

Tracing the Impact of Consumer Animosity in In-groups towards Out-group focused Endorsements in Multicultural Environments

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Abstract

In multi-cultural environments, product endorsements addressing minority groups may not be appreciated by the majority of consumers. This renders such endorsements potentially controversial should there be animosity between the majority (in-group) and minority (out-group).

Our paper attempts to identify drivers of animosity against minorities and, subsequently, relates such animosity with intention to buy products carrying endorsements associated with the focal minorities. Our research is based on social psychological literature. Specifically, we draw on Social Identity Theory and Social Dominance Theory to explain routes of potential consumer animosity. Next, the Theory of Planned Behavior is employed to link in-groups animosity directed towards religious minorities to purchase intent of products carrying out-group specific endorsements (e.g. Halal or Kosher).

Based on the extant literature, we develop a research model and derive seven empirically testable propositions. Empirical verification of the propositions consists of a large scale survey. The results of our scale empirical study indicates that distinctiveness, ethnocentrism and racism are the major drivers of animosity towards minorities, and this animosity negatively impacts the intent of the “in-group” to purchase products with minority related endorsements.

We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our findings and provide suggestions for future research in this area. Our research contributes to the extant literature on consumer animosity in three important ways. First, we offer a theory driven perspective in a field dominated by empiricism. Second, we focus on the interactions of different ethnic subgroups within a country, whereas the majority of literature investigates the role of consumer animosity between countries. Third, we develop a coherent set of propositions and test them empirically.

References are available upon request

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