Consumer Animosity: a Within-Nation Study of Arab and Jewish Israelis’ Attitudes Toward Foreign Goods

Gregory Rose, University of Washington Tacoma, USA
Aviv Shoham, University of Haifa
Mei Rose, University of Puget Sound

This study examines the animosity of Arab and Jewish Israelis toward the United Kingdom and Italy and their willingness to purchase products from these nations. The results highlight the importance of considering subcultures when studying animosity. Both animosity and consumer ethnocentrism led to a decreased willingness to purchase a nation’s products. High levels of animosity also affected product judgments. Arab Israelis felt more animosity toward the United Kingdom than Jewish Israelis, which negatively impacted their product judgments of British products.

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/14059/la/v2_pdf/LA-02

[copyright notice]:
This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at http://www.copyright.com/.
Consumer Animosity: A Within-Nation Study of Arab and Jewish Israelis’ Attitudes toward Foreign Goods

Mei Rose, University of Puget Sound, USA
Aviv Shoham, University of Haifa, Israel
Gregory M. Rose, University of Washington Tacoma, USA

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of animosity on the evaluation of foreign products across subcultures. Previous studies have focused primarily on animosity across nations (e.g., Ettensten and Klein 2005; Klein and Ettensten 1999; Witkowski 2000). Recent studies have begun to examine animosity between two subcultures (Hinck 2004; Shimp et al. 2004; Shoham et al. 2006), all of these studies, however, have focused exclusively on domestic products and neglected attitudes toward foreign products and nations. The current study addresses this issue by examining the animosity levels of two subcultures (Arab and Jewish Israelis) toward the UK and Italy and their attitudes toward British and Italian goods. It contributes to the literature by examining the attitudes of two distinct subcultures, highlighting the importance of subculture in consumer animosity, and evaluating the impact of subgroup attitudes on product judgments and willingness to buy products from foreign nations.

The specific context chosen for this study was the nation of Israel. Israel has two distinct ethnic subcultures (Jewish and Arab Israelis) with diverging attitudes toward various nations.

Two specific target nations, the United Kingdom and Italy, were chosen as the foci of animosity. The United Kingdom was chosen because of its historical role in the Middle East, its recent support for the Iraqi war, and the potential for differences in attitudes across Arab and Jewish subgroups. Italy was chosen as a benchmark, with relatively favorable attitudes expected (and identified in a pretest) for both subgroups. Political and regional tensions in the Middle East provide a relatively strong test of differences across subcultures and an interesting context for this study.

Data for this study was collected from shopping and community centers in Israel catering to middle-class neighborhoods. There are 112 usable questionnaires from Arab Israeli consumers and 111 usable questionnaires from Jewish Israeli consumers, a response rate of 86.2% and 95.7% respectively. The samples were 58.9% male and 41.1% female for Arab Israelis, and 42.3% male and 57.7% female for Jewish Israelis. Both groups generally reported having some college without a degree, an average of two children, and a modal age of between 31 and 35 years old. The income for the Arab and Jewish Israelis samples, respectively, were 40.2% and 46.9% for below average [NIS9,000 (US$2,000), 44.6% and 36.0% at national average(NIS9,000-NIS15,000 (US$2,000-US$3,333)], and 15.2% and 17.1% for above average (greater than NIS15,000 (US$3,333)) Israeli Bureau of Statistics 2002).

Multi-item measures were used to measure all constructs. Animosity measures feelings of hostility toward a nation (Klein et al. 1998). Consumer ethnocentrism measures the view of things in which one’s own group is the center of everything (Shimp and Sharma 1987). The product judgment scale measures the perceived quality and workmanship of a country’s products, while the willingness to buy scale measures the receptiveness of consumers to buying products from that country (Klein et al. 1998). The reliability coefficients for all these scales exceeded .70 for both groups.

The overall pattern of means generally reflected our intentions. Animosity was higher among Arab Israelis toward Britain than Jewish Israelis and levels of animosity toward Italy did not differ (as was intended).

The relationship between variables was examined next. Animosity was related to an unwillingness to buy across all four contexts. In other words, an individual’s feelings of animosity toward a nation decreased one’s willingness to buy goods from that nation regardless of the subculture examined (Arab or Jewish Israelis) or the target nation (the UK or Italy). Similar effects were observed for consumer ethnocentrism, which was related to both animosity and an unwillingness to buy products from both the UK and Italy. Thus, consistent with previous research (e.g., Ettensten and Klein 2005; Klein et al. 1998; Nijssen and Douglas 2004; Witkowski 2000), animosity and consumer ethnocentrism consistently contribute to unwillingness to buy at the individual level.

Other effects, in contrast, were context-specific and only observed when examining Arab Israelis’ animosity towards the UK. Animosity was highest among Arab Israelis toward this nation, which decreased product judgments of British products. These effects were not observed for Italian products or for Jewish Israelis’ assessments of British products. Thus, strong consumer sentiment can cloud product judgments within a specific subculture.

Animosity was strongest among Arab Israelis toward the UK and only in this context did animosity result in a derogation of product judgments. Arab Israelis may feel culturally and religiously connected to other Arabs in the Middle East and identify with other Arabs as an “in group.” This sense of kinship with fellow Arabs may contribute to feelings of hostility toward the UK and a perceived desire for justice for recent political tensions in the Middle East.

Consumer ethnocentrism, in contrast, produced an unwillingness to buy foreign products across all contexts. Levels of ethnocentrism, however, were unexpectedly higher among Jewish Israelis. Contrasting the findings across groups for the two target nations provides some interesting results. In the Italian context levels of animosity were similar and consumer ethnocentrism was the primary driver for both groups. Levels of animosity differed in relation to the UK, where animosity played a stronger role for Arab Israelis. These findings suggest that contrary to previous findings that separate product judgments from animosity (Ettensten and Klein 2005; Klein 2002; Klein and Ettensten 1999), strong levels of animosity can impact product judgments and contribute to an unwillingness to buy products from a specific nation. Thus, we find, contrary to previous research, that animosity can and does influence product judgments but only when it is high (as it is among Arab Israelis toward the UK).

In sum, this study extends previous research on consumer ethnocentrism and animosity to within-nation subcultures. It focuses on an ongoing and relatively strong context of animosity and explicitly tests for and finds moderation across subgroups. Important differences can and do occur between subcultures in their level of animosity toward other nations. Differences can also occur in the influence of animosity on product judgments and the willingness of...
a specific subculture to buy products from people and products associated with a particular nation.

**References**


