



Research note

A research note exploring socially visible consumption in tourism

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in the context of the political tensions between Turkey and Israel. The main objective of the present research note is to examine the relationship between consumer animosity and socially-visible consumption; although two salient constructs in the consumer behaviour stream of research, the relationship between them has not been examined in previous research. The mall-intercept method was employed to collect data from a sample of 208 respondents. SPSS's AMOS software was employed to test the construct validity of the scale items. Pearson correlations and independent sample T-tests were conducted to explore the relationships between the study variables. Results suggest that the relationships between socially visible consumption and consumer animosity is moderated by travellers' willingness to holiday in a socially visible fashion. Future research should focus on other potential moderators of the relationship between animosity and tourism behaviour such as risk perception.

1. Introduction

A growing number of studies have explored the effects of consumer animosity on tourism behaviour (Chen, Lin, & Petrick, 2013, 2016; Stepchenkova, Shichkova, Kim, & Rykhtik, 2017, 2018). Klein, Ettenson, and Morris (1998) pioneered the study of consumer animosity with the introduction of the Animosity Model of Foreign Product Purchase; furthermore, Klein et al. (1998) defined animosity as “anger related to previous or ongoing political, military, economic, or diplomatic events” (p. 90). While the overwhelming majority of research investigating consumer animosity has focused on the effects of animosity on physical products (Heinberg, 2017), relatively few studies in the field of tourism management have examined the effect of animosity on destination choice (Sánchez, Campo, & Alvarez, 2018). Exploring the possible impact of animosity and destination choice is especially pertinent as tourism plays a pivotal role in international reconciliation (Farmaki, 2017).

The current study was conducted in the context of the political tensions between Turkey and Israel. The number of Israeli travellers choosing Turkey as a holiday destination significantly dropped following the 2010 MV Mavi Marmara incident. In the aftermath of the incident, the number of Israelis travelling to Turkey decreased from 650,000 to 100,000 (Fisher, 2015).

The present research note attempts to contribute to the tourism literature by examining the relationships between the critical variables

of conceptualizing tourist behaviour: Consumer animosity, susceptibility to visible consumption, susceptibility to norm influence, willingness to learn about the local culture, and willingness to visit a holiday destination. This research note also aims to make practical contributions to the field of tourism by deriving implications critical to the business aspect of tourism marketing.

Previous research demonstrates the importance of learning about the local culture during the tourism experience (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2003). Since animosity is characterized by a hostile attitude aimed at national out-groups (Jung, Ang, Leong, Tan, & Pompitakpan, 2002), we argue that consumer animosity is not only likely to be associated with a lowered willingness to visit a targeted holiday destination but also a lowered willingness to learn about the Turkish culture.

Socially visible consumption (henceforth referred to as SVC) refers to consumption in public; that is, consumption observable to others (Josiassen & Assaf, 2013). Although very few past studies focused on the role of SVC in the context of tourist behaviour, they suggest that consumer animosity is negatively associated with SVC (Josiassen & Assaf, 2013). Thus, we argue that animosity will deter Israeli tourists from posting photos on social platforms during their visit and sharing their experience with friends upon their return to Israel. Since “publicly self-conscious individuals are motivated to observe, note, and assimilate in their own SVC the consumption tastes of significant others” (Millan & Mittal, 2017, p. 313), it stands to reason that the more travellers' are susceptible to norm influence (henceforth referred to as

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SNI), the less likely they are to consume their holiday to Turkey in a socially visible fashion. As such, we posit the following hypotheses:

- H1.** Animosity will be negatively associated with Israeli travellers' willingness to visit Turkey.
- H2.** Animosity will be negatively associated with Israeli travellers' willingness to learn about the Turkish culture.
- H3.** Animosity will be negatively associated with Israeli travellers' SVC of their holiday in Turkey.
- H4.** Travellers' willingness to engage in SVC will be negatively associated with their SNI.

2. Methodology

The mall-intercept method was employed to collect data for the study between January and March 2016. A convenience sampling technique was employed yielding 208 complete responses. 7-point Likert-scales (1-strongly agree; 7-strongly disagree) were employed to measure the study items. Klein et al's. (1998) scale was adapted to measure consumers' level of animosity towards Turkey. Josiassen and Assaf's (2013) scale was employed to measure respondents' level of SVC of their holiday. Their willingness to learn about the Turkish culture was measured with a scale adapted from Poria, Reichel, and Biran (2006). SPSS's AMOS software was employed to test the construct validity of the items (see Table 1). Pearson correlations and independent sample t-tests were conducted to examine the relationships between the study variables.

3. Results

To examine the hypothesised relationships, we conducted two-tailed Pearson correlations. In support of H1, we found a negative relationship between animosity and Israeli travellers' willingness to visit Turkey ($r = -.163, p \leq 0.01$). Previous research suggests animosity is associated with SNI (Huang, Phau, & Lin, 2010). Because of the weak association observed, we opted to investigate the relationship between the variables more closely by splitting the sample, post-hoc, into two groups: low SNI and high SNI. This split sample is also employed later in the section in the framework of other analyses conducted. We observed a positive and significant relationship between animosity and willingness to visit Turkey in the high SNI sub-sample ($r = -.318, p \leq 0.001$) but not in the low SNI sub-sample ($r = 0.168, p \geq 0.05$). This suggests that animosity only negatively impacts travellers'

willingness to visit a holiday destination when the level of animosity reaches a certain point (i.e. it is high enough).

In line with the expectations of H2, we found a negative and significant relationship between animosity and respondents' willingness to learn about the local culture ($r = -.393, p \leq 0.001$). We also observed a negative but weak relationship between animosity and SVC ($r = -0.208, p \leq 0.001$). Hence, H3 is partially supported. Despite the findings' suggestion that animosity decreases travellers' tendency to holiday in a socially visible manner, the observed relationship is below the recommended minimum (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Likewise, we found a negative but weak relationship between SNI and SVC ($r = -0.248, p \leq 0.001$). This finding suggests that the more travellers are SNI, the less likely they are to holiday in a socially visible manner; however, since the observed relationship is below the recommended minimum, H4 is also partially supported.

4. Conclusions and implications

The study findings suggest that travellers harbouring animosity towards a holiday destination may be reluctant to make it their holiday of choice. One contribution of the present study rests on the finding that low levels of animosity may have no effect on travellers' willingness to travel but could become more instrumental when a high enough level is reached. Although this offers a glimmer of hope for travel agents, the level of animosity must be measured to ensure it does not impact destination choice. As this research note is exploratory in nature, further research is necessary to shed light on the point at which the impact of animosity is most likely to become salient.

Another contribution of this research note is the light it sheds on a relationship not previously explored, i.e., the relationship between animosity and SVC. Although the study points to a significant relationship between the two variables, the observed relationship is weak. The weak relationship may have resulted from the relatively low animosity harboured by Israeli travellers towards Turkey; hence, further research in which the relationship is observed in a more extreme case of animosity is required. The findings of the present study suggest that even if travellers do opt to travel to a country towards which they harbour animosity, they are likely to become disinclined to learn about its local culture. Hotel managers and travel agents should therefore offer an abundance of leisure activities to meet the needs of travellers who may not wish to come into contact with the local population or learn about its culture, and would thus prefer to stay in their hotels for most of or perhaps the entire duration of their holiday. Offering international rather than local entertainment is also highly recommended.

Table 1
Confirmatory factor analysis results.

Factor and Corresponding Item	Mean	R	α	AVE
<i>Consumer Animosity</i>				
1.I am angry with Turkey over its support of the Palestinians	2.54	0.87*	0.74	72%
2.I consider Turkey to be an enemy country	3.68	0.79*		
3.Turkey betrayed the state of Israel	3.46	0.84*		
4.I harbour animosity towards Turkey	4.19	0.91*		
<i>SVC Scale</i>				
1.During my stay in Turkey I will take pictures and upload them to one or more social networks	5.24	0.67*	0.71	57%
2.I will tell my friends about my trip to Turkey even if they do not ask	5.36	0.83*		
<i>Jewish visitors' willingness to learn about the Turkish culture</i>				
1.I would be happy to meet with local Turks and learn about their lives	3.83	54*	0.89	57%
2.**I am not interested in learning about Turkish history	4.06	0.88*		
3.This is an opportunity for me to learn about the Turkish/Ottoman Empire.	4.32	0.93*		
4.This is an opportunity for me to learn about the perspective of the Turks on the conflict with Israel	3.37	0.58*		
5.I would be happy to visit a museum that deals with the history of Turkey	4.36	0.82*		
6.I would be happy to visit a heritage centre dedicated to the Turkish people	4.67	0.74*		
<i>Susceptibility to norm influence</i>				
1.People close to me think I should/should not vacation in Turkey	5.24	0.71*	0.79	72%
2.People close to me think I should/should not avoid traveling to Turkey	5.36	0.97*		

**Reversed-scored items.

Hence, in an attempt to facilitate reconciliation with Israeli tourists, the Turkish leadership and Turkey's Ministry of Tourism should consider developing a niche form of tourism tailored to the current needs of Israeli tourists harbouring high animosity towards Turkey (Farmaki, 2017).

In line with previous research, this finding also suggests that SNI is critical to the conceptualisation of travel behaviour.

The present study focused on a very specific context; therefore, future studies should replicate the proposed research model in other contexts. The present study suggests that the relationship between consumer animosity and socially-visible consumption is moderated by consumers' SNI. Future research should focus on potential moderators such as travel price and risk perception.

Author contribution

Both the author and co-author contributed equally (50%–50%) to the research and manuscript preparation.

We designed the questionnaire together and met several times to discuss and decide what research design is going to be. Following the data collection phase of the study we met to discuss them and draw conclusions based on mutual agreed view of the findings. We also shared the writing of the manuscript in its entirety.

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