

# CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY ABOUT ANIMOSITY AND ETHNOCENTRISM ON JUDGMENT AND RELUCTANCE TO BUY FOREIGN-MADE PRODUCTS

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## Abstract.

Psychology play a vital role in making a decision of customer. This research contributes to the development of animosity theory by exploring the relationships among consumer animosity, consumer ethnocentrism, cultural acceptability, product judgment, reluctance to buy foreign product and product ownership. By using SEM to test the model through data collected by survey questionnaires. The research extends the domain of the animosity construct to a four-dimensional structure rather than the two-dimensional structure used in most previous studies. Also, cultural acceptability plays a role in reducing consumer ethnocentrism and improving product judgment. Consumer animosity has a positive impact on ethnocentrism which reinforces consumers' patriotism in order to stimulate reluctance to buy foreign product made in the target country. The study provides theoretical and empirical insights of consumer animosity on purchase intentions, which may be beneficial for both local and international managers who suffer from boycotts of foreign merchandise.

**Keywords:** Animosity, ethnocentrism, cultural acceptability, product judgment, Vietnam, China.

**JEL Classification:** M16, M31, M38, F23

## 1. Introduction

The extant consumer behavior literature proves that the two most significant non-tariff barriers to international trade are consumer ethnocentrism and consumer animosity (Klein et al., 1998). Ethnocentrism can be defined as a tendency to buy domestic products and avoid buying foreign products whereas animosity refers to an emotional status in consumers toward a country of origin that leads to a denial of choosing that country's commodity.

Animosity or tensions among countries are present throughout the world which may stem from territory disputes, economic arguments, and diplomatic disagreements leading to cool relations between countries or even armed conflicts. The investigation of the impact of such bilateral

disputes on consumers' behavior towards products of companies from the offending nation has gained research attention in recent years (Klein et al., 1998; Klein, 2002; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007; Ferrin et al., 2015; Ahmed et al., 2013; Lee & Mazodier, 2015; Sohail & Opoku, 2016; Ma et al., 2012; Tabassi et al., 2012). Results from this stream of research show that foreign consumers' anger towards a country they perceive as hostile may affect a country's image perception and the export performance of products associated with it (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). Studies have confirmed the impact of animosity on products in general (Leong et al., 2008; Nakos & Hajidimitriou, 2007), on specific categories of products (Klein, 2002; Klein & Ettensoe, 1999), and finally on hybrid products (Funk et al., 2010).

Consumer ethnocentrism (CET) is also a part of the attitude that consumers hold towards products made in a foreign country. According to Shimp and Sharma (1987) consumers who hold strong ethnocentric beliefs are more likely to evaluate foreign products negatively than are those who do not hold such beliefs. Consequently, due to patriotic reasons, they avoid buying foreign products even though the quality of the foreign supplier is superior. As noted in previous research, consumer ethnocentrism is positively related but distinct from consumer animosity. According to Shankarmahesh (2006) consumer ethnocentrism, or “the beliefs held by ... consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign-made products”, is a good predictor of a preference for domestic products but it cannot adequately explain foreign product purchase decisions. Moreover, it is noted that consumer ethnocentrism contributes to a consumer's propensity to avoid buying foreign products in general, while animosity is directed towards a specific country (Klein & Ettensoe, 1999).

Recently, China has made a declaration on the ownership of the East Sea, also known as South China Sea called by the Chinese government (Vietnamnet, 2014)<sup>1</sup>. The debate controversy, has provoked Vietnamese consumers' hatred for China (BBC, 2015). In Vietnam in early 2014, there were a series of anti-China protests. These were followed by unrest and riots across Vietnam in May 2014 in response to China deploying an oil rig in a disputed region of the South China Sea. In addition, some of Chinese products can create a negative effect on people's health. Like using melamine on food, unhealthy Chinese traditional medicine, and meat from dead animals can create unhealthy conditions (vnexpress.net, 2015)<sup>2</sup>. As a consequence, Vietnamese consumers have negative attitudes toward “Made in China” products, and are reluctant to buy them (Phan, 2014)<sup>3</sup>. It can be seen that the disagreement over China's claims on the East Sea are the dominant

source that intensify patriotic attitude and hostility toward China, thus resulting in the hesitation to purchase Chinese commodities.

Mentioned above, these emotional factors are called animosity and ethnocentrism, respectively, and have been adopted in earlier studies as a construct for predicting consumer behaviors in different circumstances (Klein et al., 1998; Ettenson and Klein, 2005; Shoham et al., 2006). However, in light of the current Vietnam-China situation illustrated above, this paper considers tensions arising from the East Sea sovereignty crisis as an opportunity to provide an original contribution to the consumer behavior and international marketing literature in a developing country context as Vietnam.

Moreover, although a large body of research on animosity and ethnocentrism has been conducted in many different contexts and countries, with different modifications, there remain various issues to be addressed in Vietnamese contexts. First of all, there are few papers on Vietnamese consumer behaviors toward purchasing Chinese merchandise and Vietnamese attitudes toward Chinese branded products. Secondly, due to the recent territory and unhealthy product affairs between Vietnam and China, there is an urgent demand to administer this study as it proves to be beneficial for researchers and industry practitioners. Thirdly, although literature recognizes that animosity and ethnocentrism can be interrelated (Klein et al., 1998), this is the first study that empirically investigates the role of animosity as an antecedent of consumers' ethnocentrism and provides a comprehensive framework aiming to clarify the interaction between the two constructs and their impact on the evaluation of foreign countries and products in emerging nation context. Finally, it is the first discussion that covers empirically the role of cultural acceptability on ethnocentrism and product judgment in an animosity model. For the above reasons, it is necessary to analyze

<sup>1</sup> Website: <http://vietnamnet.vn/vn/tuanvietnam/tq-lai-giang-bay-ve-chu-quyen-tren-bien-dong-157847.html>

<sup>2</sup> Website: <http://vnexpress.net/thuc-pham-doc>

[trung-quoc/topic-13618.html](http://trung-quoc/topic-13618.html)

<sup>3</sup>Website: <http://dantri.com.vn/suc-manh-so/cang-thang-leo-thang-dien-thoai-trung-quoc-kho-song-tai-viet-nam-872401.htm>

consumers' behaviors and attitudes at this moment, when the two countries' connection has become more intense.

## **2. Literature review and theoretical background**

### **2.1. Consumer animosity**

The animosity concept in a marketing context was introduced by Klein et al. (1998) and has since been applied in a series of studies, most of which are reviewed in Riefler and Diamantopoulos (2007) and in Nes et al. (2012). Most of the bi-national studies that followed the Klein et al. (1998) study built on one or both of their two animosity dimensions (war animosity and economic animosity). Nes et al. (2012) expanded the animosity concept, and found that animosity is related to four dimensions: war animosity, economic animosity, political animosity, and people animosity. Riefler and Diamantopoulos (2007) pointed out that war and economic based factors were presumed to be the standard sources of animosity widely accepted by fellow researchers. However, there is a concern that many possibly relevant sources of animosity were ignored.

Based on exploratory research and Vietnam context we found that new source should consider in our research: territory conflict and health issue. At the heart of the tension between China and Vietnam is an ongoing territorial conflict over the Paracel and Spratly Islands in the East Sea in recent time. This tension has sparked Vietnamese consumer animosity toward China and protest movement to oppose strongly china's aggression in terms of East Sea. In addition, Consumers may experience worry and animosity when they feel their health and community are threatened by invasion of Chinese product contains many harmful chemical. Issues of unhealthy product concern can result in anxiety and animosity among Vietnamese consumers towards China country.

### **2.2. Consumer ethnocentrism**

Ethnocentrism is seen a component of attitude that is strongly affiliated with social and interracial factors. Shimp and Sharma (1987) defined consumer ethnocentrism as the beliefs held by consumers about the propriety and morality of

purchasing foreign products. It has been further stated that people who are consumer ethnocentric tend to distinguish products from the in-group (home country) and from out-groups (foreign countries) and to shun the purchase of foreign products because they feel that doing so is inappropriate, unpatriotic, and possibly even immoral because it hurts their domestic economy.

Empirical evidence also suggest that both animosity and consumer ethnocentrism negatively predict purchase intentions. However, animosity is a distinct construct from consumer ethnocentrism in that they play different roles in affecting buying behavior (Klein et al., 1998). More in detail, the animosity is directed toward a particular target country while consumer ethnocentrism concerns beliefs regarding foreign products in general (Klein, 2002).

### **2.3. Cultural acceptability**

Individuals in a society have different experiences and attitudes toward the value and norms of cultures different to their own. If members of a culture have opportunities to be exposed to individuals belonging to other cultures, their prejudice against the difference of their own culture from others tends to be lessened (Sharma et al., 1995). This characteristic reflects their cultural acceptability, which refers to the degree of awareness, understanding, and acceptance of the values of other cultures (Craig & Douglas, 2005)

Previous research has shown that consumers in the emerging world are willing to participate in, and be perceived as, members of the global consumer community (Venkatesh & Swamy, 1994; Batra et al., 2000). Nguyen et al. (2008) shows that cultural acceptability has a positive impact on imported product judgment. This implies that consumers with a high level of cultural acceptability tend to evaluate imported products more highly.

### **2.4. Judgment of product**

Another core aspect of the animosity concept to be questioned is, whether animosity affects purchase intention independent of product judgement. Previous researches established that animosity will affect willingness to buy, independent of product judgment (Klein et al., 1998; Klein &

Ettenson, 1999; Klein, 2002). This means that consumers will be unwilling to buy products from a country that they hold animosity against, while acknowledging their products have good quality. It is one of the key distinctions between consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentrism. This was the generally accepted notion and shown to be true in a number of different countries. However, this key argument has been challenged in some recent studies.

Leong et al. (2008) carried out an animosity study in five countries: Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, where were all severely damaged by the 1997 Asian economic crisis. The results of this study suggest that animosity negatively affects consumers' willingness to buy U.S. and Japanese products. However, it also revealed animosity negatively affected the consumers' evaluation of U.S. and Japanese products. This contradicts the previous findings that animosity affects purchase intention independent of product judgment, which was the foundation of consumer animosity theory. Maher and Mady (2010) concluded that animosity does not lead to less favorable product judgment but is associated with less willingness to buy products from a target country. It means that product judgment was not completely un-related to purchase intentions. This was further supported by Huang et al. (2010), confirmed animosity influenced both Taiwanese consumers' purchase intention and product evaluation on Japanese and Chinese products. There is no doubt that the notion that animosity affects purchase intention independent of product judgment has been effectively challenged. Further clarifications on this fundamental issue of consumer animosity theory are urgently needed to address the contradictions.

### **2.5. Reluctance to buy**

This study adopts reluctance of buying foreign products, defined as perceived guiltiness and tendency to avoidance in buying foreign-made product (Suh & Kwon, 2002). The framework would be quite meaningful and challenging because, until now, there is not much research addressing factors determining consumers' reluctance to buy a foreign product. This reluctance to buy construct is selected instead of

“willing to buy” in order to clearly show influence of animosity on Vietnamese consumer behavior intention. It may take a more specific research setting with a specific product as attitude target to explain the positive change in a proactive buying behavior (i.e. willing to buy foreign products). A decrease in a passive behavior (i.e. reluctance to buy foreign products), on the other hand, is relatively easy to be induced when a particular product name is not mentioned. This is suitable with this research which applies for general products (Suh & Kwon, 2002).

### **2.6. Hypotheses development and research model**

#### **Relationship between animosity and product judgment, consumer ethnocentrism and reluctance to buy:**

Consumer animosity is an essential construct that was taken into consideration in measurement and prediction of consumer behaviors in numerous previous researches (Klein et al., 1998; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). Animosity can be understood as people negative sentiments toward a country due to its aggressive manners in various aspects. In consumers' perception, reputation of the country's name could be much more reliable than impartial information on characteristic (Hong & Wyer, 1990). Furthermore, two psychological theories mentioned in previous sections should be examined. While Social Identity Theory indicates that people would support their in-group and be favorable of it to any other “out-group”, Realistic Group Conflict Theory anticipates the fear of sufferings and losses caused by an out-group creating negative bias toward these aliens, and apparently prejudices is dominant in consumers' appraisal of their item rather than objective assessment (Sherif & Sherif, 1979). Likewise, the homogenous hostility results in the reluctance and rejection to redeem product from infiltrating nations (Nijssen & Douglas, 2004). In consequence, animosity toward the foreign counterparts negatively influences product judgment and reluctance to buy products from that country (Ettenson & Klein, 2005; Shoham et al., 2006; Verlegh, 2007). Although some studies denied the negative effect of animosity on quality judgment (Klein et al., 1998; Klein, 2002),

Shoham et al. (2006) found that this relationship exists.

In addition, animosity and consumer ethnocentrism are unique constructs and contain several differences. While Ethnocentrism can be applied in all country and culture, Animosity is context-specific (Klein et al., 1998; Abraham, 2013). However, both constructs are relevant in Vietnam context, not only because of the patriotism that has long manifested in the Vietnamese, but also owing to Chinese government's unreasonable action that aroused hostility amongst the people. Through the review of earlier papers, this study figures out the inconsistent hypothesis and findings among different researches and scholars. The majority the animosity studies stated out that animosity would increase the level of ethnocentrism (Klein et al., 1998; Nijssen & Douglass, 2004). LeVine and Campbell (1972) said that the aggressive behaviors from another country would lead to negative attitude to objects related to that country, hence reinforcing ethnocentrism. Shankarmahesh (2006) also pointed out this relationship as animosity might be generalized to consumer ethnocentrism. We could describe ethnocentrism as a link between social and moral norms and consumer behaviour, while animosity is a variable that emphasizes a consumer's emotional attachment to the geographic origin of a product. Ethnocentric consumers believe that buying foreign products hurts the domestic economy and national employment (Balabanis et al., 2002; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). Animosity refers to remnants of antipathy, or hostility towards a country (Klein et al., 1998; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). This emotion can act as a protective instinct and increase in-group solidarity, domestic defensive behaviours and ethnocentrism (Nijssen & Douglas, 2004). Researchers have laid great stress on the need to study animosity as an antecedent of ethnocentrism, because they may be related (Klein et al., 1998; Shankarmahesh, 2006). Thus, animosity is an important variable to consider when studying consumer evaluation of foreign products, especially if it can reinforce consumer ethnocentrism (Nijssen & Douglas, 2004).

Furthermore, an out-group's warlike and hostile behavior will enhance feelings of ethnocentrism, and hence negative attitudes towards objects, people, ideas or products from the aggressor country. Consequently, consumer animosity will lead to reluctance, in some cases refusal to buy products from the aggressor country, as well as reinforcing consumer ethnocentrism.

Therefore, this research aims to examine whether the former hypotheses exist in Vietnamese context.

*H1: Vietnamese Consumer Animosity to China negatively affects Chinese Product Judgment.*

*H2: Vietnamese Consumer Animosity to China positively affects to reluctance to buy Chinese product.*

*H3: Consumer Animosity to China positively affects Consumer Ethnocentrism.*

### **Relationship between ethnocentrism and product judgment, reluctance to buy:**

Another distinct construct applies in this paper is Consumer Ethnocentrism, which has been presented widely in multiple marketing papers (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Klein et al., 1998; Pecotich & Rosenthal, 2001; Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004). Upon our review of previous academic literatures, in ethnocentric consumers' perspective, buying products manufactured in other countries causes harms to their own economy, and increase unemployment rate. Hence, they boycott these oversea products regardless of various advantageous features of such products (Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Sharma et al., 1995). Ethnocentrism is constantly a vital actor in consumer's assessment, albeit the unavailability in domestic substitution (Nijssen & Douglas, 2004). Further, Sharma et al. (1995) found out and documented in their studies a belief of ethnocentric consumers that the redemption of exotic commodity involves with morality. Therefore, the construct carries the intention not to purchase such objects. Consequently, the construct has a negative causal relationship with consumers' behaviors on the purchase intention and evaluation of foreign products, which is identical to the reflection of the CETSCALE score (Olsen et al., 1993; Marcoux et al., 1997; Shoham

& Brenic, 2003). Furthermore, previous studies using the CETSCALE to measure consumer ethnocentrism (Netemeyer et al., 1991; Shimp & Sharma, 1987) have found that high scores on the CETSCALE are related to negative evaluations of foreign products and reluctance to purchase them. Therefore, these mentioned above is a solid theoretical foundation for two next hypotheses:

*H4: Consumer Ethnocentrism negatively affects Chinese Product Judgment.*

*H5: Consumer Ethnocentrism positively affects reluctance to buy Chinese products.*

### **Cultural acceptability and ethnocentrism, product judgment:**

Consumers with high levels of cultural acceptability are likely to accept the differences between their own cultures and other cultures. They are willing to learn from, enjoy being with, and are less threatened by people from other cultures (Loo & Shiomi, 1999). Accordingly, consumers with a high degree of cultural acceptability tend to evaluate imported products more favorable than those with a low degree of cultural acceptability. This implies that consumers with a high level of cultural acceptability tend to evaluate imported products more highly.

Meanwhile people who are consumer ethnocentric tend to distinguish products from the in-group with positive view (home country) and from out-groups with negative view (foreign countries). Therefore, consumer with a high level of cultural acceptability would decrease their ethnocentric toward to domestic product. For more detail, in this research when Vietnamese people with a high level of cultural acceptability tend to decrease their ethnocentric toward domestic product. In other words, their attitude toward evaluation Chinese products more positively than others who have low level of cultural acceptability. Research also shows that, when consumers accept the difference in cultures and appreciates the values of other cultures, their degree of ethnocentric behavior is likely to decrease (Sharma et al., 1993). Therefore,

*H6: A positive relationship between cultural acceptability and product Judgment is expected.*

*H7: A negative relationship between cultural acceptability and consumer ethnocentrism is expected.*

### **Product Judgment and reluctance to buy Chinese product:**

Product judgment regards to the attitude of consumers toward specific objects or products (Rezvani et al., 2012). When products are taken into account, the evaluation is influenced by both cognitive and affective perspectives. However, emotions often prevail over reasons and logics when it comes to purchasing behaviors. In other word, consumers' sentiments influence buying decision more significantly as emotions could lead to both mental and behavioral responses (Hansen, 2005). Ramadania et al. (2014) has mentioned the essential relationship between product judgment, through consumer attitudes, and purchasing behaviors. If judgment has not have such vital role in the final step of purchasing and owning the product, marketers and scholars would not pay intensive attention to it (Javalgy et al., 2005). In spite of declaration that the attitude toward merchandise does not strongly affect the behavior to purchase them (Fishbein & Aizen., 1975), other researchers have proven the positive relationship, especially with foreign products (Javalgy et al., 2005). Mowen and Minor (2002) stated that the actual behavior consists of all other behavior "to own, use and dispense" the products (Ramadania et al., 2014). Therefore, spiritual influences such as judgment and feelings are assumed to affect purchase intention (also referred to as "willingness to buy" or "reluctance to buy") as well as the behavior intention to use and dispense a product. From the result of these studies, it is reasonable to propose the last hypothesis:

*H8: Chinese Product Judgment negatively affects reluctance to buy Chinese Product*

### **Reluctance to buy and Chinese product ownership:**

These hypotheses focus on Vietnamese consumers' attitudes toward buying Chinese products and their behavioral intentions (i.e., reluctance to buy). To assess nomological validity, we also include in the model measures of actual ownership of products from the target country (China). Therefore,

*H9: reluctance to buy will be a significant predictor of ownership of products from the target country (China).*

### **Sources of Animosity:**

As mentioned before, nature of the animosity construct is such that it cannot be operationalized on a “general” or “generic” scale but has to be adapted to the underlying reasons of tensions between the specific countries concerned (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). In this context, it appears the more surprising that the majority of subsequent animosity studies adopt Klein et al. (1998) measures with minor adaptations as if they were of a general nature. These adaptations essentially involve the change of the event of reference for war-animosity measures and the swap of the target country’s name for economic animosity measures. This is nothing short of a “universal” use of a context-specific scale. The appropriateness of this approach is highly doubtful since there is no obvious reason for which it can be taken as granted that: (1) the same bilateral economic issues causing dispute are present for any two countries; and (2) the same number of war-animosity items are applicable across studies.

Therefore, in the present study, we take a different approach for appreciating of the situation of Vietnam context. The measurement of animosity construct in this research was considered as a latent variable according to suggestion’s Riefler and Diamantopoulos (2007). This approach will

operationalize the animosity construct goes a long way towards overcoming the measurement problems of extant research identified in previous studies. Thus,

*H10a: There is a positive relationship between war experience to overall animosity*

*H10b: There is a positive relationship between economic impact to overall animosity*

*H10c: There is a positive relationship between territory conflict to overall animosity*

*H10d: There is a positive relationship between health issue to overall animosity*

Scholarly literature on ethnocentrism and animosity argues both concepts as antecedents of purchase intention of foreign and domestic products (Javalgi et al., 2005; Maher & Mady, 2010). Therefore, we argue that understanding the interactions between animosity, ethnocentrism and cultural acceptability and their combined effect(s) are critical to understanding the purchase behavior of consumers towards foreign products in a progressive developing country like Vietnam. In this study, we consider the influence of five constructs on Vietnamese consumers: animosity, ethnocentrism, cultural acceptability, product judgment, and reluctance to buy foreign product. The framework used in this research is given in Figure 1.

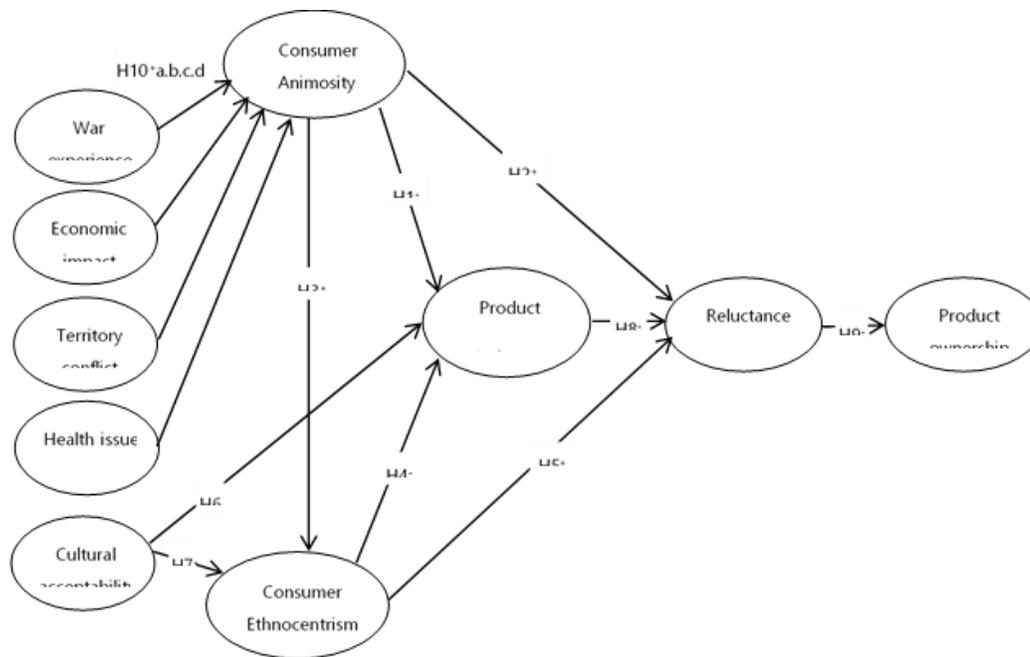


Figure 1: Research model

### 3. Methodology

The research comprised two phases, a pilot study and a main survey, and was conducted in (1) Ho Chi Minh City, principal business center of Vietnam; (2) Da Nang city, principal business center of middle Viet Nam; and (3) Da Lat city, the small city located in highland central area. The pilot study was undertaken in two stages: qualitative and quantitative. Focus Group Interview with 8 people (6 students and 2 lecturers) was used in the qualitative phase to explore the sources of animosity and test understandable ability items which translated from original scale adopted previous researches. Then, there were 8 consumers were recruited by an interviewer using a screening questionnaire. A quantitative pilot survey was then undertaken with a convenience sample of 130 consumers. These pilot studies were used to modify and refine the scale items. The main study was conducted using convenient sampling. The control characteristics were gender, age, education, living area, and income. The target population for the present research was Vietnamese young consumers in some big and small cities of Viet Nam. As mentioned, the data was collected by two ways: (1) paper-self survey and (2) online survey that

was formed by author with supported from Google drive. In this study, the researcher made efforts to obtain the relatively large absolute numbers of respondents so the research attempted to carefully match the sample to population demographic characteristics. The purpose of the main study was to assess the scales and test the models.

Eight of ten constructs proposed in the model were measured using preexisting scales drawn from prior studies. The use of established scales from the extant literature leads to a higher level of confidence in the reliability and validity of the measurements in this study. However, two constructs: territory and health issue were developed in discuss group based on Vietnam context. The initial questionnaires were translated into Vietnamese and then back-translated into English to ensure the correct meaning and cross-cultural equivalence of the measures. The revised Vietnamese version of the questionnaire was pre-tested on consumers and items were further refined. A likert 7-point rating scale was used in the questionnaire with 1-strongly disagree, and 7-strongly agree.

A total of 130 pretest surveys were collected from a non-probability sample of Vietnamese

consumers through an online survey and a paper questionnaire survey. As a result of the pretest, some adjustments were made to the questionnaire: The wording of items was revised to reflect the context of this study; five positive item wordings were turned into negative ones; and the survey instructions were modified in order to reduce ambiguity. Cronbach's alpha was also analyzed for each scale, and 2 items contributing to low reliability were dropped. This procedure resulted in a total of 36 individual items for the main constructs in this study (4 for cultural acceptability, 5 for product judgment, 3 for reluctance to buy Chinese products, 6 for ethnocentrism, 3 for general animosity, 3 for war experience, 5 for economic impact, 3 for territory conflict, and 4 for health issue).

## 4. Data analysis

### 4.1 Sample Characteristics

The original dataset consisted of sending surveys to a consumer panel of 800 consumers through the internet and paper administrated. A total of 549 consumers responded to the online survey and paper questionnaire administered. After eliminating 24 incomplete questionnaires, this study was able to include 525 (65.6 percent) participants for the actual data analysis. A summary of characteristics for demographic variables is presented in detail in the Table 1. Of the 525 individuals who provided gender information, males (50.3 percent,  $n = 264$ ) were in almost equal proportion to females (49.7 percent,  $n = 261$ ) in this study. As a whole, this sample consisted of generally young, well-educated Vietnamese consumers. These characteristics should be taken into careful consideration during the data analyzing process and discussion.

Table 1. Description of sample

| Characteristics           | Frequency (n=525) | percent |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| <b>Gender</b>             |                   |         |
| Male                      | 264               | 50.3    |
| Female                    | 261               | 49.7    |
| <b>Age</b>                |                   |         |
| < 20                      | 138               | 26.3    |
| 20-30                     | 354               | 67.4    |
| 31-40                     | 29                | 5.5     |
| 41-50                     | 3                 | .6      |
| > 50                      | 1                 | .2      |
| <b>Education</b>          |                   |         |
| Less than college/college | 22                | 4.2     |
| Undergraduate             | 486               | 92.6    |
| postgraduate              | 17                | 3.2     |
| <b>Monthly Income</b>     |                   |         |
| below 250usd              | 399               | 76.0    |

|                    |     |      |
|--------------------|-----|------|
| 250-500usd         | 85  | 16.2 |
| 500-1000usd        | 37  | 7.0  |
| >1000usd           | 4   | .8   |
| <b>Living area</b> |     |      |
| small city         | 341 | 65.0 |
| Big city           | 125 | 23.8 |
| rural              | 55  | 10.5 |
| oversea            | 4   | .8   |

#### 4.2. Data distribution and Non-response bias

In order to assess non-response bias, t-tests were employed to compare construct scores for all model variables from early respondents to those from late respondents. Following the suggestion of Compeau and Higgins (1995), the survey data was split into two sets based on the dates the responses were received. The early group contained 264 responses and the late group was comprised of 261 responses. The result indicates that none of the study variables were found to be significantly different between the early and late respondents. Moreover, chi-square tests were also conducted to compare the demographic variables age, gender, living town, education, and income between these two groups. No significant differences were observed in demographic variables. Therefore, it can be assumed that response bias may not be problematic for this study.

For normality concern. Since SEM procedures require normal distribution of data (Hatcher,

1994), the skewness and kurtosis tests were performed for each of the variables in the model. The results were within the +3 to -3 range for skewness and Kurtosis. Hence, these results provide clear evidence that scales data for the study are normally distributed with no outlying observations (DeCarlo,1997).

#### 4.3 Measurement Assessment

##### Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the variables was assessed by the Cronbach's Alpha and Item-total Correlation. The acceptable threshold for Cronbach's Alpha is 0.70, while constructs which are highly inter-correlated indicates that they are all measuring the same latent constructs. Results in Table 2 show that the Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.790 to 0.912, which is above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Also, the Item-total correlation test results are satisfactory.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha of constructs

| Construct              | Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------------------------|-------|------------------|
| Cultural acceptability | 4     | 0.897            |
| Product judgment       | 5     | 0.830            |
| Reluctance to buy      | 3     | 0.805            |
| Ethnocentrism          | 6     | 0.891            |

|                    |   |       |
|--------------------|---|-------|
| Animosity          | 3 | 0.912 |
| War experience     | 3 | 0.881 |
| Economic impact    | 5 | 0.856 |
| Territory conflict | 3 | 0.790 |
| Health issue       | 4 | 0.903 |

### Construct Validity Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the measurement model. All the model-fit indices exceeded their respective common acceptance levels suggested by previous research, thus demonstrating that the measurement model exhibited a fairly good fit with the data collected ( $\chi^2(558) = 1055.944$ , CMIN/df = 1.892,  $p = .000$ ; GFI = .897; CFI = .954; TLI = .948; RMSEA = .041).

To construct validity, two checks have to be performed: the convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was

evaluated by examining composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) from the measures. Values for composite reliability are recommended to exceed 0.70 (Chin et al., 2003) and AVE values should be greater than the generally recognized cut-off value of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All composite reliability and AVE values meet the recommended threshold values. Table 3 summarizes the results indicate that the AVE for each variable was obtained to check discriminant validity. The square root of AVE for each construct is greater than the correlations between the constructs and all other constructs, indicating that these constructs have discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3: Composite reliability, AVE and correlation of constructs values

|                     | CR   | AVE  | 1           | 2           | 3           | 4           | 5           | 6           | 7           | 8           | 9           |
|---------------------|------|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1.economic          | 0.86 | 0.56 | <b>0.75</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| 2.judgment          | 0.83 | 0.50 | -0.17       | <b>0.71</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| 3.reluctance to buy | 0.81 | 0.58 | 0.27        | -0.55       | <b>0.76</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| 4.cultural          | 0.90 | 0.69 | -0.07       | 0.17        | -0.03       | <b>0.83</b> |             |             |             |             |             |
| 5.ethnocentrism     | 0.89 | 0.58 | 0.28        | -0.20       | 0.36        | -0.13       | <b>0.76</b> |             |             |             |             |
| 6.animosity         | 0.92 | 0.78 | 0.37        | -0.37       | 0.39        | -0.17       | 0.27        | <b>0.89</b> |             |             |             |
| 7.health            | 0.90 | 0.71 | 0.44        | -0.26       | 0.31        | 0.01        | 0.25        | 0.34        | <b>0.84</b> |             |             |
| 8.territory         | 0.81 | 0.60 | 0.46        | -0.14       | 0.19        | 0.09        | 0.11        | 0.34        | 0.35        | <b>0.77</b> |             |
| 9.war               | 0.89 | 0.73 | 0.57        | -0.13       | 0.22        | -0.14       | 0.36        | 0.46        | 0.36        | 0.32        | <b>0.85</b> |

Note: Diagonal elements are the square root of AVE; Off-diagonal elements are the correlations among constructs.

### 4.4 Structural Results

Structural equation model was used to test the hypotheses. The SEM results indicated that the model had an acceptable fit,  $\chi^2(607) = 1228.901$ ,

CMIN/df=2.025,  $p = .000$ ; GFI = .881; CFI = .943; TLI = .937; RMSEA = .044. Table 4 presents the unstandardized structural paths; and Figure 2 presents the significant structural relationship among the research variables and the standardized path coefficients with their respective significance levels. As shown in figure 2, a significantly negative path was found from “general animosity” to “product judgment” ( $\beta_1 = -.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and a

significantly positive path was found from “general animosity” to “reluctance to buy” ( $\beta_2 = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This suggests that increased feelings of animosity will reduce consumers’ perceptions of product quality and increased ability of reluctance to buy foreign products. Thus, both Hypotheses H1 and H2 were supported.

Table 4: Hypotheses testing

| Hypothesis | Construct                       | Regression estimate | S.E  | C.R   | P-value | Accept/reject         |
|------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|------|-------|---------|-----------------------|
| H1         | Judgment<--- animosity          | -.198               | .030 | -6.55 | ***     | Accept <sup>***</sup> |
| H2         | Reluctance <---animosity        | .127                | .035 | 3.61  | ***     | Accept <sup>***</sup> |
| H3         | Ethnocentrism<--- animosity     | .248                | .044 | 5.63  | ***     | Accept <sup>***</sup> |
| H4         | Judgment <--- ethnocentrism     | -.062               | .031 | -1.98 | .048    | Accept <sup>**</sup>  |
| H5         | Reluctance ---ethnocentrism     | .170                | .036 | 4.73  | ***     | Accept <sup>***</sup> |
| H6         | Ethnocentrism <---cultural      | -.103               | .052 | -1.98 | .048    | Accept <sup>**</sup>  |
| H7         | judgment <---cultural           | .065                | .033 | 1.94  | .052    | Accept <sup>*</sup>   |
| H8         | Reluctance <---judgment         | -.523               | .068 | -7.74 | ***     | Accept <sup>***</sup> |
| H9         | Ownership <---reluctance to buy | -.138               | .063 | -2.20 | .028    | Accept <sup>**</sup>  |
| H10a       | Animosity <--- war              | .503                | .082 | 6.2   | ***     | Accept <sup>***</sup> |
| H10b       | Animosity <--- economic         | .064                | .091 | .71   | .483    | Reject                |
| H10c       | Animosity<--- territory         | .434                | .138 | 3.14  | .002    | Accept <sup>***</sup> |
| H10d       | Animosity<--- health            | .171                | .056 | 3.08  | .002    | Accept <sup>***</sup> |

In terms of the relationship between consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentrism, hypothesis H3, which proposed that there is a positive relationship from animosity to ethnocentrism, was supported through ( $\beta_3 = .26$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Hypothesis H4 and H5 proposed that consumer ethnocentrism has a negative effect on product judgment and a positive effect on reluctance to buy. The proposed relationships were supported by the results: product judgment ( $\beta_4 = -.10$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and reluctance to buy ( $\beta_5 = .22$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These suggest that high levels of ethnocentrism will decrease a consumer’s product

judgment while increasing the reluctance to buy foreign products. Hypotheses H6 and H7 predicted that cultural acceptability would negatively effect consumer ethnocentrism and positively effect product judgment.  $\beta_6 = -.09$ ,  $p < .05$  and  $\beta_7 = .09$ ,  $p < .1$  indicate that both hypotheses were supported even though the standardized coefficients are not high but still has meaning for this research.

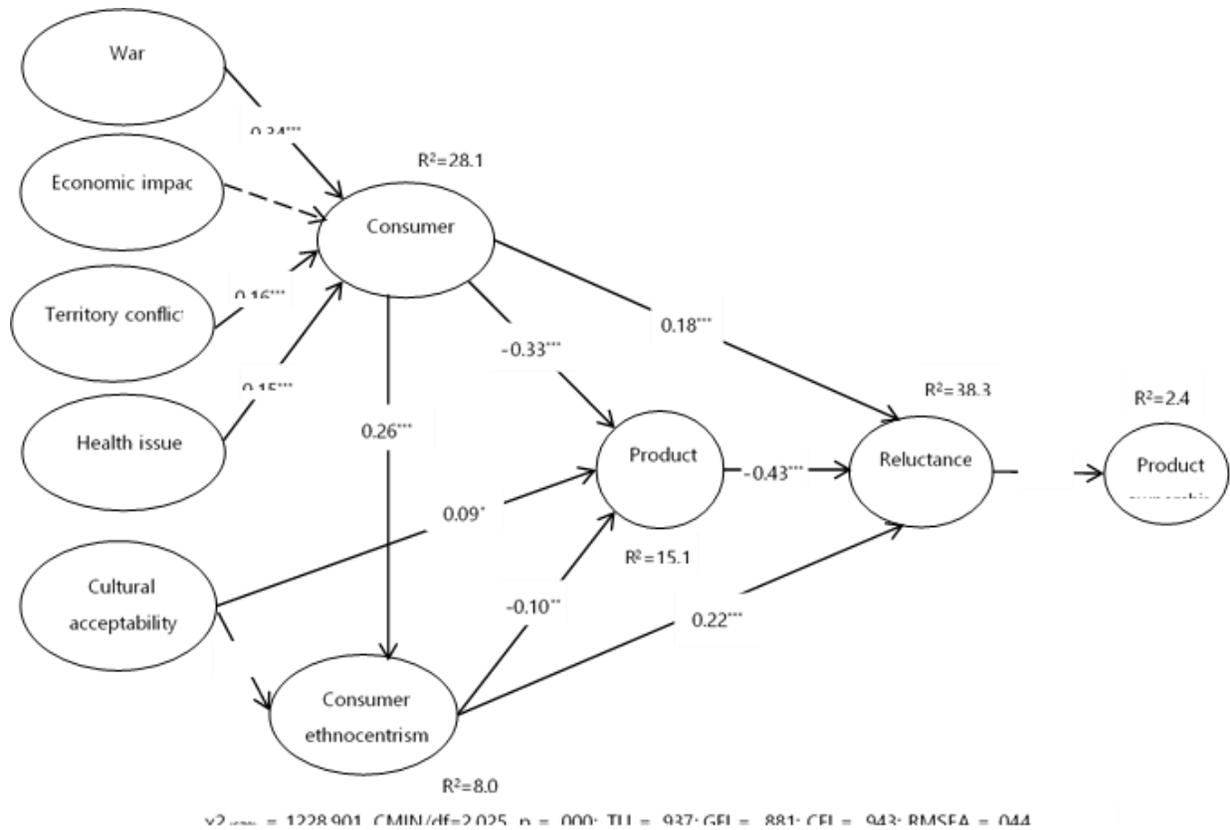


Figure 2. Results of research model

Hypothesis H8 shows the negative relationship between product judgment and reluctance to buy was strongly supported with  $\beta_8 = -.47, p < .001$ . This suggests that when customers perceive product quality is good, they would decrease their reluctance to buy Chinese products. On the other hand, when they evaluate that product quality is not good they would increase their reluctance to buy. Hypotheses H9 was supported with  $\beta_9 = -.15, p < .05$  at the statistical significant level of  $p < 0.05$ . This indicates that there is a negative relationship between reluctance to buy and product ownership. The reasons can be explained as young Vietnamese consumers trying to have the reluctance to buy Chinese products but in some cases they have no choice because they lack alternative products or they cannot overcome the cheap prices of Chinese products. Last but not least, Hypotheses H10a, H10b, H10c, and H10d proposed that there are positive effects of war experience, economic impact, territory conflict, and health issues on general animosity. The result was supported for Hypotheses H10a ( $\beta_{10a} = .34, p < .001$ ), H10c ( $\beta_{10c} = .16, p < .001$ ) and H10d

( $\beta_{10d} = .15, p < .001$ ). However, Hypothesis H10b was not supported which means that economic impact has no effect on general animosity.

In addition, the squared multiple correlations indicate the proportion of variance of an endogenous latent variable that is explained by its exogenous latent variables. For example, 28.1 percent of the total variance in the general animosity variable is explained by its three predictors: war experience, territory conflict and health issue. The results of path coefficients indicated that the predicting factor of war experience explained more of the variance of general animosity than did the other two predictors: territory conflict and health issue. Likewise, 15.1 percent of the total variance in the product judgment factor is explained by its three predicting factors: general animosity, cultural acceptability and ethnocentrism. Moreover, because ethnocentrism, general animosity and product judgment were the three significant predictors for the latent variable reluctance to buy in the model, they explained 38.3 percent of the

variance on consumer intentions reluctance to buy Chinese products.

## 5. Discussion and implications

### 5.1. Discussion

The research found interestingly that the effects of consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentrism on product judgment were supported. Firstly, the negative impact of animosity on product judgment (H1) indicated an inconsistency with the findings of the initial Nanjing study of consumer animosity by Klein et al. (1998), which indicated that animosity was unrelated to an evaluation of product quality. However, this is not a surprising finding given that many studies reported mixed results with respect to the relationship between animosity and product judgment (Amine, 2008; Klein, 2002; Klein et al., 1998; Nes et al., 2012; Tian & Pasadeos, 2012). Several theoretical and empirical factors may be used to interpret the results concerning the relationship of animosity and product judgment. First, according to Festinger (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, people are inclined to seek consistency in their attitudes and beliefs in any situation where certain cognitions are incongruous, even if that may lead to irrational kinds of actions. Therefore, the tendency toward harmony and consistency among those who harbor strong animosity toward China could result in Chinese product denigration and hence reluctance to buy Chinese products. Second, the perception of Chinese product quality may have decreased in the Vietnam market due to the entrance of well recognized global brands come from large countries like the United States, Japan, Germany, France and South Korea in comparison with Chinese low quality products and cheap prices. Therefore, the animosity and evaluations of product quality may come to affect one another more easily. Secondly, the negative influence of ethnocentrism on product judgment implies that consumers with strong ethnocentric attitudes are more likely to adversely evaluate Chinese products than those with less ethnocentric attitudes. This is also consistent with previous findings (Klein et al., 1998; Netemeyer et al., 1991; Shimp & Sharma, 1987). This indicates that both antipathy toward China and the feeling of

Ethnocentrism affect the assessment of Chinese products. Two constructs affect differently, but both result in Chinese product underestimation. While animosity leads to the depreciation of objects related to its sources, ethnocentric consumers value domestic products much more than foreign countries' products.

Furthermore, it can be seen from the results that there were the positive impacts of animosity (H2) and ethnocentrism (H5) on the reluctance to buy Chinese products. This confirms that animosity towards a particular country (China), is an important variable to consider in relation to attitudes towards foreign products, especially insofar as it reinforces consumer ethnocentrism (H3). This finding is consistent with previous findings on the negative effects of consumer animosity (Klein, 2002; Klein et al., 1998). Also noteworthy is the finding that animosity reinforces consumer ethnocentrism (H3). Even though the relationship between these two variables has hardly been studied, our findings support the idea that negative emotions, and particularly animosity, can enhance consumer ethnocentrism, strengthening the belief that purchasing foreign products is inappropriate or even morally wrong because it damages the domestic economy and is unpatriotic (Nijssen & Douglas, 2004).

For the role of cultural acceptability, the result shows that cultural acceptability plays a certain role in this study even though the level of its impact is not big. Previous researches have shown that consumers in the emerging world are willing to participate in, and be perceived as, members of the global consumer community (Venkatesh & Swamy, 1994; Batra et al., 2000). The findings of this study show that cultural acceptability has a positive impact on imported product judgment and a decrease in feelings of consumer ethnocentrism toward foreign products. This implies that consumers with a high level of cultural acceptability tend to evaluate imported products more highly and also their degree of ethnocentric behavior is likely to decrease. Therefore, foreign exporters should convey to Vietnamese consumers that sensitivity to foreign cultures is a means to become members of the global community.

The other interesting finding in this study is that we found the domain of the concept is four dimensions rather than two dimensions as applied in most of the previous studies (Klein, 2002; Klein et al., 1998; Ma et al., 2012; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004; Sohail & Opoku, 2016). By treating four constructs such as war, economic, territory and health issue separately, our study extended this finding. We demonstrated that general animosity mainly resulted from war experience, territory conflict and health issue but not from economic impact. Results indicate that Vietnamese consumers appear not to be apprehensive about the China's economic dominance. This is interesting because previous studies have suggested that people have negative attitudes toward products from a dominant country, resulting in a reluctance to buy products from such a country (Nijssen & Douglas 2004). Also of interest was that, for Vietnamese consumers, historical war-related factors were associated more closely with animosity toward China than were contemporary concerns (territory conflict and health issue), this is consistent with the previous study of Klein et al. (1998) when talking about feelings of Chinese people toward Japan.

The reason why Vietnamese consumer animosity is not affected by economic impact can be explained by China providing capital for infrastructure projects in recent years; also both Chinese and Vietnamese governments have been attempting to incite economic corporation between the two countries more and more. Furthermore, Vietnamese consumers have an obvious attraction and admiration for the

economic development of China over the past few years and they think that they can learn from China's success and apply their methods to their country's developing process. In short, this is an important finding because it shows not only the distinct effects of two basic dimensions: war experience and economic impact on evaluating, indirectly, the quality of product in Vietnamese markets but also indicates that there are other sources (territory conflict and health issue) that still impact product judgment through general animosity which has been lacking from previous studies.

In terms of comparing the effect level of consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentrism on product judgment and reluctance to buy foreign products, the result found that consumer animosity played more vital role than ethnocentrism when evaluating foreign products, meanwhile for reluctance to buy foreign products, ethnocentrism is more important than animosity. However, this does not mean that ethnocentrism plays a more vital role than animosity on reluctance to buy because animosity has an indirect impact on reluctance to buy through product judgment. The total effects in Table 5 indicated that total effects of animosity on reluctance to buy Chinese products were bigger than those of ethnocentrism on the reluctance to buy Chinese products. This result shows clearly that the effect of Vietnamese consumer animosity toward China is quite high which would cause disadvantages for Chinese companies when they want to enter Vietnam's market in a contemporary context.

Table 5: Direct and indirect effects of research model

|          |  | <b>Direct effects</b> | <b>Indirect effects</b> | <b>Total effects</b> |
|----------|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>A</b> | 1.Animosity-->reluctance                 | 0.176**               |                         | 0.390**              |
|          | 2.Animosity -->judgment-->reluctance     |                       | 0.214**                 |                      |
| <b>B</b> | 1.Ethnocentrism-->reluctance             | 0.223**               |                         | 0.267**              |
|          | 2.Ethnocentrism-->judgment--> reluctance |                       | 0.044*                  |                      |

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

## 5.2. Implication

These findings suggest a number of implications for local as well as international managers in planning marketing strategies, especially positioning strategies in the Vietnamese market.

We demonstrated that there are different sources that could directly impact general animosity with had a different nature then influence indirectly on product judgment and purchase intention. Therefore, when animosity threatens their products in practice, marketers should identify the primary sources of that animosity first, and then employ specific strategies to deal with it. Therefore, the right way to reduce the detrimental influences of animosity toward Chinese products in Vietnam is to reduce the animosity arising from the war, territory and unhealthy products as is actually occurring.

Furthermore, seeking to understand controversies would allow managers to consider courses of action in order to mitigate the damaging effects of consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentrism. These could include efforts to improve product quality judgments by highlighting objective product benefits. However, such efforts might be insufficient. Further efforts could be directed toward displaying the source company as international and distinct from the country of origin; reducing the degree of consumer ethnocentrism by emphasizing the benefits to the local market, which a Chinese company provides; and avoiding using symbols of the country of origin in order to reduce the sense of threat on the domestic market (Vietnam).

Chinese managers should understand that when levels of Vietnamese consumer animosity toward a producer nation (China) are high, consumer ethnocentrism does translate into bias for imported products. Therefore, traditional marketing tools such as sales promotions, price promotions, and brand advertisements will not be sufficient in attracting highly ethnocentric consumers. Instead, strategies that take into account the role of consumer ethnocentrism are more appropriate. Marketing programs of imported products should convey to Vietnamese consumers that the consumption of imported products is not harmful to the economy in order to reduce such a bias.

Furthermore, a more appropriate strategic response might be to downplay promotion of the “made in ...” aspect of the product and use brand names that are not obviously associated with the target country (Ettenson & Gaeth, 1991; Levin & Jasper, 1996). In addition, cultural acceptability plays a role in reducing negatively toward foreign products, so Chinese companies or the Chinese government could exploit this to decrease Vietnamese consumer animosity and ethnocentrism through cultural and academic exchange programs.

International marketers also can choose to address the animosity issue directly in certain markets. One strategy would be to engage in public relations and other communications efforts to improve country perceptions and address sources of international tension. Such efforts might be more effective for minimizing animosity stemming from current diplomatic or territory disputes than from historical and military conflicts. For example, South Korea has made many efforts to improve its negative image with Vietnamese people from its participation in the Vietnam War in the 1960s. Such as the Korean-Vietnamese Peace Foundation’s efforts to honor Vietnamese victims killed by Korean mercenaries during the war, cultural and scholarship exchanges between the two countries, “Hallyu (the Korean entertainment wave)” in Viet Nam. These actions have been contributing positively in recovering South Korea’s image in the Vietnamese consumer mind. Therefore, nowadays, Vietnamese consumers have a good perception not only for the South Korean country but also Korean brands. This helps many Korean companies succeed in the Vietnamese market.

On a broader scale, knowledge of international animosity and its effect on product purchase in select target markets can also guide the development of strategic marketing and manufacturing alliances and the production of so-called “hybrid” products (products manufactured in one country and branded by a firm from another country). Marketers of hybrid products have the benefit of promoting or de-emphasizing their products’ origins, as well as flexibility in the selection of the products’ brand names (Ettenson & Gaeth, 1991; Han, 1988; Levin & Jasper, 1996).

The manufacture of hybrids might prove fruitful to the international marketer whose products or brands have failed to capture satisfactory levels of shares in a target market because of consumer animosity.

For local managers, as the global trend of cross-border trade increases, the animosity construct can be applied by domestic Firms seeking to defend their markets against increases in imported goods and, in particular, imported goods from a particular nation (China). To the extent that levels of animosity are high toward China, Vietnamese firms can exploit and promote “buy domestic” campaigns, capitalizing on the ethnocentric influence of eschewing goods from China through campaigns such as “Vietnamese use Vietnamese products”, Vietnam’s high quality products, Vietnamese brands festivals, and so on.

Furthermore, marketing managers of domestic companies (Vietnamese companies) should also recognize consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentrism, since they can benefit by using them properly. Local companies can highlight benefits of the local market and the society at large, while emphasizing relevant topics according to sources of consumer animosity/consumer ethnocentrism (e.g., war, territory, unhealthy product, etc.).

The findings of this study suggest that brand positioning strategies based heavily on the physical attributes of brands are no longer suitable. Such positioning strategies may create serious problems for local brands in the market since Vietnamese consumers often consider imported products to have superior quality to the local products (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2004). Consequently, positioning strategies which focus on consumer ethnocentric tendencies may be more appropriate in persuading highly ethnocentric consumers to purchase local products.

### 5.3. Limitation and future research

One of the limitations of this study has been in using a majority of student respondents. It has been noted by some researches that studies using a student sample suffer from a lack of external validity (Sears, 1986). Even though concerns about representative samples may be sacrificed in favor of addressing threats to internal validity in

research designed for theory testing (Calder et al., 1981), it is hoped that testing should deal with samples from life stages other than late adolescence. According, to recent trends in marketing research, external validity concerns require more attention in theoretical research (Lynch, 1999; Winer, 1999). Nevertheless, using student samples in this research can be plausibly rationalized. The student-age group, which represents the samples of this research, is identified as a large number of Vietnamese young consumers who play a greater vital role in the Vietnamese consumption market. Therefore, future researches should pay attention on how to generalize a whole sample from various groups and areas. Secondly, this study was based on surveying consumers’ opinions toward general product categories. This may have overlooked two potential problems; consumers could have differentiated product evaluations and purchase intentions across different product categories and their self-reported opinions may not be consistent with their actual consumption decisions. We strongly suggest future studies to further examine our findings with a variety of product categories and new research methods such as field experiments and post-purchase interviews. Finally, research to date has not addressed whether and how animosity toward a country negatively affects consumers’ responses to brands associated with that country. Since brands vary in the degree to which they are associated with a country, animosity might have different effects on brands that are strongly stereotypic of a country and on brands that are more weakly associated with it. Therefore, future research should consider the relationship of consumer animosity toward brand associations in a target country.

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