



ETHNOCENTRISM AND CONSUMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY OF CONSTRUCTION FIRMS IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA: THE MODERATING ROLE OF BRAND TRUST

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Abstract

This research investigated how consumers' preference for domestic products impacts the value they place on local construction companies in the South-South region of Nigeria. This study utilized the cross-sectional survey design. The population of the study is one thousand two hundred and thirty one (1,231) employees of working under the various states ministry of works. The random sampling technique was adopted as respondents were directors and their secretaries because of their relevant experiences and sufficient knowledge on the subject matter. Each department had two (2) representatives, purposively drawn from each of the functioning seven departments and three units; human resources management, planning research and statistics, finance and accounts, civil engineering, engineering services, quantity surveying and building services, design and structure, audit unit, legal unit and press unit. Thus the sample size is 120. However, only 116 of responses were valid for analyses. The results showed that there is a substantial association between the ethnocentric dimensions and the consumer-based brand equity measures, derived from the bivariate and multivariate analysis. Accordingly, the study suggests that, based on the results, Construction companies should focus on investing in local resources and employing native workers while supporting community advancement. This approach can foster long-term loyalty and brand advocacy among ethnocentric customers. Considering that consumer patriotism affects brand preference and loyalty, firms should implement branding strategies that underscore their role in national progress, local employment, and infrastructure development.

Keywords:

Devotion, Patriotism, Consumer-Based Brand Equity, brand trust, Construction Firms

Introduction

The Nigerian economy has deteriorated in recent years due to unfavorable economic policies, which have significantly increased the cost of goods and services. Economic authorities have responded by urging Nigerians to prioritize domestic production and consumption, stressing that doing so will hasten economic recovery and promote sustainable growth. A key idea in marketing and brand management, consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) is the value a brand adds to a good or service for the customer (Sarker, Mohd-Any, & Kamarulzaman, 2019; Abate, 2021). Brand equity, according to Aaker (1991), is a collection of brand assets and liabilities associated with a brand's name and symbol that either increase or decrease the value offered by the good or service. Keller (1993) defined brand equity in terms of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, and defined CBBE as the effect of brand knowledge on how consumers react to brand marketing. In essence, CBBE reflects consumer perceptions of the brand rather than what the company promotes (Purani & Jeesha, 2022). CBBE is an important strategic asset in industries like construction, where customer dependability, dependability, and perceived quality are critical. It gives a competitive advantage, moulds customer loyalty, and affects purchasing decisions.

According to Alagarsamy, Mehroliya, and Paul (2024), CBBE is unique in that it prioritises the consumer perspective, suggesting that brand value depends not only on product efficacy but also on the affective and cognitive connections consumers form with the brand. In the context of building services, these linkages may include aspects that go beyond technical expertise, such as dependability, regional knowledge, ethical behaviour, and national pride. As a result, CBBE has a significant effect on customer engagement and organisational performance (Gundona, Yamoah, & Haq, 2023; Cambra-Fierro, et al. 2021). Once more, CBBE is essential for organisational relevance and continuation for construction companies in South-South Nigeria, a region marked by a variety of ethnic groups, political complexities, and economic hardships. Reputation, assurance, and long-lasting relationships all closely related to brand perception are the foundation of the construction industry. Businesses with strong brand equity often enjoy customer loyalty, are more resilient to market swings, and face less resistance to higher prices (Singh, Verma, Fatima, & Kumar, 2024).

Furthermore, it is increasingly important to understand how ethnocentric preferences influence buyer decisions in a global construction market where foreign companies are competing with local businesses. Without this understanding, local construction companies run the danger of losing ground even if they have operational advantages or experience with the area. A useful way to fill this gap is through consumer ethnocentrism. Consumer ethnocentrism encompasses not only purchasing behaviour but also affective attachment to national identity and the belief that local businesses contribute to economic advancement (Sulhaini, 2021). However, the dearth of studies incorporating consumer ethnocentrism as a potential determinant in CBBE within this context constitutes a notable deficiency. Moreover, considering consumer ethnocentrism as a predictor empowers researchers and practitioners to explore the affective and identity-driven dimensions of brand equity that are frequently overlooked in standard marketing frameworks. This integration enriches the CBBE framework and furnishes strategic guidance to firms endeavoring to cultivate robust and culturally pertinent brands.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that Nigerians have always preferred foreign products and services over local ones and this same issue is also observable in the construction industry as Nigerian companies are most of the time neglected or seen as second choice. This has affected their performance and competitiveness with their foreign counterparts. The construction market of South-South Nigeria is therefore driven by stiff competition, client skepticism, and unpredictable economic situations. These factors make it necessary that firms go beyond project delivery and build trust, emotional connections, and strong brand associations with their clients. However, many firms fail to do so, using strategies that are insufficient or mismatched with the expectations of consumers, and thus, marketing becomes less effective. The general reputation issues in the industry, such as perceived poor service quality, inconsistent delivery of projects, and low transparency, have also hurt consumer trust in the industry.

Conceptual Framework

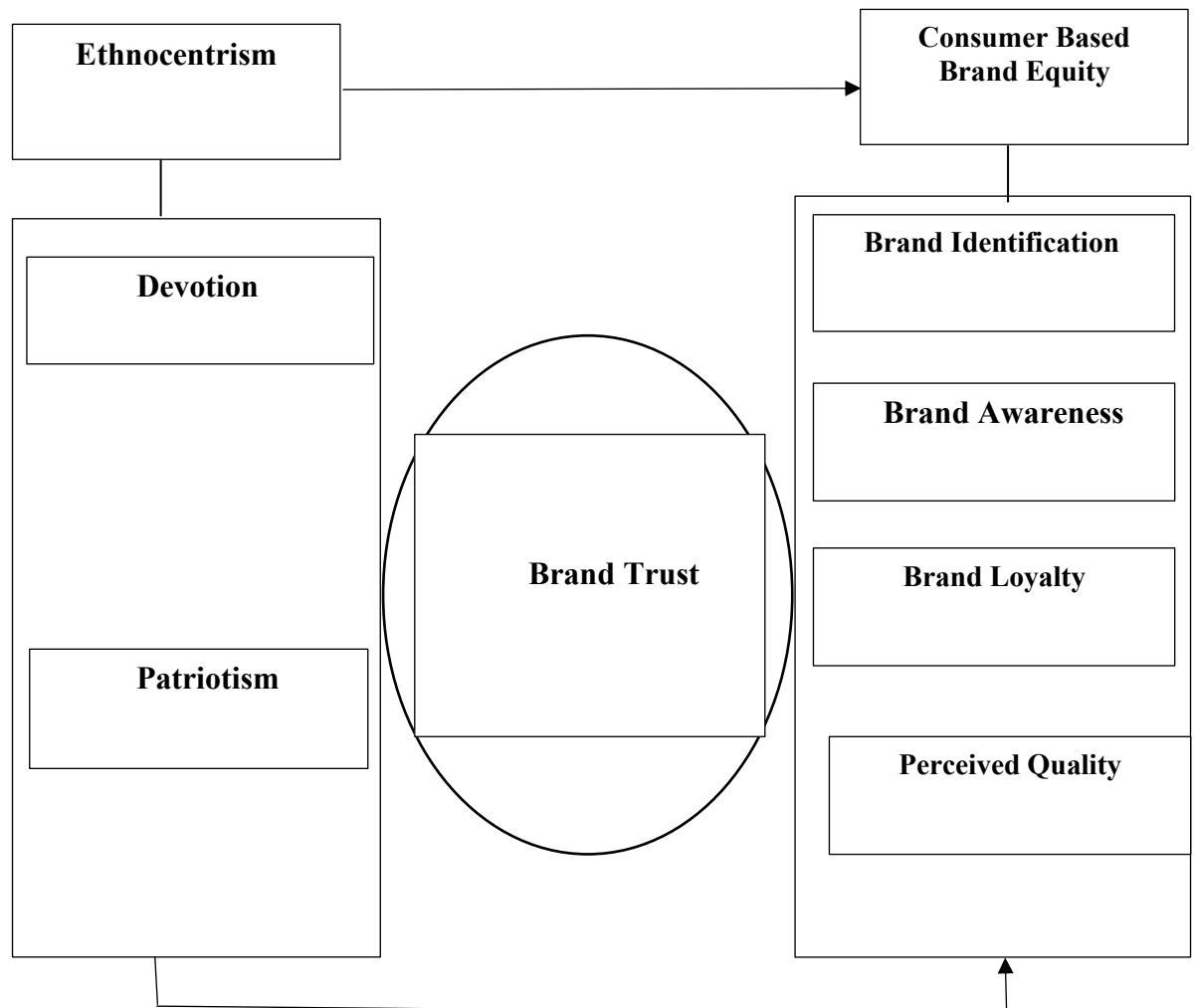


Fig. 1.1 Conceptual framework showing the link between ethnocentrism and consumer-based brand equity of Construction firms in south-south, Nigeria: a moderating role of brand trust.

Source: Adapted from Bizumic, (2019); Shankarmahesh, (2006); Nam, et al. (2011); Yoo & Donthu (2001).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to ascertain the relationship between ethnocentrism and consumer-based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria: a moderating role of brand trust. The specific objectives of this study are specifically to;

- i. Examine the relationship between devotion and consumer-based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.
- ii. Ascertain the relationship between patriotism and consumer-based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.
- iii. Examine the moderating influence of brand trust on the relationship between ethnocentrism and consumer-based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypothesis of the Study

The following hypotheses stated below are in null form and serve as a tentative answer to the research questions earlier stated above;

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between devotion and consumer-based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.
- Ho₂: Patriotism does not significantly influence consumer-based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.
- Ho₃: Brand trust does not significantly moderate the relationship between ethnocentrism and consumer-based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Framework: The fundamental theoretical framework for identification in organization studies and marketing is provided by social identity theory (SIT) (Elbedweihy al., 2016; Lam et al., 2012). People classify themselves into several social groups to help them define who they are, according to SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Based on SIT and organisational identification, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) broadened the concept of identity in customer-company connections. Despite being the theory explaining relationship marketing success for a number of years (Elbedweihy et al., 2016) and likely having an impact on how customer experiences develop (Fujita et al., 2018), SIT's importance in marketing and hospitality has been generally disregarded. Most of SIT's marketing and hospitality potential has been overlooked (Rather, 2017).

Ethnocentrism

According to Shimp and Sharma (1987), ethnocentrism is the general tendency for people to see their own group as the center of the universe, to interpret other social units from the perspective of their own group, and to reject people who are culturally different from them while accepting those who are culturally similar. Ethnocentrism entered the marketing field when it was suggested as one of the factors that might influence and mould consumer behaviour (Zdravković, & Gašević, 2022). Since then, it has been recognised as a human characteristic that influences consumer choices in a range of purchasing situations. The first consumer academics to apply ethnocentrism concept in the study of marketing and consumer behaviour were Shimp and Sharma (1987), who coined the term "consumer ethnocentric tendencies" (CET) (Sharma et al., 1995). Consumer ethnocentrism, according to Shimp and Sharma (1987), is the conviction that buying goods manufactured abroad is morally acceptable. Customers' intents to purchase foreign items are known to be negatively impacted by consumer ethnocentrism.

Devotion: Consumer loyalty has grown in importance as a marketing concept, reflecting a sophisticated level of consumer-brand interaction that is marked by behavioural loyalty, emotional attachment, and devotion to the brand. In contrast, traditional brand loyalty is more likely to be transactional or utilitarian (Obiegbu, Larsen, & Ellis, 2020). A stronger psychological bond between a customer and a brand is known as consumer devotion (Ladhari et al., 2022). According to Batista Ferraz and Dallabrida (2024), the general consumer-brand relations theory is where the word "consumer devotion" originates. It highlights consumers' emotional and symbolic ties to market items.

Patriotism: Shimp and Sharma (1987) subsequently created the Consumer Ethnocentric Tendencies Scale (CETSCALE) to further measure patriotic sentiment in consumer choice. While consumer ethnocentrism entails economic and moral concerns with buying foreign goods, consumer patriotism emphasizes symbolic identification and emotional attachment to the national economy (Shandilya, & Kumar, 2024). Literature has developed some dimensions of consumer patriotism, which are national pride, identity congruence, perceived economic contribution, and emotional loyalty. Kinawy, (2025) reported that patriotic consumers are driven by the fact that purchasing domestic products is equated with supporting the nation, which supports national pride and economic autonomy.

Consumer Based Brand Equity

Customers are said to have developed customer-based brand equity whenever they have a high degree of brand comprehension and experience and remember certain clear, favourable, and potent brand connections (Keller, 2008). Keller's (1993) initial CBBE model incorporated two dimensions: brand awareness and brand image. This perspective holds that a consumer has brand equity if they were aware of company and have strong, favourable, and distinctive brand associations. However, a five-factor conceptualization trustworthiness, value, performance, social image, and attachment are supported by Ishaq et al. (2023). Additionally, according to Jeon & Yoo (2021), the CBBE elements include brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, and brand

perceived quality. Few recent researches have examined trust's CBBE dimensions due to its importance.

Brand Trust: Tuti, and Sulistia, (2022) define it as the tendency of consumers to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stipulated function. Furthermore, Surapto, (2020) stated that brand trust is a status of the consumers who believe that a brand possesses a specialty of an extremely reliable product in terms of overall functions, quality control, and service quality. Brand trust is a valuable variable relevant to purchase decision-making and eventually leads to brand loyalty. It is a key mediator of consumer behavior before and after the purchase of a product. Moreover, it creates long-term loyalty and cements the relationship between two parties.

Empirical Review

Acar, Büyükdağ, Türten, Diker, and Çalışır, (2024) investigated the role of brand identity, brand lifestyle congruence, and brand satisfaction on repurchase intention: a structural equation model with many groups. From a social media channel, 610 usable responses were retrieved and evaluated. The research model tested a series of hypotheses based on theories of social identity and self-congruity. Brand happiness, lifestyle congruence, and repurchase intentions are all substantially impacted by brand identity, according to the research. Additionally, there is a strong relationship between brand-lifestyle congruence and both brand satisfaction and repurchase intentions. Another group that often disregards the impact of family and peers is the elderly and those with high incomes. Brand loyalty is higher among middle-aged, middle-income males who place a premium on where their products come from and who are less swayed by familial influences. Women are more likely to give in to peer pressure and spend less money on products, regardless of where they come from. In this study, we delve deeper into the brand identity literature by exploring the consequences of brand-lifestyle congruity, brand satisfaction, and purchase intention.

The authors Alam, Roy, Akther, and Hoque (2022) looked at the relationship between customer ethnocentrism and their intents to buy electronic devices, specifically looking at how demographics moderated the effect. In the context of Bangladesh, this study aims to investigate how customer demographic characteristics impact ethnocentrism and how this influences the decision to purchase domestically made household electronics. The 172 participants in the sample were surveyed using a mall-intercept survey to collect primary data. A five-point Likert scale called CETSCALE is utilised to assess consumers' ethnocentrism. To assess the ethnocentrism levels of various demographic groupings, an ANOVA and t-test were used. This study also used a manual way to apply the qualitative method. The findings indicate that customers' ethnocentrism is not influenced by their income or gender. However, CE tendency is significantly influenced by other demographic characteristics, such as age, occupation, and educational attainment.

Anabila, (2020) examined microfinance institutions' integrated marketing communications, brand equity, and business performance from the standpoint of emerging markets. A questionnaire was used to interview 407 important MFI employees. Respondents were chosen using the purposeful sampling technique. The constructs of the study were tested for correlation using partial least squares (PLS). The results show a strong positive correlation between IMC and BE, IMC and BP, and BE and BP. The study concluded that BE is a mediator in the connection between IMC and

BP. Through its analysis of IMC's impact on brand performance, the report provides valuable insight for marketing communications strategy.

Anastasiadou et al., (2022) investigated how emotional intelligence affected consumers' perceptions of e-service quality, value, buy intentions, loyalty, and satisfaction. A survey was administered to 321 Greek e-customers in order to test the research assumptions. The questionnaire was disseminated electronically in the form of a Google Form. The survey's results demonstrate that emotional intelligence has a beneficial impact on consumers' perceived value, loyalty intentions, perceived eService quality, and customer satisfaction. Additionally, the total quality of e-services is directly impacted by the performance of the website. The study's findings showed that consumers' perceptions of value, purchasing intentions, and loyalty were all positively impacted by the quality of their e-services.

Anucha, and Anaweokhai, (2022) studied brand identity programs and customer loyalty for the telecom industry in Port Harcourt, a quasi-experimental study design was adopted. Hypotheses were formulated based on the objectives of the study, and 252 questionnaires were administered. An analysis was conducted on 244 completed questionnaires using the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient in SPSS Version 21.0. It was established from an analysis of the Port Harcourt Telecom Industry that there is a highly significant positive correlation between brand identification and customer loyalty. Thus, the study's takeaway is that telecom companies should stick to the strategy of letting their brand position speak for itself.

Appiah-Nimo, et al., (2023) investigated the prominent South African fashion labels and the value their customers place on those labels. The study included quantitative research methods and survey questionnaires to gather data from 130 individuals. To put the alternate theories to the test, structural equation modelling was employed. The study affirmed the relevance of Aaker's (1991) CBBE model for luxury goods in the emerging economy of South Africa. Findings highlighted the significance of perceived quality as drivers of brand equity and validated the hedonism and behavioural loyalty as the dominant forces in South Africa's high-end garment market.

Methodology

This study utilized the cross sectional survey design. The population of the study is one thousand two hundred and thirty one (1,231) employees of the several state ministries of works make up the study's population. This study adopted the census study because of small size of the study. The sample size comprises 120 employees from the seven departments and three units harmonized from the different state ministry of works. The random sampling technique was adopted as respondents were directors and their secretaries because of their relevant experiences and sufficient knowledge on the subject matter. Each department had two (2) representatives, purposively drawn from each of the functioning seven departments and three units; human resources management, planning research and statistics, finance and accounts, civil engineering, engineering services, quantity surveying and building services, design and structure, audit unit, legal unit and press unit. Thus the sample size is 120. In this analysis, the primary source of data was used and data was operationalized using two dimensions which include 5 items were used to measuring devotion and patriotism was measured with set of 5 items. The criterion variable (consumer based brand equity) was operationalized using two measures which include brand identification and brand awareness.

5 items were used in measuring brand identification (e.g.), brand awareness was measured with set of 5 items. The convergent and discriminant validity of the instrument were determined in this study. we realized that the Cronbach's Alpha reliability values for each of the constructs were greater than 0.7 thresholds, confirming a high level of internal consistency. The bivariate analysis that is geared towards examining the relationship between ethnocentrism and consumer based brand equity was analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the aid of Smart PLS 4.1.1.4.

Data Analysis and Results

In order to test the bivariate hypotheses via the SEM, the bootstrap method was applied. Path coefficients (β values) of .10 to 0.29, .30 to .49 and .50 to 1.0 are weak, moderate and strong correlations, respectively.

Devotion and Measures of Consumer Based Brand Equity

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between devotion and consumer-based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.

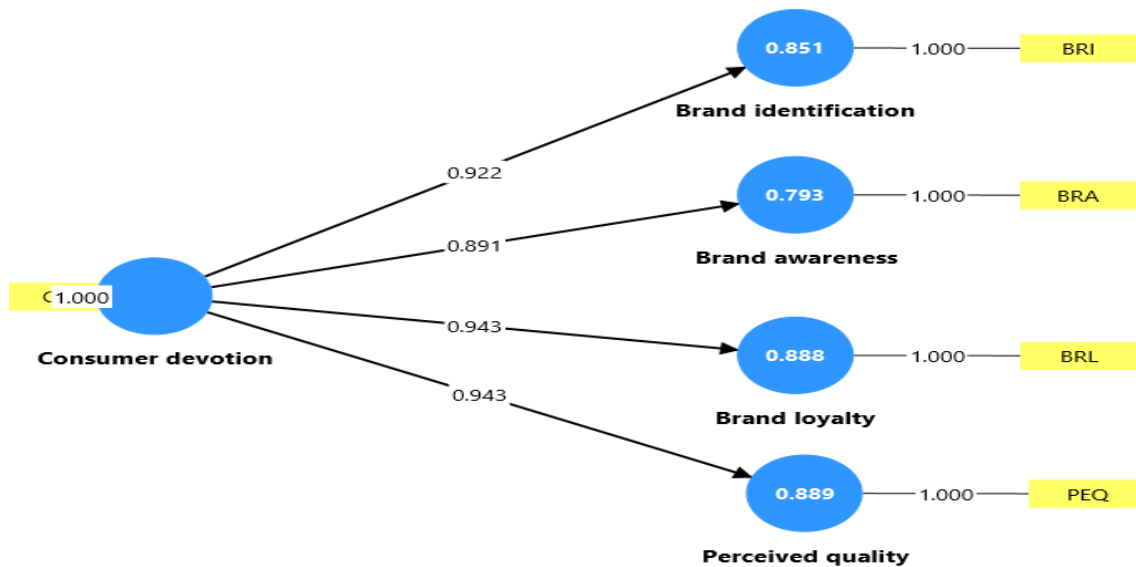


Fig. 1.2: Devotion and Measures of Consumer Based Brand Equity

Source: SmartPLS 4.0 output on Research Data, 2025

Figure 1.2 shows the result of the Path relationship between devotion and Consumer Based Brand Equity. This shows a $\beta = 0.922, 0.891, 0.943$, and 0.943 . This implies that there is a significant relationship between devotion and consumer based brand equity. Considering this, the study therefore rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between devotion and consumer based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.

Patriotism and Measures of Consumer Based Brand Equity

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between patriotism and consumer-based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.

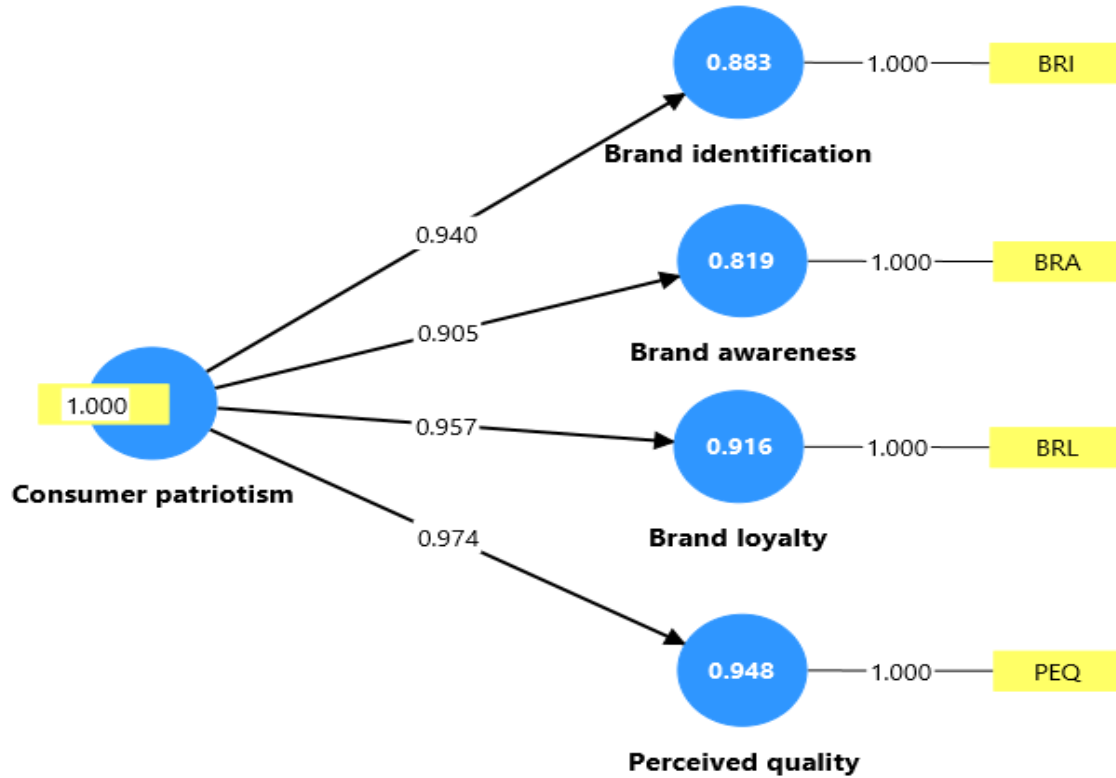


Fig. 1.3: Patriotism and Measures of Consumer Based Brand Equity

Source: SmartPLS 4.0 output on Research Data, 2025

Figure 1.3 shows the result of the Path relationship between patriotism and brand identification. This shows a $\beta = 0.940, 0.905, 0.957, 0.974$. This implies that there is a significant relationship between patriotism and perceived quality. Considering this, the study therefore rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between patriotism and perceived quality of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.

Brand Trust as a moderator between Ethnocentrism and Consumer Based Brand Equity

Ho₃: Brand trust does not moderate the relationship between ethnocentrism and consumer-based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria.

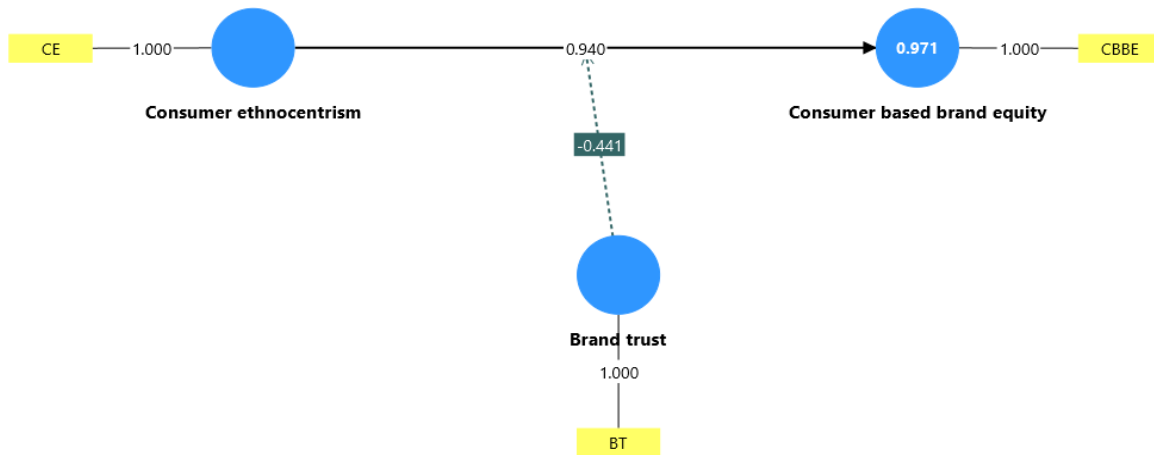


Figure 1.4: Brand trust and the relationship between ethnocentrism and consumer based brand equity

Source: SmartPLS 4.0 output on Research Data, 2025

Figure 1.4 shows the path relationship between the independent (ethnocentrism) and the dependent (consumer based brand equity) variables using a moderating variable (brand trust). The analysis shows that brand trust has a positive but significant moderating influence on the relationship between the two variables with $p < 0.05$ ($0.000 < 0.05$). A path coefficient of 0.940 shows that brand trust has a positive moderating influence on the relationship between ethnocentrism and consumer based brand equity. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate is accepted. Hence, we restate that *brand trust positively moderates the relationship between ethnocentrism and consumer based brand equity of construction firms in South-South, Nigeria*.

Discussions of Findings

Drawing from the bivariate and multivariate analysis, the findings revealed that a significant relationship exists amongst the dimensions of consumer ethnocentrism and the measures of consumer based brand equity.

Devotion and Consumer Based Brand Equity: The investigation's results indicate a robust positive correlation between devotion and brand identification, given the p-value of 0.008 which is less than the level of significance of 0.05 ($p = 0.008 < 0.05$). The hypothesis which was given in null form was thus rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. The path coefficient (β) was 0.922. Participants consistently exhibited high levels of emotional attachment, trust, and allegiance towards the brands with which they interact, implying that when individuals identify with a brand on a personal or emotional level, their dedication intensifies. The study's outcomes reveal a moderate but significant connection between devotion and brand awareness among construction firms in the South-South region of Nigeria, given the p-value of 0.008 which is less than the level of significance of 0.05 ($p = 0.008 < 0.05$). The hypothesis which was given in null form was thus rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. The path coefficient (β) was 0.891. Although there is evidence of brand recognition and familiarity among the respondents, the degree of

allegiance to specific construction firms seems limited when compared to other sectors. The study therefore conforms to the findings of Kinawy, (2025); Karoui and Khemakhem (2019).

Patriotism and Consumer Based Brand Equity: The research findings indicate a significant connection between patriotism and brand identification within construction companies in the South-South region of Nigeria, given p-value of 0.008 which is less than level of significance of 0.05 ($p=0.008 < 0.05$). The hypothesis which was given in null form was thus rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted. The path coefficient (β) was 0.940. Consumer patriotism, characterized as a preference for endorsing local enterprises due to national pride or regional loyalty, plays an increasingly vital role in influencing how individuals relate to indigenous construction brands. The study's findings indicate a moderate correlation between consumer nationalism and brand recognition of construction companies in the South-South region of Nigeria given, p-value of 0.008 which is less than level of significance of 0.05 ($p=0.008 < 0.05$). The hypothesis which was given in null form was thus rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted. The path coefficient (β) was 0.905. Patriotism characterized by an emotional attachment and a preference for patronizing domestic businesses. The study therefore conforms to the findings of Spielmann, Maguire, & Charters, (2020); Gantulga, & Ganbold, (2022); Djafer, & Adjila, (2024); Drzewiecka, & Guinnane, (2024).

Moderating Influence of Brand Trust on the Relationship between Ethnocentrism and Consumer Based Brand Equity

The study's findings indicate that brand trust plays a pivotal moderating function in the relationship between ethnocentrism and consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) among construction firms in the South-South region of Nigeria, given the p-value of 0.008 which is less than the level of significance of 0.05 ($p=0.008 < 0.05$). The hypothesis which was given in null form was thus rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. The path coefficient (β) was 0.940. Ethnocentrism, characterized by a preference for domestic over foreign companies, was evident among participants who favored Nigerian-owned construction firms due to national pride and a desire to bolster the local economy. The study conforms to the findings of Muniz, Stewart, & Magalhães, (2024); Tuti, & Sulistia, (2022).

Conclusion

This research examined the interplay between ethnocentrism and consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) in the context of construction companies in the South-South region of Nigeria, with a specific focus on the moderating influence of brand trust. The findings show that consumer perceptions and choices about local construction companies are greatly influenced by ethnocentrism. Participants stated that they were motivated by national pride, economic loyalty, and a belief in the growth of indigenous capabilities to favour domestic businesses over foreign ones. However, the results indicate that strong brand equity cannot be guaranteed by consumer ethnocentrism alone. Although ethnocentric customers are more likely to recognise and support Nigerian construction companies, this does not necessarily result in long-term brand loyalty,

perceived quality, or positive brand connotations unless these companies are also seen as reliable and competent. When consumer ethnocentrism is present, brand trust is a crucial moderating factor that increases its impact on brand equity; when it is lacking, it has the opposite effect.

These results demonstrate how crucial strategic brand management is for local construction companies. Businesses must prioritize providing high-quality services, keep their word, and communicate openly with clients in order to profit from consumer ethnocentrism. These initiatives will support the development of brand trust, which strengthens all aspects of brand equity, including brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty. In conclusion, this study highlights a substantial opportunity for South-South Nigerian construction firms to improve their brand value by matching actual performance with patriotic consumer preferences. Local businesses may turn consumer ethnocentrism into long-lasting brand loyalty and a competitive advantage in a market increasingly impacted by both emotional and performance-based brand evaluations by cultivating trust and maintaining professionalism.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, which explored how ethnocentrism affects consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) for construction companies in Nigeria's South-South region, several recommendations are put forward:

- i. Construction firms should strategically cultivate customer devotion by building strong emotional and relational connections with clients. This can be achieved through consistent delivery of high-quality projects, transparent communication, and post-project engagement.
- ii. Construction firms should form partnerships with local suppliers and visibly participate in community projects as this can reinforce the perception of the firm as a patriotic and socially responsible brand, thereby improving brand awareness and brand associations.

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