

## Consumer animosity in international business: A systematic literature review and research agenda

### Animosidad del consumidor en los negocios internacionales: una revisión sistemática de la literatura y agenda de investigación

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#### Abstract

This systematic literature review synthesises three decades of research on consumer animosity, a construct reflecting deep-seated negative emotions towards foreign countries, brands, or products. Drawing from 134 peer-reviewed articles identified via Web of Science and backward citation tracking, with 67 articles meeting stringent inclusion criteria, the review adopts a reproducible PRISMA-guided methodology to map antecedents, outcomes, and theoretical frameworks of consumer animosity. Results confirm animosity as a multidimensional construct, distinct from but related to ethnocentrism, driven by war, economic disputes, political conflict, and both historical and situational events. Key antecedents include social identity, political orientation, culture, personality, and socio-demographics, with animosity impacting consumer perceptions, emotional and psychological responses, and behaviours such as avoidance, boycotts, and negative word of mouth. Notably, persistent animosity can affect purchasing decisions for decades and across industries. Theoretical perspectives, such as the Social Identity Theory, help explain both the emergence and sustained impact of animosity. This review identifies a knowledge gap in mitigation strategies, the dynamic nature of animosity over time, and its underexplored role in company-level, crisis, and cross-cultural contexts. These findings underscore the need for further research into animosity's evolving influence on global business and suggest actionable insights for multinational firms facing complex consumer attitudes in a divided geopolitical climate.

#### Resumen

Esta revisión sistemática de la literatura sintetiza tres décadas de investigación sobre la animosidad del consumidor, un constructo que refleja emociones negativas profundamente arraigadas hacia países, marcas o productos extranjeros. A partir de 134 artículos revisados por pares identificados mediante Web of Science y el seguimiento de citas retrospectivas, de los cuales 67 cumplieron criterios estrictos de inclusión, la revisión adopta una metodología reproducible guiada por PRISMA para mapear los antecedentes, las consecuencias y los marcos teóricos de la animosidad del consumidor. Los resultados confirman que la animosidad es un constructo multidimensional, distinto aunque relacionado con el etnocentrismo, impulsado por guerras, disputas económicas, conflictos políticos y eventos tanto históricos como situacionales. Entre los principales antecedentes se encuentran la identidad social, la orientación política, la cultura, la personalidad y las variables sociodemográficas. La animosidad influye en las percepciones del consumidor, en sus respuestas emocionales y psicológicas, y en comportamientos como la evitación, los boicots y el boca a boca negativo. De manera destacada, la animosidad persistente puede afectar las decisiones de compra durante décadas y en distintos sectores industriales. Las perspectivas teóricas, como la teoría de la identidad social, ayudan a explicar tanto el surgimiento como el impacto sostenido de la animosidad. La revisión identifica vacíos de conocimiento en las estrategias de mitigación, en la naturaleza dinámica de la animosidad a lo largo del tiempo y en su papel aún poco explorado en contextos organizacionales,

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de crisis y transculturales. Estos hallazgos subrayan la necesidad de profundizar la investigación sobre la influencia cambiante de la animosidad en los negocios globales y aportan orientaciones accionables para las empresas multinacionales que enfrentan actitudes complejas de los consumidores en un contexto geopolítico dividido.

**Palabras clave:** animosidad del consumidor, comportamiento del consumidor, intenciones de compra, investigación transcultural del consumidor.

## Introduction

In today's rapidly globalising marketplace, consumers are increasingly confronted with products from other countries and continents. This highlights the need to understand the global customer and their individual purchasing behaviour. This knowledge is highly relevant to the marketing departments of internationally active firms, as it defines the approach to marketing. Consumer behaviour is shaped by cognitive assessments of products, for example, through the country-of-origin effect (Wang et al., 2023). More importantly, it is also shaped by emotional reactions. Since the late 20th century, researchers have attempted to measure these emotional reactions in individual consumer behaviour using constructs such as consumer ethnocentrism, the preference for domestically produced goods over foreign ones, consumer xenocentrism, the country of origin effect, consumer patriotism, and others (Shimp & Sharma, 1987).

Based on previous research, particularly in the area of consumer ethnocentrism, Klein et al. (1998) first introduced the concept of consumer animosity in their seminal work on the purchasing behaviour of Chinese consumers towards Japanese products. Animosity was previously defined and researched as a feeling involving emotions such as anger, defiance, and alienation (Kubany et al., 1995). However, Klein et al. (1998) were the first researchers to relate this construct to international consumer behaviour. They demonstrated the effects of the dislike among Chinese people towards Japanese products that exceeded the explanation provided by consumer ethnocentrism, thus opening up the research field of consumer animosity. It is

important to note here that consumer animosity, in contrast to ethnocentric tendencies, focuses on a single country, company, or brand, rather than on all foreign countries equally. Consumers can have positive feelings towards foreign products but still dislike products from specific countries, which can be attributed to feelings of animosity towards these countries (Klein et al., 1998). Over the last three decades, the topic has been extensively studied across various research streams, encompassing different aspects of consumer animosity and diverse scenarios.

Consumer animosity often results from war, economic disputes, political conflict, or other "previous or ongoing military, political or economic events" (Klein et al., 1998, p. 90). As we live in a time marked by numerous significant events, such as Russia's war against Ukraine, the trade war between the US and many countries worldwide, and others, the role of understanding consumers' attitudes and feelings is of growing importance. Feelings of animosity towards a specific country can also originate from interactions one has with people from that country (Moufakkir, 2014), or differences in mentality or religion compared to people from the country in question (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007).

Many articles in this research stream evaluate past or present events in relation to consumer animosity. It has been found that consumer animosity has largely decreased following the 2020 US presidential election, in which Joe Biden replaced Donald Trump. This increased the overall willingness to buy US products (Krüger et al., 2025). This finding is especially interesting, as the presidency has recently changed back to Donald Trump, which implies an opposite effect to that found by Krüger et al. (2025).

Consumer animosity can lead to the avoidance of products from certain countries or even result in boycotts (Abosag & Farah, 2014). This impact on purchasing behaviour can be long-lasting (Farmaki et al., 2025). For example, Dutch purchasing behaviour of German products was still found to be influenced by animosity from World War II (Nijssen & Douglas, 2004). The tourism industry, in particular, can feel the impact of consumer animosity, as it directly affects potential customers (Farmaki et al., 2025; Yu et al., 2020). In this context, tourist destinations are seen as products that consumers can decide to choose or not to choose, depending on the level of consumer animosity or affinity towards this destination (Campo & Alvarez, 2019; Farmaki et al., 2025). A recent example of this effect is Canadian travellers avoiding the USA, as the number of visitors dropped by 23% since the beginning of 2025 (“The U.S. Travel Insights Dashboard” 2025). This, in combination with country-brand associations of consumers, creates the need for internationally active companies to counteract. Firms can attempt to mitigate the negative consequences, for example, through their global brand positioning strategy (Mandler et al., 2023; Rice & Wongtada, 2007), or by minimising negative responses (Rice & Wongtada, 2007).

This paper aims to systematically synthesise the current state of the literature in the research stream of consumer animosity, highlighting gaps and possible future directions of research. Thus, the following sections will explain the methodology used to create this systematic literature review, provide an overview of theories, antecedents, and outcomes of consumer animosity, and subsequently discuss future research and briefly highlight gaps.

## Methodology

This article employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) as an approach to provide a comprehensive and reproducible overview of the research stream on consumer animosity. This can be classified as a domain-based review with a hybrid approach, incorporating both a framework of antecedents and outcomes, as well as

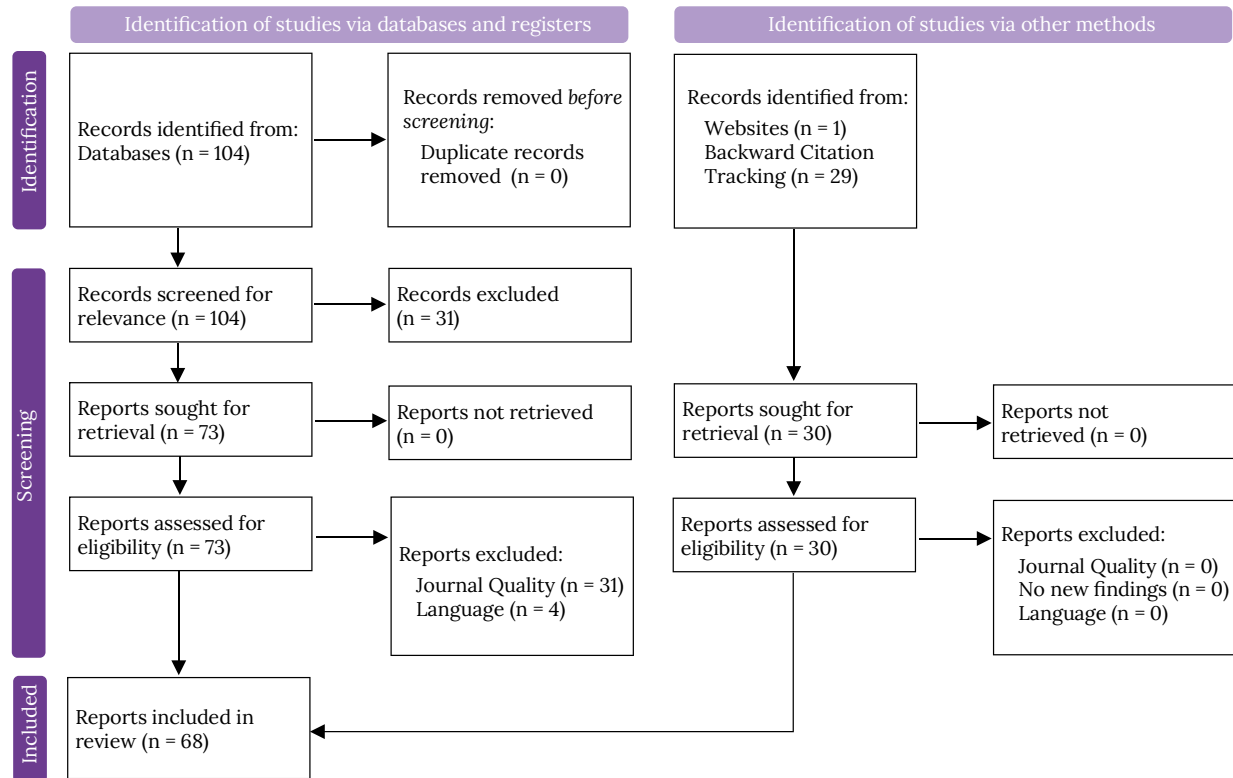
a broader, explorative approach (Paul & Criado, 2020). In contrast to other approaches to creating a literature review, such as theory-based, method-based, or meta-analytical approaches, the domain-based review focuses on the entire body of literature within a domain (i.e., consumer animosity) in a narrative and exploratory manner (Paul & Criado, 2020).

To ensure the reproducibility of this SLR, the PRISMA approach was selected, which was first introduced by Moher et al. (2009) and recently reworked and updated by Page et al. (2021). PRISMA stands for Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses and is the international standard for creating literature reviews. By incorporating a framework to track the scanned literature and thus ensure reproducibility at any given time by any researcher, the PRISMA approach can guide researchers through all the steps from study selection to synthesis. It ensures methodological consistency and minimises biases by individual researchers (Moher et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021).

This article utilises the term “Consumer Animosity” as a keyword for a database search and includes articles regardless of age, as the domain is relatively new, having been established only 27 years ago. Journals have been included if they are written in the English language, published in a peer-reviewed journal in a relevant field of science, and include the keyword in the title, abstract, or keywords.

As of the transcribing of this literature review, a total of 134 articles on the topic of consumer animosity have been identified (Figure 1) for the period from the beginning of the consumer animosity research stream in 1998 to 2025. Articles that fell outside this timeframe were included only for the theoretical foundation of the research. 104 of these articles have been identified through database research using the commonly used Web of Science database.

Additionally, through the identification of articles that fell outside the database search frame in the references of included papers, 30 articles have been included in this systematic literature review.

**Figure 1.** PRISMA flow diagram

From a total of 134 articles, 67 were selected for this synthesis and the remaining 67 were excluded due to simple reproduction of other studies, missing new findings, irrelevance of the topic, and journal or language criteria.

### Synthesis of prior studies

Klein et al. (1998) were the first to show the effects of consumer animosity on purchasing behaviour. Their research was conducted on Chinese consumers who feel both war-based animosity and economic-based animosity against Japan. War-based animosity especially derives from the occupation of Chinese territory by the Japanese during World War 2; Economic-based animosity can be explained by Japan being China's biggest trading partner and investment source. Japanese investors often adopted a "buy-and-bury" mentality, aiming to decrease competition for Japanese companies by investing in Chinese brands (Klein et al., 1998). The researchers found that consumer ethnocentrism and consumer animosity were two distinct constructs, and the purchasing preferences resulting from consumer

animosity remained even when ethnocentrism was held constant. However, many studies have found a close, positive relationship between ethnocentricity and consumer animosity, often in the roles of antecedent or moderator (Mishra et al., 2023; Tao et al., 2022). Recent research has expanded the dimensions of economic and war-based animosity to include relationship animosity, which also influences consumer behaviour (Cao et al., 2025). Other definitions also include cultural and religious animosity, with Kalliny et al. (2017) developing a scale for this purpose (Davlembayeva et al., 2024; Kalliny et al., 2017). Jung et. al (2002) added the dimensions of a stable animosity, a long-lasting feeling of animosity that results from multiple conflicts between countries over time (i.e., USA and Russia), in contrast to situational animosity, a temporary feeling of animosity induced by one specific event (i.e., Russia's war on Ukraine). They also introduced animosity on two levels, personal (micro-level) and national (macro-level) animosity. This 2x2 framework is used to classify the type of animosity into personal stable animosity, personal situational animosity, and

corresponding options on the national level (Jung et al., 2002). Rojas-Méndez et al. (2022) recently, in their study of pandemic animosity, added a third dimension to this framework, the role of intentionality, which distinguishes animosity into intention-driven and non-intention-driven categories.

The topic of consumer animosity has been researched extensively across various industries and countries, especially in the areas of foreign products and tourism, and in countries such as the US and China, likely correlated to the number of conflicts these countries have experienced (Campo & Alvarez, 2019; Farmaki et al., 2025; Kocaman et al., 2025; Stepchenkova et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020). Less research has been conducted, especially in the area of disasters or crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic crisis of 2020 (Rojas-Méndez et al., 2022).

## Theories

Articles in the research stream on consumer animosity draw on a variety of theories as a foundation for their findings. The five most prominent theories will be briefly mentioned below, along with a short explanation of their causal relation to the construct of animosity.

The most prominently used theory is the Social Identity Theory, which states that individuals feel loyalty and belonging towards their in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which can be of cultural, ethical, or national nature. As a consequence, members of the in-group can develop negative feelings towards out-groups, especially when they are in conflict with the in-group (Chau et al., 2025; Huang et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory posits that inner tension arises when one's own behaviour contradicts one's attitudes or values (Festinger, 1962). The consequence will be a change in attitude, which many papers describe as a foundation for the development of consumer animosity (Cheah et al., 2016; Tao et al., 2024).

Realistic Group Conflict Theory, originally developed to explain ethnocentrism, posits that conflict arises from the natural competition for

resources, such as economic opportunities or jobs (Levine & Campbell, 1972). This can subsequently lead to unfavourable feelings towards the competitors and thus be seen as a cause for animosity (Farah & Mehdi, 2021; Huang et al., 2010).

Attribution Theory, introduced by Kelley (1967), explains how individuals interpret events by attributing causes to actions or outcomes. By assigning blame to offending countries, consumers can develop animosity as a result of this theory (Antonetti et al., 2019; Hoffmann et al., 2011).

The Theory of Reasoned Action posits that subjective norms, stemming from the individual's normative beliefs, have a significant influence on their behaviour (Fishbein, 1979). If an individual believes their behaviour will lead to positive outcomes, they will act accordingly to achieve this outcome, and vice versa. These beliefs can foster both ethnocentric behaviours and animosity (Bahae & Pisani, 2009; Krüger et al., 2024).

Other theories that authors use to explain the reasons behind animosity include, but are not limited to, the Cognitive-Affective-Behaviour Model (Cao et al., 2025)(2), Regret Theory (Khan et al., 2019), Theory of Planned Behaviour (Kim et al., 2022), Attitude Theory (Rice & Wongtada, 2007), and Balance Theory (Yang et al., 2015).

## Antecedents

Antecedents of consumer animosity have been primarily identified in the following areas: political principles, external forces, social identification and values, culture, personality traits, and socio-demographic variables (Bahae & Pisani, 2009; Huang et al., 2015; Tao et al., 2022).

Political principles describe underlying paradigms of people, including ethnocentrism, nationalism, and patriotism, which are related to animosity but distinct constructs (Tao et al., 2022). Krüger et al. (2025) argue that the effects of consumer animosity are especially influential for people with ethnocentric tendencies.

External forces include factors that one can hardly influence, such as economic competition, economic instability, or government actions

(Huang et al., 2010). Recent studies have also found that human rights violations and negative experiences with immigrants can be factors that foster consumer animosity (Moufakkir, 2014).

Social identification and values are also based on the Social Identity Theory. If the in-group (i.e., a country) is involved in a conflict, war, or economic dispute, its members can develop animosity towards the conflict partner as a consequence (Carvalho et al., 2019).

Cultural causes of animosity lie in various dimensions, including collectivism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance (Latif et al., 2019). In individualist cultures, members of society are expected to look after themselves, whereas collectivist cultures are characterised by a stronger sense of integration and loyalty. This can lead to animosity towards national out-groups, for example, in response to a threat to the national image of the in-group (Huang et al., 2010). Other researchers have achieved contradictory results, stating that collectivist cultures actually mitigate the negative effects of consumer animosity instead of fostering them (Westjohn et al., 2021). The degree of masculinity in a culture is defined as the presence of emotions typically associated with masculine behaviour, such as aggressiveness, readiness for confrontation, or a tendency to blame (Leung et al., 1990). As animosity involves emotions with a similar nature, a high degree of masculinity has been found to be an antecedent of consumer animosity (Huang et al., 2010). The level of uncertainty avoidance has been found to influence the level of animosity positively, as people with high uncertainty avoidance tend to exhibit strong in-group favouritism, combined with acting more self-protectively when encountering challenges (Wu & Srite, 2015). Lastly, people with high power-distance values tend to be more fearful of powerful people or institutions and are less likely to disagree (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994). Latif et al. (2019) states that this leads to lower values of consumer animosity among individuals with high power-distance values, as they are less likely to speak up and criticise or show anger towards the exporting country.

Personality traits have not been extensively researched in this context, although researchers have found that traits such as neuroticism and openness positively correlate with feelings of animosity, whereas extraversion and conscientiousness have the opposite effect (Leonidou et al., 2019).

Socio-demographic variables have also been found to be moderators or even direct predictors of consumer animosity. Relevant variables include age, income, education, and gender (Bahae & Pisani, 2009; Han et al., 2020). Individuals with higher income and education tend not to feel as much animosity towards a country, even in the case of economic or military conflicts (Bahae & Pisani, 2009). In contrast, effects of a lower income, such as personal hardship, have been found to foster a higher level of animosity (Huang et al., 2010). Other studies argue that better educated individuals are more likely to exhibit higher levels of animosity, while age and income are found to be insignificant (Leonidou et al., 2019). A higher amount of foreign travel experience additionally lowers the amount of animosity. Age has been found to be positively correlated with animosity, meaning that individuals of greater age are more prone to feeling animosity (Han et al., 2020). However, other researchers have found the age variable to be inconsistent in predicting animosity (Little et al., 2009), which contradicts the findings of Han et al. (2020). The gender variable has not been consistently found to be a predictor of animosity (Harmeling et al., 2015; Leonidou et al., 2019).

## ■ Outcomes and consequences

Other studies have focused on the outcomes and consequences of consumer animosity, which have been found in areas such as perceptions, emotions, behavioural responses, and psychological responses.

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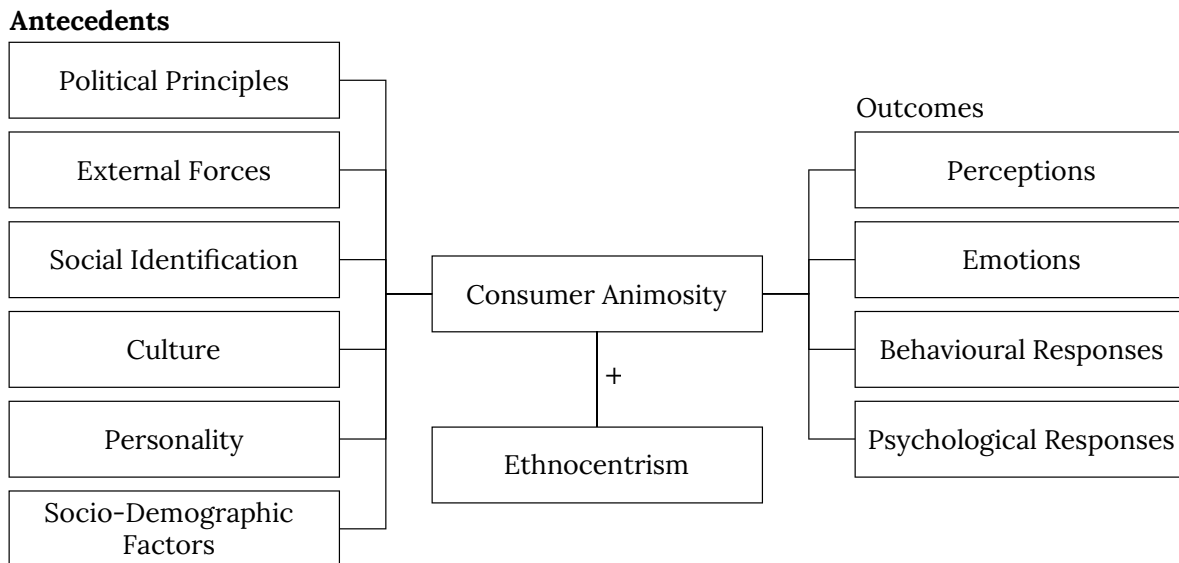
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**Figure 2.** Overview of antecedents, outcomes, and related constructs

## Discussion

### Contributions

The research area of consumer animosity, despite being very active for over 20 years, is still in its early stages. Researchers worldwide are actively discussing the antecedents and outcomes of animosity, as well as the role of ethnocentrism in this construct. As demonstrated, research is expanding in many directions, as the current times foster the need for a good understanding of customers in increasingly complex world dynamics. Therefore, this paper provides a synthesis of the current research status in the area of consumer animosity, which is methodologically transparent and thus replicable. Through this snapshot of the state of consumer animosity research, scholars will be able to better identify research gaps, as stated below.

### Research gaps and future research

Firstly, prior research widely agrees on the negative effect of consumer animosity on purchasing intentions and confirms that conflicts between countries typically lead to increased animosity among their populations. However, little is known about how to influence or mitigate consumer animosity. Future research should explore strategies aimed at reducing animosity,

such as cross-cultural communication efforts, corporate social responsibility initiatives, or diplomatic marketing campaigns, to better understand both the underlying mechanisms and the practical applications for firms operating in international markets.

Secondly, much of the existing literature treats consumer animosity as a static construct, offering only a snapshot at a given moment. However, animosity is likely to be a highly dynamic feeling that evolves alongside political or economic developments. Longitudinal or panel designs could therefore offer deeper insights into how animosity fluctuates over time and how these temporal changes affect consumer behaviour.

Thirdly, researchers have predominantly examined animosity in the context of national conflicts, often overlooking inter-organisational or corporate-level disputes. Future studies should investigate whether smaller-scale conflicts lead to similar emotional and behavioural outcomes.

Fourthly, the role of media, and particularly social media, in shaping consumer animosity remains underexplored. Given the increasing influence of digital communication, future research should examine how various forms of media contribute to the formation or mitigation of animosity. Comparative studies

between countries with differing levels of media freedom and social media penetration could reveal significant contextual differences.

Lastly, most existing studies have been conducted within developed countries, leaving a gap in understanding how consumer animosity manifests in developing economies. Future research should therefore examine animosity in diverse cultural and economic settings, especially including emerging markets, to assess potential differences in causes, intensity, and behavioural outcomes.

### Limitations

This paper, as an SLR, also has limitations.

Firstly, the scope of the research has been defined with strict exclusion criteria, including journal rankings and language. This omits many articles by default, which can result in the exclusion of research, for example, in addressing the stated research gaps. Future SLRs in the area of consumer animosity could widen the focus by decreasing exclusion criteria.

Secondly, this paper may be affected by various biases common to literature reviews, such as publication bias, time-lag bias, or outcome reporting bias. These biases potentially influence the findings of this SLR, without being intentionally applied.

Lastly, the results presented in this paper cannot be perfectly generalised, as studies are often conducted in very specific environments or contexts. The results can thus only be viewed as general guidance and must be verified individually before being used as the basis for further research. Additionally, research in the area of consumer animosity moves quickly. Thus, it is essential to consult current research at the time of reading this review, as areas may have advanced that are not yet addressed in this paper.

To conclude, this Systematic Literature Review advances the academic understanding of the research field, establishing consumer animosity as an important construct for navigating complex and dynamic consumer behaviour in a rapidly shifting global environment.

### Use of artificial intelligence

No artificial intelligence was employed in the conception, analysis, or writing of the scientific content presented in this paper. The research, data interpretation, and manuscript preparation were conducted solely by the author. AI tools were used exclusively for grammatical correction and language refinement, without altering the scientific substance or conclusions of the work.

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