U.S. Consumers’ Cultural Choices: the Interplay of Ethnocentrism and Global Openness

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Global-openness reflects a willingness to interact with foreign people and cultures, including cultural products. Ethnocentrism is a psychosocial construct depicting the proclivity for individuals to view their own group as superior and to reject that which is culturally dissimilar. The extant research suggests that ethnocentrism should be positively related to consumption of domestic movies whereas global-openness should be positively related to consumption of and desire for watching foreign movies. Data collected from a sample of U.S. moviegoers are used to test these propositions and gather insights into U.S. consumers’ cultural choices.

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Secondly, we want to explore the many aspects of relations, that add to the ones which have already been focused upon and that have been associated to interpersonal relations in the literature in socio-psychology (Fiske, 2000). Finally, we relate relationship proneness to personality traits, and in particular to basic traits (Big Five) and narrower dimensions (sociability and approval motivation).

Methodology

We develop a scale of relationship proneness, trying to capture the many-sided facets of relations; we end up with a compact and parsimonious 14-items scale, referring to the relationship to hairdressers. We measured the Big Five with a short version of the Big Five Questionnaire (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni & Perugini, 1993). Sociability is measured as in Cheek and Buss (1981); approval motivation as in Martin (1984). We run the traditional correlation and factor analysis. The sample is a convenience sample of 220 subjects, with diverse socio-demographic characteristics.

Results

When the 3+2 original items are pooled together and factor analyzed, 2 factors emerge, accounting for 68% of variance, with the 3 initial items loading on the first factor and the other 2 on the second.

When factor analyzing our 14-items scale, 3 factors emerge—social/interpersonal dimension, preferential treatment and reassurance, explaining 51% of variance. Correlations among factors ranged from .26 (social/interpersonal and preferential treatment) to .46 (social/interpersonal and reassurance).

When the 3+2 original items are pooled together with our 14 items, 4 different factors emerge, with the 3 items loading on a factor by themselves, and the other 2 splitting on 2 different factors (social/interpersonal and preferential treatment).

The social/interpersonal dimension was significantly correlated with traits of extraversion (r=.21), friendliness (r=.18) and sociability (r=.30). Preferential treatment and reassurance were respectively correlated with extraversion (r=.20) and approval motivation (r=.34). Relationship proneness and social/interpersonal dimension were significantly correlated (r=.30). These two dimensions showed the only relevant associations with satisfaction, respectively r=.27 for social/interpersonal and r=.35 for relationship proneness. An alpha level of .01 was used in all significance test.

Managerial implications:

We suggest that managers need to analyze the multi-dimensional nature of buyer-supplier relationships and to identify their different facets, and the relations among them.

We have established clearly that the orientation towards repeated and stable relationships is different, and can be treated differently, from the willingness to establish personalized relations; but also that they are related to a certain extent. This same orientation is not linked to the willingness to receive a special treatment and reassurance from one’s own supplier.

We have also established that there is a significant relation between personality traits and orientation towards relations, implying that buyers will establish the same kind of relation across categories and across suppliers.

Limitations and extension for further research:

Although it has been widely used in research, we are aware that results may not be directly generalizable, because of the idiosyncratic nature of the service setting. Therefore a wider research approach is required, in order to feature in differences across categories (in the service sector and otherwise) and different approaches towards categories by consumers.

References


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Extended Abstract
This paper focuses on the factors affecting U.S. consumers’ cultural choices, especially their consumption of domestic versus foreign movies. The U.S. movie market is the world’s most profitable and has been dominated by domestic productions for nearly a century (Vogel 2004), with foreign movies rarely exhibited in American theaters and often only at smaller independent theaters (Kaufman 2006). Although this market situation is often explained by corporate or government tactics (Puttnam 1997), it may also be attributed to the American consumer, the focus of this inquiry.

The constructs of ethnocentrism and global-openness can be especially useful in explaining their behavior. The propensity of American consumers to primarily view domestic movies may reflect the citizenry’s ethnocentric tendencies and lack of global-openness. Global-openness, also referred to as cultural-openness, reflects a willingness to interact with foreign people and cultures, including cultural products (Suh and Kwon 2002, Sharma, Shimp and Shin 1995). It connotes both cognition and emotion, whereby the human will is engaged in learning about global differences and similarities, and is characterized by three essential components: (a) a desire for cross-cultural understanding, (b) cultural self-awareness, and (c) the development of cross-cultural skills, such as languages (Wenger 1998).

Ethnocentrism is a psychosocial construct depicting the proclivity for individuals to view their own group as superior and to reject people who are culturally dissimilar (LeVine and Campbell 1972). This concept was first adapted into consumer research by Shimp and Sharma (1987) who developed an instrument to capture consumer ethnocentrism. Research found it to be an important predictor of domestic versus foreign purchases, and more consistently of the former than of the latter (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2004). The extant research suggests that these constructs should apply to cultural choices, with ethnocentrism being positively related to consumption of domestic movies and global-openness positively related to consumption of and desire for watching foreign movies.

These propositions were tested with survey data collected from American moviegoers. Movie consumption was addressed by having respondents list the last five movies they had watched at a theater and at home in the past month. This actual consumption measure ensured the validity of the answers. All reported movies were subsequently coded by country-of-origin to compute ratios of U.S. and foreign movie consumption. Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the factors contributing to their movie choices and preferences. They indicated their level of agreement with a series of statements, including measures of the two key constructs, on 5-point Likert scales. Control measures about movie consumption and preferences as well as demographic data were collected last.

The dataset included 405 complete responses from U.S. consumers (151 males; mean age 22.5). The age group represents an important segment for movie consumption. In 2003, consumers aged 12-24 comprised 39% of all U.S. moviegoers (USCB 2005; MPAA 2004). Respondents had watched an average of 10.15 movies in the past month. In general, ethnocentrism levels (α=.72) were low, with a mean of 1.95 (SD=.64), echoing recent research reporting that America’s Generation-Y expresses little ethnocentric tendencies (Werder and Roberts 2005). Global-openness (α=.74) was skewed to the high end of the scale with a mean of 4.15 (SD=.70). The two constructs were negatively correlated (r =-.41, p<.01).

Consumption ratios were computed based on the reported movies watched at the theater. Movie consumption was strongly skewed toward U.S. films, with 95.86% being American movies. Global-openness and ethnocentrism scores were compared between those consumers had seen 100% American movies at the theater and those who had seen at least one foreign movie. As the literature suggested, consumers in the first group were more ethnocentric and less globally open than consumers in the second group (1.99 vs. 1.54 (t=292)=3.42 p<.01 and 4.08 vs. 4.56 (t=292)=3.43 p<.01 respectively); but regression analyses indicated that global openness (or lack thereof) was the only factor ultimately affecting movie consumption.

To provide additional insights, the ratings of movie decision factors were also compared. Interestingly, for foreign movie consumers, only the language of the movie was rated as a less important factor, suggesting that language may be a strong barrier to American movie consumers. A close investigation of the open-ended responses provides further insights into the resistance to foreign movie consumption amongst U.S. consumers. Respondents were asked if they preferred movies from any specific country, and why. Even though few respondents had reported seeing foreign movies, the majority of the comments (67%) reflected openness to them. 11.7% brought up, without being prompted, the lack of access or limited exposure they have to foreign movies. Few indicated they disliked foreign movies (2.9%); that they would never watch one (4.3%); or that foreign films are difficult to relate to (3.2%); still, 14.3% indicated that domestic movies were easier to relate to and understand.

A truer test of participants’ openness to foreign films is their choice for the movie tickets offered as an incentive for participation. Chi-square analyses comparing choices between respondents who expressed global-openness and those who did not showed that, of the latter group, only 1.2% selected the foreign movie tickets whereas amongst the former, 13.8% did (χ²(1)=19.2, p<.01). Those selecting foreign movie tickets were more globally open (4.7 vs. 4.10; t=3.42, p<.01) and less ethnocentric than those selecting domestic films (1.41 vs. 2.00; t=3.98=4.98, p<.01). Logistic regression analyses on the choice variable further indicate that global openness is the only predictor of foreign movie choices, through a main effect and an interactive effect when ethnocentrism is low.

This research provides initial evidence of discriminant and predictive validity for the constructs of global-openness and ethnocentrism. U.S. consumers’ cultural choices were mainly affected by their level of global-openness, both in terms of actual movie consumption and in a hypothetical choice situation giving consumers an unequivocal option to consume foreign films.

References
Self-Monitoring and Status Motivation: An Implicit Cognition Perspective

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Extended Abstract

People differ in the way they regulate themselves in social situations (Snyder 1974). Some care little about the appropriateness of their behavior in the eyes of others. These are the low self-monitors, who project towards others a stable self in diverse settings of social interaction. High self-monitors exert more expressive control over their social behavior and tend to adapt their appearance and acts to specific people and situations.

In an extensive review, Gangestad and Snyder (2000) concluded that we know little about the motivational factors in self-monitoring. They called on researchers to study the possible role of status as a motivation associated with self-monitoring. They claim that high self-monitors wish to progress upward in social hierarchy by trying to win others’ favor. Therefore, they adapt their behavior to the specificities of the context. Indeed, “high self-monitors may well attempt to cultivate public images that create appearances that connote social status and may strive to construct social worlds that function as effective instruments of status enhancement” (Gangestad and Snyder 2000, p. 547). Status motivation could therefore be the driving force behind the high self-monitor’s social behavior, whereas low self-monitors should be motivated less by status. If self-monitoring indeed proves to be motivated by status seeking, this should explain why it is an important moderator of consumer behavior. In particular, why low self-monitors are more receptive than high self-monitors to functional quality cues; whereas high self-monitors are more receptive than low self-monitors to symbolic cues serving a social-adjustive function (DeBono 1987, 2000; DeBono and Harnish 1988; DeBono and Rubin 1995; Shavitt, Lowrey, and Han 1992; Snyder and DeBono 1985).

Our approach is based on advances in implicit cognition and builds heavily on Fazio and Olson (2003), Fazio et al. (1986) conceptualized attitudes as object-evaluation associations in memory. According to the MODE model of attitude-behavior processes, there are two ways in which attitudes may exert an influence on consumer behavior (Fazio and Towles-Schwen 1999). Depending on motivation and opportunity, attitudes play a role in behavior either through spontaneous processes or deliberative processes. In spontaneous processing, “attitudes may have an impact on eventual behavior, even without the individual’s reflecting upon the attitudes” (Fazio and Towles-Schwen 1999, p. 98). That is, some attitudes can be activated spontaneously, on the mere presentation of the attitude object. In such cases, a behavior is acted upon on the basis of the automatic attitudes that become spontaneously accessible in memory (Fazio, Powell, and Williams 1989). Spontaneous processing contrasts with deliberative processing, whereby the consumer engages in extensive retrieval of any data available about the attitude object. In deliberative processing, automatic attitudes may also be activated; however, they will be used less to form explicit judgments and to choose a response vis-à-vis the attitude object.

The motivation component of the MODE model is our central interest. If the attitude object does not induce sufficient motivation, subsequent explicit judgment and behavior toward it will be guided by spontaneous processing, through automatically activated attitudes. In this case, we can expect a high correspondence between automatic attitudes about an object and explicit judgments about it (Fazio and Olson 2003). On the other hand, if motivation is high, the consumer engages in a processing of the attributes of the object, situational factors etc. In these circumstances, the consumer would rely less on automatic attitudes to form explicit judgments. Therefore, a weak match is expected between automatic attitudes about the object and explicit judgments about the same object (Fazio and Olson 2003).

We expect high self-monitors to be highly motivated by status. When probed explicitly about their attitude toward status with no time constraints, we expect elaborated answers from them in agreement with deliberative processing, leading to a low correspondence between automatic attitudes and explicit attitude measures about the concept of status. If motivation is low, as Gangestad and Snyder (2000) theorize it should be for low self-monitors, then the explicit evaluation of an attitude object should correspond to automatically activated attitudes (Fazio and Olson 2003; Karpinski and Hilton 2001), leading to a high correspondence between automatic attitudes and explicit attitude measures with respect to status. The following hypothesis is therefore to be tested:

For low self-monitors, there will be a high correspondence between automatic attitudes about status and explicit attitude measures about status; for high self-monitors, there will be a low correspondence between automatic attitudes about status and explicit attitude measures about status.