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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM BETWEEN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND PURCHASE INTENTION

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Abstract

In the face of changing conditions and consumer needs around the world, businesses need to be able to adapt to these conditions and respond to the needs of the consumer in order to survive. For this reason, companies have to analyze the ethnocentric tendencies of the consumers, as well as the country of origin perceptions and their effects on the purchase intention. The aim of this study is to reveal the mediating role of consumer ethnocentrism between country of origin and purchase intention. For the purpose of the research, consumer ethnocentrism, country of origin effect and purchase intentions for local cheeses of North Cyprus, were examined. Quantitative research method was used in the research. The model design of this study was conducted in accordance with the causality research purpose. The sample of the research is composed of consumers in Northern Cyprus. Study participants were identified using convenience sampling method. 421 consumers participated in the research. The results show that there is a positive relationship between consumer ethnocentrism, country of origin and purchase intention. According to the results, it was determined that the consumer ethnocentrism tendencies partially mediated the relationship between the country of origin scale and the consumer purchase intention.

Keywords: Ethnocentrism, Consumer Ethnocentrism, Country of Origin, Purchase Intention

1. Introduction

To learn what, why, when, how consumers are, it is important to identify the underlying causes of consumer purchasing decisions and the factors affecting them. Consumer ethnocentrism (CE), and Country of Origin (CO) are known as factors that influence consumers' buying intentions (Souiden *et al.* 2011; Basfirinci and Cilingir, 2020; Camacho *et al.* 2021). CE refers to consumers' views and assessments of the appropriateness and ethicality of purchasing foreign products (Basfirinci and Cilingir, 2020).

For consumers, CO is the mind-matching of a business, product or service, country or business marketing the brand, and this plays an important role in consumers making decision (Basfirinci and Cilingir, 2020). Yang *et al.* (2022) mentioned that CO is effective and used by consumers during the evaluation of product or a brand before purchasing them. There are several studies available in the recent literature which analyzed and explored how CO affects purchasing decision of consumers especially in economically developed countries (Camacho *et al.* 2021). If customers were aware of the characteristics of particular nations, they were more likely to use the country of origin as an external element in the process of evaluating, selecting, and purchasing the product's quality (Kalicharan, 2014; Rossanty and Putra Nasution, 2018). Due to technological developments and global competitive markets in developed countries, consumers can view the products of these countries more positively in terms of product quality (Kalicharan, 2014). Compared to the CO experiment conducted by Wikner and Bäckstrand (2018) between Germany and Poland, there are differences in consumers' willingness to pay, perceptions of the brand, and perceived value surrounding CO. For an identical product, research participants would usually pay 104 euros more for a German brand than for a Polish brand. Individuals, on the other hand, have to choose the most suitable option among these alternatives offered to them by the companies. However, while making these choices, they are under the influence of certain activities. One of them is the country of origin effect. In the globalizing world, the country of origin effect has become an indispensable element (Trinh *et al.* 2019). Therefore, it has been an important factor in consumers' purchasing intentions. In this direction, this study will focus on how CE plays a mediating role between the CO and influencing the purchasing intention of consumers in Northern Cyprus.

Since there are not enough studies investigating the mediating role of consumer ethnocentrism, which is one of the main issues addressed in this research, between country of origin effect and purchase intention, it is thought to contribute to the literature by examining this issue and analyzing the researches. On the other hand, the fact that the ethnocentrism of Northern Cyprus consumers is handled together with the concepts of country of origin and purchase intention gives the research a different importance from previous studies. In this direction, it is thought that the results of the research will guide the consumer ethnocentrism studies to be conducted especially in this sample. In addition to these, it is thought that the research will be especially helpful for businesses in creating their marketing strategies.

In the structure of the article, firstly, the purpose and contribution of the research is examined with the relevant literature. Then, the theoretical background of the research is presented; the process of developing hypotheses and the research model are presented. Finally, in the third part of the study, which is the implementation part of the research, the data and methodology of the research are explained. For this purpose, the data obtained after the survey conducted on 421 people are analyzed using statistical methods and analyzes and the results given in the tables are interpreted.

In the world, which has become a single and large market with globalization, the demands and needs of consumers have changed depending on technological and socio-cultural developments. The political, social and economic relations are established between countries and positive and negative effects have begun to occur in the purchasing decisions of individuals against foreign brands and products produced in foreign countries. Due to this situation, it becomes more important to investigate the concepts CO, CE and the purchasing intention.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the mediating role of CE between CO and purchase intention. In general, although other studies on this subject have examined the subject from different angles, the research has a different importance than previous studies in terms of examining the mediator role of CE. In addition, the fact that the research was conducted for the Northern Cyprus market and that there is not enough research in this direction in the literature contributes to the relevant literature. Most of the studies conducted in the Northern Cyprus sample in the literature are on consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention. There appears to be no research investigating the mediating role of CE (Nadiri and Tumer, 2010; Guneren and Ozturen, 2008).

Başfirinci and Çilingir (2020) CE and CO have been studied separately many times, but on the other hand, there are limited studies examining the two concepts together. Also, it is

declared that this claim is relevant for the food category which is the same case that this study will focus on (Basfirinci and Cilingir, 2020). According to Insch and Cuthbert (2018), food goods have not been the subject of as much research as hi-tech and fashion products about the effects of CO. Moreover, another study by Souiden *et al.* (2011) highlighted that very few studies focused on country of origin and its impact on consumer behavior and purchase intention together. In this context, it is important to explore the relationship of ethnocentrism with purchase intention and country of origin in order to contribute to the recent literature to understand if CO and CE have an effect on purchase intention of Cypriot consumers. Furthermore, few studies discuss the impact of CE on consumer behavior towards local products (Bianchi and Mortimer, 2015; Claret *et al.* 2012; Fernandez-Ferrin *et al.* 2018; Font-I-Furnols *et al.* 2011; Orth and Firbasova, 2003). Therefore, this paper examines the relationship between ethnocentrism and purchase intention and CO to analyze the impact of CE on consumers' behavior towards local products. Hence, international brands would understand better the Cypriot market before entering the region. In terms of local brands, learning about their consumers' purchasing intentions and their thoughts on ethnocentrism and country of origin helps them orient their brand and brand image accordingly (Miguel *et al.* 2022). The research will guide local brand producers in line with the findings.

2. Theoretical background, hypotheses, and research model

2.1. Theoretical background

As the phenomenon of globalization increases, country borders are disappearing. Ethnocentrism and consumer ethnocentrism constitute an invisible barrier to the international market. While strong ethnocentric tendencies in the society pose a threat to foreign firms in the market, it can be considered an advantage for domestic firms. Ethnocentrism as a concept is defined as seeing the culture or society as superior to other societies and this reveals the concept of consumer ethnocentrism (Camacho *et al.* 2022). Consumer ethnocentrism is defined as the prevention of international competition and the protection of local production against the free trade trend in the world (Siamagka and Balabanis, 2015). For instance, Yang *et al.* (2022) mentioned that local producers of China used ethnocentrism to leverage Chinese consumers' ethnocentric tendency in order to boost the local production' consumptions. Shimp and Sharma (1987) conducted empirical research on consumer ethnocentrism for the first time and used the concept of ethnocentrism for the first time, defining ethnocentrism as centering on ethnic groups and evaluating accordingly (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Ethnocentrism tends to maintain the continuity of societies through harmony, unity, loyalty, and joint action (Lantz and Loeb, 1996). Conceptually, Shimp and Sharma (1987, p. 280) described the Consumer Ethnocentrism as "the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products".

Consumer ethnocentrism can be defined as seeing the culture and society in which individuals live as superior and different from all other cultures and communities. Individuals with this attitude prefer to use products produced in their own country and belonging to their own country and do not accept to use products produced in other countries (Balabanis and Siamagka, 2022; Baber *et al.* 2023). Consumers think that buying products from foreign countries will harm the local economy and that this is not right. At the same time, consumers perceive foreign branded products as a threat to their own country, and this perception influences their purchasing decisions (Al Ganideh, 2022). As a result, it is perceived as a threat for foreign firms to enter a market with consumers with high ethnocentric tendencies. At the same time, this situation is an opportunity for local brands because local firms are in an advantageous position when offering their locally branded products to consumers in a market with high ethnocentric attitudes (Sane *et al.* 2022). As a result of all these reasons, it has become important for foreign firms to know the ethnocentrism levels of consumers in the target market.

Country of origin information gives consumers an idea about where the products are produced (Zhang *et al.* 2023). When making a purchase decision, individuals can have information about where the product is produced by looking at its country of origin. Many consumers may purchase or refrain from purchasing the product thanks to the country of origin information they have acquired as a result of their knowledge and experience (Gantulga and Ganbold, 2022). When we look at the evaluations of consumers, products produced in some

countries are perceived to be of higher quality and durable, while products from other countries are perceived to be of lower quality and less durable. For this reason, companies operating on a global scale have to analyze the country of origin perceptions of consumers as well as their ethnocentric tendencies (Čvirik, 2023).

Basfirinci and Çilingir (2020) stated that an initial study on CO was conducted by the Schoole in 1965. Nagashima (1970) introduced the earliest definition of concept and afterwards it had widely accepted by the literature. It clarified that the country of origin is the reputation, image, stereotype that consumers and business people attach to the products of a particular country. This image is formed through representational products, economic background, national characteristics, political background, traditions, history and similar variables (Nagashima, 1970). Souiden *et al.* (2011) mentioned that CO is known as a factor that influence consumers in their purchase decision and also decreases consumers' complexity in their final decision. The country of origin is expressed as the country that has the brand for the consumer, the product or service, the country with which the business or the homeland is matched in their minds (Han and Terpstra, 1988). With the increase in global production diversity and purchasing, it is not easy to make definite judgments about countries. For example, while Toshiba brand television is being held in Mexico, parts of Japanese, Mexican and American origin can be found. Sun *et al.* (2021) discussed in their study that consumer ethnocentrism is related with COO and that it can influence consumer behavior.

Hien *et al.* (2020) revealed that country of origin image has a positive effect on brand image, brand evaluation and purchase intention, The research concluded that brand image and brand evaluation also have a positive effect on purchase intentions. In addition, the research shows that both brand image and brand evaluation play a mediating role in the relationship between country of origin image and purchase intention.

Islam and Hussain (2022) examined the relationship between consumer purchase intention and country of origin image through consumer uncertainty. The study investigated the conditional effect of brand image between country of origin and consumer uncertainty. Research data revealed that country of origin image, through consumer uncertainty, has a negative impact on consumer purchase intention directly and indirectly. In addition, it has been revealed in the research that the positive brand image and country of origin image of high-tech products reduce consumer uncertainty.

Prahiawan *et al.* (2022) aimed to analyze the relationship between smartphone purchase intention, the role of country of origin and perception of quality. The results of the research determined that there is a positive relationship between the perceived quality of the product and the country of origin. The research determined that there is a positive and insignificant relationship between purchase intention and country of origin. It was concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between perceived quality and consumer purchase intention.

In the study conducted by Firman (2022), it was aimed to examine the relationship between country of origin and brand variables on consumer attitudes. In the research, it was determined that the country of origin has a positive effect on consumer attitudes, and the brand also has a positive effect on consumers' attitudes.

Bhattacharya *et al.* (2023) aimed to examine the effect of e-commerce country of origin on consumer privacy, trust, and purchase intention. It has been determined that country of origin affects consumer privacy, trust and purchase intention.

2.2. Hypothesis development

Ethnocentric tendencies recognize that the individual's own society, country's borders, culture and the products produced in the country are better than other countries. These consumers reject foreign products instead of domestic products to protect domestic assets against foreign competition, increase domestic employment and help strengthen the national economy (Camacho *et al.* 2022). In fact, it can be said that consumer ethnocentrism is one of the most important determinants of domestic and foreign brand preferences and consumer's product purchase intention. Camacho *et al.* (2022) stated that consumers in emerging countries are less

ethnocentric and they prefer imported products from developed countries as they feel that such products are highly prestige.

Ethnocentric trends are whether a product important to the consumer is produced in the country of residence. In other words, being domestic or foreign is the most important criterion in product selection (Camacho *et al.* 2022). Ethnocentric consumers look to the country of origin of the product when they buy a product and buy a local product or service that is meaningful to them. Basfirinci and Cilingir (2020) noted that CE has significant impact on CO. CE had significant positive effect on purchase intention of domestic products and effect on purchase intention imported items (Basfirinci and Cilingir, 2020; Balabanis *et al.* 2001; Kaynak and Kara, 2001; Upadhyay and Singh, 2006).

The present research was conducted in line with the reasoned action theory. Reasoned action theory (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977), which is one of the theories frequently used to explain consumer behavior with its strong explanatory and simplicity covers the examination of personality traits, beliefs and attitudes. The theory of reasoned action forms the basis of research model. The theory of reasoned action is the determinant of behavior, the intention of individuals towards certain types of action. In the causal action theory, it is accepted that behavior is determined by intention. Behavioral intention refers to a person's tendency to do or not to do a certain behavior (Shimp and Kavas, 1984). In the study, the theory of reasoned action was handled with the attitude part, which it put forward as one of the two determining functions of intention, and the analyses were made on the relations between attitude and intention.

The main thing in consumer ethnocentrism is the attitudes and behaviors of consumers towards domestic and foreign products. The country of origin effect, on the other hand, is the prejudice of consumers against foreign branded or foreign origin products or services, and these two concepts are very closely related to each other (Amri and Prihandono, 2019; Nguyen *et al.* 2023; Thomas *et al.* 2020).

To summarize the relationship between the country of origin effect and consumer ethnocentrism, as consumers' knowledge of consumer ethnocentrism increases and gains importance, they will need to learn more about the country of origin. Research suggests that consumer ethnocentrism influences the purchasing behavior of foreign products and predetermines their purchase (Ramadania *et al.* 2023). Consumer preferences, product evaluation, and purchase intentions are affected by ethnocentrism. Research shows that people's attitudes towards a country's products influence their purchase intention and then lead them to actual purchase (Blazquez-Resino *et al.* 2021).

H₁: Ethnocentrism positively affects purchase intention.

H₂: Country of origin positively affects consumer ethnocentrism.

With the increase in international trade in the last forty years, the development of global markets has changed the nature of competition, its dimensions have changed, the borders between countries have disappeared and countries of origin have also been affected. At the same time, this is among the most important factors affecting the level of competition and purchase intention (Lautianien, 2015).

In fact, it has been revealed that consumers with a high level of ethnocentrism exhibit more positive attitudes towards brands in the local language (Camacho *et al.* 2022). Therefore, it is seen that consumer ethnocentrism has a direct and positive effect on the intention to buy the domestic brand. The person with this tendency thinks of the interests of his country before his interest, desire and happiness. Moreover, COO is known as an indicator in decision making process on consumers (Camacho *et al.* 2020).

Chrysochoidis *et al.* (2007) and Cilingir and Basfirinci (2014) mention that consumer ethnocentrism reflects the normative bias of an individual to prefer local products to international ones. On the other hand, ethnocentrism positively affects consumers' reluctance to purchase foreign goods (Garcia-de-Frutos *et al.* 2018; Suh and Kwon, 2002; Nijssen and Douglas, 2004), and ethnocentrism can be considered as a potential facilitator of anti-consumption (Makri *et al.* 2020). According to Ortega-Egea and García-de-Frutos (2021), ethnocentric consumers are skeptical of foreign and global brands because they believe that they pose challenges for their

country in political, economic, cultural and social aspects. Therefore, ethnocentric consumers think that buying products from different places is more risky.

Results from various studies show that individuals make simple generalizations when making decisions in a complex environment. In such an environment, the name of the country of origin and the image that any brand is associated with can be used as a generalization tool. In other words, the country of origin can act as an umbrella brand in the decision-making process of consumers, either positively or negatively (Ardisa *et al.* 2022; Nguyen *et al.* 2022). Various studies examining consumer behavior in international markets show that information about the country of origin changes the way consumers perceive. Consumers have to act in accordance with their social environment. Therefore, social consumption patterns also affect personal consumption trends (Islam and Hussain, 2022; Prahiawan *et al.* 2022; De Nisco and Oduro, 2022).

H₃: Country of origin positively affects consumer purchase intention.

H₄: Ethnocentrism mediates the relationship between Country of Origin and purchase intention.

2.3. Research model

The research model is as shown in Figure 1. In the model, analyzes will be made to explore the relationship between CO, CE, and purchase intention, and the mediating role of CE between CO and purchase intention.

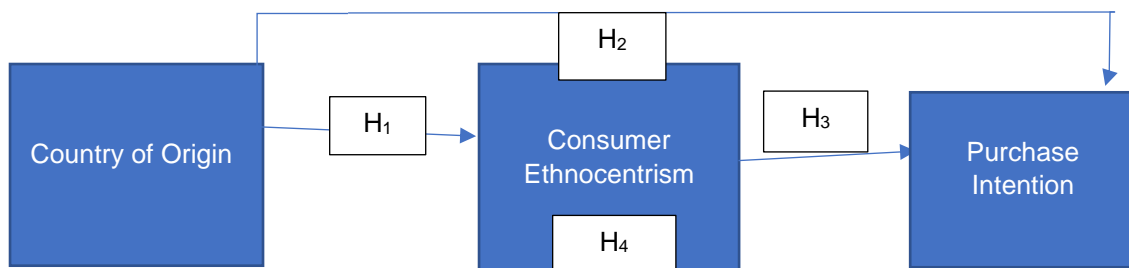


Figure 1. Research model

3. Data and methodology

The questionnaire form was prepared according to the purpose and model of the research. In the research, the CETSCALE developed by Jiménez-Guerrero *et al.* (2014) was applied to determine the ethnocentrism levels of consumers. In order to determine the country of origin and purchasing intentions of the participants, the scale developed by Souiden *et al.* (2011) was applied.

The convenience sampling method, which is one of the non-random sampling methods, was used as the sampling method. The main population of the research consists of all consumers living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Participants who bought local cheese were included in the study. In total, 583 questionnaires were distributed. The questionnaires were collected through face-to-face interviews with the participants in order for the researcher to distribute the questionnaire. Only 421 of them were found suitable for evaluation. Ninety of them could not be analyzed, 49 did not return, and 24 were excluded due to lack of answers. Research data were collected in June 2023.

SEM was used in the analysis of the research data. SEM can be used to investigate mediation (when an intermediate variable explains the relationship between two other variables) and moderation (when the relationship between two variables depends on the value of a third variable).

When the demographic distribution of the participants is examined, it can be observed that 26.60% of the participants identified themselves as Cypriots, 59.86% as Turkish Cypriots, and 10.69% as Turkish. Additionally, 54.63% of the participants were male, 31.12% had

completed high school, and 41.57% held a bachelor's or postgraduate degree. Furthermore, 24.23% of the participants were aged between 35-44, 20.67% were aged between 45-54, 64.85% were married, and 24.23% were single. Moreover, 32.07% of the participants did not have children, while 35.87% had two children. Finally, it was determined that 31.35% of the participants resided in Nicosia, 26.60% in Famagusta, and 21.38% in Kyrenia. According to the data, it has been determined that 23.99% of the participants were employed in the private sector, 12.83% were self-employed, and 18.53% were retired. Furthermore, 67.93% of the participants were born in Cyprus, while 29.45% were born in Turkey. In terms of citizenship, 53.68% were citizens of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and 42.52% held dual citizenship of both TRNC and Turkey. Regarding monthly income, 18.53% of the participants had an income ranging between 12,001 TL and 17,000 TL, 15.68% had an income between 17,001 TL and 22,000 TL, and 15.68% had an income of 37,001 TL and above. Additionally, it was observed that 58.43% of the participants resided in the city center.

4. Results

In this section of the study, descriptive statistics are provided for the scores obtained by participants on the consumer ethnocentrism scale, the consumer purchase intention scale, and the country of origin scale. The correlations between the scores obtained from these scales are also presented.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the scores obtained from the consumer ethnocentrism scale, consumer purchase intention scale, and country of origin scale.

Table 1. Participants' CETSCALE, CPI, and COO scores

	n	\bar{x}	s	Min	Max
Consumer Ethnocentrism Tendencies Scale (CETSCALE)	421	3.42	0.65	1.29	4.71
Consumer Purchase Intention (CPI)	421	4.01	0.64	1.50	5.00
Country of Origin (COO)	421	3.54	0.71	1.00	5.00

According to Table 1, participants obtained a mean score of 3.42 ± 0.65 on the consumer ethnocentrism scale, a mean score of 4.01 ± 0.64 on the consumer purchase intention scale, and a mean score of 3.54 ± 0.71 on the country of origin scale.

Table 2 examines the compliance of participants' scores obtained from the consumer ethnocentrism scale, consumer purchase intention scale, and country of origin scale with the normal distribution using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Skewness-Kurtosis values.

According to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test findings presented in Table 2, it is determined that the participants' scores on the consumer ethnocentrism scale, consumer purchase intention scale, and country of origin scale do not follow a normal distribution. However, Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) have indicated that if the Skewness and Kurtosis values fall within the ± 1.5 range in a dataset, the data can be considered as approximately normally distributed. Therefore, since the participants' scores fall within the ± 1.5 range, it is concluded that the data shows approximately normal distribution.

Table 2. Normality tests of participants' CETSCALE, CPI, and COO scores

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Skewness	Kurtosis
	Statistic	df	p		
Consumer Ethnocentrism Tendencies Scale (CETSCALE)	0.121	421	0.000*	-0.818	0.185
Consumer Purchase Intention (CPI)	0.218	421	0.000*	-0.824	1.423
Country of Origin (COO)	0.184	421	0.000*	-0.996	0.716

Note: **p<0.01.

Due to the normal distribution of scores obtained by participants from the consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale, consumer purchase intention scale, and country of origin scale, the correlations between the scales were examined using Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient.

According to the findings presented in Table 3, a statistically significant and positive correlation was observed between the scores obtained from the consumer ethnocentrism scale and the consumer purchase intention scale ($r=0.571$, $p<0.05$).

Table 3. Correlations between participants' CETSCALE, CPI, and COO scores

	CETSCALE	CPI	COO
Consumer Ethnocentrism Tendencies Scale (CETSCALE)	r 1		
Consumer Purchase Intention (CPI)	r 0.571**	1	
Country of Origin (COO)	r 0.662**	0.584**	1

Note: ** $p<0.01$.

Furthermore, a statistically significant and positive correlation was found between the scores on the consumer ethnocentrism scale and the country of origin scale ($r=0.662$, $p<0.05$).

Lastly, a statistically significant and positive correlation was identified between the scores on the consumer purchase intention scale and the country of origin scale ($r=0.584$, $p<0.05$). Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to examine the mediating role of consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale (CETSCALE) scores in the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale country of origin (COO) scores and consumer purchase intention (CPI) scores. In the research, before using structural equation modeling, the assumptions were examined, and the following assumptions were defined: multivariate normal distribution, Linearity, Large sample size, Continuous measurement variables.

In the study, before conducting structural equation modeling, the assumptions were examined. The Mardia's Skewness value for the dataset's adherence to multivariate normal distribution was found to be 4.223, and the Skewness-Kurtosis values for all variables in the model were below 3. This indicates that the model exhibits multivariate normal distribution. It was determined that there is linearity among the variables included in the model, the sample size is sufficient ($n=421$), and the data is continuous. Based on these results, the available dataset is deemed suitable for the use of structural equation modeling.

In order to conduct mediation analysis according to the criteria proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986): (1) The predictor variable must have a significant impact on the outcome variable. (2) The mediator variable must have a significant impact on the outcome variable. (3) The predictor variable must have a significant impact on the mediator variable. (4) When both the mediator variable and the predictor variable are simultaneously entered into a regression analysis, the previously significant relationship between the predictor and outcome variables should become non-significant or its significance level should decrease. According to the criteria mentioned, the first step is to examine the prediction of consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale scores on consumer purchase intention scores.

Research results in the literature support the research findings (Ardisa *et al.* 2022; Blazquez-Resino *et al.* 2021). Nguyen *et al.*, (2023) revealed that consumer ethnocentrism trends positively affect consumer purchase intention. Hien *et al.* (2020) similarly revealed in their research that there is a significant relationship between the country of origin and purchase intention.

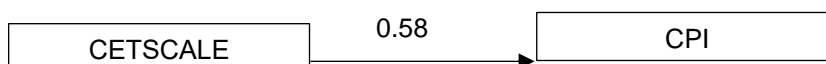


Figure 2. Consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale (CETSCALE) scores predict consumer purchase intention (CPI) scores

When examining Figure 2, it was determined that participants' scores on the consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale significantly and positively predicted their scores on consumer purchase intention ($\beta=0.58$, $p<0.05$).

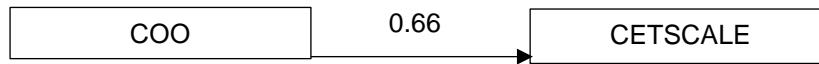


Figure 3. Country of origin (COO) scores predict consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale (CETSCALE) scores

Upon examining Figure 3, it has been determined that participants' scores on the country of origin (COO) Scale significantly and positively predict their scores on the consumer ethnocentrism (CET) Scale ($\beta=0.66$; $p<0.05$).

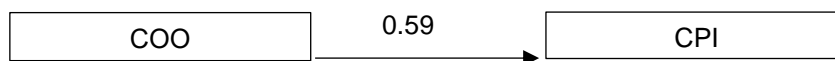


Figure 4. Country of origin (COO) scores predict consumer purchase intention (CPI) scores

According to Figure 4, it has been determined that participants' scores on the country of origin (COO) scale significantly and positively predict their scores on the consumer purchase intention (CPI) Scale ($\beta=0.59$; $p<0.05$).

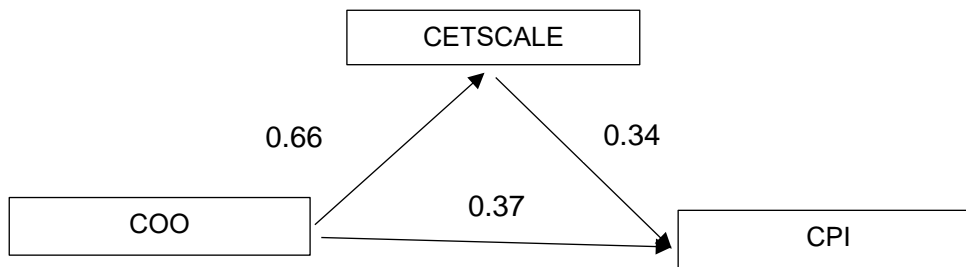


Figure 5. The mediating role of consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale (CETSCALE) scores in the relationship between country of origin (COO) scores and consumer purchase intention (CPI) scores

According to Figure 5, it has been determined that participants' scores on the country of origin (COO) scale significantly and positively predict their scores on the consumer ethnocentrism (CETSCALE) scale ($\beta=0.66$; $p<0.05$). Furthermore, it has been observed that participants' scores on the CETSCALE scale also significantly and positively predict their scores on the consumer purchase intention (CPI) Scale ($\beta=0.34$; $p<0.05$). Finally, it has been found that participants' scores on the COO scale significantly and positively predict their scores on the CPI scale ($\beta=0.34$; $p<0.05$). Previously, it was determined that the COO scale alone significantly predicted the CPI scale with a β coefficient of 0.59. However, when both the COO scale and the CETSCALE scale were included in the model, the β coefficient decreased from 0.59 to 0.37. This indicates that the CETSCALE scores may partially mediate the relationship between COO scores and CPI scores, suggesting a partial mediation role.

Table 4. Direct, indirect, and total effects of consumer ethnocentrism scale and country of origin scale scores on consumer purchase intention scale scores

	Direct	Indirect	Total
CETSCALE	0.208*		0.328*
COO	0.315*	0.186*	0.584*

Note: * $p<0.05$.

Upon examining Table 4, it was determined that there is a statistically significant direct effect ($\beta=0.315$; $p<0.01$) as well as a total effect ($\beta=0.584$; $p<0.01$) of country of origin scale scores on consumer purchase intention scale scores. In terms of the impact of country of origin scale scores on consumer purchase intention scale scores, it has been observed that the indirect effect of consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale scores is also statistically significant and positive ($\beta=-0.186$; $p<0.01$).

Based on the aforementioned results, it has been determined that consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale scores partially mediate the relationship between country of origin scale and consumer purchase intention scale, in other words, it acts as a partial mediator variable.

Many studies on different sectors in the literature reveal that there is a significant and positive relationship between the country of origin, consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention (Bryła, 2022; Camacho *et al.* 2021; Yang *et al.* 2022; Ardisa *et al.* 2022; Ramadania *et al.* 2023). Additionally, many ethnocentric consumers may think that buying foreign products harms their country's economy and their workers are unemployed. This has an impact on purchase intentions (Gantulga and Ganbold, 2022; Brucaj, 2020; Onurlubaş and Altunışık, 2019).

5. Conclusion

The present study aims to determine the mediator role of consumer ethnocentrism between country of origin and purchasing intention. In the study, it is concluded that there is a statistically significant and positive relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and the country of origin. Therefore, it can be said that the country of origin directly affects consumer ethnocentrism.

In terms of the effect of country of origin scale scores on consumer purchase intention scale scores, the indirect effect of consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale scores is also found to be statistically significant and positive. According to the aforementioned results, it is determined that the consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale scores partially mediate the relationship between the country of origin scale and the consumer purchase intention scale, in other words, it serves as a partial mediator variable.

Research shows that companies should pay attention to the ethnocentrism factor while developing long-term strategies for the future. However, the country of origin factor is also important. Because one of the first points that consumers pay attention to when displaying purchasing behavior is the country of origin information, and this information has a great impact on their purchasing behavior. For consumers with a high level of ethnocentrism, country of origin information is decisive. As a result of the research, it was concluded that there is a positive and positive relationship between ethnocentrism, country of origin and purchase intention.

5.1. Practical implications

The research explains the mediating role of consumer ethnocentrism towards the domestic product local cheese on the country of origin and purchase intention. Disclosure of consumer ethnocentrism towards local product purchase intention is especially important for local firms to expand their markets and determine their market strategies.

The fact that consumer ethnocentrism has a positive intermediary role between the purchase intention and the country of origin should focus on the purchasing behavior of consumers. Researching and selecting future target markets, target market segmentation can be applied to companies and industry representatives in deciding whether to isolate the country of origin effect before launching a product or service. If the companies operating in the sector want to increase the purchase intention of the consumer, it is useful to focus on consumer ethnocentrism first.

By leveraging ethnocentrism, local firms can maintain larger market share and increase their profit margins. In line with the results of the study, it is recommended that domestic companies create marketing programs for their target audiences. In addition, competitive advantage can be achieved by focusing on other factors that affect purchase intention. The

research reveals the positive mediator role of ethnocentrism especially for consumers in Northern Cyprus.

In this direction, marketing studies can be carried out by highlighting the country of origin of the products and creating the purchase intention. In order to successfully develop and implement consumers' purchase intentions, the organization must ensure continuous improvement, taking into account the current conditions, the strengths of being a local product. This will provide an opportunity for businesses to develop strategies that are appropriate for consumers.

5.2. Limitations and future research recommendations

The scope of the research is limited to Northern Cyprus and the local product local cheese. Ethnocentrism, country of origin and purchasing intentions of the participants for different local products in Northern Cyprus can be examined.

The research is limited to the quantitative research method and the scales used in line with the research purpose. The opinions of the participants can be examined in depth by conducting the research with qualitative research methods. The sample of the research is determined for Northern Cyprus consumers by convenience sampling method. Therefore, the data are obtained within these limitations. It can be replicated by comparing the purchasing intentions of the generations in terms of the age of the research participants.

In addition, the research is limited to the duration of the research and the opinions of the participants. Cross-sectional research can be done by repeating the research using the same scales. The sample can be expanded to make the research results more generalizable. In a market where different features of products may be important; it may be recommended to conduct additional research on the obstacles that businesses may encounter. The sample size of future studies can be expanded to different destinations, and the results of studies with the participation of individuals from different cultures can be compared. At the same time, consumers' ethnocentrism tendencies and country of origin perception can be examined by considering different factors that affect their purchasing intentions.

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