

Examining the Animosity Model from Both Explicit and Implicit Perspectives

Completion Report

Increasing globalization presents great challenges to both domestic and international marketers. One of the challenges some firms may face is the cross-country tension due to historical, economic, military, religious, or political conflicts, which usually manifest as kind of animosity and will affect consumers' product evaluations or their purchase decisions of foreign products. Therefore, it becomes a critical issue for marketing managers to understand the cause, correlates and mechanism of animosity when international conflicts emerge and to develop appropriate marketing strategies to cope with them.

In this paper, we reexamine the animosity model of foreign product purchase by Klein, Ettenson, and Morris (1998) in the context of Chinese consumers' animosity toward Japan to better understand the relationship of animosity, product evaluation, and purchase intention. This study goes beyond the Klein's model and advances it in the following areas. First, we extend the Klein's model by examining the differential roles of two components of animosity (war animosity and economic animosity) on product judgments and willingness to buy. Second, we also incorporated implicit animosity into the Klein's model and examined its impact on product judgments and willingness to buy beyond explicit animosity.

A total of 224 college students from Shanghai and Guangzhou participated in the study and they completed various explicit measures including product judgments, willingness to buy Japanese products, consumer ethnocentrism, war animosity, economic animosity, and Japanese brand ownership. Implicit Association Test (IAT) was employed to measure implicit animosity with "China vs. Japan" as target concepts and "good vs. bad" as attribute concepts. Results of the structural equation modeling showed that (1) war animosity and economic animosity had different impacts on product judgments and willingness to buy. Specifically, war animosity led to unwillingness to buy Japanese products but had no relationship with product judgments whereas economic animosity affected product judgments positively but had no relationship with willingness to buy; (2) implicit animosity was positively associated with war animosity only and had a negative impact on willingness to purchase independent of explicit animosity, consumer ethnocentrism, and product judgments; (4) consumer ethnocentrism influenced willingness to buy Japanese products negatively but had no impact on product judgments.

The findings have important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the present study suggests that animosity is a multidimensional construct and these different dimensions should be treated separately because they may have different impacts on consumers' product judgments and willingness to buy. Second, implicit animosity has its unique influence on consumers' willingness to buy independent of explicit animosity and consumer ethnocentrism, which suggests that future research in this area should take implicit animosity into account. Practically, the findings are helpful for marketing managers to develop appropriate marketing strategies. Marketing manager can't ignore the potential influence of both explicit and implicit animosity when making marketing strategies.

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