



Investigating the Role of Western Acculturation, Ethnocentrism, and Consumer Cosmopolitanism in Predicting Preferences for Apparel Brands among Indian Consumers

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Introduction

Indian immigrant population in the U.S. had higher median household income as compared to the other immigrants and natives of the U.S. in 2016 (Zong & Batalova, 2017), thereby, forming an important consumer segment. Consumer ethnocentrism plays a vital role during product evaluation process (Sharma, Shimp, & Shin, 1995) because it provides extrinsic cues about products' qualities and/or aids in expressing patriotism and status (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Therefore, having insights about Indian consumers' apparel preferences and the role of ethnocentrism will aid in devising strategic marketing decisions by the apparel brands targeting this population. Further, a growing preference for foreign apparel brands and products is seen among Indian consumers residing in India (Kinra, 2006; Siamagka & Balabanis, 2015), especially amongst the middle- and upper-class (Mann & Byun, 2010). It indicates a growing cosmopolitanism amongst the consumers of India. However, consumer ethnocentrism seems to be more salient for Indian immigrants in the U.S., as compared to Indians residing in India (Mehta & Belk, 1991). Therefore, purpose of the present study was to understand whether or not (i) the country of residence (India vs. the U.S.) influences the relationship between western acculturation and consumer ethnocentrism in apparel consumption amongst the Indian consumers; (ii) consumer cosmopolitanism influences the relationship between ethnocentrism and attitude toward western apparel brands; (iii) attitude toward western clothing brands influences purchase intentions from the western clothing brands.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

The theory of acculturation (Berry et al., 1989) was employed as a framework in the present study. Berry et al. (1989) stated that the degree to which an incoming cultural entity will maintain its original roots, adapt to or adopt the dominant culture, will depend upon both the acculturation attitude and strategies of acculturation among the dominant and incoming cultural entity. For example, a segment of Indian consumers residing in India (i.e., dominant culture) often prefers foreign (i.e., incoming culture) apparel and brands substantially over domestic Indian apparel and brands (Kinra, 2006). Kumar, Fairhurst, and Kim (2011) have indicated that the middle-class consumers of India exhibit the least ethnocentrism as they spend a substantial amount of their disposable income on western branded products, including apparel. Further, as consumer cosmopolitanism enhances the global outlook of a consumer (Turken & Rudmin, 2013), a highly acculturated Indian consumer may have higher positive attitude toward a western apparel brand, than that of another Indian consumer who is acculturated but not highly cosmopolitan. However, Mehta and Belk (1991) suggested that Indian immigrants (i.e., incoming culture) residing in the U.S. (i.e., dominant culture) tend to consume Indian products substantially, as they perceive these products as symbolically representing their home country. Indian immigrants in the U.S. prefer westernized apparel in Indian tradition colors, even if they score moderate to high in acculturation (Presley & Campassi, 2013). Therefore, based on the extant literature and the theory on acculturation, the present study hypothesized that (*H₁*) western acculturation influences ethnocentrism in apparel consumption; (*H₂*) country of residence of Indian consumers moderates the relationship between western acculturation and ethnocentrism in apparel consumption; (*H₃*) western acculturation positively influences attitude toward western apparel brands; (*H₄*) ethnocentrism in apparel consumption negatively influences

attitude toward western clothing brands; (H_5) consumer cosmopolitanism positively influences attitude toward western clothing brands; (H_6) consumer cosmopolitanism moderates the relationship between ethnocentrism in apparel consumption and attitude toward western apparel; (H_7) consumer cosmopolitanism strengthens the relationship between western acculturation and attitude toward western clothing brands, such that higher the western acculturation more is the positive attitude toward western clothing brands, when consumer cosmopolitanism is high amongst the Indian consumers; (H_8) attitude toward western clothing brands positively influences Indian consumers' intention to buy from western clothing brands; (H_9) western acculturation influences Indian consumers' intention to buy from western clothing brands.

Method and Data Analysis

The target population for the present study was Indian consumers residing in India and the U.S. who fall under middle- or upper social class, and age group of 19 years and above. The sampling frame for the study included Indian consumer panels of Amazon Mturk residing in the U.S. and India. The useable sample size was 550 (Indians in the U.S. = 247, Indians in India = 303). Data was collected through online survey in Qualtrics. The variables of interest were measured with existing scales. For example, western acculturation (Barry, 2001), ethnocentrism (Shimp & Sharma, 1987) in apparel consumption, and consumer cosmopolitanism (Turken & Rudmin, 2013) were measured by Likert scales whereas, attitude toward western apparel brands (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2000) and purchase intention (Spears & Singh, 2004) from western apparel brands were measured by semantic differential scales. The Cronbach's α for western acculturation, ethnocentrism in apparel consumption, consumer cosmopolitanism, attitude toward western apparel brands, and purchase intention from western apparel brands were found to be .93, .97, .77, .77, and .90 respectively. The hypotheses were tested through Structural Equation Modelling in Mplus. The structural model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 268.40$, $df = 59$, $p = .00$; RMSEA = .08, $p = .00$; CFI = .93, TLI = .91, SRMR = .05). H_1 ($\beta = .86$, $r = .60$, $p < .001$), H_2 ($\beta = .29$, $r = .13$, $p < .001$), H_3 ($\beta = .87$, $r = .72$, $p < .001$), H_4 ($\beta = -.37$, $r = -.47$, $p < .001$), H_5 ($\beta = .32$, $r = .24$, $p < .001$), H_8 ($\beta = .99$, $r = .94$, $p < .001$), and H_9 ($\beta = -.13$, $r = -.11$, $p < .05$) were supported. The total variance explained in consumer ethnocentrism, attitude toward western clothing brands, and purchase intention were 56.5%, 48.3%, and 77.6%, respectively ($p < .001$).

Discussion and Conclusion

Supporting the extant literature that Indians in the U.S. are highly ethnocentric (Mehta & Belk, 1991) even when they are highly acculturated (Presley & Campassi, 2013), the present study adds that Indians residing in both India and the U.S. are highly ethnocentric, but Indians in the U.S. are more ethnocentric than the Indians residing in India, in terms of their apparel consumption behavior, in spite of being highly acculturated. Further, supporting the extant literature that consumer cosmopolitanism helps consumers engage in a global culture (Turken & Rudmin, 2013), this study adds that consumer cosmopolitanism aids Indian consumers in having a positive attitude towards western clothing brands, thereby translating to a positive purchase intention from western clothing brands, even when they are highly ethnocentric. However, having high western acculturation in itself cannot translate to high purchase intentions from the western clothing brands even after having highly positive attitude toward western clothing brands. Therefore, instead of just promoting a pro-Indian image and targeting the ethnocentric Indian consumers in the U.S. and India, the western clothing brands should consider focusing more on the promotion of a cosmopolitan brand image. In future, studies could explore how the duration of stay in the U.S. or India may predict the relationships amongst western acculturation, consumer ethnocentrism in apparel consumption, consumer cosmopolitanism, attitude toward western clothing brands, and purchase intentions from the western clothing brands.

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