

Original Article

Advertising Nationalism: How Effective Are Advertisements Appealing to Consumer Ethnocentrism? – The Cases of Electric Vehicles and Smartphones in a Developing Southeast Asian Country

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Disclosure Statement

There is no potential conflict of interest. The study did not receive any external funding. The dataset used in the current study may be available upon request.

Received

10 May 2023

Revised

11 Sep 2023

Accepted

16 Dec 2023

ABSTRACT

While CETSCALE has frequently been tested and applied in Western contexts, it has received little attention in Asian countries, particularly Vietnam, a developing country that has one of the highest economic growth rates worldwide (Dabla-Norris & Zhang, 2021). Hence, the current study employs CETSCALE to examine the effects of nationalistic advertisements on consumer ethnocentrism and purchase intention for the domestic VinFast electric vehicles and Bphone smartphones among Vietnamese millennial consumers. Results based on 206 survey responses ($N = 206$) suggested the predictive powers of respondents' attention and exposure to nationalistic advertisements on their perceptions of the advertisements which, in turn, predicted consumer ethnocentrism level and domestic buying intention. Perceptions of nationalistic advertisements particularly played a quintessential role in predicting consumers' ethnocentrism and, eventually, buying intentions for domestic EVs and smartphones. The study is one of the first attempts to examine the influence of nationalistic advertisements (e.g., exposure and attention), in relation to CETSCALE, on buying intentions, looking at two different product categories (i.e., EVs and smartphones). Furthermore, it contributed to the globalization and de-Westernization of media mass communication scholarship by testing CETSCALE in the understudied context of Vietnam. Theoretical and empirical implications, for instance, employment strategies for nationalistic advertising, were provided.

KEYWORDS

Advertising, nationalism, Vietnam, CETSCALE, consumer ethnocentrism

The expansion of marketplace globalization has indeed provided customers with an unprecedentedly wide range of choices between domestic and imported products (Granzin & Painter, 2001). In the competitive international market and recent financial turmoil, however, governments and local businesses often remind consumers of their civic duty to purchase domestically manufactured products

(Chan et al., 2010; Hamin & Elliot, 2006). While such calls to purchase national products have proliferated worldwide since the eighteenth century (Kühnschelm, 2020), the tendency for domestic purchases is unclear among customers in countries with different economic and cultural backgrounds (Tsai et al., 2013).

One of the motivational influences on consumers' buy-domestic behaviors is nationalism, a critical antecedent to consumer ethnocentrism (Granzin & Painter, 2001; Tsai, 2010). Companies are likely to embed nationalistic discourse in advertising to persuade buyers to prioritize domestic products over foreign ones (Dedeoglu et al., 2005). The usage of nationalistic advertising is classified by its involvement in broader nationalistic political programs such as national buying-domestic campaigns and the establishment of nationalist credentials (e.g., a national icon; Prideaux, 2009). Given the diverse and frequent use of nationalistic advertisements, as well as the gap in understanding consumers' tendency toward domestic consumption, the current study employs the consumer ethnocentric tendencies scale (CETSCALE; Shimp & Sharma, 1987) to analyze the influence of nationalistic advertisements on Vietnamese consumers' perception of domestic product purchases. Implications regarding the understanding of consumers in the increasing international competition where buyers can be more involved with their identities and nationalism (Netemeyer et al., 1991) may be further provided.

As the study focuses on examining the connection between nationalistic advertisements and consumer nationalism (e.g., "the invocation of individuals' collective national identities in the process of consumption to favor or reject products from other countries"; Wang, 2005, p. 225), the CETSCALE was chosen to conceptualize the latter notion. Generally, when brands induce

nationalistic pride, they trigger consumers' reflections on their national identity and self-esteem (Liu et al., 2017). Thus, they tend to favor national products over foreign ones, which the CETSCALE measures.

We choose to examine the cases of VinFast electric vehicles (EVs)¹ and Bphone smartphones,² which employ nationalistic advertisements to characterize their products as the first to be "made in Vietnam" and that these products shall help Vietnam "reach out to the world." While the product category plays a vital role in exploring consumers' ethnocentric tendencies and purchasing decisions (Pereira et al., 2002; Tsai et al., 2013), none of the studies assessing the validity of the CETSCALE in Vietnam (e.g., Spillan & Harcar, 2013; Tran et al., 2017) concentrated on a specific product. Thus, the current study further contributes to the literature by examining electric vehicles and smartphones in a developing country that has one of the highest economic growth rates worldwide (Dabla-Norris & Zhang, 2021). This study is also a response to the call for de-Westernization in mass communications scholarship (Waisbord, 2022), particularly focusing on Asia (Ang & Zhou, 2023), in at least two different senses. Firstly, this study expands the examination and reassesses the validity of CETSCALE, a Western-based measurement, in Vietnam, a Global South country, with contextual modifications. Secondly, as a result of the first argument, it provides findings regarding nationalistic advertisements and consumer ethnocentrism in a non-Western context. Examinations of diverse cases are needed for stronger generalizability and arguments of theories (Thussu, 2009).

Nationalistic Advertising

While nationalism and patriotism are similar in

¹ https://vinfastauto.com/vn_en

² <https://bphone.vn/>

that they both include nonrational sentiments such as love, passion, and particular commitment, nationalism provides citizens with intense feelings of loyalty and a sense of identity and dignity, which patriotism does not (Barnard, 1997; Rosenblatt, 1964). In media research, nationalism is conceptualized as positive attitudes towards people, objects, and concepts typically labeled by the media as belonging to one's country (Pedic, 1990). Individuals believe their home country is distinctive from other nations and place their country first (Curti, 1946). The current study defines nationalistic advertising as advertisements containing patriotic and nationalistic appeals to evoke people's nationalistic sentiments, such as solid feelings and pride in national uniqueness and superiority (Kaynak & Kara, 2013; Liu et al., 2017).

The contemporary economy is increasingly reproducing nationalism, which is gradually associated with multiple institutions and recognized as a popular approach in corporate advertising (Castelló & Mihelj, 2017; Prideaux, 2009). Advertisements' messages that appeal to consumers' national identity and patriotic emotions can positively influence consumers' reactions and intention to buy domestic products (Castelló & Mihelj, 2017; Han, 1989) and attract consumers who have a great sense of national identity and wish to buy products that affirm their national identity (McGovern, 1998). Businesses thus try to reflect and fit their products with a local identity in marketing strategies, establishing a unique brand image and presentation to each market (Prideaux, 2009).

Nationalistic advertising is critical in creating strong brand connections, making products more emotive, and orienting consumption toward symbolic meanings (Heath et al., 2006; Illouz, 2009). Some businesses become means of identity expression by conveying sensibly nationalistic advertising messages encouraging consumers to show their identities through product consumption (Mazzarella, 2003).

Nationalistic advertising evokes emotions and fosters citizens' attachment to their country, particularly during major national events (Kinnick, 2003). When a crisis hits, as nationalism increases, buying domestic products becomes more morally sound. Many corporations have exploited these crises to appeal to consumers' nationalism, pushing them to buy locally-produced goods (Lee et al., 2003; Sharma et al., 1995).

Nationwide Nationalistic Campaigns and Advertisements in Vietnam

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck Vietnam in early 2021, the Ministry of Industry and Trade promoted the "Vietnamese people prioritize using Vietnamese goods" campaign (Ministry of Industry and Trade of Vietnam, 2021). The campaign has previously been established and implemented by the Vietnamese Politburo in 2009, aiming for long-term advocacy for local resources (Vietnam Government Portal, 2009). Buy-national campaigns generally encourage the relationship between citizens' sense of national belonging and their act of purchase. The government tries to instill pride in consumers in national production and the country (Kühlschelm, 2020).

Several Vietnamese companies have positioned themselves based on nationalistic strategies. Trung Nguyen, a coffee brand, for instance, has positioned their G7 instant coffee as a source of national pride, sending an open letter to partners and customers to rally support for the Vietnamese brand ahead of a product launch (Trung Nguyễn Legend, 2021). Likewise, Biti's, a shoe manufacturer, positioned their products as those that "caress the Vietnamese feet." They also launched the "Proudly Made in Vietnam" campaign for their Hunter sneaker product line (Biti's Hunter, 2020). The campaign includes advertisements embedded with national symbols and components of national pride, focusing

on Vietnamese cultural aspects, the nature of Vietnamese people, and the meaning of existence in the country (Biti's, 2020).

VinFast, a car brand, promotes itself as the first Vietnam-made automotive and national pride. Their advertising strategies attempt to convey nationalism via name, logo, and promotional videos. For instance, during the debut at an international exhibit (i.e., Paris Motor Show), VinFast employed nationalistic slogans such as "VinFast - Intense Vietnamese Spirit" and "VF e34 - Vietnam's First Smart Electric Car." The ethnic aspect is related to the claimed objective of VinFast to bring the first Vietnamese EVs to international markets and become a global electric vehicle firm (Nguyen, 2022). Similarly, BKAV has applied nationalistic advertising for Bphone, a smartphone brand, positioning it as the first smartphone created and manufactured by Vietnamese people. Via the slogan "Made in Vietnam" and catchphrases like "pride," Bphone tries to emphasize the importance of supporting Vietnamese products (BKAV Corporation, 2018a). Some of their promotional videos contain compliments from state officials (BKAV Corporation, 2018b). The advertising strategies for VinFast EVs and Bphone smartphones are indicative and symbolic of aspirations of nationalism in Vietnam.

Consumer Ethnocentrism and the CETSCALE

Ethnocentrism can be measured via the 17-item consumer ethnocentric tendencies scale (CETSCALE; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Consumer ethnocentrism describes the tendencies to differentiate products of in- and out-groups (i.e., made in the home country or foreign countries) regardless of their price, quality, or features (Sharma et al., 1995; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Ethnocentrism depends on the intensity of consumers' nationalism. Thus, consumers with higher ethnocentrism, whose primary concerns

are job opportunities for fellow citizens and national economic conditions (Dedeoglu et al., 2005; Josiassen, 2011; Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010), are more likely to buy domestic goods, i.e., their products (Dedeoglu et al., 2005; Granzin & Painter, 2001; Jiménez-Guerrero et al., 2014).

Positive feelings toward the country of origin (COO) of a product can be generated by individuals' familiarity with home countries, social ties, and traditions. These emotional drivers, including nationalism and ethnocentrism, in turn, affect the preference of consumers for local products (Heiman & Just, 2021). Consumers' nationalistic feelings, therefore, can even outweigh functional and affective attributes (e.g., quality) in purchasing consideration (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Wang & Wang, 2007). The competitiveness of local production thus increases as buyers are willing to pay higher prices for domestic goods (Kilders et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 1995; Van Loo et al., 2019).

COO-based bias considerably relates to and places effects on ethnocentrism, which resembles nationalism in that it often involves positive attitudes toward an ingroup and, vice versa, negative attitudes toward the out-groups (Balabanis et al., 2001; Rosenblatt, 1964). Consumers' ethnocentrism is associated with nationalistic pride and patriotic sentiments of responsibility and loyalty (Tsai, 2010). Lee et al. (2003), for instance, found that nationalism is a good predictor of consumers' ethnocentric tendencies. While the influence of products' COO on consumer ethnocentrism has been widely explored (Harris et al., 1994; Tsai et al., 2013), the roles of advertisements and product categories in customers' purchase intention and decisions are often neglected (Jiménez-Guerrero et al., 2014; Moon & Jain, 2002). Thus, the current study aims to fill that gap.

Consumer ethnocentrism can also be influenced by multiple socio-psychological factors (e.g., cultural openness, patriotism, and conservatism) and demographic factors (e.g.,

gender, age, education, and income; Sharma et al., 1995). Consumers who are more nationalistic and less cosmopolitan in their attitudes and preferences tend to be more ethnocentric (Lee et al., 2003). Female, older, less-educated, and blue-collar buyers are more likely ethnocentric (Good & Huddleston, 1995), while the ethnocentrism of male, younger, better-educated, and higher-income individuals tends to be low (Lee et al., 2003).

The relationship between cultural dimensions and consumer ethnocentrism has been investigated in cross-cultural contexts (Tsai, 2010). For example, in individualistic cultures (e.g., the US), consumers' ethnocentric tendencies are motivated by nationalistic perceptions of dominance (Lee et al., 2003). Meanwhile, in collectivistic societies (e.g., Turkey), customer ethnocentrism results from customers' loyalty and attachment to their country (Balabanis et al., 2001). Consumer ethnocentrism also tends to be highest in advanced economies, further highlighting the significance of the buyers' country (Tsai et al., 2013).

The CETSCALE has been proposed to examine whether the behaviors are ethnocentric or dependent on analyzed categories and countries (Jiménez-Guerrero et al., 2014). The limited literature suggests that people with high consumer ethnocentrism tend to purchase domestic EVs and smartphones (Guo & Bunchapattanasakda, 2020; Taute et al., 2017). Kausuhe et al. (2021) suggested that the COO of smartphones, however, did not impact purchase decisions.

Nationalism can associate and predict consumers' ethnocentric tendencies as they both share the inclination to differentiate the in- and out-groups (Balabanis et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2003; Tsai, 2010). Hence, it is reasonable to argue that nationalistic advertising might be a good predictor of consumer ethnocentrism. Nevertheless, the relationship has not been explored thoroughly. Limited literature suggests that amplifying national identity in

advertisements can lead individuals to react more positively to the presentations and the ads themselves (Carvalho & Luna, 2014). For instance, an advertising campaign highlighting national history has leveraged customers' national identity when emphasizing the central national values of the country (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015). Nationalistic advertising is thus often used as a marketing appeal (Heslop et al., 2008; Insch & Florek, 2009).

RQ1. Do people who are more frequently exposed to nationalistic advertisements perceive nationalistic advertisements as more positive?

RQ2. Do people who pay more attention to nationalistic advertisements perceive nationalistic advertisements as more positive?

The association between consumer ethnocentrism and types of advertisements has been investigated. For instance, Neese and Haynie (2015) found that exposure to comparative advertisements between domestic and foreign products could trigger ethnocentrism. Additionally, exposure and attention to foreign product advertisements might influence the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and purchasing frequency (Puzakova et al., 2010). It is arguable to propose that the more customers are exposed to nationalistic appeals in advertising and perceive these advertising positively, the higher level of consumer ethnocentrism they will have (Bartikowski et al., 2021).

H1. People who are more frequently exposed to nationalistic advertisements have higher ethnocentrism towards the advertised products.

H2. People who pay more attention to nationalistic advertisements have higher ethnocentrism towards the advertised products.

H3. People who perceive nationalistic advertisements as more positive have higher ethnocentrism towards the advertised products.

Several studies have suggested that not only consumers' ethnocentrism but also nationalistic advertisements, as well as consumers' perception of the ads, can also increase consumers' buying intentions. Exposure and attention to nationalistic advertisements trigger individuals' positive perceptions of the ads and, consequently, their preferences for home-country brands (Carvalho & Luna 2014; Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015).

H4. People who perceive nationalistic advertisements as more positive are more likely to purchase the advertised products.

H5. People who have higher ethnocentrism toward domestic products with nationalistic advertisements are more likely to purchase the advertised products.

METHOD

Data Collection

Data for the study was collected via a web-based Qualtrics survey. A convenient sample of the urban millennial group, i.e., people aged 25-40 who were based in the five major municipalities (i.e., cities under the jurisdiction of the central government) of Vietnam, including Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hai Phong, Da Nang, and Can Tho, was recruited via social media (e.g., Facebook). Millennials are considered potential consumers of EVs and smartphones in Asia (Shetty et al., 2020; Zahid & Dastane, 2016). The study received approval from the Institutional Review Board at Louisiana State University

(IRBAM-22-0013).

Respondents were requested to read and accept a consent form before completing the survey, which takes about 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Between January 15 and November 15, 2022, 406 survey responses were received; only 206 responses, however, qualified for data analysis ($N = 206$). Qualified survey responses are those without missing entries and passed all concentration checks. The relatively low completion rate (50.7%) was perhaps due to the length and complexity of the questionnaire. Respondents, furthermore, did not receive any incentive for participating in the study.

Demographics of the Sample

While nine respondents (4.4%) refuse to disclose their gender, 104 respondents (50.5%) identify as female, and 93 respondents (45.2%) identify as male. The average age of the sample is 30.19 (*Median* = 29, *SD* = 3.78). Respondents in the sample are relatively well-educated, with all obtained at least a high school diploma; 92.2% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Additionally, the majority of respondents (173; 84%) have above-average income (i.e., earning at least 5.6 million VND, equivalent to approximately 245,29 USD, per month) based on the categorization of the General Statistics Office of Vietnam.

Measures of Variables

Before proceeding to the main part of the survey, respondents are shown two advertisements from each of the products (i.e., VinFast and Bphone).³ These advertisements contain nationalist elements and are publicly available on YouTube. Nevertheless, respondents' level of exposure and attention to VinFast and Bphone nationalistic advertisements was not merely

³ Links to VinFast advertisements: <https://youtu.be/6ucZPwUTOa0> and <https://youtu.be/rO8jgwW4z08>.
Links to Bphone advertisements: <https://youtu.be/hyT9Q4cr-OU> and <https://youtu.be/JJeBIWrRQPM>.

measured based on their encounter with the advertisements introduced in the survey but also included their previous experiences with those brands and their ads.

Exposure to Nationalistic Advertisements (EXP)

Respondents' level of exposure to VinFast ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.94$) and Bphone ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 1.06$) nationalistic advertisements were measured based on a seven-level Likert scale item (0 = *Never*, 6 = *Always*) adapted from Puzakova et al. (2010), "In general, how often do you see branding information of [brand] in the mass media on a typical day?"

Attention to Nationalistic Advertisements (ATT)

Respondents' level of attention to VinFast ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.23$) and Bphone ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 1.17$) nationalistic advertisements were measured based on a seven-level Likert scale item (0 = *None at all*, 6 = *A great deal*) adapted from Puzakova et al. (2010), "In general, when you see branding information of [brand] in the mass media, how much attention do you give to them?"

Perceptions of Nationalistic Advertisements (PER)

Four items were adapted from Li et al. (2020)

to measure respondents' perceptions of VinFast ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.42$; $\omega = .90$, $AVE = .70$) and Bphone ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.33$; $\omega = .92$, $AVE = .75$) nationalistic advertisements. Respondents rated these items on a seven-level Likert scale (0 = *Strongly disagree*, 6 = *Strongly agree*); a higher score indicated a more positive perception of nationalistic advertisements (Table 1).

CETSCALE (CET)

The CETSCALE was modified by pointing to the specific products (i.e., VinFast EVs and Bphone smartphones), as well as eliminating items irrelevant to the Vietnamese context, e.g., "Americans should not buy foreign products, because this hurts American business and causes unemployment" or "Only those products that are unavailable in the US should be imported." In reality, Vietnam's openness to international trading and foreign direct investment are the key drivers of the nation's economic growth (Le, 2020).

From the original 17-item CETSCALE (Shimp & Sharma, 1987), nine items that are most fitted to the context of Vietnam were adapted into the study. Respondents rated these items on a seven-level Likert scale (0 = *Strongly disagree*, 6 = *Strongly agree*). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) suggested that CETSCALE for VinFast ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 1.10$) was a second-order model with three first-order factors (Table 2), while CETSCALE for Bphone ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 1.10$) should be constructed as a second-order factor with two first-order factors (Table 3). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) supported these models. The fit indices for VinFast, $\chi^2 (24, N = 206) = 72.02$, $p < .001$; CFI = .96, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .05, and Bphone $\chi^2 (25, N = 206) = 100.26$, $p < .001$; CFI = .95, RMSEA = .12, SRMR = .04 both indicated acceptable fitting.

Buying Intention (BUY)

Respondents were asked to what extent they would consider buying a VinFast EV ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 2.81$) and a Bphone smartphone ($M =$

Table 1. Descriptive Analyses and Reliability Statistics for Items Measuring Respondents' Perceptions of Nationalistic Advertisements of VinFast (PERV) and of Bphone (PERB); Factor Loadings are Standardized

		M	SD	Loadings
VinFast	PERV1	3.38	1.48	.83
	PERV2	3.29	1.66	.76
	PERV3	3.10	1.66	.85
	PERV4	3.30	1.67	.91
Bphone	PERB1	2.23	1.45	.78
	PERB2	2.35	1.54	.91
	PERB3	2.16	1.43	.93
	PERB4	2.31	1.49	.84

Table 2. Descriptive Analyses and Reliability Statistics for Items Measuring Respondents' Consumer Ethnocentrism (CETSCALE) toward VinFast; Factor Loadings are Standardized

	M	SD	Loadings	ω	AVE
Factor 1			.83	.82	.62
CET1	2.56	1.49	.81		
CETV1	2.15	1.51	.92		
CETV2	3.01	1.68	.64		
Factor 2			.82	.84	.75
CETV3	0.80	1.09	.78		
CETV4	0.96	1.22	.93		
Factor 3			.89	.86	.62
CETV5	1.63	1.46	.76		
CETV6	1.87	1.62	.81		
CETV7	1.72	1.53	.83		
CETV8	2.04	1.50	.76		

Note. AVE is average variance extracted.

Table 3. Descriptive Analyses and Reliability Statistics for Items Measuring Respondents' Consumer Ethnocentrism (CETSCALE) toward Bphone; Factor Loadings are Standardized

	M	SD	Loadings	ω	AVE
Factor 1			.91	.89	.56
CET1	2.56	1.49	.59		
CETB1	1.19	1.31	.83		
CETB2	2.27	1.73	.56		
CETB3	0.80	1.09	.87		
CETB4	0.97	1.27	.92		
CETB5	1.20	1.33	.80		
CETB8	1.15	1.36	.82		
Factor 2			.91	.94	.89
CETB6	1.19	1.38	.94		
CETB7	1.29	1.37	.88		

Note. AVE is average variance extracted.

1.72, $SD = 2.36$) if they were to make a purchase decision within the next 12 months. Answers were based on the 11-level Net Promoter Score (NPS; 0 = Definitely would not buy, 10 = Definitely would buy; Reichheld, 2003).

RESULTS

Data Analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the data. Reliability statistics for PER and CET are provided in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3, respectively, along with descriptive statistics. Other factors (i.e., EXP, ATT, and BUY)

Figure 1. The Theoretical Model (Model 0) of the Study; +/- Indicates the Direction of the Hypotheses

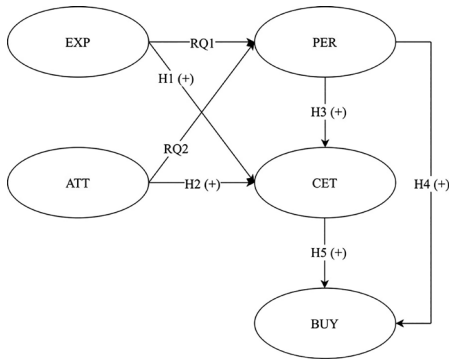
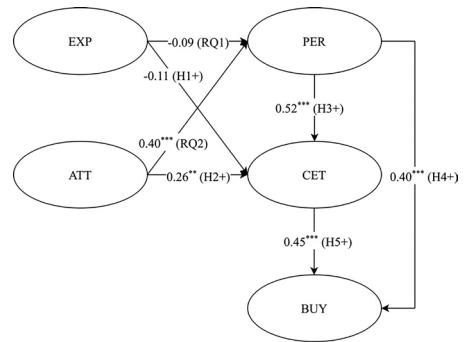


Figure 2. The Structural Model for VinFast (Model V_0); Regression Coefficients are Standardized



were inserted as single variable factors. Based on the literature review, Figure 1 depicts the theoretical model of the study. All data analysis was conducted in R with the *lavaan* package (Rosseel, 2012).

Both ML (i.e., maximum likelihood) with standard error bootstrapping and MLM (i.e., maximum likelihood with robust standard errors and a Satorra-Bentler scaled test statistic) estimations were employed for the fitting function. The model fit indices provided by the two methods were not significantly different.

VinFast

The fit indices indicated that the priori model for VinFast (Model V_0) was acceptably fitting; χ^2 (96, $N = 206$) = 239.87, $p < .001$; CFI = .93, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .07 (see Figure 2). RQ1 questioned the relationship between respondents' exposure to nationalistic advertisements and their perception of nationalistic advertisements. Furthermore, RQ2 focused on the effect of respondents' attention to nationalistic advertisements on their perception of nationalistic advertisements. Results from Model V_0 indicated that, controlling for the effects of other predictors,

Note. χ^2 (96, $N = 206$) = 239.87, $p < .001$; CFI = .93, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .07.

the relationship between respondents' exposure to VinFast nationalistic advertisements and their perception of those advertisements was not statistically significant ($b = -0.11$, $z = -1.04$, $p = .297$). Respondents' attention to VinFast nationalistic advertisements, on the other hand, was significantly and positively correlated with positive perceptions of the advertisements ($b = 0.40$, $z = 3.90$, $p < .001$).

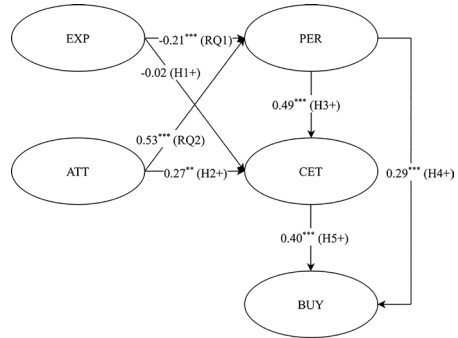
H1 hypothesized that respondents who were more frequently exposed to nationalistic advertisements would have higher ethnocentrism towards the advertised products. In the case of VinFast, the effect of exposure on consumer ethnocentrism was not statistically significant ($b = -0.13$, $z = -1.74$, $p = .081$; $b_{\text{indirect}} = -0.05$, $z = -0.96$, $p = .335$, 95% CI [-0.17, 0.04]). H1, therefore, was not supported. H2 proposed that respondents who paid more attention to nationalistic advertisements would have higher ethnocentrism towards the advertised products. For VinFast, attention indeed significantly and positively predicted consumer ethnocentrism ($b = 0.23$, $z = 2.72$, $p = .006$; $b_{\text{indirect}} = 0.18$, $z = 3.46$, p

= .001, 95% CI [0.09, 0.30]). H2 was supported.

H3 proposed that respondents who perceived nationalistic advertisements as more positive would have higher ethnocentrism towards the advertised products. The results from Model V_0 indicated a positive direct connection between respondents' perception of VinFast advertisements and consumer ethnocentrism ($b = 0.46$, $z = 5.02$, $p < .001$). H3 was supported. H4 hypothesized that respondents who perceived nationalistic advertisements as more positive would be more likely to purchase the advertised products. Respondents in the sample indeed had significantly higher buying intentions for VinFast as their perceptions of VinFast nationalistic advertisements were more positive ($b = 0.92$, $z = 4.61$, $p < .001$; $b_{indirect} = 0.53$, $z = 3.98$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.32, 0.85]). H4 was supported. H5 hypothesized that respondents who had higher ethnocentrism toward domestic products with nationalistic advertisements would be more likely to purchase the advertised products. The influence of consumer ethnocentrism toward VinFast on respondents' buying intentions for the EV brand was statistically significant and positive ($b = 1.16$, $z = 4.58$, $p < .001$). H5 was supported.

Model V_0 's modification indices suggested that respondents' attention to VinFast nationalistic advertisements may have a significant direct effect on their buying intentions for the electric car. The literature has suggested that capturing consumer attention is quintessential in increasing perceived product attractiveness and enhancing their intention to buy (Chang et al., 2016). Thus, a modified version of Model V_0 (i.e., Model V_1 ; χ^2 (95, $N = 206$) = 218.25, $p < .001$; CFI = .94, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .07) was constructed to test the effect. Results from Model V_1 indicated that the effect of respondents' attention to nationalistic advertisements had a significant and positive effect on buying intentions ($b = 0.55$, $z = 4.49$, $p < .001$; $b_{indirect} = 0.67$, $z = 3.68$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.33, 1.03]). Other results from Model V_1

Figure 3. The Structural Model for Bphone (Model B_0); Regression Coefficients are Standardized



Note. χ^2 (97, $N = 206$) = 265.92, $p < .001$; CFI = .93, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .06.

were not significantly different from those of Model V_0 .

Bphone

Fit indices from the priori model for Bphone (Model B_0) showed acceptable fitting; χ^2 (97, $N = 206$) = 265.92, $p < .001$; CFI = .93, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .06 (Figure 3). Regarding RQ1 and RQ2, results from Model B_0 indicated that both respondents' exposure ($b = -0.23$, $z = -2.87$, $p = .004$) and attention ($b = 0.52$, $z = 6.80$, $p < .001$) to Bphone nationalistic advertisements had statistically significant direct effects on their perception of the ads. While the effect of respondents' attention to Bphone advertisements was, similar to the case of VinFast, positive, the influence of exposure on positive perception of the advertisements was negative, which suggested that the more people were exposed to Bphone nationalistic advertisements, the more negative they felt about those advertisements.

Meanwhile, respondents' exposure to Bphone nationalistic advertisements did not have a

direct, but an indirect and negative influence on consumer ethnocentrism toward the smartphone brand ($b = -0.02$, $z = -0.38$, $p = .706$; $b_{\text{indirect}} = -0.09$, $z = -2.43$, $p = .015$, 95% CI $[-0.18, -0.03]$). H1 was partially contradicted in the case of Bphone. Respondents who paid more attention to BPhone nationalistic advertisements indeed had higher ethnocentrism towards their smartphones ($b = 0.21$, $z = 2.88$, $p = .004$; $b_{\text{indirect}} = 0.21$, $z = 4.47$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[0.13, 0.32]$). Furthermore, respondents' positive perception of Bphone nationalistic advertisements was correlated with higher consumer ethnocentrism ($b = 0.39$, $z = 5.88$, $p < .001$). H2 and H3 were thus supported for Bphone.

As for H4, respondents who perceived Bphone nationalistic advertisements as more positive were indeed more likely to purchase Bphone smartphones ($b = 0.59$, $z = 3.62$, $p < .001$; $b_{\text{indirect}} = 0.40$, $z = 4$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[0.24, 0.66]$). H4 was supported. Finally, buying intentions for Bphone were significantly and positively influenced by consumer ethnocentrism ($b = 1.03$, $z = 3.87$, $p < .001$). H5 was supported.

DISCUSSION

Targeting two key product categories – EVs and smartphones – within a rapidly growing economy in Vietnam, this study is one of the first attempts to investigate the impact of nationalistic advertisements and consumer ethnocentrism on consumers' buying behavior. Analyzing responses from 206 participants, the findings shed light on the intricate relationship between exposure and attention to such ads, consumer perceptions, and, ultimately, buying intentions. Notably, the study reveals that individuals' perceptions of nationalistic advertisements, influenced by their exposure and attention, play a crucial role in predicting their level of consumer ethnocentrism and preference for domestic products.

Theoretically, the study made a significant

contribution to literature since the relationship between the CETSCALE and the level of exposure to, as well as the perception of, nationalistic advertisements had seldom been explored. Results suggested that the perception of nationalistic advertisements, controlling for the effects of other independent variables, was the strongest predictor of consumer ethnocentrism in both cases, which might happen because nationalism increased the level of consumer ethnocentrism (Balabanis et al., 2001). On the other hand, while results suggested that consumer ethnocentrism possessed reliable predictive power over buying intention, consumer ethnocentrism, in turn, can be influenced by consumers' perception of nationalistic advertising.

Furthermore, the study explores the current state of Vietnamese consumer ethnocentrism using CETSCALE. The CETSCALE indexes for VinFast and Bphone in Vietnam were considerably low compared to the general CETSCALE indexes in countries such as China, Russia, South Korea, and the US (Puzakova et al., 2010). The results can be explained from two perspectives. From an economic perspective, consumer ethnocentric tendencies, which are parts of countries' economic development, may change following the evolvement of an economy (Good & Huddleston, 1995). Consumer ethnocentric tendencies are expected to be low at the early development economic stage due to the increased interest in foreign products and brands (Puzakova et al., 2010), which partially explains the low level of consumer ethnocentrism in Vietnam, a developing economy. The results were consistent with previous findings positing that the more advanced an economy was, the more ethnocentric the consumers would be, and vice versa (Tsai et al., 2013), highlighting the role of context.

From a cultural perspective, while scholars have proposed that collectivistic individuals tend to demonstrate stronger consumer ethnocentric tendencies (Sharma et al., 1995), the results

indicated that Vietnamese, whose culture is often perceived as collectivist (Hofstede Insights, 2022), did not show a strong sense of consumer ethnocentrism, at least toward VinFast EVs and Bphone smartphones. An explanation for that, perhaps, would be because cultural interference has been considered a driving force for the economic development of Vietnam since the country adopted economic and political reforms known as Doi Moi in 1986 (Nguyen, 2019). Cultural openness, which is an influential factor in consumer ethnocentric tendencies, may have reduced ethnocentric tendencies in Vietnamese consumers.

In addition, findings, which highlighted the relationship between the CETSCALE and purchase intention, supported the validity and predictive power of the CETSCALE in Vietnam, as well as similar countries, i.e., Asian, developing, and culturally collective nations. Hence, they contribute to the literature and implication of CETSCALE studies. The scale, however, should be adjusted by adapting appropriate items depending on the examined products and the context since consumer ethnocentrism is contextual to the product category and the nations of consumers (Dedeoglu et al., 2005; Tsai et al., 2013). For instance, consumers in developing countries tend to choose automobile brands from developed countries since domestic products in such heavy industry may be scarce (Erdogan et al., 2021).

Practically, as shown in the case of Bphone, increased exposure to nationalistic advertisements might decrease consumer ethnocentrism. The study argues that excessive exposure to advertisements, particularly those with nationalistic elements, can backfire on customers' attitudes if the repetition surpasses a threshold (Schmidt & Eisend, 2015). A two-stage responding process to repeated advertisements based on the habituation-tedium theory (Tellis, 2003) may provide an explanation for the phenomenon. At first, the more exposed

consumers are to advertisements, the more familiar they are with the product, which leads to positive responses. Boredom and resentment, however, will emerge when the exposure passes its threshold and produces negative feelings toward the brand (Karniouchina et al., 2011).

The study further suggests several empirical implications. First, brands may employ nationalistic strategies in advertising to influence consumers' preferences, ethnocentrism, and, eventually, domestic buying tendencies. Advertisements may include nationalistic elements that arouse individuals' nationalism and patriotism (e.g., collective national identity, in-group identification with the brand, or national pride; Liu et al., 2017). Collectivism is indeed a significant cultural value that impacts customers' buying intentions (Meng & Kim, 2020). For instance, VinFast has long boasted its image as a national Vietnamese car brand and, moreover, the first Vietnamese-made car. Advertising strategies, furthermore, can use specific cultural and nationalistic meanings and understandings (Kaynak & Kara, 2013). For example, as aforementioned, Biti's has run campaigns featuring their shoes with historical stories and images about Vietnamese origin and cultural characteristics.

Second, corporates should be cautious in building their brand image have they decided to employ nationalistic elements in advertising, e.g., avoid repeated advertising to prevent ad fatigue. Additionally, attention to ads plays a crucial role in shaping customers' perception of the product, their ethnocentrism, and even their buying intention (in the case of VinFast). Therefore, companies should mindfully embed and highlight nationalistic elements in advertising, focusing on enhancing consumers' perceived product quality, perceived corporate ability, and perceived corporate integrity, which may result in a positive patriotic and nationalistic brand image. Exaggerated statements attempting to incite nationalism, inversely, may

prove counterproductive. If done correctly, a nationalistic brand image can effectively encourage local consumers to buy domestic products (Li et al., 2020).

Limitations and Future Research

The study recognizes several limitations. First, the sample size is small, which minimizes the generalizability of the study. As the survey was distributed to the urban millennial group in Vietnam, however, the sample of 206 respondents is acceptable to examine the CETSCALE validity and its predictors in Vietnam, focusing on two brand categories of EVs and smartphones. The homogenous characteristics of the sample lead to the second limitation, which is the inability to examine the influence of demographic characteristics on consumer ethnocentrism and domestic buying intention.

The study, furthermore, did not examine the content of nationalistic advertisements; thus, it could not investigate aspects such as advertisement types, types of nationalistic content, or media of dissemination, as well as their impacts on consumer ethnocentrism and buying intention. Empirically, the study is unable to describe and discuss specific and effective advertising strategies that employ nationalistic elements. Future studies can address these limitations by analyzing the content of nationalistic advertisements of multiple brands. Experiments can be conducted to investigate consumers' conceptualization of nationalistic advertisements, CETSCALE, and buying intentions. Finally, cross-national comparative studies with more robust independent variables can be carried out, especially in countries in the Global South, to further validate the CETSCALE and its predictive power over consumers' buy-domestic intention.

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Appendix

Items for Respondents' Perceptions of Nationalistic Advertisements (PER) and Consumer Ethnocentrism (CETSCALE)

Variable	Item
PER1	In general, I have positive feelings about the branding information of [brand].
PER2	In general, I think that the branding information of [brand] is patriotic.
PER3	In general, I think that the branding information of [brand] reflects Vietnam's characteristics.
PER4	In general, I think that the branding information of [brand] deserves to be respected by Vietnamese people.
CET (common item)	It is always best to purchase Vietnamese products.
CET1	Vietnamese people should always buy [brand]'s [products] instead of foreign-made [products].
CET2	Buy [brand]'s [products] means keeping Vietnamese working.
CET3	Purchasing foreign-made [products] instead of [brand] is not patriotic.
CET4	A real Vietnamese should always buy [brand]'s [products], not foreign-made ones.
CET5	We should purchase [products] manufactured in Vietnam, e.g., [brand]'s [products], instead of letting other countries get rich off us.
CET6	Foreign-made [products] should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into Vietnam.
CET7	Curbs, e.g., controlling and limiting policies, should be put on foreign-made [products].
CET8	It may cost me in the long run, but I prefer to support [brand]'s [products] instead of foreign-made [products].