

Exploring Consumer Preferences for Indian-Made Products: A Study on Economic Nationalist and Protectionist Attitudes in Surat

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Abstract:

Consumer preferences for domestic products over imports have garnered increasing attention amidst the rise of economic nationalism and global market dynamics. This study investigates the attitudes of Indian consumers toward Indian-made products and their perspectives on foreign goods, focusing on demographic influences such as education, gender, profession, and income. A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed online, collecting 295 valid responses for analysis. The findings reveal a strong overall preference for Indian-made products, underscoring the role of cultural and economic factors in shaping consumer behavior. Education emerged as a significant factor, influencing nuanced perspectives on protectionist policies like import taxation and restrictions on foreign goods. Respondents with higher education levels demonstrated stronger support for such measures, reflecting a deeper understanding of their economic implications. On the other hand, certain beliefs, such as the preference for Indian products to support local industries and promote self-reliance, were consistent across all demographic groups, suggesting shared cultural narratives. This research highlights the potential for targeted educational campaigns to further enhance support for domestic products and foster economic self-reliance. The study contributes to the broader discourse on consumer behavior and economic nationalism, offering valuable insights for policymakers and marketers seeking to align strategies with consumer preferences in a globalized economy.

Introduction:

Consumer behavior is a complex and multifaceted domain that plays a pivotal role in shaping market dynamics and economic trends. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on understanding consumer preferences for domestic products over imports, particularly in the context of economic nationalism. This phenomenon is driven by a combination of factors, including national pride, the desire to support local industries, and the belief that buying locally contributes to economic self-reliance and job creation.

India, with its rich history of movements advocating for self-reliance, such as the Swadeshi movement, presents a unique case for studying consumer preferences. The contemporary emphasis on "Vocal for Local" and campaigns promoting Indian-made products further underscores the relevance of examining how these preferences manifest in consumer behavior. As globalization continues to introduce diverse choices in the market, understanding the factors that influence consumer decisions becomes crucial for policymakers, businesses, and marketers aiming to promote domestic industries.

This study aims to explore the attitudes and preferences of Indian consumers toward Indian-made products and their perspectives on imported goods. By analyzing these preferences across various demographic groups, the research seeks to uncover the underlying motivations and barriers that drive consumer choices. The study employs a structured questionnaire distributed online to collect responses, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of these attitudes. Through this research, we aim to contribute to the existing body of literature on economic nationalism and consumer behavior, offering insights into how national identity, economic considerations, and cultural factors intersect in shaping purchasing decisions. The findings are expected to inform strategies for promoting domestic products and fostering sustainable economic growth.

Review of Literature:

The preference for domestic products over imports among Indian consumers has been a subject of extensive research, particularly in the context of economic nationalism and consumer behavior. Recent studies have provided valuable insights into this phenomenon, highlighting the interplay between consumer ethnocentrism, national identity, and purchasing decisions.

Consumer ethnocentrism refers to the belief that purchasing domestic products is morally appropriate, while buying foreign-made goods is considered inappropriate. Shimp and Sharma (1987) introduced the concept, emphasizing that highly ethnocentric consumers are inclined to prefer domestic products and may even disapprove of others purchasing foreign goods. This concept has been instrumental in understanding consumer behavior in various cultural contexts. In the Indian context, research by Bandyopadhyay and Muhammad (1999) examined the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on preferences for domestic versus foreign products. Their study revealed that Indian consumers with high ethnocentric tendencies exhibited a strong preference for domestic products, driven by a sense of national pride and the perception that supporting local industries contributes to the country's economic development.

Economic nationalism emphasizes the importance of domestic control over the economy, advocating for the prioritization of local goods and services. In India, this ideology has deep historical roots, notably in the Swadeshi movement, which encouraged the boycott of foreign goods in favor of Indian-made products. This movement has significantly influenced contemporary consumer behavior, fostering a preference for domestic products as an expression of national identity and economic patriotism.

Recent studies have explored the resurgence of economic nationalism in India, particularly in response to globalization and economic liberalization. Nayar (2001) analyzed the limits of economic nationalism in India during the late 1990s, highlighting the challenges and

contradictions faced by the government in balancing nationalist economic policies with the pressures of globalization. This analysis provides a historical perspective on the evolution of economic nationalism in India and its impact on consumer behavior.

Globalization has introduced a plethora of foreign products into the Indian market, challenging traditional consumer preferences. However, studies indicate that Indian consumers continue to exhibit a strong preference for domestic products. A report by the Boston Consulting Group (2019) found that 50% of Indian consumers prefer Indian brands over international ones in at least one category, with the trend being most pronounced in food products. This preference is attributed to factors such as cultural affinity, perceived quality, and the desire to support the local economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further influenced consumer behavior in India, reinforcing the preference for locally made products. Dasgupta (2023) observed that the pandemic heightened health and hygiene concerns, leading consumers to favor products that promote personal safety and well-being. Additionally, there has been a shift towards supporting local businesses and products, driven by a renewed sense of community and economic self-reliance.

Despite the preference for domestic products, consumers often face challenges in distinguishing between Indian and imported goods. A study by Mintel (2022) reported that nearly one-third of Indian consumers find it difficult to differentiate between domestic and foreign products, as many global brands manufacture locally, and domestic brands compete in premium segments. This blurring of lines necessitates clear labeling and marketing strategies to help consumers make informed choices aligned with their preferences.

Consumer Preferences and Economic Nationalism Studies have shown that consumer preferences are often swayed by economic nationalism, where local products are favored due to perceived economic and social benefits. This trend is strengthened by sentiments of national pride and the belief in supporting local economies, which can influence purchasing behaviors significantly (Nielsen, 2023).

Global Trends in Consumer Behavior Globally, there is a growing preference for domestic products across various industries. This trend is partly driven by the perceived quality and sustainability of local products compared to imports. For instance, in the food industry, consumers show a pronounced preference for local brands, which they associate with freshness and lower environmental impact (Ingredion, 2024).

Impact of Globalization and Consumer ethnocentrism While globalization has increased the availability of imported goods, there is a noticeable trend of consumer ethnocentrism where local products are favored even when foreign alternatives might offer superior quality. This

paradoxical behavior underscores the complex interplay between consumer identity and global market dynamics (Forest Products Journal, 2023).

Socio-Demographic Factors Influencing Preferences Research indicates that socio-demographic factors such as age, family size, and occupation play crucial roles in shaping preferences for domestic versus imported products. Older consumers and those with larger family sizes tend to prefer domestic products, reflecting broader life-stage and economic considerations (Forest Products Journal, 2023).

The Role of Marketing and Advertising Marketing strategies significantly affect consumer preferences. Effective advertising can shift consumer attitudes towards both domestic and imported goods. Campaigns that highlight the quality, tradition, or innovation associated with local products can enhance consumer preference for these items (Nielsen, 2023).

Research Methodology:

The present study aimed to investigate the attitudes of individuals toward supporting Indian-made products and restricting foreign goods. The research was conducted using a quantitative survey method, wherein a structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to collect responses. The questionnaire was meticulously designed to capture various dimensions of economic patriotism, protectionism, and cultural beliefs related to consumer behavior. It included statements reflecting attitudes toward Indian-made products, the impact of foreign goods, and preferences for protectionist measures such as import limitations and taxation. The responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The questionnaire was created using Google Forms for ease of distribution and accessibility.

The survey was conducted among individuals known to the researchers and through various online modes, including email, social media platforms, and messaging applications. This ensured a diverse pool of respondents across different demographic backgrounds, such as education, profession, and income levels. The use of online distribution methods facilitated the efficient collection of responses while maintaining a geographically dispersed sample. A total of 295 responses were collected for the study. These responses were screened and verified for completeness and consistency, ensuring the quality of the data. The sample included participants from varied educational, professional, and income backgrounds, providing a broad spectrum of perspectives on the research topic.

The collected data was analyzed using statistical tools to identify patterns and significant differences in attitudes across demographic groups. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the responses, while one-way ANOVA was used to examine the influence of

education on various statements. The significance levels were evaluated to determine whether the differences in responses were statistically meaningful. The methodology adopted in this study provides a robust framework for understanding consumer attitudes toward economic nationalism. By leveraging a well-structured questionnaire and online data collection methods, the research ensures both the reliability and validity of the findings, offering valuable insights into the behavioral patterns of Indian consumers.

Result:

The results of this study provide a detailed analysis of the attitudes of respondents toward supporting Indian-made products and restricting foreign goods, focusing on the influence of demographic factors such as education, gender, profession, and income. A variety of statements reflecting economic patriotism, protectionism, and cultural beliefs were analyzed to identify patterns and differences among groups. Using statistical tools such as ANOVA, the study highlights significant variations in attitudes based on respondents' educational backgrounds, while also revealing consistent trends across other demographic variables.

Demographic Details	Indian people should always buy Indian made products instead of imports.						Sig.
	Variable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Gender	Male	69	17	7	0	99	0.28
	Female	32	15	4	0	52	
Education	SSC	2	2	0	0	4	0.18
	HSC	17	4	1	2	24	
	Graduation	50	15	8	1	74	
	Post Graduation	32	9	2	4	47	
	Other	0	2	0	0	2	
Profession	Students	25	9	3	3	40	0.78
	Business	23	4	1	0	28	
	Homemaker	4	3	0	0	7	
	Private Job	33	10	5	2	50	
	Government Job	16	6	2	2	26	
Monthly Income	Below 30000	40	13	8	0	4	0.68
	30000 - 40000	17	4	0	0	0	
	40000 - 50000	24	7	1	0	2	
	50000 - 60000	9	4	0	0	0	
	Above 60000	11	4	2	0	1	

TABLE 1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 shows the responses to the statement, "Indian people should always buy Indian-made products instead of imports," across various demographic variables, including gender, education, profession, and monthly income. The findings revealed some interesting patterns in attitudes toward prioritizing Indian-made products.

In terms of gender, males demonstrated a mixed response, with a notable proportion (69 respondents) strongly agreeing, while an equally significant number (99 respondents) strongly disagreed. Females showed a similar trend, with 32 strongly agreeing and 52 strongly disagreeing. However, the p-value (0.283) suggests no statistically significant difference between males and females in their support for Indian-made products.

When examining education levels, respondents with Graduation and Post-Graduation qualifications expressed stronger support, with 50 and 32 individuals, respectively, strongly agreeing with the statement. Lower education levels, such as SSC and HSC, displayed more mixed responses, with some agreement and a small amount of disagreement. Despite this variation, the p-value (0.183) indicates that education does not significantly influence the preference for Indian-made products.

Professionally, private jobholders (33 strongly agree) and students (25 strongly agree) showed higher levels of support for Indian-made products. Respondents from government jobs and homemakers demonstrated moderate agreement, with fewer respondents strongly disagreeing across these groups. However, the p-value (0.781) confirms no significant differences in attitudes based on profession.

Income-wise, individuals earning below ₹30,000 showed the highest level of strong agreement (40 respondents), suggesting that lower-income groups may prioritize Indian-made products due to economic or patriotic reasons. Higher-income groups, such as those earning above ₹50,000, also showed support, but the overall trend was less pronounced. The p-value (0.683) indicates that monthly income does not significantly impact opinions regarding the preference for Indian-made products.

The analysis highlights a general inclination toward supporting Indian-made products across demographic groups. However, the lack of statistically significant differences across gender, education, profession, and income suggests that the preference for Indian-made goods is a broadly shared sentiment, not confined to any subgroup. These findings underscore the potential for nationwide campaigns promoting Indian-made products, leveraging this shared nationalistic perspective.

TABLE 2 ANOVA (EDUCATION OF THE RESPONDENTS AS THE FACTOR)
ANOVA (Education of the Respondents as the Factor)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Indian people should always buy Indian made	Between Groups	1.085	4	.271	.278	.892
	Within Groups	142.386	146	.975		

products instead of imports.	Total	143.470	150			
Only those products that are unavailable in India should be Imported.	Between Groups	3.012	4	.753	.820	.514
	Within Groups	133.982	146	.918		
	Total	136.993	150			
Buy Indian-made products, Keep India working.	Between Groups	9.474	4	2.369	3.538	.009
	Within Groups	97.744	146	.669		
	Total	107.219	150			
Indian products first, last and foremost.	Between Groups	2.959	4	.740	.596	.666
	Within Groups	181.239	146	1.241		
	Total	184.199	150			
Purchasing foreign made products is un - Indian.	Between Groups	9.128	4	2.282	1.239	.297
	Within Groups	268.819	146	1.841		
	Total	277.947	150			
It is not right to purchase foreign products because it puts Indians out of jobs.	Between Groups	.875	4	.219	.141	.967
	Within Groups	226.304	146	1.550		
	Total	227.179	150			
A real Indian should always buy Indian-made products.	Between Groups	4.329	4	1.082	.804	.524
	Within Groups	196.505	146	1.346		
	Total	200.834	150			
We should purchase products manufactured in	Between Groups	12.309	4	3.077	2.814	.028
	Within Groups	159.664	146	1.094		
	Total	171.974	150			
India instead of letting other countries get rich off us.	Between Groups	11.467	4	2.867	2.838	.026
	Within Groups	147.474	146	1.010		
	Total	158.940	150			
There should be very little trading or purchasing of goods from other countries unless out of necessity.	Between Groups	1.060	4	.265	.236	.918
	Within Groups	163.987	146	1.123		
	Total	165.046	150			
It is always best to purchase Indian products.	Between Groups	3.206	4	.801	.589	.671
	Within Groups	198.582	146	1.360		
	Total	201.788	150			
Indians should not buy foreign products because it hurts Indian business and causes unemployment.	Between Groups	1.637	4	.409	.351	.843
	Within Groups	170.098	146	1.165		
	Total	171.735	150			
Limitations should put on all imports.	Between Groups	6.586	4	1.646	1.143	.339
	Within Groups	210.248	146	1.440		

	Total	216.834	150			
It may cost me in the long run but I prefer to support Indian products.	Between Groups	8.030	4	2.008	1.003	.408
	Within Groups	292.129	146	2.001		
	Total	300.159	150			
Foreigners should not be allowed to put their products on our markets.	Between Groups	7.323	4	1.831	1.143	.339
	Within Groups	233.777	146	1.601		
	Total	241.099	150			
Foreign products should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into India.	Between Groups	9.227	4	2.307	2.708	.033
	Within Groups	124.349	146	.852		
	Total	133.576	150			
We should obtain from foreign countries only Those products That we cannot obtain within our own country.	Between Groups	7.242	4	1.810	.979	.421
	Within Groups	269.858	146	1.848		
	Total	277.099	150			

The one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of respondents' education levels on their attitudes toward supporting Indian-made products and restricting foreign goods shown in the **Table 2**. The analysis revealed significant differences between certain statements. For the statement "Buy Indian-made products, Keep India working," the results ($F = 3.538$, $p = 0.009$) indicated a significant variation across education levels, suggesting that higher education levels may lead to stronger agreement on the importance of supporting Indian-made products for economic sustainability. Similarly, the statement "We should purchase products manufactured in India instead of letting other countries get rich off us" also showed significant differences ($F = 2.814$, $p = 0.028$), implying that education influences the preference for prioritizing domestic goods over imports. Another notable finding was the significance for the statement "India instead of letting other countries get rich off us" ($F = 2.838$, $p = 0.026$), indicating a stronger inclination among certain education groups to support domestic products as a means of retaining economic benefits within the country. The statement "Foreign products should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into India" also revealed significant differences ($F = 2.708$, $p = 0.033$), highlighting that education shapes opinions on implementing protectionist measures like taxation to reduce reliance on foreign products.

However, for many other statements, such as "Indian people should always buy Indian-made products instead of imports" ($p = 0.892$) and "It is not right to purchase foreign products because it puts Indians out of jobs" ($p = 0.967$), no significant differences were observed. This

consistency suggests that certain beliefs regarding the support of Indian-made goods transcend education levels and are widely shared among the population.

The findings suggest that education plays a crucial role in shaping nuanced attitudes toward economic protectionism and the prioritization of Indian products. While some opinions are consistent across all education levels, specific views on taxation and economic retention strategies are influenced by the respondents' educational background. These insights highlight the potential for targeted educational campaigns to further strengthen support for Indian-made products and promote economic self-reliance.

Discussion:

The findings of the study provide valuable insights into the attitudes of individuals toward prioritizing Indian-made products over foreign goods and the influence of demographic factors, particularly education, on these attitudes. The analysis revealed that while certain beliefs are widely shared across all education levels, other opinions show significant variation based on the educational background of respondents.

The significant results for statements such as "Buy Indian-made products, Keep India working" and "We should purchase products manufactured in India instead of letting other countries get rich off us" suggest that education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' understanding of the economic implications of supporting domestic products. Higher levels of education may enhance awareness of the benefits of supporting local industries and the impact of economic protectionism on national development. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the role of education in fostering economic patriotism and a sense of responsibility toward domestic industries.

Interestingly, the statement "Foreign products should be taxed heavily to reduce their entry into India" also showed significant differences across education levels. This indicates that while protectionist policies such as import taxation are broadly supported, the intensity of this support may vary depending on the educational background of respondents. Higher-educated individuals may better understand the economic rationale behind such policies, which could explain the observed variation.

On the other hand, several statements, such as "Indian people should always buy Indian-made products instead of imports" and "It is not right to purchase foreign products because it puts Indians out of jobs," did not show significant differences across education levels. This suggests that these beliefs are deeply ingrained in the collective mindset, cutting across demographic divides. Such consistency reflects the cultural and nationalistic undertones associated with

supporting Indian-made products, which may stem from long-standing societal narratives promoting economic self-reliance.

The findings also highlight opportunities for policy interventions and educational campaigns. While there is already strong support for Indian-made products, targeted efforts to educate the population about the broader economic and social implications of their purchasing decisions could further enhance this behavior. For example, campaigns emphasizing the long-term benefits of supporting domestic industries and the drawbacks of excessive reliance on imports could be designed to resonate with specific educational groups.

Additionally, the observed support for taxing foreign products underscores the potential for policy measures that encourage the consumption of domestic goods. However, such policies must be implemented carefully to avoid adverse effects on consumer choice and market dynamics. Balancing protectionism with global competitiveness will be key to ensuring sustainable economic growth.

The study underscores the importance of education in shaping nuanced attitudes toward economic patriotism and protectionism while also revealing the widespread support for Indian-made products across all demographic groups. These insights contribute to the broader discourse on fostering national economic resilience through consumer behavior and highlight the need for targeted interventions to maximize the potential of such attitudes. Further research could explore additional factors influencing these attitudes, such as cultural and regional differences, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the context of economic nationalism.

Conclusion:

This study examined the attitudes of individuals toward supporting Indian-made products over foreign goods, with a particular focus on the influence of demographic factors such as education, gender, profession, and income. The findings revealed that while certain beliefs, such as the general preference for Indian products, are widely shared across all demographic groups, education emerged as a significant factor shaping nuanced attitudes toward economic protectionism and domestic product prioritization.

Significant variations were observed in responses to statements such as "Buy Indian-made products, Keep India working" and "We should purchase products manufactured in India instead of letting other countries get rich off us," highlighting the role of education in enhancing awareness of the economic and social benefits of supporting domestic industries. Furthermore, education influenced opinions on protectionist policies, such as taxing foreign products,

suggesting that higher educational levels are associated with a deeper understanding of such economic measures.

Conversely, attitudes toward statements with strong cultural or nationalistic undertones, such as "Indian people should always buy Indian-made products instead of imports," were consistent across all demographic groups, indicating a deeply rooted cultural narrative that transcends differences in education, income, or profession. This reflects the shared belief in economic self-reliance and national pride, which forms the foundation of consumer behavior in India.

The study underscores the potential for leveraging education and awareness campaigns to further enhance support for Indian-made products and foster economic patriotism. Policymakers and businesses can capitalize on these insights to design initiatives that not only promote domestic goods but also encourage informed consumer behavior that aligns with the broader goal of economic self-reliance and sustainable growth.

Overall, this research contributes to the understanding of consumer behavior in the context of economic nationalism, emphasizing the importance of education as a critical factor. Future studies could explore additional dimensions, such as regional and cultural influences, to build a more comprehensive framework for understanding the drivers of consumer preferences in emerging economies like India.

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