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Research Paper

The effect of animosity on the intention to visit tourist destinations

Marta Sánchez^a, Sara Campo^{a,*}, Maria D. Alvarez^b^a Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Dpto. Financiación e Investigación Comercial, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas, Madrid, Spain^b Bogaziçi University, Dpt. of Tourism Administration, Istanbul, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The concept of tourist destination image has been frequently studied, with numerous articles appearing in the literature. In most of these studies, destination image is a defining variable for a tourist's intention to visit a given destination. However, once the concept of hostility or animosity towards a country was introduced into marketing, the idea arose to study how this hostility affects not only the consumption of goods from this country, but also the intention to visit the place. This work delves into the construct of animosity to identify the dimensions that comprise this concept, their role in tourism, and their influence on intention to visit a given destination. The results of this study reveal that there are various types of animosity, depending on the country analyzed, the influence of which on intention to visit does not always have a significant effect. The results facilitate an improved understanding of what causes people to feel animosity towards a country while at the same time offering destination managers guidelines to minimize its effects.

1. Introduction

The 2008 and 2009 global economic crisis had a severe impact on income from international tourism. After initial uncertainties and the decrease of tourist income (Bronner & Hoog, 2010), the industry saw significant improvements and by the beginning of 2012, recovery was seen throughout the world. Given that tourism is, at the international level, the most important force behind the world's economic recovery and the sector with the highest growth rate throughout 2014 (World Tourism Organization, 2014), any negative impact has far-reaching consequences. Authors such as Gallarza, Gil, and Calderón (2002) or Echtner and Ritchie (2003), consider tourism-related activities to be the main drivers of economic growth and the per capita income of developing countries. Likewise, tourism has been recognized as a key sector in the growth of these countries, as well as being one of the most effective instruments to decrease poverty and promote employment.

On the other hand, tourism has a transversal character and is strongly dependent upon other aspects such as economy, security and the environment (Rodríguez-Toubes & Fraiz, 2011), so that any change in these areas has repercussions on tourist arrivals and receipts. Within the scope of marketing research, there is a specific field about how certain events, varying in nature, have a direct impact on tourism (Clements & Georgiou, 1998). This area of study includes research on crises and their impact on the perceptions of the destination and on the decision to travel to the place. In the academic literature, a crisis is defined as a critical change in an important variable that endangers all

or part of the system (Glaesser, 2006). Okumus and Karamustafa (2005) define crisis as an unplanned event coming from within or outside a country; one that interrupts the normal functioning of a given area and threatens people, whether physically or psychologically, also affecting the feasibility of tourism activities. Crises are categorized according to their origin, with the most important being economic, political, and military, as well as those resulting from natural phenomena (Avraham, 2009).

The study of crisis in tourism is closely linked to that of animosity. Çakmak and Isaac (2012) and Alvarez and Campo (2014) have analyzed the image of destinations with continued crises: the conflicts resulting in these crises can also lead to feelings of animosity towards a given country if their consequences persist over time, and may thus affect the image and the intention to visit, even when the critical event has ceased. Guo, Zhou, and Tu (2016) have also confirmed that the animosity the Chinese feel towards the Japanese as a result of the events of World War II affects their intention to visit Japan as a tourism destination. Indeed, animosity is defined as a remnant of dislike derived from events past or still happening, which are generally military or economic in nature (Klein, Etnenson, & Morris, 1998).

Studies into international conflicts of a religious, diplomatic, economic, or social nature, have received particular attention with regards to the purchasing attitudes of consumers (Sutikno & Cheng, 2010). Nevertheless, few studies have researched the service sector: more specifically, those investigating tourism are scarce, despite its economic importance and transversal character. Tourism is also

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: martradesan@gmail.com (M. Sánchez), sara.campo@uam.es (S. Campo), alvarezm@boun.edu.tr (M.D. Alvarez).<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.11.003>

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strongly dependent upon other characteristics of the destination, such as the stability of the economy, the safety of the place, or the quality of the environment (Rodríguez-Toubes & Fraiz, 2011). Although it is known that certain economic and political events have had a direct impact on tourist activities (Arnegger & Herz, 2016; Clements & Georgiou, 1998; Knott, Fyall, & Jones, 2015) there are few studies that have performed an in-depth analysis of the effects of animosity in tourism; the notable exception being that of Guo et al. (2016). At the same time, economic, historical or even environmental events that have been proven to influence tourism have not been analyzed regarding their role as the origin of a possible situation of tourist animosity.

This research seeks to help fill this gap and contribute knowledge about the role of animosity in tourism, with a double objective. On the one hand, the study attempts to research the concept of animosity in various countries to understand what types of animosity exist, how they take place and what kind of animosity affects which countries. According to Riefler and Diamantopoulos (2007), animosity is specific to the context; we need greater knowledge about the reasons that generate it. Knowing what causes animosity towards a given destination is a basic starting point before attempting to correct its effects on tourism, and to minimize the influence of this variable on the decision to visit that destination (Podoshen & Hunt, 2011). On the other hand, the research aims to investigate the effect of the various types of animosity on the intention to visit a given destination. With this in mind, this work is structured as follows. First, the concept of animosity is analyzed through the academic work from different disciplines discussing this topic. Based on prior literature, a theoretical model regarding the types of animosity and their effect on the intention to visit is configured, which is then contrasted through a quantitative study. The third section describes the main results of the study, to finally provide a series of conclusions, implications and limitations, as well as future lines of study.

2. Animosity and its effect on the intention to visit a place

The study of animosity has been confirmed as a stream of research in its own right, within the study of country of origin in marketing (Bahae & Pisani, 2009; Russell & Russell, 2006). Klein et al. (1998) were the first to relate consumer behavior with conflicts between nations; their work provided the most commonly seen definition of animosity in the literature. Animosity was defined in their study as a remainder of dislike towards a country generated by past or current military or economic events. Jung et al. (2002) conceptualize the construct as an attitude of hostility (beliefs and emotions) toward external groups. The term had already appeared in the work of Averill (1982), who defined it as general feelings of enmity, based on beliefs originating in political or economic problems, that individuals see as unjustified and contrary to social norms.

Since the introduction of animosity to the marketing literature by Klein et al. (1998), several studies have established its influence on purchase intentions of products from the country towards which the hostility is felt. For Klein et al. (1998), although animosity does not affect the product assessment, it does weigh heavily on the decision of whether or not to purchase the product. This study was a turning point in the literature pertaining to country of origin; until then, it was assumed that the term 'made in' impacted on the purchasing decision through product assessment (Clifton, 2014; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2003; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Klein et al.'s (1998) premise has been corroborated by later studies (Amine, Chao, & Arnold, 2005; Ettenson & Klein, 2005; Klein & Ettenson, 1999; Shimp, Dunn, & Klein, 2004; Shoham, Davidow, Klein, & Ruvio, 2006). Other studies have found contradictory results, such as those of Ang et al. (2004) and Huang, Phau, and Lin (2010), that found that animosity does have an influence on the evaluation of the attributes of the products and on the subsequent purchase decision.

Riefler and Diamantopoulos (2007) classified the animosity litera-

ture into three groups: those that constitute the foundational support of the theoretical body of the construct (Klein & Ettenson, 1999; Klein et al., 1998); those that replicate the Klein model to validate it in different geographical-time contexts (Bahae & Pisani, 2009; Maher & Mady, 2010; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004; Shin, 2001); and those that expand the study of animosity onto other variables in addition to the intention to purchase (Ang et al., 2004; Jung et al., 2002; Shimp et al., 2004). In addition, both animosity between countries (Amine et al., 2005; Klein & Ettenson, 1999; Little, Cox, & Little, 2012) and within a single country (Shimp et al., 2004; Shoham et al., 2006) have been investigated. Other studies analyze the relationship between animosity and other variables, such as ethnocentrism (Akdogan, Ozgener, Kaplan, & Coskun, 2012; Jiménez & San Martín, 2010; Klein & Ettenson, 1999), normative social influence (Huang et al., 2010), price (Cui, Wajda, & Hu, 2012), and the level of individualism or collectivism in society (Koh, 2014).

Based on this previous research, it can be stated that animosity is a complex concept where diverse variables enter into play (Jiménez & San Martín, 2010; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009); depending on the causes, diverse dimensions or types that are established. The work of Klein et al. (1998) differentiated two types of animosity that give rise to this feeling of ill will: military and economic. The first results from aggressions or military actions taken by one nation against another. Economic aspects, on the other hand, are understood as feelings of dominance, exploitation, or aggression towards a given country, with effects on its economy, industry, or commerce. Subsequent works extend the classification to other types, such as political (Russell, 2004; Witkowski, 2000), religious (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007) and social, or animosity toward people (Larsen, 2014; Nes, Yelkur, & Silkset, 2012).

Accordingly, Jung et al. (2002) developed a typology of animosity to facilitate the analysis and comparison of the construct between different countries. The authors established the types of animosity depending on the locus and source of the manifestation, thus determining two bipolar continua that define animosity as specific—situational, and national—personal. Jung et al. (2002) stated that animosity could be due to a particular event - situational - or to the accumulation of incidents over time - stable. Situational animosity may be assimilated to the effects caused by crises and become stable, in which case personally experiencing the events, circumstances or actions causing that animosity is not necessary (Jung et al., 2002, p. 527). Furthermore, people animosity refers to the subject rather than the object, because as Leong et al. (2008) point out, when the cause of the transgression is perceived as an individual, animosity is not generated toward the country: only when it is interpreted that a country has participated in the offense does this lead to a feeling of animosity. In contrast, stable national animosity that is caused by historical circumstances at the national level may become commonplace among the national population (Nadeau, Heslop, O'Reilly, & Luk, 2008).

When it comes to measuring and quantifying animosity, most of the literature uses Klein et al.'s (1998) scale as a starting point, which is then adapted to the specific context (Abraham & Reitman, 2014; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). Although studies have verified the legitimacy and reliability of the Klein et al. (1998) model in eight countries, other authors point out the inherent problems of adapting that model to varied situations and scenarios. Hoffmann, Mai, and Smirnova (2011) indicate the convenience of establishing measuring methods that facilitate the comparison of results from various space-time scenarios. These authors recognize the existence of universal factors (*drivers*) that appear in all situations of animosity and that allow these states of hostility to be arranged and compared based on degrees (with regards to the perceived threat, unethical political behavior and negative personal experience). Qualitative exploratory studies suggest that animosity is a more complex construct than the original two-dimensional nature (see review by Nes et al. (2012)) and encourage researchers to follow this line of study.

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