

Chapter 17

Turkish Consumers' National Identification and Willingness to Buy From Syrian-Owned Supermarkets: A Sequential Mediation Model of Consumer Ethnocentrism and Consumer Racism

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the current 'Syrian Wave' phenomenon in Turkey in line with consumer behavior through social identity theory, this study examines the serial mediator role of consumer ethnocentrism and consumer racism in the relationship between national identity and the willingness to buy from supermarkets owned by Syrians. Also, this study evaluates the effect of education on these variables. Finally, the robustness of the predicted model is checked on the basis of control variables such as age, income, and gender. Data was collected from 322 Turkish consumers through an online survey. The bootstrapping method was used to estimate the indirect effects. The results show that consumer ethnocentrism and consumer racism completely mediate the relationship between national identity and the willingness to buy from Syrian-owned supermarkets. In addition, the results supported that education level reduces national identity, consumer ethnocentrism, and consumer racism.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, one in every 30 human beings is a migrant, a refugee or asylum-seeker in a foreign country. World Immigration Report (2022) represents there are around 281 million international migrants in the world. Countries that host immigrants experience ethnic and racial diversity which leads to significant great socio-psychological and economic challenges. Since March 2011, Turkey has received a huge migration, totally 3.6 million Syrian refugees in 2019 (UNHCR, 2019), flow due to the 'open door' refugee policy.

During the last decade, especially between 2014 and 2016, terror attacks threatened Turkish people that created negative and unfavorable attitudes against the Syrian refugees. For instance, in 2015 one study showed that most Turks (84%) said that they see Syrian refugees negatively (The German Marshall Fund, 2015). Particularly the conflicts between major and minor ethnic groups create a culture of discrimination against the others, i.e., non-national, refugee or immigrant, which is fueled by disturbing ethnocentric trend that evaluates the diversity as animosity (Diène, 2005). Studies show that migrants may encounter basic problems such as social exclusion, discrimination, and racism in their settlements (Ünal, 2014). On the other hand, after the Turkish Code of Commerce provides support to refugee entrepreneurship in Turkey since 2013, Syrian-owned businesses consist of the highest number of foreign companies, which were established in the wholesale, real estate, and construction sector in 2017 and 2018 (Erdoğan, 2019). Even with that impressive statistics, Syrian-owned businesses can encounter market-related and socio-cultural barriers (Harima et al., 2019). This complicated situation raises questions such as how inter-ethnic relations manifest themselves in the consumer behavior domain and to what extent this conflict affects Turkish consumers' attitudes towards Syrian-owned businesses in Turkey?

In the consumer behavior literature, consumer ethnocentrism (Shimp & Sharma, 1987), consumer racism (Quellet, 2007), national identity (Dinnie, 2002), and consumer animosity (Klein & Ettensoe, 1999) have drawn attention in explaining negative attitudes towards foreign services, products, and brands. These studies have consistently shown those constructs have negative effect on willingness to buy foreign products and to buy from foreign-owned supermarkets (Zarkada-Fraser & Fraser, 2002). Notably, no studies have examined the mediated relationships among national identity, consumer ethnocentrism, consumer racism, and willingness to buy (Shoham & Gavish, 2016).

This study can be useful in understanding the market-related relations between Turkish consumers and Syrian-owned businesses based on social identity theory. The main aim of this study to fill the gap in the literature by examining the sequential mediation role of consumer ethnocentrism and consumer racism in the relationship between national identity and willingness to buy from Syrian-owned supermarkets based on social identity theory. And also, this study evaluates the effect of education on these variables. In this context, the following questions motivated aims of this study: Does national identification increases consumer ethnocentrism? Does consumer ethnocentrism increases consumer racism? Do consumer racism lead Turkish consumers less to buy from Syrian-owned supermarkets? Do consumer ethnocentrism and consumer racism explain the relationship between national identity and willingness to buy from Syrian-owned supermarkets? Finally, to what extent does education manifest itself with in these relationships?

For the direction of this study's aim the chapter is structured five main sections. At the first section conceptual background is examined. In second section, we gave the research model and present hypotheses of the study. In third section, we explained our research methodology. Section 4 the findings are clarified and in the last section we discussed the findings and gave practical and social implications.

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