

## Does the Netherlands-Based Consumer Disidentification Model Work in the US?

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Alexander Josiassen (2011) initiated research on the consumer disidentification (CDI) concept and its impact on product purchase behavior. In his investigation, a predictive model that included CDI as an exogenous factor in domestic product preference was tested on adult second-generation immigrants who were born in, and lived in, the Netherlands. The model also incorporated consumer ethnocentrism (CET) as a second predictor variable. Josiassen's study showed that CDI negatively affected the purchase of products made domestically or by domestic firms. Conversely, CET was found to have a positive effect on the purchase of these products. Furthermore, relationships of CDI and CET to purchase intentions were independent of each other. In the Netherlands model, both variables were hypothesized to explain domestic product preference directly and indirectly through domestic product judgment. This paper replicates and assesses the generalizability of the CDI construct and model. Replication of the Netherland CDI model in the U.S. results in an acceptable measurement fit, but a slightly below acceptable structural fit.

**Keywords:** consumer disidentification, ethnocentrism, second-generation immigrants, cross-cultural, domestic product preference

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## Introduction

Immigrants in the United States may experience a clash between their ethnic identities and their national identities. Disidentification with the national identity can be reinforced by ethnic allegiances and felt discrimination by mainstream outgroups. In turn, outgroups may be distrusted, met with ambivalence, or even rejected by second-generation immigrants. This phenomenon of national disidentification becomes highly relevant in nations that are replete with settlers, such as the United States. The steady infusion of second-generation partially acculturated immigrants into a country generates profound political, cultural, and normative shifts over time. From a marketing perspective, the concept of national disidentification affects buying predispositions and motivations to acquire goods that are alternatives to domestic products. The general concept of national disidentification has given rise to the notion of consumer disidentification, or the distancing of consumers from the typical domestic consumer. The disidentified consumer is self-categorized as a group member who, in some respects, is outside of the mainstream culture.

Josiassen (2011) introduced the marketing-relevant concept of consumer disidentification (CDI) to represent consumers' active rejection of and distancing from the perceived typical domestic consumer. His model was based on forces of product attraction and repulsion of second-generation immigrants with respect to their domestic country. The CDI model originated with a matrix that formalized consumer country-induced biases. The biases were ascribed to country image impressions and beliefs that the purchase of domestic products benefits the domestic economy. Consumer disidentification was located in the matrix by the bias of domestic country product repulsion classification. The CDI classification involved no assumptions as to product quality.

Consumers with high levels of consumer disidentification do not identify with consumers in the country in which they live, and they categorize themselves as different from the majority consumer population. In principle, consumer disidentification is important for development of marketing strategies that involve many nations experiencing meaningful waves of immigration. Therefore, firms doing business in these markets might broaden their brand images, such that they reflect important traits of outside cultures. In principle, this would reduce the perceived disparity in responsiveness between disidentifying consumers and the firm's other target segments.

Consumer disidentification is an important construct across different demographic groups. Consumer disidentification levels in new ethnic populations are ever present, and the predictive ability of consumer disidentification remains strong within demographic segments (Josiassen, 2011). Therefore, consumer disidentification must be taken into account regardless of the gender, age, and income of consumer targets. In short, these realities hold considerable promise for domestic and international marketers, and the consumer disidentification scale promises to provide marketers with a new and useful strategic instrument that leads to a better understanding of how current and prospective customers might react to their products.

In addition to the concept of consumer disidentification, consumer ethnocentrism has been shown to influence consumers' willingness to buy domestic products significantly (Josiassen 2011). Ethnocentric consumers are collectively oriented and express higher levels of domestic national identification. Consumer ethnocentrism generates positive domestic product willingness to buy among consumers, even in the absence of positive product judgments of domestic products (i.e., "Domestic products seem good" and "I favor domestic products"). Consumer ethnocentrism basically activates domestic product preference. It does not elicit negative biases against the products of any specific country.

Besides Josiassen's research there is only one published study involving the effect of consumer disidentification on domestic product preferences (Shoham, Segev and Gavish 2017). Unlike the Netherlands research, Shoham et al.'s study was conducted among U.S. Hispanic first-generation immigrants, with more challenging acculturational issues. Additionally, the U.S. Hispanics study does not replicate the Josiassen consumer disidentification model because it omits the key independent variable of consumer ethnocentrism. Interestingly, it found that consumer disidentification (CDI) was predictive of Hispanic first-generation immigrant consumers' unwillingness to buy, irrespective of their product quality judgments. On the other hand, an indirect effect of CDI through product judgments was found in the Netherlands study.

## **Consumer Disidentification and Domestic Product Purchases**

Our present replication study in the U.S. focuses on the basic CDI model, and is unique; it is the first replication of the consumer identification model. It also tests the cross-cultural generalizability of the model in the US, providing context for a country other than the Netherlands. It is national in scope and samples second-generation immigrants of all ethnic backgrounds (i.e., Hispanics, Asians, African Americans, Europeans, and others). A schematic of the CDI model is shown in Figure 1. Our replication research ascertains whether among U.S. consumers' disidentification is a pre-eminent driver of purchase behavior with respect to domestic products.

U.S. second-generation immigrants were selected for this replication study because both the U.S. and the Netherlands are western cultures with similar mainstream lifestyles. Individualism is a common cultural value in both societies. Similar institutional arrangements are shared in such domains as economic systems, education, government, and procedural justice. Thus, the acculturation process in both countries has similar parameters.

However, unlike the second-generation Dutch citizens, second-generation U.S. citizens have highly diverse origins and socioeconomic backgrounds (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, most of the immigrants in the U.S. came primarily from Europe. However, beginning in the mid-1960s, U.S. immigrant policy led to newcomers of various origins and resulted in a more diverse ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic composition within the U.S. (Zhou & Gonzales, 2019). Immigrants in general possess a set of pre-migration characteristics, including their homelands' culture and social resources. This disposition affects views and purchasing behavior of domestic products. Therefore, the replication of the Netherlands research with various ethnic second-generation U.S. citizens serves to validate CDI's generalization. As such, this research has significant policy and managerial implications.

## **Research Objectives and Hypotheses**

The Josiassen study measured domestic product evaluations and buying motivations as consequences of attraction via consumer ethnocentrism and repulsion via consumer disidentification. The Netherlands study used structural equation analysis to test the following hypotheses:

H1: Consumer disidentification (CDI) has a negative effect on product judgment of domestic products.

H2: Consumer disidentification (CDI) has a negative effect on willingness to buy domestic products.

The Netherland study also sought to verify the positive impact of consumer ethnocentrism on domestic product judgment and willingness to buy. The same study also measured ownership of domestic goods as an outcome variable. The items listed in a domestic product ownership index consisted of durable goods such as televisions, DVD players, headphones, radios, cameras, and refrigerators. However, the index is inappropriate in the U.S. replication study as a measurement of domestic product ownership and is inconsistent with consumer willingness to buy, because the domestic market for these products is heavily saturated with foreign products in the U.S. The same hypotheses advanced in Josiassen (2011) were tested in the replication study of the CDI model. The hypotheses were well-grounded in balance theory where tensions between imbalanced preference systems are reduced or avoided.

## Method

### Procedure

In order to test the empirical generalizability of Josiassen (2011) in the U.S. context, this research targeted U.S. adult residents, aged 18-65, who were second-generation immigrants. The second-generation immigrant classification refers to people born in the United States, with at least one first-generation (immigrant) parent. MTurk participants were the sampling frame in exchange for a small payment. MTurk sampling has been found to be reliable for consumer research studies; it is more representative of the general population parameters than traditional convenience samples found in published articles (Goodman and Paolacci, 2017). To further enhance the quality of our data in this study only MTurk workers with intellectual capabilities (i.e., a 90-100% Human Intelligence Task [HIT] approval rating and 100 or more approved HITs) were recruited to participate in this research (Hauser and Schwarz 2016).

The survey was completed online by 301 second-generation U.S. immigrants in an average of 7.5 minutes. The sample was diverse. It was divided equally by females and males, the majority of whom were single (60%), and 79% of participants had at least some college education. Median household income was \$50,000. The majority of respondents (33.9%) were Caucasians, followed by Hispanics (24.6%), Asians (24.6%), African-Americans (8%), others (6.3%), and Middle Eastern (2.7%).

### Construct Measures

Scales and items were adapted from the same sources accessed by the original CDI study.

The product judgment scale used in this study (see the Appendix) was adopted from Klein, Ettenson, and Morris (1998); and Ouellet (2007). The scale measures product judgment along a three-item (good/bad, favorable/unfavorable, and satisfactory/unsatisfactory) five-point semantic differential scale ( $\alpha = .797$ ). Willingness to buy was assessed with a three-item, seven-point semantic differential scale ( $\alpha = .871$ ) derived from previous studies (i.e., Klein, Ettenson, and Morris 1998; Ouellet 2007). The scale in the current study excluded an item: "Whenever available, I would prefer to buy products made in the U.S." because it did not fit the unidimensionality criterion. Consumer ethnocentrism (CET) is measured by five items on a five-point scale ( $\alpha = .895$ ) from the CETSCALE (Klein, Ettenson, and Morris 1998; Nijssen and Douglas 2008; Steenkamp, Ter Hofstede, and Wedel 1999).

## Results

Analyses were conducted using EQS 6.4 (see Bentler 1989 and Byrne 1994). The reliability of the CDI scale was calculated by coefficient alpha (Cronbach 1951), reliability coefficient Rho, maximal weighted internal consistency, and highest non-extracted eigenvalue. The CDI scale exhibited good internal consistency on all measures, with an alpha value above .8. Reliability coefficient Rho was also above .8, as was the maximal weighted internal consistency. Finally, the highest non-extracted eigenvalue was over .9. In sum, reliability of the CDI scale exhibited good internal consistency (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Consumer disidentification scale**

	Mean	Item Loadings	Item - Total Corr.	Skewness	Kurtosis	Standard Dev.
1. In general, I dislike the consumption culture of the American consumers.	3.405	.732	.731	-0.480	-0.731	1.220
2. It is good if they say something bad about American consumers.	2.309	.743	.737	0.504	-0.554	1.138
3. I object to being seen as just another American consumer.	3.379	.593	.606	-0.396	-0.420	1.097
4. I always tend to not shop in the same places as the Dutch	2.206	.600	.619	0.764	-0.274	1.168
5. Generally, I do not want to consume like the Americans.	2.910	.826	.815	-0.101	-0.985	1.226
6. I sometimes feel uncomfortable if people think I buy the same as the Americans do.	2.279	.789	.778	0.519	-0.736	1.176

Coefficient $\alpha$	.810
Reliability coefficient Rho	.817
Maximal weighted internal consistency	.841
Highest non-extracted eigenvalue	.984

*Note:* All paths are significant.

The issue of common method bias was addressed by means of a one-factor test involving all variables in the CDI model. Results of this test indicate that common method bias was not a concern in the current study. The factor analysis found four factors, each of which corresponded to a construct in the model. A second test for common method bias involved the use of a marker variable and its correlation with CDI scale scores, expected to be uncorrelated. The marker

variable asked respondents about their level of confidence in the American economy. This provides additional evidence that common method variance does not pose a significant threat to the analysis. The correlation between the marker variable and CDI scores was low and non-significant (.08).

The distinctiveness of the CDI measure from the consumer ethnocentrism measure was tested. A factor analysis from the combined pool of items for both CDI and consumer ethnocentrism constructs was undertaken. The analysis disclosed that the two concepts are clearly independent factors. Thus, discrimination between the CDI scale and the Consumer Ethnocentrism (CET) scale was established.

The overall model fits of measurement and structural models was tested, based on CFI, Chi-square and RMSEA scores. The measurement model was found to be acceptable, while the structural model was unacceptable (see Table 2). However, the principal focus was on causal relations between CDI, product judgment, and willingness to buy, validated in our replication study. Structural model fit statistics were adversely affected by the relatively low level of CDI scores ( $M = 2.75$ ). The low CDI contributed as an adverse impact on the model should in fact be deleted, as it is speculative.

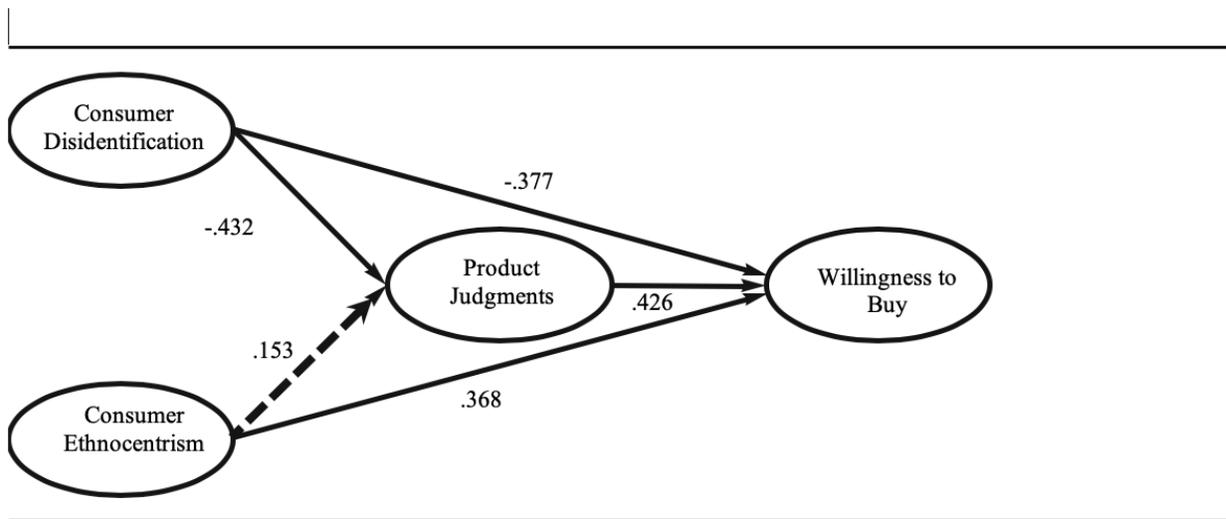
**Table 2. Results of measurement and structural model fit**

	Chi-Square	Df	p-level	CFI	RMSEA
Maximal Likelihood					
Measurement	64.30	9	.000	.902	.143
Structural	458.42	114	.000	.872	.100

*Note:* Df, CFI, and RMSEA respectively refer to degree of freedom, comparative fit index and root mean square error of approximation.

Each of the five paths in the CDI model was found to be significant. The path from, CDI to domestic product judgment was  $-.43$ , supporting H1. The path from, CDI to willingness to buy was also significant and negative, supporting H2 ( $-.38$ ). Paths from consumer ethnocentrism to product judgment and willingness to buy were both significant and positive ( $.15$  and  $.37$ ) (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. The Consumer Ethnocentrism-Disidentification Model, SEM Path Analyses**



Note: Source: adapted from Josiassen (2011)



Significant in this study, but it was not significant in Josiassen's study.

### Comparison of Results: Current Study with Josiassen's Original Results.

The current study is the only replication of Josiassen's CDI model, which was based on a general population of second-generation immigrants in the Netherlands. The current study is based on second-generation immigrants in the United States. Two of Josiassen's hypotheses and verified findings are presented and compared with the current study for support (or lack of support) in terms of replicability.

H1: Consumer disidentification (CDI) has a negative effect on product judgment.

H2: Consumer disidentification (CDI) has a negative effect on willingness to buy.

The replication study results agreed with the original study's empirical confirmation of these hypotheses. Original study findings of the effects of consumer ethnocentrism in the CDI model agreed with replication study findings for one of two paths. In the current study, consumer ethnocentrism positively affected willingness to buy as was the case in both studies. However, the studies diverged in findings about the path from consumer ethnocentrism to product judgment. The path was not significant in the original study but was positively significant in the replication. This latter discrepancy is of considerable interest and is controversial. Finally, as may be expected, the path from product judgment to willingness to buy domestic products were significant in both the original and current study.

Noticeably, the original and the replication study found Cronbach's alpha reliabilities for the CDI scale exceeding .8, an acceptable level of scale reliability. In both studies common method variance was tested and dismissed, by using the same techniques of factor analysis and marker variables. Based on factor analyses of pooled items from both scales, both studies found that CDI measurement is distinct from that of consumer ethnocentrism.

The original study gave no data or assessment of the overall model fit parameter. However, the replication study explored and presented fit parameters for the model. Measurement modeling was found to be acceptable.

## DISCUSSION

Based on findings from the replication study, we tentatively conclude that the CDI concept and its contextual model are cross-culturally viable. However, additional replication studies are called for. The need for replications extends to developing countries and those with cultural and geographic differences from the original and future replication studies. For these studies, the CDI scale should be further calibrated to increase its variability and consequently its predictive power. Both original and current studies were limited by the low ceiling of CDI means. The impact of consumer ethnocentrism on product judgment should be carefully examined and generalized as far as possible in future replication studies. Such studies should seek to enlarge the model by incorporating additional variables that importantly drive product judgment, such as domestic psychological product ownership.

### Managerial Implications

The implications of our U.S. replication are three-fold: (a) the cross-cultural robustness of the measurement model beyond the Netherlands; (b) the concept's importance as a cross-pressure to ethnocentrism in purchase of domestic goods; and (c) the importance of product judgment for the indirect effect of CET on willingness to buy. Marketers may be assured that the CDI model results are reliable and accurate. Marketers' strategic thinking involving ethnocentrism have to take into account the consumer disidentification effect. This is an important factor in consumer decision-making. Levels of CDI in target populations should be taken into account in the development of strategies based solely on CET. Positive CDI predicts consumers' dispositional favoritism toward foreign products. As a result, foreign marketers should consider CDI as an important measurement to define target markets and develop brand positions.

## Research Implications

Future research studies should expand the CDI model to include measures of consumer xenophilia. This would complete the spectrum of consumer dispositions toward domestic and foreign products. Additionally, comparative CDI model results should be tested for several diverse ethnic groups within a single country. Finally, future research should include explanations of antecedents of acculturation and ethnic identities of second-generation immigrants.

A consumer attraction-repulsion matrix was advanced in Josiassen's (2011) study. This attribute space motivated the concept of consumer disidentification. This matrix is a fourfold table with product attraction vs. repulsion on one axis, and domestic vs. foreign countries on the other. It locates consumer ethnocentrism, consumer disidentification, consumer affinity, and consumer animosity within the four cells. The matrix describes dispositional consumer responses not entirely related to quality expectations. Future research should elaborate on the basic attraction-repulsion matrix to include a third dimension: new, unexplored categories of consumer dispositions that relate to product quality expectations. This would capture the extensive literature on consumer dispositions to buy domestic or foreign products in developing vs. developed countries. The importance of product quality in complementing country-induced consumer biases should not be under-estimated. In this replication study, as well as in the original study, CDI mediated by product judgments, was predictive of willingness to buy domestic products.

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## Appendix: Survey Items

### ***Product Judgments*** (modified from Ouellet 2007)

- American products seem good.
- I am favorable toward products made in the United States.
- American-made products seem to be unsatisfactory.

### ***Willingness to Buy*** (modified from Darling and Wood 1990; Klein, Ettenson, and Morris 1998; Ouellet 2007)

- I would feel guilty if I bought a product made in the USA.
- Whenever possible, I avoid buying American products.
- I do not like the idea of owning American products.
- Whenever available, I would prefer to buy products made in the U. S.

### ***Consumer Ethnocentrism*** (modified from Nijssen and Douglas 2008; Shimp and Sharma 1987; Steenkamp, Ter Hofstede, and Wedel 1999)

- Purchasing foreign-made products is un-American.
- It is not right to purchase foreign products, because it puts American people out of jobs.
- We should purchase products manufactured in America instead of letting other countries get rich off of us.
- We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country.
- American consumers who purchase products made in other countries are responsible for putting their fellow Dutchmen out of work.

### ***Consumer Disidentification (CDI)*** (newly developed scale by Josiassen 2011)

- In general, I dislike the consumption culture of the American consumers.
- It is good if they say something bad about American consumers.
- I object to being seen as just another American consumer.
- I always tend to not shop in the same places as the Americans.
- Generally, I do not want to consume like the Americans.
- I sometimes feel uncomfortable if people think I buy the same as the Americans do.