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# U.S.-CANADA TRADE TENSIONS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON CANADIAN PERCEPTION, NATIONAL SENTIMENT AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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## Abstract

This study investigates how recent U.S. threatened and imposed tariffs under the Trump administration have influenced Canadian public sentiment and consumer behaviour. While traditional economic analysis of tariffs focuses on macro-level indicators such as GDP and trade balances, this research explores the sociopsychological and behavioural impacts of economic protectionism on individuals. Specifically, it examines the extent to which Canadian consumers' awareness of tariffs correlates with negatives perceptions of Americans, increased nationalism, consumer ethnocentrism and retaliatory purchasing behaviour.

Drawing upon theories such as social identity theory, consumer ethnocentrism and reactance theory, the study develops a conceptual framework linking tariff awareness to five key hypotheses. A cross-sectional, quantitative survey was conducted with 123 Canadian residents, collecting data on demographic variables, attitudes toward the U.S., national sentiments and purchasing patterns. The validated instruments consisted of both self-developed scales and pre-established scales including the CETSCALE (Shimp & Sharma, 1987) and Kosterman & Feshbach's Nationalism scale (1989).

Statistical analyses revealed significant relationships across several variables. Greater awareness of U.S. tariffs was associated with more negative perceptions of Americans, heightened national pride, a stronger preference for Canadian products and reduced support for U.S. brands. Notably, consumer behaviour in Canada has shifted, with increasing domestic product loyalty and signs of consumer boycott activity, evidenced by retail behaviour. Regression models confirmed that tariff awareness significantly predicts these attitudinal and behavioural outcomes.

These findings offer insights into how economic policy can shape national identity and market behaviour, highlighting the symbolic power of trade actions. The research underscores the importance for policymakers and businesses to consider the wider social implications of economic conflict, especially in closely integrated bilateral relationships like between Canada and the U.S.

## Keywords

American-Canadian Relations, Nationalism, Social Identity Theory, Ethnocentrism

## Introduction

The United States and Canada have one of the largest and strongest economic partnerships in the world which supports millions of jobs in both countries (Government of Canada, n.d.-d). This deep relationship is characterized by highly integrated supply chains and significant cross border investment (Government of Canada, n.d.-c). For more than a century, Canada has been a major recipient of American investment, and

since 1920, it has been one of the United States principal trading partners (Bothwell, 2019). Approximately $1 trillion CAD in goods and services are exchanged annually between the two countries and according to a report by Scotiabank Economics in January 2025., the U.S. is the destination for approximately 77% of Canadian goods traded (Government of Canada, n.d.-d; McNally & Sarraf, 2025). Free trade agreements like the current Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) underpin this relationship, fostering economic growth and stability in critical sectors like automotive, energy and agriculture (Council of Foreign Relations, n.d.). Despite the two countries having one of the most comprehensive trading relationships in the world, relations have come under significant strain in recent months due to escalating threats and imposed tariffs by the American Trump Administration (Froman, 2025).

Tariffs, also known as customs duties, are a tax on goods imported from another country, increasing the cost of imports and making foreign goods less competitive in the marketplace (Kourkafas, 2025). They're paid by the company importing the product and are typically calculated as a percentage of the value of the imported goods (The Globe and Mail, 2025). So, if a U.S. company buys a Canadian export, the U.S. government adds the tariff on top and collects that money. Tariffs are a central tenet of U.S. President Donald Trump's "American First Trade Policy" as he says they will boost U.S. manufacturing, protect jobs, raise tax revenue and grow the domestic economy (Faguy, 2025).

In 2018, during President Trump's first presidential term, he imposed tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of imported goods from China and other countries to try to combat alleged unfair trading practices and boost domestic manufacturing in the name of national security and U.S. economic competitiveness (Siripurapu & Berman, 2025). In the second Trump administration, he has expanded his position on tariffs to achieve an even wider array of goals. On March 4, 2025, he proceeded with implementing tariffs on Canada and Mexico under the International Emergency Powers Act (The White House, 2025). Under this act, hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of imported goods from Canada and Mexico will be subject to 25% tariffs, while Canadian energy imports will be subject to a 10% tariff (Government of Canada, n.d.-a). He imposed the sweeping tariffs on Canada, China and Mexico to reduce the U.S.'s trade deficit and citing the countries' lack of immigration enforcement and failure to control the flow of illegal fentanyl into the United States (The White House, 2025).

While the tariffs were presented by the Trump administration as a national security measure, they were widely perceived in Canada as a betrayal of their close ally (Angus Reid, 2025a). Hostility between the two nations leaders was evident with Trump posting on social media online "Canada should become our Cherished 51st State" (Gillies, 2025). Additionally, Canadian Priminister Justin Trudeau stated in a press conference "What he wants is to see a total collapse of the Canadian economy, because that'll make it easier to annex us" (Yousif & Ahmadi, 2025). Although Trump has since lifted some of the tariffs and put others on pause, many Canadians say the damage has already been done (Yousif & Ahmadi, 2025).

The economic impact of these tariffs is far reaching effecting growth, employment, prices and profits with all countries involved (Rendell, 2025). Political disputes may trigger shifts in public sentiment, which has real world consequences such as changes in consumption, diplomatic tensions and increases in nationalism or protectionism (Lekakis; 2015; Jung et al., 2002; Zhao et al., 2022). Escalating trade tensions between Canada and the United States have ignited a new wave of Canadian patriotism, with consumers consciously choosing made-in Canada products as an act of economic self-preservation and national pride (Colleto & Sheppard, 2025). This has been evident on various media platforms and recent polls.

Recent research indicates a significant desire among Canadians to buy local, and in some cases, to avoid American products entirely (Morgan, 2025). An Angus Reid Group online survey conducted from February 16 – 18, 2025 among a representative randomized sample of 3,310 Canadian adults found four-in-five (78%) are committing to buying more Canadian products overall, while three-in-five (59%) say they'll boycott U.S. products (Angus Reid, 2025c). The "Buy Canadian" movement has extended beyond goods and into travel with Canadians seeking alternative destinations to the U.S. and increasingly opting for domestic and overseas options (Rabinovich, 2025). The Canadian Press reported that Flight Centre Travel Group Canada said leisure bookings to American cities fell by 40 per cent in February compared to the same month in 2024 (Chiasson et al., 2025). While boycotts and buycotts are not a new phenomenon, the current surge appears to be driven by a heightened sense of personal conviction, influence by real time political developments.

# Chapter 1: Literature Review

## *Introduction*

This chapter explores the theoretical foundations relevant to Canadians' responses to U.S. tariffs during the most recent Trump Administration. The literature draws on tariff theory, American-Canadian relations, nationalism, social identity theory, ethnocentrism and broader concepts related to economic nationalism and consumer retaliation to investigate how tariff policy influence public opinion, reinforces national identity and alters consumer behaviours.

## *Theoretical Frameworks*

To understand these dynamics, this study draws upon several theoretical frameworks. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) explains the psychological reinforcement of national identity in response to perceived group-based threats. Reactance theory (Brehm, 1966) accounts for resistance behaviours when individuals feel their autonomy or sovereignty is being infringed. Consumer ethnocentrism tendency (Shimp & Sharma, 1987) offers a lens to interpret the moral dimension of favouring domestic over foreign goods.

## *Awareness of Tariffs and Perceptions of Americans*

The history of tariffs between the United States and Canada is marked by periods of protectionism and free trade with notable shifts in the 19th and 20th century. The Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA), implemented in 1987 was a significant agreement that eliminated tariffs and reduced trade barriers between the two countries, leading to increased trade and economic integration (Government of Canada, n.d.-b). CUSFTA was the precursor to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which expanded upon the foundation by including Mexico and incorporating new provisions related to intellectual property, investment and other areas (Government of Canada, n.d.-b). Despite this history of strong bilaterial ties between the two nations, the current landscape of escalating tariffs and trade tensions has marked a critical shift in U.S.-Canada relations.

While Canada historically has resembled the United States the most closely in terms of culture, geography, economy, society, and politics, there has always been anti-Americanism in Canada (Stuart, 1997). Anti-Americanism is defined as opposition or hostility to the people or the government policies of the U.S. but most often in Canada its sentiments are derived from the United States inclination to put the market before the state and its emphasis on individual achievement itself (Lipset, 1986). While the core motivations behind anti-Americanism have remained largely consistent, the focus of these sentiments shave shifted over time, reflecting evolving perceptions of the nature of threat the United States poses to Canada.

Notably, periods of controversial U.S. leadership such as during the Iraq War and Trump administrations have resulted in Canadian anti-American sentiments to surge affecting bilateral relations and public opinion (Adams, 2018; Bow 2008; Hillmer 2006). This was indicated in a national survey by the Environics Institute which found that Canadians attitudes towards Americans hit unprecedented lows in 2018 after Donald Trump's first election (Adams, 2018). Additional research following Trump's second presidential election found there was a 50% decline in the view of Americans from the previous June (Jedwab, 2025).

Thus, based on the literature above we hypothesize that the:

*H1. There is a statistically significant inverse relationship between an awareness of U.S. tariffs and negative perception of Americans.*

## *Nationalism*

Rooted in a platform of "America First", President Trump's tariff policy marked a resurgence of U.S. economic nationalism, characterized by protectionism, unilateralism and a rejection of multilateral trade agreements (Dufour & Ducasse, 2020). In response, Canadian discourse reflected a sense of unity and resistance, with slogans like "Bye America, Buy Canadian" echoing back at Trumps' protectionist measures (Cross, 2025). Media and recent polls indicate that there has been a marked surge of national pride and patriotism – coupled with a strong desire to support and protect Canadian interests (Angus Reid, 2025b).

This response can be explained by Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory (SIT) which explains how individuals define themselves based on group memberships. When an in-group (ex.

Canadians) is perceived as being treated unfairly by an out-group (ex. Americans), individuals may reinforce their in-group identity as a protective mechanism (Bonikowski; 2016; Tafjel & Turner, 1979). Trade tensions with the U.S. can activate national identity and encourage pro-Canadian consumer behaviour. SIT is therefore instrumental in interpreting increased nationalism and loyalty to Canadian products as a psychological response to U.S. trade policy.

Nationalism is defined as "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed to constitute an actual or potential nation" (Smith, 1991). While arguments have been made that there is a global increase in nationalism around the world as evident during the covid-19 vaccine distribution or rise of far right and nationalist parties (Brown, 2021), research using data from the World Survey between 2004-2014 found that there has been no significant global shift towards exclusionary virulent nationalist attitudes (Bieber, 2018). Rather Bieber's (2018) findings indicate there have been a series of nation- or region-specific developments, driven by domestic political shifts, economic insecurities, or symbolic provocations.

Wang's (2021) exploration of neo-nationalism during the COVID-19 crisis highlights a broader pattern in which external disruptions catalyse internal nationalist reactions. Scholarly literature highlights how moments of instability or external threat, whether real or perceived, provoke inward-looking attitudes, elevate national identity, and influence public behaviour (Bieber, 2018; Wang, 2021). Nationalism becomes a particularly strong driver when the home country is in conflict with, and harbours animosity toward, specific foreign nations (Jung et al., 2002). These dynamics are especially salient in the context of trade disputes, where economic tools like tariffs become politicized and symbolically charged.

In the context of the U.S.-Canada trade conflict, the Canadian public response reflected what Billig (1995) terms banal nationalism—everyday expressions of national identity activated in times of perceived threat. Billig's concept of banal nationalism describes how everyday practices, such as flags on buildings, the use of "ours" or "us," and even "made in" labels on products—become arenas for performing national identity.

The literature on implicit nationalism shows that these national symbols have tangible psychological effects. For example, Baker and O'Neal (2001) and Mueller (1970) highlight the rallying effect of flags, while Ferguson and Hassin (2007) found that brief exposure to the U.S. flag increased aggressive tendencies among politically engaged individuals. Similarly, Skey and Antonsich (2017) show how specific events and symbols reproduce the nation-state through everyday discourse and behaviour.

We hypothesize tariffs; by explicitly labelling certain products and or the United States of America as adversarial, they make national identity more salient and politicized.

*H2. There is a statistically significant (positive) relationship between an awareness of U.S. tariffs and Canadian nationalism.*

## Consumer Behaviour

### *Consumer nationalism*

Building on the implications and threat of American tariffs, an emerging body of research shows that political context and national identity increasingly shape how consumers make purchase decisions, especially in politicized markets (Maheswaran, 1994; Stolle et al., 2005; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). While consumer behaviour has traditionally been understood through economic and psychological frameworks focusing on variables such as price sensitivity, brand loyalty and perceived quality (Kirchel & Hoelzl, 2011; Zeithaml, 1988), the market has increasingly become an arena in which citizens increasingly turn to communicate causes and undertake civic actions. Such practices have been conceptualized as political consumerism (Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti et al., 2004; Micheletti & McFarland, 2010).

In Canada, the American tariffs provoked a wave of civic action where social media users shared lists of Canadian products to swap for U.S. brands and retailers have rushed to set up signage highlighting local and domestically purchased made merchandise (CBC News, 2025). These actions can be best understood as consumer nationalism, which is a form of consumerism where consumption itself becomes a symbol of nationhood (Iwabuchi, 2002). In consumer nationalism, local products convey pride and belongingness by representing local culture, traditions, customs and resources (Ozsonmer & Altaras, 2008; Schuiling & Kapferer, 2004). Consumers who are more nationalistic may be willing to make sacrifices to buy local products because of loyalty or devotion to one's nation.

Nationalism is also related to out-group rejections and hostility towards others and demonstrates the aggressive side of favourable in-group appraisal (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989). Druckman (1994) writes that nationalism is liking one's group and disliking other groups. Research has indicated that symbolic threat can intensify national consumption as demonstrated during the U.S.-China trade war which showed rising domestic support for nationalist rhetoric and identity-affirming consumer campaigns (Zhao et al., 2022).

Reich (1991) emphasized that underlying consumer nationalism is the belief that a nation's economic strength – and therefore the well-being of its citizens – depends on the success of its domestic companies. As described by Rawwas et al. (1996, p. 21), "Consumer nationalists are willing to make a sacrifice to purchase a domestic brand because they believe that imported goods may damage their country's economy." Thus, the reason why nationalist consumers favour local products is their beliefs that buying imported one would be detrimental to their economy and put their people out of work. Under such condition, people may be willing to forgo absolute gains to prevent their perceived rival from enjoying even greater gains (Reich, 1991). Therefore, based on the literature around consumer nationalism, we hypothesize:

*H3. There is a statistically significant (positive) relationship between an awareness of U.S. tariffs and the intent to purchase more Canadian products over U.S. products.*

***Consumer Ethnocentrism***

While consumer nationalism represents one type of political consumerism; another is ethnocentric consumption, which involves favouring domestically produced items while exhibiting distrust or rejection of foreign-made products (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Consumer ethnocentrism is derived from the broader notion of Sumner's (1906) concept of ethnocentrism which is a psychological concept that describes how one's group may be perceived as the centre of everything, with all other groups being evaluated from this perspective. Since their inception, nations have aimed to win the loyalty and support of their citizens, with the idea of the nation-state often built around a shared sense of identity shaped through consumer culture (Crane, 1998; Gerth, 2011).

Most studies on ethnocentric consumption focus on individual traits – like personal values, age, and other demographic factors (Balabanis et al., 2002; Rawwas & Rajendran, 1996; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Less attention has been paid to external influences like the economic, political and societal environment – even though these may also shape why people prefer local goods (Shankarmahesh, 2006; Balabanis et al., 2002; Crockett & Pendarvis, 2017).

One form of ethnocentric consumption is "buycotting" where people choose to buy products in their own country to show national pride or support the local economy (Lekakis, 2015). This kind of behaviour is not just about economics – it's also political, because people use their spending to support national or political goals. Ethnocentric buying tends to happen more in countries going through hard economic times, like during austerity (e.g. when governments cut public spending) (Breton 1964; Meuleman et al., 2012).

Klein (2002) shows that consumers ethnocentric tendencies come alive only when national products are available as purchase alternatives; they do not do so when only foreign products are in the market. Other studies find that consumer ethnocentrism can be reinforced by consumer animosity and or by the manifestation of country-of-origin effects in consumers mind (Jiménez & Martin, 2010; Shankarmahesh 2006). Chan et al. (2010) showed that consumers' attitudes toward foreign products are not fixed—they're shaped by how ethnocentric or hostile they feel toward the country the product comes from. In a study examining the Eurozone crisis, results show that both animosity and ethnocentrism negatively affect consumer acceptance of products associated with a disliked country but are not related with cognitive belief about the products (De Nisco, Massi & Papadopoulos, 2020). Findings from the study also revealed that nationalism significantly amplified the negative impact of animosity and ethnocentrism on willingness to buy – strong nationalists are especially prone to reject foreign products during international crises (De Nisco, Massi & Papadopoulos, 2020).

Shimp and Sharma (1987) operationalized the construct of consumer ethnocentric tendency by creating the Consumer Ethnocentrism Scale (CESTSCALE). The CETSCALE has been tested in many countries with a variety of goods and has been determined to have strong reliability and validity (Huddleston et al., 2000; Jimenez-Guerrero et al., 2014; Kaynak & Kara, 2002; Klein et al., 1998). This measure will be used to test how the awareness of tariffs effects consumer ethnocentrism in Canada:

*H4. There is a statistically significant (positive) relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs and consumer ethnocentrism among Canadians.*

***Retaliatory Purchasing***

Unlike consumer ethnocentrism, which is a more general form of consumerism, consumer animosity is targeted and situational. Consumer animosity refers to a negative emotional response such as anger, resentment or hostility – that consumers feel toward a specific foreign country, often due to historical, political or economic conflicts (Klein, Ettenson & Morris, 1998). Consumer animosity is in line with Brehm's (1966) reactance theory that suggests when individuals perceive their freedoms are being constrained, they experience psychological reactance and attempt to restore autonomy. In the context of trade disputes, U.S. tariffs may be perceived as an unjust coercion, leading Canadians to assert their independence by rejecting American goods. This theory helps explain behavioural shifts such as boycotting U.S. brands or actively seeking Canadian alternatives (Clee & Wicklund, 1980).

Research has shown that consumers react strongly to perceived injustices against their nations (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Klein et al., 1998). Even if a product is high quality, consumers with strong animosity may refuse to purchase it if it comes from a country they resent (Gurhan-Canli & Maheswaran, 2000; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). Such reactions can include consumer retaliation in the form of product boycotts and shifts in purchasing behaviour. A survey experiment conducted in Canada during the 2018 Canada-U.S. trade dispute found that consumers' willingness to boycott American products – even when costly and not directly impacting their own welfare is significantly driven by: what fellow citizens are doing, government or elite cues and retaliation (Li & Liu, 2020). This study illustrates that during a trade conflict, consumer choices aren't merely about price or economic utility but how trade tensions evoke nationalistic, identity-based and charged consumption patterns.

Further research by Weiss and colleagues (2023) explored whether international disputes harm commerce by galvanizing consumer boycotts of foreign products. Using administrative data on all new passenger vehicle registrations in China from 2009 to 2015, the study found that consumer boycotts during the 2012 China-Japan territorial dispute had significant and lasting effects on vehicle sales, particularly in cities that experienced anti-Japanese street demonstrations (Weiss et al., 2023).

These retaliatory behaviours were also exhibited in a study by two University of Virginia Professors that investigated the weekly sales of U.S. supermarkets during the US-France dispute over the 2003 Iraq War (Pandya & Venkatesan, 2016). For every week in 2003, they compared each store's sales of French-sounding brands to that same week in 2002. Results showed that during the U.S.-France public debate, the market share of French-sounding U.S. supermarket brands declined 0.4 percent in one week which translated into a $43 million loss in sales.

*H5. There is a statistically significant (positive) relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs and retaliatory purchasing behaviour toward American products among Canadian consumers.*

***Conceptual Framework***

Based on the literature review, this study outlines a conceptual framework to better explain the relationship between tariffs and their influence on perception of Americans, nationalist attitudes and changes in consumer behaviour. The framework is shown as follows (Figure 1):

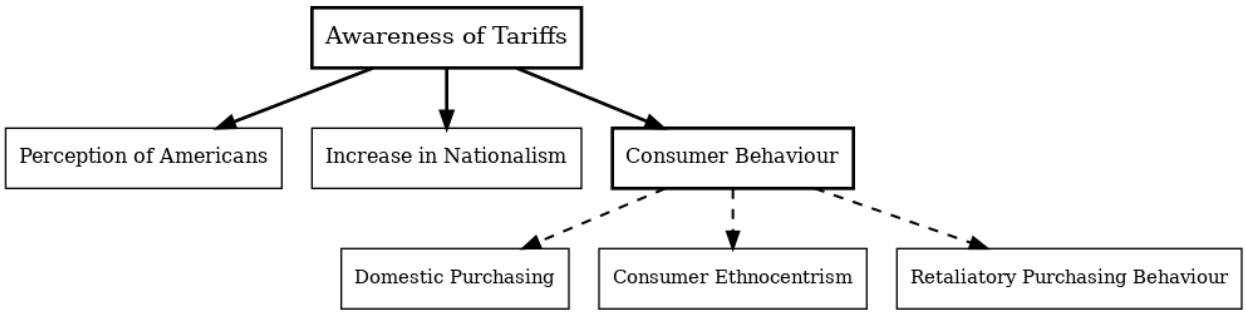



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

# Chapter 2: Methodology

***Introduction***

This section outlines the methodology employed to examine how American tariffs shape residents of Canada attitudes and behaviours. Specifically, the study investigates the threat/implementation of U.S. tariffs and how it has influenced Canadians perceptions of Americans, nationalistic attitudes, and consumer habits. A quantitative survey approach was adopted to capture data from Canadian residents aged 18 years of age or older.

***Research Design***

This study used a cross-sectional, quantitative survey design to evaluate the influence of U.S.-imposed tariffs on Canadian attitudes and behaviours. The research addressed five hypotheses involving perceptions of Americans, national pride, domestic purchasing behaviour, consumer ethnocentrism, and retaliatory purchasing toward U.S. products. A structured survey method was chosen for its ability to gather large-scale, standardized data efficiently (Bryman, 2016).

The survey consisted of 47 questions, grouped into conceptual domains aligned with the five hypotheses. The survey was broken down into 6 sections in addition to an initial consent page. Responses to most items were captured using a 5-point agreement Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) and a 7-point agreement Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree), with some questions utilizing alternative scales including frequency (Never =1 to 5=Always) and binary response (No = 0 to Yes = 1) questions.

The questionnaire design was grounded in attitudinal and behavioural psychology and consumer behaviour theory. Pre-established instruments were employed alongside self-developed scales, both of which demonstrated reliability and validity. These tools allowed for a rigorous examination of tariff related public sentiment.

- **Section A:** Contains predisposing factors, which include grouping and demographic information, collected data on participants' age, gender, educational background, household income level, geographic location and political orientation.
- **Section B:** Contains questions to gain insights into participants' awareness and opinions of tariffs.
- **Section C:** Contains questions to record participants perceptions of Americans.
- **Section D:** Measures the construct of nationalism to understand the influence tariffs has had on nationalist attitudes in Canada.
- **Section E:** Measures the construct of Consumer Ethnocentrism (CET) to understand how tariffs relate to consumer ethnocentrism levels in Canada.
- **Section F**: Contains questions to measure how consumer behaviour has been impacted by the threat and implementation of tariffs by the U.S. in Canada.

**Table 1: Survey Constructs and Theoretical Framework Alignment Table**

| Survey Section & Items | Construct Measured | Purpose in Study |
|---|---|---|
| **Section A: Demographics & Groups (Q1-Q6)** | Predisposing Factors | Control Variables and respondent classification |
| **Section B: (TA1)** | Awareness of Tariffs | Measures the Opinions/Awareness of tariffs |
| **Section C: (PA1-PA6)** | Perception of Americans | Measures the attitudes towards Americans **H1** |
| **Section D: (NTL1-NTL6)** | Nationalism Attitudes | Measures the nationalist attitudes **H2** |
| **Section E: (CET1-CET17)** | Consumer Ethnocentrism Tendencies | Measures the consumer ethnocentric tendencies **H4** |
| **Section F: (CB1-CB8)** | Consumer Behaviour | Measures the changes in consumer behaviour **H3, H5** |

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## Participants and Sampling Procedures

### *Sample Size and Demographics*

The survey was open for four weeks between June 2025 and July 2025 and received *N*=123 valid responses from Canadian residents aged 18 or older. Respondents completed a consent form and were assured of voluntary participation and anonymity.

Demographic variables collected included age, gender, education, income, province of residence, and political orientation.

### *Sampling Technique*

A non-probability sampling method was employed, combining convenience sampling and a snowball technique. The survey link was distributed via email and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn), targeting a broad Canadian audience. Participants were encouraged to share the survey, enhancing respondent diversity. While this limits generalizability, it is suitable for exploratory studies seeking a range of perspectives (Babbie, 2023).

### *Pilot Study*

A pilot study was conducted to refine the questionnaire design ensuring clarity and relevance of the items before full data collection, in line with Bryman's (2016) recommendations. Participants (*n*=11) were recruited for the pilot study by way of convenience sampling, and the survey was administered through Google Forms. Based on feedback from the pilot study, redundant items were removed, and question wording was refined. Data was analysed using SPSS (Version 29.0) to confirm internal consistency and instrument.

The pilot study results demonstrated high reliability and internal consistency across all constructs, with Cronbach's alpha values indicating acceptable measurement quality. Content and external validity was improved through participant feedback, and the sample's heterogeneity provided preliminary insights into generalizability. Construct validity was supported by expected correlations among variables and criterion validity was supported as the analysis significantly predicted the composite variables. These results confirmed that the instrument is ready to be used in the main study and did not require major revisions.

## Reliability and Validity Analysis

### *Reliability Tests*

The reliability of the survey instrument was assessed for the data after reverse coding items using Cronbach's Alpha (0.70 minimum) to determine the internal consistency of each construct (Taber, 2018). "TariffAwareness" scale has one item. All other results showed the constructs have a Cronbach's Alpha above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, reflecting strong reliability and internal consistency across all scales as shown below (Taber, 2018):

**Table 2: Reliability Analysis for Each Construct**

| *Construct* | *Cronbach's Alpha* | *No. Of Items* | *Interpretation* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *TariffAwareness* | N/A | 1 | One Item Scale |
| *PerceptionAmericans* | 0.895 | 6 | Good |
| *Nationalism* | 0.794 | 6 | Acceptable |
| *CETSCALE* | 0.96 | 17 | Excellent |
| *Consumer Behaviour* | 0.843 | 3 | Good |

*Note.* The table showing the Reliability Analysis conducted using the software IBM SPSS 29.0 is the outcome of Cronbach's Alpha for each construct and their interpretation.

### *Validity Tests*

A) **Content Validity:** The content validity was assured through the feedback of participants at the end of pilot study. Based off input from respondents, the survey underwent revisions to improve the clarity and length of the survey. These changes were crucial to ensure the accurate capture of

key constructs related to tariffs; perception of Americans, nationalism and concepts related to consumer behaviour.

B) **Construct Validity:** Construct validity refers to how well a test or measurement tool measures the specific abstract concept or theory it's designed to assess. Convergent validity is one type of construct validity and refers to the extent to which a measure correlates with other measures designed to assess the same or related thing (Cronbach & Meehl, 1995). To test convergent validity, we conducted a Pearson correlation between each item in the scale and the composite score. Each item showed strong internal consistency and significant/meaningful correlations with their composite scores.

**Table 3**: *Pearson Correlation with items PA1-PA6 and composite variable PerceptionAmericans*

| Item | Correlation with composite score | Significance |
|---|---|---|
| *PA1* | .714 | p < .001 |
| *PA2* | .845 | p < .001 |
| *PA3* | .830 | p < .001 |
| *PA4* | .883 | p < .001 |
| *PA5* | .788 | p < .001 |
| *PA6* | .796 | p < .001 |

**Table 4:** *Pearson Correlation with items NTL1 to NTL6 and composite variable Nationalism*

| Item | Correlation with composite score | Significance |
|---|---|---|
| *NTL1* | .811 | p < .001 |
| *NTL2* | .582 | p < .001 |
| *NTL3* | .517 | p < .001 |
| *NTL4* | .748 | p < .001 |
| *NTL5* | .724 | p < .001 |
| *NTL6* | .794 | p < .001 |

**Table 5:** *Pearson Correlation with items CET1 to CET17 and composite variable ConsumerEthnocentrism*

| Item | Correlation with composite score | Significance |
|---|---|---|
| *CET1* | .718 | p < .001 |
| *CET2* | .825 | p < .001 |
| *CET3* | .697 | p < .001 |
| *CET4* | .780 | p < .001 |
| *CET5* | .833 | p < .001 |
| *CET6* | .818 | p < .001 |
| *CET7* | .868 | p < .001 |
| *CET8* | .847 | p < .001 |
| *CET9* | .768 | p < .001 |
| *CET10* | .823 | p < .001 |
| *CET11* | .877 | p < .001 |
| *CET12* | .780 | p < .001 |
| *CET13* | .528 | p < .001 |
| *CET14* | .757 | p < .001 |
| *CET15* | .768 | p < .001 |
| *CET16* | .829 | p < .001 |
| *CET17* | .777 | p < .001 |

**Table 6:** *Pearson Correlation with items CB4, CB6, CB8 and composite variable ConsumerBehaviour*

| Item | Correlation with composite score | Significance |
|---|---|---|
| *CB4* | .876 | p < .001 |
| *CB6* | .853 | p < .001 |
| *CB8* | .890 | p < .001 |

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C) **Criterion Validity:** In order to test criterion validity, we tested whether the intended independent variable item "TA1" used to measure participants tariff awareness, can predict the following dependent variables:

1. Perception of Americans
2. Nationalism
3. Consumer Ethnocentrism
4. Consumer Behaviour

**Table 7**: *Pearsons Correlation test results of Tariff Awareness Variable (TA1) and all four scales*

| Criterion Variable | R | $R^2$ | F(Sig.) | *β (Beta)* | p-value (Sig.) | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *PerceptionAmericans* | .439 | .193 | 28.852 (p < .001) | .439 | p < .001 | Strong |
| *Nationalism* | .492 | .242 | 38.686 (p < .001) | .492 | p < .001 | Strong |
| *ConsumerEthnocentrism* | .178 | .032 | 3.967 (p < .001) | .178 | p < .001 | Weak |
| *ConsumerBehaviour* | .445 | .198 | 29.936 (p < .001) | .445 | p < .001 | Strong |

Overall, the independent variable (TA1) has good criterion validity as it significantly predicts all four constructs. It explains: 19-24% of the variance in *PerceptionAmericans, Nationalism* and *ConsumerBehaviour.* A smaller 3.2% variance in *ConsumerEthnocentrism* (but still statistically significant). Thus, our analysis supports criterion validity for TA1 as it significantly predicts the composite variables. The relationships are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) and directionally consistent. The amount of variance explained ($R^2$) is meaningful for most variables.

D) **External Validity:** To enhance the external validity of this study, several strategies were employed to ensure the findings are generalizable beyond the specific sample and setting used. First, a heterogeneous participant pool was recruited, including individuals from varied age groups, socioeconomic levels, and educational backgrounds. This demographic diversity increases the likelihood that the findings are applicable across broader populations (Babbie, 2013). Second, participants were recruited across multiple sites including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and through email which allowed for testing the consistency of effects across different environmental contexts. This multi-site design strengthens the generalizability of the results beyond a single platform. Taken together, these methodological decisions were purposefully incorporated to increase confidence in the external validity of the study's findings.

**Measures and Variables**

***Independent Variable***

Tariff awareness was measured with the item, TA1: "How aware are you of recent U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods?", using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all aware, 5 = Extremely aware).

***Dependent Variables***

- Perception of Americans
- Nationalism Attitudes
- Consumer Behaviour: Encompassing consumer ethnocentrism, domestic purchasing and consumer retaliatory purchasing.

## Chapter 3: Hypothesis Testing Framework

***Hypothesis 1***

Null Hypothesis 1 ($H_0$): There is no statistically significant relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs and negative perception of Americans.

Alternative Hypothesis 1 ($H_1$): There is a statistically (inverse) relationship between an awareness of U.S. tariffs and negative perception of Americans.

This hypothesis was operationalized through six Likert-scale items under the section titled "Perception of Americans." Questions assessed whether U.S. trade actions damaged Canadian attitudes toward Americans culturally and politically.

***Key items:***

- PA1: "U.S. tariffs on Canadian products have made me feel that Americans do not respect Canada as an equal trading partner."
- PA2: "Since the implementation of U.S. trade tariffs, I feel less positively about American culture and values."
- PA3: "The trade policies of the U.S. have created a sense of distrust toward Americans among Canadians like myself."
- PA4: "U.S. economic aggression toward Canada has made me more likely to support distancing from American influence."
- PA5: "I feel that the trade tensions have damaged the long-standing relationship between Canadians and Americans."
- PA6: "I view American consumer products differently now compared to before the trade conflicts"

These items were averaged to form a composite scale titled *PerceptionAmericans* with internal consistency reliability (e.g., Cronbach's alpha) calculated prior to analysis.

This composite scale was used in a Pearson correlation test to investigate the relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs (TA1) and perception of Americans. A linear regression test followed to assess the strength of the relationship.

***Hypothesis 2***

Null Hypothesis 2 ($H_0$): There is no statistically significant relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs and Canadian nationalism.

Alternative Hypothesis 2 ($H_2$): There is a statistically significant (positive) relationship between an awareness of U.S. tariffs and Canadian nationalism.

To examine changes in national pride, six questions were adapted in part from Kosterman and Feshbach's Nationalism scale (1989) and modified to fit the economic focus of the current study.

Key items:

- NTL1: "I feel more pride in being Canadian when Canada faces foreign economic pressure (e.g., tariffs)."
- NTL2: "I believe Canadians should respond to U.S. tariffs by supporting Canadian businesses more actively."
- NTL3: "I believe Canada should be more economically independent, especially from the U.S."
- NTL4: "Canada is a better country than the U.S. in most respects."
- NTL5: "I believe showing loyalty to Canadian businesses is a civic duty during international disputes."

- NTL6: "I feel more inclined to express Canadian pride (e.g., flying the flag, posting online) during trade-related tensions."

These questions formed the composite scale titled "Nationalism." They reflect both emotional (e.g., pride) and instrumental (e.g., policy preference) aspects of nationalism in the context of trade. To test the relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs and strength of nationalist attitudes, a Pearson correlation test as well as a linear regression was carried out.

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***Hypothesis 3***

Null Hypothesis 3 ($H_0$): There is no statistically significant relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs and the intent to purchase more Canadian products over U.S. products.

Alternative Hypothesis 3 ($H_3$): There is a statistically significant (positive) relationship between an awareness of U.S. tariffs and the intent to purchase more Canadian products over U.S. products.

To test this hypothesis, four tests were carried out using items from the *ConsumerBehaviour* Scale in addition to the creation of a Domestic Purchase Index.

Domestic Purchase Index Key Items (5 point-Likert Agreement Scale):

- CB6: "I am more loyal to Canadian brands because of trade conflicts"
- CB8: "I choose Canadian products even when American Ones are cheaper"

Descriptive statistics will be calculated to summarize participants levels of tariff awareness and pro-domestic attitudes. Key Items for frequency analyses:

- TA1: "How aware are you of recent U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods (e.g. aluminium, lumber, dairy)?"
- CB2: "If yes, how have you responded; I avoid U.S. products, I buy more Canadian-made products, I look for non-U.S. alternatives, I participate in "Buy-Canadian" campaigns, I avoid travelling to the U.S.
- CB3: "Would you be willing to pay more for Canadian products to support the national economy during trade tensions?" (Yes/No)

A Chi-square test will be run to test associations between categorical variables, a chi-square test of independence will be performed to examine the relationship between tariff awareness and willingness to pay more for Canadian products. Key items:

- TA1: "How aware are you of recent U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods (e.g. aluminium, lumber, dairy)?
- CB3: "Would you be willing to pay more for Canadian products to support the national economy during trade tensions?" (Yes/No)

A Spearman's rho correlation will be performed to assess the strength and direction of association among these continuous variables; correlations will be conducted between tariff awareness and Domestic Purchase Index Items. Key items:

- TA1: "How aware are you of recent U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods (e.g. aluminium, lumber, dairy)?"
- Domestic Purchase Index
  - CB6: "I am more loyal to Canadian brands because of trade conflicts"
  - CB8: "I choose Canadian products even when American Ones are cheaper"

A linear regression will be conducted to evaluate the predictive power of tariff awareness on the Domestic Purchase Index. Key items:

- TA1: How aware are you of recent U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods (e.g. aluminium, lumber, dairy)?
- Domestic Purchase Index
  - CB6: "I am more loyal to Canadian brands because of trade conflicts"
  - CB8: "I choose Canadian products even when American Ones are cheaper"

All analyses will be conducted to test whether awareness of tariff policy is significantly associated with changes in consumer behaviour favouring Canadian goods.

***Hypothesis 4***

Null Hypothesis 4 ($H_0$): There is no statistically significant relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs and consumer ethnocentrism among Canadians.

Alternative Hypothesis 4 ($H_4$): There is a statistically significant (positive) relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs and consumer ethnocentrism among Canadians.

This construct was assessed using 17 items from the CETSCALE (Shimp & Sharma, 1987), one of the most widely used scales in consumer behaviour research.

Example items:

- CET1: "Canadians should always buy products made in Canada instead of imports."
- CET3: "Buy Canadian-made products and keep Canadians working."
- CET6: "It is not right to purchase foreign products, because it puts Canadians out of jobs."

Participants responded using a 7-point Likert agreement scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to *7 = Strongly Agree). A composite score was calculated from the ConsumerEthnocentrism* scale.

This composite score was used in a Pearson correlation test the relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs (TA1) and consumer ethnocentrism. Following this a linear regression test to measure the strength of the relationship.

***Hypothesis 5***

Null Hypothesis 5 ($H_0$): There is no statistically significant relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs and retaliatory purchasing behaviour toward American products among Canadian consumers.

Alternative Hypothesis 5 ($H_5$): There is a statistically significant (positive) relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs and retaliatory purchasing behaviour toward American products among Canadian consumers.

Four separate tests will be conducted to test the hypothesis focused on emotional and behavioural aversion to American goods post-tariffs.

Frequency analysis key item:

- CB5: "Have you stopped buying any specific U.S. brands in response to trade tensions" (No = 0, Yes = 1)

Cross tabulation key Items to examine the relationship between respondent's awareness of U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods and their decision to boycott U.S. goods:

- TA1: "How aware are you of recent U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods (e.g. aluminium, lumber, dairy)?"
- CB5: "Have you stopped buying any specific U.S. brands in response to trade tensions" (No = 0, Yes = 1)

The three items listed below are from the *ConsumerBehaviour* scale which were used to create a composite score to measure retaliatory purchasing behaviour. Retaliatory Purchase Index key items:

- CB4: "Do you actively seek information about product origin when shopping (e.g. checking labels?"
- CB6: "I am more loyal to Canadian brands because of trade conflicts."
- CB8: "I choose Canadian products even when American alternatives are cheaper."

This composite score titled *ConsumerBehaviour* was used in a Pearson correlation test to investigate the relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs (TA1) and changes in consumer behaviour. Following this a linear regression test to test the strength of the relationship.

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***Data Analysis***

Post ethical approval, the online survey was distributed via digital platforms. Following the four-week data collection period, all responses were exported to excel then SPSS (Version 29.0) for analysis.

***Ethical Considerations***

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the collection of data. Each respondent was informed of the purpose and procedure of the study. This ensured the participants were aware of their willingness to participate and had the right to withdraw from the study at will and without it having any negative consequences.

No identifiable data was collected. Data protection practices were observed in the storage using password-protected files and encrypted digital storage of the data to prevent unauthorized access and data breaches.

## Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

***4.1 Introduction***

The objective of this study is to investigate the influence of threatened and implemented tariffs under the recent Trump administration on Canadians' perceptions of the U.S., expressions of nationalism and patterns of consumer behaviour. For this purpose, this chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses conducted using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS Version 29.0). The following analysis includes descriptive statistics to summarize sample demographics, reliability and validity testing to assess the internal consistency of key measurement scales and inferential analyses to examine the five hypotheses formulated in previous chapters.

***4.2 Descriptive Analysis***

There were *N*=123 participants who participated in this experiment by means of the Google Forms survey. A descriptive analysis of the sample demographics was conducted to provide context for interpreting the results of the study. Demographic variables assessed included age, gender, education, household income, the province of residence, and political orientation. A summary of the results is provided below:

The demographic composition of the sample indicates that participants were predominantly older with two-thirds (67.5%) of participants age 45 or older with most participants being educated and having a household income bracket over $150 000 CAD. Almost all respondents reside in the province Ontario (99.2%). The sample was balanced in terms of gender with 50.4% of participants identifying as female and 49.6% identifying as male. The population also featured a relatively even distribution of political orientations with the most common orientation identifying as centrist at 35.8%. These demographic characteristics are important for interpreting the results of subsequent analyses, particularly those related to tariff awareness, perception of Americans, nationalism, and consumer behaviour.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 18-24 | 15 | 12.2 | 12.2 | 12.2 |
| | 25-34 | 17 | 13.8 | 13.8 | 26.0 |
| | 34-44 | 8 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 32.5 |
| | 45-54 | 23 | 18.7 | 18.7 | 51.2 |
| | 55-64 | 40 | 32.5 | 32.5 | 83.7 |
| | 65+ | 20 | 16.3 | 16.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 123 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Figure 2: The Descriptive Analysis of the Age Group

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Female | 62 | 50.4 | 50.4 | 50.4 |
| | Male | 61 | 49.6 | 49.6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 123 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Figure 3: The Descriptive Analysis of the Gender Group

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | College | 14 | 11.4 | 11.4 | 11.4 |
| | Graduate | 45 | 36.6 | 36.6 | 48.0 |
| | Highschool | 12 | 9.8 | 9.8 | 57.7 |
| | Some University | 1 | .8 | .8 | 58.5 |
| | Undergraduate | 51 | 41.5 | 41.5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 123 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Figure 4: The Descriptive Analysis of the Education Level

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Between $100 000 and $150 000 | 33 | 26.8 | 26.8 | 26.8 |
| | Between $30 000 and $49 999 | 2 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 28.5 |
| | Between $50 0000 and $74 999 | 9 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 35.8 |
| | Between $75 000 and $99 999 | 9 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 43.1 |
| | Over $150 000 | 70 | 56.9 | 56.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 123 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Figure 5: The Descriptive Analysis of the Household Income Level

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Centrist | 44 | 35.8 | 35.8 | 35.8 |
| | Left-leaning | 26 | 21.1 | 21.1 | 56.9 |
| | Prefer not to say | 21 | 17.1 | 17.1 | 74.0 |
| | Right-leaning | 32 | 26.0 | 26.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 123 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Figure 6: The Descriptive Analysis of Political Orientation

### *4.3 Reliability Tests*

The Nationalism scale and CETSCALE has demonstrated strong validity and reliability in prior research (Kosterman & Feshbach 1989; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). In the current study, internal consistency was assessed for all scales, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient for *TariffAwareness* scale, *PerceptionAmericans* scale, *Nationalism* scale, *ConsumerEthnocentrism* scale and *ConsumerBehaviour* scale were $\alpha = 0.668$ $\alpha = 0.895$ $\alpha = 0.794$, $\alpha = 0.960$ and $\alpha = 0.843$.

Due to tariff awareness having a questionable Cronbach's alpha, a Pearson correlation coefficient was run. All three items are moderately and positively correlated with each other (values between 0.37 and 0.46). This suggests they are likely measuring related aspects of the same construct. All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, meaning its very unlikely these correlations are due to chance. Therefore, indicating strengthen in scale reliability.

### *4.4 Hypothesis Testing*

#### 4.4.1 Test H1

The mean tariff awareness score was 4.06, whereas the mean *PerceptionAmericans* score was 4.07, where a higher score (out of 5) reflects a more negative perception. A Pearson correlation indicated a moderate, positive relationship between tariff awareness and *PerceptionAmericans*, $r = .439$, $p < .001$. indicates a


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moderate, statistically significant positive correlation, showing that higher tariff awareness is associated with more negative perceptions of Americans.

To examine the predictive relationship to assess whether tariff awareness predicted participants perception of Americans, a linear regression was run. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 121) = 28.85$, $p < .001$. Tariff awareness accounted for 19.3% of the variance in *PerceptionAmericans*, $R^2 = .193$. The unstandardized regression coefficient indicated that for each one-unit increase in tariff awareness, *PerceptionAmericans* increased by 0.42 units ($B = 0.424$, $SE = 0.079$, $\beta = .439$, $p < .001$). The regression model confirms that tariff awareness accounts for 19.3% of the variance in perception, supporting H1.

### 4.4.2 Test H2

The mean of tariff awareness was 4.06 whereas the mean of *Nationalism* was 4.1504. The Pearson correlation: $r = .492$, $p < .001$ indicates there is a moderate-to-strong positive correlation between tariff awareness and nationalism. This suggests that people with higher nationalism scores tend to score higher in tariff awareness.

A linear regression examined whether tariff awareness predicted levels of nationalism. The model was statistically significant, $F(1, 121) = 38.69$, $p < .001$, with tariff awareness accounting for 24.2% of the variance in nationalism scores ($R^2 = .242$). The unstandardized coefficient revealed that higher tariff awareness was associated with higher nationalism ($B = 0.376$, $SE = 0.060$, $\beta = .492$, $p < .001$). Thus, regression analysis lends robust support to H2.

### 4.4.3 Test H3

Regarding descriptive statistics, respondents indicated generally high levels of awareness regarding recent U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods (e.g., aluminium, lumber, dairy). Approximately 80% of participants selected one of the top two awareness levels. Regarding attitudinal and behavioural responses: A majority (81%) agreed or strongly agreed that they are more loyal to Canadian brands because of trade conflicts. Similarly, 83% indicated a preference for choosing Canadian products even when American alternatives

are less expensive. These high percentages suggest that Canadian consumers are both aware of and are influenced by international trade dynamics in their purchasing decisions.

A Chi-square test of independence was conducted to assess the relationship between awareness of U.S. tariffs and willingness to pay more for Canadian products during trade tensions. Results indicated a statistically significant association, $\chi^2(6, N = 123) = 13.47$, $p = .036$. This finding suggests that higher awareness is associated with greater willingness to support Canadian goods, even at a premium. However, 50% of the expected cell counts were less than 5, which may affect the reliability of the result and should be interpreted with caution.

Following a Chi-square test, a Spearman's rho correlation was employed to evaluate the strength and direction of relationships among key variables:

- Awareness and brand loyalty: $r(s) = .415$, $p < .001$
- Awareness and willingness to choose Canadian over cheaper American alternatives: $r(s) = .339$, $p < .001$
- Brand loyalty and willingness to choose Canadian over cheaper American alternatives: $r(s) = .567$, $p < .001$

All correlations were positive and statistically significant, indicating that higher awareness is associated with stronger loyalty and purchasing preferences. The strongest correlation was between brand loyalty and purchase behaviour, reflecting a substantial link between attitudinal and behavioural dimensions of economic nationalism.

A linear regression was conducted to determine whether awareness of U.S. tariffs predicted scores on a composite *DomesticPurchaseIndex*, comprising behavioural and attitudinal items. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 121) = 29.89$, $p < .001$, with an $R^2$ of .198. This suggests that awareness explained 19.8% of the variance in domestic purchasing behaviour. The standardized regression

coefficient was β = .445, t = 5.47, $p < .001$, and the unstandardized coefficient was B = 0.768. Thus, for each unit increase in awareness, the Domestic Purchase Index increased by approximately 0.77 units.

Together, these findings show that consistent pattern of greater tariff awareness is linked to increase loyalty to Canadian products and willingness to pay a premium for domestic products. The moderate to strong correlations and significant regression support H3.

### 4.4.4 Test H4

The mean of tariff awareness is 4.06 while the mean for consumer ethnocentrism is 3.9120. The correlation coefficient is weak (0.178), but it is statistically significant ($p$=.049).

A linear regression was conducted to determine whether awareness of U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods (e.g., aluminium, lumber, dairy) predicts ethnocentric attitudes among Canadian participants. The independent variable was tariff awareness (TA1), and the dependent variable was the composite ethnocentrism score derived from the validated *ConsumerEthnocentrism* scale.

The regression assessed the predictive power of tariff awareness on consumer ethnocentrism. The model reached statistical significance, though the effect was weak, $F(1, 121) = 3.97$, $p = .049$. Tariff awareness explained 3.2% of the variance in consumer ethnocentrism ($R^2 = .032$). The regression coefficient showed that higher tariff awareness predicted a slight increase in ethnocentric attitudes ($B = 0.263$, $SE = 0.132$, $\beta = .178$, $p = .049$). H4 is thus supported but should be interpreted with caution.

### 4.4.5 Test H5

Four separate tests were included to test this hypothesis including frequency analysis, cross-tabulation and linear regression. The frequency analysis showed that the responses to the question “Have you stopped buying any specific U.S. brands in response to trade tensions” indicated that 39 participants (31.7.%) responded yes, whereas 84 participants (68.3%) responded no. Roughly 1 in 3 Canadians reported boycotting U.S. brands due to trade tensions.

A cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between respondents' awareness of U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods (Rated on a scale from 2=not so aware to 5=extremely aware) and their decision to boycott U.S. goods. The results indicated a positive trend: as awareness of U.S. tariffs increased, participants were more likely to report stopping purchases of U.S. brands. The preliminary

analysis suggested a potential link between tariff awareness and consumer activism, prompting further investigation through regression analysis.

A linear regression was conducted with consumer behaviour as the outcome. The model was statistically significant, $F(1, 121) = 29.94$, $p < .001$. Tariff awareness explained 19.8% of the variance in consumer behaviour ($R^2 = .198$). Participants with higher tariff awareness were more likely to engage in domestic-supportive consumer behaviours ($B = 0.461$, $SE = 0.084$, $\beta = .445$, $p < .001$). These findings provide strong evidence that economic awareness influences political consumerism. Canadians who are more informed about U.S. tariffs are significantly more likely to engage in protest purchasing behaviour—specifically, avoiding U.S. brands. The strength of the relationship ($R^2 = 0.198$) indicates that while other factors also influence consumer choices, tariff awareness plays a meaningful role in shaping behavioural responses.

The correlation and regression indicate a meaningful link between awareness and protest purchasing, offering strong support for H5.

### Chapter Summary

The chapter presented the key statistical findings derived from descriptive, reliability, validity and inferential analyses related to the impact of U.S. tariffs on Canadian perceptions, nationalism and consumer behaviour.

The descriptive analysis outlines the demographic profile of the sample, indicated a predominantly older, educated population with a majority in the 150 000 CAD income bracket, mostly residing in Ontario and politically centrist orientation.

Reliability testing showed strong internal consistency across all major scales used in the study. Construct validity was supported through Pearson’s correlations, indicating appropriate levels of convergent validity between related constructs. Criterion validity was established via linear regressions,

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confirming that awareness of U.S. tariffs predicted expected outcomes such as negative perceptions of Americans, increased nationalism and changes in consumer preferences.

Hypothesis testing revealed the following key relationships:

- **H1:** Supported. A moderate, statistically significant correlation ($r$ = .439) and regression ($R^2$ = .193) indicated that higher tariff awareness is associated with more negative perceptions of Americans.
- **H2:** Supported. A stronger correlation ($r$ = .492) and regression ($R^2$ = .242) showed that higher awareness predicted higher nationalism scores.
- **H3:** Supported. Results from correlation ($p$ = .415 to .567), chi-square, and regression ($R^2$ = .198) analyses indicated that tariff awareness is significantly linked to stronger loyalty to Canadian brands and willingness to pay a premium.
- **H4:** Supported with caution. A weak but statistically significant correlation ($r$ = .178) and a small $R^2$ = .032 suggest that awareness of tariffs has a modest effect on ethnocentric attitudes.
- **H5:** Supported. One-third of participants reported boycotting U.S. brands. Regression analysis ($R^2$ = .198) confirmed that tariff awareness significantly predicts protest purchasing behaviour.

Overall, the findings demonstrate consistent support for the theoretical model: awareness of U.S. tariffs is a significant predictor of shifts in nationalistic sentiment and consumer behaviour, reflecting the influence of international trade politics on individuals attitudes and economic actions.

## 5. Discussion

### *5.1 Perception of Americans and Canadian Nationalism*

This finding aligns with social identity theory, which posits that in-group solidarity, under certain conditions, lead to negative attitudes towards out-groups sometimes expressed as out-group discrimination or hostility (Tajfel & Turner's 1979). The imposition of tariffs is seen not merely as an economic act but also a symbolic rejection of Canadian-American partnership. Consequently, Canadians who are more aware of such measures may internalize these tensions, resulting in a more critical outlook toward Americans.

These findings of a more negative view of Americans may be a result of recent controversial presidential administrations as evidenced in research by Adams (2018) and Jedwab (2025).

This mirrors findings from prior studies in political psychology, where external threats often trigger nationalistic responses as a form of protective identity reinforcement (Wang, 2021). Hostility toward the out-group may be augmented during conditions of instability in the relative economic fortunes of nations (

Jung et al., 2002). Under conditions of perceived threat, "foreignness" takes on negative meanings, nationalism increases, and pressures for in-group solidarity increases (Rosenblatt, 1964; Sherif et al., 1961; Sharma, Shimp & Shin, 1992). The surge in nationalism is consistent with research by Wang (2021) who found a causal relation between crisis and nationalism. Canadians who perceive the U.S. actions to be threatening may adopt more nationalistic views as a psychological defence mechanism.

### *5.2 Domestic purchasing*

One of the most robust findings of the study is the relationship between tariff awareness and increased support for Canadian products. Nearly 81% of respondents expressed greater loyalty to Canadian brands, and 83% stated a preference for Canadian goods even when American alternatives are cheaper. The regression results ($R^2$ = 0.198) and strong correlations (e.g., $p$ = .567 between brand loyalty and purchase behaviour) emphasize that awareness of trade conflicts significantly influences consumer preferences.

These findings are consistent with theories of economic nationalism, where consumers make purchasing decisions not solely based on utility but also on values and national allegiance (Proffen & Jürgensmeier, 2024; Reich, 1991). This consumption pattern was highlighted in research by Sequeira and Nardotto (2022), which found that in the months following the Brexit referendum, products prominently labeled as British experienced a 6% increase in sales compared to UK products without a flag and a 13% increase compared to EU products. The implication for Canadian businesses is profound: national branding and messaging that emphasizes local identity many resonate strongly with consumers during period of cross-national trade friction.

### *5.3 Consumer Ethnocentrism*

Interestingly, while consumer ethnocentrism was positively associated with tariff awareness, the relationship was much weaker ($r$ = .178, $R^2$ = .032). Although the results were statistically significant ($p$ = .049), the small effect size suggest that while some individuals may exhibit stronger ethnocentric tendencies, due to tariff awareness, it is not a primary driver.

This outcome might reflect the distinction between nationalistic consumer behaviour (buying Canadian products as an act of support) and ethnocentric attitudes (outright rejection of foreign products on moral grounds). The findings suggest that Canadian consumers may react to U.S. tariffs more pragmatically—supporting their own domestic products—rather than ideologically opposing foreign ones. This aligns with Balabanis et al. (2001), who found that in the Czech Republic, nationalism played the strongest role as an antecedent of ethnocentrism.

### *5.4 Retaliatory Purchasing*

Approximately 32% of respondents reported deliberately avoiding U.S. brands in response to trade tensions. The regression analysis ($R^2$ = 0.198) and Pearson correlation ($r$ = .445) confirms a meaningful association between tariff awareness and retaliatory purchasing behaviours. This suggests a significant degree of consumer activism, where market behaviour becomes an avenue for political expression.

This corresponds with the literature on political consumerism, where individuals use economic choices to support or oppose political actions (Micheletti & McFarland, 2010). These results are also consistent with previous studies on consumer boycotts where economic disputes result in consumers boycotting products from the opposing country (Cheah et al., 2016; Klein; 1998; Li & Liu, 2020; Pandya & Venkatesan, 2016, Weiss et al., 2023).

The ability of trade policy to provoke such responses underscores the intersection of economics, identity and morality in consumer decision-making.

### *5.5 Theoretical Contributions*

This study reveals a divergence between strong domestic support and relatively weak consumer ethnocentrism, suggesting a distinct Canadian model of economic nationalism—one grounded in affirming national identity rather than antagonizing foreign entities. Canadian consumers appear to express belonging through supportive economic behaviour, such as buying domestic goods during trade tensions, challenging ethnocentric models rooted in exclusion (Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998; Shimp & Sharma, 1987).

The findings support political consumerism theory, showing that behaviour is shaped not only by price and quality but also by political awareness and ideology (Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti et al., 2004; Micheletti & McFarland, 2010). Canadian consumers act as political agents, using market choices to express identity or protest injustice, matching with Micheletti's (2003) view of consumers as citizens in the marketplace.

A significant positive correlation between tariff awareness and nationalism supports the link between external threats and in-group solidarity (Bonikowski, 2016). Awareness of tariffs appears to heighten national identity, illustrating how international disputes can trigger expressions of loyalty.

However, the weak correlation between tariff awareness and consumer ethnocentrism suggests that not all protectionist purchasing is ideologically motivated. Buying domestic during trade disputes may often reflect situational responses to perceived threats or unfairness rather than deeply rooted nationalist beliefs (Proffen & Jurgensmeier, 2024). These insights bridge political science, international trade, psychology, and marketing.

### *5.6 Practical Implications*

With U.S. tariffs looming, trade policy and economic uncertainty are top-of-mind for Canadians. While this study found that most have not yet changed their shopping habits (68.3%), nearly a third (31.7%) have. Businesses that understand these concerns will be better positioned to adapt to evolving demand.

Trade tensions present an opportunity for Canadian brands to emphasize domestic roots—highlighting local supply chains, partnerships, and workforce contributions. Such messaging aligns with consumer values and can reinforce loyalty through shared identity (Skey & Antonisch, 2017).

Emotional and symbolic dimensions of consumer behaviour are critical in politically charged contexts. Beyond usage and satisfaction metrics, firms must understand the societal and moral frames shaping perceptions. Marketing that addresses political and emotional triggers can foster deeper

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connections, particularly with politically engaged consumers who are often less price sensitive. “Made in Canada” narratives may justify premium pricing when tied to national interests (Cheah et al., 2016). Targeted marketing is key, as psychographic segmentation can identify consumers receptive to nationalistic messaging (Cleveland, Laroche & Papadopoulos, 2009). Multinationals, especially U.S. brands, should anticipate reputational risks and visibly support Canadian causes through local partnerships and sourcing initiatives. Demonstrating alignment with Canadian values can help preserve trust, especially during geopolitical tensions (Breidahl, Holtug & Kongshøj, 2018).

Policymakers can strengthen public support for trade measures by appealing to national pride and unity. Recognizing that consumers view economic policy through symbolic as well as financial lenses allows for more effective communication.

## Limitations

Several limitations emerged in this study that may affect the generalizability and depth of its findings. First, the sample was restricted to adult residents of Canada, with a disproportionate concentration of participants from Ontario (99.2%). As such, the results may not reflect regional or cultural differences across other provinces or territories. Attitudes toward tariffs and related behaviours may vary significantly across geographic, economic, or political contexts. Additionally, the relatively small sample size ($N$=123) limited the opportunity to capture a broad range of viewpoints. While meaningful patterns were observed, a larger and more diverse sample would allow for greater confidence in generalizing the findings and for deeper subgroup analyses.

## Future Research

While this study provides important insights into the relationships between Canadians’ tariff awareness, perceptions of Americans, nationalism, and consumer behaviour, there are several directions for future research that could further explore and deepen these findings.

Greater generalizability as well as longitudinal research design would help assess how consumer attitudes and behaviours evolve over time—particularly as trade tensions escalate, stabilize, or resolve. For instance, do retaliatory behaviours persist after tariffs are lifted? Or do consumers eventually revert to pre-conflict purchasing habits? (Heilmann, 2016) A long-term view would provide valuable insight into the durability of politically motivated consumer behaviour. Future research could also adopt a comparative, cross-cultural approach to investigate whether similar relationships exist in other countries affected by U.S. trade policy—such as China, Mexico, or members of the European Union. Such research could identify whether observed patterns are uniquely Canadian or part of a broader, global consumer trend. Cultural dimensions such as collectivism, power distance, or masculinity may also shape how trade disputes influence behaviour across nations (Hofstede, 1983).

Future research should aim to include greater geographic and demographic diversity. The current sample was predominantly older, educated, and based in Ontario. Including participants from other provinces and territories, as well as a broader range of age groups, educational levels household income brackets would enhance the generalizability of the results and allow for analysis of regional or demographic variations in consumer response to trade conflict.

The study’s use of self-reported data could be altered in future studies by employing experimental designs or behavioural tracking to better measure actual behaviour. For example, experimental simulations that expose participants to different trade scenarios could reveal causal relationships between tariff awareness and consumer choices. Additionally, real-world purchasing data collected during trade disputes would offer more robust evidence of retaliatory consumption patterns (Pandya & Venkatesan, 2016).

Another opportunity for future studies should explore how consumers become aware of trade conflicts and how that awareness is shaped. Media framing, social media discourse, political narratives, and interpersonal communication likely all play a role in shaping public understanding of trade issues (Brutger & Guisinger, 2025). Studies could examine the effectiveness of corporate messaging and localization strategies aimed at mitigating reputational risk and preserving consumer behaviours.

Furthermore, future research should consider mediators and moderators of the relationships identified in this study. For example, demographic factors or nationalism may mediate the relationship between tariff awareness and consumer behaviour, while political ideology, economic security, or trust in

government may moderate these associations (Jung & Mittal, 2020). Structural equation modelling could be used to explore such relationships and enhance theoretical depth.

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