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Do birds of a feather flock together? Empirical evidence from the Generalized Approach to Tourist Ethnocentrism (GATE)

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Abstract

Beyond the scope of the home country's economy, the present study investigates the effects of ethnocentrism on the cognitive, affective and conative image of a destination, in view of perceptions of cultural distance. Two datasets were collected in the city of Pretoria (South Africa) through structured surveys proposing either Japan (n=346) or Zimbabwe (n=302) as destinations. Psychometric properties as well as model-fit, robustness, and measurement invariance of the composite were confirmed. Ethnocentrism was found to negatively affect the image of less competitive destinations. Cognitive states mediated the positive effects with respect to Japan, whereas the negative effects towards Zimbabwe were explained by affective states. Japan maintained a positive image irrespective of ethnocentrism levels. No significant differences were found in the way ethnocentrism affects destination image across groups displaying different perceptions of cultural distance. This study is set to advance the current knowledge on tourist decision-making beyond marketing mix and socio-demographic variables.

Keywords: Ethnocentrism, tourist behavior, intergroup biases, destination image, composite of second-order constructs.

Introduction

The integration of people into a single world society has impacted nearly every aspect of modern-day behavior from organizational down to the individual level (Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). Within this global scenario, tourism and ethnocentrism can be regarded as two important phenomena with respect to human mobility. The former is viewed both as an outcome and a contributing factor to globalization (Hannam & Knox, 2010), whereas the latter is presently investigated for possible effects on the distribution of tourists across the globe. Over the past six decades, the tourism industry has considerably expanded into becoming one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors, with a 10% contribution to the global gross domestic product (GDP), and international tourist arrivals rising to 1.32 billion in 2017, as compared to 680 million in 2000, and an estimated 25 million in 1950 (UNWTO, 2018; 2015). This statistical landscape, beyond the much-emphasized economic benefits, essentially denotes a higher frequency in human mobility and cross-cultural encounters in these present times. Yet, the regional distribution of international tourist arrivals between 1950 and the projected 2030 still appears to be skewed. This is mainly characterized by relatively unchanged travel patterns in regions such as Africa and the Middle East, whereas consistent tourist clusters are observed in others (e.g. Europe). The explanatory line of inquiry implied through this observation generally alludes to tourist behavior literature, and in particular, the decision-making process.

Tourist Behavior (TB) as a field of study is the application of Consumer Behavior (CB) concepts, theories, and models to investigate the processes involved when tourists select, purchase, use, or dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences for the satisfaction of their

needs and desires (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995). Over the years, destination choice studies have spawned a number of research areas such as destination images (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993), information-seeking behavior (Vogt & Andereck, 2003), sequencing and consumption systems (King & Woodside, 2001), and destination choice modelling (Crouch & Louviere, 2001). With regards to the latter, the influence of internal socio-psychological processes, situational constraints, and external destination stimuli (Ankomah, Crompton, & Baker, 1996) has been recognized within the funneling choice heuristic process proposed by comprehensive models of destination choice (e.g. Um & Crompton, 1990). With decision-making having become central to tourism research during the past three decades, behavioral determinants have consequently gained interest among researchers. Yet, it appears that ethnocentrism has merely been applied as an explanatory variable to investigate tourism destination choices.

Ethnocentrism is a nearly universal socio-psychological trait, summarized into the tendency of judging other cultures (the out-group) according to the standards of one's own (the in-group), and the beliefs that one's ethnic and cultural group is superior to others (Sumner, 1906). Ethnocentrism studies that have integrated travel-related variables in their analytical frameworks (e.g. Kock, Josiassen, Assaf, Karpen & Farrelly,2018) appear to have proceeded from Shimp and Sharma (1987) Consumer Ethnocentrism conceptualization. As such, they have primarily considered tourism as a consumption phenomenon underpinned by socio-economic dimensions such as economic morality, economic animosity, and economic rationality (see Mavondo & Tan, 1999), rather than a phenomenon involving human cross-cultural interactions within physical environments away from one's own (see Boukamba, Oi, & Sano 2020). Consequently, despite the substantial volume of literature on ethnocentrism, and its subsequent adaptation in international consumer behavior studies, it appears that the influence of this socio-psychological phenomenon in the context of tourism, and its contribution to the understanding of travel behavior beyond the scope of the home country's economy remain unclear at an empirical level.

The present study takes place at the pre-visitation stage of the travel process and follows a behavioral approach to decision-making. It applies Boukamba, Oi, and Sano (2020) Generalized Approach to Tourist Ethnocentrism (GATE) in order to investigate how biased views that tourists may hold towards the cultural attributes of a destination and its residents, affect the mental impressions assigned to their knowledge and beliefs (cognitive image); feelings, emotions, and evaluations (affective image); and behavioral intent towards a destination (conative image). Understanding the effects of ethnocentrism on attitudes towards tourist destinations is set to advance the current knowledge on tourist decision-making beyond marketing mix and socio-demographic variables.

Theoretical Background

Ethnocentrism in consumer behavior and tourism research

Ethnocentrism is "the technical name for 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" (Sumner, 1906:13). It is labeled as cultural bias or in-group/out-group differentiation (Applebaum, 1996), thus denoting a state of cultural narrowness in which the ethnically centered is rigid in his acceptance of the culturally 'alike' and in his rejection of the culturally 'unlike' (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950:102). Literature indicates that the scope of ethnocentrism is not limited to ethnic or cultural groups (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). It can also be employed in reference to many, or even all kinds of groups (Bizumic, 2015). Accordingly, ethnocentric views can be held towards various psychological objects including country, religion, region of origin, and (in line with this study) a tourist destination region.

Tourism scholars have recently argued that tourists are likely to harbor ethnocentric tendencies that shape their behavior and exert an influence on their decisions and choices (Kock et al., 2018; Boukamba, Oi, & Sano, 2020). These are systematic ingroup biases that manifest in the prescriptive belief and felt moral obligation, that the domestic tourism economy should be supported (Kock et al., 2018). In this manner, spending a holiday at a domestic destination is socially expected, and a way for ethnocentric tourists to secure domestic jobs. Tourist Ethnocentrism (TE) was therefore described as a positive ingroup bias specifically concerned with the domestic tourism economy and its stakeholders, and its construct subsequently underpinned by socio-economic dimensions.

Beyond the above-discussed economic scope, tourism is also described as a socio-cultural phenomenon whose processes involve human mobility across geographical and cultural boundaries (Jafari, 1977). Its consumption, unlike others, is linked to specificity of places. That is a production/consumption inseparability characteristic which requires people to travel away from their usual environment to the point of production in order to experience the product (Cooper & Hall, 2008). Hence, tourism is viewed as a phenomenon which not only entails the traveler's involvement with worlds, values, and lives of those inhabiting other cultures (Rojek & Urry, 1997), but also involves an environmental bubble which tends to dictate the degree to which one exposes him/herself to the strangeness of the host society (Cohen & Cooper, 1986). From this basis, Boukamba, Oi, and Sano (2020) have proposed an alternative approach to TE, which is based on the works of Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) from the field of Intercultural Communication. The Generalized Approach to Tourist Ethnocentrism (GATE) considers tourist ethnocentrism as the biased views that tourists may hold towards the cultural attributes of a destination and its residents, when comparing to either their own or -possibly, to one that is perceived as culturally similar (Boukamba, Oi, & Sano, 2020). In that sense, the GATE provides the missing socio-cultural lens to the study of ethnocentrism, not only in the tourism context, but also in general CB literature. The GATE approaches tourist-host interactions at inter-cultural and inter-personal levels, which respectively reflect sentiments of cultural bias and personal prejudice towards the host culture and its members (Boukamba, Oi, & Sano, 2020). Accordingly, its conceptual domain can be said to tap into the ethnocentrism dimensions which have somehow been suppressed from the scope of the TE scale. These include distorted cognition, insecurity, and animosity towards outgroup members.

Values, attitudes, and behavior

Attitudes play a central role in decision-making as they can help predict behavior (Sheth & Mittal, 2004). They are defined as a ''person's degree of favorableness or unfavorableness with respect to a psychological object'' (Ajzen & Fishbien, 2000:2). Scholars have argued that attitudes may serve multiple psychological functions on the basis of the Attitude Function Theory (Allen, Ng, & Wilson, 2002). For instance, Herek (1987) mentions 'evaluative' and 'expressive' psychological functions. Evaluative attitudes develop from an interaction between the person and the attitude object. They derive their attractiveness or averseness from the intrinsic properties of that object. Expressive attitudes, on the other hand, do not strongly rely on the attitude object. Instead, they are strongly related to personality. That is, one's cognitive beliefs about her/himself (Katz, 1960). Three sub-types of expressive attitudes are further described by Herek (1987). These include value-expressiveness, social adjustment, and ego-defensiveness. While social-adjustment and value-expressive functions result from seeking acceptance by others and expressing important human values or self-concept, the ego-defensive attitudes tend to protect the self-image from threats and insecurities (Allen et al., 2002). Although human values and attitudes are two separate concepts with regards to the object of reference, Rokeach (1973) nonetheless notes a functional similarity between the two, by maintaining that human values can also serve the same psychological functions underlying attitudes. Hence, values, as abstract goals that serve as the guiding principles in people's lives), can significantly predict attitudes and behavior (Muzikante & Renge, 2011).

Perceived Cultural Proximity

Perceptions of proximity and distance reflect a subjective understanding of a relationship with a psychological object, which is felt as being 'close or far away from the self, here, and now' (Trope & Liberman, 2010:440). Given the scope of the concept beyond its traditional geographical understanding, researchers have focused on narrowing it to different dimensions. For instance, in tourism studies, the focus on distance has been emphasized on the cultural dimension over the recent years (e.g. Ahn & Mckercher, 2015). Culture may be defined as a collective programming of the mind, which incorporates factors such as common values, beliefs, attitudes, behavioral norms, as well as the use of symbols, customs, rituals, ceremonies, and perceptions (Warner & Joynt, 2002). Cultural distance, in the same vein, represents the degree to which these shared norms and values differ from one country to another (Hofstede, 2001). Alternatively, some tourism researchers have opted to use the term 'cultural proximity' to emphasize 'closeness' (e.g. Szytniewski, Spierings, & Velde, 2017), which in a broader sense reflects the similarity in culture of two or more countries. The importance of understanding the effects of cultural proximity has been documented throughout TB studies. It is particularly highlighted by the concept of environmental bubble described by Cohen (1972), which denotes the constant role played by cultural background when people consciously or unconsciously use their cultural baggage when sojourning away from their home environments (Kastenholz, 2010).

Tourist destination image

Attitudes are a constituent of destination image (DI). That is a subjective interpretation of a destination made by individuals that influences tourist behavior (Hunt, 1975). DI plays an important role in tourist behavior at various stages of the travel process. It influences not only the choice of destinations, but also the processes of comparing expectations with experience, revisiting, spreading word of mouth, and recommending the destination to friends and family (Agapito, Valle, & Mendes, 2013). DI is a composite construct (Rasoolimanesh & Ali, 2018) made of cognitive, affective, and conative images (Gartner, 1993). Cognition refers to the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thoughts, experiences, and the senses (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2003). It is viewed as the intellectual/perceptual component, which relates to the individual's beliefs and knowledge about the attributes of the destination. The affective component consists of feelings, emotions, and evaluations associated with the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Whereas, the conative component comprises of the behavioral intent towards the destination. That is, the individual's actual conduct or intention to revisit and recommend the destination to others, or even to spread positive word of mouth (Pike & Ryan, 2004).

Direct effects hypotheses

World-mindedness is a form of social cognition, characterized by one's adaptability and openness towards the acceptance of ideas, norms and values from other cultures (Nijssen & Douglas, 2011). World-mindedness has been found to be negatively related to the cultural narrowness and rejection entrenched in ethnocentrism (Ganideh & Refae, 2010). Moreover, demographic analyses have also reported a negative relationship between ethnocentrism and level of education (Klein & Ettensoe, 1999). Thus, open-mindedness in educated consumers makes them less likely to have prejudicial views when making choices (Javalgi, Khare, Gross, & Scherer, 2005). Accordingly, a research hypothesis is stated:

H_1: Ethnocentrism has a direct negative effect on the Cognitive Image.

Ethnocentrism denotes a tendency of placing one's group in a position of centrality, while considering members of the outgroup as contemptible, immoral, and inferior (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). Similar to cross-cultural interaction, ethnocentrism studies in CB literature also support that high ethnocentric consumers tend to negatively evaluate foreign products (Nijssen & Douglas, 2011). Accordingly, a research hypothesis is stated:

H_2: Ethnocentrism has a direct negative effect on the Affective Image.

Research on animosity and buying behavior indicates that consumers might refuse to purchase products from a country with whom they associate high negative feelings (Klein, 2002). These findings have been consistent in various countries and across cultural products such as movies (Maher & Mady, 2010). Additionally, it was demonstrated that the animosity felt by the Chinese towards the Japanese as a result of the events of World War II affects their intention to visit Japan as a tourism destination (Guo, Zhou, & Tu, 2016). Accordingly, a research hypothesis is stated as follow:

H_3: Ethnocentrism has a direct negative effect on the Conative Image.

Specific indirect effects (mediation) hypotheses

Cognition has a higher effect on the conative image, via the affective component (Agapito et al., 2013). The relative weight of affect versus cognition (i.e. attitude base), is an important moderator of attitude-behavior consistency. As such, affectively based attitudes towards were found to be better predictors of the willingness to associate (Esses & Dovidio, 2002). Similarly, it has been posited that behavior may be influenced by the affective quality of an environment, rather than directly by its objective properties (Li, Cai, Lehto, & Huang, 2010). When beliefs and feelings are consistent, they both contribute strongly and equally to the evaluation of the destination. On the other hand, when cognition and affect are negatively correlated, feelings tend to predominate (Ajzen, 2001). Consequently, research states that emotions might be better predictors of behavior than the perceptual dimension (Yu & Dean, 2001). Accordingly, a research hypothesis is formulated:

H_4: Ethnocentrism has a stronger effect on Conative image through Affective image, as compared to Cognitive Image.

Multigroup (moderation) hypotheses

The strength of ethnocentric tendencies varies among social groups, demographic characteristics, and even the nature of its intended object (Cleveland, Laroche, & Papadopoulos, 2009; Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004). Ethnocentric levels tend to be positively correlated with the negative attitudes towards out-group members and foreign products. That is, the more ethnocentric people are, the less likely they are to choose to interact with members of other cultures (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997), and the more likely they are to negatively evaluate foreign products (Nijssen & Douglas, 2011). In view of these findings and the hypothesized direct effects in H1, H2, and H3, we propose three additional hypotheses:

H_5: Ethnocentrism levels moderate the effect of ethnocentrism on cognitive image, such that the effect is stronger across the group with high ethnocentrism score.
H_6: Ethnocentrism levels moderate the effect of ethnocentrism on affective image, such that the effect is stronger across the group with high ethnocentrism score.
H_7: Ethnocentrism levels moderate the effect of ethnocentrism on conative image, such that the effect is stronger across the group with high ethnocentrism score.

The Similarity-Attraction Theory (see Byrne & Nelson, 1965) can explain the relationship between values, attitudes, and behavior in a context of cross-cultural interaction. It suggests that a positive relationship exists between similarity in attitude and social attraction (Byrne, London, & Reeves, 1968). In that sense, perceived outgroup similarity leads to greater willingness to associate (LeVine & Campbell, 1972), whereas difference in attitudes can lead to dislike and avoidance (Singh & Ho, 2000). Concurring evidence exemplifying these relationships are also documented in the attitudinal and behavioral manifestations of

ethnocentrism (e.g. Neuliep, Hintz, & McCroskey, 2005). Attitudinally, ethnocentric groups exercise value-expressive functions by considering themselves as virtuous and superior. Moreover, they see their standards of value as universal and intrinsically true, and their customs as original and centrally human. In contrast, out-groups are seen as contemptible, immoral, inferior, and weak. Hence ethnocentrism, as a perceptual window through which all cultures interpret and judge other cultures (Samovar & Porter, 1997), is likely to weigh in favor of psychological objects which are considered similar to oneself. Accordingly, two research hypotheses are formulated:

H_8: Cultural distance moderates the effect of ethnocentrism on cognitive image, such that the effect is stronger across the group perceiving the destination as culturally dissimilar.

H_9: Cultural distance moderates the effect of ethnocentrism on affective image, such that the effect is weaker across the group perceiving the destination as culturally similar.

Behaviorally, in-group members exercise social adjustment functions by displaying a willingness to retain their membership, while fostering cooperative relations and obedience with other members of that group (Neuliep, & McCroskey, 1997). This behavior is triggered by ego-defensiveness, which is likely to intensify as a result of perceived threat from the outgroup (Grant & Brown, 1995). For instance, when traveling away from their usual environments, tourists may experience instances of cultural shock, when confronted with differences in language, food, the pace of life, standard of living, intimacy, and etiquette, even if they are mentally prepared to enter different cultures (Fung & Mckercher, 2016). This, in turn, does not only affect visitor's experience, but also has an impact on decisions on travel party, duration of trips, travel propensity, destination image, and choice of destination (Kastenholz, 2010; Bi & Lehto, 2017). Hence, even though tourists seek for otherness, difference, and change when traveling, it has been cautioned that the extent of such change should remain non-threatening (Cohen, 1979), because the greater the cultural distance, the greater the resistance (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). In line therewith, a research hypothesis is formulated:

H_{10}: Cultural distance moderates the effect of ethnocentrism on conative image, such that the effect is stronger in the group perceiving the destination as culturally dissimilar.

Methodology

Measures

Destination Image (DI) was approached using Lancaster (1966) theory of consumer's demand based on the Hedonic Utility model, as recommended for tourism research (Um & Crompton, 1990). It suggests that consumers don't choose goods, but their attributes instead. These are subsequently used as input factors to assess utility. Accordingly, we focused on destination attributes, rather than the destinations themselves. They were generated using construct elicitation in an online survey comprising of two open-ended questions adapted from Echtner and Ritchie (1993). *Cognitive Image* was measured by placing the generated destination attributes on a five-point Likert scale. Respondent's levels of agreement were expressed from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). *Affective Image* was measured by a 7-point semantic differential scale, developed from two emotional indicators (Russell, Ward, & Pratt, 1981): unpleasant-pleasant; sleepy-arousing. These two independent bipolar dimensions are recommended when assessing individuals' affective responses to physical environments (Russell et al., 1981).

Conative Image was measured by adapting three items suggested by Agapito et al. (2013). These included the intentions to visit; to recommend; and to spread positive word of mouth. These items were placed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (definitely no) to 5 (definitely yes). *Cultural Distance* was treated as a moderator within the structural model. It was measured by adopting indicator variables from the cultural distance dimension from the

CAGE (Cultural, Administrative, Geographic, and Economic) model distance framework proposed by Ghemawat (2001). Within the CAGE, cultural distance as a latent variable is observed by four indicators, namely language, ethnicity, religion, and social norms. These indicators are consistent with the literature in the fields of tourism (e.g. Reisinger & Turner, 2003) and cross-cultural psychology (e.g. Triandis, 1994). A 5-point Likert scale required respondents to rate how similar their country is to the proposed destination (1= Not similar at all; to 5= very similar). For the purpose of Multigroup analyses (MGA), we computed Cultural Distance into a categorical variable by averaging the score of its summated indicators. The resulting categories were specified in two groups: The Perceived as Culturally Similar [PCS] group (mean ≥ 3.0), and the Perceived as Culturally Dissimilar [PCD] group (mean < 3.0). This specified mean value represented the mid-point at which each group lays at 1 standard deviation above or below on a 5-point Likert scale. *Ethnocentrism* was measured using the GATE model (Boukamba, Oi, & Sano, 2020). It consists of a 7-item construct modelled as a Type II reflective first-order formative second-order, whose causal indicators include Cultural Bias and Personal Prejudice.

The items consist of positively worded statements placed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Ethnocentrism scores were obtained following reverse-coding and aggregation steps while using the 22-item GenE scale (Neuliep & McCroskey, 2013). Scores can range from 15 to 75, with a mid-point of 45. They were categorized into two groups: High Ethnocentrism Score (HES) and Low Ethnocentrism Score (LES) groups, which were subsequently used in the MGA.

Sampling and data collection

A quantitative research design was applied, and data was collected by means of structured pre-coded questionnaires. Socio-demographic variables included gender, age, race, level of education, and foreign travel experience. The race matrix was adopted from the South African population group classification currently in use by Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, 2012). The subsequent part of the survey focused on the five latent constructs included in the structural model (i.e. Cognitive Image, Affective Image, Conative Image, Cultural Distance, and Ethnocentrism). The collection was conducted in two phases, at different dates and parts of the city of Pretoria (South Africa). The process was facilitated by the Inter African Research Consultancy (IARC). In phase 1, we collected N=303 usable surveys in the northern and eastern parts of Pretoria, which we referred to as Dataset 1. Phase 2 was conducted in the central and western parts of the city. It generated N=350 usable surveys, which are collectively named Dataset 2. We used Dataset 1 for initial hypotheses testing (Study 1), whilst Dataset 2 was assigned for the replication study in order to contrast the findings (i.e. Study 2).

A sampling guideline for PLS-SEM suggests that the minimum sample size should be 10 times the largest number of indicators used to measure a construct (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014). Accordingly, we concluded that Study 1 and Study 2 have sufficient sample size for estimating path coefficients, and for conducting Multigroup Analyses. In Study 1, Zimbabwe was proposed as the tourist destination. Two reasons guided this decision: First, its geographical proximity in relation to South Africa indicated that respondents (South African citizens) would be likely to have an adequate level of knowledge about Zimbabwe, its culture, and its people. Second, the social and economic relationships between South Africans and Zimbabweans at community level call for an assessment of ethnocentrism (e.g. Crush & Tawodzera, 2014).

For the replication study (Study 2), we selected Japan as the proposed destination as it is expected to be perceived as culturally distant by most respondents. In that sense, both datasets contrast cultural proximity and distance between the respondents' home environment and the proposed destinations in order to test the similarity-attraction theory. Survey's

technical specifications (Table 1) and descriptive statistics of respondents' socio-demographics (Table 2) for both datasets are provided.

Table 1. Survey technical specifications

ASPECT	DATASET 1	DATASET 2
Data collection agency	Inter African Research Consultancy (IARC)	
Target population	Adult South African citizens	
Survey area	Pretoria (North & East)	Pretoria (West & Central)
Survey period	6 - 15 June 2018	3 - 14 September 2018
Sample size (after data processing)	302 (+1 MVO)*	346 (+4 MVO)*
Sample error	±5.60%	±5.22%
Confidence level	95%	95%

Table 2. Respondents' demographic profile

VARIABLE	%	N	%	N
Gender				
• Female	48.0%	145	49.1%	170
• Male	52.0%	157	50.9%	176
Age				
• 18-25 years old	64.9%	196	69.7%	241
• 26-35 years old	26.8%	81	18.5%	64
• 36-45 years old	5.6%	17	5.2%	18
• 46-55 years old	2.0%	6	4.3%	15
• >55 years old	0.7%	2	2.3%	8
Race				
• Asian/Indian	4.3%	13	3.2%	11
• Black	79.8%	241	82.1%	284
• Coloured	11.3%	34	7.5%	26
• White	4.6%	14	4.6%	16
• Other	0.0%	0	2.6%	9
Level of education				
• Grade 7 or less	1.0%	3	0.6%	2
• Grade 8-12	18.2%	55	15.0%	52
• Diploma or degree	64.9%	196	65.9%	228
• Postgraduate degree	14.2%	43	12.7%	44
• Other	1.7%	5	5.8%	20
Foreign travel experience				
• None	67.2%	203	65.3%	226
• 1-2 times	22.5%	68	19.7%	68
• 3-5 times	5.3%	16	9.0%	31
• >5 times	5.0%	15	6.1%	21
Ethnocentrism levels				
• Low Ethnocentrism Score (LES group)	32.8%	99	42.8%	148
• High Ethnocentrism Scores (HES group)	67.2%	203	57.2%	198
Cultural distance				
• Perceived as Culturally Similar (PCS group)	21.5%	65	16.8%	58
• Perceived as Culturally Dissimilar (PCD group)	78.5%	237	83.2%	288
	DATASET 1 (N=302)		**DATASET 2 (N=346)**	

Data processing and analysis

The nature and suitability of the data were assessed to support the choices of statistical analysis tools and methods. Missing value analysis revealed that there were no missing data. Tests for univariate outliers using Z-scores (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) and inspections of histograms and boxplots (Tukey, 1977) confirmed the absence of problematic outliers. Multivariate outlier were assessed by computing the Mahalanobis Distance, which was then compared to a Chi-Squared distribution at $p < 0.001$. Flagged cases included ID_90 in dataset 1, ID_208; ID_292; ID_327; and ID_341 from dataset 2. Normality assessments suggested that the data is not significantly departing from normality as skewness and kurtosis values

were within the recommended ± 2 range (George & Mallery, 2010). These preliminary tests confirmed the appropriateness of the data as no significant violations were found. The variance-based SEM software (SmartPLS v.3) was preferred in view of the composite nature of Ethnocentrism within the GATE model. SmartPLS (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015) is a software for Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis which also provides confirmatory factor analysis functions. Confirmatory analyses included assessments of measurement models, structural model, reliability of the composite. This required the application of the Three-Stage Approach described by van Riel, Henseler, Kemény, and Sasovova (2017). Analyses of structural relationships involved tests of direct, specific-indirect, and MGA which was preceded by tests for Measurement Invariance of Composite Models (MICOM).

Results

Assessment of measurement models

The structural model contained the five first-order constructs assessed in Table 3. Extant validity and reliability coefficients were used owing to the reflective nature of these latent variables (van Riel et al., 2017). Recommended thresholds include: Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha > 0.7$; Nunnally, 1978); Dijkstra-Henseler's rho_A (ρ_A>0.7; Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016); composite reliability (CR>0.7; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010); average variance extracted (AVE>0.5; Hair et al., 2010); and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT<0.85; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). Results presented in Table 3 indicate that all minimum requirements were met by the measurement models in terms of internal consistency, composite reliability, and convergent validity. Discriminant validity was supported by results in Table 4.

Table 3. Measurement model assessment

		α	ρ_A	CR	AVE
DATASET 1	Affective Image	0.899	0.900	0.899	0.817
	Cognitive Image	0.873	0.903	0.876	0.706
	Conative Image	0.914	0.917	0.915	0.782
	Cultural Bias	0.814	0.828	0.820	0.605
	Personal Prejudice	0.890	0.892	0.890	0.670
DATASET 2	Affective Image	0.701	0.716	0.706	0.548
	Cognitive Image	0.754	0.758	0.751	0.503
	Conative Image	0.794	0.822	0.801	0.578
	Cultural Bias	0.739	0.756	0.731	0.483
	Personal Prejudice	0.801	0.829	0.801	0.510

Table 4. Discriminant validity ($HTMT_{0.85}$ criterion)

		AI	CI[a]	CI[b]	CB	PP
DATASET 1	Affective Image (AI)					
	Cognitive Image (CI[a])	0.447				
	Conative Image (CI[b])	0.670	0.441			
	Cultural Bias (CB)	0.344	0.154	0.343		
	Personal Prejudice (PP)	0.247	0.159	0.285	0.124	
DATASET 2	Affective Image (AI)	0.740				
	Cognitive Image (CI[a])	0.334	0.709			
	Conative Image (CI[b])	0.695	0.435	0.760		
	Cultural Bias (CB)	0.044	0.019	0.102	0.695	
	Personal Prejudice (PP)	0.141	0.137	0.116	-0.255	0.714

Hierarchical assessment of the structural model

Fit indices of the structural model were assessed at two levels. First-level focused on the causal indicators of ethnocentrism (i.e. model-fit without the second-order composite, see Figure 1). Recommended thresholds include SRMR=0 for a perfect fit, and SRMR<0.05 for an acceptable fit (Byrne, 2008). In reflective models, NFI>0.90 is considered acceptable (Byrne, 2008). NFI thresholds for composite models are yet to be determined (Henseler et al., 2016a). The first-level assessment results were considered acceptable for both datasets in view of Hair et al. (2010) argument regarding absolute fit indices. Dataset 1 (SRMR = 0.037; NFI = 0.905) and Dataset 2 (SRMR = 0.054; NFI = 0.854).

The second-level assessment focused on the structural model. It required modelling Ethnocentrism as composite by means of extracted standardized scores, and setting the indicator weighting to Mode B (see Figure 2). Fit indicators were within recommended threshold: Dataset 1 (SRMR = 0.033; NFI = 0.913; Ethnocentrism ρ_A= 1) and Dataset 2 (SRMR = 0.037; NFI = 0.918; Ethnocentrism ρ_A= 1).

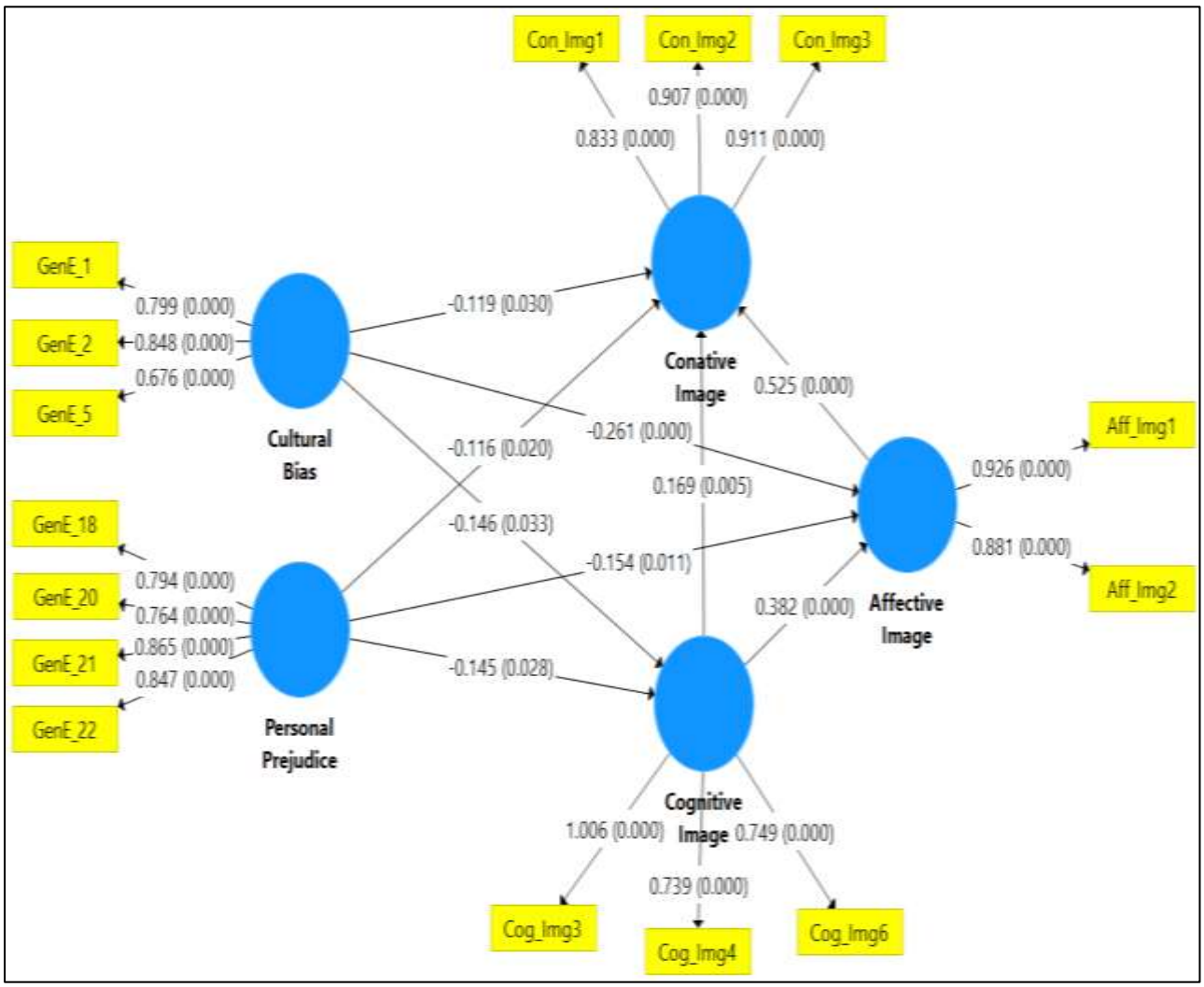

Fig 1A. Model without second-order composite (Dataset 1)

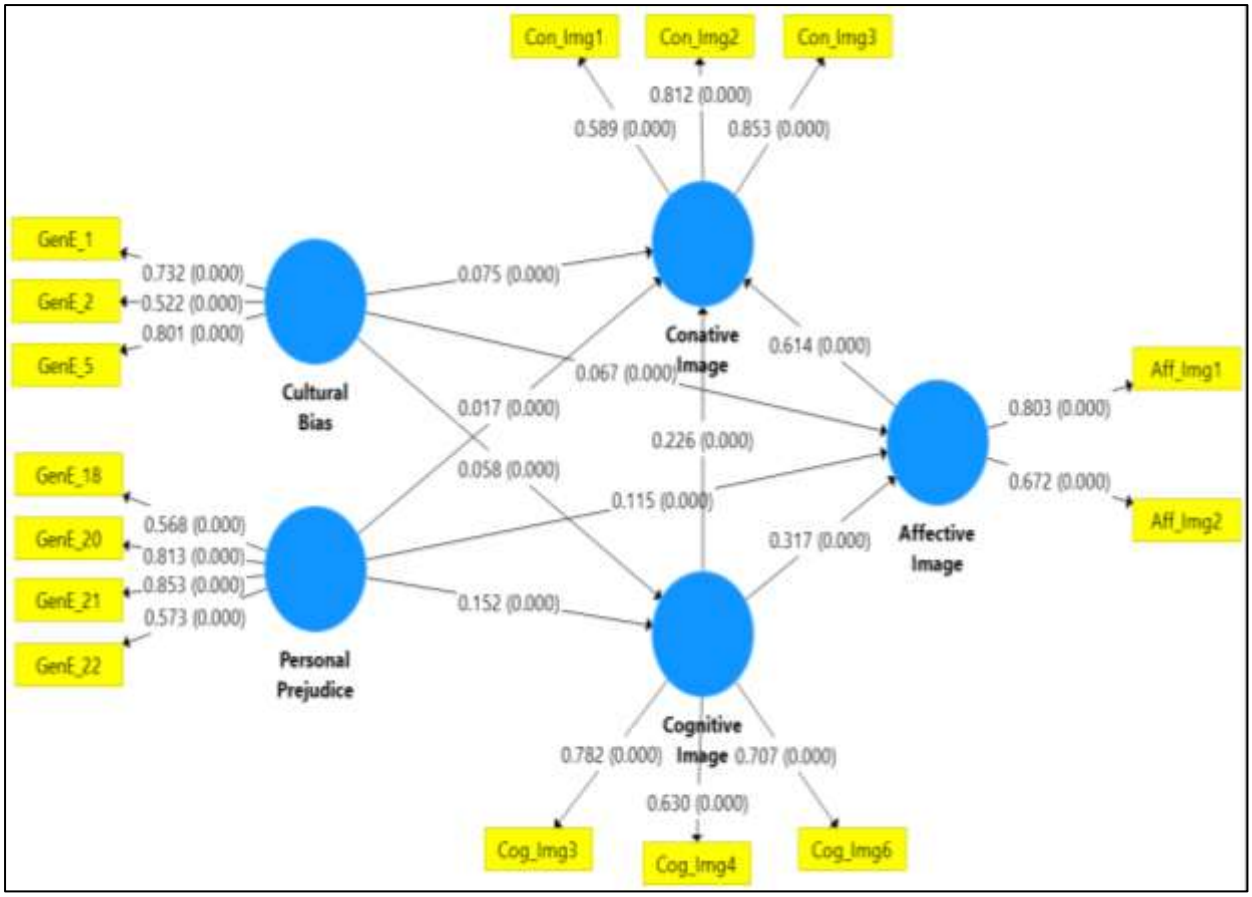

Fig 1B. Model without second-order composite (Dataset 2)

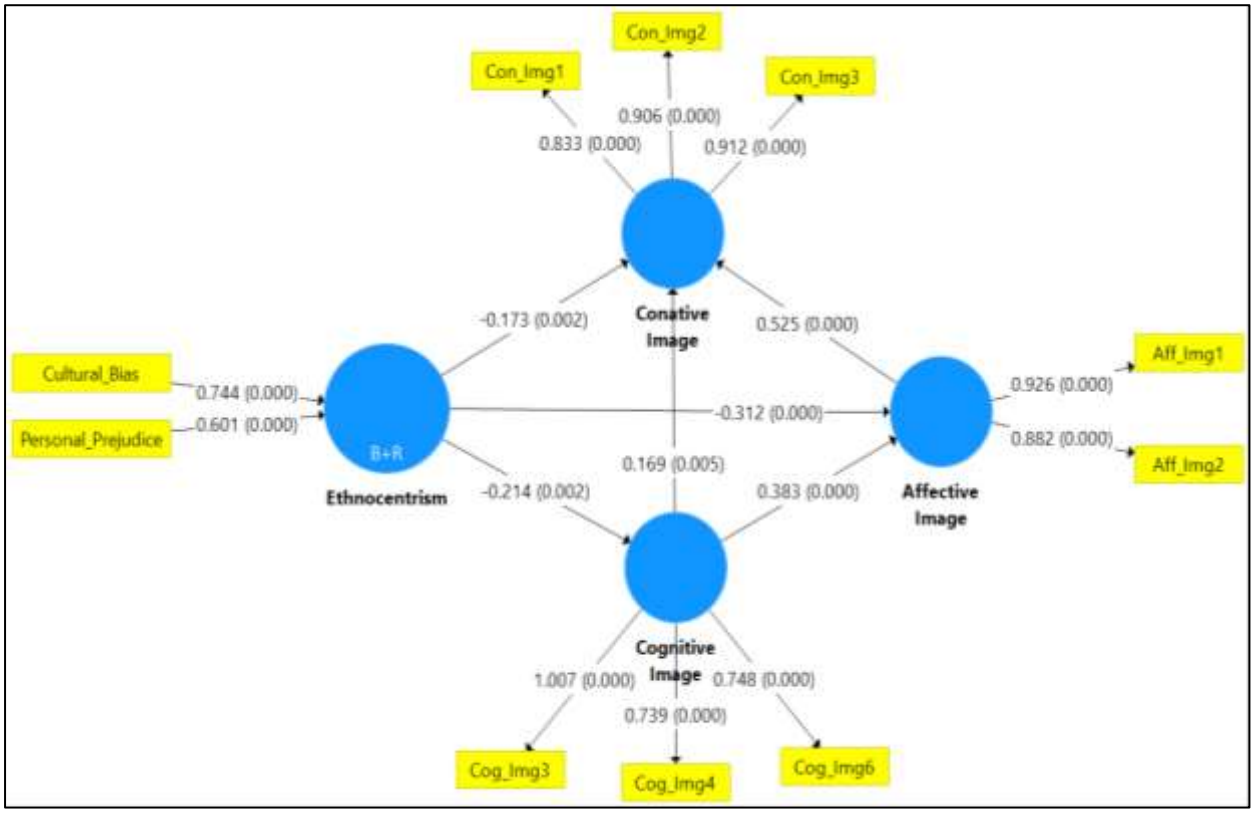

Figure 2A. Model as second-order composite (Dataset 1)

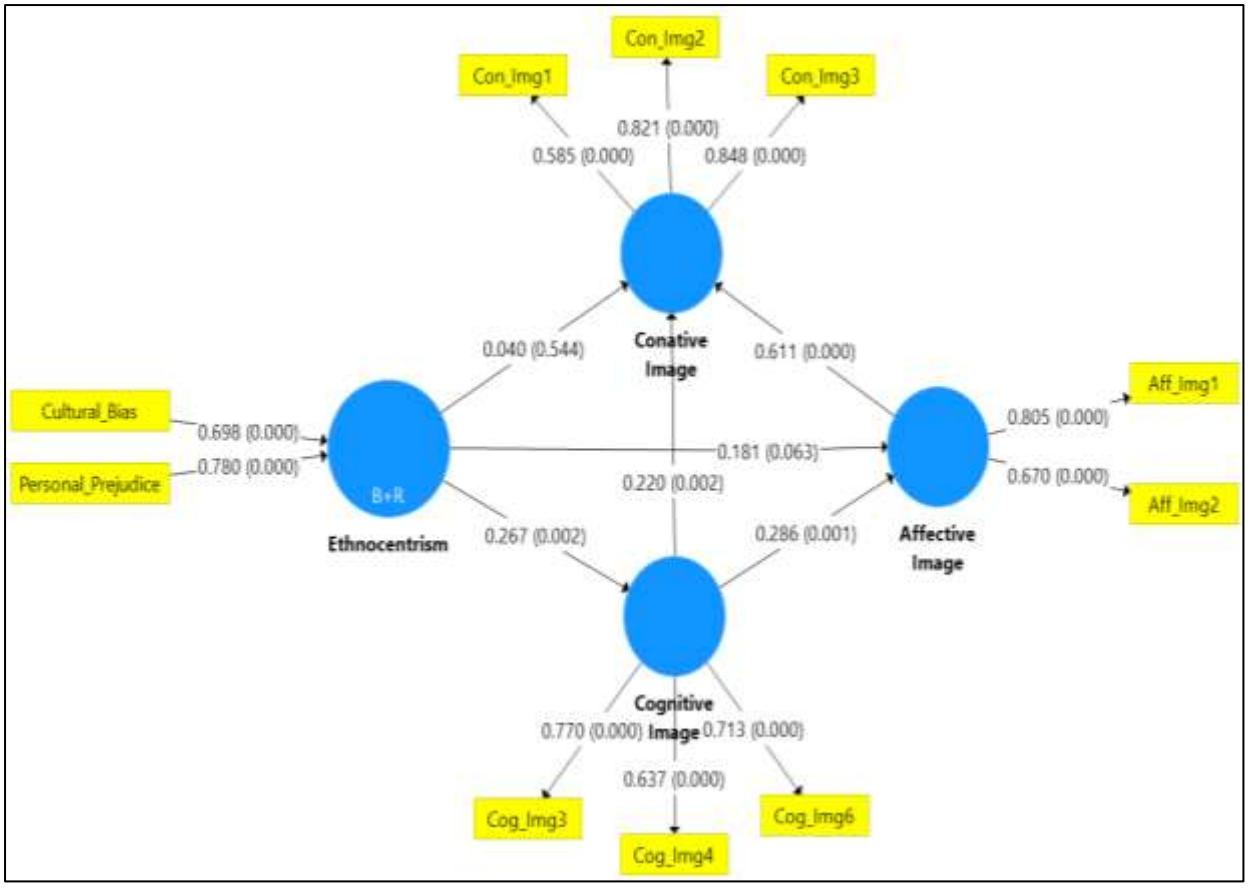

Figure 2B. Model as second-order composite (Dataset 2)

Reliability of the second-order composite

A simplified version of Mosier (1943) equation for determining the reliability of a weighted composite (ρ_S) was used, given the inability of extant coefficients to accurately calculate the reliability of composite constructs (van Riel et al., 2017). Prior studies have used ρ_S values ranging from 0.8 to 0.6 (e.g. Hayes, Bhandari, Kathe, & Payakachat, 2017; Mercado, 2017). Conservative ρ_S thresholds were obtained by separately computing the composite's Cronbach α for each dataset (i.e. DS), which were subsequently hypothesized to be lower than ρ_S on the basis that the latter takes weighting and multidimensionality into account. The following thresholds were obtained: α = 0.760 for DS1; α = 0.535 for DS2. The formula was expressed as follow:

$$\boldsymbol{\rho_S = w' S^* w}$$

Within this equation, *w* represents the column vector containing the indicator weights of Cultural Bias (w^{CB} = 0.744^{DS1}; 0.698^{DS2}) and Personal Prejudice (w^{PP} = 0.601^{DS1}; 0.780^{DS2}) on Ethnocentrism. *S** represents the consistent correlation between the second order composite's indicators, i.e. Cultural Bias and Personal Prejudice (*S* = 0.114^{DS1}; -0.255^{DS2}). We added Dijkstra-Henseler's ρ_A reliability on the diagonal (ρ_A for Cultural Bias = 0.828^{DS1}; 0.756^{DS2}; ρ_A for Personal Prejudice = 0.892^{DS1}; 0.829^{DS2}. Upon processing the formula through Microsoft Excel, we obtained ρ_S for Ethnocentrism = 0.882 > α (Dataset 1); ρ_S = 0.595 > α (Dataset 2).

Robustness of the structural model

Common method bias (CMB) and tests of nonlinear effects were conducted to assess robustness. CMB was assessed using Harman's one-factor test in SPSS. The output showed that CMB doesn't affect the results, given that a specified single factor (30.50% for dataset 1;

and 18.91% for dataset 2) did not account for the majority of the variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In view of potential limitations to Harman's one-factor test regarding formative models (Sarstedt, Hair, Ringle, Thiele, & Gudergan, 2016), we conducted Kock (2015) collinearity assessment as an additional procedure. The output indicated that variance inflated factors (VIF) were within the 3.3 critical threshold. This provided further assurance that CMB related issues were non-existent.

Causal relationships

Hypothesized effects were examined through standardized regression weights (*β*), coefficient of determination (R^2), and level of significance (*p*-value) via 5000 bootstrap subsamples.

Table 5. Direct effects

	Paths	Standardized estimate (β)	p-value	R^2	Decision
DATA SET 1	Ethnocentrism → Cognitive Image	-0.214**	0.002	0.046	H1 Accepted
	Ethnocentrism → Affective Image	-0.313***	0.000	0.295	H2 Accepted
	Ethnocentrism → Conative Image	-0.174**	0.002	0.498	H3 Accepted
DATA SET 2	Ethnocentrism → Cognitive Image	0.267**	0.002	0.071	H1 Rejected
	Ethnocentrism → Affective Image	0.181 ns	0.063	0.142	H2 Rejected
	Ethnocentrism → Conative Image	0.040 ns	0.544	0.529	H3 Rejected

The results (Table 5) show that ethnocentrism had a statistically significant direct negative effect on the cognitive image (*β* = -0.214; *p* < 0.01), affective image (*β* = -0.313; *p* < 0.001), and conative image (*β* = -0.313; *p* < 0.001) in the case of Zimbabwe. The strongest effect being for affective image, whereas the lowest effect was on conative image. These results support hypotheses H1, H2, and H3. In the case of Japan, ethnocentrism wasn't found to have negative effects on destination image. Rather, it had positive effects which were statistically significant for cognitive image (*β* = 0.267; *p* < 0.01).

Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 were subsequently rejected. Ethnocentrism explained 4.6% of cognitive image and 29.6% of affective image in the case of Zimbabwe. Moreover, the percentage of behavioral intent (conative image) was strongly explained through the model (R^2 = 49.8%). Results referring to Japan reported a similar pattern, with ethnocentrism explaining 7.1%, 14.7%, and 52.9% on cognitive, affective, and conative image respectively.

Table 6. Specific indirect effects

	Paths	Standardized estimate (β)	p-value	Decision
DATA SET 1	Ethnocentrism → Affective Image → Conative Image	-0.164***	0.000	H4 Accepted
	Ethnocentrism → Cognitive Image → Conative Image	-0.036 ns	0.083	
DATA SET 2	Ethnocentrism → Affective Image → Conative Image	0.110 ns	0.077	H4 Rejected
	Ethnocentrism → Cognitive Image → Conative Image	0.059*	0.034	

Analyses of specific indirect effects (Table 6) supported the mediating role of affective image (Ethnocentrism→ Affective image→ Conative image; β = -0.164; *p* < 0.001). Thus, accepting hypothesis H4 in the case of Zimbabwe. This mediating role of was not supported in the case of Japan (Ethnocentrism→ Affective image→ Conative image; β = 0.110; *p* > 0.05). Rather,

cognition was found to mediate, though very weakly, the effect of ethnocentrism on conation (β = 0.059; $p < 0.05$). Accordingly, hypothesis H4 was rejected in that case.

Invariance test

The assumption that the model is measuring the same trait across specified groups was tested by measurement invariance, whose importance has been stressed prior conducting MGA (e.g. Hair et al., 2014). Measurement Invariance of Composite Models (MICOM) procedure was implemented in view of the model in use (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016).

Three steps were involved: *(1)* configural invariance assessment; *(2)* compositional invariance assessment; and *(3)* assessment of equal means and variances. Requirements for *Step 1* (see Henseler et al., 2016b) were met by pruning groups from variables within the same sample after data collection. Results of 5000 permutations computed by ethnocentrism scores and cultural distance groups (Tables 7A and 7B) indicated that all correlations (*c*) values were neither significantly different from one, nor lower than the 5% quantile.

This therefore suggested that compositional invariance has been established, hence fulfilling *Step 2*. With regards to *Step 3*, assessments of equality of mean values (EMV) and variances (EV) across groups revealed that all EMV and EV do not significantly differ from across groups. Moreover, confidence intervals (CIs) of differences in those values included zero, thus implying equality between the composite's mean values and variances. Full measurement invariance (FMI) was subsequently concluded among the groups within each dataset.

Table 7A. Measurement invariance results (5000 permutations) for Dataset 1

		STEP 1	STEP 2			STEP 3				
		CONF*	COMP*			EMV*		EV*		FMI*
	CONSTRUCTS		C = 1	5%		Diff	CIs	Diff	CIs	
BY CULTURAL DISTANCE	Affective Image	Yes	1.000	0.999	Yes	0.003	[-0.274, 0.281]	0.015	[-0.245, 0.293]	Yes
	Cognitive Image	Yes	0.998	0.993	Yes	-0.001	[-0.272, 0.271]	0.019	[-0.230, 0.304]	Yes
	Conative Image	Yes	1.000	0.999	Yes	0.001	[-0.274, 0.277]	0.014	[-0.228, 0.279]	Yes
	Cultural Bias	Yes	0.990	0.967	Yes	0.001	[-0.267, 0.284]	0.014	[-0.286, 0.333]	Yes
	Personal Prejudice	Yes	0.989	0.973	Yes	0.002	[-0.265, 0.281]	0.018	[-0.283, 0.351]	Yes
	Ethnocentrism	Yes	0.925	0.705	Yes	0.003	[-0.279, 0.285]	0.014	[-0.252, 0.305]	Yes
BY ETHNOCENTRISM SCORES	Affective Image	Yes	1.000	1.000	Yes	0.001	[-0.242, 0.245]	0.009	[-0.225, 0.247]	Yes
	Cognitive Image	Yes	0.999	0.996	Yes	0.003	[-0.243, 0.243]	0.009	[-0.210, 0.234]	Yes
	Conative Image	Yes	1.000	0.999	Yes	0.004	[-0.239, 0.247]	0.007	[-0.218, 0.235]	Yes
	Cultural Bias	Yes	0.991	0.971	Yes	0.001	[-0.240, 0.244]	0.008	[-0.247, 0.292]	Yes
	Personal Prejudice	Yes	0.993	0.982	Yes	-0.003	[-0.240, 0.237]	0.012	[-0.272, 0.312]	Yes
	Ethnocentrism	Yes	0.913	0.682	Yes	0.000	[-0.241, 0.239]	0.006	[-0.236, 0.249]	Yes

Table 7B. Measurement invariance results (5000 permutations) for Dataset 2

		STEP 1	STEP 2			STEP 3				
		CONF*	COMP*			EMV*		EV*		FMI*
	CONSTRUCTS		C = 1	5%		Diff	CIs	Diff	CIs	
BY CULTURAL DISTANCE	Affective Image	Yes	0.997	0.988	Yes	-0.001	[-0.275, 0.290]	0.034	[-0.412, 0.489]	Yes
	Cognitive Image	Yes	0.987	0.959	Yes	0.004	[-0.295, 0.290]	0.024	[-0.290, 0.377]	Yes
	Conative Image	Yes	0.997	0.990	Yes	0.003	[-0.274, 0.282]	0.030	[-0.331, 0.415]	Yes
	Cultural Bias	Yes	0.639	0.048	Yes	0.002	[-0.287, 0.296]	0.024	[-0.331, 0.403]	Yes
	Personal Prejudice	Yes	0.870	0.439	Yes	-0.002	[-0.278, 0.280]	0.021	[-0.272, 0.330]	Yes
	Ethnocentrism	Yes	0.785	0.225	Yes	-0.001	[-0.284, 0.275]	0.027	[-0.325, 0.413]	Yes
BY ETHNOCENTRISM SCORES	Affective Image	Yes	0.998	0.994	Yes	0.001	[-0.214, 0.217]	0.003	[-0.338, 0.343]	Yes
	Cognitive Image	Yes	0.994	0.983	Yes	-0.001	[-0.219, 0.217]	0.005	[-0.251, 0.265]	Yes
	Conative Image	Yes	0.998	0.995	Yes	0.000	[-0.213, 0.214]	0.004	[-0.274, 0.284]	Yes
	Cultural Bias	Yes	0.569	-0.030	Yes	-0.003	[-0.224, 0.214]	0.003	[-0.267, 0.279]	Yes
	Personal Prejudice	Yes	0.889	0.565	Yes	0.002	[-0.212, 0.213]	0.004	[-0.224, 0.228]	Yes
	Ethnocentrism	Yes	0.785	0.225	Yes	-0.001	[-0.284, 0.275]	0.027	[-0.325, 0.413]	Yes

Multigroup analysis

Two series of MGA were performed using 5000 bootstrap subsamples. The first MGA (Table 8) focused on ethnocentrism scores to address H5, H6, and H7 on both datasets. It consisted of LES group (N=99) versus HES group (N=203) in the case of Zimbabwe; and LES group (N=148) versus HES group (N=198) in the case of Japan. Results on Zimbabwe showed no significant effects of ethnocentrism in the LES group ($p > 0.05$), while the HES group reported significant negative effects on the affective ($\beta = -0.339$; $p < 0.001$) and conative image ($\beta = -0.298$; $p < 0.001$). Path comparison across both groups only showed a statistically significant difference on affective image ($\beta_{diff} = 0.544$; $p < 0.001$). Accordingly, H6 was accepted whilst H5 and H7 were rejected on the basis of statistical significance of paths differences across groups. With regards to Japan, ethnocentrism had no significant effects on the affective and conative image of both groups. The HES group however reported a significant positive effect on cognitive image ($\beta = 0.196$; $p < 0.01$), while a relatively similar effect was observed in the LES group ($p > 0.05$ at 5000 bootstrap, and $p = 0.05$ at 10000 subsamples). None of the path differences across groups were statistically significant. Thus, hypotheses H5, H6, and H7 were rejected on the basis of statistical significance of paths differences across groups.

Table 8. Multigroup analysis: Low Ethnocentrism vs High Ethnocentrism

		LES Group		HES Group		Path Diff	*p*-Value	Decision
		β	*p*-Value	β	*p*-Value			
Dataset 1	**Ethnocentrism -> Cognitive Image**	-0.131 ns	0.497	-0.116 ns	0.105	0.015 ns	0.928	H5 rejected
	Ethnocentrism -> Affective Image	0.205 ns	0.248	-0.339***	0.000	0.544***	0.000	H6 accepted
	Ethnocentrism -> Conative Image	-0.155 ns	0.309	-0.298***	0.000	0.142 ns	0.285	H7 rejected
Dataset 2	**Ethnocentrism -> Cognitive Image**	0.209*	0.057[a]	0.196 **	0.008	0.013 ns	0.919	H5 rejected
	Ethnocentrism -> Affective Image	0.025 ns	0.808	0.129 ns	0.092	0.104 ns	0.401	H6 rejected
	Ethnocentrism -> Conative Image	-0.033 ns	0.700	0.078 ns	0.150	0.111 ns	0.252	H7 rejected

Levels of significance
***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05, ns = non-significant
[a] Ethnocentrism -> Cognitive Image (*p* = 0.05 at 10000 bootstrap subsamples).

The second MGA involved perceptions of cultural distance (Table 9). It tested for statistical significance across PCS group (N=65) versus PCD group (N=237) in the case of Zimbabwe; and PCS (N=58) versus PCD (N=288) in the case of Japan. The imbedded hypotheses (H8, H9, and H10) were stated in line with the Similarity-Attraction Theory. Results on Zimbabwe showed no significant effects of ethnocentrism within the PCS group ($p > 0.05$). The PCD group however reported statistically significant negative effects on cognitive (β = -0.153; $p < 0.05$), affective (β = -0.314; $p < 0.001$), and conative image (β = -0.185; $p < 0.01$). The lack of statistical significance from path comparison across groups led to the rejection of H8, H9, and H10. With regards to Japan, a strong positive significant effect was reported on the cognitive image of the PCS group (β = 0.403; $p < 0.01$). For the PCD group, weaker but positive significant effects were reported on cognitive (β = 0.139; $p < 0.05$) and affective image (β = 0.147; $p < 0.05$). Comparison of path differences across groups did not yield statistical significance. Hypotheses H8, H9, and H10 were consequently rejected.

Table 9. Multigroup analysis: Culturally Similar vs Culturally Dissimilar

		PCS Group		PCD Group		Path Diff	*p*-Value	Decision
		β	*p*-Value	β	*p*-Value			
Dataset 1	**Ethnocentrism -> Cognitive Image**	-0.141 ns	0.370	-0.153*	0.023	0.012 ns	0.935	H8 rejected
	Ethnocentrism -> Affective Image	-0.176 ns	0.164	-0.314***	0.000	0.138 ns	0.249	H9 rejected
	Ethnocentrism -> Conative Image	-0.201 ns	0.079	-0.185**	0.001	0.016 ns	0.894	H10 rejected
Dataset 2	**Ethnocentrism -> Cognitive Image**	0.403**	0.009	0.139*	0.028	0.264 ns	0.093	H8 rejected
	Ethnocentrism -> Affective Image	0.029 ns	0.893	0.147*	0.019	0.118 ns	0.486	H9 rejected
	Ethnocentrism -> Conative Image	0.015 ns	0.924	0.071 ns	0.127	0.056 ns	0.649	H10 rejected

Levels of significance
***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05, ns = non-significant

Discussion of results

Confirmatory assessments attested for the validity and reliability of the measures. Robustness as well as the fit of the structural model, were supported, whilst measurement invariance maintained the assumption that the model was measuring the same traits among the specified groups. PLS-SEM tests of causal relationships produced mixed results. While all hypothesized direct relationships were supported in the case of Zimbabwe, different results were reported from the sample to whom Japan was proposed as a destination.

For Zimbabwe, the results concur with previous findings from CB and intercultural studies which attest that negative outgroup biases negatively affect cross-cultural interaction, foreign product evaluation and purchase (Logan, Steel, & Hunt, 2015). For instance, Kock, Josiassen and Assaf (2019) showed that tourist xenophobia exerts a negative effect on willingness to travel internationally. With particular reference to the cognitive image, the findings highlighted the inefficacy of ethnocentrism to negate the mental impression assigned to the knowledge and beliefs about the attributes of Japan as a tourist destination. This suggests that the effects of ethnocentrism are destination-specific, in a sense that they tend to negatively affect the image of less competitive destinations, thus corroborating various reports on destination competitiveness. For instance, Japan ranked 4th on the travel and tourism competitiveness index, while South Africa and Zimbabwe ranked 61st and 114th respectively (Calderwood, Soshkin, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2019). Also, in the year 2017, Japan ranked 10th in terms of international tourism receipts with 28.6 million international tourists, while South Africa and

Zimbabwe received 10.2 and 2.4 million arrivals in that same year respectively (UNWTO, 2018). The inference being made about the competitiveness of domestic alternatives is further supported by MGA results on ethnocentrism scores. It was found that Japan, unlike Zimbabwe, still maintained a positive image with no significant difference across groups exhibiting different ethnocentrism levels, even when these levels were heightened.

Analyses of specific indirect effects showed that respondents' negative behavioral intent towards Zimbabwe was explained by the affective image they had towards that country, whereas in the case of Japan, perceptual states were found to be better predictors. While the results on Zimbabwe support previous findings in the context of cross-cultural interaction (Esses & Dovidio, 2002), results on Japan seem to align with findings from destination food image (e.g. Lai, Wang, & Koo-Lattimore, 2019). The contrast between both results indicates that cognitive states seem to mediate positive effects in the case of Japan, whereas affective states mediate the negative effects in the case of Zimbabwe. Using Stern and Krakover (1993) terminology, this entails that Japan's image is designative (i.e. based on cognitive categorizations of the landscape), whilst Zimbabwe's image is appraised (i.e. based on attitudes towards environments imbued with personal and cultural meanings). With particular reference to Zimbabwe, this observation can be attributed to different image levels associated with the geographic distance between South Africa and the two proposed destinations. For instance, one could mention international image in the case of Japan, whereas referring to a local level image for the case of Zimbabwe in view of their distance/proximity to South Africa. While Gunn (1988) considers local images to be organic, Walmsley and Young (1998) add that they are based on personal experiences and knowledge through "long-term assimilation of place-related information gleaned from a variety of everyday sources" (p. 66). This could include first-hand information about the socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe since the mid-2000s, or even recurrent episodes of xenophobic attacks against Zimbabwean nationals in South Africa, which attest for heightened levels of annoyance and antagonism in inter-personal encounters.

The resulting image, eventually, entails high levels of familiarity upon which respondents evaluate the destination through experiences, local knowledge, and a response to the people and activities known to be associated with the place in question. Thus, stronger affective responses were triggered. International images on the other hand, are believed to be induced (Gunn, 1988). That is, they are influenced by active efforts to advertise and promote particular destinations. They use cognitive categorizations of the landscape such as scenery, climate, facilities, and attractions (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Consequently, as opposed to Zimbabwe, the lack of personal experiences and personal knowledge about Japan and its people restrained respondents' behavioral intention to being influenced by messages relayed by destination marketing organisations, which in most cases are intended to be positive.

MGA results showed that ethnocentrism has no significant negative effect on the image of a destination, when dealing with groups exhibiting low ethnocentrism scores. On the other hand, groups with high ethnocentrism scores reported significant negative effects with regards to affective and conative images only in the case of Zimbabwe. Yet, despite the strength and the significance of paths within each group, the comparison of effects across groups only confirmed a statistically significant difference in the affective image of Zimbabwe. This therefore suggests that the level of ethnocentrism moderates affective responses, in a way that an increase in ethnocentrism scores will result in an increase in negative affective states towards the destination's attributes. This observation validates the arguments proposed in previous studies which hold that the more ethnocentric people are, the more negatively they are to evaluate, and the less likely they are to choose to interact with members of other cultures (Nijssen & Douglass, 2011; Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). While this observation is valid for the case of Zimbabwe, it should however be noted that the moderating role of ethnocentrism levels was not supported in the case of Japan. The inconsistency in findings between both cases makes an important reference to the role played by the nature of the intended object

(Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004), and the apparent irrationality underlying hedonic or emotionally driven behavior, which is a particular feature of holiday tourism (Gnoth,1997) .

Finally, the MGA results on perceptions of cultural distance displayed a clear pattern regarding the significance of the negative effects that ethnocentrism has on cognitive, affective, and conative image of Zimbabwe. The negative effects of ethnocentrism in that case, appeared to be significantly intensified by perceptions of cultural distance and nullified by perceptions of similarity. This initial observation appears to support the Similarity-Attraction Theory (Byrne & Nelson, 1965). For instance, Basala and Klenosky (2001) found that people were more likely to visit a novel destination if their home language was spoken at that destination. This happens to be the case for Zimbabwe, where Ndebele, Shona, and English are official languages which are also widely spoken in South Africa. Hence, further supporting that culturally similar destinations provide an environment in which it is easier to associate with the host community (Ng et al., 2007). While this initial observation only relates to differences within groups, it should be noted that the moderating role of cultural distance was not supported for either of the destinations. This therefore suggests that there is no significant difference in the way that ethnocentrism affects destination image, among groups displaying different perceptions of cultural distance between their home environment and the destination.

Conclusion and implications

The aim of the present study was to examine the effects of ethnocentrism on the cognitive, affective, and conative image of a destination beyond the scope of the home country's economy. The integration of the GATE and Destination Image dimensions in the study contributes to the understanding of how negative outgroup biases affect responses towards foreign tourism destinations. Guided by the Similarity-Attraction Theory, the inclusion of Perceived Cultural Distance as a moderating variable within the structural model helped set up a tourism-specific context to address the research question: Do birds of a feather flock together?

The conclusion that the effects of ethnocentrism tend to be destination-specific implies that ethnocentrism, as a form of negative outgroup bias, is still influenced by perceptions of quality criteria of foreign destinations, and also by how they compare to domestic alternatives. Though ensuing managerial implications would eventually point towards the development of competitive domestic alternatives, we also suggest that particular attention needs to be paid on improving the efficiency of Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO) to communicate, especially during periods of crises in the case of developing countries. In spite of a rich natural and cultural tourism potential, Africa is still affected by a distinct image challenge which to a large extent, has contributed to the continent's inability to command a larger share of the global tourist market. While most of these challenges are of a socio-economic nature, it nevertheless appears that the African image that is predominantly sold to international markets is still focused on natural, rather than the cultural components (Cornelissen, 2005).

Cultural tourism represents a major element of international tourism consumption, accounting for an estimated 40% of global tourism. It encompasses contemporary motivations of travelers seeking meaningful and transformative experiences, active involvement in the everyday culture of the place that they visit, and the need to feel inspired by those places and the people they meet, while pushing past preconceived notions of different cultures (Richards, 2018). Accordingly, managerial implications relating to the results obtained from specific indirect effects are aimed towards the improvement of affective responses by capitalizing on cultural and heritage tourism trends. In the case of African destinations for instance, this would entail an emphasis on the human element in promotional strategies. In that sense, we further echo the need to increasingly promote Africa as a place imbued with unique personal and cultural meanings, rather than a vast land full of rivers and wild animals. Lastly, we note further implications carried by MGA results, which are of relevance to tourism research. The lack of

significant difference in the way that ethnocentrism affects destination image across groups displaying different perceptions of cultural distance, is consistent with the notion of otherness in tourism. This doesn't only indicate that tourism is an irrational behavior where the quest for otherness isn't necessarily outweighed by perceptions of similarity, but also that similarity-attraction in tourism is not adequately determined by factors such as language, ethnicity, religion, and social norms. Consequently, in view of the scope and limitations of this study, the findings suggest that birds of a feather do not necessarily flock together.

Limitations and future research directions

A limitation applies to the direction of movements implied by the choice of countries (i.e. South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Japan). The case of South Africa to Zimbabwe denotes a horizontal movement (i.e. traveling from one developing country to another), whereas the case of South Africa to Japan entails a vertical upward movement (i.e. traveling from a developing to a developed country). Among the internal forces which cause tourists to seek activities away from their home environments, Dann (1977) identifies anomie and ego-enhancement as two important travel motives. Anomie expresses a need to get away as a response to the societal situation that one finds himself/herself in, whereas ego-enhancement denotes a need for positive recognition and enhanced status from others (Bright, 2008). With reference to the direct effect results of this study, one could argue that the socio-economic gap between the home country and the proposed destinations would weigh in favor of Japan. That is because traveling to a developed country could be seen as ego-enhancing, whereas traveling to a neighboring developing country could still confront one to similar societal conditions as the home environment, thus not fully fulfilling the need to get away.

We acknowledge that this discrepancy may limit the comparison of direct effects results between both cases. In line therewith, we call for further replication studies with comparable cases. This limitation also applies to the approach to cultural distance. Though the present study focused on language, ethnicity, religion, and social norms to measure cultural similarity, it should be noted that culture can hardly be built in isolation of social reality. This implies that culture would, in a broader sense, refer to the consciousness about life and social relations in economic and political activities in a society, including values, social consciousness and morality (Sun, 2017). Consequently, we encourage further studies that would integrate economic and political factors in their operationalization of the concept '*birds of a feather'*. The final limitation relates to the nature and size of the sample. Though the study meets the minimum sample size requirements with regards to the nature of the analyses, subjective concerns over the generalizability of results could still be raised. Furthermore, the findings of this study reflect the views of a sample collected within an urban setting which, due to socio-demographic factors, is likely to differ in response from one collected in a rural area.

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