CONSUMER ANIMOSITY AND THE INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE ON GENERAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF CONSUMER ANIMOSITY

MATEA MATIĆ
UNIVERSITY OF DUBROVNIK, CROATIA

BARBARA PUH
UNIVERSITY OF DUBROVNIK, CROATIA

Abstract

Expansive development of the globalisation of markets has caused a variety of feelings of hostility and/or friendship among consumers toward products of certain countries. By identifying these different feelings, the concept of consumer animosity emerges as a significant variable which impacts on the individual consumer purchase choices. The original concept of animosity is based on the remnants of antipathy toward certain countries which are related to certain military, political or economic events. The consequences of these events are different forms of consumer behaviour that are manifested through the dimensions of animosity as a determining factor in selecting a particular product from specific foreign country. Specifically, development of the concept of consumer animosity has contributed to the better understanding of the complexity of consumer behaviour towards individual products of a certain foreign country, in order to better understand the final consumer purchase decisions. Research instrument was a questionnaire which included statements that measure general and economic dimension of animosity as well as questions of demographic characteristics of respondents. The aim of this paper is to explore the existence of general and economic dimension of animosity among students of the University of Dubrovnik, Department of Economics toward neighbouring countries of former Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) as well as the connection of these dimensions to the gender variable.

Key words: animosity, consumer, consumer animosity, demographic variables

For tables and figures please contact the authors direct.

E-mail: matea.matic@unidu.hr
Tel: +385 20 445 939

E-mail: barbara.puh@unidu.hr
Tel: +385 20 445 935

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, numerous studies in marketing and consumer behaviour have studied the psychology of consumer purchasing behaviour in the choice of one product instead of another. Significant number of economic research has focused on the impact of country of origin and consumer ethnocentrism in order to determine consumer purchase decisions, at the same time neglecting other important factors which play a key role in defining the consumer buying behaviour. Still, recent studies related to consumer behaviour have revealed a new concept of consumer animosity that significantly affects the final consumer purchase decisions.

The concept of animosity is an aversion to certain specific country, company, social group, organisation that is shaped by cultural, political and demographic factors. In fact, in some studies, such as research of Jaffe and Nebenzahls (1997),
Ethnocentric consumers showed the conflicting choices of the purchasing decisions resulting from the general aversion to foreign products, showing also positive attitudes to the products of certain foreign countries. Such specific consumer behaviour resulting from indeterminate emotions of the consumer towards only one particular country as a result of certain events between the consumer country and the producer country. Many research results included various feelings of animosity because of the military, political and social events while less effort was spent in conceptualisation of animosity, i.e. in understanding the basic form of its appearance and effects.

Finally, this study tries to discover existence of general and economic consumer animosity and the impact of demographic factors on its dimensions among students from the University of Dubrovnik, Croatia. The paper is structured as follows: in Section 2, the literature review includes the conceptualisation of consumer animosity and an overview of impact demographic factors on the tendency of general and economic consumer animosity. This paper will offer explanation of the demographic variables of gender as control variables which influence the concept of consumer animosity.

The methods applied in the study are described (Section 3) and research findings are presented in Section 4. Section 5 contains concluding comments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The foundation of the concept of animosity is the emotional background of each individual consumer which also represents the foundation of the behaviour in purchase decision. The degree of expression of animosity is shaped through the personal development of each individual which is determined by the influence of external and internal environment of country in which it is located.

The concept of animosity is defined “as the remains of antipathy toward a particular country associated with previous or current military, political or economic actions that the consumer finds hard to forget and forgive” (Klein, Ettenso and Morris 1998). Such different consumer feelings are manifested through different dimensions of animosity depending on the cause of formation. Specifically, Klein, Ettenso and Morris (1998) have found an independent effect of product country of origin on consumer purchasing decisions, proving that consumers will likely avoid the products of the enemy country, not because of consumer perceptions about the poor quality of these products, but the real reason is previous military, political and economic effects of the specific country. Many studies of Witkowski (Bahnee, Pisani, 2009), Shin (2001), Nijssen, Douglas (2004) and Kalliny, LaMaster (2005) and Amine (2008) showed significant impact of consumer animosity on consumer purchasing intention or negative relationship between animosity and consumer buying intentions. In Eastern countries including Croatia several small studies were conducted by Kesić, Piri Rajh, Vlašić (2005) and Crnjak-Karanović, Pecotić, Renko (2005) in which they confirmed the relationship between animosity and consumer buying intentions.

The concept of animosity, except the general animosity, includes a number of different dimensions which will depend on the characteristics of specific countries and the perception of some individual consumers. In their study Klein, Ettenso and Morris (1998) proposed the concept of animosity that leads to explanation of consumer rejection to buy these specific products from enemy countries, not because of consumer perception on poor quality of those products but because of warlike and economic and political dimensions of animosity. They also found that such consumers are willing to buy products from friendly countries and yet refuse to purchase products from the countries to whom they feel hostility. Such consumer behaviour points to a conceptual distinction of consumer animosity of other impact on consumer behaviour such as consumer ethnocentrism or country of origin. All war, military, political or economic events can significantly shape animosity in individual consumer towards a particular country. War animosity is result of actions of aggression and war behaviour of one country to another country or nation, while the economic animosity results from trade and political relations between the two countries. Klein, Ettenso and Morris (1998) explored the impact of animosity on the purchase intention of consumers towards foreign products. Their model has developed a scale of war and economic animosity that showed a negative impact on consumers buying intentions associated with those product categories that are a source of reporting of consumer animosity. Furthermore, researchers Mincheol (2001) and Ang, Jung, Kau, Leong
(2004) and Nijssen and Douglas (2004) are also investigating the causes of consumer behaviour on the basis of war and economic animosity by the model of Klein, Ettenson and Morris (1998) and they also proved a stronger impact of war animosity than economic and political animosity on the consumers purchasing decisions.

The intensity of consumer animosity can significantly affect a number of different variables that ultimately can assume different consumer purchasing behaviour. Geographical regions, demographic variables, factors of market integration and economic conditions (Amine, Chao, Arnold, 2005) are unusual series of variables that can affect the effects of consumer animosity, thereby significantly affecting consumer preferences and ethnocentric attitudes. Previous studies that have shaped consumer attitudes toward buying foreign products are also investigating the effect of gender variables on the intensity of consumer animosity. The results of these studies were contradictory. The study Klein, Ettenson (1999) and Nakos, Hajidimitriou (2007) examined the effect of gender variable on consumer animosity. The study results did not prove statistically significant correlation between gender although they showed a stronger presence of consumer animosity in men than women. Presumably, such research results related to the fact that women are more educated and more conscious in the perception of foreign products. Furthermore, scientists Bahaei, Pisani (2009) in their study proved varying degree of consumer animosity among gender.

Consumer animosity is a concept that can operate independently and occurs in each society and country. Feelings of animosity are not a universal phenomenon because they include certain personal characteristics that are different among individual consumers. Incorporation of the concept of consumer animosity to understand consumer purchasing choices can lead to crucial importance in determining the different profiles of consumers in different countries.

METHODOLOGY: RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aim of the research is to examine the existence of general and economic animosity dimensions in student population of the Department of Economics in Dubrovnik. Questionnaire was used for the research instrument which was conducted at the University of Dubrovnik, Department of Economics on a sample of 244 students from all five years of study. It is important to emphasize the dominant presence of the female population of 68% in the collected sample. However, the sample will not affect the validity of research results, as women are evidently more frequent consumers than men. Taking into account that the sample research is student population, age and education were not important variables in creation of high-quality research findings, and for this reason they are not included in further research analysis.

The questionnaire contained 24 questions: 20 questions designed to measure dimensions of general and economic animosity, expressed on a Lickert scale and 4 questions concerning determination of demographic factors. Sources of occurrence in consumer animosity are numerous and can be found in different domains and situations in consumers purchasing decisions. Four categories of sources of animosities are:

1. geographical proximity
2. war events
3. economic competitiveness, diplomatic developments
4. religion or an individual attitude of the individual-consumer

Based on these sources of animosities countries of research were selected assuming that consumers would express strong feelings of animosity toward these countries because they satisfied all the stated criteria. The scale of measurement was ordinal with degrees from 1 to 5, where respondents express their degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement date (1 = completely disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Data were collected and analysed by methods of induction, deduction, description, analysis, synthesis, comparison and statistical methods. To obtain the results of the research the statistical package SPSS will be used.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research aims at exploring the existence of a general and economic dimension of animosity towards neighbouring countries from former
Yugoslavia (Slovenia, BH, Montenegro and Serbia), as well as the existence of a correlation of these dimensions with gender variable. Having taken into consideration the research goal 22.6% of students coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina were eliminated from further data analysis, consequently the total sample resulted in 187 students.

General animosity dimension

General animosity dimension has been measured by one statement – I do not like (name of the country) on Likert scale of 5 points (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree). Herebelow are shown general animosity dimensions percentages per gender for each country stated.

In Table 1, total 45.7% of respondents agree with the statement I do not like Slovenia as opposed to 36.6% of respondents that disagree with the mentioned statement. When analysing the gender distinction it is noticeable that as many as 70% of male respondents agree with the statement while as 34.1% of female respondents disagree. At the same time there are significant differences in percentages per gender in other responses as well. The existence of significant statistical difference in the general animosity dimension per gender was confirmed also by Mann Whitney test shown in the table below, the significance being below $\alpha=0.05$.

Table 3 and 4 show the research results for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Table 3 shows that only 14% of respondents agree with the statement that they do not like BH whereas 68.7% of respondents disagree with the statement. Consequently it is to be concluded that general animosity towards BH is rather low. Although there are larger differences in percentages per gender in two possible answers (the answer I agree and the answer I strongly agree) Mann Whitney test did not confirm the existence of differences in general animosity dimension per gender with significance above $\alpha=0.05$ (Table 4).

Results for Montenegro are shown in two tables. In Table 5, 49.9% of respondents agree with the statement I do not like Montenegro, whereas 34.3% of respondents disagree with the statement. Further analysis which includes gender variable shows that male respondents, some 60%, are more prone to agree with the statement in comparison with 44.3% of female respondents. Additional confirmation of the results has been obtained by Mann Whitney test with significance below $\alpha=0.05$ (Table 6).

Table 7 shows that 67.2% of respondents agree with the statement I do not like Serbia whereas 23.7% of respondents disagree with this statement. The percentage of agreement with the statement according to gender indicates that there are no significant differences between male and female respondents. Lack of difference in general animosity dimension per gender is obtained from Mann Whitney test results too with significance above $\alpha=0.05$ (Table 8).

Economic animosity dimension

Economic animosity dimension for each state has been measured on the basis of four statements on Likert scale of 5 points (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree). To simplify the statistical data analysis, the arithmetic mean value of total responses per each respondents for each state has been separately calculated and new variable has been formed on 5 point scale (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree). Research results and correlation of the animosity dimension with gender variable have been given in the following tables:

Table 9 indicates that total 50.8% of respondents show economic animosity towards Slovenia. Introduction of gender variable into further analysis indicates that male respondents are more inclined to show economic animosity towards Slovenia, which has been confirmed by Mann Whitney test too, the significance being below $\alpha=0.05$ (Table 10).

Table 11 shows the results for economic animosity dimension for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Only 14.3% of respondents show low degree of economic animosity towards the mentioned country. From further analysis which includes gender variable it is obvious that 18.7% of male respondents and 12.3% of female respondents show economic animosity towards BH. The Mann Whitney test (Table 12) has not proven existence of a significant statistical difference in economic animosity dimension according to gender.

Table 13 shows economic animosity dimension according to gender towards Montenegro. From the mentioned table it can be noted that there is no statistical difference in economic animosity.
The results of the analysis of economic animosity dimension made for Serbia indicate that there is no statistical difference in economic animosity dimensions according to gender (Table 15), which has also been confirmed by Mann Whitney test resulting α=0,05 (Table 16).

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

For quite some time market globalisation has been a major challenge to marketing experts struggling to ascertain the specific consumer profile regarding purchase choice of a product. Knowledge of the global market and understanding of consumer preferences, desires and purchase habits is of crucial importance in recognition and categorisation of various consumer profiles. Tensions between individual countries may vary depending on different relations between countries. Sources causing such tensions are to be found in territorial conflicts, economic relations, restrictions on imports, diplomatic disagreements or religious conflicts. Of course, such relations may also result in various feelings of animosity/hostility within consumer behaviour patterns towards certain countries.

Consequently, consumer animosity is an emotional reaction of an individual consumer onto international tensions between individual countries. The concept of consumer animosity through its dimensions assists in explaining the complex consumer behaviour when making a purchase choice of national or foreign products.

The research results indicate the existence of general and economic animosity dimension, as well as the difference in feelings of animosity according to gender towards certain countries. Nevertheless, it is to be taken into account that for the purpose of this research a purposeful sample has been used disabling generalisation of results obtained, therefore they can be used as mere indication only.

Certain international tensions can lead to serious conflicts which will result in creation of strong consumer animosity. Consumer animosity is a dynamic concept the intensity of which varies with time depending on the sources causing the animosity. However, even associations to a certain country may play a vital role in purchase choice of consumers. Consequently, consumer animosity or hostility towards certain countries may over the long term play a vital role in determining the consumers’ purchase choice.

LITERATURE


Kesić T., Piri Rajh S., Vlašić G.: Influence of animosity, xenophobia and ethnocentric tendencies on willingness to buy foreign products (Case of Croatia), 34th EMAC, Annual Conference, Milan, Italy, 2005.


