ($n = 219$)

Brand	%	Brand	%
Danone	34.2	Florian	5.0
Jogobella	12.3	Hollandia	4.6
Kunin	11.0	Jihočesky	3.7
Olma	8.2	Yoplait	3.7
Chocensky	5.5	Others (e.g. Zott, Müller)	11.8
Total			100

Table 4. Consumer preferences – conjoint analysis results ($n = 289$)

Attribute	Averaged importance	Attribute level	Partial utility
Country-of-Origin	35.9	Russia	-0.004
		Czech Republic	-0.119
		France	-0.104
		Germany	0.224
Price	17.2	7.20 CZK	-0.030
		8.80 CZK	0.030
Flavor	15.4	flavored	0.004
		white not flavored	-0.004
Packaging material	15.1	glass	-0.175
		plastic	0.175
Fat content	16.4	low	-0.085
		natural / full	0.085

Pearson's $R = 1.00$; Kendall's Tau = 1.00; Significance = 0.0003

been presented to the consumers' (Shocker and Shrinivasan 1979). At the aggregated level, the results of the conjoint experiment show that the country-of-origin Czech Republic has a slightly negative partial utility (-0.004) while yoghurt from Germany is most preferred (0.224). Additionally, consumer preferences for price lev-

els, flavour, packaging material and fat content become visible. However, partial utilities have been obtained at the level of each individual and it is these individual numbers that will be used for further analysis.

Tables 5 and 6 show the item-total correlations and the reliability estimates for the ethnocentrism and involvement measures. Item-total correlations (factor loadings) indicate the strength of individual items used to create the single ethnocentrism variable used in the further analyses. The reliability estimates (alpha values) reveal what proportion of variance in the data is true variance. The highest correlation for an item used to measure consumer ethnocentrism was 0.90 and the lowest 0.67. The alpha value shows that overall 92 percent of the variation (reliability) in the variable used to analyse consumer ethnocentrism was true variation. Correlation for the involvement items ranged from 0.74 to 0.81 with an alpha value of 0.66.

The variables reported in Table 7 were coded so that positive values represented ethnocentric persons, young individuals, high purchase frequency, high purchase volume, and high involvement. The dependent variable was favourable evaluation (positive partial utility) of Czech made yoghurt.

The first column of numbers in Table 7 identifies the positive or negative relationship of six variables with consumer evaluations of Czech made yoghurt. The values associated with ethnocentrism (0.36) and age (0.13)

Table 5. Reliability estimates for ethnocentrism measures (CETSCALE)

Reliability estimates for ethnocentrism measures	Total correlation
1. Czech people should always buy Czech-made products instead of imports.	0.78
2. Only those products that are unavailable in the Czech Republic should be imported.	0.80
3. Buy Czech-made products. Keep the Czech Republic working.	0.67
4. Czech products first, last, and foremost.	0.82
5. Purchasing foreign-made products is un-Czech.	0.82
6. It is not right to purchase foreign products because it puts Czechs out of jobs.	0.89
7. A real Czech should always buy Czech-made products.	0.89
8. We should purchase products made in the Czech Republic instead of letting other countries get rich off us.	0.87
9. It is always best to purchase Czech products.	0.81
10. There should be very little trading or purchasing of goods from other countries unless out of necessity.	0.88
11. Czechs should not buy foreign products because this hurts Czech business and causes unemployment.	0.90
12. Curbs should be put on all imports.	0.77
13. It may cost me in the long-run but I prefer to support Czech products.	0.81
14. Foreigners should not be allowed to put their products on our markets.	0.75
15. Foreign products should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into the Czech Republic.	0.68
16. We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our country.	0.85
17. Czech consumers who purchase products made in other countries are responsible for putting their fellow Czechs out of work.	0.82

Note: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.92

Scores ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The mean values of the 7-point ratings of all the items above were used to compute a single measure for ethnocentrism.

explained variance: 66.2 per cent

1 factor extracted (eigenvalue of 1.0 employed as cutoff criterion)

Table 6. Reliability estimates for involvement

Reliability estimates for involvement	Total correlation
1. I prefer a particular yogurt.	0.81
2. I believe there are many differences in yogurt.	0.78
3. I am very interested in yogurt.	0.74

Note: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.66

KMO = 0.65

explained variance = 60.2 per cent

Scores ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The mean values of the 7-point ratings of all the items above were used to compute a single measure for involvement.

Table 7. Correlation matrix of study variables

Variable	Product evaluation	Ethnocentrism
1. Product Evaluation		
2. Ethnocentrism	0.36	
3. Age	0.13	0.23
4. Involvement	-0.17	-0.02
5. Purchase frequency	-0.02	-0.08
6. Purchase volume	-0.08	-0.12

Note: Variable age dichotomized: 1 = below median age of 38.2; 0 = above median age.

Variable involvement dichotomized to reflect above and below median involvement of 5.3. 1 = above; 0 = below.

Variable purchase frequency dichotomized: 1 = above median frequency of 2.4; 0 = below. Variable purchase volume dichotomized: 1 = above median frequency of 3.5; 0 = below.

Table 8. Regression results with favorable correlation of domestically (Czech) made yogurt as the dependent variable

Variable	Beta	T	P
A. (N = 163)			
Age	0.15	2.38	0.00
Purchase frequency	-0.01	-1.15	0.05
Purchase volume	-0.14	-3.07	0.03
Multiple R	0.24		
F	12.49		
B. (N = 163)			
Ethnocentrism	0.36	6.54	0.00
Multiple R	0.36		
F	32.14		0.00
C. (N = 163)			
Involvement	-0.17	-2.81	0.02
Multiple R	-0.07		
F	10.81		
D. (N = 163)			
Ethnocentrism	0.31	5.78	0.00
Involvement	-0.15	-2.66	0.00
Age	0.14	2.33	0.00
Multiple R	0.38		
F	59.64		0.00

are all positive. Based on the coding scheme which was used, the researchers concluded that ethnocentric persons and older persons are more likely to have favourable evaluations of Czech made yoghurt than non-ethnocentric and younger persons. Also in column 1 of Table 7, the results show a negative relationship between favourable evaluations of Czech made yoghurt and involvement (-0.17), purchase frequency (-0.02) and purchase volume (-0.08). This suggests that individuals with low involvement, with low purchase frequency and with low purchase volume tend to have unfavourable evaluations of Czech made yoghurt. Accordingly, the findings reported in column 1 of Table 7 supported the first two hypotheses: (1) ethnocentric individuals are more likely than non-ethnocentric individuals to favourably evaluate yoghurt which is perceived as Czech-made; (2) older individuals, individuals with a lower involvement, with a lower shopping frequency and with a lower shopping volume are more likely than others to favourably evaluate Czech-made yoghurt.

Column 2 in Table 7 shows the relationships between ethnocentrism and the variables age, involvement, purchase frequency, and purchase volume. Since the data were coded, positive values are associated with ethnocentrism, and negative values with non-ethnocentrism. The results show a positive value for the variable age (0.23) and negative values for the variables involvement (-0.02), purchase frequency (-0.08) and purchase volume (-0.12). Based on the way the data were coded, we concluded that younger individuals are more likely to be non-ethnocentric than older individuals. Further, ethnocentrism is associated with low involvement, low purchase frequency and low purchase volume. This evidence supports the third hypothesis: Ethnocentric individuals are more likely than non-ethnocentric individuals to be older, shop for yoghurt less frequently and also purchase smaller volumes at a time.

Table 8 shows the results of four separate regression analyses of the data. Multiple regression can be employed to identify the extent to which a single variable or a group of variables can be used to predict the value of another variable. The multiple correlation (R_c) indicates the strength of the prediction while the beta values indicate how important a variable is in making a prediction.

In the first regression analysis where the demographic variables were used, all variables were found to be significantly related to consumer evaluations of Czech made yoghurt. The most important variable was age (beta = 0.15). The least important variable was purchase frequency (beta = -0.01). Ethnocentrism was the only independent variable used in the second analysis. This variable was found to be significantly related to consumer evaluations of Czech made yoghurt. In the third regression, analysis involvement was the only independent variable. It was also found to be significantly related to consumer evaluations of Czech made yoghurt. When all variables were entered in the final regression analysis, only the demographic variable age along with the psychographic variables ethnocentrism and involvement were found

to be significant. Based on their beta values, ethnocentrism was identified as the most important variable (0.31) while involvement and the demographic variable age were found to be equal in importance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our study examined the extent to which the CETSCALE singularly, as well as in concert with selected demographic and psycho-graphic variables, can predict consumers' evaluations of Czech made yoghurt. In addition, the reliability of the CETSCALE as a robust measure of consumer ethnocentrism was also measured by using it on a sample population outside the U.S.

The study showed consumer ethnocentrism to be a strong and significant predictor of consumers' evaluations of domestically (Czech) made yoghurt. The predictive ability of the demographic variables were found to be smaller and different when they regressed with and without the consumer ethnocentrism variable. For example, when analysed alone, three of the demographic variables (age, purchase frequency and purchase volume) emerged as significant predictors of Czech yoghurt evaluations, with consumer age being the most significant predictor. However, when consumer ethnocentrism was entered into the analysis, the variable not only emerged as the most important predictor but also only one of the demographic variables (age) remained significant. Including another psycho-graphic variable (involvement) that has not been used in previous studies improves the predictive ability of the set of variables even more.

As suggested by Shimp and Sharma (1987) and James and Eroglu (1990), consumer ethnocentrism appears to be a potentially valuable concept for researchers and practitioners. For example, the instrument could be used by national and international companies to identify and understand "segments" of the common European market and to devise efficient marketing communication strategies to reach them (Etzel and Walker 1974). Additionally, retailers could also benefit from these findings. In their selection of store sites and assortments, retailers who are interested in doing business in the Czech Republic are well advised to delineate carefully those market segments which are ethnocentric in their purchasing habits. Previous studies (Shimp and Sharma 1987) have shown that in the United States consumer ethnocentrism tendencies are especially strong among individuals from lower socio-economic classes, older groups, and working classes. Apparently, these are people whose economic livelihood is most likely to be threatened by foreign competition. It is therefore recommended that a domestic retailer includes consumer ethnocentrism as one of the determinants of local demand when assessing the potential of various store sites and merchandising alternatives.

In this study, we focused on the ability of ethnocentrism, along with selected demographic and psycho-graphic variables, to predict consumer evaluations of Czech yoghurt. Extension of this study to other product

categories is highly desirable. Future researchers can also consider whether or not the role of consumer ethnocentrism in attitudes toward foreign made products increases as the perceived value and risk of the product category increases. For example, are consumers more likely to demonstrate ethnocentric tendencies when they are in the market for yoghurt or beef (considering the higher frequency of BSE cases in other EU countries)? If so, alternative marketing communication strategies should be used for foreign products and markets of various product categories. Similarly, it may be useful to see if the results of the study can be replicated when dependent measures other than product evaluations are used, such as buying intentions or observed purchase behaviour.

Finally, for those international managers and researchers who are interested in examining the motivational background of country-of-origin effects, more instruments await further testing. More recently, the concept of animosity has been introduced. Given the high demonstrated reliability and validity of the new approach, its application and comparison of its predictive value with those of the CETSCALE would be encouraged. This will not only help assess the universality of both instruments but also open new awareness of application for those managers who are interested in producing and marketing their goods across countries.

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Arrived on 9th November 2001

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