Understanding the Chinese Consumption Culture: Brand Image, Ethnic Centrism, National Identity, and Consumption Behaviour

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Abstract

In the digital age, there is a growing fascination with China's consumer culture, specifically in relation to locally made beauty products. This trend underscores the significant market opportunities within this industry. This research aims to explore the complex interplay between brand image, consumer ethnocentrism, and national identity and their impact on consumer decision-making in the Chinese domestic beauty industry. Employing purposive sampling, the study collected data from 533 respondents who have experience in buying Chinese domestic beauty products. An online questionnaire was distributed through WeChat and QQ. Through the use of structural equation modelling, it has been found that brand image has a significant impact on consumer ethnocentrism and national identity, leading to changes in consumption patterns. Consumer ethnocentrism and national identity were found to play a role in linking brand image to consumer behaviour. This study emphasises the importance of combining brand strategies with socio-cultural trends to improve consumer engagement and loyalty in the Chinese marketplace.

Keywords: China's Consumer Culture, Domestic Beauty Products, Market Potential, Consumer Behaviour, Brand Strategy.

Introduction

The development of cosmetic products has become a significant subject of interest among young people in today's society (Ando et al., 2021). Parallel to economic progress, the beauty industry has witnessed remarkable expansion (Souza et al., 2020).

This growth trajectory is demonstrated by the success of European, American, Japanese, and Korean beauty conglomerates. These companies have achieved remarkable results through careful brand development and strategic marketing, establishing a near-monopolistic dominance in the industry (Souza et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the burgeoning evolution of China's beauty industry. Recent trends have seen Chinese domestic brands, such as Huaxizi and Perfect Diary, eclipsing traditional European and American giants like Dior, YSL, and L'Oréal in the Chinese market. Significantly, in the 2022 Tmall e-commerce cosmetics arena, three indigenous Chinese brands were among the top ten, marking a notable shift.

Despite the progress made, Chinese domestic beauty brands face significant obstacles in terms of market size and competitiveness compared to international competitors. Therefore, it is crucial to analyse the way consumers in China perceive domestically produced cosmetics (Kang et al., 2020). This analysis plays a crucial role in predicting consumer trends, understanding market patterns, grasping the revival of the national economy, and developing marketing strategies for local brands.

Recently, China's domestic beauty sector has seen a notable trend of incorporating traditional Chinese elements, as highlighted by Irawan et al. (2020). This fusion extends beyond product design, permeating brand marketing and corporate ethos. Several local brands have incorporated traditional Chinese cultural motifs into their products, blending ancient aesthetics with modern techniques (Ni et al., 2023). This collaboration not only caters to local preferences but also gives Chinese cosmetics a distinct competitive advantage in the domestic market.

While consumer behaviour differs among nations, and European research has emphasised the impact of cultural identity, ethnocentrism, national image, brand perception, and national identity on the consumption of domestic products (Nguyen et al., 2021; Prince et al., 2020; Wilkins et al., 2019). Nevertheless, there is still a lack of research on how these factors influence consumer behaviour towards products that incorporate Chinese cultural elements, like domestic cosmetics.

Research has shown that patriotism, ethnocentrism, and cosmopolitanism have a significant impact on the success of domestic products (Shi et al., 2021). However, the field of studying consumption behaviour for beauty products is still in its early stages, despite its fascinating consumer cultures and historical narratives. It is crucial to note that there is still a lack of research on the influence of Chinese cultural factors on the consumption of beauty products.

This study seeks to: 1) examine the relationship between brand image and consumption behaviour of domestic cosmetics in China; 2) explore the connection between ethnocentrism, national identity, and consumption behaviour of domestic cosmetics in China. 3) The study aims to develop a model for understanding the consumption behaviour of domestic cosmetics in China with the intention of providing strategic insights for the growth of the domestic cosmetic market.

To achieve these objectives, the study will employ quantitative research methodologies, gathering data via surveys and employing statistical analysis for data interpretation. Furthermore, sophisticated structural equation modelling (SEM) techniques will be employed to clarify the relationships among different variables.

This segment provides a thorough literature review, carefully analysing various important topics. It covers the development and current status of Chinese domestic beauty brands, the complex concept of brand image, the different aspects of ethnocentrism, the intricacies of national identity, and the detailed patterns of consumption behaviour related to Chinese domestic beauty brands. The third section provides an overview of the method. Additionally, we present a comprehensive overview of the research findings. The study concludes with a thorough examination and analysis of the entire text in the final section.

Literature Review

Theoretical Basis: Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides a foundational framework for understanding how individuals' self-concepts are influenced by their membership in

different social groups, such as national or ethnic communities (Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015). SIT proposes that individuals perceive themselves and others as belonging to different social groups, leading to the formation of in-group identities and out-group differences. In the field of consumer behaviour, understanding the relationships between ethnocentrism, national identity, brand image, and consumer actions is of utmost importance (He et al., 2015).

From a scholarly perspective, ethnocentrism, influenced by SIT, can be seen as the tendency to perceive one's own group (in this instance, the nation) as the primary point of reference and to evaluate other groups and their achievements based on this perspective. This viewpoint frequently results in an inclination towards domestic products and brands, as they are seen as belonging to the in-group. National identity, a crucial component of social identity, further strengthens this bias by linking consumers' product choices with their patriotic emotions (Carvalho et al., 2019).

When considering brand image, it is important to understand that it goes beyond just the product's features. It also represents a sense of national identity and pride (Agmeka et al., 2019). Consumers' preferences or dislikes for specific brand images can be seen as a reflection of their social identity and the biases that come with being part of a particular group (Kremer et al., 2012).

This theoretical framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interaction among these variables. This research delves into the reasons behind consumers' preference for domestic brands and how this choice is reflected in their perception of brand image. As a result, Social Identity Theory provides a strong framework for examining consumer behaviour, especially in situations where national identity and ethnocentrism play a significant role in shaping consumer preferences.

Chinese Domestic Cosmetic Products (CDCP)

CDPC products are skincare, makeup, and personal care items that are created, produced, and promoted mainly in China. These products often highlight traditional Chinese ingredients and cultural themes, catering to the preferences and requirements

of Chinese consumers (Irawan et al., 2020). China's digital media industries are making significant efforts to expand into international markets. It is worth noting that Chinese products, including beauty items, are primarily targeted towards domestic consumers and the Chinese diaspora (Su et al., 2020). The current research landscape showcases a diverse approach to studying Chinese domestic beauty products (Cheng et al., 2020). Kim et al. (2020) examined the crisis in K-beauty and emphasised the importance of customising beauty products to meet the specific demands of the Chinese market. This highlights the significance of localised cosmetics in addressing regional needs. These studies provide a comprehensive perspective on the production, environmental impact, and consumer behaviour aspects of the Chinese beauty industry.

Although there is a wide range of existing research, there are still significant gaps and areas that require further investigation. The direct relationship between brand image, ethnic centrism, national identity, and consumption behaviour specific to Chinese domestic beauty products has received limited attention. Peng et al. (2021) examine the level of domestic technology content in Chinese manufacturing. While Wen (2021) offers valuable insights, it does not comprehensively address the intricate relationship between cultural identity and consumer preferences in the beauty industry. Further research is required to gain a deeper understanding of how Chinese consumers' national identity and ethnic centrism impact their preferences and purchasing behaviours when it comes to domestic beauty brands. This particular area has not been extensively studied in the existing literature.

Hypothesis Statement

In the context of SIT, there is a strong connection between brand image and ethnocentrism, as highlighted by Zeugner-Roth et al. (2015). An optimistic and robust brand image, especially one that resonates with the cultural values and identity of an ethnic group, has the potential to strengthen a consumer's sense of ethnic identity (Harrison et al., 2019). According to Dixon et al. (2021), individuals are more inclined to develop a preference for a brand when they perceive it as reflecting the qualities or values of their own ethnic group. This preference is influenced by the brand's capacity

to connect with their ethnic identity and cultural pride. Essentially, the perception of a brand can strongly influence consumers, reinforcing their connection to their cultural heritage and identity and leading them to prefer products that align with these aspects Beverland et al. (2021).

The perception and choices of consumers are greatly influenced by the brand image. (Li et al., 2021). In their study, Le et al. (2019) examined tourist preferences in ethnic fine dining and highlighted the impact of a unique brand image on the appeal of ethnic-themed experiences. In a recent study, Liu et al. (2019) shed light on the impact of vlogger-endorsed brands on consumer attitudes. These studies highlight the significance of a robust and favourable brand image in connecting with an individual's ethnic identity, strengthening their sense of cultural importance. Hence, this study posits:

H1: Brand image positively affects the Ethnic Centrism

Understanding national identity is a multifaceted concept that involves the shared sense of belonging and identity among the members of a nation (Harell et al., 2022). It is based on common cultural, historical, linguistic, and sometimes racial or ethnic traits. The concept of national identity extends beyond individual identification and is manifested in the shared consciousness and societal customs of a country's inhabitants. It encompasses a range of elements such as values, traditions, symbols, and beliefs that serve to differentiate one nation from another (Carvalho et al., 2019). The collective identity is of utmost importance in shaping the self-perception of individuals within a nation and their connection to the global community.

Brand image, encompassing the perceptions and beliefs consumers have about a brand, can profoundly impact national identity (Jin et al., 2019). Brand image of private labels can impact perceptions related to national brands, affecting loyalty and perceived quality (Pérez-Santamaría et al., 2019). This suggests that the way a brand is perceived can influence how national products are viewed, thereby influencing national identity. Jin et al. (2019) found that elements like brand association and brand attitude positively impact brand self-identification, indicating that a brand that effectively incorporates elements of national identity can strengthen consumers'

association with the brand as part of their national identity. Bartikowski et al. (2021) found that nationalistic appeals and nation branding initiatives can strengthen national identity and consumer ethnocentrism. Li et al. (2021) demonstrate that a robust brand image has a positive impact on brand identity, trust, and consumer behaviour towards national brands. The study by Iglesias et al. (2019) emphasises the importance of a strong brand image in shaping national identity. It suggests that a positive perception of national brands can contribute to the overall perception and value of national identity. Hence, this research proposes:

H2: Brand Image positively affects the National Identity.

CDCPs are a distinct subset of the global beauty industry that emphasises catering to the specific demands and tastes of local consumers. Typically, China develops, manufactures, and markets these products, emphasizing traditional Chinese ingredients and cultural themes. Ouyang et al. (2021) emphasise the increasing consumer awareness and knowledge gaps regarding certain products, such as cheese in China, which indicates changing consumer preferences. Liu (2022) examines the significance of national brand consciousness and consumer brand affectionate bonds in relation to Chinese medicine. The study highlights the distinctive characteristics of CDCP that appeal to the specific preferences and values of Chinese consumers.

The influence of brand image on consumer behaviour towards culturally diverse consumer products (CDCP) has been emphasised (He et al., 2014). Osakwe (2019) highlighted the significance of brand image in conjunction with price, quality, and convenience. Mishra et al. (2020) examined the impact of doppelganger brand images on consumer behaviour, specifically focusing on the influence of brand reputation and consumer perception on purchasing decisions. Kim et al. (2020) conducted a study on the relationship between brand image and corporate social responsibility (CSR) consumption. They found that brand image has a multifaceted impact on purchasing behaviour. The changing dynamics in the beauty industry are reflected in the emerging trends in consumer behaviour towards CDCP. Barbarossa et al. (2016) highlight the increasing significance of green and eco-friendly products, suggesting a change in consumer preferences towards more sustainable and

environmentally responsible options. The studies indicate that consumer behaviour towards CDCP is influenced by both traditional factors like brand image and product quality, as well as newer dimensions such as sustainability and social responsibility. Hence, this study proposed:

H3: Brand Image positively affects Consumption Behaviour towards the CDCP.

Ethnic centrism, the preference for products from one's own ethnic or national group, greatly influences consumption behaviour, particularly in markets such as China where cultural and national identity are of utmost importance. Zeugner-Roth et al. (2015) emphasise the importance of sellers enhancing product cognition to increase consumers' interest and behaviour in cross-border e-commerce. They note that purchasing decisions in these settings can be influenced by ethnic centrist attitudes. Kozinets et al. (2010) found that social media forums, ratings, and reviews have a significant impact on Chinese consumers' attitudes towards products, including organic food. This suggests that platforms that align with ethnic and cultural norms can influence impulse buying behaviours.

Wang et al. (2020) examined the impact of information on remanufactured products on the intentions of Chinese consumers. Their findings indicate that knowledge and cultural perceptions play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards these products. Zhang et al. (2020) examined the influence of personal norms on green consumption and emphasised the role of cultural and ethnic values in shaping purchasing choices. The studies highlight the impact of ethnic centrism on attitudes, preferences, and consumption behaviour in the Chinese market.

Overall, ethnic centrism has a positive impact on consumer behaviour towards CDCP. Cultural and national identity are significant factors in shaping consumer preferences and purchasing decisions. Therefore, this study posits:

H4. Ethnic Centrism positively affects Consumption Behaviour towards the CDCP

Rupprecht et al. (2020) examined the preferences of Chinese consumers for cheese products. They observed a growing awareness of the product but also recognised cognitive limitations, suggesting the impact of national dietary habits and preferences.

The study conducted by Yue et al. (2020) observed a change in behaviour that was influenced by national economic strategies and environmental consciousness.

The influence of national identity on consumption behaviour is evident in the context of socio-demographic identity and lifestyle choices (Khare, 2015). In their study, Yoo et al. (2020) highlighted the significance of considering socio-demographic identity when formulating policies in response to the direct rebound effects and wealth inequality associated with travel. Fong et al. (2021) examined the role of social identity signalling in service internationalisation, specifically focusing on the impact of national and cultural symbolism on consumer perceptions and behaviours in the service sector.

National identity has a significant impact on both immediate consumption choices and broader behavioural intentions, as well as ecological awareness (Yoon et al., 2016). Lin et al. (2022) found that national identity and social norms have a significant impact on ecological intentions and behaviour. Huang et al. (2022) noted a change in the behaviour of Chinese consumers regarding smart home products and organic foods, indicating a shift from impulsive to rational decision-making. This change reflects an increasing national consciousness regarding sustainability and health. National identity has a significant influence on consumer decision-making processes, impacting various consumption patterns, including product choices, lifestyle, and health-related behaviours. Hence, this study posits:

H5. National identity has a positive impact on consumption behaviour towards culturally diverse consumer products (CDCP).

Pandey et al. (2023) investigated the factors influencing the discrepancy between consumers' ethical consumption attitudes and behaviours. The study emphasised that price, quality, taste, and brand image are influential factors in consumers' ethical considerations regarding society and the environment. Elbarky et al. (2023) examined purchasing intentions and highlighted the influence of brand image on consumer behaviour towards eco-friendly products. Mishra et al. (2020) investigated the influence of doppelganger brand images (DBIs) on consumer behaviour, specifically examining the impact of negative brand perceptions on consumer choices.

Abdul-Latif et al. (2022) examined the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on the consumption of products and services from ethnic minorities. Their findings suggest that ethnocentric attitudes have a significant influence on purchasing decisions. Sousa et al. (2019) examined how country image mediates the relationship between cosmopolitanism and purchase intentions. The study's findings indicate that ethnocentrism has a moderating effect on these relationships.

Studies examining consumer preferences in specific contexts provide further evidence of the relationship between ethnic centrism, brand image, and consumption behaviour. According to Lee et al. (2019), the country image has a significant impact on the perception of product-country image among consumers from coloured ethnic groups. However, it does not have any influence on their intention to purchase Korean products. Yang et al. (2020) examined the influence of cultural and ethnic preferences on Chinese consumers' recycling behaviours by introducing consumer goods with varying attributes. Hence, this research assumes that:

H6. Ethnocentrism serves as a mediator in the relationship between brand image and consumption behavior towards culturally diverse consumer products.

According to Roth (1995), there is a positive relationship between brand image and consumer behaviour. Hollebeek et al. (2019) argue that brand image alone may not lead to consumer consumption without aligning with national identity. Khan et al. (2019) examined how identity-based consumer perceptions impact brand avoidance, with a specific focus on foreign brands. Fong et al. (2021) developed a social identity signalling model to examine the impact of national and cultural symbolism on consumer attitudes and behaviours in the context of service internationalisation, specifically in situations involving hostility towards a particular country. The impact of national identity on brand effectiveness varies depending on the degree of alignment between the brand and national or cultural values. Rahman et al. (2020) examined the behaviour of Chinese consumers in relation to various product types. They found that consumer choices are influenced by how these products align with the national context and consumer lifestyles.

The relationship between brand image, national identity, and consumption

behaviour is demonstrated in the discourse on image-architecture relationships and brand identity construction (Albdour et al., 2022). de Jong et al. (2022) have contributed to the field of architecture by further exploring the connections between brand image, identity, and national and cultural symbolism. Therefore, this study posits:

H7. National Identity mediates the association between Brand Image and Consumption Behaviour towards culturally diverse consumer products (CDCP).
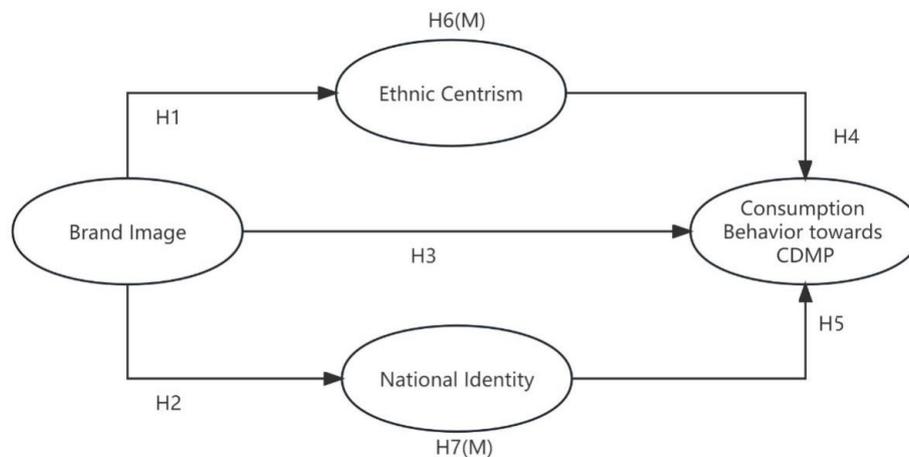

Figure 1: Empirical Model of the Consumption Behaviour of CDCP.

Method

This study collected data from 533 consumers who have experience using domestic cosmetic products through an online survey. The online questionnaire was distributed through popular Chinese social media platforms, WeChat and QQ. Table 1 reveals that the study included 533 participants with diverse demographics and experiences. A total of 280 participants identified as female, while 253 identified as male. Out of these, 280 participants identified as female, and 253 identified as male. Concerning age distribution, 137 participants<20 years old, 122 were 20 -30 years old, 97 were between 30-40 years old, 33 were between 40 -50 years old, and 144>50 years old. Geographically, 420 participants were from urban areas, while 113 resided in rural areas. A total of 330 participants had international exposure, while 203 participants did not. The distribution of participants within China revealed 120 from the eastern region, 110 from the western region, 112 from the southern region, and 191 from the northern region. A total of 92 participants had less than a bachelor's degree, 127 held a bachelor's degree, 230 had a master's degree, and 84 possessed a doctorate

degree. In terms of the purpose of purchasing domestic cosmetics, 328 individuals bought the products for personal use, 37 for others, and 168 as gifts.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Participants in the Study on Chinese Domestic Beauty Brands Consumption.

Demographic	Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	280	52.5
	Male	253	47.5
Age	Under 20 years	137	25.7
	20-30 years	122	22.9
	30-40 years	97	18.2
	40-50 years	33	6.2
	Over 50 years	144	27
Geographic Location	Urban	420	78.8
	Rural	113	21.2
International Experience	Have been abroad	330	61.9
	Have not been abroad	203	38.1
Regional Origin (China)	Eastern	120	22.5
	Western	110	20.6
	Southern	112	21
	Northern	191	35.8
Education Level	Less than Bachelor	92	17.3
	Bachelor	127	23.8
	Master	230	43.2
	Doctorate	84	15.8
Purpose of Purchase	For personal use	328	61.5
	For others	37	6.9
	As gifts	168	31.5

The study employed a 5-point Likert scale and consisted of five sections. The initial section of the study collected fundamental demographic data from participants, including gender, age, family income, region, and education level. The following section focused on evaluating brand image using 10 questions adapted from Kremer et al. (2012). The study included an evaluation of consumer ethnocentrism using 5 items and national identity using 4 items. The measurements for these constructs were adapted from Nguyen et al. (2021). The last segment of the study examined consumption behaviour by including five items from Agmeka et al. (2019).

After the data was collected, it was analysed extensively using specialised data analysis software. The analysis included descriptive analysis, reliability and validity

testing, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modelling (SEM). The main goal of these analytical procedures was to develop a behavioural model of consumption for China's domestic beauty cosmetics. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of consumption culture and the key factors influencing consumer behaviour in the domestic beauty cosmetics market in China.

Results

Reliability Analysis

Table 2 displays the reliability analysis of the constructs utilised in the study. Reliability, as measured by Cronbach's α, assesses the internal consistency of items within each construct. The values range from 0 to 1, with a commonly accepted threshold of 0.7 for research purposes. The constructs examined in this study are Brand Image (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.884, 10 items), Consumer Ethnocentrism (0.85, 5 items), National Identity (0.91, 4 items), and Consumption Behaviour (0.865, 5 items). The Cronbach's α coefficient for the entire questionnaire is 0.923, indicating a high level of internal consistency across the 24 items.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis of Constructs in the Study on Consumer Behaviour towards Chinese Domestic Beauty Brands.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Brand image	0.884	10
Consumer Ethnocentrism	0.85	5
National identity	0.91	4
Consumption behaviour	0.865	5
	0.923	24

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 3 summarises the CFA model fit indices for the original measurement model in the study. The commonly accepted threshold values for a satisfactory model fit are as follows: $\chi2/df < 3$, RMSEA < 0.08, and GFI, AGFI, NFI, IFI, TLI, CFI > 0.9 (Hu et al., 1999). The findings show that the $\chi2/df$ is 3.484, RMSEA is 0.068, GFI is 0.889, AGFI is 0.865, NFI is 0.886, IFI is 0.916, TLI is 0.906, and CFI is 0.916. The results indicate that the model generally fits well, as most indices meet the recommended

standards. However, the GFI and AGFI fall slightly below the threshold.

The analysis of convergent validity and reliability indicated that the alpha reliability for the constructs ranged from 0.850 to 0.910, and the Composite Reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.851 to 0.913, which aligns with accepted standards. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for brand image was 0.464, which did not meet the desired threshold of 0.5. The model fit indices, including $\chi2/df$, GFI, AGFI, and NFI, did not meet the desired benchmarks. The Modification Indices (MI) revealed higher values for residuals e1, e6, e7, e10, as well as for the latent variables corresponding to items BI1, BI6, BI7, and BI10. In order to improve the fit of the model, the items with low factor loadings were excluded.

Table 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model Fit.

	χ2/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Standard	<3	<0.08	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9
Result	3.484	0.068	0.889	0.865	0.886	0.916	0.906	0.916

Table 4 displays the reliability and convergent validity analysis of the constructs examined in the study, namely Brand Image, Consumer Ethnocentrism, National Identity, and Consumption Behaviour. The table presents factor loadings, Cronbach's α, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each item in the constructs. Acceptable thresholds for these measures are typically considered as follows: factor loadings > 0.5, Cronbach's α > 0.7, CR > 0.7, and AVE > 0.5 (Collier, 2020).

The analysis of Tables 3 and Table 4 shows that the alpha reliability for the constructs is within the range of 0.850 to 0.910, which is considered commendable. The Composite Reliability (CR) values also meet the established standard, ranging from 0.851 to 0.913. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for Brand Image is 0.464, which is below the desired threshold of 0.5. The examination of fit indices reveals that the $\chi2/df$, GFI, AGFI, and NFI do not meet the required standards. Table 5 shows that the residuals e1, e6, e7, and e10, which correspond to the items BI1, BI6, BI7, and BI10, have high MI values. Moreover, these items exhibit low factor loadings. Therefore, it is suggested that these four items be eliminated in order to improve the model's fit.

Table 4: Convergent Validity Analysis of Original Constructs.

Variable	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Brand image	BI1	0.571	0.884	0.891	0.464
	BI2	0.883			
	BI3	0.679			
	BI4	0.747			
	BI5	0.713			
	BI6	0.429			
	BI7	0.415			
	BI8	0.717			
	BI9	0.876			
	BI10	0.603			
Consumer Ethnocentrism	CE1	0.708	0.850	0.851	0.533
	CE2	0.785			
	CE3	0.689			
	CE4	0.740			
	CE5	0.725			
National Identity	NI1	0.901	0.910	0.913	0.725
	NI2	0.808			
	NI3	0.941			
	NI4	0.743			
Consumption behavior	CB1	0.679	0.865	0.873	0.582
	CB2	0.713			
	CB3	0.679			
	CB4	0.870			
	CB5	0.850			

Table 5: Modification Indices.

			M.I.	Par Change
e6	<-->	e7	107.555	0.703
e7	<-->	Consumption behavior	53.359	0.304
e10	<-->	e14	34.4	0.305
e10	<-->	Consumer Ethnocentrism	28.807	0.237
e10	<-->	National Identity	23.072	0.249
e1	<-->	Consumer Ethnocentrism	22.109	0.216
e1	<-->	Consumption behaviour	20.477	0.182

The fit indices of the CFA have improved noticeably after removing specific items. Table 6 presents the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) conducted on the revised model. The fit indices have improved significantly and now meet established standards. The χ2/df ratio is 2.292 (<3), indicating a good fit. The RMSEA value is 0.049 (<0.08), also indicating a good fit. Additionally, the GFI, AGFI, NFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI values are all above 0.9, specifically 0.934, 0.915, 0.942,

0.966, 0.961, and 0.966, respectively. The findings indicate that the revised model effectively captures the data and relationships among the constructs, demonstrating a robust model fit (Hu et al., 1999).

Table 6: CFA Model Fit for the Revised Model.

	χ2/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Standard	<3	<0.08	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9
Result	2.292	0.049	0.934	0.915	0.942	0.966	0.961	0.966

Table 7 presents the reliability and convergent validity metrics for the revised scales of Brand Image, Consumer Ethnocentrism, National Identity, and Consumption Behaviour. The revised Brand Image construct shows enhanced Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.605, as well as satisfactory factor loadings (>0.5), Cronbach's α (>0.7), and CR (>0.7) values. The constructs of Consumer Ethnocentrism, National Identity, and Consumption Behaviour demonstrate strong reliability and convergent validity, meeting the established thresholds for these metrics (Collier, 2020).

Table 7: Reliability and Convergent Validity for the Revised Scales.

Variable	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Brand image	BI2	0.890	0.897	0.910	0.605
	BI3	0.681			
	BI4	0.754			
	BI5	0.719			
	BI8	0.722			
	BI9	0.877			
Consumer Ethnocentrism	CE1	0.709	0.850	0.851	0.533
	CE2	0.786			
	CE3	0.689			
	CE4	0.739			
	CE5	0.726			
National Identity	NI1	0.901	0.910	0.913	0.725
	NI2	0.808			
	NI3	0.941			
	NI4	0.743			
Consumption behavior	CB1	0.679	0.865	0.873	0.582
	CB2	0.713			
	CB3	0.678			
	CB4	0.870			
	CB5	0.850			

Table 8 presents the results of the discriminant validity assessment for the constructs of Brand Image, Consumer Ethnocentrism, National Identity, and Consumption Behaviour. Discriminant validity is established when the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct (diagonal values) is greater than the correlations between constructs (off-diagonal values). The values in Table 8 confirm discriminant validity among the constructs (Hu et al., 1999; Prince et al., 2020).

Table 8: Discriminant Validity Among Study Constructs.

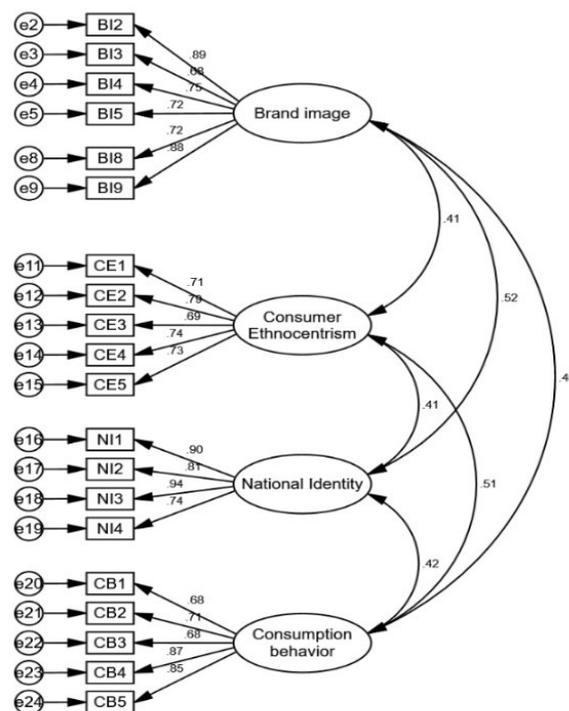| Variable	1	2	3	8
Brand image	0.778			
Consumer Ethnocentrism	0.415	0.730		
National Identity	0.520	0.414	0.851	
Consumption behavior	0.449	0.509	0.425	**0.763**
Note: The diagonal is the square root of the AVE				

Figure 1: Measurement Model Diagram.

Figure 1 illustrates the CFA model that explains the connections between Brand Image, Consumer Ethnocentrism, National Identity, and Consumption

Behaviour. The figure displays the standardised factor loadings for each item. The connections between constructs represent proposed relationships, along with their corresponding path coefficients. The factor loadings indicate the extent to which each item effectively represents its corresponding underlying construct. The model incorporates correlations between constructs, which are crucial for comprehending the interdependencies within the model. This representation facilitates the visualisation of the underlying structure proposed by the research hypotheses. Typically, factor loadings of 0.7 or higher are considered acceptable reference values. Additionally, path coefficients should be statistically significant in order to support a correlation relationship (Collier, 2020).

Structural Equation Model (SEM)

The SEM depicted in Figure 2 was constructed using AMOS 24.0 to test the research hypotheses. The SEM consists of four latent variables, twenty observed variables, and twenty-three error terms representing the residuals. This configuration allows for the examination of the hypothesised relationships between Brand Image, Consumer Ethnocentrism, National Identity, and Consumption Behaviour in a comprehensive framework. This facilitates a detailed analysis of the proposed theoretical structure.
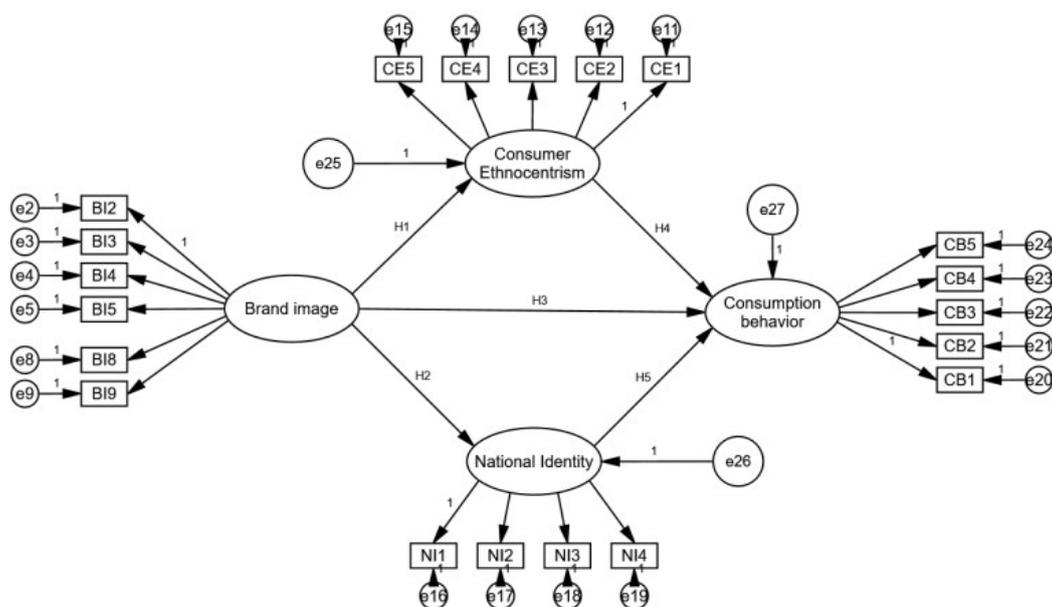

Figure 2: Structural Equation Model of Consumer Behavior Constructs in Chinese Consumption Culture.

The SEM in Figure 2 analyses the interrelationships between Brand Image, Consumer Ethnocentrism, National Identity, and Consumption Behaviour. The model defines four latent constructs, each assessed by multiple observed variables, while also accounting for the error terms related to these assessments. The direct effects are numbered from H1 to H5. The model's complexity, with twenty observed variables and twenty-three error terms, facilitates a thorough examination of the interplay between constructs, enabling a rigorous evaluation of the proposed theoretical relationships.

Table 9 presents the fit indices for the SEM. The results suggest that the model fits the data well, as indicated by a χ2/df of 2.434, RMSEA of 0.052, and all other indices exceeding 0.9. This confirms that the model meets the established standards for a suitable fit (Hu et al., 1999; Wang et al., 2023).

Table 9. Fit Indices for the Structural Equation Model (SEM).

	χ2/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Standard	<3	<0.08	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9
Result	2.434	0.052	0.929	0.910	0.938	0.963	0.957	0.962

Path Analysis

Table 10 presents a summary of the path test results of the structural equation model. It provides statistical evidence supporting the hypothesised relationships within the 95% confidence interval. This evidence is indicated by critical ratios (C.R.) greater than 1.96 and p-values less than 0.05. More specifically, a stronger brand image leads to increased consumer ethnocentrism (β = 0.426, $p < 0.001$), national identity (β = 0.528, $p < 0.001$), and consumption behaviour (β = 0.211, $p < 0.001$). In addition, it is worth noting that consumer ethnocentrism has a significant impact on consumption behaviour (β = 0.351, $p < 0.001$), just as national identity does (β = 0.184, $p < 0.001$). Emphasising the significance of brand perception on consumer attitudes and behaviours (Diao et al., 2023).

The study evaluated the mediation effects using the Bootstrapping method with 5000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval. Bias-Corrected estimation in

AMOS was utilised for this purpose. A mediation effect is considered significant when the confidence interval does not include zero. The mediation path "Brand Image → Consumer Ethnocentrism → Consumption Behaviour" resulted in a 95% confidence interval of [0.104, 0.203], which does not include zero. This suggests that consumer ethnocentrism plays a mediating role, with an effect value of 0.150. Furthermore, the mediation of "Brand Image → National Identity → Consumption Behaviour" was found to be statistically significant, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.043, 0.162] and an effect value of 0.097, which also excludes zero. The results confirm the important role that consumer ethnocentrism and national identity play in mediating the relationship between brand image and consumption behaviour.

Table 10: Structural Equation Model Path Test Result.

	Path	Estimate	Std Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Results
H1	Brand image→Consumer Ethnocentrism	0.370	0.426	0.043	8.580	***	Supported
H2	Brand image→National Identity	0.576	0.528	0.047	12.157	***	Supported
H3	Brand image→Consumption behavior	0.165	0.211	0.043	3.829	***	Supported
H4	Consumer Ethnocentrism→Consumption behavior	0.314	0.351	0.048	6.602	***	Supported
H5	National Identity→Consumption behavior	0.131	0.184	0.035	3.697	***	Supported

Table 11: Mediation Effect Test Results.

	Path	Effect	S.E.	Bias-Corrected 95%CI	
H6	BI→CE→CB	0.150	0.025	0.104	0.203
H7	BI→NI→CB	0.097	0.030	0.043	0.162

The study employed structural equation modelling and bootstrapping to assess the associations between brand image, consumer ethnocentrism, national identity, and consumption behavior. The results demonstrated strong model fit indices, with significant positive impacts observed in key paths: brand image on consumer ethnocentrism and national identity, and both constructs on consumption behaviour. Consumer ethnocentrism and national identity were found to strongly mediate the relationship between brand image and consumption behaviour, providing support for

hypotheses H6 and H7. The reliability and validity tests confirmed the robustness of the scales, ensuring accurate representation of the constructs. The data highlight the significant impact of brand perception and socio-cultural factors on consumer behaviour in the Chinese domestic beauty market.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study employed an online questionnaire to collect 533 valid responses from individuals with prior experience in purchasing Chinese domestic beauty products. The study utilised structural equation modelling to reveal the significant positive impact of brand image on consumer ethnocentrism and national identity, which in turn had a significant influence on consumption behaviour. Consumer ethnocentrism and national identity were found to be important factors that mediate the relationship between brand image and consumption behaviour. This highlights the complex interaction between cultural factors, brand perception, and consumer behaviour in the Chinese beauty product market.

Theoretical Implication

The positioning of brands as H1 and H2 reflects social categorization, indicating that brands hold symbolic value for consumers' social identity, impacting their ethnocentrism and national identity, respectively. H3 suggests that brand image, as a component of social identity, has a direct impact on consumption behaviour. This implies that consumers' brand preferences are influenced by their social self-concept. H4 and H5 propose that consumer ethnocentrism and national identity, which are elements of social identity, mediate the connection between brand image and consumption behaviour. This highlights the importance of in-group favouritism and national pride as drivers of purchasing choices.

This research examines consumer behaviour culture within the context of Chinese domestic beauty brands. The results are consistent with Zeugner-Roth et al. (2015), highlighting the impact of brand image on consumer ethnocentrism (H1) and national identity (H2). The significant mediation effect observed in H6 and H7 aligns

with the findings of Abdul-Latif et al. (2022) and Agmeka et al. (2019), emphasising the intricate relationship between cultural identity and consumer behaviour. This study expands on previous research by examining unique dynamics within the Chinese market, specifically the role of national identity and consumer ethnocentrism as mediators between brand image and consumption behaviour. This aspect has received limited attention in existing literature. This contributes to academic discourse by providing a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural factors that influence consumer decisions in a particular cultural context.

Practical Implication

Considering the measurement items for all variables and the hypothesis verification results of H1-H7, the recommendations for stakeholders in the Chinese domestic beauty industry are as follows:

Brands should prioritise attributes that align with consumer ethnocentrism (H1) and national identity (H2) to enhance their brand image. This can be achieved by highlighting national heritage or cultural relevance in their branding strategies. To enhance brand image for Chinese domestic beauty brands, a targeted approach is required for the retained scale items. The alignment of emphasising environmental responsibility (BI2) and consumer rights advocacy (BI3) with modern consumer values enhances brand appeal. Brands should prioritise the cultivation of customer relationships (BI4) by implementing customised marketing strategies and providing personalised experiences. By ensuring product accessibility (BI5) and maintaining a diverse product range (BI6), the brand can better cater to the diverse needs of consumers, thereby strengthening its market position. The commitment to high product quality (BI7) and a positive in-store experience (BI8) are essential for strengthening a positive brand image. The combination of these efforts with regular promotional activities (BI9) can establish a comprehensive brand image that aligns with changing consumer preferences and cultural values. This, in turn, enhances consumer loyalty and market position.

Consumer ethnocentrism has been found to impact consumption behaviour. Therefore, brands should adapt their marketing strategies to target national pride by

emphasising the quality and distinctiveness of domestic products. To exploit consumer ethnocentrism in the Chinese domestic beauty market, brands should align their strategies with the patriotic sentiments of consumers. The scale items pertaining to consumer ethnocentrism (CE1-CE5) indicate an inclination towards domestic products, based on national pride and economic patriotism. Brands should emphasise their 'made in China' identity in marketing communications, highlighting the quality and innovation of domestic products. Customising advertising to highlight the connection between choosing domestic brands and supporting local industry and national economic well-being can strongly appeal to ethnocentric consumers. This can lead to increased brand loyalty and a preference for domestic products over foreign alternatives.

We recommend that brands undertake initiatives to strengthen national solidarity and pride, given the significant impact of national identity on consumption behaviour (H5). This Supporting local communities or causes can achieve this. egically aligning with scale items indicative of national identity (NI1-NI4) can help cultivate national identity within the Chinese domestic beauty industry. These items promote a strong sense of Chinese identity and pride. Brands can incorporate cultural symbols and narratives into their branding and marketing strategies to connect with the shared identity of their consumers. Campaigns that promote national achievements, heritage, and values can strengthen the connection between consumers and brands by fostering a stronger emotional bond. Brands can enhance consumer loyalty and preference for domestic products by incorporating elements of national identity into their products and communications. This fosters a sense of shared identity in a market that values cultural affinity.

Marketing strategies should be developed to enhance consumer ethnocentrism (H6) and national identity (H7) as mediators in the relationship between brand image and consumption behaviour. This will foster a stronger connection between brand image and purchase decisions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the significant impact of brand image on predicting consumer ethnocentrism, national identity, and consumption behaviour in the

Chinese domestic beauty market. The study used an online questionnaire to collect 533 valid samples. The findings confirmed that brand image has a significant positive effect on both consumer ethnocentrism and national identity. Furthermore, these factors were found to significantly influence consumption behaviour. The mediation analyses showed that consumer ethnocentrism and national identity play important roles in mediating the relationship between brand image and consumption behaviour. This highlights the intricate relationship between cultural identity, brand perception, and consumer decision-making.

The study, although thorough, had some limitations. The sample was limited to consumers who have purchased Chinese domestic beauty products, potentially limiting its representativeness of the wider consumer population. Theoretical frameworks, such as Social Identity Theory, could be enhanced by incorporating other theories to achieve a more comprehensive understanding. The study's geographical focus was limited to China, which restricts its generalizability to other cultural contexts. The research focused on a specific product within the beauty industry and relied exclusively on self-reported data. However, it would be beneficial to supplement this methodology with other qualitative or observational methods.

Future research should aim to increase the sample's diversity by including a broader range of demographics and consumer experiences. Incorporating additional relevant theories into the theoretical base could offer further insights into consumer behaviour. Replicating this study in various cultural contexts would improve its generalizability from a geographical perspective. Additionally, investigating different product categories can offer a more comprehensive insight into the dynamics of consumer behaviour. The integration of qualitative research methods or observational studies can provide more comprehensive insights and enhance the validity of findings obtained from self-reported data.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets presented are not readily available due to considerations of collaborators' interests, privacy issues, and the confidentiality of some data. However,

individual scholars or experts interested in accessing these datasets for academic references or other purposes are welcome to request them. Requests to access these datasets should be directed to email: jiang.song@rmutr.ac.th

Author Contributions

All authors have read S.J and K.N: conceptualization, writing, original draft preparation, methodology, formal analysis, and writing, review and editing. and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted without any commercial or financial relationships that could be perceived as potential conflicts of interest.

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