

## The Willingness of Omani Consumers to Buy Domestic versus Imported Products

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*The aim of this paper is to research Omani consumer behavior, specifically consumers' willingness to buy domestic products by examining the influence of consumers' ethnocentrism, conspicuous consumption, and susceptibility to interpersonal influence on domestic product purchases. The study has developed a conceptual model based on previous studies related to consumer behavior and combines the above three factors in one investigation. The research can be considered to be one of the first studies to combine these factors in the context of Omani consumer behavior. The research has used several methods to analyze the data. It starts with descriptive analysis (quantitative method). Moreover, reliability analysis is used to measure the validity of the scales. Finally, multiple regression analysis is applied to test the hypothesis. 377 respondents participated in this study by contributing in the questionnaire which was circulated to them online. The paper offers a new direction to the literature on the subject of consumer behavior, which establishes that consumers' conspicuous consumption and their susceptibility to interpersonal influence have a positive influence on purchasing domestic products, in addition to ethnocentrism. Furthermore, the limitations and implications of this research have explored and recommendations for future research are made.*

**Keywords:** *conspicuous consumption, ethnocentrism, interpersonal influence, domestic product, imported product*

### Introduction

Consumer buying behavior has been the focus of a great deal of literature over the past few decades. Most research have focused on the different factors that influence customer buying decisions and behaviors toward different products. In this context, most of the literature focused on customers' attitudes toward domestic and imported products (Shimp and Sharma 1987, Wang et al. 2004 Phau et al. 2008, Kiriri 2021). In fact, domestic manufacturers and their products are beneficial to countries and their inhabitants in numerous ways. For example, they provide career opportunities and increase the growth potential and development of the economy (Mrad, Mullen and Mangleburg 2001). Therefore, it is important to recognise how much people understand the importance of buying domestic products and what part they play, in order to expand the domestic economy. One of the major areas to measure, particularly in developing countries, is the customer's willingness to buy domestic products.

Over the years, researchers have studied domestic products and customer buying behaviour. In most cases, researchers have studied the factors that influence

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customers to buy domestic products; however, most of the literature focus on customer ethnocentrism, initially established by Shimp and Sharma (1987) (Mrad, Mullen and Mangleburg 2001). These researchers developed the CETSCALE, which measures customers' ethnocentrism level and the effect on customers' buying behaviour (Bawa 2004). Moreover, Shimp and Sharma first applied it to customers in the US in 1987.

Customers' conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence are also important factors that have been studied extensively in different literatures, principally in the context of buying luxury and domestic products.

A further point worth exploring in the area of buying domestic products is the country of origin (COO), country of origin effects (COE) (Mrad et al. 2001) and stereotypes, in relation to countries' manufacturers and trusts and furthermore, animosity (Watson and Wright 2000).

A large number of researchers have studied developed countries (Shimp and Sharma 1987, Wang et al. 2004); nevertheless, very few papers have investigated developing countries (Mrad et al. 2001, Saffu and Walker 2006). For example, there have been few studies that have measured customer ethnocentrism in countries in the Middle East (Mrad et al. 2001). As a result of ignoring Arab countries in the Middle East, there is a distinct lack of information for students and the market to improve the state of the local economy and to gain a greater understanding of the market.

### *Research Aim*

This research aims to measure 'customers' preferences towards domestic products versus imported products in the Sultanate of Oman'. The study examines different socio-economic respondents (male, and female) of different ages, educational levels and travel experience.

### *Research Objectives*

Specifically, this study is guided by the following objectives:

- To undertake a literature review related to consumer behaviour towards domestic brands and imported products.
- To study whether Omani customers' level of ethnocentrism influences their willingness to buy domestic over imported products.
- To examine whether Omani customers' level of conspicuous consumption influences their willingness to buy domestic products over imported products.
- To investigate whether Omani customers' level of susceptibility to interpersonal influences their willingness to buy domestic products over imported products.
- To measure the willingness to buy domestic products and imported products, in relation to various personal factors, such as, age, gender, education level, frequency of travel, and socio-economic factors.

## Literature Review

For purposes of providing a contextual background as well as theoretical framework for this study, a brief review of relevant literature is pertinent at this juncture. The review will focus on the three major variables that the paper studies (ethnocentrism, conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence).

### *Consumers' Ethnocentrism*

Customer bias towards products has been a topic of research for more than three decades and numerous researchers from different countries have investigated it. According to Saffu and Walker (2006), the two biases that are considered in the context of consumer willingness are positive bias, when consumers' buying orientation is to purchase domestic products over imported products and vice versa. Consumers of the former bias are known to be exceedingly ethnocentric. Hamelin, Ellouzi and Canterbury (2011) mentioned that Sumner (1906) defined ethnocentrism as 'the view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it' (p. 229). One of the earliest studies on ethnocentrism was conducted by Shimp and Sharma (1987), who also agreed that ethnocentrism, is a concept where people tend to accept their own group culture and reject other cultures for the reason that they believe that they are superior (Kiriri 2021). In addition, they designed CETSAL (a customer ethnocentrism scale) to measure consumers' ethnocentrism (Kiriri 2021). This scale was first applied in the US. The validity of this scale has been confirmed by many researchers in the field, who have used it in their studies. The scale uses the Likert-type (1- strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree) (Saffu and Walker 2006, Kiriri 2021). Nevertheless, Douglass and Nijssen (2003) and Altinats and Tokol (2007) reduced the original items in Shimp and Sharma's scale and kept only six items, whilst also making the modified version bilingual (Jiménez-Guerrero et al. 2014). It is generally accepted that developed countries are more ethnocentric than developing countries, due to the fact that they are more likely to purchase their own products (Wang et al. 2004, Mrad et al. 2001, Kiriri 2021). Based on Shimp and Sharma (1987), US consumers are extremely ethnocentric. In contrast, Saffu and Walker (2006) determined that the ethnocentrism of Ghanaians is low. Furthermore, Shimp and Sharma (1987) noted that the concept of ethnocentrism improves our understanding of consumers' buying decisions and corporate businesses evaluation of domestic and imported products.

According to Shimp and Sharma (1987), customer ethnocentrism is a 'unique proclivity for people to view their own group as the center of the universe, to interpret other social units from the perspective of their own group, and to reject persons who are culturally dissimilar while blindly accepting those who are culturally like themselves' (Mrad et al. 2001, p. 2). In addition, ethnocentric customers buy locally-made products as a moral duty, given that they believe that buying foreign products may possibly damage the national economy and cause a loss of jobs (Saffu and Walker 2006, Shimp and Sharma 1987, Kiriri 2021). Prefer local products due to moral convictions and a belief that their own country produces superior goods. Additionally, ethnocentrism can cause consumers to favor domestic products over

foreign ones. They have a tendency to buy domestic products due to their moral and ethical values they believe (Kiriri 2021). Furthermore, they also tend to overstate the quality of domestic products and favor them regardless of the imported alternatives that are available (Saffu and Walker 2006, Kiriri 2021).

To explain, the ethnocentric consumer has a tendency to evaluate a domestic product by bringing in all the positive features of that particular product, while placing his/her negative judgments on foreign-made products. However, based on Jiménez and San Martín (2010), several other factors should be taken into account, such as animosity and stereotypes. They defined animosity as ‘remnants of antipathy, or hostility towards a country’. For example, most Arab Israelis have a great deal of animosity towards Britain. Therefore, they are not willing to buy British products (Rose et al. 2009). Additionally, the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has been going on for more than six decades, means that Arab consumers are unwilling to buy Israeli products. For example, the recent conflict in Palestine which started on 7th Oct 2023, has led to a global call to boycott Israeli brands along with all supported brands involved in supporting the Israeli army and its government. The campaign ‘Did you kill a Palestinian?’ runs across the globe on different social media platforms by pro-Palestinians (AFP and TOI STAFF 2023, AFP 2023).

Furthermore, Hamelin et al. (2011), highlighted the differences between the ethnocentric consumer and the non-ethnocentric consumer, in terms of their evaluation of products. The main criterion that the ethnocentric consumer tends to examine is the country of origin (COO) of the products he/she wishes to purchase. For example, if the product is not domestic, the ethnocentric consumer will refrain from buying it as they believe that purchasing foreign products will damage the local economy (Kiriri 2021). Nevertheless, an ethnocentric consumer would buy a foreign product if the COO is culturally similar to his country (Lantz and Loeb 1996, Watson and Wright 2000). According to Areiza-Padilla and Manzi Puertas, 2021, there is a noteworthy and affirmative correlation between consumer ethnocentrism and patriotism in developing nations with conspicuous consumption.

Conversely, according to Hamelin et al. (2011) the non-ethnocentric or the polycentric consumer does not evaluate the product based on the COO, but based on the quality and the price, in addition to other criteria. For instance, customers from the Gulf countries do not have a definite preference for a particular origin. This means that they have a propensity to buy products based on market variables, such as price, quality and place (Alhemoud and Mohiuddin n.d.). Based on Saffu and Walker (2006) the reasons for customer bias comprise ‘patriotism, ethnocentrism, the economic level of the country of origin, animosity towards a country, products and culture similarity to the home country’ (p. 184). Moreover, recent studies have ascertained that levels of consumer ethnocentrism are linked to country of origin (COO) and moreover, country of origin effects (COE) (Watson and Wright 2000).

### *Country of Origin (COO)*

The country of origin or country of origin effects is known as the ‘made in’ concept (Watson and Wright, 2000). Furthermore, Alhemoud and Mohiuddin (n.d.) noted that Dichter (1962) considered this concept as ‘the fifth element of marketing

mix” (p. 3). More importantly, Cordell (1992) perceived COO as a process that has three different levels: cognitive, affective and behavioural. Similarly, Solomon et al. (2013) explained the theory of “the standard learning hierarchy’. Their explanation can be summarised into three stages: think (belief), feel (affect) and do (behaviour) (p. 295). In the first stage, the customer investigates the characteristics of the country. Second, he/she evaluates these characteristics and decides to appreciate the product, whether or not he/she wishes to buy it. Accordingly, the consumer decides to take the action of buying the product or not buying it. Nevertheless, customers do not only rely on the affective factors of the COO to evaluate a product, particularly if they lack information regarding it; but also rely on its cognitive factors (Lu Wang and Xiong Chen 2004, Mrad et al. 2001).

Solomon et al., (2013) defined cognitive learning theory as ‘a result of mental processes... this perspective views people as problem-solvers who actively use information from the world around them to master their environments’ (p. 266). Cognitive factors consist of the marketing mix; i.e., price, place, distribution and product, country economy, and technological development (Chao et al. 1995, Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999). In addition, consumers from developing countries tend to buy products that are made in developed countries, particularly if there is a lack of alternatives. For instance, GCC consumers prefer Western jeans and dresses (Alhemoud and Mohiuddin n.d.). Moreover, according to Kaynak et al. (2000), Bangladeshis prefer British, American and German food products.

Generally, existing literature agrees that consumers, especially from developing countries, prefer products that are produced in developed countries, such as Western countries and the US over the products that are produced in developing countries (Saffu and Walker 2006, Watson 2000, John and Brady 2010, Kiriri 2021, Oumlil 2020) as they believe that all developed countries are culturally and politically similar (Saffu and Walker 2006). For instance, Canadian consumers have a positive perception of domestic and American apparel (Forney, Robolt and Friend 1993). Additionally, according to Kinra (2006), Indians perceive foreign products as superior quality, in comparison to domestic products. However, different studies have proved that consumers prefer to purchase goods from the United States and the United Kingdom amongst developed countries (Saffu and Walker 2006) For example, young Mexicans, who make up 50% of the population, find that US apparel brands are more appealing than the clothing brands of the other countries (Lee et al. 2008). Moreover, Oumlil (2020) supports this argument in his study of 89 participants from Morocco, he finds that product categories from more developed nations receive more favorable evaluation than products from less developed nations.

In contrast, people tend to have an inferior perception of products that come from China, Russia and Eastern Europe. To underline this, Watson and Wright (2000) noted that consumers from New Zealand think that Chinese products are poor quality. Nevertheless, numerous countries are attempting to raise people’s awareness concerning the advantages of purchasing domestic products on the personal and local levels by means of various strategies. It is generally accepted that developed countries are exceedingly ethnocentric, in contrast to developing countries based on different, superior factors, such as level of education and awareness, communication and globalisation, travel and technology.

### *COO Marketing Campaign and Ethnocentrism*

A number of advertising and marketing campaigns and programmes have emerged aimed at promoting local products and changing customer purchasing behaviours from purchasing overseas products to domestic products. The local advertising and marketing campaigns and programmes are frequently supported by governments. Despite the fact that they are governmentally supported, some members of the public believe that governments should put more effort into these particular campaigns.

A study by Saffu and Walker (2006) on Ghanaians' attitudes to buying local campaigns stressed that 92.82% of Ghanaian respondents believe that the government does not make enough effort to promote products from Ghana and that they should endeavour to do more about it. However, one of the techniques that these campaigns and programmes use to change customers' purchasing behaviour towards domestic products and services is by way of provoking citizens' patriotism. For instance, US campaigns which are held under the slogan 'crafted with Pride in the U.S.A' were designed to encourage Americans to buy locally-made products. Similarly, 'Origin Oman' provides parallel commitments for both entrepreneurs and consumers. The entrepreneurs benefit from this campaign for the reason that their businesses are being promoted through it, while the latter benefits from the contribution of the entrepreneurs in public projects, such as youth groups and schools (originoman.om 2009).

Recently, 'Origin Oman' participated in an Expo in Ethiopia, on behalf of more than 100 Omani firms, government bodies and small and medium-size enterprises, introducing Omani products to Ethiopian businesses (trade Arabia.com 2016). Despite the advantages of these campaigns, Hamelin et al. (2011) have commented that the negative side of customers' patriotism in purchasing products is that consumers tend to prefer domestic products despite the quality and the function of various imported products. The bias which is related to COO, affects consumption behaviour, brand loyalty, product evaluation decision...etc. (p. 230). Nevertheless, there are several factors that affect customers' choices. Some of them are addressed below.

### *The Effects of Socio-Demographic Factors on Ethnocentrism*

Hamelin et al. (2011) studied the relationship between several socio-demographic factors, for instance, gender, age, occupation, education, and income of 400 respondents in relation to consumer ethnocentrism. They noted that with respect to the research, they did not attain an absolute result regarding the relationship between the gender factor and consumer ethnocentrism. Nevertheless, Bawa (2004) established that men are less ethnocentric than women, maintaining that they are not guided by their emotions in their purchasing. Additionally, young buyers tend to be less ethnocentric than older people, due to the worldwide increase in cosmopolitanism, which has pushed the youth to be polycentric, even in their purchasing. In fact, numerous prior studies have indicated that in particular circumstances, societies with ethnocentric tendencies can develop positive attitudes toward foreign brands, For example, a recent study

titled ‘ Conspicuous Consumption in Emerging Markets: The Case of Starbucks in Colombia as a Global and Sustainable Brand’ confirmed the above finding they stated that “people in emerging markets, although they may be ethnocentric, when the purchase of foreign products generates social status, and, in addition, these products are part of the symbols of national identity, negative feelings toward them are not generated” (Areiza-Padilla and Manzi Puertas 2021).

According to Wei (2008), farmers in China are more ethnocentric, as a result of the limited access to information concerning foreign products. Moreover, Hamelin et al. (2011) noted that several studies did not establish a correlation between education and ethnocentrism. However, based on Bawa (2004), a number of researchers have agreed that the lower the education, the higher the consumer ethnocentrism. Furthermore, Hamelin, Ellouzi and Canterbury (2011) noted that people with low incomes are liable to be more ethnocentric because they have fewer chances to travel and buy foreign products, in contrast to people with a higher income. Additionally, Saffu and Walker (2006) ascertained that travelling, communication and education develop consumer’s perceptions of the countries they visit. They also improve their demand for quality products, which are provided in these countries. All these socio-demographic factors affect conspicuous consumption.

### *Conspicuous Consumption*

The concept of “conspicuous consumption” was first introduced in 1899 in ‘The Theory of the Leisure’ by the American socialist and economist Thorstein Veblen. He introduced this concept to describe the wealthy conditions that the upper class lived in during the 19th century, as a result of the Second Industrial Revolution. The concept depicts consumers who purchase luxury and expensive products to exhibit income, status, and wealth instead of covering their real needs from the products. In other words, ostentatious consumers actually behave in this way to gain respect and high status (Veblen 1899, Areiza-Padilla and Manzi Puertas 2021). Additionally, social referencing, prestigious values, and construction of one’s self are features of a product, in order to be considered as luxurious (Wiedmann et al. 2007, Areiza-Padilla and Manzi Puertas 2021).

During the appearance of this concept, it concerned only people who were high class as they could fulfill the condition of owning property, in order to be included in the conspicuous consumption concept (Trigg 2001, Areiza-Padilla and Manzi Puertas 2021).

Sundie et al. (2011) defined conspicuous consumption as ‘attending and exhibiting costly items to impress upon others that one possesses wealth and state’ (p. 1). Nevertheless, the tendency to rise socially exists in all classes and it is expressed by buying luxurious products (Shukla 2010). Moreover, Shukla (2010) has called “people who continuously strive to surround themselves with visible evidence of the superior rank they are claiming” status seekers (p. 1). These consumers might be inferior and attempt to fill this gap by demonstrating their wealth (Areiza-Padilla and Manzi Puertas 2021). In fact, consumers who like to show off affect other people of higher and lower classes, as they imitate them. By the 20th century, both rich and poor attempted to impress others and gain the

advantages of conspicuous consumption; therefore, luxury markets increased (Truong et al. 2008, Trigg 2001). As a result, the effects of luxury markets on other markets and consumers have become a subject of study in pieces of literature (Wiedmann et al. 2007).

### *The Effect of Luxury Products on Conspicuous Consumption*

According to Truong et al. (2008), people perceive new luxury brands differently in the context of conspicuousness and status. Nueno and Quelch (1989) cited in Park, Rabolt and Sook Jeon (2008) defined luxury brands as ‘those whose ratio and functional utility to price is low while the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high’ (p. 245). Chalhoub (2014) indicated that 42% of GCC luxury consumers spend approximately \$2,400 on beauty, fashion and gifts. In addition, they purchase luxury clothes once to twice per month, and luxury shoes and bags twice to three times per month. However, conspicuous consumption reflects the intangible side of a brand and carries its image. Based on O’Cass and McEwen (2004), Kilsheimer (1993) defined status consumption as ‘the motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer and symbolize status both for individuals and surrounding significant others’ (p. 26). To emphasize this, Chalhoub (2014) stated that 82% of GCC consumers buy luxury gifts with the aim of enhancing their image and impressing other people. In fact, they are buying foreign brands to emphasize that statuses (Areiza-Padilla and Manzi Puertas 2021).

According to Shukla (2010) who has studied status consumption in the UK and India, the consumer’s tendency to achieve social gain influences status consumption. However, consumers are inclined to believe that it is imprecise to consider conspicuous consumption and status consumption as one term. The two terms: conspicuous consumption and status consumption are, in fact, correlative terms and are very similar. (Truong et al. 2008, Areiza-Padilla and Manzi Puertas 2021) stressed that some individuals purchase brands to gain internal status i.e., improving self-respect and self-esteem, and external status i.e., others’ approval and envy. Furthermore, some customers tend to purchase luxury brands to gain status primarily for external motives, for example how others perceive them. Based on Shuka (2010), self-esteem influences status consumption. Moreover, Truong et al., (2008) noted that it is a matter of image and appearance when people buy and use brands for conspicuous reasons. Status seekers purchase products which are visible to others, in order to associate themselves with status. More importantly, Wang et al. (2004) linked conspicuous consumption to the preference for imported products, as they are perceived as being more prestigious. Conspicuousness is basically a rejection of domestic alternatives and acceptance of specific international products (John and Brady 2010). Areiza-Padilla and Manzi Puertas (2021) stress that consumers who engage in conspicuous consumption typically hold a highly favorable perception of the brands they purchase. They associate these brands with social status, leading to strong brand loyalty.

Wiedmann et al. (2007) argued that several brands gain status from the reputation that people create for that particular brand, regardless of its features and function. In



addition, if a product is socially approved as a high-status product, the consumers are more likely to purchase it, in order to meet the social standard. Luxury products which are used in public are more likely to be conspicuous in contrast to luxury products which are used privately. To emphasise this point, people tend to make sure that they use luxury products during the week to claim high social and professional status, while they use other products during weekends to meet the social standards of their families and neighborhoods (Wiedmann et al. 2007).

#### *The Effects of Socio-Demographic Factors on Conspicuous Consumption*

There are several socio-demographic factors that contribute to the concept of conspicuous consumption, for instance, age, income, materialism and gender. In addition, several researchers, such as Wang et al. (2004) and Alhemoud and Mohiuddin (n.d.) have related buying foreign products to conspicuous consumption, excluding products imported from China, Russia and Eastern Europe. A number of studies have proved that the younger generation tends to buy imported or luxury products. For example, Australian adolescents tend to have more positive attitudes towards overseas luxury brands over locally made brands (Phau et al. 2008). Nevertheless, Park et al. (2008) ascertained in their study of Korean consumers, that there is no relation between age and the purchase intention towards luxury brands. The same paper revealed that the higher the income, the higher the purchasing intentions with regards to international luxury products. Due to the fact that the world is more materialistic than ever, the intention to buy luxury products is higher than ever these days. Furthermore, the previous study has also emphasised that materialism promotes luxury products. Thus, conspicuous consumption is high. However, females are considered to be more conspicuous because they use clothing more than males to define themselves to the social community (O’Cass and McEwen 2004). In the same vein, a study by Alhemoud and Mohiuddin (n.d.) in GCC countries established that young women have a greater preference to buy Western clothes, with the intention of wearing these clothes to influence their peers and to make their peers discuss what they are wearing, in addition to improving their social status. Interestingly, Sundie et al. (2011) suggested that both women and men perceive the conspicuous consumption of the other gender as interesting for a short-term mate. However, conspicuous consumption may trigger interpersonal influence.

#### *Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence*

Bearden et al. (1989) defined consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence as ‘the need to identify with or enhance one’s image in the opinion of significant others through the acquisition and use of products and brands’ (p. 473). Solomon et al. (2013) suggested in the theory of ‘consumption and self-concept’ that products, such as cars, clothing, furniture...etc., help an individual to construct an image of his/her perceived self in his/her mind, given that these products are part of his/her appearance. They asserted that an individual’s consumption behaviour assists people to judge the person’s social identity. In other words, an individual’s consumption behaviour could be used as one way of answering the question: ‘who am I now’ (p.

158). According to Chalhoub (2014), 34% of Gulf nationals prefer to buy iconic luxury brands as they believe that these brands show who they are and where they stand in society.

John and Brady (2010) highlighted that ‘susceptibility to interpersonal influence will have a positive impact on conspicuous consumption of foreign products’ (p. 50). A further significant definition of susceptibility to interpersonal influence is ‘the willingness to conform to the expectation of others regarding purchase decisions’ (John and Brady 2010, p. 473). In addition, Kropp et al. (2005) determined that people who have a high level of susceptibility to interpersonal influence tend to value warm relationships with others, develop a sense of belonging, and are more respected than people with a low level of susceptibility to interpersonal influence (p. 4). Nevertheless, the literature has established that there is a negative correlation between susceptibility to social influence and age; hence, the older an individual becomes, the less susceptible he/she is to social influence (Kropp et al. 2005).

In conclusion, this review not only explored some studies which had been done in the past, but also clearly shows the new perspective that this study introduces, especially by focusing on Oman as a typical GCC country.

## **Study Hypotheses and Methodology**

In order to give a clear direction and scope to this study, the following hypotheses shall determine the method of collection, analysis and discussion of empirical data in the subsequent sections of this paper.

### *Influence of Ethnocentrism on Omani Consumers’ Willingness to Buy Domestic versus Imported Products*

Customer’s ethnocentrism is defined by Shimp and Sharma (1987) as a ‘unique proclivity for people to view their own group as the centre of universe, to interpret other social units from the perspective of their own group, and to reject persons who are culturally dissimilar while blindly accepting those who are culturally like themselves’ (Mrad et al. 2001, p. 2). The literatures established that highly ethnocentric consumers have a positive attitude towards local products. They believe that buying domestic products is a national duty and it is a part of their morality (Wang et al. 2004, Phau et al. 2008).

Level of ethnocentrism was measured by Shimp and Sharma (1987) in the United States using CETSALE. They determined that US consumers are exceedingly ethnocentric. Moreover, much literature underlines that consumers from developing countries tend to be less ethnocentric than consumers from developed countries (Saffu and Walker 2006, Watson 2000, John and Brady 2010). Consumers from developing countries have a propensity to purchase products that are made in developed countries seeing as they think that these countries are superior technologically and economically, or sometimes because of the lack of choices in their motherlands (Chao et al. 1995, Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999).

For example, young Mexican consumers are likely to prefer US clothes (Lee et

al. 2008). Moreover, another research has discovered a minimal level of ethnocentrism among Kenyans, a finding that aligns with similar studies conducted in various regions across Africa, such as Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, and different locations in Africa (Kiriri 2021). A study by (Alhemoud and Mohiuddin n.d.) measured the ethnocentrism of consumers from the Gulf and discovered that they have a low level of ethnocentrism. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that:

H1: Omani consumers' ethnocentrism positively influences their willingness to buy domestic products.

#### *Influence of Conspicuous Consumption on Omani Consumers' Willingness to Buy Domestic versus Imported Products*

The concept of conspicuous consumption was created by Veblen (1899) to identify wealthy, upper-class people who lived during the second industrial revolution (Trigg 2001). The concept was developed to describe the behaviour of consumers who are 'attending and exhibiting costly items to impress upon others that one possesses wealth and state' (Sundie et al. 2011, p. 1). Nowadays, most social classes practice this behaviour by purchasing luxury brands to gain some social value from this behaviour, such as supervisor status, respect, prestigious values and social acceptance (Wiedmann et al. 2007, Shukla 2010, Sundie et al. 2011). For example, a study by Chalhoub (2014) revealed that GCC consumers spend in the region of \$ 2,400 on buying cosmetics, fashionable clothes and gifts. Moreover, a number of other countries have a preference for imported products. For example, Phau et al. (2008) discovered that young Australians have negative preferences towards domestic brands.

It is also argued that Arabs of less economically advantaged classes attempt to imitate those in more prosperous categories. 31% and 43% of GCC consumers strongly agree and agree that they occasionally purchase an item that they had not planned to buy. It is also worth mentioning that the preferences of showing brands to the public in different GCC countries are generally high: 90% in Riyadh, 80% in Abu Dhabi and Doha, 75% in Jeddah and Dubai, and 70% in Kuwait. Moreover, 38% of GCC consumers stated that it is important for them to be noticed. In addition, 40% and 43% strongly agree and agree that it is important for them to be accepted (Chalhoub 2014). In fact, consumers from developing countries have a tendency to think highly of most imported luxury brands unlike local luxury brands (Wang et al. 2004). Thus, it can be assumed that:

H2: Omani consumers' conspicuous consumption negatively influences their willingness to buy domestic products

#### *Influence of Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence on Omani Consumers' Willingness to Buy Domestic versus Imported Products*

John and Brady (2010) defined susceptibility to interpersonal influence as 'the willingness to conform to the expectation of others regarding purchase decisions' (p. 473). Moreover, it is the behaviour of attempting to improve an individual's

image in the minds of others by using brands that would provide acceptance (Kropp et al. 2005). For example, Chalhoub (2014) determined that 40% and 43% of GCC consumers strongly agree and agree that it is important for them to be accepted. In addition, 39% of them agree and strongly agree that they keep up with the latest fashion. In fact, 32% of them actually grew up with buying luxury brands.

The studies have shown that people who have a high level of susceptibility to interpersonal influence are most likely to have warm relationships with others (Kropp et al. 2005). These relationships are predominantly with friends, a spouse, siblings and parents. Chalhoub (2014) studied consumers' behaviours in the GCC towards buying luxury brands and established that 79%, 66%, 52%, 44% and 22% of them respectively agree that their friends, a spouse, siblings, mothers and fathers are their principal influence on buying luxury brands. Moreover, John and Brady (2010) noticed that there is a significant relationship between susceptibility to interpersonal influence and conspicuous consumption. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

H3: Omani consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence negatively influences their willingness to buy domestic products.

### *Research Methodology*

The design of this research is descriptive and quantitative using a survey method. It is descriptive as it uses different measurements; however, the most important measurement is, as Curwin and Slater (2008) stated, standard deviation which is commonly used with the mean (p. 140). Moreover, descriptive research aims to provide a description of what is observational in a range of variables and may present them in percentages, while the aim of a quantitative study is to discover causal relationships (Aect.org 2011). Aimed at measuring the three main variables: ethnocentrism, conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence, which were presented in the research framework and hypotheses, this study used an online survey questionnaire, which was transmitted via Google docs as the main instrument of data collection. Its questions are based on three different certified scales with some adjustments in order to suit the cultural context of the respondents.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section sought responses to respondents' socio-demographic data, which were relevant in testing the study hypotheses, namely: age, gender, level of education, and frequency of travel. The second section comprised a variety of questions that aimed at the following: measuring the level of ethnocentrism of respondents; identifying respondents' ability to identify the origin of six of the most worn outfits in Omani society; measuring the conspicuous consumption tendencies of the participants; determining the level of susceptibility to interpersonal influence of the Omani participants.

*Construct Operationalisation and Measures*

According to table 1 below, this research used three scales for each variable. The first scale is a modified one from Shimp and Sharma's (1987) (CETSALE) to measure the level of ethnocentrism pertaining to Omani participants. The second scale investigates the level of participants' tendency to conspicuous consumption (Bearden et al. 1989). The last scale aims to measure susceptibility to interpersonal influence (O'Cass and McEwen 2004).

**Table 1.** *The Three Scales Used in the Study*

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Sources</b>
Ethnocentrism	Measures the Level of Ethnocentrism	Shimp and Sharma (1987)
Conspicuous Consumption	Measures Conspicuous Consumption Tendencies	Bearden et al. (1989)
Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence	Measures Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence	O'Cass and McEwen (2004)

Source: As listed above.

*Study Sample*

The study sample comprised 377 Omani adults who were requested to respond to the survey questionnaire that was posted on online platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter for a period of ten days. The Arab Social Media Influencers Summit (2015) reported that the percentages of Omani users of Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter are 86%, 80%, 40% and 36% respectively. In addition to having access to at least one of these platforms, many Omanis also use them almost on a daily basis.

**Results***Demographic Profile of Respondents*

There are four demographic variables in the questionnaire: gender, age, level of education and frequency of travel. The survey was completed by 377 Omanis; 134 males (35%) and 243 females (64.5%). The minority of the participants are aged less than 20 (7.2%) and 41-50 (5%) years old, while the majority is 21-30 years old (45.6%) and 31-40 (33.2%) years old. In addition, the percentages of the participants who are studying in colleges and high schools are very close: 17.2% and 17.8%. However, more than half of the participants are holders of a Bachelor Degree (51.2%) and only 0.3% are illiterate. Moreover, 43% of the participants travel frequently, while 9.3% have never travelled. The full details can be seen in Table 2.

*Descriptive Analysis*

The questionnaire used three scales to assess the study constructs by using different

outfit items familiar to respondents (dishdasha/Abaya, kumaa/shelah, dresses, t-shirt, bags and shoes). This section represents the descriptive statistic for each scale and outfit items, in addition to the correlation. Table 2 presents the scores for the variables.

**Table 2.** *Descriptive Statistic for Each Scale and Outfit Items*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Gender	1.64	.48
Age	2.36	.69
Education	5.50	1.07
Frequency of Travel	3.27	1.13

It is evident from the above scores in connection with the respondents' demographic factors that mean scores from 1-5 are diverse; however, the highest mean score was related to educational level which is above 5, while the gender score was the lowest (1.64).

The respondents' ethnocentrism, gives a mean score of 3.54 (SD= 1.12) for the first factor of the ethnocentrism scale: Omani people should always buy Omani made products instead of imported products (Ethno1). The mean scores of 3.57, 3.24, 3.36, 3.59 and 3.08 represent Ethno 2, Ethno 3, Ethno 4 and Ethno 5 respectively (Table 3). The average mean of the ethnocentrism scale in each factor is 3 to 3.6, which means that most of the respondents' answers were similar; it drives us to conclude that most of the respondents have a natural opinion regarding the statements in the scale.

**Table 3.** *Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Ethnocentrism*

Ethnocentric Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ethno1	3.54	1.12
Ethno2	3.57	1.31
Ethno3	3.24	1.16
Ethno4	3.36	1.28
Ethno5	3.59	1.11
Ethno6	3.08	1.24

With regards to respondents' outfits; for outfit 1 (dishdasha/Abaya) respondents have a mean score of 2.24 (SD= .72). Scores of 2.17, 1.45, 1.64, 1.34 and 1.51 represent the mean outfits 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively (Table 4). The mean of the outfit items manufacturer ranges from 1 to 2 which implies that most of the respondents own more imported clothes than domestic clothes.

**Table 4.** *Descriptive Statistics Related to Respondents' Outfit Manufacturer*

Outfit Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Outfit 1	2.24	.72
Outfit 2	2.17	.75
Outfit 3	1.45	.60
Outfit 4	1.64	.65
Outfit 5	1.34	.53
Outfit 6	1.51	.64

For the respondents' conspicuous consumption scale, the mean for gaining respect (CC1) regarding their choice of outfit is 3.62 (SD=1.02). The mean scores of 3.34, 3.41 and 3.80 represent CC2, CC3, CC4 and CC5 respectively (Table 5). The average mean score of the scale is 3.3 to 3.6, which means that most of the respondents have natural opinions concerning the scale statements.

**Table 5.** *Descriptive Statistics Related to Respondents' Conspicuous Consumption Scale*

	Mean	Std. Deviation
CC1	3.62	1.02
CC2	3.34	1.27
CC3	3.41	1.21
CC4	3.80	.98
CC5	3.44	1.12

**Table 6.** *Descriptive Statistics related to Respondents' Susceptibility to Interpersonal Scale*

	Mean	Std. Deviation
SII1	.064	1.25
SII2	.066	1.28
SII3	.066	1.28
SII4	.065	1.26
SII5	.055	1.06
SII6	.061	1.19
SII7	.070	1.35
SII8	.069	1.33
SII9	.061	1.18
SII10	.043	.83
SII11	.044	.86
SII12	.046	.89

Pertaining to respondents' susceptibility to the interpersonal influence scale, the mean for SII1 is 2.17 (SD=.75). The mean score and the standard deviation of each factor of the scale are shown below (Table 6). The average mean is below 3, which signifies that most of the respondents have negative (disagree) opinions concerning the scale statements.

#### *Construct Validity and Reliability*

Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the validity and reliability of items in each scale. According to Hair Jr et al. (2006), the acceptable validity for the scale items is at least 0.6 and the best Cronbach's Alpha is 0.7 and above. All the reliable measurements are shown below (Table 7) (Appendix 1). The highest Cronbach's Alpha is reported for the level of ethnocentrism scale (.865) and susceptibility to interpersonal influence scale (.821); at the opposite, the lowest was with regards to the conspicuous consumption scale (.682).

**Table 7.** Reliability Analysis Using Cronbach's Alpha

Constructs	Nr. Of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Level of ethnocentrism	6	.868
Outfit	6	.795
Conspicuous consumption	5	.682
Susceptibility to interpersonal influence	12	.814

*Test of Correlation*

To estimate the strength of the variables' relationship, Pearson's R was used in the correlation matrix using SPSS. Pearson's R ranges from -1 to +1. If one variable increases and the other does, the relationship between the two variables is positive. Conversely, if one of the variables increases and the other variable decreases, the relationship amongst the two variables is negative (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

Examining the correlation matrix in this study (Table 8), it is apparent that the correlation includes both relationships in different variables. For example, there is a significant and positive relationship between conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence, where  $\{r=0.378, p<.01\}$  which demonstrates discrimination validity (Hair et al. 2006) (Appendix 2). Moreover, a significant relationship between the level of ethnocentrism and the dependent variable (outfit)  $\{r=0.078, p<.01\}$ , where the significance level is at .00. In contrast, there is a negative and significant relationship between the level of education and outfit where  $\{r=-.189, p<.01\}$ .



**Table 8.** Construct Correlations

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).	8. Out- fit	7. Susceptibility to interpersonal influence	6. Conspicuous consumption	5. Level of Ethnocentrism	4. Frequency of travel	3. Level of Education	2. Age	1. Gender	construct
	.022	-.014	.051	.084	-.121*	.096	.043	1	1
	-.059	-.032	-.065	.090	.228**	.250**	1		2
	-.189**	-.104*	-.104*	-.072	.252**	1			3
	-.107*	-.071	-.116*	-.029	1				4
	.262**	-.028	.078	1					5
	.132*	.378**	1						6
	.003	1							7
	1								8

### *Hypotheses Testing*

#### H1: Omani consumers' ethnocentrism influences their willingness to buy domestic products positively.

In order to test the above hypothesis, multiple regression analysis is used to measure the relationships between the independent variable 'level of ethnocentrism' and the dependent variable 'outfit'. As a consequence, a significant model emerges ( $F_{7,369} = 6.654, p < .05$ ). Adjusted R square = .095 which means 9.5% of their purchase of domestic products is explained by ethnocentrism. Significant variables that emerged from the result are shown in Table 11.

The result indicates that both independent variables (level of ethnocentrism) are strong predictors of the criterion variable (outfit). Hence, the hypothesis is supported. The  $p$  values confirm that the independent variable is making a statistically significant contribution to the variation in the dependent variable at level  $p < .05$ .

#### H2: Omani consumers' conspicuous consumption influences their willingness to buy domestic products negatively.

In this regression, the significant value is .042, the adjusted  $r^2$  value is .095, and the  $t$ -value is 2.036. The data demonstrate that Omani consumers' conspicuous consumption behavior is positive towards purchasing domestic outfit products. Therefore, the second hypothesis is rejected (Table 9).

#### H3: Omani consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence influences their willingness to buy domestic products negatively.

Based on the  $p$ -value which is .344 (and so  $> .05$ ), the hypothesis is rejected (Table 9). This means that Omani consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence has a positive attitude toward domestic outfit products.

Both Omani consumers' conspicuous consumption behavior and Omani consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence have a positive effect with respect to buying domestic fashion products.

### *Additional Findings*

In order to gain further details in relation to the relationship between the dependent and independent variable, two groups of the dependent variable are created to test the independent variables. The two groups are traditional outfits, which comprise Abaya/ dishdasha and Kumaa/shelah (outfit 1 and outfit 2), and non-traditional outfits which includes, t-shirt, dress, bags and shoes.

In the first group (traditional outfit) the significant value is .015, and the adjusted R square is .028. Based on the  $p$  value which is  $> .05$ ,  $t$ value is -1.969, and the  $\beta$  is -.106, there is a negative relationship between young Omanis and traditional domestic outfits (Table 10 and Appendix 3). Moreover, it reveals that there is a significant positive relationship ( $p$  value = .003,  $t$  value = 3.016, .156) between traditional outfit and Omani consumers' level of ethnocentrism, which also supports H1. The adjusted  $R^2$  is .028, which indicates 28% of Omani consumers are willing to buy traditional domestic outfits.

**Table 9.** Multiple Regression Analysis between Outfit and Independent Variables

Model	Beta	tvalue	pvalue	Hypotheses
Constant		7.348	.000	
Gender	.005	.092	.927	
Age	-.028	-.537	.592	
Level of education	-.147	-2.783	.006	
Frequency of travel	-.047	-.900	.369	
Level of ethnocentrism	.242	4.851	.000	Supported
Conspicuous consumption	.109	2.036	.42	Rejected
Susceptibility to interpersonal influence	-.051	-.948	.344	Rejected
<b>Model summary</b>				
F- statistic	6.654			
p value	.000			
R2	.122			
Adjusted R2	.095			

**Table 10.** Multiple Regression Analysis between Traditional Outfit and Independent Variables

Model		Beta	t- value	p- value
Constant			5.869	.000
Gender		.073	1.398	.163
Age		-.106	-1.969	.050
Level of education		-.033	-.605	.545
Frequency of travel		-.002	-.038	.970
Level of ethnocentrism		.156	3.016	.003
Conspicuous consumption		.036	.651	.515
Susceptibility to interpersonal influence		-.032	-.571	.568
<b>Model summary</b>				
F- statistic	2.526			
p- value	.015			
R2	.046			
Adjusted R2	.028			

For the second group of outfits, the significant value is .000, and the adjusted R square is .113. Based on the  $p$  value which is  $>.05$ ,  $t$  value which is  $-3.538$ , and the  $\beta$  which is  $-.185$ , there is a negative relationship between Omani consumers' level of education and buying non-traditional domestic out-fits (Table 13) and (Appendix 3), which signifies that the higher the educational level is, the less non-traditional domestic outfit products the consumer buys. In addition, a significant positive relationship emerges between consumers' level of ethnocentrism and buying a non-traditional domestic outfit which is a supporting result with regards to H1.

Furthermore, a positive significant relationship between consumers' conspicuous consumption and the dependent variable is again rejected by H2 (Table 11). More regression results for each.

**Table 11.** Multiple Regression Analysis between Non-traditional Outfit and Independent Variables

Model	Beta	t- value	p- value
Constant		6.233	.000
Gender	-.044	-.886	.376
Age	.034	.666	.506
Level of education	-.185	-3.538	.000
Frequency of travel	-.065	-1.259	.209
Level of ethnocentrism	.234	4.740	.000
Conspicuous consumption	.129	2.437	.015
Susceptibility to interpersonal influence	-.050	-.940	.348
<b>Model summary</b>			
F- statistic	7.809		
p- value	.000		
R2	.113		
Adjusted R2	.113		

Finally, the sample size in the study is above 50, which is considered to be a valid sample for quantitative research. According to the analysis, the study is reliable given that Cronbach's Alpha for all the scales is  $>0.5$ . The fitness of the study is good according to the correlation analysis. The regression analysis reveals that H1 is supported and both H2 and H3 are rejected.

**Table 12.** Summary of Hypotheses and Results

Hypothesis	Result
H1: Omani consumers' ethnocentrism influences their willingness to buy domestic products positively.	Supported
H2: Omani consumers' conspicuous consumption influences their willingness to buy domestic products negatively.	Rejected
H3: Omani consumers' susceptibility to interpersonal influence influences their willingness to buy domestic products negatively.	Rejected

## Discussion

According to the literature, we talk about "ethnocentrism" when a person believes that his/her own group is the supervisor of all groups and the reference for others (Hamelin et al. 2011). Moreover, they tend to accept people who are only from their own group, rejecting others (Shimp and Sharma 1987). According to studies, ethnocentric consumers have a tendency to purchase domestic products over imported products due to the fact that they believe that buying imported products would damage their national economy and create unemployment.

According to the results obtained from this study, Omani consumers manifest favourable behaviour towards domestic products, although they do not totally reject international products (Appendix 3). This could possibly be a result of the lack of alternatives. Moreover, other marketing mix factors, such as price and place, play a role in assisting consumers to make their choice.

The CETSALE is used in many different studies and pursued in different countries to measure consumers' level of ethnocentrism and their behaviour towards domestic and imported products. It has been generally accepted that consumers from developed countries are liable to be more ethnocentric and trust their own domestic products more than consumers from developing countries (Chao et al. 1995, Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999). Moreover, they consider their products to be superior in relation to products from other countries (Saffu and Walker 2006). For example, Shimp and Sharma (1987) ascertained that people in the US are highly ethnocentric, whilst Forney et al. (1993) mentioned that Canadian consumers have positive attitudes towards domestic and American clothes. Conversely, in developing countries, studies have discovered that consumers tend to have a positive perception towards products from developing countries over their domestic products. For instance, Lee et al. (2008) established that young Mexicans have a favourable attitude towards American apparel. Moreover, Kinra (2006) noted that Indians demonstrate a favourable attitude towards overseas products, principally products made in the US and in the UK.

However, based on the results collected in this paper, Omani consumers have a different orientation compared to other developing countries which have been studied before. The results reveal that Omani consumers have a high level of ethnocentrism as well as a positive attitude towards domestic apparel. This could be due to the governmental support of domestic businesses and youth programmes started by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said in his different speeches. For instance, the one in Saih Al- Taibat in 1991 during his tour of different regions in Oman, where he advised the Omani youth to gain employment in the private sector and asked people to support local business projects (BsSQU 2013). Furthermore, he established 'Omanization programmes' in addition to supporting local businesses (Oman video 2013). Moreover, the campaigns which supported domestic products, such as 'Origin Oman', raised awareness on the importance of buying and supporting different domestic products (originoman.om 2009). In addition, there are different facility programmes that encourage Omani citizens to open their own business and create their own brands, by means of governmental funding and consulting, Sannd (2001), Ruwad (2009), and Knowledge Oasis Oman (KOM) (2003).

Although the contribution of the SME to the GDP until 2014 was between 13-14% (Oman Observer 2014), the SME has increased lately in a quite remarkable way, particularly in fashion and restaurant projects, where the total numbers of licences and shops operating in the fashion field numbered 3633 (NCSI 2016) (Appendix 4). In fact, people have become more educated and aware of the need to support their national economy in the current sensitive economic situation caused by the oil crisis which started 2015.

With regard to consumers' conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence, and its influence on buying domestic and imported products,

it is pertinent to recall that the concepts are linked to John and Brady (2010). While conspicuous consumption is used to describe people who seek to exhibit luxury brands in order to expose social status (Trigg 2001, Sundie et al. 2011, Shukla 2010), susceptibility to interpersonal influence is the behaviour of using brands to gain acceptance from others (Kropp et al. 2005).

Wang et al. (2004) and John and Brady (2010) have linked conspicuous consumption with the behaviour of buying foreign luxury products, as it is seen to be more prestigious. According to John and Brady (2010), people who reject purchasing domestic products are considered to be conspicuous. Based on different papers which have studied conspicuous consumption, it is generally accepted that people perceive imported products as luxury brands, excluding some products that come from poor quality manufacturing countries, for instance China. As an example, Australian teenagers tend to have positive attitudes towards overseas luxury brands over domestic ones (Phau et al. 2008). Moreover, a study by Chalhoub (2014) noted that GCC consumers spend an average of \$2,400 on purchasing fashionable clothes and gifts, and moreover, that 80% agree that they buy luxury gifts, in order to enhance their image. In addition, 90% in Riyadh and 80% in Abu Dhabi and Doha like to show brands to the public. Furthermore, it was discovered that friends, spouses, siblings and family are the biggest influence on consumers with regards to purchasing luxury brands. Thus, it was determined that GCC consumers are highly conspicuous and have a tendency to be susceptible to interpersonal influence. Moreover, the literatures illustrates that females have a propensity to be more conspicuous in contrast to men (O'Cass and McEwen 2004).

This study has ascertained that Omani consumers' conspicuous consumption and their tendency to be susceptible to interpersonal influence has directed consumers more into buying domestic fashion products as opposed to imported products. They buy domestic products more than imported products. This could be explained from an economic point of view given that Oman's household income has increased by 83.9% in a decade (Sophia 2014). However, the recent economic situation exacerbated by the oil crisis has led to several bonuses being discontinued in a number of jobs and the removal of governmental subsidies in relation to the oil prices. Consequently, it is believed that this could affect consumers' behaviours and their purchasing power. Moreover, the GDP fell to \$70.255 in 2015 after it was \$81.797 billion in 2014 (The World Bank Group 2016). In addition, economists have warned that there could be a downturn in the coming years (Townsend 2016). Accordingly, people will be more interested in saving money for the future.

Culturally and demographically speaking, Oman is considered a country with high uncertainty avoidance (IGI Global 2016). Therefore, people are unlikely to buy imported luxury brands. In addition, previous literatures have ascertained that females are more conspicuous than men; however, this research sample included more females than males and the results prove that females are in fact less conspicuous.

Social media and the collaborative support of social media influencers' within the domestic market have played an immense role in changing Omani consumers' perceptions towards local brands. Wearing local brands and posting it on Instagram and Snapchat have become a fashion trend and profitable work for influencers, entrepreneurs and small/medium business owners.

## Conclusion

This study examined Omani consumers' behaviour towards domestic fashion products and established that Omani consumers are highly ethnocentric, conspicuous and susceptible to interpersonal influence. In addition, sales demonstrate that they are more willing to buy domestic products over imported products.

This finding will possibly help Omani fashion entrepreneurs and small business owners to understand their targets and address their marketing business in a way that enables them to promote their products as local made products, considering that demand for domestic products is high.

With regard to theoretical implications, this study is probably the first instance of research to study only Omani consumers' behaviour towards domestic products, including ethnocentrism, conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Nevertheless, there has been one unpublished paper by Alhemoud and Mohiuddin (2011, p. 2) which studied GCC consumers' ethnocentrism. Chalhoub (2014) studied luxury consumers in the Gulf; however, he mentioned virtually all the capitals and large cities in the Gulf, except for the capital of Oman, Muscat. This would support the finding of this research that conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence have influenced Omani consumers to buy domestic products rather than luxury imported products. It can be argued that despite the fact that GCC countries are culturally similar; consumer behaviour is different. Surprisingly, this research shows the opposite of previous researches that conspicuous consumption and susceptibility to interpersonal influence have a positive relationship towards domestic fashion products.

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**Appendix 1***Reliability**Ethnocentrism***Ethnocentrism**

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

**Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	377	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	377	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.865	.868	6

**Inter-Item Correlation Matrix**

	ethno1	ethno2	ethno3	ethno4	ethno5	ethno6
ethno1	1.000	.380	.586	.575	.602	.462
ethno2	.380	1.000	.429	.498	.373	.328
ethno3	.586	.429	1.000	.654	.613	.513
ethno4	.575	.498	.654	1.000	.675	.582
ethno5	.602	.373	.613	.675	1.000	.565
ethno6	.462	.328	.513	.582	.565	1.000

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

**Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	377	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	377	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.787	.795	6

**Inter-Item Correlation Matrix**

	outfit1	outfit2	outfit3	outfit4	outfit5	outfit6
outfit1	1.000	.661	.267	.340	.231	.177
outfit2	.661	1.000	.328	.294	.255	.268
outfit3	.267	.328	1.000	.555	.550	.447
outfit4	.340	.294	.555	1.000	.502	.377
outfit5	.231	.255	.550	.502	1.000	.640
outfit6	.177	.268	.447	.377	.640	1.000

Conspicuous consumption

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

**Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	377	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	377	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.682	.682	5

**Inter-Item Correlation Matrix**

	CC1	CC2	CC3	CC4	CC5
CC1	1.000	.207	.186	.353	.270
CC2	.207	1.000	.514	.101	.271
CC3	.186	.514	1.000	.234	.440
CC4	.353	.101	.234	1.000	.423
CC5	.270	.271	.440	.423	1.000

*Susceptibility to Interpersonal*

Influence Scale: ALL VARIABLES

**Inter-Item Correlation Matrix**

	SII1	SII2	SII3	SII4	SII5	SII6	SII7	SII8	SII9	SII10	SII11	SII12
SII1	1.000	.504	.426	.383	.260	.388	.241	.234	.313	.081	.115	.131
SII2	.504	1.000	.579	.465	.369	.388	.351	.339	.330	.121	.060	.154
SII3	.426	.579	1.000	.537	.377	.314	.340	.317	.366	.109	.122	.130
SII4	.383	.465	.537	1.000	.428	.377	.364	.326	.344	.117	.068	.085
SII5	.260	.369	.377	.428	1.000	.397	.227	.312	.349	.226	.182	.153
SII6	.388	.388	.314	.377	.397	1.000	.300	.335	.322	.101	.038	.121
SII7	.241	.351	.340	.364	.227	.300	1.000	.523	.399	.113	.029	.051
SII8	.234	.339	.317	.326	.312	.335	.523	1.000	.392	.150	.024	.059
SII9	.313	.330	.366	.344	.349	.322	.399	.392	1.000	.183	.168	.160
SII10	.081	.121	.109	.117	.226	.101	.113	.150	.183	1.000	.508	.341
SII11	.115	.060	.122	.068	.182	.038	.029	.024	.168	.508	1.000	.502
SII12	.131	.154	.130	.085	.153	.121	.051	.059	.160	.341	.502	1.000

**Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	377	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	377	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.821	.814	12

## Appendix

		Correlations							
		gender	age	edu	travel	ETHNO	CC	SII	OUTFIT
gender	Pearson Correlation	1	.043	.096	-.121	.084	.051	-.014	.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.406	.064	.019	.104	.321	.788	.674
	N	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377
age	Pearson Correlation	.043	1	.250**	.228**	.090	-.065	-.032	-.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.406		.000	.000	.080	.209	.541	.256
	N	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377
edu	Pearson Correlation	.096	.250**	1	.252**	-.072	-.104	-.104	-.189**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.064	.000		.000	.161	.044	.044	.000
	N	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377
travel	Pearson Correlation	-.121	.228**	.252**	1	-.029	-.116	-.071	-.107
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.000	.000		.575	.024	.171	.038
	N	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377
ETHNO	Pearson Correlation	.084	.090	-.072	-.029	1	.078	-.028	.262**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.104	.080	.161	.575		.131	.584	.000
	N	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377
CC	Pearson Correlation	.051	-.065	-.104	-.116	.078	1	.378**	.132
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.321	.209	.044	.024	.131		.000	.010
	N	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377
SII	Pearson Correlation	-.014	-.032	-.104	-.071	-.028	.378**	1	.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.788	.541	.044	.171	.584	.000		.949
	N	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377
OUTFIT	Pearson Correlation	.022	-.059	-.189**	-.107	.262**	.132	.003	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.674	.256	.000	.038	.000	.010	.949	
	N	377	377	377	377	377	377	377	377

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Appendix 3: Multiple Regression Analysis

Outfit 1: Dishdash \Abaya

**Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC <sup>b</sup>		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: outfit1

b. All requested variables entered.

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.210 <sup>a</sup>	.044	.026	.706

a. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.455	7	1.208	2.421	.020 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	184.060	369	.499		
	Total	192.515	376			

a. Dependent Variable: outfit1

b. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.743	.368		4.739	.000
	gender	.115	.078	.077	1.480	.140
	age	-.103	.056	-.100	-1.853	.065
	edu	.015	.036	.023	.420	.675
	travel	-.009	.034	-.014	-.267	.790
	ETHNO	.019	.007	.152	2.936	.004
	CC	.012	.011	.061	1.089	.277
	SII	-.003	.005	-.029	-.516	.606

a. Dependent Variable: outfit1

Outfit 2: Kumma\ Shelah

Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC <sup>b</sup>		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: outfit2

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.197 <sup>a</sup>	.039	.021	.740

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.176	7	1.168	2.130	.040 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	202.296	369	.548		
	Total	210.472	376			

a. Dependent Variable: outfit2

b. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.277	.386		5.905	.000
	gender	.087	.081	.056	1.071	.285
	age	-.101	.059	-.093	-1.731	.084
	edu	-.056	.038	-.081	-1.476	.141
	travel	.007	.036	.010	.187	.852
	ETHNO	.018	.007	.133	2.557	.011
	CC	.001	.011	.007	.118	.906
	SII	-.003	.005	-.029	-.522	.602

a. Dependent Variable: outfit2

Outfit 3: t- shirt

**Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC <sup>b</sup>		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: outfit3



b. All requested variables entered.

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.322 <sup>a</sup>	.104	.087	.574

a. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.038	7	2.005	6.095	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	121.400	369	.329		
	Total	135.438	376			

a. Dependent Variable: outfit3

b. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.048	.299		3.508	.001
	gender	.032	.063	.026	.514	.607
	age	.043	.045	.049	.948	.344
	edu	-.080	.030	-.143	-2.698	.007
	travel	-.022	.028	-.042	-.800	.424
	ETHNO	.026	.005	.240	4.781	.000
	CC	.014	.009	.088	1.640	.102
	SII	.000	.004	-.004	-.079	.937

a. Dependent Variable: outfit3

## Outfit 4: dress

Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC <sup>b</sup>		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: outfit4

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.262 <sup>a</sup>	.068	.051	.628

a. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.702	7	1.529	3.873	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	145.669	369	.395		
	Total	156.371	376			

a. Dependent Variable: outfit4

b. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.104	.327		3.373	.001
	gender	.074	.069	.055	1.074	.284
	age	.053	.050	.057	1.069	.286
	edu	-.056	.032	-.094	-1.739	.083
	travel	-.008	.030	-.014	-.262	.793
	ETHNO	.022	.006	.187	3.664	.000
	CC	.018	.009	.105	1.920	.056
	SII	-.003	.004	-.040	-.730	.466

a. Dependent Variable: outfit4

Outfit 5: bags

**Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC <sup>b</sup>		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: outfit5

b. All requested variables entered.

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.315 <sup>a</sup>	.099	.082	.504

a. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.318	7	1.474	5.792	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	93.900	369	.254		
	Total	104.218	376			

a. Dependent Variable: outfit5

b. Predictors: (Constant), Sil, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.277	.263		4.860	.000
	gender	-.004	.055	-.004	-.080	.936
	age	.018	.040	.023	.442	.659
	edu	-.080	.026	-.164	-3.085	.002
	travel	-.031	.024	-.066	-1.252	.211
	ETHNO	.015	.005	.158	3.138	.002
	CC	.024	.008	.169	3.133	.002
	Sil	-.004	.003	-.058	-1.074	.283

a. Dependent Variable: outfit5

Outfit 6: shoes

**Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Sil, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC <sup>b</sup>		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: outfit6

b. All requested variables entered.

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.361 <sup>a</sup>	.130	.114	.607

a. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.337	7	2.905	7.892	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	135.833	369	.368		
	Total	156.170	376			

a. Dependent Variable: outfit6

b. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.439	.316		7.718	.000
	gender	-.279	.067	-.207	-4.173	.000
	age	-.019	.048	-.020	-.388	.698
	edu	-.114	.031	-.189	-3.623	.000
	travel	-.049	.029	-.087	-1.681	.094
	ETHNO	.018	.006	.158	3.198	.002
	CC	.010	.008	.059	1.115	.266
	SII	-.005	.004	-.057	-1.078	.283

a. Dependent Variable: outfit6

5.8 Traditional outfit: (outfit1&2)

Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC <sup>b</sup>		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: TRA

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.214 <sup>a</sup>	.046	.028	1.31524

a. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.591	7	4.370	2.526	.015 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	638.316	369	1.730		
	Total	668.907	376			

a. Dependent Variable: TRA

b. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.020	.685		5.869	.000
	gender	.202	.145	.073	1.398	.163
	age	-.205	.104	-.106	-1.969	.050
	edu	-.041	.068	-.033	-.605	.545
	travel	-.002	.064	-.002	-.038	.970
	ETHNO	.037	.012	.156	3.016	.003
	CC	.013	.020	.036	.651	.515
	S	-.005	.009	-.032	-.571	.568

a. Dependent Variable: TRA

#### 5.9 Non- traditional outfit: (outfit 3, 4, 5 and 6)

**Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC <sup>b</sup>		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: NONTRA

b. All requested variables entered.

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.359 <sup>a</sup>	.129	.113	1.80744

a. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	178.576	7	25.511	7.809	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1205.466	369	3.267		
	Total	1384.042	376			

a. Dependent Variable: NONTRA

b. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.867	.941		6.233	.000
	gender	-.176	.199	-.044	-.886	.376
	age	.095	.143	.034	.666	.506
	edu	-.330	.093	-.185	-3.538	.000
	travel	-.110	.087	-.065	-1.259	.209
	ETHNO	.080	.017	.234	4.740	.000
	CC	.067	.027	.129	2.437	.015
	SII	-.012	.013	-.050	-.940	.348

a. Dependent Variable: NONTRA



All Outfits:

**Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC <sup>b</sup>		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: OUTFIT

b. All requested variables entered.

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.335 <sup>a</sup>	.112	.095	2.58377

a. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	310.968	7	44.424	6.654	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2463.403	369	6.676		
	Total	2774.371	376			

a. Dependent Variable: OUTFIT

b. Predictors: (Constant), SII, gender, age, ETHNO, travel, edu, CC

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	9.887	1.346		7.348	.000
	gender	.026	.284	.005	.092	.927
	age	-.110	.204	-.028	-.537	.592
	edu	-.371	.133	-.147	-2.783	.008
	travel	-.112	.125	-.047	-.900	.368
	ETHNO	.118	.024	.242	4.851	.000
	CC	.080	.039	.109	2.036	.042
	SII	-.017	.018	-.051	-.948	.344

a. Dependent Variable: OUTFIT

#### Appendix 4

Number of the enterprises operating under fashion in Oman Below is direct message in tweeter sent to National Centre for Statistics and information (NCSI). The message is translated. Me: My master's dissertation is on marketing and I need statistics on small and medium enterprises in Oman as well as Omani fashion business. Please help me get the statics because I look for them on the website, but I didn't find any information regarding them. NCSI: Hello, We don't have date on small and medium enterprises currently. About the field of fashion, we lack precise information about it, however; some information could be obtained from commercial activity registered in the commercial register of an enterprise. Me: Can I have the statistics of the commercial activity of those enterprise? NCSI: Good morning. Apologies for being late. The total number of the enterprises operating under fashion and the licenses permitted for them 3633 Me: Thank you very much Screen shoot of the message below.



