

## Mediating Role of Online Trust Between Consumer Ethnocentrism and Online Purchasing Behaviour: Evidence from Uttarakhand

Trisha Sharma

Sparsh Himalaya University

Email:trishsharma55@gmail.com

### Abstract

*The growth of e-commerce in India has intensified scholarly interest in understanding cultural and psychological factors influencing online purchasing behaviour. Consumer ethnocentrism has been identified as a significant barrier to online consumption, particularly in culturally rooted regions. Simultaneously, online trust plays a critical role in reducing perceived risk and facilitating digital transactions. This study adopts a secondary-data-based research design to examine the mediating role of online trust between consumer ethnocentrism and online purchasing behaviour, with contextual relevance to Uttarakhand. Using a systematic review of existing empirical studies, government reports, and industry datasets, the study synthesizes evidence to develop a conceptual mediation framework. Findings suggest that while consumer ethnocentrism negatively influences online purchasing behaviour, online trust consistently acts as a mitigating mechanism, encouraging consumer participation in e-commerce. The study contributes theoretically by consolidating fragmented literature and practically by offering policy and managerial insights for digitally emerging regions.*

### 1. Introduction

E-commerce has revolutionized the way consumers interact with markets, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. In India, rapid digitalization initiatives such as Digital India and increased smartphone penetration have accelerated online shopping adoption. However, adoption rates remain uneven across regions due to socio-cultural factors. Uttarakhand, characterized by strong local identity and traditional

consumer values, presents a unique context for examining culturally driven consumer behaviour.

One such cultural construct is consumer ethnocentrism, which reflects consumers' belief that purchasing foreign or non-local products may be harmful to the domestic economy and social fabric. Ethnocentric consumers tend to prefer locally produced goods and may resist online platforms that promote non-local brands.

Conversely, online trust has emerged as a decisive factor in shaping online purchasing behaviour. Trust in digital platforms reduces uncertainty, enhances perceived security, and fosters long-term consumer relationships. Prior studies suggest that trust can alleviate cultural resistance by reassuring consumers about transaction safety and seller credibility.

Despite extensive research on these constructs individually, limited studies have systematically examined their interrelationships using secondary evidence, particularly in region-specific contexts like Uttarakhand. This study addresses this gap by synthesizing secondary data to explore the mediating role of online trust.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Consumer Ethnocentrism

Consumer ethnocentrism originates from social identity theory and nationalism. Empirical studies consistently report a negative relationship between ethnocentrism and purchase intention toward foreign or online products. In developing economies, ethnocentrism is often stronger in regions with deep-rooted cultural values and limited exposure to global markets.

## 2.2 Online Trust

Online trust encompasses perceptions of platform security, privacy protection, seller reliability, and transaction transparency. Secondary studies demonstrate that trust is one of the strongest predictors of online purchasing behaviour, often outweighing price and convenience factors.

## 2.3 Online Purchasing Behaviour

Online purchasing behaviour refers to consumers' actual or intended engagement in digital buying activities. Secondary research indicates that behavioural outcomes are influenced by technological readiness, trust, perceived risk, and cultural orientation.

## 2.4 Relationship Among Ethnocentrism, Trust, and Online Behaviour

Existing empirical literature suggests:

Ethnocentrism negatively affects online shopping attitudes.

Ethnocentrism reduces trust in non-local digital platforms.

Online trust positively influences online purchase behaviour.

However, studies often examine these relationships independently. Synthesizing evidence indicates that online trust may mediate the negative influence of ethnocentrism, a relationship that warrants consolidated examination through secondary data analysis.

This conceptual framework investigates the complex relationship that emerges between the security implications in a smart city setting and consumer behavior in online purchases within the context of the Internet of Things (IoT). It looks at how affordability, convenience, and tailored suggestions affect user decisions in the context of the Internet of Things. It explores the security flaws in networked devices and the resulting risks to both individual users and the infrastructure of smart cities as a whole at the same time.[9] In order to ensure a safe and sustainable future for smart cities, this framework examines the

relationship between user trust, data privacy, and the changing landscape of cyber threats. It does this by highlighting the critical need for strong security measures and raising consumer awareness.[10]

## 3. Research Objectives

To examine the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and online purchasing behaviour using secondary evidence.

To analyze the role of online trust in influencing online purchasing behaviour.

To conceptually evaluate the mediating role of online trust between consumer ethnocentrism and online purchasing behaviour.

To contextualize findings with reference to Uttarakhand using secondary regional data.

## 4. Research Methodology ( Secondary Data Based)

### 4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical research design based exclusively on secondary data sources. No primary data was collected. The study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) and secondary data synthesis approach to analyze existing research findings.

### 4.2 Sources of Secondary Data

The secondary data for this study was collected from the following sources:

Peer-reviewed journals indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and UGC CARE

Government reports (Ministry of Electronics & IT, NSSO, Digital India reports)

Industry reports (IAMAI, Statista, McKinsey, Deloitte)

Published theses and working papers

E-commerce market studies relevant to Uttarakhand and similar regions

### 4.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

#### Inclusion Criteria:

Studies published between 2010–2025

Studies focusing on consumer ethnocentrism, online trust, or online purchasing behaviour

Empirical or conceptual studies conducted in India or comparable emerging economies

#### Exclusion Criteria:

Studies lacking methodological rigor

Non-English publications

Opinion-based or non-academic sources

### 4.4 Data Analysis Technique

The collected secondary data was analyzed using:

Thematic analysis to identify recurring relationships among constructs

Comparative analysis to observe consistency of findings across studies

Conceptual synthesis to develop a mediation framework linking ethnocentrism, online trust, and online purchasing behaviour

No statistical modeling was conducted, as the study relies entirely on previously published results.

### 4.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on synthesized secondary evidence, the following conceptual model is proposed:



Figure 1. Mediating role of online trust between consumer ethnocentrism and online purchasing behaviour.

Table 1: Synthesized Evidence on Ethnocentrism, Online Trust, and Online Purchasing Behaviour

Construct	Key Findings from Prior Studies	Direction of Relationship
Consumer Ethnocentrism	Preference for local products; resistance to non-local and global platforms	Negative with online purchasing behaviour
Online Trust	Reduces perceived risk; enhances platform credibility and transaction security	Positive with online purchasing behaviour
Ethnocentrism → Trust	Ethnocentric consumers exhibit lower trust in non-local e-commerce platforms	Negative relationship
Trust as Mediator	Trust mitigates cultural resistance and facilitates online purchase decisions	Partial/Full mediation supported

This framework illustrates the mediating role of online trust between consumer ethnocentrism and online purchasing behaviour. Table 1 below summarizes key evidence from secondary studies on ethnocentrism, online trust, and purchasing behaviour.

Online trust acts as a mediating variable, reducing the negative influence of ethnocentrism on online purchasing behaviour.

## 5. Key Findings

High consumer ethnocentrism is consistently associated with lower online purchasing intention.

Ethnocentric consumers exhibit reduced trust toward non-local and international e-commerce platforms.

Online trust significantly enhances online purchasing behaviour across demographic groups.

Evidence strongly supports the mediating role of online trust, as trust mechanisms alleviate ethnocentric resistance.

In regions similar to Uttarakhand, trust-building initiatives are more effective than price-based strategies.

## 6. Discussion

The synthesized findings reinforce the notion that cultural predispositions significantly shape online consumption. However, trust emerges as a strategic lever capable of transforming consumer attitudes. For Uttarakhand, where local identity and economic nationalism are prominent, trust-driven digital strategies may help integrate traditional consumers into online markets.

The findings derived from secondary evidence align with prior research suggesting that trust functions as a critical mechanism in reducing uncertainty and perceived risk associated with online transactions. Studies have consistently shown that even culturally conservative consumers are willing to engage in online purchasing when trust-related assurances—such as secure payment systems, transparent policies, and reliable delivery mechanisms—are present.

From a cultural perspective, ethnocentric consumers are not inherently resistant to digital platforms; rather, their resistance is rooted in concerns about economic nationalism, authenticity, and unfamiliar sellers. Online trust helps bridge this gap by reframing e-commerce

platforms as reliable and accountable intermediaries rather than threats to local economic interests. This explains why trust emerges as a powerful mediating variable capable of weakening the negative influence of consumer ethnocentrism.

In the context of Uttarakhand, these dynamics are particularly relevant. The state's socio-cultural environment emphasizes local production, community trust, and traditional market structures. Trust-building initiatives, therefore, play a more significant role than aggressive pricing or promotional strategies. Platforms that integrate local sellers, emphasize authenticity, and demonstrate institutional credibility are more likely to gain acceptance among ethnocentric consumers. This reinforces the argument that culturally sensitive trust mechanisms are essential for expanding online purchasing behaviour in regionally diverse markets.

## 7. Conclusion

This secondary-data-based study provides a comprehensive understanding of how online trust mediates the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and online purchasing behaviour. By consolidating existing empirical evidence, the study demonstrates that trust can effectively counteract cultural resistance to online shopping. The findings offer valuable insights for e-commerce firms and policymakers aiming to expand digital inclusion in culturally sensitive regions.

## 8. Implications

### Theoretical Implications

Strengthens mediation theory in online consumer behaviour research

Integrates cultural and technological constructs into a unified framework

### Practical Implications

E-commerce firms should prioritize trust-building mechanisms

Policymakers should promote digital literacy and secure online infrastructure

Local branding combined with trust signals can enhance adoption

## 9. Limitations and Future Research

Reliance on secondary data limits empirical validation

Region-specific inference based on available reports

Future studies may use longitudinal secondary datasets or meta-analysis techniques.

Additionally, the study's reliance on secondary data limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the examined constructs. While the synthesized evidence strongly supports the mediating role of online trust, the absence of primary empirical testing restricts statistical validation. Furthermore, the availability and scope of region-specific secondary data for Uttarakhand remain limited, which may affect the depth of contextual interpretation.

Future research may address these limitations by employing advanced secondary methodologies such as meta-analysis or bibliometric analysis to quantitatively validate mediation effects. Researchers may also explore longitudinal secondary datasets to examine changes in consumer trust and ethnocentric attitudes over time. Comparative studies across Indian states or between rural and urban regions could further enhance understanding of culturally driven online purchasing behaviour. Integrating policy-level data with consumer behaviour studies may also offer valuable insights for digital inclusion strategies.

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