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Article

# The Role of Religion and Acculturation in the Consumer Ethnocentrism of Turkish Immigrants in Germany

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**Abstract:** Researchers have invested much effort in the understanding of acculturation-relevant factors that influence immigrants' psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. Factors that might have an impact on immigrants' product consumption decisions have comparatively received scarce attention by acculturation and marketing researchers. Immigrants show different product consumption patterns and therefore constitute big consumer groups that can have an impact on both the economy of immigrants' culture of origin and the host society. The present study investigated Turkish immigrants' product consumption ethnocentrism. The sample consisted of 599 youth and adult Turkish in Germany drawn from Cologne, the city with the highest ratio of Turkish people in the country. The study sample represented a very similar demographic make-up of the Turkish people in Cologne. The associations between acculturation strategies, loyalty to religion, and product consumption ethnocentrism were quantitatively analyzed based on a field survey. Research findings indicated that participants in the acculturation mode of separation scored significantly higher for consumer ethnocentrism than those showing other orientations, and those with an assimilation orientation scored the least for consumer ethnocentrism. Among the three religiosity dimensions (behavioral, emotional, cognitive) investigated in the present study, analyses controlling for a range of socio-demographic variables revealed a positive relationship between the behavior dimension of religiosity and consumer ethnocentrism.

**Keywords:** consumer ethnocentrism; religiosity; acculturation; Turkish immigrants

## 1. Introduction

Short or long term residence in a foreign country may force people to fulfill various consuming behaviors to sustain their daily life. In general, the market conditions in the new resident country may differ significantly from the market conditions of their home country in terms of both product availability and consumption behavior types. Thus, short or long term migration leads to intercultural consumer experiences involving specific struggles associated with product search and consumption [1]. Turkish people immigration to Germany started in the 1960s [2], and it is estimated that 2,790,000 Turkish are living nowadays in Germany, constituting the largest ethnic group in the country. Turkish immigrants who crossed the borders and initiated a new life in Germany brought with them their product consumption cultural habits. To the best of our knowledge, no study has investigated

how Turkish immigrants' product consumption has changed, if at all, over the years and what factors contribute to their consumer ethnocentrism, being defined as the tendency of immigrants to prefer the consumption of their own cultural products. Immigrants' consumer ethnocentrism is an important factor that influences their purchasing decisions and, therefore, can have economic and social consequences for both the country of settlement and their own culture, warranting an understanding of the motivation and factors driving the fulfillment of consumer ethnocentrism. Interestingly, this area of study has been scarcely explored in international research on immigrant groups. The current study examines the roles played by acculturation and religion in shaping Turkish immigrants' consumer ethnocentrism in Germany.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Consumer Ethnocentrism

Shimp and Sharma (1987) denoted consumer ethnocentrism as the reluctance of local consumers to purchase foreign products due to their belief that the local economy will be negatively affected if they purchase a non-domestic product [3], causing them in turn to favor domestic products. Relatedly, many consumers hold the belief that it would be highly ethically justifiable to show a purchase preference towards their home country products [4]. Group membership may be an important factor in the consumption ethnocentric behaviors of individuals and societies. While people may remain faithfully loyal to the in-group consumption values during sojourn or immigration experiences, they also become exposed to a wide range of out-group (host country) products and concepts associated with consumption that may affect their own sense of consumer ethnocentrism. Consumer ethnocentrism was studied in the literature using a range of indicators such as preference of home country products [5], attitude towards imported products [6], and willingness to purchase domestic products [7,8]. Studies have generally indicated a positive link between ethnocentrism and a preference towards domestic products [3,9], without this being taken to mean a negative evaluation of the quality of foreign products. People with lower levels of ethnocentric consumption, on the contrary, evaluate local and foreign products based on their properties rather than their cultural origins [5], so that a foreign product becomes more likely purchased if it possesses better qualities than the equivalent local products.

### 2.2. Acculturation

As noted by Rudmin (2009), a particular ethnic group culture is hard to specify with certainty as it includes visible artifacts (e.g., food, architecture), behaviors (e.g., language, social roles) and invisible fundamental beliefs and values that are learned through a life-long enculturation process [10]. Individuals within the same culture may have different views about the invisible psychological aspects of their own culture, and it is claimed to a degree that no individual knows exactly what their culture is with certainty [11]. Nevertheless, individuals have a sense of the degree of similarity they have with their own-culture members and the degree of dissimilarity they have with out-culture members. This becomes clearer when individuals come in contact with out-culture members as, for example, a result of immigration. Acculturation, at the individual level, denotes a second-culture acquisition [10]. Individuals' attitudes and orientation towards their own culture and the culture of settlement during the immigration process affect the degree of their first-culture maintenance and the degree of second-culture acquisition. Berry's (1997) well-known two-dimensional model of acculturation highlights four possible modes of acculturation that immigrants may endorse based on their cultural identity maintenance and willingness to adopt important features of the host country. The modes are as follows [12]:

- i Assimilation: Refers to those immigrants who are unwilling to maintain their own cultural identity but instead interact with and adopt the host culture as their own. In a way, they become detached from their first culture and acculturated into the second (host) culture.

- ii Separation: Refers to those immigrants who maintain their own culture of origin and avoid interaction with the host culture. Therefore, their degree of second-culture acquisition is kept minimal.
- iii Integration: Refers to immigrants who maintain their own culture of origin and also interact with the host culture and adopt important features characteristic of it, thus becoming bicultural.
- iv Marginalization: Refers to those immigrants who show low degrees of cultural identity maintenance and low degrees of interaction with the host culture.

A plethora of research has focused on the examination of the interconnection between immigrants' acculturation modes and their adaptation [13,14]. Less is known, however, about how the acculturation modes relate to immigrants' product consumption behaviors and ethnocentrism. It is envisaged that immigrants who endorse the assimilation acculturation strategy are less likely to show ethnocentric behavioral patterns of product consumption. In contrast, those who adopt a separation mode of acculturation are more likely to be product consumer ethnocentric. Immigrants who endorse an integration mode of acculturation are likely to show a preference towards both cultural and host country products.

The present study hypothesized that:

$H_{1a}$ : Turkish immigrants endorsing the assimilation mode of acculturation will have lower levels of product consumption ethnocentrism than those in the integration or separation modes.

$H_{1b}$ : Turkish immigrants endorsing the separation mode of acculturation will have the highest levels of product consumption ethnocentrism.

$H_{1c}$ : Turkish immigrants endorsing the integration mode of acculturation will show less product consumption ethnocentrism compared to those endorsing separation and more compared to those endorsing assimilation.

$H_{1d}$ : Turkish immigrants endorsing the marginalization mode of acculturation will show the least product consumption ethnocentrism compared to those endorsing the other styles.

### 2.3. Religiosity

Immigrants' religious beliefs and experiences are likely to carry over into the new country of settlement. Relocation to a new country may impose many challenges, and religion for religiously oriented cultures can provide significant assistance and motivation for immigrants in this experience [15]. Religiosity, for instance, can assist immigrants in handling the pressure of adaptation to the host culture and symptoms of depression that may arise due to departing their home country. Connectedly, studies have shown, for instance, a positive relationship between religiosity and happiness, perceived quality of life, and reduced depression [16]. While the role of religiosity in individuals' wellbeing may extend to immigrants [15], immigrants' religious loyalty can also affect certain areas of daily life such as dining habits, rituals associated with cultural events and holidays. For instance, research indicates that religious loyalty in Catholics, Protestants and Jews has an influence on their attitudes concerning dancing, magazines, restaurants, and politics [17].

Religion influences consumer attitudes and behaviors in general [18,19], and their food purchasing decisions and eating habits more specifically [20,21]. The level of compliance with the rules set by religions varies according to individuals' religiosity [22], with those religious tending to show high loyalty to traditional consumption values [18].

In an attempt to address this notion in the present study, a conceptual aspect associated with measuring religiosity was taken into account. Two apparently different approaches to the measurement of religiousness appear in the literature. The two dimensional approach proposed by Allport and Ross (1967) conceptualizes religiousness alongside introversion and extroversion dimensions [23]. Introverted religiousness expresses the significance and meaning of life, while the extroverted religiousness displays religiosity in a social order manner [24]. The three-dimensional approach conceptualizes religiosity in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional terms. The "cognitive aspect"

refers to the individual's faith in God and conceptions arising from this faith; the "behavioral aspect" includes all behaviors generated as a result of this faith such as religious practices, rituals, and prayer; and the "emotional aspect" denotes the individual's psychological state regarding their beliefs and practices, and expectations for success, protection, heavenly reward, or damnation. The introverted and extroverted religiousness dimensions in the two-dimensional approach may be thought of as part of the dimensions specified in the three-dimensional approach. Therefore, cognitive, behavioral and emotional aspects may be presumed to capture more of the individuals' religiousness, and we relied therefore on the three-dimensional approach in the present study investigation of the link between Turkish immigrants' religiosity and their consumer ethnocentrism.

The following hypotheses were tested:

$H_{2a}$ : The emotional dimension of Turkish immigrants' religiosity will associate positively with their product consumption ethnocentrism.

$H_{2b}$ : The behavioral dimension of Turkish immigrants' religiosity will associate positively with their product consumption ethnocentrism.

$H_{2c}$ : The cognitive dimension of Turkish immigrants' religiosity will associate positively with their product consumption ethnocentrism.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Participants

A group of 750 Turkish immigrants living in the city of Cologne in Germany, drawn through convenience sampling methods, was approached to participate in the present study. Five hundred and ninety-nine (50.9% males and 49.1% females) did actually participate through the completion and return of a self-report questionnaire. Of the participants, 16.7% were in the age group of 18–24Y, 12.2% between 25–30Y, 15% between 31–35Y, 30.6% between 36–45Y, 16.7% between 46–55Y, 6.3% between 56–65Y and 2.5% were 66Y or above. In total, 23.7% of the participants reported having a mean monthly income of 1500€ or less, 50.3% earned between 1501 and 3000€, 20.4% earned between 3001 and 4500€, 3.8% earned between 4501 and 6000€, and 1.9% earned 6001€ or more. About 50% of the participants had studied in educational institutions in Turkey and the rest had studied in educational institutions in Germany.

#### 3.2. Measures

##### 3.2.1. Demographic Variables

Four questions sought information on respondents' gender, age, income, and educational level.

##### 3.2.2. Consumer Ethnocentrism

The CETSCALE 9-item scale developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987) [3] was employed to measure the product consumption ethnocentric tendencies of the participants. Participants responded to a five-point Likert scale running from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The measure was reported to be valid and reliable [7,9]. Factor analysis in the present study indicated that the measure items loaded on a single factor. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the measure was 0.90.

##### 3.2.3. Acculturation

Acculturation was assessed using Berry *et al.*'s (2006) 16-item scale that measures acculturation in four life domains, namely tradition, language, social activities and friendship [13]. Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. Factor analysis in the present study supported the distinction between these four acculturation modes, and Cronbach's alpha reliability of the modes were good, 0.67 for assimilation, 0.68 for separation, 0.71 for integration, and 0.82 for marginalization.

### 3.2.4. Religiosity

Participants' religiosity was measured in the present research using the scale developed by Onay (2002) [25] which is designed to measure three religiosity dimensions: (a) cognitive (sample items: "I think that religion is a principal cause of the backwardness of society"; "I think that it is not worth enduring difficulties for the sake of religion"); (b) behavioral (sample items: "I pray privately [nafil] in my own time"; "I feel that I have to obey religious rules") and (c) emotional (sample items: "I expect that God will have mercy upon me on the day of judgment"; "I pray to God"). Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Factor analysis conducted in this study revealed exactly three dimensions with the associated items as expected. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the "Behavioral Dimension", "Emotional Dimension", and "Cognitive Dimension" were, respectively, 0.87, 0.89, and 0.68; with the overall reliability across dimensions being 0.88.

To calculate indices, the items for the different measures were averaged, after reversing negative items where appropriate, with a higher mean score indicating a higher degree of the trait recorded by the measure. Mean scores were used in the analyses. Refer to Table 1 for means and standard deviations of the study scales.

**Table 1.** Means and standard deviations of the scales.

Scale	Mean	SD
Consumer Ethnocentrism	2.68	0.92
Acculturation Modes		
Assimilation	1.96	0.81
Separation	2.69	0.93
Integration	3.87	1.17
Marginalization	2.07	0.85
Religiosity	3.91	0.68
Cognitive	2.26	0.83
Emotional	4.31	0.81
Behavioral	3.78	0.93

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Differences in Consumer Ethnocentrism by Demographic Variables

T-tests revealed nonsignificant gender differences on Consumer Ethnocentrism. ANOVA analyses revealed significant consumer ethnocentrism differences by age ( $F_{(6, 571)} = 4.90, p = 0.001$ ), income ( $F_{(4, 589)} = 4.83, p = 0.001$ ) and educational levels ( $F_{(7, 567)} = 4.39, p = 0.001$ ). Post hoc comparisons indicated that immigrants aged 66Y or above ( $M = 3.76$ ) scored significantly higher than the group aged 18–24Y ( $M = 2.55$ ) and the group aged 36–45Y ( $M = 2.58$ ). For income, post hoc tests indicated that immigrants earning a monthly income of 1500€ or less ( $M = 2.90$ ) had a significantly higher consumer ethnocentrism than immigrants earning 3001–4500€ ( $M = 2.47$ ) and 1501–3000€ ( $M = 2.63$ ). Finally, the post hoc Tukey test related to education levels showed that participants with primary school education ( $M = 3.03$ ) scored significantly higher than the other groups on ethnocentrism.

### 4.2. Acculturation Modes and Consumer Ethnocentrism

We applied K-means cluster analysis to determine and assign participants to the four modes of acculturation. This resulted in clustering 430 (72.33%) participants as integrated, 39 (6.6%) as assimilated, 105 (17.6%) as separated, and 21 (3.5%) as marginalized. ANCOVA analyses controlling for age, income, and educational level were conducted to examine differences among the acculturation modes by consumer ethnocentrism. The analyses revealed that consumer ethnocentrism was significantly related to acculturation modes ( $F_{(3, 575)} = 8.13, p < 0.001$ ). Post hoc comparisons indicated that participants assigned to the acculturation mode of separation scored significantly higher on

consumer ethnocentrism than those assigned to the other modes. Immigrants in the assimilation mode scored the least on consumer ethnocentrism (see Table 2). Thus, the research hypotheses  $H_{1a}$ ,  $H_{1b}$ , and  $H_{1c}$  were supported.

**Table 2.** Differences in Acculturation Modes by Consumer Ethnocentrism.

Product Consumption	Integration (n = 430)		Assimilation (n = 39)		Separation (n = 105)		Marginalization (n = 21)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Consumer Ethnocentrism	2.55 *	0.91	2.20 *	0.87	3.01 *	0.92	2.84	0.81

\*  $p < 0.001$ .

#### 4.3. Religiosity and Consumer Ethnocentrism

Pearson correlations between the religiosity dimensions (behavioral, emotional, cognitive) and consumer ethnocentrism (ETNO) were positive and statistically significant;  $r = 0.24$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for behavioral,  $r = 0.14$ ,  $p < 0.001$  for emotional, and  $r = 0.10$ ,  $p < 0.01$  for cognitive.

Multiple linear regression analysis of the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and the dimensions of religiosity was conducted, controlling for age, income, and educational level. The analysis revealed a positive linear relationship ( $r = 0.22$ ) between the behavioral dimension of religiosity only and consumer ethnocentrism. It was observed that an increase of 1 standardized unit in the behavioral dimension of religiosity contributes to an increase of 0.24 standardized unit in consumer ethnocentrism (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Multiple Linear Regression on the Consumer Ethnocentrism: Coefficients <sup>a</sup>.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	Stat Test T	Stat Sig P-value
	Beta	Standard Error			
ETNO <sup>a</sup>					
Constant	1.632	0.232		7.033	0.001
Behavioral	0.273	0.056	0.247	4.872	0.001
Emotional	−0.003	0.051	−0.002	−0.050	0.960
Cognitive	0.009	0.055	0.008	0.175	0.861

<sup>a</sup> Dependent Variable: (ETNO) Immigrant Consumer Ethnocentrism.

## 5. Conclusions

In our era, the borders separating cultures are becoming diffused and, consequently, sub-cultures emerge. In our multicultural world, where there is a global flow of people, money, knowledge, technology and media, cultures confront each other more frequently both in the personal and product consumption senses. The product consumption behaviors of immigrants may vary depending on a range of factors including acculturation orientations and religiosity.

The present study was designed to primarily investigate the interconnections between Turkish immigrants' acculturation strategies, religiosity, and product consumption ethnocentrism. As a secondary aim, the study sought also to investigate the relationship between socio-demographic variables and product consumption ethnocentrism so that important factors can be taken into consideration in the analyses of the relationship between acculturation or religiosity and product consumption ethnocentrism.

As far as socio-demographic variables are concerned, the study findings revealed that product consumption ethnocentrism among Turkish in Germany differed by age, income, and education. Specifically, Turkish immigrants in the old age bracket (*i.e.*, 66Y or above) seem to show more consumer ethnocentrism than younger immigrants, and those with lower monthly income (*i.e.*,  $\leq 1500\text{€}$ ) or educational attainment (*i.e.*, primary schooling) seem also to have higher consumer ethnocentrism.

The findings imply that there would be a greater tendency among older Turkish immigrants, and/or those with lower income and/or educational achievements to prefer Turkish-made products.

Controlling for these specific variables, and in support of the study hypotheses ( $H_{1a}$ ,  $H_{1b}$ , and  $H_{1c}$ ), the findings indicated that Turkish immigrants assigned to the acculturation mode of separation showed a higher level of product consumption ethnocentrism than those assigned to the other modes. Immigrants in the assimilation mode scored the least on consumer ethnocentrism. It should be noted that Turkish immigrants tended to mainly show an integration (72.33%) or separation (17.6%) acculturation tendency. It would be thus envisaged that Turkish made products are more likely consumable among those endorsing the separation mode of acculturation; Turkish immigrants who felt integrated tend to be less product consumer ethnocentric and are likely to have favorable attitudes towards non-Turkish made products.

Finally, while simple correlational analyses revealed that each of the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of religiosity had a positive association with consumer ethnocentrism, the behavioral dimension had the higher correlation (0.24) and, most importantly, it was the only dimension that maintained its association with consumer ethnocentrism controlling for socio-demographic variables. The finding implies that Turkish made products are more likely to be consumed among Turkish immigrants who practice religion, not simply those who have cognitive or emotional association with their religion.

The study findings are overall in alignment with previous research concluding that cultural and religious factors influence product consumption decisions [18,19]. Our findings suggest that product consumption ethnocentrism among Turkish immigrants differs according to age, income, educational attainment, acculturation orientation, and religiosity. For successful Turkish and non-Turkish product marketing among Turkish immigrants in Germany, we recommend that marketers take note of these factors and develop marketing mix strategies to accommodate the different needs of the targets.

The findings of the present study are limited by the reliance on correlational methods and participants sampling just from Cologne. Future studies might be able to recruit a more representative sample and employ experimental methods that would allow cause-effect conclusions. Besides, the study was conducted among Turkish immigrants, limiting cross-cultural comparisons. Future research would be advised to look at the roles of acculturation orientations and religiosity across a range of cultural minority groups in Germany.

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**Author Contributions:** Nurdan Sevim and Elif Eroglu Hall were responsible for the data collection; Nurdan Sevim, Elif Eroglu Hall, and Hisham Motkal Abu-Rayya developed the research design of the study and strategies of data analyses, and they equally engaged in the writing up of all paper's sections.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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