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**Consumer Ethnocentrism in Evaluations of Superior  
Foreign Brands and Inferior Domestic Brands:  
A Study of Polish Consumers**

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## **Abstract**

In recent years, there has been a great deal of research exploring the concept of consumer ethnocentrism, although little has been done in Eastern Bloc countries. In these countries, foreign brands are often clearly superior to domestic alternatives. This study applied the CETSCALE in a survey of 218 Polish consumers with respect to attitudes and beliefs for one domestic and two foreign gas station brands. The findings suggest that, in a situation where foreign brands are superior to domestic ones, consumer ethnocentrism is displayed in more positive perceptions of the domestic brand, with little or no effect on perceptions of foreign brands. Moreover, the effect of consumer ethnocentrism on evaluations of different types of product qualities (search vs. experience) is explored. The results support the prediction that consumer ethnocentrism has greater impact on evaluations of experience qualities than on search qualities. Managerial implications and future research directions are suggested.

## **Introduction**

In the 1970s and 1980s several studies persistently demonstrated that in most western countries domestic products generally enjoy a more favorable evaluation than foreign-made products (e.g., Bannister and Saunders 1978; Cattin, Jolibert, and Lohnes 1982; Darling and Kraft 1977; Lillis and Narayana 1974). These findings initiated a stream of research on country of origin (COO) effects which is still dominating the literature on international consumer behavior. As research in this area progressed, it was recognized that COO effects are more complex than simply a unidimensional measure of country image. As Johansson, Ronkainen and Czinkota (1994) pointed out in their study of U.S. farmers' evaluations of Russian-made tractors, countries are good at some things and not so good at others, which explains the discrepancy between COO for Russian caviar and Russian automobiles. Further studies (cf. Chao 1998; Hulland, Todiño and Lecraw 1996; Iyer and Kalita 1997) focused on identifying and measuring the multiple cues and dimensions affecting consumer perceptions with respect to COO effects. By thus delving below the surface of country image, researchers have tackled such phenomena as the American penchant for Toyotas in the face of "Buy American" campaigns (Peyrot, Van Doren and Smith 1996).

One central construct that has emerged from the COO literature is that of consumer ethnocentrism (Shimp and Sharma 1987), defined as "the beliefs held by (American) consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality of purchasing foreign made products" (p. 280). Consumer ethnocentrism implies that buying imports is wrong because it is unpatriotic and detrimental to the domestic economy and employment. A number of studies have demonstrated the consumer tendency to evaluate domestic products unreasonably favorably compared to imported products, as reviewed in Sharma, Shimp and Shin (1995).

Shimp and Sharma (1987) developed the CETSCALE to measure the construct of consumer ethnocentrism, and in a study of American consumers, they showed that ethnocentric tendencies are significantly negatively correlated with attitudes toward foreign products and significantly positively correlated with attitudes toward domestic products. These findings have been replicated by Netemeyer, Durvasula, and Lichtenstein (1991) on a cross-national sample of Western European and Japanese consumers. However, in these studies respondents evaluated products from different developed countries that were largely comparable with

respect to quality. The former Eastern Bloc countries are quite different from the western markets. In these countries, Western products tend to be preferred to domestic products due to their superior quality. For example, Papadopoulos, Heslop and Beracs (1990) found that Hungarians generally evaluated Western products more positively than national products. Similar findings have been reported for Polish and Russian consumers (Ettenson 1993; Good and Huddleston 1995). Further, a study of Australian consumers revealed that, when a locally made product was perceived to be of inferior quality to the imported product, consumers generally preferred the imported product (Elliott and Cameron 1994).

The first question addressed in this study is: what is the nature of consumer ethnocentrism in situations where foreign brands are generally regarded as better than domestic ones? More specifically, how are scores on the CETSCALE related to attitudes and beliefs toward domestic and foreign store brands in such situations? We expect the pattern of effects to vary from that observed in studies of products with comparable quality.

Another void in the literature on effects of consumer ethnocentrism concerns the level of analysis of previous investigations. So far, the primary focus has been on effects of consumer ethnocentrism on overall attitudes and purchase intentions. Little is known about the differential role of various kinds of beliefs in the formation of ethnocentric attitudes and intentions (Sharma et al. 1995). This is an important matter to the theoretical understanding of consumer ethnocentrism as well as to managers of brands facing international competition. If, for instance, particular types of product qualities (Darby and Karni 1973; Nelson 1971) are more susceptible to ethnocentric tendencies than others, managers need to pay extra attention to these qualities in market communications and product development processes. On this account, we pose the following question: what is the effect of consumer ethnocentrism on evaluations of different types of product qualities?

In the next sections, hypotheses are developed and subsequently tested on a sample of Polish consumers. Theoretical and managerial implications of the findings are highlighted.

## **Hypotheses**

### Consumer Ethnocentrism When Foreign Brands Are Superior

Knowledge of consumer behavior in the former Eastern Bloc countries is limited and largely anecdotal (Sharma 1992). Though several studies have demonstrated COO effects among consumers from the former COMECON countries, the underlying mechanisms producing these effects have seldom been explored. The concept of consumer ethnocentrism, and the CETSCALE in particular, provide a useful starting point for investigating possible determinants of COO effects. To our knowledge, only a couple of studies have applied the CETSCALE in this geographical area. Good and Huddleston (1995) compared the ethnocentric tendencies of Russian and Polish consumers, and Durvasula, Andrews and Netemeyer (1992) contrasted the ethnocentrism of American and Russian consumers. Though both studies indicate that Eastern European and Russian consumers can be ethnocentric, the impact of ethnocentrism when foreign products are demonstrably superior was not investigated. For example, in their field experiment, Good and Huddleston (1995) used identical shirts and sweaters in the different experimental conditions, only varying the label which identified each of the four countries of origin investigated (Poland/Russia, Germany, China and the U.S.). The intrinsic quality of the products was held constant, while sacrificing external validity. Good and Huddleston only addressed the impact of ethnocentrism on product choice and not its possible effects on attitudes or beliefs. We contend that in a real situation where foreign brands are clearly better, the impact of ethnocentrism will mainly affect evaluations of domestic brands and not evaluations of foreign brands.

When it is commonly believed that foreign products are superior, the psychological and social cost of stating and maintaining a contradictory opinion is substantial. Research in social psychology clearly points to the need of individuals to gain approval from others (e.g., Schlenker 1980; Snyder 1977). One common strategy of obtaining favorable impressions is behavioral matching, that is, adapting to or imitating the observed behavior of the majority in different situations (e.g., Gergen and Wishnov 1965). In our context, this would imply that Polish consumers would tend to express a positive attitude toward foreign brands in order to

match the general opinion that foreign brands are better than domestic brands. Over time, displaying a positive attitude toward foreign brands may become a more stable element of consumers' 'situated identities' (Alexander and Knight 1971) for occasions in which foreign products are discussed. This means that positive opinions toward foreign brands are seen to represent the best identity for such a setting. Stating a non-conforming attitude may thus be regarded as inappropriate and out of touch. Also, ethnocentric consumers are less familiar with foreign products and thus have a very limited set of arguments to defend a negative attitude. Hence, when criticizing superior foreign products, ethnocentric consumers run the risk of displaying a simplistic and unjustified patriotic attitude. Therefore, ethnocentric consumers will probably refrain from displaying an overly negative evaluation of foreign brands. Instead, these consumers are likely to accentuate the positive aspects of domestic brands rather than to discount the virtues of foreign brands.

H1: When foreign brands are commonly regarded as superior to domestic brands, consumer ethnocentrism has positive impact on attitudes toward domestic brands but no effect on attitudes toward foreign brands.

#### Effects on Evaluations of Search vs. Experience Qualities

This positive effect of ethnocentrism on evaluations of domestic brands is likely to vary by the kind of product in question. Nelson (1971) made a distinction between two kinds of product qualities: search and experience qualities. Search qualities are directly observable and unambiguous and can thus be ascertained in the search process prior to purchase. This is mainly the case for products such as clothing, magazines and newspapers. These products can be checked and evaluated along core attributes prior to purchase. Experience qualities can be discovered and evaluated only after purchase as the product is used. For example, the pleasure of driving a car can be evaluated only after use of the car. Evaluations of experience qualities are more subjective than evaluations of search qualities, and the antecedents of such qualities are more complex and ambiguous than for search qualities. Darby and Karni (1973) added a third type of quality: credence qualities. These cannot be evaluated even in normal use; additional costly information will be needed. One example of a product with credence qualities is legal services. The average consumer is not very familiar with the law. Therefore, from the consumers' point of view, the antecedents and/or consequences of product performance are very complex and ambiguous. Thus, the three kinds of qualities vary with

respect to the observability, complexity and ambiguity of product evaluations. Search qualities are the most objective and observable; credence qualities are the most complex and ambiguous. Of course, one single product may possess all three kinds of qualities. Still, many products are dominated by either kind of quality. In this study, we focus on the distinction between search and experience qualities. Our contention is that the effect of consumer ethnocentrism in a situation of superior foreign alternatives is greater for experience qualities than for search qualities. This can be explained by two related mechanisms.

First, ethnocentric preferences are easier to defend when the performance of a brand is personal and the basis of evaluations ambiguous. For search qualities, the disadvantages of inferior domestic brands are observable and unambiguous. For experience qualities, the disadvantages of domestic brands are more ambiguous and to a larger extent than for search qualities a legitimate matter of discussion and personal taste. Consequently, an ethnocentric evaluation cannot as easily be overridden by decisive and directly observable evidence.

Second, because the antecedents and consequences of experience qualities are subjective and ambiguous, cognitive biases are more easily developed and maintained for such qualities. Findings within cognitive psychology suggest that individuals tend to engage in top-down processing when stimuli are ambiguous (Snyder and Swann 1978; Wason and Johnson-Laird 1972). This means that expectations and prior knowledge, which in turn results in expectation-consistent processing (Darley and Gross 1983), will guide perception. Applied to the case of consumer ethnocentrism, these findings from psychology imply that ethnocentric consumers will have a tendency to confirm and thus maintain their ethnocentric perception of experiential qualities of domestic brands. For search qualities, however, which are unambiguous and relatively objective, ethnocentric perceptions are less likely maintained over time because the consumer repeatedly encounters objective evidence contrary to his or her perception.

H2 Consumer ethnocentrism has greater impact on evaluations of experience qualities than on search qualities for the domestic brand.

## **Method**

### Questionnaire

The objects of the present study were one domestic and two foreign gas station brands in Warsaw, Poland. A frontrunner in Eastern European economic reform, Poland is an increasingly attractive market. Warsaw, the capital of Poland, boasts the highest average earnings in the country. The population of the Warsaw Province is 2.4 million people, 6.5 percent of Poland's total population (U.S. Department of Commerce 1999). Competition for western consumer goods is very intense in Poland. Consumers as well as importers have become increasingly selective about the products they will buy, and a western brand name is no longer the sure sell it once was (U.S. Department of Commerce 1999). Polish consumers have become increasingly demanding in terms of both the quality and price competitiveness of products purchased (Shipley et al. 1998). Moreover, there is some evidence that Poles seek information on brands, and that their level of interest in products and advertising remains higher than in the West (Senft 1999), making Poland an excellent location for testing these hypotheses.

The three gas station brands were CPN (Polish), Statoil (foreign) and Shell (foreign). Statoil and Shell were selected for this study because prior market research conducted by one of the companies involved indicated that Polish consumers regarded the overall quality of Statoil and Shell as clearly superior to CPN (this finding was further supported by our data, see Table 2).

In this market CPN has the largest market share, about 40 percent, and Shell and Statoil have about equal shares. Shell and Statoil both entered the Polish market in 1992-93. There are small price differences on gas among the competitors. With the exception of food and beverages, Shell and Statoil have more imported goods and larger assortments.

A questionnaire was used for the collection of data. The questionnaire was written originally in English and translated into Polish by a Polish translation consultant. The Polish version then was back-translated into English by another bilingual person. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section asked respondents to evaluate the three gas station



brands, which were all found in Warsaw, on standard scales measuring general attitudes toward the brands and the overall quality of fuel and 'in-store' products (e.g., groceries, magazines, newspapers, liquor, etc.). Nine-point Likert scales were used. The next section contained evaluations of beliefs about the three station brands (also on nine-point Likert scales). Important search and experience qualities were derived from two focus groups with Polish consumers (the groups included both men and women and the age of participants ranged from 20 to 66). Four search criteria were used in the questionnaire: cleanness, assortment of fuel, assortment of "in-store products," and price of fuel. The following experience criteria were included: station atmosphere, pleasure of shopping, helpfulness of staff, and competence of staff. To minimize possible order effects, the questionnaire was counterbalanced in terms of the presentation order of belief and attitude measures. The third section contained the Polish version of the 17-item CETSCALE (Shimp and Sharma 1987), and the final section included demographic variables. The average response time was about 16 minutes.

### Sample

The participants of the study were 218 Polish consumers. Representativity was not a major concern since the purpose of the study was to test a set of new theoretical contentions (Calder, Phillips, and Tybout 1981). Adult individuals were recruited at four large parking lots and three shopping centers in Warsaw, Poland. In a mall-intercept manner, every third or fourth individual was encountered and asked to complete the questionnaire on-site. Four native Polish students collected the data during the period of July 10-12, 1997. About 35 percent of the individuals encountered agreed to participate. The final sample consisted of 41 females (18.8 percent) and 176 males (80.7 percent). The average age of respondents was 37.8 (range: 18 to 74).

## **Results**

### Dimensionality, Reliability and Preliminary Nomological Validation of the CETSCALE

To our knowledge, only one previous study has applied the CETSCALE in Poland (Good and Huddleston 1995). However, no analyses were reported in this study on the dimensionality of the scale; there was only one indicator of reliability which showed high internal consistency of their Polish translation (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$ ). In the present study we investigated both the internal consistency and the dimensionality of the Polish CETSCALE. Also the nomological validity of the scale was tested against demographic variables (other variables pertinent to nomological validation also were addressed; see section on hypothesis testing). The results of these analyses are reported in Table 1.

The original American version of the CETSCALE was found to have a unidimensional factor structure (Shimp and Sharma 1987). This finding was replicated in a cross-national sample of Western European and Japanese consumers (Netemeyer et al. 1991). Hence, we performed confirmatory factor analysis via LISREL 8 (Jöreskog and Sörbom 1993) on the 17 items of our Polish version of the scale.

Table 1

Dimensionality, Internal Consistency, and Nomological Validity of a 10-item Polish Translation of the CETSCALE

Dimensionality<sup>a</sup>

$\chi^2$ null <sub>45</sub>	1430.15
$\chi^2$ <sub>35</sub>	81.23
GFI	.93
CFI	.97
NFI	.94
RMSEA	.08

Internal consistency

Cronbach's alpha	.932
Variance extracted	.622

Nomological validity

CETSCALE correlations with demographic variables

Age	.197***
Income	-.227***
Gender	-.012

Note: The ten CETSCALE items included correspond to items 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 14 of the original measure (Shimp and Sharma 1987).

<sup>a</sup>The chi square values are significant at the .0001 level.

\*\*\* $p < .01$ .

The fit statistics for the full 17-item measure suggested a poor model fit for a unidimensional structure (GFI = .77, RMSEA = .13). Before any further steps were taken to improve the fit, we performed an exploratory factor analysis and found two factors with eigenvalues above 1 (though the second factor was only slightly above one: 1.08). In particular, two items loaded

more strongly on the second factor than the first (items 12 and 15 of the original scale). However, when the two dimensions were each correlated with the other variables included in the study (beliefs, attitudes, gender, age and income), no significant differences were found between them. Hence, we concentrated on improving the unidimensional measure and excluded items based on inspection of factor loadings and modification indices. A ten-item version obtained acceptable levels of fit and was used in subsequent analyses. Fit statistics are shown in Table 1. The variance extracted by this measure was calculated and found to be at a level of .622, which is clearly above the limit of .50 suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981) as a minimum level to support the consistency among items in a scale.

Shimp and Sharma (1987) maintained that high scorers on the CETSCALE feel threatened by foreign competition. Correspondingly, they showed that age and social class were correlated with scores on the CETSCALE (positively correlated with age and negatively with social class). Good and Huddleston (1995) found the same pattern of results for Polish consumers (though income was used instead of social class). Our results replicate this finding for Polish consumers. In our sample, age was significantly positively correlated with scores on the CETSCALE, whereas income was significantly negatively correlated with the scale. However, the significant relationship between Polish consumer ethnocentrism and gender reported by Good and Huddleston was not found in the present study. Thus, our results add to the pattern of equivocal findings on gender effects observed in other countries (cf. Usunier 1996, p. 288). At present it seems reasonable to assume that the role of gender is dependent on the product under investigation.

### Test of the Hypotheses

First, in order to check that foreign gas stations were considered superior to the domestic alternative, mean scores on overall quality, quality of fuel, and quality of 'in-store' products were compared across the three gas stations by means of three ANOVAs (no violations to ANOVA assumptions were observed). Mean scores are reported in Table 2. As expected, scores for the domestic brand CPN were significantly lower than scores for the foreign brands Statoil and Shell.

Table 2

Mean quality scores for one domestic and two foreign gas station brands (nine-point scale)<sup>a</sup>

Variable	CPN (domestic)	STATOIL (foreign)	SHELL (foreign)
General quality of brand	4.08	7.63	7.12
Quality of fuel	4.44	7.90	7.78
Quality of 'in-store' products	5.25	7.08	7.09

<sup>a</sup>All scores for CPN are significantly lower than for STATOIL and SHELL at the .05 level or better. Nine-point scales: 1=very low quality, 9=very high quality.

According to the first hypothesis, consumer ethnocentrism should have a positive effect on attitudes toward CPN (the domestic brand), but have no effect on attitudes toward foreign brands (Shell and Statoil). To test this prediction, the sample was split in three parts according to scores on the CETSCALE. The low third (scores < 19) and the high third (scores > 40) were retained and contrasted in three ANOVAs for attitudes toward each gas station brand. Inspection of skewness and curtosis values indicated that the variables were fairly normally distributed. Cochran C and Bartlett-Box F statistics were computed to test for homogeneity of variances across the two groups. No serious violations were observed. ANOVA results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3  
ANOVA results for attitudes toward gas station brands

	Consumer ethnocentrism		F	Sig. of F
	(Group means)			
	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>		
	(n=65)	(n=66)		
Attitudes CPN (domestic)	<b>3.59</b>	<b>5.80</b>	<b>21.23</b>	<b>.000</b>
Attitudes SHELL (foreign)	7.10	6.83	.45	.504
Attitudes STATOIL (foreign)	7.70	7.55	.23	.627

Note: Attitudes are measured on nine-point Likert scales.

The results in Table 3 provide strong support for H1. Attitude scores for CPN are significantly higher for high-scorers on the CETSCALE than for low-scorers ( $M_{\text{High}}=5.80$ ,  $M_{\text{Low}}=3.59$ ,  $F_{1,117}=21.234$ ,  $p=.000$ ), whereas no significant group differences are observed for the two foreign brands. Hence, consumer ethnocentrism seems to have an asymmetric effect on brand attitudes when foreign products are superior.

H2 predicted that consumer ethnocentrism will have greater impact on evaluations of experience qualities than on search qualities for the domestic brand. The four experience qualities (station atmosphere, pleasure of shopping, helpfulness of staff, and competence of staff) were combined in a multi-item measure ( $\alpha = .888$ ). Likewise, the four search qualities (assortment of fuel, assortment of in-store products, station cleanness, and price of fuel) were included in a single measure of search quality ( $\alpha = .815$ ). Since the two measures were significantly correlated ( $r = .639$ ,  $p = .000$ ), the effects of consumer ethnocentrism on evaluations of search and experience qualities of the domestic brand were tested by means of MANOVA. Again, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested by means of the Cochran C and the Bartlett-Box F statistics and normality assumptions by inspection of skewness and kurtosis values. The additional assumption for MANOVA of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was tested by means of the Box M statistic. No serious violations were detected. MANOVA results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4  
MANOVA results for evaluations of search and experience qualities of the domestic gas station brand (CPN)

	Consumer ethnocentrism		F	Sig. of F	Effect size (Eta square)
	(Group means)				
	<u>Low</u> (n=65)	<u>High</u> (n=67)			
<u>Multivariate test</u>					
Wilk`s $\lambda = .923$			3.67	.029	
<u>Univariate tests</u>					
<b>Search qualities</b>	<b>4.97</b>	<b>5.85</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>.107</b>	<b>.029</b>
Experience qualities	4.20	5.54	7.41	.008	.077

Note: Attitudes are measured on nine-point Likert scales.

The multivariate test of group differences for evaluations of experience and search qualities of the domestic brand is significant (Wilks`  $\lambda=.923$ ,  $F=3.672$ ,  $p=.029$ ). Moreover, univariate tests for each type of quality show that consumer ethnocentrism has significant impact on evaluations of experience qualities ( $M_{high}=5.54$  versus  $M_{low}=4.20$ ,  $F=7.414$ ,  $p=.008$ ), but no significant effect on evaluations of search qualities ( $M_{high}=5.85$  versus  $M_{low}=4.97$ ,  $F=2.644$ ,  $p=.107$ ). Thus H2 also is supported.

## Discussion

The present study answers the call for translation and application of the CETSCALE in the former Eastern Bloc countries (Netemeyer et al. 1991). Strong support was found for the factor structure and reliability of our Polish version of the scale, suggesting that the CETSCALE can be applied as a useful tool for segmentation and positioning of new products in Polish markets.

In this study, we addressed a context where foreign brands are commonly regarded as superior to domestic brands. This is a very relevant situation in many markets of the former COMECON countries. Consistent with our expectations, the effect of consumer ethnocentrism was found to be different in this situation than in studies on U.S. and Western European consumers. Consistent with the nature of foreign competition in the West, studies on ethnocentrism of Western consumers have used domestic and foreign products which were largely comparable with respect to quality. For example, Shimp and Sharma (1987) focused on cars (in addition to products in general) from the U.S., Europe and Asia; and Netemeyer et al. (1991) compared ethnocentric tendencies toward TV sets and cars from the U.S., two Western European countries (France and Germany) and Japan. In these studies, consumers' ethnocentrism was negatively related to evaluations of foreign products and positively related to evaluations of domestic products. In the present study, however, where foreign brands were considered as superior, only the positive effect of ethnocentrism on evaluations of the domestic brand was observed. In other words, when foreign brands are clearly better than domestic alternatives, ethnocentric consumers seem to conform to the general opinion on foreign brands and rather express their ethnocentric feelings in terms of accentuating the positive aspects of domestic brands. This was explained by elements from social psychological theories. When it is commonly believed that foreign brands are superior, there is a social cost of stating and defending a contradictory opinion.

Furthermore, this study focused on the effects of consumer ethnocentrism on different types of product qualities in a situation where foreign alternatives are superior. Support was found for the general contention that evaluations of experience qualities are more susceptible to ethnocentric influence than search qualities. This finding was explained by two mechanisms. First, it is easier to defend ethnocentric evaluations of experience qualities because the basis for evaluation of such qualities is more subjective and ambiguous than for search qualities. Second, ethnocentric consumers more easily develop cognitive biases in favor of experience qualities. Since experience qualities are somewhat ambiguous and a matter of personal taste, ethnocentric consumers are likely to engage in expectation-consistent processing of such qualities for domestic brands (Darley and Gross 1983). Thus expectations of good performance on such qualities for domestic brands will tend to be confirmed. Search qualities are directly observable and therefore less prone to expectation-consistent processing. These findings offer several implications for marketing management and future research in this area.



### Managerial Implications

The finding that superior foreign products seem to be unaffected by ethnocentric tendencies is important to managers of foreign brands in Eastern European countries. In particular, if we are right in suggesting that the underlying mechanism of this non-effect is based on the commonality of positive attitudes toward foreign brand quality and related tendencies of conformity, a viable communication strategy for superior foreign brands would be to support established and favorable social norms by focusing on the pervasiveness and commonality of positive attitudes and by stimulating positive word-of-mouth. Also, our findings indicate that search qualities should be given priority in communication efforts, *ceteris paribus*, as such qualities are more resistant to ethnocentric tendencies. This means that objective and observable advantages of the foreign brands are underscored and made salient in advertising and promotions. Additionally, managers of foreign brands may consider a “domestic profile” on specific experience qualities since these are more susceptible to consumer ethnocentrism.

For the managers of domestic inferior brands, a major objective would be to change the general opinion that foreign is better than domestic. Such an opinion is based on a simple foreign-domestic dichotomy. The most obvious means of changing this is to improve the search qualities of the products. However, established brand associations are difficult to alter (Aaker 1996), so even if domestic products are dramatically improved according to objective or technical standards, the *perceived* quality probably will change more slowly. The most effective strategy, at least in the short run, probably would be to enter some kind of cooperation with foreign Western companies combined with substantial improvements of search qualities. This would provide greater believability of product improvements and change perceptions of product quality more rapidly. Interestingly, CPN recently has followed a “Quality Over Quantity” theme, bearing out the logic of this approach (Malyska 1998).

Moreover, our findings imply that managers of domestic brands may exploit ethnocentric tendencies effectively by focusing on the experiential qualities of their brands. Such qualities are suited for development and maintenance of ethnocentric beliefs because they are ambiguous and subjective.

### Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of this study suggest potential avenues for future research. First, our finding that consumer ethnocentrism had no effect on superior foreign brands should be replicated on other brands in other store categories and in various product categories. One important question regards the level of quality differences required for foreign brands to remain unaffected by ethnocentric tendencies. Correspondingly, the general contention that product qualities which are evaluated on a subjective and ambiguous basis (such as experience qualities) are more prone to consumers' ethnocentric tendencies should be tested in other categories and in other situations for both products and stores. It could be that the product quality effect is not only relevant to situations where foreign brands are superior, but rather represents a more general effect of consumer ethnocentrism. Also, the possible effects of manipulating the degree of search, experience and credence qualities in advertising for domestic brands could be examined. The findings of this study appear to be consistent with those of Sharma et al. (1995), in that consumer ethnocentrism was not so influential when the product is a necessity and consumers do not feel themselves or the economy threatened by its importation. But further study is needed to better understand the relevant antecedents and moderators of consumer ethnocentrism.

Limitations associated with the sample should be noted. As with most published studies in the former Eastern Bloc countries reported in the literature, our sample consisted of people from one large city, Warsaw, using a mall-intercept approach. Generalizations beyond the sample and the area of Warsaw are not warranted. In rural areas, transitions are slower and consumers are to a lesser degree subjected to foreign products. Therefore, other results probably would be observed outside the large cities. This limitation of the present and previous studies on Eastern European and Russian consumers is an important challenge for future research.

While the CETSCALE performed reliably in this study, consideration of alternative measures might be explored. Alternative approaches, such as the animosity model tested by Klein, Ettenson and Morris (1998) in the People's Republic of China, may exhibit promise in situations where negative attitudes toward certain foreign nations exist.

Finally, future research should determine whether ethnocentric tendencies affecting attitudes, beliefs and intentions regarding products actually affect purchase behavior. In a study of American consumers using the CETSCALE, McLain and Sternquist (1991) found that consumers who display strong ethnocentric tendencies were no more likely to purchase American-made products than those who were less ethnocentric; that these consumers were not any more likely than less ethnocentric consumers to be aware of the country of origin of their purchases; and that, although consumers may claim that they want to purchase American-made products, they do not actually carry out the actions to support this claim. Our findings indicate that, when foreign products are considered to be of higher quality, only the positive effect of ethnocentrism on evaluation of the domestic brand was observed. Future research should determine whether Polish consumers carry out purchase behaviors to match their ethnocentric views.

Much progress has been made in recent years in understanding consumers' ethnocentric tendencies, but there is still much to learn. Inasmuch as the global economy continues to grow ever more interdependent, global competition among products and brands shows no signs of abating; thus, the phenomenon of consumer ethnocentrism provides an area ripe for further study and exploration.

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