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Strengthening the Attachment to Local Brands through Consumer Ethnocentrism and Impactful Entrepreneurship Education

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Abstract: This study investigates whether consumer ethnocentrism, a concept that refers to the tendency of consumers to favor domestic products over foreign ones, and entrepreneurship education are variables that can be used to strengthen attachment to local brands. Brand attachment is a well-researched concept in marketing literature. Many variables have been found to have different impacts on brand attachment across the globe. However, studies linking consumer ethnocentrism and entrepreneurship education to brand attachment are scarce, and this study contributes in that regard. Furthermore, the study examines whether entrepreneurship education mediates the association between consumer ethnocentrism and brand attachment. The study adopted a quantitative research methodology. Primary data were gathered through a survey. Past and current entrepreneurship education candidates were targeted. Factor analysis, simple linear regression, and hierarchical regression analyses using PROCESS were performed to make sense of the data. The study's findings reveal that consumer ethnocentrism and entrepreneurship education can be used to strengthen attachment to local brands. The study recommends that marketing practitioners, scholars, and policymakers collaborate to design an impactful entrepreneurship education curriculum with the goal of enhancing consumer ethnocentrism, leading to increased interaction between consumers and local brands.

Keywords: brand attachment; consumer ethnocentrism; entrepreneurship education

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1. Introduction

Various factors that positively contribute to brand attachment have been identified in the literature, and marketers have shown great interest in some of them. Owing to the threat of global brands, calls for protecting local brands are growing louder across the globe, especially in Europe and the United States of America (USA). In Europe, nationalist movements are gaining significant ground, evident by the Brexit vote, and in the USA, evident by the "America First" movement. Some countries that are players in the global market are facing a dilemma as global brands threaten the growth of their local brands.

Given the need to protect local brands and promote local economic growth through local entrepreneurship, many nations are implementing measures to elevate local brands at the expense of global brands. The thinking is that reducing the number of foreign brands in the domestic market will increase local brands' visibility, resulting in increased consumer interactions with local brands and, consequently, brand attachment to local brands, brand loyalty, and switching resistance [1].

South Africa has recently experienced its exports of citrus fruits rotting at the point of entry to Europe, owing to an abrupt change in import rules [2]. The sudden change in plant and health safety rules required all citrus fruits intended for the European market to be placed under a minimum of 2 degrees Celsius for 25 days as a means to control the false codling moth. South Africa's Citrus Growers Association (CGA) vehemently criticized this move as scientifically baseless, discriminatory, and excessive. South Africa's Citrus Growers Association requires its farmers to strictly adhere to proven scientific measures

for combating the false codling moth, which the European Union failed to consider [3]. Therefore, the move was widely interpreted in South Africa as a means to increase export costs and render the EU market unattractive for South African citrus growers.

With a significant number of South African citrus growers already facing immense pressure owing to rising production costs, there is no doubt a significant number will pull out and focus on the local market. South Africa is the second-largest exporter of citrus fruits, and Spain is the leading exporter and also the initiator of a change in EU citrus export rules. Such a move, however, will arguably benefit Spain, the major competitor in the sector. Botswana also took measures to protect and elevate local brands as opposed to foreign brands when they barred imports of vegetables from South Africa in December 2021. In January 2022, Namibia also implemented a similar measure [4]. Their governments declared that their own entrepreneurs could now produce enough quality vegetables to supply the local market [5]. According to Manoko [4], the move excited local farmers in Botswana, and many retired vegetable farmers are now back to farming. In other words, the move created various opportunities for entrepreneurs in Botswana.

The cases described above are just a few examples of consumer ethnocentrism, where policymakers and marketing practitioners work hand-in-hand to elevate local brands over non-local brands. Consumer ethnocentrism describes the behavior of consumers in which they shun and vehemently reject non-local brands, despite their quality and price, and in some instances, that behavior also includes rejecting non-local culture and places [6]. In other words, consumer ethnocentrism seeks to promote the consumption of local brands as opposed to foreign brands.

It is important to note that policymakers and marketing practitioners understand that customers physically and virtually interact with thousands of products. The reality, however, is that customers only develop strong attachments to a few [7]. Therefore, some governments believe that a literal ban on selected non-local products on the local market is one way to ensure increased interaction with selected local brands, resulting in attachment to local brands. The question is how marketers can enhance the attachment to local brands. The study proposes entrepreneurship education as a factor to strengthen the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and attachment to local brands. The motivation for choosing entrepreneurship education lies in its three strongest abilities: the ability to change human behavior, mindset, and creation of situations [8]. Owing to the dangers caused by globalization to local brands, there is an urgent need to ensure that the behavior of local consumers and their mindset is biased towards building a sustainable national economy through the consumption of local brands [9,10]. This is one way to grow the economy by promoting local industry growth. However, it is not clear from research what the role of entrepreneurship education is in the association between consumer ethnocentrism and brand attachment. This research fills this void in the literature.

Entrepreneurship education was introduced to promote local entrepreneurship as it is viewed in South Africa as a viable alternative solution to South African problems, for example, high youth unemployment and mismanagement of public resources, among other South African problems [11–13]. Therefore, the identification of mechanisms that will aid in the development of strong attachment with local brands is needed for sustainable revenue streams and profits [14] and an increased share of wallet for local producers [15], as this will allow local entities to invest back profits and sustain entrepreneurial activities in South Africa. To investigate variables that can be used to strengthen attachment to local brands in South Africa, this study explores the role of both consumer ethnocentrism and entrepreneurship education on brand attachment. The section that follows reviews the study's theoretical and empirical literature, leading to hypotheses development and the building of the study's proposed model. The research methodology is discussed, followed by the presentation and discussion of the findings and the study's conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background

Hazan and Shaver [16] explained that brand attachment can be well understood from attachment theory [17], which points out that continued interaction between people and specific objects results in the development of feelings of commitment towards the object. People begin to invest time, commit resources, and make sacrifices as a sign of acceptance of the object. According to Feeney and Noller [18], for attachment to materialize, a reasonable amount of time must have passed while the interaction between the person and the object was happening. As the person gains valuable experience through interaction with the object, attachment to the object grows stronger, resulting in people rejecting alternatives owing to brand loyalty, which is widely believed to be an outcome of brand attachment.

Rejection of alternative brands is not uncommon, given that attachment is a powerful emotional state that often drives consumer behavior [19]. In that regard, consumer ethnocentrism is a concept that seeks to promote the consumption of local brands and, to a certain degree, reject nonlocal products, places, and cultures. Calls for anti-globalization are growing louder, given the recent Brexit vote, the America First campaign, and the rise of European nationalist parties [20,21].

South Africa is a country that has embraced globalization, and many non-South African brands are available in almost every shop across the country. Consumer ethnocentrism is also linked to the love of the country, and in recent research, the concept of patriotism or nationalism has been used. The common theme across these concepts is the promotion of local brands to protect the country from depending on other countries, boost local productivity, increase employment, and promote the local level of entrepreneurship [22].

Promoting local entrepreneurship against other countries is a concept similar to that of ethnic entrepreneurship. Since entrepreneurship can be taught, it is possible to teach individuals to develop a positive attitude toward local brands and shy away from non-local products. Depending on the curriculum content or design, individuals can be modeled to favor local brands and rely less on foreign products. In other words, following the attachment theory, through the continued use of local brands instead of non-local brands, individuals develop experiences with local brands, arguably the most essential ingredient required to ensure that South Africans are attached to local brands.

Proponents of globalization argue against this thinking because, to a certain degree, it goes against the spirit of learning from others and discourages competition and innovation [23]. In the absence of competition, local consumers may be subjected to poor-quality products that are overpriced. Although the "America First" movement is gaining momentum, many consumers in the USA believe global brands are exciting and better in quality [24]. Research is scarce exploring the link between consumer ethnocentrism, entrepreneurship education, and their relationship with brand attachment in South Africa. It is against this background that this study is pursued.

2.2. Consumer Ethnocentrism and Brand Attachment

Consumer ethnocentrism is ripe in developed countries as opposed to emerging markets [25]. It is manifested in many ways; for example, local citizens shunning foreign products and services regardless of price and quality [26]. In the marketing fraternity, the degree to which a nation's citizens exhibit loyalty to local brands is considered a potential market barrier to foreign products [27]. Research concurs and proclaims a negative relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and attitudes toward foreign brands [28,29]. As highlighted earlier, citizens of developed countries are known to prefer local products as opposed to foreign brands, making consumer ethnocentrism an effective non-tariff barrier [26], a tool the South African market can easily adopt to develop its local industries and ease social ills such as high unemployment, poverty, and crime.

As an emerging market, South Africa is not immune to the challenge where its citizens prefer foreign brands over local brands, a predicament that all emerging markets are

battling [30,31]. The perception that local brands are inferior to foreign brands from a quality perspective is the major problem facing local entrepreneurs responsible for developing local brands. South Africa is better positioned to address this issue by tapping into one of the effective consumer behavior changing tools, entrepreneurship education, which targets both the young and the old. Empirical evidence supports this notion, pointing out that in addition to teaching students to start new ventures, entrepreneurship education promotes discipline, creative thinking, and entrepreneurial awareness [32,33].

The local market needs to be aware that for every foreign product in the country, chances are that there is a locally made alternative or substitute. For South Africans to become disciplined consumers of local brands, entrepreneurship education must be vigorously used as a tool to promote local brands. A concept which the current curriculum falls short on, owing to design, structure and context [13,33]. Upon addressing the mentioned issues, we could witness a situation where South Africans develop a strong emotional bond with local brands and identify with them from an early age [34], which can benefit the local industry through profits and improved brand equity [35]. Suppose local brands perform better in the market, fueled by the local market's desire to choose them ahead of foreign brands. In that case, they are more likely to attract foreign currency for the country as foreign investors seek to benefit from them through investments. Therefore, the role of attachment to local brands cannot be over-emphasized. Attachment to a brand occurs due to continued interaction between the consumer and the brand, which explains why consumers associate a brand with their existence. Thus, through attachment, local firms generate profits, which is critical in growing the local economy [36].

2.3. Entrepreneurship Education in South Africa

In South Africa, the landscape of entrepreneurship education is divided into two significant areas, education about entrepreneurship and education for entrepreneurship, as distinguished by Laukkannen [37]. This division is crucial as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the field. When educating undergraduates, masters, and PhD students about entrepreneurship, the focus is on entrepreneurship theory, defining entrepreneurs, the entrepreneurial process, business plan, and the new-venture start-up process. In addition, the role of entrepreneurship in the national economy and managing small- and medium-sized entities (SMEs) is explained [11]. Role players include business education lecturers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers. From this perspective, entrepreneurship is viewed as a social phenomenon, and the student must acquire in-depth knowledge of the field.

Conversely, the education for entrepreneurship perspective seeks to stimulate and promote current and future entrepreneurship behavior by making available the tools necessary to create new ventures independently or within organizations [11]. The focus is on how students can acquire the experience of starting new ventures, managing them, and creating new products and services. Thus, students must develop entrepreneurial skills and competencies by tapping into their aptitudes and values [38].

South African higher education institutions (HEIs) are so diverse, given the apartheid legacy, and this has both a positive and negative impact on the impact entrepreneurship education can make in society. For instance, historically advantaged universities (HAUs), formerly named white student-only universities, have a sound entrepreneurial ecosystem [39] to support their robust entrepreneurship education curriculum, evident in many stand-alone entrepreneurship qualifications. They have world-class innovation hubs, access to seasoned entrepreneurs, and ample start-up resources [40]. In stark contrast, historically disadvantaged universities (HDUs), formerly named black, colored, and Indian student universities, face significant challenges. They struggle with limited infrastructure, insufficient funding, and a lack of experienced lecturers and mentors [41]. Therefore, depending on resources, South African HEIs strategically try to balance the two areas of entrepreneurship education.

HAUs are better resourced in every aspect than HDUs and are quite advanced in their approach to entrepreneurial education. HAUs, besides offering stand-alone undergraduate and postgraduate entrepreneurial qualifications, have established dedicated centers for nurturing and implementing entrepreneurial ideas. These centers, referred to as incubation centers, entrepreneurship/innovation hubs, and centers for entrepreneurship in South Africa [42], play a pivotal role in students' entrepreneurial journey [43]. They serve as a platform for students to develop and refine their ideas, connect with experienced entrepreneurs, and access start-up resources [44].

Despite the different names, the common goal of having innovation hubs is to support students in developing novel ideas that can be commercialized [45]. In innovation hubs, students' ideas are honed, entrepreneurial networks are established, seasoned entrepreneurs mentor the developers, and, most importantly, start-up resources are provided [40,46].

The ability of HAUs to offer stand-alone entrepreneurship qualifications reinforced by a sound entrepreneurial ecosystem at the campus level enables them to offer an impactful entrepreneurship education, as they can easily strike a balance between theory, practice, and research. Considering that it takes at least three years to complete an undergraduate qualification in entrepreneurship, there is ample time to enrich modules with content for protecting local brands and encouraging the buying and consumption of local brands. Postgraduate qualifications in entrepreneurship may focus on researching mechanisms to protect local brands in line with community values, beliefs, vision, and goals. Involving the community may effectively enhance South African entrepreneurship and regain its status as an economic giant of Africa. The need for consumer ethnocentrism to be incorporated into the entrepreneurship curriculum in institutions of higher learning to stimulate a positive attitude toward local brands cannot be over-emphasized as it is currently lacking [25,30].

The offering of stand-alone entrepreneurial qualifications enables HAUs to respond immediately to the market's needs, such as protecting South African brands through consumer ethnocentrism. Therefore, stand-alone entrepreneurship qualifications offer the flexibility to enrich the curriculum according to the market's demands. Hence, it is relatively easy for HAUs to achieve certain graduate's attributes, namely, innovation and entrepreneurship, where each graduate is likely to leave the university having acquired business skills, with the potential to become an industrialist, local market developer, and job creator as they promote creative thinking and problem-solving [47]. This is a privilege that HAUs enjoy currently but can also be enjoyed by HDUs when they offer stand-alone entrepreneurial qualifications. However, the information obtained from HDUs' websites by the time of writing paints that it will be years until HDUs offer stand-alone entrepreneurship qualifications that can respond to the needs of society. As shown in Table 1, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), the University of South Africa (UNISA), and the Central University of Technology (CUT) offer stand-alone entrepreneurship undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. Instead of a pure entrepreneurship qualification, Walter Sisulu University offers a qualification in Small Business Management at the undergraduate level. Most HDUs offer entrepreneurship education as a bundled-up module to support existing business-related qualifications and others on offer [33]. In the same vein, Radipere [48] emphasized the need for research on designing entrepreneurial qualifications at South African universities. This will ensure that entrepreneurship qualifications are impactful, as measured by how they address societal needs.

Myeki and Temoso [49] noted that HDUs grapple with infrastructure, funding, teaching, learning, and research experience, leading to fewer graduates and weaker research output. These constraints significantly hamper the development of entrepreneurship qualifications in selected HDUs. As a workaround, as shown in Table 1, some HDUs offer entrepreneurship as a module in business-related qualifications. While commendable, this approach falls short of providing students with the necessary experience in new venture start-ups and management skills [50]. In addition, this grossly affects an in-depth understanding of the South African entrepreneurship landscape and what needs to be carried out to promote the buying and consumption of local brands, resulting in thriving local

industries and lower unemployment rates. Wilson [51] added that a sound entrepreneurial training course must focus on new venture creation, profitability, growth, and harvesting.

As already highlighted, the problem within HDUs is that entrepreneurship education is bundled up with other business-related qualifications instead of being a stand-alone qualification from the undergraduate to postgraduate level [33]. Therefore, entrepreneurship education stemming from HDUs is less responsive to the market needs. In addition, there is also a lack of a sound entrepreneurial ecosystem owing to the lack of funding and the location of the HDUs as they are predominantly rural [44,52]. In addition, HDUs lack specialist skills in teaching and learning, adversely affecting entrepreneurship graduate outcomes such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes [32]. The list of selected HDUs in South Africa offering entrepreneurship education and their delivery mode and assessment methods are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Delivery and assessment mode for entrepreneurship education in South Africa's HDUs.

HDU	Entrepreneurship Education	Method of Delivery	Main Assessment Method	Centre for Entrepreneurship (Yes/No)	Source
University of Venda (Univen)	Offered as a module for non-entrepreneurship qualifications	Lectures, guest lecturers, creation of business plans, discussions	Tests and business plans	Yes—University of Venda Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator (UCFERI)	[53,54]
Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)	Offered as a stand-alone qualification at undergraduate and postgraduate levels	Lectures, guest lecturers, creation of business plans, discussions	Tests, Business plans, dissertation, thesis	Yes—Business & Entrepreneur Centre	[55]
Vaal University of Technology (VUT)	Offered as a module for non-entrepreneurship qualifications	Lectures, guest lecturers, creation of business plans, discussions	Tests, assignments, practicals, tutorials and final examinations	Yes—The Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE)	[56,57]
University of Fort Hare (UFH)	Offered as a module for non-entrepreneurship qualifications	Lectures, guest lecturers, creation of business plans, discussions	Tests, examination, business plan, dissertation/thesis	There is no entrepreneurship hub on campus yet	[58]
* University of South Africa (UNISA)	Offered as a module for related entrepreneurship qualification at the undergraduate level.	Lectures, guest lecturers, creation of business plans, discussions and research	Tests, work experiential learning, business plans, examinations, dissertation and thesis	Yes—Entrepreneurship Hub	[59,60]
University of Limpopo (UL)	Offered as a module for non-entrepreneurship qualifications	Lectures, guest lecturers, creation of business plans, discussions	Tests, examination, business plan	Yes—The Rural Development and Innovation Hub	[61]
Durban University of Technology (DUT)	Offered as a module for non-entrepreneurship qualifications	Lectures, guest lecturers, creation of business plans, discussions	Tests, examination, business plan	YES—innobiz DUT Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation	[62]
University of the Western Cape (UWC)	Offered as a module for non-entrepreneurship qualifications	Lectures, guest lecturers, creation of business plans, discussions	Tests, assignments, practicals, tutorials and final examinations	Yes—Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation	[63]
Central University of Technology (CUT)	Offered as a stand-alone qualification at undergraduate and postgraduate levels	Primarily uses case studies, guest speakers, and business plan preparations. Company visits, work-integrated learning, role players, and business start-ups are used but do not form a major component	Tests, assignments, practicals, tutorials, and final examinations, WIL	Yes—The Idea Generator	[64]

Table 1. *Cont.*

HDU	Entrepreneurship Education	Method of Delivery	Main Assessment Method	Centre for Entrepreneurship (Yes/No)	Source
** Walter Sisulu University (WSU)	Offered as a module for related entrepreneurship qualification.	Lectures and guest lecturers	Tests, examinations and work-integrated learning (WIL)	Yes—Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator	[65]
University of Zululand (UNIZULU)	Offered as a module for non-entrepreneurship qualifications	Lectures, guest lecturers, creation of business plans, discussions	Tests, examinations, and business plan	There is no entrepreneurship hub on campus yet	[66]

* UNISA offers an undergraduate qualification in Small Business Management, including masters and PhD qualifications specializing in entrepreneurship. ** WSU offers an undergraduate qualification in Small Business Management instead of Entrepreneurship.

3. Empirical Literature and Hypotheses Development

3.1. The Impact of Consumer Ethnocentrism on Brand Attachment

Individuals understand a nationalist or a patriot differently. This has also resulted in individuals demonstrating consumer ethnocentrism in different ways for varying reasons, which, to a certain degree, converge on protecting the local industry against foreign brands. Zdravkovi and Gaevi [22] indicated that some customers exclusively buy local brands, shunning non-local brands in the process. Akbarov [67] argued that such actions have a positive impact if national growth is the subject of interest. For example, increased buying or demand for local brands creates employment, increases disposable income, and lowers the income inequality gap across the population. These indicators are critical to enhancing local people's living standards. South Africa has a longstanding history of high income inequality, and any mechanism that seeks to reduce it must be explored, for example, consumer ethnocentrism.

Local producers have also been observed encouraging people to buy local brands. Therefore, local brand marketers view the concept of consumer ethnocentrism with appreciation, owing to its implications. From a local brand marketer's perspective, a stronger consumer ethnocentrism orientation is better. Consequently, they often tailor their communication messages to appeal to consumers' moral and ethical consciousness. In other words, they design their communication messages to declare that the love for the country is seen in what the consumer buys. Their agenda is to make consumers who buy non-local brands look like people who are not patriotic and who do not adore their own country [68].

Other local brand marketers try to enhance consumer ethnocentrism by designing their message around the subject of respect for local culture and traditions. In other words, a local customer who buys non-local brands is perceived as a person who has less respect for local traditions and customs [69]. Marketers will go to this length, hoping that local consumers will engage with local brands, buy local brands, and eventually develop memorable experiences with local brands. As pointed out by the attachment theory, continued interaction with an object, that is, a local brand, will result in brand attachment. Based on this discussion, the study hypothesizes that:

H1. *Consumer ethnocentrism has a significant positive impact on consumer attachment to local brands.*

3.2. The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Brand Attachment

It is believed that local citizens get to know which products originate within their borders through entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship education is a welcome module among citizens concerned about growing and protecting the local economy [70]. However, for citizens to fully participate in growing and protecting the local economy, they need to be made aware of home brands, which is arguably a role that impactful entrepreneurship education can accomplish if the curriculum is designed with that argument in mind [71]. Therefore, there is a need to reconsider the curriculum content because restricting the role of entrepreneurship education to new venture development implies a

restricted understanding of its influence as far as economic growth is concerned. Many people identify with regional brands, and impactful entrepreneurship education may be able to encourage more people to adopt this perspective, which is essential for brand attachment. When people identify with local brands, they have an advantage over non-local brands. This boosts local economic activity by increasing local market share, profitability, and employment levels. As a result of this discussion, the study hypothesizes that:

H2. *Entrepreneurship education has a significant positive impact on brand attachment.*

3.3. Entrepreneurship Education, Consumer Ethnocentrism, and Brand Attachment

Consumer ethnocentrism stems from the concept of ethnocentrism, which Bizumic [72] described as an individual's tendency to perceive his or her own culture, people, and place as dominant and better when compared to others. From a business perspective, ethnocentrism is linked to buying and promoting local brands as opposed to non-local ones, hence the name consumer ethnocentrism. To ensure the sustainability of the local economy, entrepreneurship is encouraged. In other words, local entrepreneurs are encouraged to take risks with the goal of transforming local resources to satisfy the unlimited needs and wants of the local people. Entrepreneurs expect a return on investment, and to guarantee that in return, their brands must face minimal competition from non-local brands, which are generally believed to be exciting and of high quality [24,73].

To ensure local brands face minimal competition from global brands, governments are using several tools, including import tariffs, embargoes, and, recently, entrepreneurship education. Import tariffs and embargoes ensure that limited quantities of non-local products find their way into the local market, whereas entrepreneurship education has a different approach when used from a consumer ethnocentrism perspective. South Africa is a global market; hence, global brands are sold locally. Entrepreneurship education, depending on the curriculum design and content, is a critical tool that is used to instill a deep desire to buy locally and protect the local industry.

In other words, entrepreneurship education is a viable mechanism for enhancing local brand engagement, local brand experiences, and eventually local brand attachment. Citizens are taught from an early age to buy local brands with the aim of protecting the local industry and promoting economic growth. A carefully designed entrepreneurship education curriculum is one effective way to ensure that local brands thrive. As locals continue to interact with local brands, a significant number of citizens will become attached to local brands. Given the above discussion, the study hypothesizes that:

H3. *Entrepreneurship education mediates the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and attachment to local brands.*

The study's model was developed in response to the aforementioned discussion, and it summarizes the suggested mediation effect of entrepreneurship education on the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and brand attachment (Figure 1).

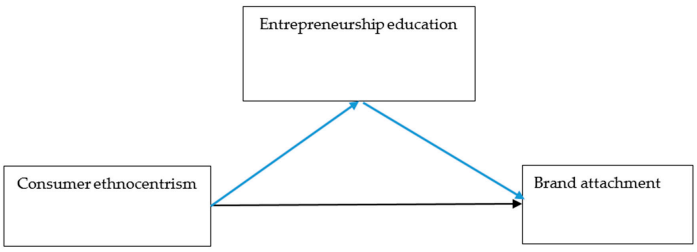


Figure 1. Research model. Figure 1 depicts the study's research variables where consumer ethnocentrism is a predictor variable assumed to have a positive effect on the outcome variable, that is, brand attachment, while entrepreneurship education is considered to be mediating the indirect association between consumer ethnocentrism and brand attachment.

4. Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research methodology, and a positivist research paradigm was pursued. Data were gathered once, through a survey, making this study cross-sectional research. A mall intercept technique was used at a South African university in the Eastern Cape Province. In South Africa's institutions of higher learning, entrepreneurship education is taught across faculties to promote new venture start-ups and enhance self-employment as opposed to training graduates for employment. Purposeful sampling was therefore implemented to select respondents who have undergone entrepreneurship education. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were filled correctly, providing enough data to proceed to the analysis stage, where exploratory factor analysis and simple and hierarchical regression analysis were performed.

For the sample used, descriptive statistics revealed the distribution by gender of the respondents where approximately 43% were males and 42% were females, while 15% chose the rather not say option. The results reveal the progressive nature of South Africa in terms of individual identities and the roles they choose to play in society. With respect to age, the results reveal that 12% were aged 20 and below, 36% were between 21 and 25, 31% were between 26 and 30, and 21% were above 31 years. With respect to education, 24% were carrying out undergraduate studies, 33% were pursuing masters education, and 43% were pursuing doctoral studies. The income distribution of the respondents revealed that undergraduate students had fewer cash inflows per month, where 38% revealed that they receive not more than R12500 per month compared to at least R15000 per month for masters candidates and R17500 per month for doctoral candidates.

Measures

The questionnaire was made up of four sections. The first section gathered demographic information about the respondents. Section 2 gathered information relating to consumer ethnocentrism. The consumer ethnocentrism scale with five items used in this study was developed by Shimp and Sharma [6]. The five items had factor loadings ranging from 0.505 to 0.784 and an average extracted variance (AVE) of 0.468. These factor loading values are connected to each scale item's reliability, and according to Khan et al. [74], values ranging from 0.4 to 0.7 are highly acceptable. An AVE of $\geq$0.5 is considered satisfactory by Fornell and Larcker [75], and for this scale in question, the value of 0.468 was obtained and is considered acceptable. This is because highly reputable papers in the field of business management have reported AVE scores of 0.310; see Lam [76]. The scale also reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.733 and composite reliability equal to 0.811. According to Hair et al. [77] a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 is satisfactory, and with reference to composite reliability, Hair et al. [78] emphasize that the score must exceed 0.7. The reported values for the consumer ethnocentrism scale are above the given thresholds, indicating that the scale is free from internal consistency challenges.

Section 3 of the questionnaire gathered information on the impact of entrepreneurship education, and Section 4 gathered information on brand attachment. The entrepreneurship education (impact) scale was developed through a literature review. The scale was largely informed by the work of Souitaris et al. [79], and it has six items with factor loadings ranging from 0.588 to 0.680 and an AVE equal to 0.376. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.724 and a composite reliability score of 0.807. The brand attachment scale from Shimul et al. [80] has five items with factor loadings ranging from 0.620 to 0.819 and an AVE score of 0.508. With respect to reliability issues, the scale has a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.757 and a composite reliability score of 0.836. Similarly, the reliability and validity scores reported for the entrepreneurship education impact and brand attachment scales are within acceptable ranges.

The quantitative approach adopted in this study is almost similar to that adopted by Iwu et al. [32], who investigated entrepreneurship education, curriculum, and lecturer competency as predictors of student entrepreneurial intentions in South Africa. They relied on a sample of 125 students, gathered primary data through a survey, adopted measures

developed and validated by other scholars, and statistically analyzed the data to arrive at conclusions.

5. Results

5.1. Consumer Ethnocentrism Impact on Brand Attachment

To determine whether consumer ethnocentrism has a significant positive impact on brand attachment, a simple linear regression analysis was performed, and the results reveal that consumer ethnocentrism accounts for 15% of the variation in brand attachment. The model in question can also be relied upon in predicting brand attachment, given an F-ratio of 26.298, which is significant at a *p*-value less than 0.001. Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Simple linear regression model fit and summary for consumer ethnocentrism on brand attachment.

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F	Pr > F	R	R2	Adjusted R2	Estimated Standard Error
Model summary	-	-	-	-	-	0.390	0.152	0.146	0.61388
Regression	1	9.910	9.910	26.298	<0.001 *	-	-	-	-
Residual	146	55.396	0.377	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	147	65.307	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: predictor variable: consumer ethnocentrism; outcome variable: brand attachment. *, significant fit at $p < 0.05$.

The coefficients were examined, and b0 = 2.178 as well as b1 = 0.329 were observed (Table 3). This result means that for every 1 unit increase in consumer ethnocentrism, there is a significant positive change in brand attachment equivalent to 0.329, given that t = 5.128 and the *p*-value is less than 0.001. Given this outcome, the hypothesis stating that consumer ethnocentrism has a significant positive impact on brand attachment is supported.

Table 3. Parameter estimates for consumer ethnocentrism on brand attachment.

	Parameter Unstandardized Coefficient			
	B	Standard Error	t	Significance
Constant	2.178	0.160	13.638	<0.001 *
Consumer ethnocentrism	0.329	0.064	5.128	<0.001 *

Note: predictor variable: consumer ethnocentrism; outcome variable: brand attachment. *, significant fit at $p < 0.05$.

5.2. Entrepreneurship Education Impact on Brand Attachment

A simple linear regression analysis was performed to determine whether entrepreneurship education significantly impacts brand attachment. Results indicated that entrepreneurship education accounted for approximately 45% of the variance in brand attachment (R2 = 0.447). To determine whether the model can be relied upon in predicting brand attachment, the F-ratio was examined, and it was observed to be significant given F = 117.81 with a *p*-value less than 0.001. This result reveals that we can rely on the model to predict brand attachment instead of the mean value. The results are summarized in Table 4.

The regression coefficients were examined: b0 = 0.645, b1 = 0.796. The obtained beta values show that for every 1 unit change in entrepreneurship education, a significant positive change in brand attachment equal to 0.796 is observed. This change in brand attachment is significant given t = 10.854 and *p* less than 0.001. Given this outcome, the hypothesis stating that entrepreneurship education has a significant positive impact on brand attachment is supported. Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 4. Simple linear regression model fit and summary for entrepreneurship education on brand attachment.

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F	Pr > F	R	R2	Adjusted R2	Estimated Standard Error
Model summary	-	-	-	-	-	0.668	0.447	0.443	0.49403
Regression	1	28.754	28.754	117.814	<0.001 *	-	-	-	-
Residual	146	35.634	0.244	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	147	64.388	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: predictor variable: entrepreneurship education; outcome variable: brand attachment. *, significant fit at $p < 0.05$.

Table 5. Parameter estimates for entrepreneurship education on brand attachment.

	Parameter Unstandardized Coefficient			
	B	**Standard Error**	**t**	**Significance**
Constant	0.645	0.217	2.966	0.004
Entrepreneurship education	0.796	0.073	10.854	<0.001 *

Note: predictor variable: entrepreneurship education; outcome variable: brand attachment. *, significant fit at $p < 0.05$.

5.3. Mediation Analysis

The study also investigated whether entrepreneurship education mediated the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and brand attachment. A hierarchical regression analysis was performed, and the results reveal that consumer ethnocentrism accounted for approximately 35% of the change in entrepreneurship education (R2 = 0.3475). The effect of consumer ethnocentrism on entrepreneurship education in the absence of the mediator represented by "a" was observed to be significant (b = 0.4158, t = 8.8170, and $p = 0.000$), with a lower- (LLCI) and upper-level confidence interval (ULCI) of 0.3226 and 0.5091, respectively. This is shown diagrammatically in Figure 2.

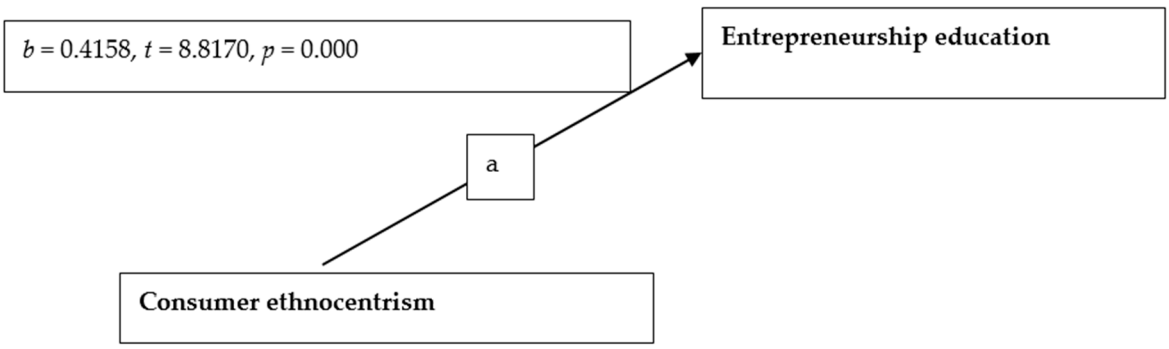


Figure 2. Impact of consumer ethnocentrism on entrepreneurship education in the absence of the mediating variable.

The impact of consumer ethnocentrism on brand attachment in the presence of the mediating variable, that is, the direct effect, represented by c' in Figure 3, was observed. The results reveal that in the presence of the mediating variable, the effect of consumer ethnocentrism on brand attachment, or the direct effect, is insignificant, given b = 0.009, t = 0.146, and $p = 0.884$. However, path b, that is, the impact of entrepreneurship education on brand attachment, was observed to be significant (b = 0.788, t = 8.653, p = 0.000, with LLCI and ULCI equal to 0.6083 and 0.9685, respectively).

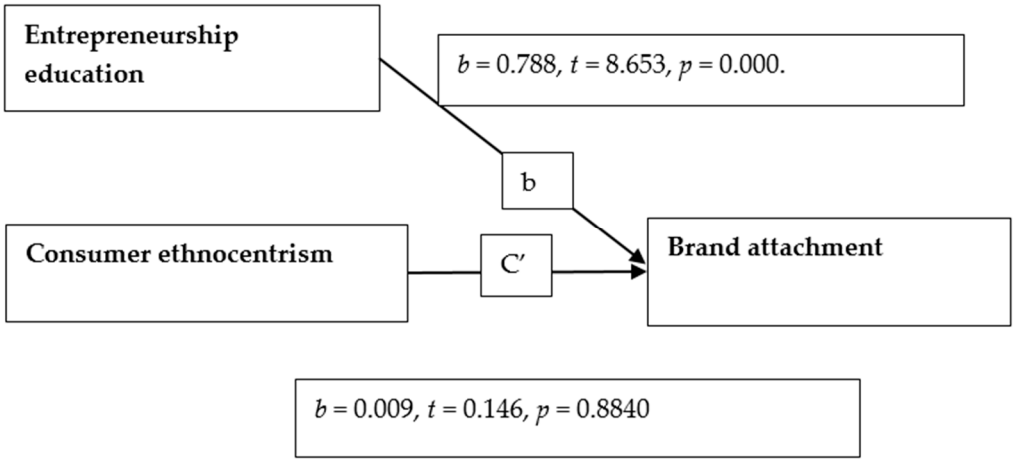


Figure 3. The impact of consumer ethnocentrism on brand attachment in the presence of the mediating variable.

The indirect effects of the mediation output were examined to determine whether entrepreneurship education mediates the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and brand attachment. The results reveal that entrepreneurship education mediates the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and brand attachment, given b = 0.3278, t = 5.981, [0.2106, 0.4572]. Given that the direct effect was insignificant, the results, therefore, indicate that entrepreneurship education fully mediates the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and brand attachment. Given this outcome, the hypothesis stating that entrepreneurship education mediates the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and brand attachment is supported. Table 6 summarizes the mediation analysis outcome.

Table 6. Mediation analysis summary.

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		t-Statistics	Conclusion
				Lower bound	Upper bound		
*ConEthn >> **Ent Educ >> ***BrandAt	0.3372 (0.000)	0.0094 (0.8840)	0.3278	0.2106	0.4572	5.187	Full mediation

*ConEthn = Consumer ethnocentrism. **EntEduc = Entrepreneurship education. ***BrandAt = Brand attachment.

6. Discussion

Brand attachment is a critical subject for marketers as it drives profitability and significantly influences customer repurchase intentions [81]. The study's results reveal that consumer ethnocentrism accounts for 15% of the change in brand attachment, while entrepreneurship education accounts for approximately 45% of the change in brand attachment. This finding is a major contribution to marketing theory and practice. According to Grisaffe and Nguyen [82], marketing practitioners invest large proportions of their financial resources in identifying mechanisms that will ensure customers develop strong attachments to their brands. The findings therefore suggest that marketing practitioners can also explore ways to enhance consumer ethnocentrism, leading to customers becoming attached to local brands and shunning non-local brands. This move is critical as it offers advantages such as an increased share of the wallet [15] and may guarantee a consistent flow of revenue, resulting in sustainable profits [14]. The study also identified that entrepreneurship education fully mediates the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and entrepreneurship. This is another significant contribution of the study to the literature on brand attachment and entrepreneurship education, and it helps scholars gain a deeper understanding of the concept of brand attachment and its drivers. Bidmon [83] concludes that research on brand attachment drivers is needed to help researchers and marketing practitioners develop

intervention mechanisms to reseal greater loyalty levels, trust, and repurchase intentions. According to Thomson et al. [7], discovering new intervention mechanisms earmarked to enhance customer behavior, such as brand attachment, is worthwhile, as attachment describes the strength of the connection between a brand and the customer. In addition, brand attachment fosters brand profitability and customer lifetime value; hence, through the two predictors examined in this study, consumer ethnocentrism and entrepreneurship education, marketing practitioners can utilize these tools to enhance brand attachment to benefit the local economy.

6.1. Theoretical Implications

The study contributes to consumer ethnocentrism, entrepreneurship education, and brand attachment theory, with empirical evidence indicating that consumer ethnocentrism and entrepreneurship education have a positive and significant relationship with brand attachment. Of the two independent variables, the result also showed that entrepreneurship education has a larger effect on brand attachment compared to consumer ethnocentrism, as shown by beta values of 0.796 and 0.329, respectively. Both consumer ethnocentrism and entrepreneurship education have a combined effect of 0.81 on brand attachment measured through Cohen's f2. Cohen [84] effect size values equal to f2 $\geq$ 0.35 resemble a large effect. With this result, this study has made a significant contribution to theory by revealing the strong link that exists between consumer ethnocentrism, entrepreneurship education, and brand attachment.

6.2. Managerial Implications

The strength of the link between the variables in question is important in developing the practical interventions required for customers to develop a strong bond with local brands in South Africa. To ensure that is achieved, marketing practitioners, scholars, and policymakers should collaborate in designing a quality entrepreneurship education curriculum. It must be able to function as an awareness tool and must highlight the importance of growing the local economy. Students who undergo entrepreneurship education must be exposed to products that are made local; they must be afforded the opportunity to learn how they are made and what they stand for. The challenge is that not all people know exactly what is available locally, and entrepreneurship education should, in some way, seek to close this gap. To have an entrepreneurship curriculum this rich, all institutions of higher learning must consider offering stand-alone qualifications in entrepreneurship as they are flexible and well-positioned to respond to society's demands.

7. Conclusions

This study was undertaken with the goal of examining the determinants of brand attachment in South Africa. No literature has been found linking consumer ethnocentrism and entrepreneurship education to brand attachment, yet the drivers of brand attachment are considered critical. Calls have been made in the literature to identify such drivers, and this study has contributed to the literature in that regard. The literature revealed the disparities in implementing the entrepreneurship education curriculum in South Africa's HEIs. On the one hand, HAUs have stand-alone entrepreneurship qualifications and a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem which make it easier to market needs on demand. Conversely, most HDUs have entrepreneurship bundled up in business-related qualifications and offer no stand-alone entrepreneurship qualifications. The amount of entrepreneurship content HDUs can teach is very little, and because the modules are bundled up, flexibility in responding to market needs on demand is lost. The study's results reveal that consumer ethnocentrism is a factor that can enhance attachment to local brands, and the entrepreneurship curriculum can be used to enhance this relationship. This can be achieved if HDUs offer stand-alone entrepreneurship qualifications, giving them ample room to alter the content as the market demands. The presence of a sound entrepreneurship ecosystem on campus can assist in delivering an impactful entrepreneurship education

where stand-alone qualifications exist. Given the empirical literature and data findings, the study concludes that consumer ethnocentrism and entrepreneurship education are determinants of brand attachment, and entrepreneurship education fully mediates the indirect association between consumer ethnocentrism and brand attachment.

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Data Availability Statement: Due to privacy concerns, data are available on request.

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