

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ANIMOSITY MODEL EXTENSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR PURCHASE INTENTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Although issues of cultural and religious differences are complicated, assessing the influence of cultural and religious animosity have on purchase intentions is even more complex and is often neglected in the consumer behavior literature (Klein, Ettenson and Morris 1998). The purpose of this study is to twofold: 1. to extend the animosity model developed by Klein, Ettenson and Morris (1998) by adding cultural and religious animosity constructs. 2. to provide a measurement tool and an understanding of how cultural and religious differences impact consumer intention to purchase regardless of beliefs regarding the quality of the product.

INTRODUCTION

One of the main areas neglected in consumer research is the impact of religious differences and cultural stereotypes on foreign purchase intention and foreign product quality evaluation. Huntington (1993) argues that differences in history, language, culture, tradition and, most importantly, religion will be the driving forces for conflicts. History is full of examples of wars that have been fought based on religious and cultural differences. If religious and cultural differences can lead to armed conflict and atrocities, it is reasonable that religious and/or cultural animosity toward a nation or culture might also affect consumers' willingness to buy products produced by companies identified with the source of this animosity. Although there has been a substantial amount of research with respect to the country of origin effect (COO) and ethnocentricity, arguably these phenomena are different than those proposed here, a contention substantiated by the results uncovered by Klein and her colleagues (1998). The purpose of this study is twofold: 1. to extend the animosity model developed by Klein, Ettenson and Morris (1998) by adding cultural and religious animosity constructs 2. to provide a measurement tool and an improved understanding of how cultural and religious differences impact consumer intentions to purchase products regardless of their product quality evaluations or ethnocentricity. There is a growing need for such measures as more corporations seek a global market, bringing them face-to-face with potential animosity from consumers in that marketplace.

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ANIMOSITY

Klein and her colleagues (1998) argue that animosity is a country-specific construct based on beliefs regarding the collective actions of that particular country either in the past or today. These beliefs inform consumer attitudes about the appropriateness of products from that country. Their findings show that consumer animosity toward the military and/ or economic actions of a country lead consumers to reject products identified with that country despite their evaluations of the product itself. Ethnocentrism, which is a belief that buying all foreign products is inappropriate, also leads consumers to reject products regardless of product quality. These constructs are independent, in prior empirical trials (Klein et al. 1998). Thus, an individual unwilling to purchase products from one foreign country based on war or economic animosity might be perfectly willing to buy products from another foreign country. Another distinction between ethnocentrism and animosity is the perception of product quality. Netemeyer, Durvasula, and Lichtenstein (1991) found a negative correlation between ethnocentrism and product judgment. However, in the case of animosity, it is conceivable that consumers who bear animosity toward a culture may still be objective about judging the quality of their products.

There are also crucial differences between war and economic animosity constructs developed by Klein, and her colleagues (1998) and our religious and cultural animosity constructs. First, these types of animosities are different from one another in terms of what they represent. Huntington (1993) argues that culture and religion define who we are. He argues that a person for example, could be a half Chinese and a half Japanese but a person could not be a half Muslim and a half Christian. We can safely argue that people may find it easier to compromise on issues that are based on economics or wars and find it harder to do the same when it comes to culture and religion. Based on this we argue that cultural and religious animosity may be deeper and longer lasting compared to war or economic animosity. Second, the war construct is based on past or present wars between countries or nations while cultural and religious animosity constructs are based on present religious and cultural differences discords.

Finally, it can be argued that the impact of cultural and religious animosity can be more prevalent among citizens compared to war or economic animosity. For example, according to CBS news, millions of people in Iraq did not resist the U.S. occupation and it can be safely assumed that if this war was viewed to be a religious war, these people would have probably acted differently. Based on this argument we believe cultural and religious animosity may be more shared by people of one nation than war or economic animosity. We also argue that animosity and ethnocentrism are fundamentally different.

THE CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS ANIMOSITY MODEL

Klein and her colleagues (1998) proposed the construct of animosity between nations and their finding support its impact on foreign product purchase. Klein's model, which developed scales to measure war and economic animosity (defined as remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political or economic events), demonstrated the negative impact of these constructs on Chinese purchase intentions related to products from the source of this animosity, Japan. Nijssen and Douglas (1999) tested the animosity model in The Netherlands and found support for the theory. They also found that those who are willing to travel to foreign countries to have a positive attitude toward foreign products. Shin (2001) tested the animosity model in Korea and found support for it as well. Although the model has been supported we argue that animosity toward another country or culture emanates from several potential sources in addition to those identified by Klein, et al (1998) and Figure 1 attempts to model these factors. Specifically, extant literature identifies the potential of religious and cultural animosity to impact purchase intentions.

Carroll (2001) argues that more people have been killed in the name of Jesus Christ than any other name in the history of the world. There is little doubt that the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 were due to religious animosity, at least in part. Throughout history, religion has played a critical role in many aspects of life including whether countries traded with each other or declared war against each other. Although empirical documentation of the impact of religious animosity on consumers' purchase intention is lacking, anecdotal evidence suggests that there is an impact of religious animosity on consumers' purchase intention. For example, some Muslim religious leaders make it a religious and a moral obligation for the faithful to boycott foreign products from certain countries at certain times. Muslim leaders have called for a boycott on French products in protest over France's move to ban Islamic headscarves from schools (Aljazeera News 2004). It seems plausible to suspect that this religious animosity plays a role in their willingness to buy foreign products, thus we propose:

H1: Religious animosity will have a negative impact on consumers' willingness to buy products representative of rejected religious values.

Netemeyer, Durvasula, and Lichtenstein (1991) found that customers who believe it is wrong to buy foreign goods tend to perceive foreign goods to be of lower quality. However as argued above the situation of animosity is different. It seems plausible to think that consumers who harbor religious or cultural animosity may still be able to view products from the hated country objectively. Thus we propose:

H2: Religious animosity will have no effect on product judgments.

Cultural animosity has also played a role in world affairs and in consumer behavior. Grantham (1998) argues that it is easy to trace French animosity toward America back a century and a half and this animosity played an instrumental part in placing quotas on American films in France. Similarly, American consumers boycotted French products (wine, etc.) during the American/Iraqi war because the French government would not support the American invasion of Iraq (CBS News 2003). Meanwhile, Saudi schoolchildren are taught intolerance and contempt for the West, Christians and Jews in their textbooks (Harris 2003). It seems plausible that cultural animosity will have a negative impact on foreign product purchase intention. In regard to product judgment, we use the previous argument where we suspect that cultural animosity will not impact product judgment. Thus we propose:

H 3: Cultural animosity will have a direct negative impact on willingness to buy.

H4: Cultural animosity will have no effect on product judgments.

It seems logical to think that there is an overlap between religion and culture. We believe religion has an impact on culture and cultural practices. For example, Kabasakal and Bodur (2002) argue that the Koran (the holy book of Islam) indicates inequalities in power distribution and Islam clearly advocates that people accept the authority of people in leadership

positions and followers should not be critical of decision and applications of their superiors but obey them without any question. It is clear that this religious teaching has influenced the culture and values of the Arab world. Thus we propose:

H5: There is a positive correlation between religious and cultural animosity.

Finally, we argue that our religious and cultural animosity constructs and Klein et al war and economic animosity constructs will be correlated. This is based on the logic that many wars were fought because of religion and culture as we argued above. In many situations war becomes the outcome or the demonstration of these religious and cultural animosities. It seems plausible to assume that religious and cultural difference may answer the question: why there is an animosity between nations? While war may answer the question: what do nations do as a result of these religious and cultural differences? On this premise we suspect that cultural and religious animosity will be correlated with war and economic animosity. Thus we propose:

H6: Religious animosity and war animosity will highly correlate.

H7: Religious animosity and economic animosity will be positively correlated.

H8: Cultural animosity and war animosity will be positively correlated.

H9: Cultural animosity and economic animosity will be positively correlated.

METHOD

Given the lack of theoretical guidance regarding what items should be included in the constructs of religious and cultural animosity, a qualitative study was conducted. Due to the sensitivity of the issue of religion and culture, a depth interview methodology was employed. A standard question guide including some probing questions was developed. Interviews were analyzed to identify themes that would provide the researchers presumptive scale items (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

A stratified sample procedure was used to select informants (Davis 1997; Patton 2000). Our goal was to obtain a sample that would include representation from all major religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism) and cultures (North America, Middle East, Far East, Africa, and Latin America). Informants were chosen from a group of international students at a major US university with an international focus. Informants consisted of two Indians (Hindu), two Latin Americans (Christian), two Middle Easterners (Muslim), two Chinese (Buddhist), one African (Muslim), one Bangladesh (Muslim), one Caucasian American (Christian) and one Middle Easterner (Christian). Both genders were represented (5 females and 7 males) and a range of ages (16-52).

The analysis of the interviews provided some interesting findings. Unsurprisingly, most informants felt their religion and culture was superior to others. The reasons given for religious superiority were 'the age of the religion, its truth content, and its consistency. Sources of cultural superiority were the age of the culture and major cultural elements, such as. Most participants felt that making fun of one's culture or sarcastically questioning values found in one's culture may cause anger and animosity toward the source of these comments. Some participants stated that being stereotyped was a source of distress and a cause for resentment and animosity. When participants were asked to define cultural and religious animosity, participants used the following key words: anger, disrespect, intolerance and hatred. Finally, Participants stated that cultural and religious animosities affect nations negatively by leading to conflicts. Below we discuss how the information obtained from interviews was used to develop the questionnaire. The qualitative data collected was analyzed using thematic coding to identify a total of 29 items (17 religious animosity and 12 cultural animosity items).

The 29 items, along with demographics and a religion item comprised the survey that was administered to a sample of 113 graduate and undergraduate students at the same US University (see [Table 1](#)). All items (except for the religious item) were measured using a 5-point Likert type scale with strongly agree and strongly disagree as anchor points. Questionnaires were distributed during class and later collected to ensure anonymity and reduce response bias by preventing respondents from being influenced by others to respond in a certain way thinking that one response is preferred to the other (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994, p. 391). Cronbach's alpha, Factor Analysis, and item-to-total correlation were used to assess validity and reliability of the constructs (Churchill, 1979).

Unless otherwise stated, all analysis was conducted using SPSS 11.0. Factor analysis employed Maximum Likelihood extraction with an Oblique rotation (Gorsuch, 1997a). To test the dimensionality of the items, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted. As shown in [Table 2](#), an eight factor solution was obtained that explained 41% of the variance. Five

items of the original 29 items loaded on factor one with factor loadings greater than the .3 cutoff suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Five items loaded on a second factor using the same criterion. The first factor contains items reflecting religious animosity and the second, cultural animosity. Religious animosity and cultural animosity constructs demonstrated acceptable reliability based on Cronbach's alphas (.71 and .86 respectively).

Hypotheses Testing

A test of the animosity model was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) implemented by Amos (4). As Table 3 demonstrates, a good fit between the data and theoretical model. H₁ postulated that religious animosity will have a negative impact on willingness to buy products representative of different religious values. The resulting path coefficient between these constructs supported H₁. H₂ stated that religious animosity will have no effect on product judgments. A strong positive relationship between animosity and product judgment was found thus hypothesis 2 was not supported. This result is similar to what (Netemeyer, Durvasula, and Lichtenstein 1991) found in regard to consumer ethnocentrism and product judgment. H₃ postulated that cultural animosity will have a direct negative impact on willingness to buy. H₃ was strongly supported by a coefficient path of -.73 between cultural animosity and willingness to buy. Subsequently, religious and animosity subscales were combined to form one variable that we called animosity, which also demonstrated a strong negative effect on willingness to buy, offering further support to the previous hypotheses. H₄ postulated that cultural animosity will have no impact on product judgment. H₄ was not supported. Similar to the case of religious animosity, we found a strong relationship between cultural animosity and product judgment. The path coefficient also revealed a strong correlation at .81 between religious and cultural animosity supporting H₅. H₆ stated that religious animosity and war animosity will highly correlate. There was a strong correlation between religious animosity and war animosity at .88 supporting H₆. H₇ postulated that religious animosity and economic animosity will be positively correlated. A significant correlation of .336 was found between these two constructs supporting H₇. A significant positive correlation of .451 between cultural and war animosity was obtained supporting H₈. Finally a significant correlation of .36 between cultural and economic animosity was found supporting H₉.

CONCLUSION

This paper presents evidence of the existence of cultural and religious animosity between individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 are the most recent reminders of these animosities. Some researchers (see Huntington, 1993) suggest that cultural and religious animosities are likely to increase in the future due to increase in civilization-consciousness. The purpose of this paper was to extend Klein et al. (1998) animosity model by adding two more constructs (religious and cultural animosity) and to create a scale that would allow us to measure religious and cultural animosity. We collected data for different populations to develop and purify the scales. Discriminant validity showed that cultural and religious animosity scales are distinct and measure different kinds of animosity, which are related to Klein's et al. war and economic scales. The data collected present empirical evidence that cultural and religious animosity have a negative impact on willingness to purchase foreign products. This result is similar to the effect of war and economic animosity on purchase intention found in Klein et al. study. This study provides support for Klein et al (1998) theory of animosity and extends the theory to now include religious and cultural animosity and their impact on purchase intention. The data also provide evidence that religious and cultural animosity have a negative effect on product judgments which was also found in prior studies regarding consumer ethnocentrism. This is an important finding because it suggests that consumers' might be blinded regarding the quality of foreign products due to cultural and religious animosity that they may have toward the producing country. Although animosity and consumer ethnocentrism are two different things, it can be argued that this study provides support for the product judgment theory because in both cases consumers are blinded by love of one's country, religion or culture. This study also suggests that consumer ethnocentrism is related negatively to product judgments.

Table 1

Sample Demographics (Sample #1 and #2)

Variable	Sample # 1 (Percentage)	Sample # 2 (Percentage)
Age		
18-25	79	40
26-30	11	25
31-40	5.5	15
41-50	2.5	10
51-above	2	10
Gender		
Male	35	40
Female	65	60
Education		
Less than High School	0	3

Table 2

Factor Analysis Results

Religious Animosity Construct	
Item	Factor Loading
I will never forgive the Muslims for September 11.	.384
I think Islam is a good religion.	.404
I feel angry toward Muslims.	.744
The events of September the 11 have caused me to feel angry toward Muslims and Islam.	.901

Reliability = .72

Cultural Animosity Construct	
Item	Factor Loading
I think if we get rid of Muslims, this world will be a much safer place.	.451
I think Arabs encourage the killing of other people.	.781
I think it is stupid that women cover their faces in Muslim countries.	.402
I think the Arab culture encourages terrorism.	.757
I think the Arabs are responsible for the terrorism that is currently taking place.	.643
The Arab culture is stupid.	.477

Reliability = .83

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