

The Impact of Hard and Soft Ethnocentrism on Consumer Purchase Intentions: Moderating Role of Country-of-Origin Image

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Abstract

Purpose– This study investigates the distinct effects of hard ethnocentrism (HET) and soft ethnocentrism (SET) on consumer purchase intentions (PIN) toward foreign products, with a focus on the moderating role of country of origin (COO) image. The study proposes that HET negatively impacts PIN, while SET may positively influence it.

Design/Methodology/Approach– A structured questionnaire was administered to 304 Bangladeshi consumers using convenience sampling. Constructs were measured using scales supported by existing literature and analyzed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Findings– Results confirm that HET significantly decreases PIN, whereas SET enhances it. Furthermore, a favorable COO image has a strong positive effect on PIN and moderates the impact of both HET and SET—weakening HET’s negative influence and amplifying SET’s positive effect.

Research Implications– The study offers theoretical advancements by distinguishing between HET and SET and reinforces COO’s role in shaping consumer buying behavior.

Originality/Value– The research introduces an original distinction between hard and soft ethnocentrism, demonstrating their differential impacts on purchase intentions in Bangladesh, with country of origin as a key moderator, offering valuable theoretical and practical insights for consumer behavior in emerging markets.

Keywords: Consumer Ethnocentrism, Hard Ethnocentrism, Soft Ethnocentrism, Country of Origin, Purchase Intentions

1 Introduction

The globalization of markets has significantly broadened the array of choices available to consumers, including both domestic and imported goods. In this context, consumer ethnocentrism (CET) has become a pivotal construct in the field of international marketing, offering insights into the decision-making processes that govern preferences for local versus foreign products (Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Existing literature overwhelmingly treats CET as a

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unidimensional construct, primarily emphasizing its negative influence on purchase intentions toward foreign goods (Gbadamosi, 2019; N. H. Nguyen et al., 2023). However, recent socio-economic dynamics suggest that consumers' ethnocentric attitudes may not be universally rigid or hostile toward foreign products, especially in emerging economies. This evolving context calls for a more nuanced examination of CET.

According to scholarly research, consumer ethnocentrism (CET) has both positive and negative effects on purchasing intentions (PIN) (Felix, 2023; Vuong & Khanh Giao, 2020). The perceived relationship between a brand's quality and global identity dictates how CET affects PIN. In particular, when customers believe that a product is of lower quality, CET tends to decline (Wang & Chen, 2004). Additionally, CET has a greater impact on more expensive goods (Balabanis & Siamagka, 2022). PIN can therefore be positively shaped by elements like perceived product quality and the image of the place of origin, whereas CET may encourage negative views toward imported goods (N. H. Nguyen et al., 2023; Zeren et al., 2020).

It has also been shown that the country of origin can play a pivotal role in influencing consumer preferences for domestically produced goods (Aguilar-Rodríguez & Arias-Bolzmann, 2023a; Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004). Consumers who are in developing nations might display reduced levels of ethnocentrism leading to favoring brands that originate from developed countries (Reardon et al., 2005; Shoham et al., 2017). On the contrary, consumers in developed nations typically exhibit higher levels of ethnocentrism, demonstrating a preference for domestically produced goods perhaps for their superior perceived quality (Güneren & Öztüren, 2008). Consumers may simultaneously exhibit pronounced ethnocentric sentiments toward their country of origin as well as hold favorable attitudes toward foreign products. This phenomenon is particularly evident among some immigrant consumer groups (Areiza-Padilla et al., 2021).

The traditional view of ethnocentrism as a monolithic construct, on the other hand, overlooks its nuanced manifestations creating a necessity of a more granular approach to understand its impact on consumer decision-making. This study introduces a split conceptualization of CET, distinguishing between hard ethnocentrism (HET) and soft ethnocentrism (SET), and examines their differential effects on purchase intentions toward foreign products, while at the same time examining the country of origin (COO) image serving as a moderating factor.

For Bangladesh, a rising economy with a strong sense of national identity and increasing integration into international markets, this study is extremely pertinent. Bangladeshi consumers, akin to those in other developing countries, experience a conflict between cultural pride and the appeal of foreign products, which are often perceived as embodying superior quality or prestige (Chaturvedi et al., 2024). The proliferation of foreign brands, however, facilitated by e-commerce and globalization, poses challenges to these inclinations. Examining the roles of hard ethnocentrism (HET) and soft ethnocentrism (SET) in shaping purchase behavior in this context yields critical insights for marketers seeking to effectively engage such markets while remaining sensitive to local values and sentiments.

The theoretical foundation of this study draws on established frameworks, including the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that purchase intentions are shaped by

attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. CET influences these attitudes by framing domestic products as morally or economically superior, while COO shapes perceptions of foreign product quality. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) further informs the study, suggesting that ethnocentrism stems from in-group favoritism, where consumers valorize their cultural group's products while distancing themselves from out-group alternatives. By integrating these theories, the study proposes that HET exerts a stronger negative effect on purchase intentions toward foreign products compared to SET, which may have a positive or neutral effect. Additionally, a favorable COO image is hypothesized to positively influence purchase intentions and moderate the relationships between ethnocentrism and purchase intentions, reducing the negative impact of HET and enhancing the positive influence of SET.

A major gap in the existing literature is that there is a lack of differentiation between varying intensities and expressions of ethnocentrism. Some consumers will show extreme opposition to foreign products (what we term as Hard Ethnocentrism- HET), while some consumers have affection to local products without denying foreign products (Soft Ethnocentrism- SET). In past studies, there is a sparse tendency to differentiate the forms, and the opportunity to explain the different consumer reaction to them in the globalized markets is lost (Durço et al., 2021). Failure to make such specific dimensions results in studies overlooking the various factors at work in functions of consumer behavior and oversimplifies the same.

Adding to this complexity, the Country-of-Origin (COO) image is widely recognized as a pivotal factor shaping consumer perceptions of product quality and purchase intentions (Pappu et al., 2006; Rezvani et al., 2012). Nevertheless, little empirical research has been conducted on the moderating role of COO with respect to purchase intentions of different types of ethnocentrism. Whereas there is a large body of research recognizing that positive COO perceptions can offset consumer resistance intentions (Lee, 2022), few studies have systematically tested the moderating potential of COO between HET/SET and low purchase intentions.

This study responds to these gaps by proposing and empirically testing a conceptual framework that differentiates between Hard and Soft Ethnocentrism and examines how Country-of-Origin Image moderates their effects on purchase intentions toward foreign products. We argue that:

- HET will exert a stronger negative influence on purchase intentions due to its rigid nationalistic stance.
- SET may have a neutral or even positive impact, as soft ethnocentric consumers value domestic products but remain open to foreign alternatives.
- A favorable COO image can attenuate the negative impact of HET and amplify the positive effect of SET on purchase intentions.

By conducting comprehensive quantitative investigations and testing hypotheses, our study sheds light on the dual role of ethnocentrism and COO: as HET influencing PIN negatively and as SET affecting PIN positively. Through this research, we aim to make significant theoretical contributions to the fields of ethnocentrism and purchase intention. We uncover and present the

specific role played by positive country of origin image within the context of hard and soft ethnocentric consumers choices.

Research Objectives:

This study aims to:

- i. Distinguish between Hard and Soft Ethnocentrism and assess their respective impacts on purchase intentions toward foreign products.
- ii. Examine the moderating role of Country-of-Origin Image in shaping the relationship between ethnocentrism (both HET and SET) and purchase intentions.

By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to refining CET theory and offers practical insights into market strategies in ethnocentric consumer segments. Moreover, we provide practical implications for marketers, as understanding the HET-SET dichotomy enables tailored strategies that address varying levels of ethnocentric resistance. These findings offer valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners in fostering effective strategies.

2 Literature background and hypotheses

Consumer ethnocentrism and country of origin perception significantly influence purchase intentions by shaping consumer attitudes and preferences. Ethnocentrism leads consumers to favor domestic products, often due to perceived quality and national pride, while country of origin perceptions can either enhance or diminish the appeal of foreign products. These factors collectively impact consumer decision-making processes and marketing strategies.

2.1 Consumer Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism, as articulated by Sumner (1907), is a sociological construct that denotes a perspective wherein individuals perceive their own cultural group as superior and normative relative to others. This concept has been extended into the domain of marketing and consumer behavior, culminating in the development of consumer ethnocentrism (CET). Shimp and Sharma (1987) define CET as “the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products” (p. 280). Contemporary interpretations of ethnocentrism, however, suggest an evolving dynamic, wherein individuals may simultaneously maintain a strong appreciation for their own cultural identity while exhibiting openness and respect toward other cultures.

Ethnocentric consumers with high levels of ethnocentrism show clear preference to the locally produced goods and antipathy to foreign brand, due to such factors as national pride, threats towards the native markets perceived, or patriotic feelings or prejudice against countries of origin of foreign goods (Chaturvedi et al., 2024; De Nisco et al., 2016; Durvasula et al., 1997; Narang, 2016; Trivedi et al., 2024). This preference does not end with national goods, but it continues with a preference for local goods should it be in competition with a national or import option (Fernández-Ferrín & Bande-Vilela, 2013; Onozaka & McFadden, 2011). Such inclinations reflect a broader tendency to valorize the cultural artifacts and meanings associated with one’s own social group while distancing oneself from those of out-groups, often viewing

the latter with skepticism or disapproval (Acikdilli et al., 2018; Aguilar-Rodríguez et al., 2025; El Banna et al., 2018; Tajfel, 1982). The act of purchasing foreign products, for ethnocentric consumers, is often perceived as a violation of domestic economic interests. Notably, the degree of ethnocentric attitudes may fluctuate and as a result can become more pronounced in specific contexts such as economic crises, pandemics, or geopolitical conflicts. All these can amplify preferences for local products (Hanchukova et al., 2024; Miftari et al., 2021).

2.1.1 Hard vs Soft Ethnocentrism

Chryssochoidis et al. (2007) first incorporated the concepts of Hard ethnocentrism (HET) and Soft ethnocentrism (SET). HET and SET represent two distinct manifestations of ethnocentric attitudes. Hard ethnocentrism is characterized by a rigid belief in the superiority of one's own cultural norms and values which eventually leads to the devaluation of other cultures (Wan, 2018). Judging other cultures strictly by the standards of one's own is a common outcome, which can result in a generalized contempt for members of other groups (Wan, 2018). SET can often be associated with in-group favouritism, where only those within the same cultural or ethnic group gets cooperation (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006).

Soft ethnocentrism, on the contrary, reflects a softer view, where individuals may recognize cultural differences and still hold a preference for their own culture. SET can lead to a sense of pride without necessarily devaluing other cultures (Etinson, 2018). While hard ethnocentrism can lead to significant deterrence toward foreign products, soft ethnocentrism may foster a more inclusive environment which as a consequence allow for appreciation of foreign products without the extremes of superiority (Chryssochoidis et al., 2007).

2.2 Purchase intentions (PIN)

Behavioral framework such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) discusses the concept of “intention” that describes Purchase intention (PIN) (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen et al., 1977). PIN is identified to refer to an individual’s deliberate willingness to spend effort towards acquiring a certain product (Spears & Singh, 2004). Based on Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) and further refinement (Ajzen, 1991), normative beliefs (perceived social expectations from significant others) form PIN with the mechanism of social influence (Aguilar-Rodríguez & Arias-Bolzmann, 2023b; Jia et al., 2023). Intention is therefore the willingness or ability or a person to commit to some specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). A purchase intention refers to an intention of a consumer to buy and use imported foreign products (Narang, 2016). In the domain of marketing, in its turn, PIN is a crucial construct for predicting future purchasing behavior of consumers, it is related to the propensity of prospective buyers to make a purchase (Teng et al., 2018).

2.3 Consumer ethnocentrism (CET) and purchase intentions (PIN)

Existing research indicates an inverse relationship between consumer ethnocentrism (CET) and purchase intention toward foreign products (PIN). A study examining Swedish and Finnish consumers' attitudes toward national airlines revealed that CET directly reduces PIN while also indirectly diminishing it by negatively influencing consumer perceptions. Notably, this adverse effect was less pronounced among frequent travelers (Felix, 2023).

Contrasting findings by Aguilar-Rodríguez and Arias-Bolzmann (2023b) suggest that CET may positively correlate with PIN when consumers evaluate domestic goods, though this relationship varies depending on whether individuals are in their home country or abroad. Consumer preference for domestic products is thus contingent on country-of-origin effects (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004). Further analysis by Jia et al. (2023) demonstrates that CET and evaluations of domestic products function as motivational and cognitive mediators between social norms and national purchase intentions. Supporting this, Güneren and Öztüren (2008) found that consumers with higher ethnocentric tendencies exhibit a stronger inclination to purchase domestically produced goods. Additionally, entrepreneurs integrate individual, social, and cultural cues from consumers to shape their strategic decisions (Niemi et al., 2022). These insights collectively highlight the complex interplay between consumer ethnocentrism, social influences, and purchasing behavior.

Prior studies have always indicated inverse relationship between consumer ethnocentrism (CET) and the tendency to consume foreign products (Abdul-Latif et al., 2024; Amal et al., 2024; Gbadamosi, 2019; Makanyeza & Du Toit, 2017; L. Nguyen et al., 2019). On the other hand, consumer purchase intention has positively been established to influence actual purchasing behavior (Amal et al., 2024). In particular, for the Vietnamese customers, CET was revealed to have a detrimental effect on both the perceived image of a country and the intention to buy Chinese imported goods (L. Nguyen et al., 2019).

HET in general, significantly, influences purchase intentions, where consumers with high ethnocentric tendencies show a strong preference for local products over imported ones (Durço et al., 2021). In the Myanmar textile market, hard ethnocentrism is evident as consumers exhibit a strong preference towards their local textiles. This attitude is often driven by insecurity and habituation, which significantly affect purchase intentions (Htet, 2022). Soft consumer ethnocentrism involves a preference for domestic products without a strong aversion to foreign goods as found with Brazilian consumer (Durço et al., 2021).

Miguel et al. (2023) reported a prevalence of soft ethnocentrism (SET) among Portuguese consumers. Durço et al. (2021) examined varying degrees of consumer ethnocentrism (CET) among Argentine, Uruguayan, and Brazilian consumers, revealing that individuals exhibiting hard ethnocentrism (HET) identified as conservative and demonstrated a strong preference for national products, driven by perceptions of superior taste, quality, and nationalistic sentiment. Conversely, consumers with SET were characterized as more liberal, typically possessing higher educational attainment, and displayed positive attitudes and intentions toward imported products, attributed to perceived enhancements in quality, although patriotic tendencies persisted.

From these evidences from the literature this study proposes that:

- Hypothesis 1** Hard ethnocentrism has a significant negative effect on purchase intentions toward foreign products.
- Hypothesis 2** Soft ethnocentrism has a positive effect on purchase intentions compared to hard ethnocentrism.

2.4 Perceptions of the country of origin (COO) and purchase intentions (PIN)

The country of origin (COO) plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' perceptions of products and composition of the brands and thus becomes determinant in the determination of their purchase intentions. COO is an important cue about the product attributes, and it directs consumers' judgements of the quality of the products to link it with the country of origin (Thakor & Katsanis, 1997). Some recent studies suggest that COO role is changing in the sphere of digital marketplaces in which e-commerce might undermine origin cues while boosting trust-based signals (Durço et al., 2021). Therefore, though COO is still critical in affecting purchase decisions, the influence of COO depends on the contexts, and different marketing strategies are thus needed. Previous research has shown that country image has an immediate impact on the purchase intentions (Rezvani et al., 2012). Additionally, Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey (2006) found that COO contributes to differing levels of perceived product quality. The interplay between product familiarity and COO hinges on theoretical frameworks that elucidate how consumers rely on origin cues to inform their purchase intentions (Rezvani et al., 2012). Overall, COO encapsulates the extent to which the manufacturing location influences consumer evaluations of a product (Elliott & Cameron, 1994). Thus, COO emerges as a fundamental factor shaping consumer purchase intentions.

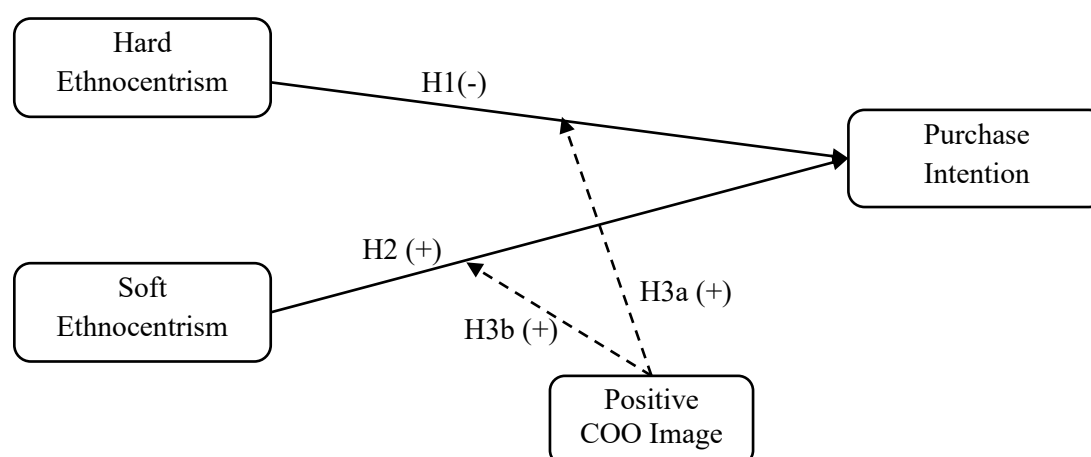


Figure 1: Conceptual model: suggested hypothesis on the relations among the research constructs.

2.5 Perceptions of the country of origin (COO) as a moderator

Empirical evidence demonstrates that a product's country of origin (COO) serves as a significant determinant of perceived quality, subsequently impacting consumer purchase intentions. A study examining Korean skincare products in the Indonesian market revealed that favorable COO image positively correlated with both perceived quality and purchase intention, with consumer ethnocentrism (CET) functioning as a moderating factor (Lee, 2022).

Consumers with elevated CET levels typically exhibit reduced trust and affinity toward foreign COOs. However, product-related associations tied to COO can substantially shape consumer trust and price evaluations, ultimately affecting purchasing decisions (Li & Xie, 2021). Interestingly, research indicates that consumer attitudes and buying behaviors are often more

strongly linked to brand-country perceptions than to the actual COO (Pappu et al., 2006; Story & Godwin, 2023; Tomić Maksan et al., 2019).

Although ethnocentrism generally reinforces domestic product preference, emerging findings suggest it does not consistently amplify COO's effect on perceived quality, pointing to a nuanced relationship that warrants additional investigation (González-Cabrera & Trelles-Arteaga, 2021).

Given these diverse findings, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis 3a Country of origin moderates the relationship between hard ethnocentrism and purchase intentions, such that a favorable country image reduces the negative effect.

Hypothesis 3b Country of origin moderates the relationship between soft ethnocentrism and purchase intentions, such that a favorable country image enhances purchase intentions further.

3 Methodology

A quantitative research approach is adopted in this study to examine the distinct effects of Hard Ethnocentrism (HET) and Soft Ethnocentrism (SET) on consumers' purchase intentions toward foreign products, along with the moderating role of Country-of-Origin (COO) Image. The chosen methodology supports the study's goal of gathering empirical evidence via systematic data collection and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

Guided by a positivist epistemological stance, this research employs a cross-sectional survey design using structured questionnaires (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The choice of research methods was driven by the goal of obtaining objective responses from the targeted participants. We believe that the questions posed to respondents elicited impartial and objective responses in a positivistic manner. Our assessment of ethnocentrism, perception towards country of origin, and purchase intention was conducted without bias or personal prejudice. The survey method is appropriate for testing theoretical relationships in behavioral research and for generating quantifiable data suitable for statistical analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.2 Sampling and data collection

We collected data from all over the country- Bangladesh. To gather data from respondents, we utilized a non-probability convenience sampling technique. The target population included Bangladeshi consumers from various professional backgrounds, ensuring diversity in age, education, and occupation. Although convenience sampling limits generalizability, it is a common and acceptable approach in exploratory studies focused on theory testing rather than population estimation (Saunders et al., 2009). A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed; out of which, 304 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 60.8%, and all valid responses were used for analysis.

3.3 Operationalization of measures

All measurement items were adapted from validated scales in prior literature to ensure content validity and reliability. We utilized established frameworks and referred to relevant literature to guide the operationalization. The constructs and their sources are as follows:

Table 1 Questionnaire items with their Mean, Standard Deviation

Constructs	Codes	Measuring items	Mean	SD
Hard ethnocentrism (HET)	HET1	It is unpatriotic to buy foreign products.	4.944	1.619
	HET2	Buying foreign-made products hurts our local economy.	4.763	1.621
	HET3	Only products made in my country should be purchased.	5.138	1.772
	HET4	Purchasing foreign products is like betraying my country.	4.878	1.715
	HET5	Imported goods should be subject to substantial tariffs to restrict their influx into the domestic market.	5.220	1.588
Soft ethnocentrism (SET)	SET1	I prefer to buy products made in my country whenever possible.	4.931	1.581
	SET2	I feel good when I purchase domestic products, but I don't mind buying foreign ones if needed.	5.132	1.391
	SET3	Products from my country are my first choice, but foreign products are acceptable too.	4.934	1.389
	SET4	Buying domestic products supports my country's growth, though foreign products also have value.	4.836	1.740
Country of Origin (COO)	COO1	I trust products that come from developed countries.	5.477	1.217
	COO2	Products from ethical countries are reliable and innovative.	5.368	1.224
	COO3	I have a positive image of products manufactured in countries whose accountability is high.	5.431	1.199
Purchase Intentions (PIN)	PIN1	I think that purchasing foreign products is not a bad idea.	4.809	1.969
	PIN2	I think that purchasing foreign products is safe.	4.885	1.765
	PIN3	I have resources, time, and willingness to purchase overseas products.	5.030	1.940
	PIN4	I would probably buy foreign products.	4.964	1.852
	PIN5	I will consider switching to foreign brands.	5.118	1.880

Hard Ethnocentrism (HET): Adapted from the CETSCALE (Shimp & Sharma, 1987), using the five-item subset defined by Chryssochoidis et al. (2007) to capture rigid ethnocentric attitudes (e.g., “Buying foreign-made products hurts our local economy”).

Soft Ethnocentrism (SET): Also adapted from Chryssochoidis et al. (2007), comprising four items that reflect a preference for domestic products without hostility toward foreign ones (e.g., “I feel good when I purchase domestic products, but I don’t mind buying foreign ones if needed”).

Country-of-Origin Image (COO): The Country of Origin (COO) has been conceptualized as a general perception towards foreign product supplying country. COO was measured using a four-items scale adapted from Han (1989), Roth and Romeo (1992) focusing on trust, ethical production, and perceived innovation associated with foreign countries.

Purchase Intentions (PIN): Finally, the scale of Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991) and Spears & Singh (2004) were used with some modifications to match the context of foreign product consumption, modified to reflect foreign product purchase contexts (e.g., “I would probably buy foreign products”).

Detailed information regarding the operationalization of measures can be found in Table 1.

A seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), were utilized for all the constructs of the current study. The questionnaire consisted of a total of 17 Likert scale questions. Additionally, the questionnaire included 7 general questions about the respondents’ age, education, and occupation, which provided valuable demographic insights.

3.4 Data analysis

The proposed conceptual model was evaluated using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) methodology, as outlined by Sarstedt et al. (2021) and Szakos et al. (2021). Initially, the measurement instrument was assessed for validity and reliability to ensure robust quality, employing the SmartPLS 4.0 software. Subsequently, structural equation modelling analyses (SEM) were performed in order to test the proposed relationships. The PLS path modeling is known as one of the established methods to estimate complex cause and effect relationship models in the management research (Gudergan et al., 2008). In addition, PLS-SEM is highly adept at dealing with complicated models that have many constructs, indicators, and structural relationships (Hair, 2017). Since the main aim of theory build-up is to seek relationship and their directions, strengths and their corresponding observable metrics, PLS-SEM is deemed suitable. The advanced, second-generation data analysis capabilities of the SmartPLS 4.0 software were utilized to perform the SEM analyses.

4 Data analysis of results

4.1 Descriptive data

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive data of the 304 respondents who participated in this study. The gender distribution of the respondents is nearly balanced, with 48.7% male and 51.3% female. The majority (51.3%) fall within the 31-40 years age group while we have 31.9% from age 21-30 years and 16.8% from age 41-50 years respectively. Regarding occupation, the highest proportion is in service (34.5%), while students (17.8%) and businesspersons (17.1%) follow. In terms of education, over half (54.9%) are postgraduates, 23.4% undergraduates, and 17.8% graduates, while only 3.9% have primary education. The data suggest that most respondents are well-educated professionals aged between 31–40 years, with a slight female majority.

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of the samples

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	148	48.7
	Female	156	51.3
Age Group	21–30 years	97	31.9
	31–40 years	156	51.3
	41–50 years	51	16.8
Occupation	Business	52	17.1
	Homemaker	47	15.5
	Student	54	17.8
	Self-employed	18	5.9
	Service	105	34.5
Education Level	Others	28	9.2
	Primary Education	12	3.9
	Undergraduate	71	23.4
	Graduate	54	17.8
	Postgraduate	167	54.9

4.2 Reliability and validity analysis

In order to test the measurement model, this study tested the reliability and validity of the constructs. The factor loadings of the items were from 0.828 to 0.980. The results showed that the composite reliability of all the latent variables is above 0.8 and that exceeds the threshold recommended by Field (2007), thus demonstrating robust reliability. Similarly, Cronbach's coefficient alpha, which has been renowned as the standard criterion used for the evaluation of the internal consistency of the multi-item scales (Saunders et al., 2009), was employed. According to Nunnally (1994), the minimum acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha is 0.7. The

results indicated that the Cronbach's alpha values for all the constructs were greater than 0.88; this implies a high level of internal consistency and reliability of the items with the variables.

The results of the reliability analysis, including the item loadings, are presented in Table 3. Validity was evaluated through convergent and discriminant validity analyses. Convergent validity is established when the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct is 0.5 or greater. As shown in Table 3, the AVE values for all constructs surpassed the 0.5 threshold, consistent with the guidelines provided by Wong (2013).

Fornell–Larcker Criterion is used to assess discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) methods. As per the Fornell–Larcker criterion, the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor must exceed the correlation coefficients between that factor and all other factors. Henseler et al. (2015) stated that the HTMT value of an effect should be less than 0.90. The results show that HTMT values were less than 0.90 which confirms discriminant validity (Table 4).

The Goodness of the model was evaluated based on the strength of the structural paths, as indicated by the R^2 values for the dependent variables (Briones Peñalver et al., 2018). According to Falk and Miller (1992), R^2 values should be equal to or greater than 0.1 to

demonstrate acceptable explanatory power. The findings, presented in Table 5, confirm that all R^2 values exceed 0.1, thereby establishing the model's predictive capability.

Table 3 Reliability Analysis

Items	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Hard ethnocentrism (HET)		0.966	0.974	0.881
HET1	0.924			
HET2	0.919			
HET3	0.965			
HET4	0.904			
HET5	0.980			
Soft ethnocentrism (SET)		0.880	0.917	0.733
SET1	0.828			
SET2	0.856			
SET3	0.868			
SET4	0.872			
Country of Origin (COO)		0.938	0.961	0.890
COO1	0.958			
COO2	0.945			
COO3	0.928			
Purchase Intentions (PIN)		0.966	0.973	0.880
PIN1	0.916			
PIN2	0.934			
PIN3	0.938			
PIN4	0.957			
PIN5	0.944			

Additionally, the Q^2 metric was used to assess the predictive relevance of the endogenous constructs. A Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates that the model possesses predictive relevance. The results, as reported in Table 5, demonstrate significant predictive relevance for the constructs. We evaluated the Goodness of Fit (GoF) to determine the overall model fit. The calculated GoF value of 0.755 indicates an acceptable model fit, surpassing the threshold of $GoF > 0.36$ as recommended by Wetzels et al. (2009). Consequently, this study affirms that the research model demonstrates a robust overall fit.

Table 4 Discriminant validity results

	HET	SET	COO	PIN
HET	0.939	0.577	0.045	0.487
SET	-0.526	0.856	0.104	0.501
COO	0.033	0.036	0.944	0.614
PIN	-0.474	0.472	0.587	0.938

Notes: The diagonal and italicized values represent the square roots of the AVE. The values below the diagonal indicate the correlations between the constructs, while the values above the diagonal represent the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) values.

To assess the presence of multicollinearity among the predictor constructs in the structural model, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were examined. As presented in Table 5, all

VIF values are well below the commonly accepted threshold of 5.0, indicating no serious multicollinearity issues. Specifically, the VIF values range from 1.398 to 1.771, suggesting that the predictors are sufficiently independent of each other. These results confirm that the estimated path coefficients are reliable and not distorted due to collinearity among constructs, thereby ensuring the validity of the structural model.

Table 5 Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Values for Predictor Constructs

Predictor Construct	VIF
Country of Origin (COO)	1.444
Hard Ethnocentrism (HET)	1.515
Soft Ethnocentrism (HET)	1.501
COO x HET -> PIN	1.771
COO x SET -> PIN	1.398

4.3 Structural Model and Hypotheses testing

The structural model was used to identify the path relationships between the constructs in the research model. This hypothesis was tested at a significant level of $p < .05$. The relationship between variables was calculated by t-statistic and path coefficient (β). The PLS results for the structural model are given in Table 6.

Table 6 Analysis results

	Path coefficient	Std deviation	T statistics	p values
Direct effect				
HET -> PIN	-0.288	0.032	9.062	0.000
SET -> PIN	0.317	0.038	8.316	0.000
Moderation effect				
COO x HET -> PIN	0.282	0.033	8.573	0.000
COO x SET -> PIN	0.094	0.032	2.902	0.002
R^2	0.674			
Q^2	0.666			

4.3.1 Test Results of Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 aims to evaluate the extent to which Hard ethnocentrism (HET) significantly influences Purchase Intentions (PIN). The hypothesis test results indicate a statistically significant negative effect of HET on PIN ($\beta = -0.288$, $t = 9.062$, $p < 0.000$). These findings suggest that, within the context of this study, HET negatively contributes to purchase intention and consequently, hypothesis 1 is supported.

4.3.2 Test Results of Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 aims to evaluate the extent to which Soft ethnocentrism (SET) has a weaker negative effect on purchase intentions compared to hard ethnocentrism. Test results show a statistically significant positive effect of SET on PIN ($\beta = 0.317$, $t = 8.316$, $p < 0.000$). These findings suggest that, within the context of this study, SET positively impacts purchase intention. Consequently, hypothesis 2 is supported.

4.3.3 Test Results of Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3a proposes that the negative influence of HET on purchase intention would be decreased by favorable country of origin image, such that a favorable country image reduces the negative effect. The moderating effect of COO is found significant ($\beta = .282$, $t = 8.573$, $p = .000$). This shows that COO positively moderates the relationship between HET and PIN.

Again, Hypothesis 3b proposes that the influence of SET on purchase intention would be enhanced by a favorable country of origin image, such that a favorable country image enhances the effect. The moderating effect of COO is found significant ($\beta = .094$, $t = 2.902$, $p = .002$). This shows that COO positively moderates the relationship between SET and PIN although the effect is not so strong. The results of the hypotheses tests are summarized in Table 5.

5 Discussion

This study aimed at investigating the effect of different types of consumer ethnocentrism—Hard Ethnocentrism (HET) and Soft Ethnocentrism (SET) and the purchase intentions of foreign products with specific emphasis on moderating effect in the Country-of-Origin (COO) Image. The findings offer valuable insight on the complexity of consumer behaviour in the emerging economies like Bangladesh.

The study validates the prior literature which demonstrates that HET (hard ethnocentrism) produces a considerable adverse effect on the intention to purchase as most previous studies assume economically deteriorating attitude as a result of economic threats, patriotism, or cultural affiliation (Abdul-Latif et al., 2024; L. Nguyen et al., 2019). This trend throws light on the fact that strong ethnocentric orientations may be most often based on strict in-group preferences (Tajfel, 1982), with consumers seeing foreign goods as threatening the local industry and national identity.

Conversely, the findings indicate that SET— softer ethnocentrism illustrates a substantial positive effect on the predisposition of buying foreign goods. This result may be compared to studies indicating more flexible ethnocentric orientations as an attribute of consumers and securing simultaneously cultural pride and access to foreign products when they offer a higher quality of services or innovation (Chryssochoidis et al., 2007; Durço et al., 2021; Miguel et al., 2023). SET will therefore refer to a more sensible approach that blends domestic preference with international openness.

Also, the study presents the critical fact that Country of Origin Image (COO Image) plays a pivotal role in dictating consumer behavior. A favorable COO Image moderates the effects of both HET and SET. This is exactly where COO has been helpful in mitigating the adverse effects of HET implying that any strongly ethnocentric consumer can be motivated into taking account of foreign products given under the banner of quality or ethical nations. This observation is similar to the argument developed by Lee (2022) and Chryssochoidis et al. (2007), who stated that the perception of COO can numb the impact of ethnocentric resistance, especially in emerging markets.

Altogether, these findings refine the theoretical understanding of consumer ethnocentrism by showing that it is not a uniform construct. A deeper explanation for the variant consumer responses to foreign products could be obtained with the distinction between HET and SET. Moreover, the moderating role of COO reveals the conditions under which the ethnocentric inclination becomes weak or strong, thus strengthening understanding in the relationship between cultural attitudes and brand perceptions in foreign countries.

6 Conclusion

This study offers theoretical and empirical insight by into the role of ethnocentrism in shaping purchase intention towards foreign products by distinguishing ethnocentrism based on their extent into hard and soft ethnocentrism. The findings reveal that HET has significant negative effect on consumers' purchase intention towards foreign products, reflecting nationalistic and protectionist beliefs. On the other hand, SET shows a positive impact, reflecting a more accommodating and flexible consumer mindset that support domestic product and at the same time remaining open to high-quality foreign alternatives.

Additionally, the study uncovers the importance of Country of origin (COO) image as a pivotal moderating variable. A favorable COO image enhances consumers' overall purchase intention while weakens the negative impact of HET and strengthens the positive impact of SET. These results suggest that foreign brands operating in emerging markets like Bangladesh can practically, reduce the negative impact of ethnocentrism by emphasizing building a positive COO in branding strategies. For HET consumers, highlighting product origins from trusted countries can soften resistance. For SET consumers, marketing campaigns should focus on quality and value, leveraging COO to amplify appeal. The study underscores COO's moderating role, advancing knowledge on its interaction with ethnocentric attitudes and providing a foundation for future cross-cultural and product-specific research.

By exploring these differentiated pathways of ethnocentrism, the study moves beyond traditional one-dimensional approaches and provides a more subtle understanding of consumer behavior in a globalized yet locally sensitive market environment. Future research could investigate ethnocentrism's impact on specific product categories, such as luxury goods or essentials. Furthermore, future research could explore perceptions of country-of-origin (COO) associated with specific nations such as India, China, the United States, or members of the European Union. Such investigations would offer deeper insights into country-specific COO effects and their influence on consumer ethnocentrism

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