Item-Generation in Consumer Animosity Research

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Abstract: [1] Seminal investigation of the effect of animosity on consumer behavior has ushered in a new stream of research into the field of consumer behavior. In the overwhelming majority of studies since Klein’s et al. research, scales originally developed by Klein et al. have been adapted to various contexts. In the overwhelming majority of these studies both the country which is the target of animosity and the reasons for the animosity were assumed. [2] Have criticized these studies for being deterministic. Despite this criticism, most researchers continue to follow the footsteps of their predecessors. Hence, in light of the abovementioned criticism, the objectives of this exploratory study are as follows: (1) To learn from respondents, rather than assume, which country among a host of countries is the target of animosity; (2) To explore the reasons for the animosity; (3) To determine, based on the study findings, whether it is an absolute must to generate new consumer animosity items for every study. A semi-structured interview is employed to collect data from a sample of 80 consumers. The findings of the present investigation suggest that, at least in certain cases, the optimal methodological solution is to learn from consumers what country, if any, is the target of animosity and use existing scales to measure the reasons for the animosity. The use of existing scales would enable researchers to compare their results to those of previous studies.

Key words: Country of origin • Consumer attitudes • Consumer animosity • Sub cultural groups • Item-generation

INTRODUCTION

Country of origin research focuses on studying consumers’ emotional response to and cognitive processing of country of origin cues. This stream of research examines not only how country images are formed but also how they influence consumer behavior [3-6]. According to [7], country of origin image is “the picture, the reputation, the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products of a specific country. This image is created by such variables as representative products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history and traditions” (p.68).

COO research has become relevant to an increasing number of researchers and practitioners as more and more countries became more globally oriented. The globalization of world markets is a consequence of several micro and macro-economical changes pronounced in the international arena. One such change is the increase in the production capacity at home which has made the search for new markets abroad inevitable [8]. Another change pertains to technological developments in communication and transportation which have lowered geographical and cultural distances [9]. While import tariffs can be lowered by regulation, there are non-tariff obstacles to free trade which are more difficult to address. These non-tariff barriers are socio-psychological factors such as consumer ethnocentrism and animosity.

The present paper is organized in the following order. First, the paper presents a review of the consumer animosity literature. Then, a study conducted by the authors of the present work in response to [2] critique of the consumer animosity research is delineated. Next, the results of the study are reported and discussed. Finally, the authors present their conclusions and recommendations for future research.

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Literature Review: To date dozens of studies published in peer-reviewed journals have examined the effects of consumer animosity on consumer behavior [9-16]. According to [17], animosity is a strong emotion of dislike and hatred triggered by past or present military, political, or economic contentiousness and actions between countries or peoples discerned as unwarranted or diverging from social norms.

[1] seminal study on the effects of animosity on consumer behavior was conducted in the context of the Naijing massacre. This relationship was tested with a model known as the Animosity Model of Foreign Product Purchase. In a review of the consumer animosity literature, [2] have criticized past studies for being deterministic. [2] Argue that these studies have determined in advance, rather than elicit from respondents, what country is the target of animosity. Furthermore, they argue that the reasons for the animosity were also predetermined.

An examination of the consumer behavior literature conducted by the authors of the present study uncovers evidence in support of the [2] contentions.

Although a few researchers 2, [18-21] have either developed completely new items or made major modifications to existing items, the overwhelming majority of studies have essentially adopted existing scales [16, 19, 22-27]. Table 1 presents the items used to measure consumer animosity in previous research.

The present work was conducted in the initial stages of a large-scale study conducted by one of the authors of the present study which aim was to examine the relationship between consumer animosity and purchase involvement [28]. The current investigation is conducted for three reasons. The first purpose is to learn from respondents, rather than assume, which country among a host of countries is the target of animosity. The second objective of the study is to explore the reasons for the

Table 1: Items Employed in Previous Research

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Animosity</td>
<td>I feel angry toward the Japanese.</td>
<td>I still feel angry towards Japan because of WWII.</td>
<td>I feel anger because of the role that the Germans played in World War II.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Animosity</td>
<td>I will never forgive Japan for such war crimes as “comfort women.”</td>
<td>We should not forget the atrocities committed by Japan during WWII.</td>
<td>I can still get angry over Germany’s role in World War II.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Japan should pay for what it did to Korea during the occupation.</td>
<td>I cannot forgive Japan for bombing Pearl Harbor.</td>
<td>I will never forgive the Germans for occupying our country and pursuing the Jews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Japan is not a reliable trading partner.</td>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Germany is liable for the damage caused by the bombardment of Rotterdam in 1940.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Japan wants to gain economic power over Korea.</td>
<td>Japan is taking advantage of the U.S.</td>
<td>I will never forgive the Germans for bombing of Rotterdam in 1940.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Japan has too much economic influence in Korea.</td>
<td>Japan wants to gain economic power over the Netherlands.</td>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>The Japanese are doing business unfairly with Korea.</td>
<td>The U.S. is more fair with its trade dealings with Japan than Japan is with the U.S.</td>
<td>While doing business with Germans one should be careful German companies are unreliable trading partners (e.g., Fokker-Dasa). Germany wants to gain economic power over the Netherlands. German companies often outsmart Dutch companies in business deals. Germany has too much influence on the Netherlands and the Dutch economy. German companies are doing business unfairly with</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>General Animosity</th>
<th>Nakos &amp; Hajidimitriou (2007)</th>
<th>Rose et al. (2009)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Animosity</td>
<td>I dislike Israeli Arabs.</td>
<td>War Animosity</td>
<td>War Animosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Animosity</td>
<td>I feel angry toward Israeli Arabs.</td>
<td>I dislike the Turks.</td>
<td>I feel angry toward the Italians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Israeli Arabs should pay for what they did during the Intifada.</td>
<td>I feel angry toward the Turks.</td>
<td>I will never forgive the Italians for what they did in the second world war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Israeli Arabs are not reliable trading partners.</td>
<td>I will never forgive Turkey for what it has done to Greeks in the past.</td>
<td>Italy should pay for what they did in the second world war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli Arabs want to gain economic power over Israel.</td>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Turkish should pay for what it has done to Greeks in the past.</td>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli Arabs are taking advantage of Israel.</td>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Economic Animosity (The UK/Italy) is not a reliable trading partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli Arabs have too much economic influence in Israel.</td>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Turkish is not a reliable trading partner.</td>
<td>Economic Animosity (The UK/Italy) wants to gain economic power over Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli Arabs are doing business unfairly with other Israelis.</td>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Turkey wants to gain economic power over Greece.</td>
<td>(The UK/Italy) is taking advantage of Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(The UK/Italy) is doing business unfairly with other Israelis.</td>
<td>Economic Animosity</td>
<td>Turkey has too much economic influence in Greece.</td>
<td>(The UK/Italy) has too much economic influence in Israel.</td>
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A 7 point Liker scale was used to measure consumers’ attitudes toward Israel’s ten most important trade partners. Respondents were then requested to rank their level of agreement with each reason given on a 5-point Liker scale. While [2] suggest that a total of 100 points are allocated to each reason, scales are a commonly used method of measurement and hence it was presumed that a 1-5 scale would make it easier for respondents to cope with the ranking task.

**Data Collection:** A total of 80 individuals have taken part in the study. The administrations of a number of “Amcha” branches (a nonprofit organization that provides psychological support to survivors) have been contacted and a formal request to interview members was submitted. After permission to interview was granted, the administration was asked to provide information as to the days and time of the day the organizations’ members visit the place.

Once this information was received, the researcher who also conducted the interviews made arrangements with the administration of the various branches to revisit the organization on the specified days and hours in an attempt to meet and encourage as many members as possible to participate in the study. Those members that were present on the days visited were approached individually by the researcher.

Out of the total of 30 survivors approached, 24 agreed to participate in the study. Once individuals approached expressed their agreement to participate in the study, they were asked whether they would be willing to take part in a telephone interview. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were not conducted for a number of reasons. First, it was presumed that the preoccupation of the subjects with the Holocaust within the confines of the organization would be greater than it is normally. This in turn would have resulted in more members mentioning Germany as the country they prefer the least. Conducting
face-to-face interviews in the homes of each organization member were also considered. However, this was not possible due to the fact that the organizations’ members live in different cities and an attempt to schedule interviews at times of the day which would have suited all respondents was not successful.

In order to examine whether there are any intergenerational differences between Holocaust survivors, the second and third generations and Holocaust survivors were asked if they would provide the telephone number of their children and/or grandchildren. For the purposes of the present study, “children” and “grandchildren” refer to second and third generation survivors respectively. In accordance with the ethical guidelines set by the University of Manchester, second and third generation survivors younger than the age of 18 were not solicited for participation. Out of the 24 survivors interviewed, 19 provided the telephone numbers of their children and/or grandchildren.

Eight second generation survivors and 8 third generation survivors agreed to participate in the study. The second and third generation Holocaust survivors were asked whether they would be willing to provide the telephone numbers of two or three friends who they definitely know is not related to the Holocaust in any way. Using the snowball sampling techniques has enabled the researchers to collect the telephone numbers of 50 potential participants who are neither Holocaust survivors nor 2nd and 3rd generation survivors. These respondents lack of a relationship to the Holocaust was confirmed during the interview. 40 of the 50 respondents contacted expressed their willingness to participate in the study.

In the first question respondents were requested to express their preference (on a 7 point Likert scale) toward 10 countries read out to them by the interviewer (in the following order: USA, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, UK, China, Italy, Holland, Hong Kong, India). The scale was adapted from [32].

The second question required respondents to freely express their feelings toward the country they preferred the least. After respondents indicated their preferences they were asked why the country with the lowest ranking is the least preferred (for example, stereotypes, personal experience, animosity, etc.). If, however, a respondent stated that a particular country is least preferred for a reason deemed too general by the interviewer (i.e. German people are unpleasant, I don't like Chinese products), he/she was prompted to give more details by being asked to elaborate.

Finally, the interviewees were asked to rank the reasons provided on a scale of 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important). The purpose of the ranking was to allow a comparison of the importance attributed to the various reasons for not preferring a particular country.

RESULTS

The top of mind approach was employed to learn about the country respondents preferred the least (Table 2). 55% of respondents mentioned Germany. China was the next least preferred with almost 19% of respondents mentioning it.

Sub-Group Analysis: A t-test was conducted to explore whether the two main Israeli-Jewish sub-cultural groups (Ashkenazim and Mizrahim) differ in their country preferences (see Table 3). No statistically significant difference was found between the groups (Prob> F = 0.3857). This suggests that the image of countries that have committed war atrocities affect the victimized nation as whole rather than merely a particular group within the country.

Out of the individuals (55%) who have mentioned Germany as the country they prefer the least, 71.27% are either Holocaust survivors or 2nd and 3rd generation survivors. Respondents have cited four main reasons for having chosen Germany as the least preferred country: 1) the murder of innocent Jews during WWII; 2) the existence of Neo-Nazism in Germany today; 3) the fact that somebody they know (for instance, a parent, a grandparent, an uncle, a friend, etc.) has been victimized (i.e. killed or persecuted) by the Nazis; 4) personal victimization by the Nazis.

All four reasons for disliking Germany related to WWII have received at least 4.75 points on average on a 5-point scale. 4.75 points in the scale employed in the current investigation are comparable to 95 points (on a scale of 0 to 100 points) in the scale used in the study conducted by [2].

Table 2: Frequency of Countries Preferred the Least by Respondents.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>57.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>66.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td>85.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>95.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100.00</td>
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</table>
**DISCUSSION**

The present investigation was conducted in response to [2] criticism of the research approach to investigating the effects of animosity on consumer behavior adopted by the overwhelming majority of past research. The results of the present study demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of respondents prefer Germany the least. This is especially evident among respondents that have family relatives that were either murdered by the Nazis or are Holocaust survivors. This finding is in stark contrast to the reported results of a similar study conducted by [2] in Australia. More than half of the study participants (59%) have mentioned either the US, Germany or Turkey as the country they prefer the least. Australians have not mentioned Russia as one of the countries they prefer the least despite the latter’s occupation of the former following WWII. From this evidence the researchers have concluded that consumers are not conscious of historical events unless they are reminded of them. Thus, they suggest that researchers base their country choice based on research evidence rather than intuition.

The fact that respondents have not mentioned Russia leaves several questions unanswered. First, have the researchers of the abovementioned study surveyed consumers who have been affected by the Russian occupation? In other words, has their sample included the population whose family members, relatives or friends has been murdered or have fallen victim to atrocities during the Russian occupation? Did the sample include individuals who have lived in Australia at the time of the occupation?

In the present study, however, only 32% of respondents mentioned Neo-Nazism in today’s Germany as a reason lying behind their feelings of animosity. The majority of respondents mentioned reasons that are related, one way or the other, to Germany’s role in the Holocaust. The differences in findings may be accounted for by the relatively large number (approximately 50%) of Holocaust survivors or 2nd and 3rd generation survivors who have taken part in the present study. In [2] study, the three most frequently mentioned countries by Australian consumers were the USA, Germany and Turkey. While the majority of respondents indicated mentality, loss of identity or economic issues as causes of their feeling of animosity toward Germany, less than half of those who have mentioned Germany cited WWII as the reason and have allocated merely 7.3 points (out of 100) on average to its importance. This is quite unexpected considering that Austria’s annexation by Germany in 1938 resulted in the death of 120,000 people [33].

Although it may be more appropriate to generate new items to measure animosity in certain circumstances, there are several reasons why future researchers should consider adapting existing scales first. Firstly, since [1] study, over 30 research articles have been published in peer-reviewed or scholarly journals. [1] Animosity Model has been used (essentially unchanged, see Table 1) in later studies with various populations and contexts [19, 22, 25, 27]. [27], for one, has retested [1] “Animosity Model of Foreign Product Purchase” in the context of the Korean-Japanese relationship during WWII. While in the former study students comprised the sampling frame, in the latter study the sampling frame consisted of Chinese consumers.

Shin’s study demonstrates that the relationships between the various constructs in the model (i.e. animosity, ethnocentrism, judgments of product quality and intentions to buy) can be replicated even when used with various populations. This is an encouraging finding as it shows that the items used to measure the various constructs comprising the animosity model are not only valid but also reliable. In other words, it is likely that results obtained from a given sample can be generalized to other groups.

Secondly, the study participants of the present study have cited four main reasons for having chosen Germany as the least preferred country: 1) the murder of innocent Jews during WWII; 2) the existence of Neo-Nazism in Germany today; 3) the fact that somebody they know has been victimized by the Nazis; 4) personal victimization by the Nazis. These reasons reflect on scales already employed and tested in previous research. Thus, rather than developed completely new scales to measure animosity using the reasons provided by respondents as the scale items, existing scales may be employed.

For example, the first reason mentioned by respondents is the murder of innocent Jews during WWII. This could be measured with the 3-item war animosity construct which includes items such as ‘I still feel angry
towards (country) because of (incident)’. The second reason mentioned by respondents is the existence of Neo-Nazism in Germany today. The third reason given by respondents is the fact that somebody they know (for instance, a parent, a grandparent, an uncle, a friend, etc.) has been victimized (i.e. killed or persecuted) by the Nazis. The final reason given mentioned by respondents is personal victimization by the Nazis. The last three reasons mentioned could be measured with the items included in the war animosity construct (e.g. ‘I cannot forgive (country) for (incident)’, ‘I feel angry towards (country)”).

Thirdly, the development of new scales for every new study may lead to serious methodological implications. In a related stream of research, country of origin effects, different scales have been employed to measure country of origin images [34, 35]. Consequently, findings are inconsistent and cannot be generalized [36].

Finally, [37] developed scales that can be employed to measure consumer animosity in a pan-cultural manner. In other words, the measurement enables researchers to assess consumer animosity in various contexts and in different countries. In conclusion, before choosing between item-generation and item-adaptation, future studies should conduct in-depth interviews with individuals from the relevant population to determine the country which is the target of animosity and the reasons for the animosity. If the reasons provided reflect on existing scales which can be adapted with minor modifications, then the use of existing scales may be the better choice. If, however, no existing scales can be employed, then the study should proceed with the validation of the new scales and their eventual inclusion in the study.

Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research: The present study has a number of limitations. First, time constraints have limited the sample size. Although small sample sizes are common practice in pilot studies [29, 30, 38], future research should replicate the present study with a larger sample size.

Another limitation of the present study is related to one of the sampling techniques employed in the present investigation (i.e. judgmental sample). The judgmental sampling technique enables researchers to collect data from individuals from a homogeneous group. Nevertheless, whilst some Holocaust survivors were placed in concentration camps, others have found refuge and thus have not endured equal suffering. It is, therefore, suggested that the attitudes of Holocaust survivors toward Germany will depended on their personal experiences. Thus, the sampling technique employed in the present study may over-represent certain groups of survivors but yet under-represent other groups.

A third limitation is the collection of data from a single organization, i.e. “Amcha”. Thus, the results of the study reflect the attitudes of a particular group of survivors, i.e. those in most need of assistance. What are the attitudes of those survivors who have not turned to “Amcha” for help? Perhaps they are less traumatized than those that do. Thus, they are less likely to harbor high levels of animosity toward Germany. Finally, the current study has been conducted in a single country. Hence, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

CONCLUSION

Additional factors which could be potential moderators of consumer animosity were not investigated in the present study. Perhaps a religious person would have a different, perhaps more positive and attitude towards Germany than a secular person? A growing body of evidence suggests that religiosity affects consumer choices [39, 40 and 41]. While a religious person might be more forgiving towards Germany believing that the suffering endured by Jews in the Holocaust was God's punishment for sins committed by Jews themselves, a secular person's point of view might be that the genocide committed by the Nazis was unwarranted. Thus, additional variables not included in the current investigation are possible moderators of animosity.

Other potentially significant moderators of animosity are social norms. Consumer behavior research suggests that social norms affect consumers' willingness to buy [20, 41]. The present study indicates that Germany is the least preferred country by the majority of respondents. It stands to reason that some respondents have mentioned Germany because of the belief that it is socially undesirable to possess a positive attitude towards Germany.

The results of the present study suggest that when marketing managers wish to penetrate a market in which some or all consumers may potentially harbor feeling of animosity toward their country's products, they should conduct research to learn whether their country is in fact a target of animosity. If it is, they should conduct further research so as to investigate the reasons for this. If the reasons mirror existing scales, then they should be employed with minor modifications if necessary. If reasons given don't reflect on scales in the literature, then they should proceed with the item-generation process.
REFERENCES


