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Domestic Food Purchase Bias: A Cross-Country Case Study of Germany, Italy and Serbia

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Domestic Food Purchase Bias: A Cross-Country Case Study of Germany, Italy and Serbia

Moritz Bosbach^{*}, Ornella Wanda Maietta^{} and Hannah Marquardt^{***}**

Abstract

This work examines several psychological mechanisms that motivate the purchase of domestic food products rather than foreign ones. A purposed-made survey was conducted in Germany, Italy and Serbia to investigate the influence of socio-demographic and national contexts on food consumption patterns. The interdisciplinary approach of the present study yields a comprehensive image of consumer preferences, including different perceptions of food standards and requirements. Food quality evaluation, consumer ethnocentrism, nationalism and openness to other cultures are defined, measured and then used to simultaneously explain the intention to purchase domestic food products. Our findings provide insights in the choices of different consumer groups at country level and show that accounting for individual and country characteristics is key to develop effective marketing and communication strategies as well as policy strategies within and across national boundaries.

Keywords: consumer behavior, food culture, domestic purchase bias, country of origin, consumer ethnocentrism, food quality evaluation

JEL Classification: D12, Z1, Q13, C93

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Table of contents

- 1. Introduction*
- 2. Theoretical Background and Testable Hypotheses*
- 3. Study Design*
- 4. Empirical Setting*
- 5. Measurement*
- 6. Data Collection*
- 7. Analysis*
- 8. Summary and discussion*
- 9. Concluding remarks*
- 10. References*
- 11. Appendix: Item score and scale statistics by country samples*

1. Introduction

In a globalized world, consumers are confronted with a wide range of products and services from which they can choose. Free trade agreements with disappearance of tariff and non-tariff barriers increased the supply of imported products competing with domestic food on national markets.

The product's country-of-origin (COO) became an important cue for international marketing research and has been the subject of studies since almost six decades (Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999; Vida and Dmitrovic *et al.*, 2009). Research findings reveal that COO functions as a product attribute that triggers different psychological processes when forming purchase behaviors (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993; Askegaard and Ger 1998; Fournier *et al.*, 1998). Obermiller and Spangenberg (1989) developed a theoretical framework identifying three types of processes: cognitive, affective and normative. Based on this distinction, the product's COO signals overall quality performance (cognitive process), evokes emotional responses related to the country origin (affective process) and triggers social and personal norms (normative process). This framework is consistent with the majority of the COO literature, and will be used to structure the present study.

Consumers confronted with a variety of products from different origins often express a tendency to prefer their own country's products (Verlegh and Steenkamp; 1999, Verlegh *et al.*, 2007). This "domestic product preference" is mostly referred to as the socio-psychological construct of consumer ethnocentrism (CE) describing the perceived morality of purchasing domestic vs. foreign products (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). The conceptualization of consumer ethnocentrism is based on a form of "protectionism at the consumer level" and "represents the belief that it is inappropriate to buy foreign products, and that consumers should support domestic companies through the purchase of domestic products." (Verlegh 2007, p.362). Verlegh points out that economic concerns are not the only motive to prefer domestic country products over foreign products. Many studies have examined the country of origin of products in relation to national identity, which results in emotional attachment to home country products (Netemeyer, 1991; Klein, 1998, 2002).

Most of the COO literature is concerned with the purchase of durable products, other than food. Much fewer studies have examined the COO of food products in relation to domestic food purchase bias (Eriksson, 2011; Ellison *et al.*, 2010; Knight, 2007; von Alvensleben *et al.*, 1993; Xie *et al.*, 2015). Consumers on the food market are affected by many factors when forming the purchase decision induced by the country of origin information. Beside economic reasons and social affiliations, consumers are particularly concerned with quality-related issues when preferring domestic versus foreign food products (Lusk *et al.*, 2006). The COO labels on food products have the potential to sway perception of quality. In particular, the domestic country indication relates quality to traditional methods of production and induces perceptions of trust and confidence (von Alvensleben *et al.*, 1993).

2. Theoretical Background and Testable Hypotheses

The issue whether consumers are favourably biased towards national and regional *versus* foreign-made products has been examined in many studies. As mentioned in Section 1, the prevailing explanation for the bias against foreign products and in favour of domestic ones is

based on consumer ethnocentrism (CE) (Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999; Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004). Shimp and Sharma (1987) transformed the sociological construct of ethnocentrism into economic ethnocentrism. They developed a multi-item scale to capture consumer ethnocentric tendencies (CETSCALE) and showed that consumer ethnocentrism is an important individual-level construct that allows a better understanding of consumers' preference for domestic over imported products, even when the latter are cheaper and their quality is evidently better (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2001; Vida and Dmitrovic, 2009). Shimp and Sharma (1987) argue that "from the perspective of ethnocentric consumers, purchasing imported products is wrong, because it hurts the domestic economy, causes loss of jobs, and is plainly unpatriotic". According to Phau and Prendergast (2000) consumers are positively biased towards their own countries products when they have a strong sense of patriotism and national pride, the domestic economy is threatened by foreign goods and there is unfamiliarity with foreign products. Consumer nationalism appears to influence the purchase decision both through quality evaluation and through affective factors regarding the purchase itself (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993). Patriots are more likely to see it as a part of their duty to their country to protect its economy and support domestic producers (Han, 1988).

Contrary to nationalism and patriotism, cultural openness is conceptualized as the willingness to interact with people from other cultures and experience some of their artefacts (Sharma *et al.*, 1995). Some studies find a negative relationship between cultural openness and consumer ethnocentrism (e.g. Shimp and Sharma, 1987; Sharma, 1995), while other studies do not find any significant relationship between this construct and consumer ethnocentrism (Balabanis *et al.*, 2001).

In times of globalization and migration, people are concerned about their cultural identity. For decades, European local and regional food traditions risked disappearing. The concept of country of origin, included in the definition of "geographical indication", provides a foundation for identities, diversity, tradition, and authenticity – individual and social, local and national (Almli *et al.*, 2011).

Food can be used as a metaphor for otherness and to affirm cultural superiority. Based on the aphorism "You eat what you are" (Brillat-Savarin, 1825), the obverse of this is that you identify yourself with others by eating the same things in the same way. National culinary identity has to do with geographic boundaries and regional identities (van Ittersum, 1999). Some researchers assume that the identity of a territory or region is more formed by its typical foods than by the language or dialect (Petrini, 2011; Parasecoli, 2005). As Lévi-Strauss pointed out, "Cooking, it has never been sufficiently emphasized, is with language a truly universal form of human activity: if there is no society without a language, nor is there any which does not cook in some manner at least some of its food" (Lévi-Strauss, 1978 in Counihan and von Esterik, 2008:36). Advertisements and public campaigns focus on the threat of losing national identity and try to evoke national sentiments, but also try to evoke feelings of duties consumers have towards their domestic economies (Parasecoli, 2005). Normative reasons to buy domestic food products play a major role in places where local agribusiness is threatened by foreign imports. Local farmers and food companies still provide a sense of independence and alimentary autonomy and hence, "buy domestic" campaigns work really well when addressing food consumption. Thus, it is expected that:

Hypothesis 1a: The more nationalistic and patriotic the individual, the higher his/her consumer ethnocentric tendencies will be.

Hypothesis 1b: The more nationalistic and patriotic the individual, the higher his/her valuation of domestic food quality will be.

Hypothesis 2a: Consumer ethnocentrism is positively related to consumer preference for domestic food products.

Hypothesis 2b: Consumer ethnocentrism is positively related to the valuation of domestic food quality.

The country-of-origin information of food can be an overall indicator for other quality attributes when other information is not available. Mostly, it is quality perceived by the consumer rather than ‘objective’ quality that influences a consumer's decision process (Knight *et al.*, 2007; Sáenz-Navajast *et al.*, 2014). Objective quality is defined by the product's total amount of attributes including its origin, ingredients and all attributes that can be detected by food analysis. Subjective quality is defined by personal quality valuation; hence every consumer has his/her own definition and requirement on quality. Thereby socio- and psycho-demographic factors as well as the cultural and historical contexts of consumers play a role in forming their expectations on product quality issues based on individual needs. The most important food quality attributes are certainly associated with taste and safety including the production processes and usage performance of the product (Bachl, 2011; Ortega *et al.*, 2014). Parrot (2002) made the distinction between northern and southern food cultures, implying that northern food cultures are characterized by ‘efficient’ production, whereas southern food culture, which distinctively perceive food consumption as hedonic (Gomez and Torelli, 2015), strongly refer to ‘terroir’, meaning tradition and artisanal production and associate healthy food with typical and their own region products (Balestrieri and Brunori, 2003). These conclusions are further confirmed by the authors of the EU trust in food study (Kjaernes *et al.*, 2007), who claim that German consumers connect trust in food with feeling secure and confident about a product while Italian consumers connect trust with familiarity. This leads us to two further hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: The perception of food quality depends on culinary cultures and thus differs from country to country.

Hypothesis 3b: Domestic food quality evaluation is positively related to domestic purchase behaviour.

In contrast, the construct of ‘openness to other cultures’ represents the consumer who tends to try new products. They show higher risk tolerance and thus are more trustful against new products:

Hypothesis 4a: Openness to other cultures is negatively related to consumer ethnocentric tendencies.

Hypothesis 4b: Openness to other cultures is negatively related to domestic food quality evaluation.

3. Study Design

The hypotheses stated above imply a set of causal relationships between the variables that contribute to the choice to purchase domestic food products rather than foreign ones. These causal relationships are visually summarized in Figure 1.

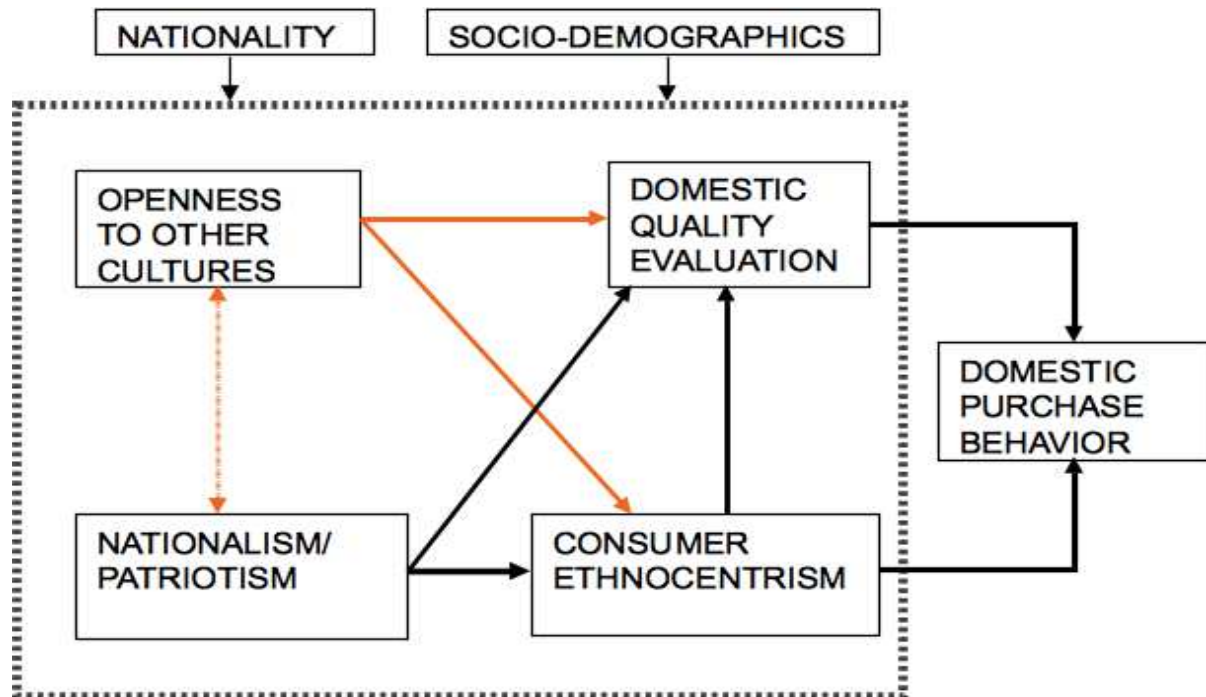


Figure 1. Modelling causal relationships in domestic purchase behavior

As shown by the figure, both Domestic Quality Evaluation and Consumer Ethnocentrism are assumed to have a positive influence on the decision to prefer domestic food products in purchase choices. The construct of Nationalism/Patriotism has an indirect impact on the decision: the relation is mediated by Consumer Ethnocentrism and Domestic Quality Evaluation. Similarly but negatively loaded, is the construct of Openness to Other Cultures: it is assumed to have a negative impact on Consumer Ethnocentrism and Domestic Quality Evaluation and thus a negative indirect influence on the domestic purchase decision. Openness and the Nationalism/Patriotism construct correlate negatively. Distrust correlates negatively with Openness and positively with Nationalism and Patriotism. The relation between Distrust and Domestic Purchase Behavior is mediated by Domestic Quality Evaluation.

The decision-making process to purchase domestic as opposed to foreign food and its motivations depend on consumers' socio-demographics and on the national context they live in. That is, the interdependences of affective, normative and cognitive processing mechanisms are moderated by nationality and socio-demographic variables.

4. Empirical Setting

This study tests the hypotheses presented in Section 2 by drawing on comparative evidence for three quite different countries: Germany, Italy and Serbia. These countries differ not only in history and culture, demographically and economically¹, but to a large extent also in consumer habits. The preference for domestic food products is proven and agreed upon in all significant studies and for all countries, as well as in our own evidence. That this preference may have very different reasons in every country and especially may differ depending on gender, class and age, can be made clear by comparing the three countries in our sample. The concepts discussed in the previous sections play different roles in consumers' choice in the three countries, which can partly be explained by placing the findings in a historical and socio-cultural context.

In Italy, consumers prefer food that they consider as rural, traditional, typical, and above all, familiar. High standards in taste are perceived as very difficult to fulfil for foreign food products. Thus, attributes such as “*tipicità*” and tradition work well in advertisement and marketing strategies, even for products resulting from highly engineered and processed operations. A history of occupation by foreign powers might be another reason for aversion to foreign food products.

Due to many factors, German consumers are more prone to the consumption of foreign food and cuisine than most of their European neighbours. Previous studies show that, when dining out, Germans choose foreign restaurants far more often than Italians and nationals of all other European countries (Frank, 2004). Due to Germany's long history as immigration country, foreign restaurants opened in Germany much earlier and in much greater numbers than in Italy and especially Serbia.

Instead, Serbia is very much at the nation-state-building stage, being a very young nation-state that exists in today's borders only since 2005, and still featuring borders that are challenged by Kosovo's declaration of independence. Therefore in Serbia the role of nationalism and patriotism in the making of a nation needs to be taken into consideration. Also, in recent years, the mainly domestic production and consumption of former Yugoslavia declined constantly and suffered overwhelming competition from a globalised market economy. A regionalisation and ethnic characterization of food habits became part of strong opposition against the elimination of local and regional specificities.

5. Measurement

The latent constructs included in the causal model can be operationalized using a variety of scales. These scales containing four to six manifest (measurable) variables (items) were drawn from the literature and have been shown to be psychometrically sound. All scale items were measured on a five-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

1 Germany has a population of over 81 million and per-capita GDP of US\$ 41,514; Italy has almost 61 million inhabitants and per-capita GDP of US\$ 33,048, while Serbia is the smallest country with 7,1 million inhabitants and per-capita GDP of US\$ 6,081.

Domestic Purchase Behavior. Adopted from previous research, the construct for domestic purchase intention was operationalized using Grazin and Olsen's (1998) scale of consumer helping behavior. The four items have been modified to fit the food product theme and express "purchase behavior in favor of domestic foods in that consumers take the time to identify the domestic origin of either products and brands or retail outlets that stock them" (Dmitrovic and Vida, 2009:5).

- ◆ Mostly, I try to buy Italian/Serbian/German made products.
- ◆ Mostly, I try to buy brands from Italian/Serbian/German companies.
- ◆ I take the time to look on labels so I can buy Italian/Serbian/German food.
- ◆ I shop first at retail stores.

Domestic Quality Evaluation. Domestic food quality evaluation as a cognitive cue is conceptualized as consumer judgments of intrinsic quality attributes of domestic food based on Parameswaran and Pisharodi's general product attributes scale (2002).

- ◆ Italian/Serbian/German food is better.
- ◆ Italian/Serbian/German food satisfies my taste.
- ◆ Italian/Serbian/German food is secure.
- ◆ Good value for the money.

Consumer Ethnocentrism. A reduced and version of the CETSCALE proposed by Shimp and Sharma (1987) was used. Adjusted for food-related issues, consumers express their agreements about beliefs concerning their duty to support their national or domestic economy by rejecting imported food products.

- ◆ Italians/Serbians/Germans should not buy foreign products, because this hurts Italian/Serbian/German business and causes unemployment.
- ◆ Only those products that are unavailable in Italy/Germany/Serbia should be imported.
- ◆ Buy Italian/Serbian/German food products. Keep Italy/Germany/Serbia working.
- ◆ A real Italian/Serbian/German should always buy Italian/Serbian/German - made products.
- ◆ We should purchase products manufactured in Italy/Germany/Serbia instead of letting other countries get rich of us.

Nationalism/Patriotism. Patriotic and nationalistic attitudes are measured using scales from Kosterman and Feshbach (1989) and Sampson and Smith (1957).

- ◆ I love my country.
- ◆ I am proud to be Italian/Serbian/German.
- ◆ The first duty of every young Italian/Serbian/German is to honor the national history and heritage.
- ◆ Foreigners should not be permitted to come into Italy/Germany/Serbia if they compete with our own workers.

Openness to Other Cultures. “Cultural Openness” is based on the cosmopolitan scale by Jane and Etgar (1977) and Cannon (1994).

- ◆ I like to travel to different places.
- ◆ I like to have contact with people from different cultures.
- ◆ I often feel like an “outsider” in my community.
- ◆ I enjoy experimenting with many different kinds of foods.
- ◆ I like immersing myself in different cultural environments.
- ◆ Foreigners often leave me comfortable.

6. Data Collection

The questionnaires were translated by native speakers in the country's language (i.e. Italian, Serbian and German). Items containing national references (i.e. Italian, Serbian and German) were adjusted respectively. A mixed-mode survey method was executed, online and face-to-face interviews. Once the online questionnaire was established, a link to the webpage was distributed via email and social networks. Additionally to the online survey, face-to-face interviews were executed. To reach more potential food consumers, live interviews on daily food market spots and mall intercepts were conducted.

At the start of 2011, interviews were held in bigger cities of Serbia. With the help of native speaking interviewers, 222 Serbian consumers were surveyed. In May 2011, surveys were conducted in Italy. The Italian sample consists of 259 observations and is divided in northern and southern parts. Starting in December 2011, the survey was executed in Germany. The German sample consists of 238 observations and is divided in two geographical parts (e.g. East- and West-Germany).

Table 1. Sample characteristics

	Germany	Italy	Serbia	Total
Sample size	238	259	222	719
Gender %				
Male	39,9	42,5	38,7	
Female	60,1	57,5	61,3	
Age %				
14-34	58	58,7	59,5	
35-90	42	41,3	40,5	
Education %				
Non-graduated	34,9	33,2	47,7	
Graduated	65,1	66,8	52,3	
Income/month %				
Under € 2000	47,1	59,1	36	Under € 300
€2001-3000	21,4	22,0	39,9	€ 301-450
€3001-...	31,5	18,9	24,1	€451-2500

7. Analysis

Table 2 provides descriptive information about the constructs of interest (scale item-split descriptive information can be found in appendix). On average, Italian consumers feature greater domestic food purchase bias than Germans and Serbs. The domestic quality is also more highly valued in Italy than in both Germany and Serbia. Notable are the low measurement results for consumer ethnocentrism and patriotism in Germany in contrast to those in Serbia and Italy. All three countries feature high and similar sample means for openness to other cultures. Interestingly, Serbian consumers feature the highest means for both nationalism and openness.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

	ITALY N=259		SERBIA N=222		GERMANY N=238	
	Mean	Std. Dev. ^a	Mean	Std. Dev. ^a	Mean	Std. Dev. ^a
Domestic Purchase Behaviour ¹ (4 items)	14,71	3,314	11,28	3,872	12,55	3,554
Domestic Quality Evaluation ² (4 items)	15,15	2,880	13,20	3,719	12,08	3,431
Consumer Ethnocentrism ³ (5 items)	14,49	5,860	15,05	6,155	10,02	4,496
Nationalism/Patriotism ⁴ (4 items)	12,98	4,006	12,54	4,474	9,12	4,106
Openness to Other Cultures ⁵ (5 items)	21,93	3,363	22,95	2,791	22,32	2,878

^a standard deviation

¹ scores on this scale range from 4 to 20

² scores on this scale range from 4 to 20

³ scores on this scale range from 5 to 25

⁴ scores on this scale range from 4 to 20

⁵ scores on this scale range from 5 to 25

Rather than contrasting the three countries in terms of patriotism, openness and other socio-psychological variables, this study aims to examine the interplay and interdependence

of affective, normative and cognitive processes, hence to test the hypothesized model depicted in Figure 1. Hence, structural equation modeling (SEM) is used (scale item-split descriptive information can be found in appendix). To test the score's internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha reliability measures and item-to-total correlations are obtained. Validity measure purifications were tested using confirmatory factor analysis. After adjusting the Openness construct by eliminating one misfitting item, all scales reveal acceptable reliability and validity measures.

The hypothesized model was evaluated separately for each of the three countries investigated. All global fit index values are in adequate ranges. The ratio χ^2/df ranges from 1,6 to 1,8; the RMSEA revealed acceptable fit ranging from 0,052 to 0,055 and the comparative fit index (CFI) ranges from 0,937 to 0,942.

7.1. Italy

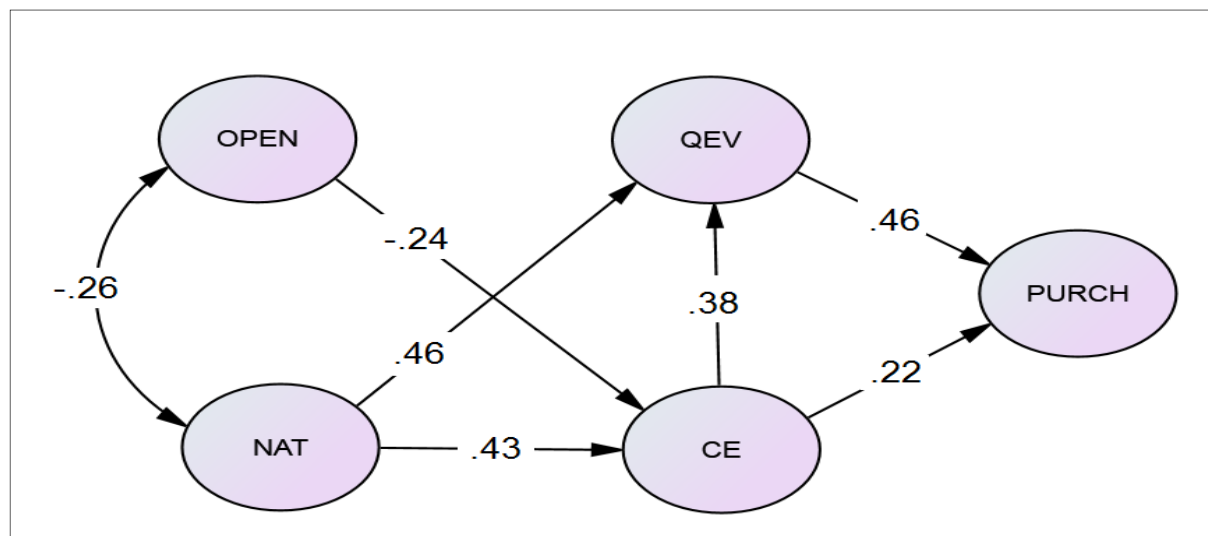


Figure 2. Italian Sample Estimates

SEM results for the Italian sample show the regression weights of the maximum likelihood estimation, indicating the strength and directions of relations between constructs. Values ranging from zero to one, whereas only those standardized estimates with significant impact (≥ 0.2 and $p \leq 0.05$), are depicted in the causal models.

As illustrated by Figure 2, when purchasing domestic food products, Italian consumers are motivated by both their valuation of domestic food quality (QEV) and their belief in the moral duty to support the domestic food economy (CE). The influence of CE on the domestic purchase bias (PURCH) is much smaller compared to the influence of QEV, but is still significant. The impact of CE on PURCH is higher when mediated by QEV. Also mediated by QEV is the indirect influence of nationalistic and patriotic attitudes (NAT) on the purchase decision in favor of domestic food. Both affective dimensions, openness to other cultures

(OPEN) and NAT, have impacts on CE.

Open consumers show less ethnocentric tendencies, whereas neither negative nor positive influences are measured for OPEN on QEV. The openness construct correlates negatively with NAT, i.e. open consumers show less nationalistic/patriotic tendencies and vice versa. Albeit Italian consumers are slightly motivated by consumer ethnocentrism, the main direct motive for a domestic preference is based on the quality evaluation.

7.2. Serbia

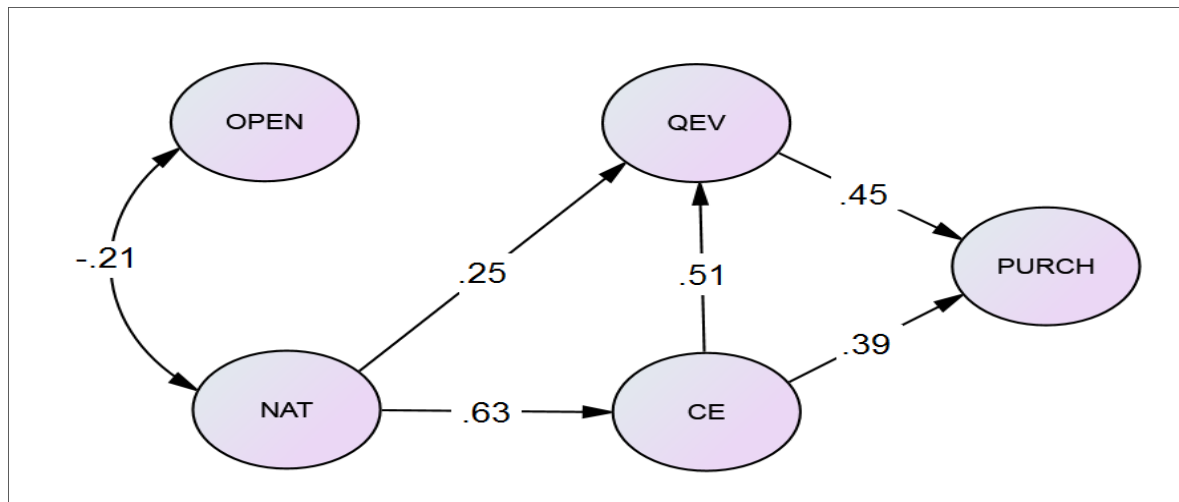


Figure 3. Serbian Sample Estimates

In the Serbian sample, as shown by Figure 3, consumers are motivated by quality issues to buy domestic food. But they also prefer domestic food regardless of the quality, directly out of the moral belief in supporting the domestic food economy (CE). This belief has also a positive impact on the QEV, and hence mediates the indirect influence of CE on the domestic purchase intention. Nationalism/patriotism has a strong positive impact on the CE, whereas CE is a mediator of the influence between NAT and PURCH. Open attitudes have no negative impact on neither CE nor on QEV. In the Serbian sample, being more open and ethnocentric at the same time seems to be no contradiction.

7.3. Germany

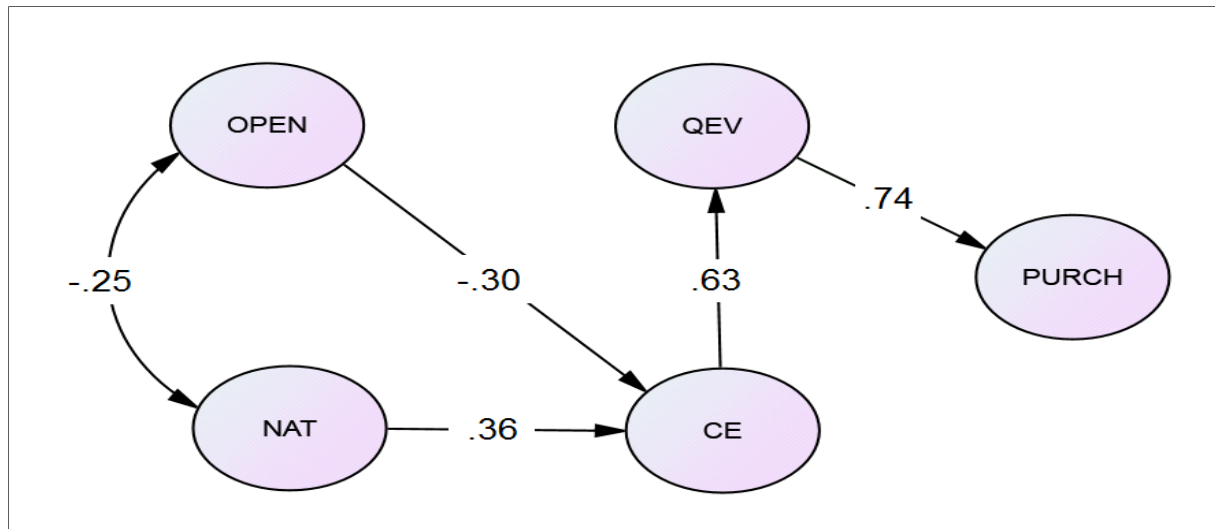


Figure 4. German Sample Estimates

As shown by Figure 4, German consumers prefer their national food due to quality issues. CE has a strong indirect impact on the purchase decision for domestic food, but is mediated by the QEV. NAT attitude has a substantial impact on CE and correlates negatively with the openness construct. More open consumers show less consumer ethnocentric tendencies, hence OPEN is a negative antecedent of CE. The affective constructs (NAT and OPEN) have no positive or negative impact on the quality valuation of German food. The relation with a domestic behavior is mediated by both CE and QEV, and hence is of lower priority than it appears to be the case in Italy and Serbia.

7.4. Food Quality Evaluation

Food quality is the dominant motivation for purchasing domestic food. All three samples show, regardless of the underlying processing mechanism and influences, a significant impact of QEV on PURCH. This fact stresses the importance to examine perceptions of quality and its national differences. The scale items measuring the latent variable QEV consist of different statements regarding food quality attributes:

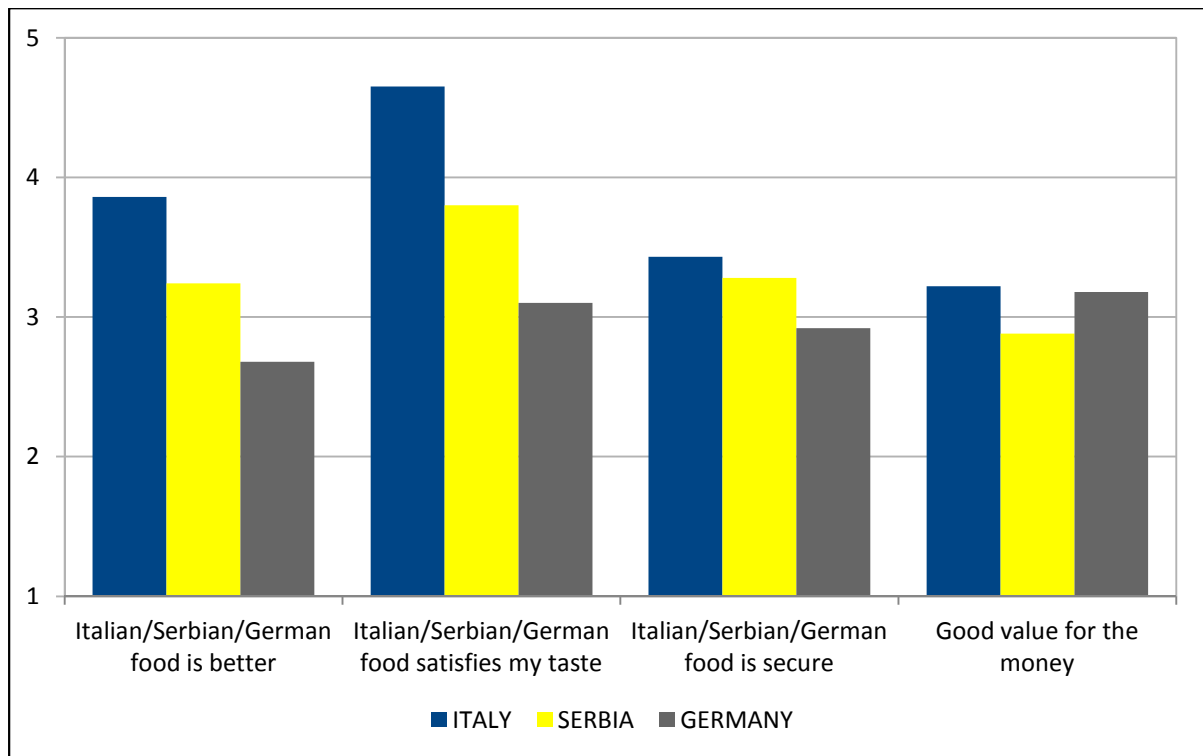


Figure 5. Domestic Quality Evaluation

Italian consumers rate their national food the highest, being especially convinced by the taste attributes. Serbian consumers also like their national food due to taste attributes, but show a higher price sensitivity. German food quality evaluations (scale mean 12.80) compared to Italy (scale mean 15.15) and Serbia (scale mean 13.20) reveal the lowest scores. In relation to other quality items, Germans like their food out of the value for the money, value involving taste parameters as well.

Depending on several socio-demographic variables in national contexts, the study aims to emphasize the diversity of consumer behavior patterns. Controlled for gender, age, income and education differences, results reveal different structural models for every socio-demographic sub-group connected to the three country samples. Regional differences were captured for Italy and Germany.

8. Summary and discussion

Table 3 summarizes the results of this study. It shows clearly that motivations for domestic food purchase intention differ across consumer groups with different characteristics.

Table 3. Summary of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Italy	Serbia	Germany
H 1a: The more nationalistic and patriotic the individual, the higher his/her consumer ethnocentric tendencies will be.	Supported for all sub-groups	Supported for all sub-groups	Supported for all sub-groups
H 1b: The more nationalistic and patriotic the individual, the higher his/her domestic food quality evaluation will be.	Supported for all sub-groups	Supported for higher income and older consumers	Not supported
H 2a: Consumer ethnocentrism is positively related to consumer preferences for domestic food products.	Supported for Southern, over 35y., higher income	Supported for all sub-groups	Not supported
H 2b: Consumer ethnocentrism is positively related to domestic food quality evaluation.	Supported for all sub-groups	Supported for all sub-groups	Supported for all sub-groups
H 3a: The perception of food quality depends on culinary cultures and thus differs from country to country.	Supported for all sub-groups	Supported for all sub-groups	Supported for all sub-groups
H 3b: Domestic food quality evaluation is positively related to domestic purchase behaviour.	Supported for all sub-groups	Supported for all sub-groups	Supported for all sub-groups
H 4a: Openness to other cultures is negatively related to consumer ethnocentric tendencies.	Supported except for graduated women	Not supported	Supported for female, younger, non-graduated
H 4b: Openness to other cultures is negatively related to domestic food quality evaluation.	Not supported	Not supported	Not supported

The forming of product preferences based on the country of origin is determined by the culture-historical and socio-psychological contexts the consumers are living in. The consumer's individual processing mechanisms determine the emotional attachment to his/her own country, moral beliefs and expected utility requirements, which affect purchasing domestic food products. The countries chosen to examine these processing mechanisms offer

diversified research settings where individual food consumptions reflect national culinary cultures and their underlying sociological and psychological factors. As described earlier, each country features unique characteristics of consumers which lead to distinct motivations for purchase intentions. Results from the structural equation modeling (SEM) illustrate that motivations regarding food quality and consumer ethnocentrism for domestic food purchase are not following a single explanatory model but change across consumer groups depending on their respective social environments. The country of origin (COO) label is used as an informational cue to predict the quality of a product. But preferences for domestic products, identifiable by the COO label as well, are commonly explained by the normative construct of consumer ethnocentrism (e.g., Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). The results of this work demonstrate that food is a more complex product category than others formerly researched in other studies. This can be explained by the deeper psychological processes at work as antecedents for the commonly accepted motivations to buy domestic.

According to the findings, the level of consumer ethnocentrism reflected in consumer preference patterns has the largest impact for Serbian consumers. This is not surprising, since consumer ethnocentrism appears to be positively influenced by nationalistic tendencies. These results mirror previous research (e.g., Balabanis and Diamtopoulos, 2001; Vida and Dmitrovic, 2009) by demonstrating that the more nationalistic an individual consumer is, the higher his/her ethnocentric tendencies are. In all countries and social classes it appeared that ethnocentrism leads to higher valuations of domestic food quality and thus indirectly to domestic purchase intentions. In the Serbian data sample, the perceived duty to support the local food producers, heightened by nationalistic feelings, seems to be an even stronger motivation to buy domestic food than quality issues. In Serbia, along all gender, generation and social classes, CE is directly influencing the purchase decision, although this effect changes in strength. Nationalist and patriotic feelings in Serbia are both a reason for and a result of the recent history, the building of a sovereign nation-state that includes the reconstruction of a national identity. Food and what is constructed as “Ours” and “Theirs” plays an important role. Food serves as a positive identification marker, which is a similarity with Italy. Likewise, a stronger consumer ethnocentric impact on the food purchase decision prevails for South Italian consumers. The moral duty to support domestic food producers is a strong motivation for consumers whose networks of groups one belongs to are important social aspects. Uncertainties are stronger in societies where public policies tend to fail and members of the society rely more on social networks along group norms and traditional behavior than on guidance from public authorities. Hence, a sense of loyalty to one’s in-group triggers consumer ethnocentric tendencies, which mirrors the results in the study. Together with Serbian consumers, Southern Italians of the older generation with higher income are directly influenced by CE in their purchase decision process and thus express CE as an important motivation for the domestic food bias. In contrast, in Northern Italy and Germany, CE has no direct influence on the purchase decision for domestic food, but indirectly through quality valuation.

Cognitive valuations trigger the domestic food preference. Albeit German consumers express high sensitivity to quality issues when purchasing domestic food, for them the value-for-the-money of food still is the most important product attribute. This implies that the price of products remains the crucial argument for German foods. Italian consumers prefer Italian food products out of its taste in the first place. Quality attributes related to taste are the most important assets of typical domestic food. At the same time, a habitual purchase decision

in favor of typical, traditional food products is the best strategy to avoid perceived risks related to food safety and other quality attributes. Italian consumers show that the cognitive process of domestic quality evaluations is positively influenced by nationalistic and patriotic antecedents. Also for Serbian consumers, the cognitive cue of the domestic food origin seems to be influenced by affective antecedents, especially for wealthier and older consumers. The rational choice based on informational processes is strongly biased by emotional processes based on the attachment to the one's own country. Both in Serbia, and even to a greater extent in Italy, one of the most important aspects is the "*tipicità*" and the traditional ways of producing which enhance a quality evaluation.

Depending on the target group, the openness construct appears to be of varying importance when examining motivations for domestic food preferences. The degree of 'openness', fostered by travelling and experiences with foreigners, is assumed to lessen motivations for domestic food preferences. In Italy, mainly male consumer with no graduate education seem to be more influenced by experiences they had in the past with other (culinary) cultures. Also in Germany, young consumers with no graduate education are more affected by their degree of openness and express lower scores for CE. In the Serbian sample, instead, openness to other cultures barely diminishes the domestic purchase intention; hence, being open and ethnocentric at the same time seems to be no contradiction in this sample.

9. Concluding remarks

In times of globalization and multilateral free trade agreements, "buy domestic" campaigns are used as a non-tariff barrier to support the national food sector. Agricultural authorities inducing those campaigns try to evoke a sense of moral duty among consumers and thus hope to influence consumer behavior in favor of national food companies, without implementing import tariffs or other restrictions for foreign marketers. The findings of the present study provide insights on consumer preferences, which become relevant when developing campaigns addressing consumers' normative beliefs. Depending on the consumer group, the causal relations between cognitive, normative and affective processing mechanisms indicate primal motivations and incentives for a domestic purchase of food, so that mottos and theme for communication and promotion strategies can be adjusted to touch consumers' incentives and hence be more effective.

For international marketers, the foreign country-of-origin of food products can, depending on the target group of consumers and product category, possibly turn into a competition barrier. In Serbia, consumer ethnocentrism is a strong influence factor when purchasing domestic food. Regarding the target group of consumers, collaboration with local food players might be a successful marketing opportunity to veil the foreign origin and to suggest selling a national food product. For national food marketers, depending on the food category and target group, patriotic themes and product images can be used to activate patriotic and consumer ethnocentric attitudes. In Italy, above all, originality and tradition are important food product features which suggest good quality should be considered in marketing strategies. Especially in Italy it seems a precondition for successful foreign food products to meet sensorial standards of food in order to be competitive on the national food market. German consumers appear to be less motivated to buy domestic food out of affective and normative reasons. They prefer German food mostly out of quality reasons. But especially

in Germany, other motivations and reasons to buy domestic food products might be more relevant than those motives under study. In future research, depending on the country setting, other latent constructs describing the influence of ecological motivations should be included in the theoretical framework.

10. References

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11. Appendix: Item score and scale statistics by country samples

DOMESTIC PURCHASE INTENTION	ITALY		SERBIA		GERMANY	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
(d01_01) Mostly, I try to buy Italian/Serbian/German - made products.	4,10	,962	3,39	1,131	3,10	1,134
(d01_02) Mostly, I try to buy brands from Italian/Serbian/German companies.	3,94	,938	3,10	1,345	2,97	1,253
(d01_03) I take the time to look on labels so I can buy Italian/Serbian/German food.	3,53	1,258	2,48	1,461	3,59	1,343
(d01_04) I shop first at retail stores.	3,14	1,352	2,31	1,321	2,89	1,198
Scale Statistics	14,71	3,314	11,28	3,872	12,55	3,554
DOMESTIC QUALITY EVALUATION						
(d01_01) Italian/Serbian/German food is better.	3,86	1,134	3,24	1,259	3,18	1,009
(d01_02) Italian/Serbian/German food satisfies my taste requirements.	4,65	,673	3,80	1,066	2,97	1,138
(d01_03) Italian/Serbian/German food is secure.	3,43	1,014	3,28	1,143	3,14	1,068
(d01_04) Good value for the money.	3,22	1,045	2,88	1,269	2,18	1,171
Scale Statistics	15,15	2,880	13,20	3,719	12,08	3,431
CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM						
(d01_01) Italians/Serbians/Germans should not buy foreign products, because this hurts Italian/Serbian/German business and causes unemployment.	2,86	1,435	2,81	1,475	2,82	1,475
(d01_02) Only those products that are unavailable in Italy/Germany/Serbia should be imported.	3,26	1,473	3,33	1,488	2,26	1,309
(d01_03) Buy Italian/Serbian/German food products. Keep Italy/Germany/Serbia working.	3,39	1,296	3,65	1,326	1,36	0,844

(d01_04) A real Italian/Serbian/German should always buy Italian/Serbian/German - made products.	2,43	1,405	2,29	1,500	1,40	0,845
(d01_05) We should purchase products manufactured in Italy/Germany/Serbia instead of letting other countries get rich of us.	2,56	1,441	2,97	1,526	4,15	0,998
Scale Statistics	14,49	5,860	15,05	6,155	10,02	4,496
<i>NATIONALISM/PATRIOTISM</i>						
(d01_01) I love my country.	3,98	1,164	3,95	1,217	2,49	1,383
(d01_02) I am proud to be Italian/Serbian/German.	3,60	1,347	3,36	1,506	2,51	1,352
(d01_03) The first duty of every young Italian/Serbian/German is to honor the national history and heritage.	3,59	1,399	3,27	1,522	1,40	0,903
(d01_04) Foreigners should not be permitted to come into Italy/Germany/Serbia if they compete with our own workers.	1,82	1,261	1,95	1,356	4,66	0,693
Scale Statistics	12,98	4,006	12,54	4,474	9,12	4,106
<i>OPENNESS TO OTHER CULTURES</i>						
(d01_01) I like to travel to different places.	4,56	0,825	4,75	0,684	4,66	0,693
(d01_02) I like to have contact with people from different cultures.	4,64	0,781	4,82	0,566	4,66	0,666
(d01_03) I enjoy experimenting with many different kinds of foods.	4,18	1,099	4,49	0,906	4,53	0,845
(d01_04) I like immersing myself in different cultural environments.	4,12	1,097	4,67	0,696	4,16	0,792
(d01_05) Foreigners often leave me comfortable	4,43	1,066	4,22	1,081	4,30	1,165
Scale Statistics	21,93	3,363	22,95	2,791	22,32	2,878