

Impact of Israel-Hamas Conflict on Consumer Animosity

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Abstract: Consumer animosity refers to hostile feelings towards an offensive country due to its political or military action. This animosity can result to negative consumption such as product boycott or negative word of mouth (NWOM). Using the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory, this research examined how digital media exposure of 306 Filipino respondents affected consumer behavior and emotion, especially the mediating role of fear in the relationship between consumer animosity and boycott behavior. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the relationships between these variables. The result reveals that consumer animosity is positively related to fear. Fear is also significantly related to boycott behavior and NWOM. Fear is a key mediator in translating animosity into negative consumer actions. Further, perceived intrusiveness significantly affects consumer animosity and, thus, leads to higher levels of fear and boycotts. The indirect effect of perceived intrusiveness on boycott behavior through animosity and fear shows its role in escalating negative consumer responses. The results imply that perceived intrusiveness of the Israel-Hamas conflict can lead to fear and consequently, product boycotts and NWOM.

Key Words: consumer animosity, product boycott, negative word of mouth, fear, perceived intrusiveness

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

On October 7, 2023, Hamas, which is a Palestinian armed group, attacked Israel (BBC, 2025). According to BBC, Hamas killed 1,200 people and took 250 hostages. This attack caused the massive Israel bombardment of Gaza, which killed thousands of Palestinians (BBC, 2025). A consumer boycott was launched against products of Western companies, such as McDonalds, Starbucks & Coca Cola that were perceived to be pro-Israel (Gruet, 2024). The McDonalds franchise was allegedly giving free meals to the Israel military which angered consumers who did not like the Israel military bombardment in the Gaza. According to Gruet (2024), the anti-Israeli consumer boycott negatively affected the McDonalds sales in the Middle East, Indonesia, Malaysia and France.

Consumer animosity is exemplified in how consumers behaved towards McDonalds due to the Israel-Hamas conflict. Consumer animosity can lead to boycott, negative word of mouth & withdrawal towards foreign products from countries that are viewed as initiators in wars (Akhtar, 2023; Bahae & Pisani, 2009; Klein et al., 1998; Shimp & Sharma, 1987).

Determining the factors that caused consumers' animosity towards products produced from an aggressor country can add to the few literature on why consumers withdraw, boycott or spread negative word of mouth on certain products. Further, this research studies the interaction between digital media and consumer behavior amidst the Israel-Hamas conflict. Knowing how media can influence consumer behavior towards foreign products produced by aggressor countries can help global marketers develop marketing strategies that consider the consumers' behavior, especially animosity towards countries viewed as aggressors (Ettenson & Klein,

2005; Janiszewski & Laran, (2024; Jiménez Torres & San Martín Gutiérrez, 2007).

1.2 Review of Related Literature

Uses and Gratifications (U & G) Theory

In determining how digital media exposure affects consumer attitudes towards products of aggressor countries in the context of international conflicts, this research uses the U & G Theory. According to Katz et al. (1973), this theory explains how individuals look for specific media content to satisfy various needs. These can be psychological needs, including the need for identity, integration and social interaction, entertainment, and information (Katz et al., 1973). Using the U & G theory as the framework, consumers choose the media content based on their needs.

Hypotheses

Perceived intrusiveness and consumer animosity. According to Li et al. (2002), perceived intrusiveness is the degree to which an advertisement influences the consumer's cognitive process. Perceived intrusiveness is also the disturbance of the consumers' knowing & understanding process by media or advertising that can cause anger (Smink et al., 2020). According to Ducoffe (1995), this can be explained as a negative consequence of media use. When media or advertisement from a hostile country intrudes into the consumers' cognitive process, the consumer tends to become more agitated towards the hostile country's brand. Following this perspective, it can be inferred that the perceived intrusiveness of the Israel advertisements during the Israel-Hamas conflict heightens the feelings of consumer animosity among consumers towards Israel brands. Thus, this hypothesis is made: *H1*. Perceived intrusiveness positively affects consumer animosity towards the Israeli brands.

Consumer Animosity and Fear. Hamerling et al. (2015) defines consumer animosity as the severe disapproval or rejection of the products of the offending country due to its offensive political, military or economic behavior. When consumers develop dislike about the offending country's products,

it is more likely that they will experience fear because of the concern on stability, economy and peace. The U & G theory points out than an annoying report on the conflict in the media, of the Israel-Hamas conflict, can lead to negative consequence such as fear (Ducoffe, 1995). Fear is a retreat emotion that leads to product avoidance & withdrawal (Harmeling et al., 2015; Neese, 1990). This leads to the following hypothesis: *H2*. Consumer animosity is positively related to fear.

Fear and Boycott. According to Hamerling et al. (2015), when consumers fear the offending country, they tend to stay from this threatening country. This is because consumers avoid the offending country's products to protect themselves from perceived danger in the present and in the future. This implies that one way of distancing from the offending country's product is to boycott the product. The U & G theory also implies that a negative consequence of a media behavior can be withdrawal (Ducoffe, 1995). Thus, the following hypothesis is made: *H3*. Fear is positively related to product boycott.

Fear and Negative Word of Mouth. According to Hamerling et al. (2015), consumer animosity can lead to fear. When these two are present, the fearful consumer may adopt a coping behavior (Hamerling et al., 2015). One of these behaviors that the consumer may adopt to is to talk unfavorably about the offending country so that other consumers will not purchase the offending country's products (Bougie et al., 2003). Based on the U & G theory, this is an unfavorable result of media use (Ducoffe, 1995). Consumers speak and disseminate unfavorable information about the offending country to protect other consumers (Hamerling, 2015). This altruistic behavior has been evident in the literature as consumers want to save their peer from the offending country's threat and harm (Siddiqi et al, 2020). This leads us to the following hypothesis: *H4*. Fear is positively related to negative word of mouth.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the study's conceptual framework.

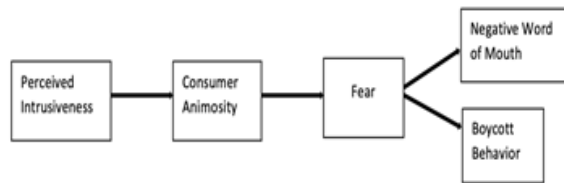


Fig. 1. Impact of Israel-Hamas Conflict on Consumer Animosity

2. METHODOLOGY

Respondents of the Study

The study’s respondents were recruited from universities in Metro Manila. The criteria to participate in the survey included the following: 1 at least 18 years of age, 2. Enrolled in a university, 3. Business major, 4. Aware of the Israel-Hamas conflict and 5. Exposed to digital media.

Research Instrument

The self-administered survey instrument has 2 sections: demographic information and survey. The survey questions used validated scales for measuring variables (perceived intrusiveness, consumer animosity, fear, product boycott and negative word of mouth). A Likert Scale (5 Strongly Agree, 4 Agree, 3 Neutral, 2 Disagree and 1 Strongly Disagree) was used to determine the respondents’ level of agreement to survey statements. The pretest of the survey instrument showed that respondents wanted sectional themes to clearly understand the survey. Thus, the survey was revised to reflect the themes.

Statistical Treatment of Data

To analyze the data, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used. This was used because it allowed the researchers to assess the direct and indirect effects and examine the overall fit of the conceptual model with the collected data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Respondents’ Profile

Characteristics	N (306)	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	157	51.31
Female	149	48.69
<i>Marital Status</i>		
<i>Age</i>		
19-24	169	55.23
25-30	112	36.60
31-36	2	0.65
37-42	3	0.98
Over 42	20	6.54
<i>Educational Level</i>		
College	193	63.07
Graduate Students	113	36.93
<i>Estimated (Monthly) Household Income*</i>		
Less than P10,957 (USD195.66)	48	15.69
P10,957-P21,194 (USD195.66-USD378.46)	43	14.05
P21,195-P43,828 (USD378.48-USD782.64)	48	15.69
P43,829-P76,669 (USD782.66-USD1,369.08)	49	16.01
P76,670-P131,484 (USD1369.10-USD2347.93)	47	15.36
P131,485-P219,140 (USD2,347.95-USD3913.21)	27	8.82
P219,141(USD3,913.23) and up	44	14.38

Note: Exchange rate is USD1.00: P56

Of the 306 respondents, 51.31% were males while 48.69% were females. There were 63.07%

college students while 36.93 % were graduate students. Forty-nine respondents or 16.01% had incomes ranging from P43,829-P76,669 (USD782.66-USD1,369.08). In terms of age, majority of the respondents or 55.23% were in the age range of 19-24. This age range represent the Generation Z. According to Ozkan & Solmaz (2017), these ages prefer technology more than their predecessors, such as Generation X and Y, and frequent social media through their tablets and cellular phones. According to the Uses and Gratification Theory, it is this generation that would be aware of digital media and would inquire on ethical purchases on products amidst the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict.

Figure 2 shows the Structural Equation Model (SEM) Path Diagram. This depicts the relationships between the variables

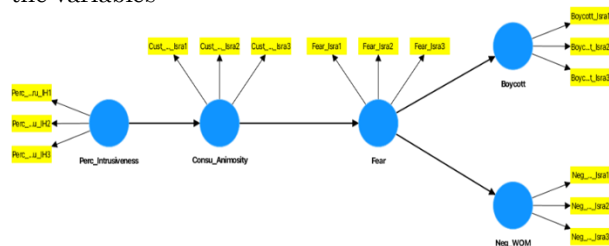


Table 2. Construct reliability and validity

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Boycott	0.924	0.926	0.952	0.868
Consu_Animo	0.814	0.846	0.889	0.727
Fear	0.922	0.930	0.951	0.866
Neg_WOM	0.950	0.974	0.967	0.908
Perc_Intrusive	0.815	0.862	0.887	0.724

According to Nunally (1978), Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency of the constructs, with values above 0.70 to be considered acceptable. The indicators for all constructs exceed this threshold: Boycott (0.924), Fear (0.922), and Negative WOM (0.950). These constructs show strong internal consistency. On the other hand, Consumer Animosity (0.814) and Perceived Intrusiveness (0.815) also exceeded the 0.70 value.

Table 3. Discriminant validity

Constructs	Boycott	Consu_Animosity	Fear	Neg_WOM	Perc_Intrusiveness
Boycott					
Consu_Animo	0.742				
Fear	0.456	0.768			
Neg_WOM	0.615	0.582	0.353		
Perc_Intrusive	0.221	0.397	0.390	0.170	

The Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) is a method that shows whether the constructs are recognizable from each other. Table 3 shows the HTMT analysis. The discriminant validity is considered adequate when the HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.85 (Henseler, 2015). The results show that constructs—Boycott, Consumer Animosity (Consu_Animosity), Fear, Negative Word-of-Mouth (Neg_WOM), and Perceived Intrusiveness (Perc_Intrusiveness)—indicate discriminant validity, as none of the HTMT values exceed 0.85.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Boycott	Consu_Animosity	Fear	Neg_WOM	Perc_Intrusiveness
Boycott	0.932				
Consu_Animo	0.639	0.853			
Fear	0.423	0.681	0.930		
Neg_WOM	0.581	0.504	0.340	0.953	
Perc_Intrusiv	0.198	0.345	0.354	0.139	0.851

Table 4 shows the diagonal values representing the square root of the AVE for each construct, while the off-diagonal values show the correlations between constructs. For each construct, the square root of its AVE (diagonal value) must be higher than any off-diagonal value in the same row and column. The values show that each construct is separate from the other constructs in the model.

Table 5. Direct Path Coefficients

Paths	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)
Consu_Animosity -> Fear	0.696	0.698	0.036	19.192
Fear -> Boycott	0.489	0.490	0.059	8.259
Fear -> Neg_WOM	0.379	0.379	0.064	5.943
Perc_Intrusiveness -> Consu_Animosity	0.268	0.275	0.063	4.271

Table 5 shows the paths between variables related to the Israel-Hamas conflict as perceived by Filipino respondents.

1. Consumer Animosity ->Fear.

The coefficient of 0.696 indicates a strong and positive relationship between consumer animosity and fear. In the context of Filipino perceptions of the Israel-Hamas conflict, this suggests that as animosity towards Israel increases, fear also significantly increases. The extremely high T-statistic (19.192) and the very low p-value (0.000) confirm that this relationship is statistically significant and robust. This implies that the more Filipinos harbor negative feelings (animosity) towards Israel due to the conflict, the more they experience fear regarding the situation, likely due to concerns about safety, regional instability, or moral implications.

2. Fear ->Boycott

The coefficient of 0.489 shows a strong positive relationship between fear and boycott behavior. For Filipino respondents, this indicates that the fear generated by animosity towards Israel is likely to lead to boycotting Israeli products. The T-statistic (8.259) and the low p-value (0.000) reinforce the statistical significance of this finding. In this context, it can be inferred that as Filipinos' fear concerning the Israel-Hamas conflict increases, they are more likely to avoid purchasing products associated with Israel as a form of protest or self-protection.

3. Fear -> Negative Word of Mouth (Neg_WOM)

The coefficient of 0.379 suggests a moderately strong positive relationship between fear and negative word of mouth. This means that as fear increases among Filipinos regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict, they are more likely to engage in negative discussions about Israel and its products. The T-statistic (5.943) and p-value (0.000) confirm that this relationship is

statistically significant. In essence, fear driven by animosity can lead Filipinos to not only boycott Israeli goods but also to speak negatively about Israel within their social circles, potentially influencing others' perceptions.

4. Perceived Intrusiveness -> Consumer Animosity

The coefficient of 0.268 indicates a positive relationship between perceived intrusiveness and consumer animosity. This suggests that the more Filipinos perceive the Israel-Hamas conflict as intrusive—meaning that the conflict feels personally relevant, disruptive, or invasive—the more likely they are to develop animosity towards Israel. The T-statistic (4.271) and p-value (0.000) indicate that this relationship is also statistically significant. In the context of this conflict, perceived intrusiveness could stem from constant media coverage, the global implications of the conflict, or moral outrage, all contributing to heightened animosity.

Table 6. Indirect Path Coefficients

Paths	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Perc_Intrusiveness -> Consu_Animosity -> Fear -> Neg_W	0.071	0.073	0.024	3.011	0.003
Consu_Animosity -> Fear -> Neg_WOM	0.264	0.266	0.052	5.126	0.000
Perc_Intrusiveness -> Consu_Animosity -> Fear -> Boyco	0.091	0.095	0.027	3.382	0.001
Perc_Intrusiveness -> Consu_Animosity -> Fear	0.187	0.192	0.046	4.085	0.000
Consu_Animosity -> Fear -> Boycott	0.340	0.343	0.052	6.495	0.000

Table 6 presents several indirect paths that detail the relationships between perceived intrusiveness, consumer animosity, fear, boycott behavior, and negative word of mouth (Neg_WOM). Each path coefficient reflects the strength and significance of these indirect effects.

1. Perceived Intrusiveness -> Consumer_Animosity -> Fear -> Negative Word of Mouth

This indirect path coefficient (0.071) indicates a significant, positive relationship between perceived intrusiveness and negative word of mouth, mediated by consumer animosity and fear. In the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict, this suggests that as Filipinos perceive the conflict as more intrusive—perhaps due to frequent media coverage—they develop stronger animosity towards Israel. This animosity then

triggers fear, which in turn leads to increased negative word of mouth against Israel. The T-statistic of 3.011 and p-value of 0.003 confirm the statistical significance of this pathway.

2. Consumer Animosity -> Fear -> Negative Word of Mouth

This path coefficient (0.264) shows a strong and significant indirect effect of consumer animosity on negative word of mouth through fear. Among Filipinos, animosity towards Israel due to the conflict increases fear, which in turn amplifies their likelihood of engaging in negative discussions about Israel. The high T-statistic (5.126) and very low p-value (0.000) suggest this relationship is highly significant.

3. Perceived Intrusiveness -> Consumer Animosity -> Fear -> Boycott

This path (0.091) indicates that perceived intrusiveness indirectly leads to boycott behavior through the mediating roles of consumer animosity and fear. For Filipinos, perceiving the Israel-Hamas conflict as intrusive fosters animosity towards Israel, which then increases fear. This fear subsequently drives boycott behavior. The T-statistic of 3.382 and p-value of 0.001 confirm that this pathway is statistically significant.

4. Perceived Intrusiveness -> Consumer Animosity -> Fear

The coefficient of 0.187 indicates that perceived intrusiveness has a significant indirect effect on fear through consumer animosity. In the Filipino context, when the Israel-Hamas conflict is perceived as highly intrusive, it leads to increased animosity towards Israel, which subsequently heightens fear. This relationship is statistically significant, as indicated by the T-statistic of 4.085 and p-value of 0.000.

5. Consumer Animosity -> Fear -> Boycott

This path (0.340) reveals a strong indirect effect of consumer animosity on boycott behavior through fear. Among Filipinos, higher animosity towards Israel due to the conflict increases their fear, which then strongly drives boycott behavior. The very high T-statistic (6.495) and p-value (0.000) underline the robustness and significance of this pathway.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Filipinos' perceptions of the Israel-Hamas conflict are influenced by a complex interplay of emotions and beliefs. The data suggests that animosity towards Israel is significantly influenced by how intrusive and pervasive the conflict appears in their daily lives, possibly due to extensive media coverage or personal ethical stances.

As animosity grows, it leads to increased fear, which in turn drives both boycott behaviors and negative word of mouth. This sequence highlights a psychological process where Filipinos' negative emotions (animosity) due to perceived intrusion by the conflict escalate into fear. This fear then manifests as active consumer behaviors—avoiding Israeli products and speaking negatively about Israel. These findings align with broader research on how fear and animosity can mobilize consumer actions, especially in the context of geopolitical conflicts (Harmeling et al., 2015).

These findings show that businesses with ties to Israel or the broader Middle Eastern region need to be aware of these emotional undercurrents when operating in the Philippines. Strategies to mitigate these negative perceptions could involve corporate social responsibility initiatives or transparent communication efforts that address the concerns fueling animosity and fear.

For businesses and policymakers, understanding these pathways is crucial in managing and potentially mitigating the negative impacts of consumer animosity in international markets, particularly during sensitive geopolitical conflicts.

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