

# THE ORIGINS AND CONSEQUENCES OF CONSUMER ANIMOSITY IN SLOVENIA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study investigates the sources underlying consumer animosity in Slovenia and the effects of country-specific negative attitudes on foreign purchase behavior. The empirical data were collected via 82 semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews using maximum variation sampling. Transcripts of the interviews were then content analyzed in a two-stage approach applying within-case and cross-case evaluation. The top hostility-evoking countries identified included Hungary, Croatia, Italy and the US. The most important sources of animosity related to the dimensions of the people, politics and personal experience. Consumer animosity was found to influence purchase behavior in selected product categories. Based on these results, theoretical and managerial implications are offered.*

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**Keywords:** *consumer animosity, purchase behavior, country of origin*

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**JEL Classification:** M31, M39

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The consumer animosity construct was introduced in the marketing literature in the late 1990s to offer insights into consumer attitudes to buying foreign products (Klein, Ettenson & Morris, 1998; Klein & Ettenson, 1999). Consumer animosity relates to individuals' negative feelings and attitudes toward a specific foreign country that are often developed by various triggers, such as traumatic historical events, economic disputes (Klein et al., 1998), or basic differences in cultural norms and values (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007). The consumer animosity models posit that the antipathy toward a country and its people will translate into a refusal to buy products and services originating from this country, irrespective of judgments on product quality.

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Apprehension regarding buying products that originate from a particular country can be detrimental to the business interests of international companies. Therefore, the concept of consumer animosity has quickly gained the attention of marketing scholars and practitioners (Cai et al., 2012). Over the past 15 years, many studies have investigated the antecedents and consequences of consumer animosity and tested its scale validity. The initial two-dimensional consumer animosity model proposed by Klein et al. (1998) captured war-related and economic animosity but was later extended to other domains. Several new dimensions and drivers of animosity were proposed, e.g. people animosity and political/government animosity (Nes, Yelkur & Silkoset, 2012), implicit animosity (Cai et al., 2012), perceived threat, antithetical political attitudes, and negative personal experiences (Hoffmann, Mai & Smirnova, 2011).

Hoffmann et al. (2011) suggested managers would benefit if a universally applicable animosity scale were developed that allows a cross-national comparison of animosity levels to facilitate decisions regarding new market entries. However, alternative conceptualizations based on studies conducted in various country and product settings lent support to the conjecture that the domain of the construct was more context-specific than universal. The contextual nature of animosity precludes precise generalizations across markets; thus each country market must be analyzed to understand which nations are animosity targets, what are the underlying reasons for that animosity, and for which product groups animosity factors into the buying process. Only after this insight is obtained it makes sense to measure the level of animosity and its influence on purchase behavior in that particular market. Hence, in animosity studies the emic approach should be adopted and quantitative research should be preceded by a qualitative study in the same research setting.

In this study we explore consumer animosity in Slovenia. Since consumer animosity has not yet been investigated in this setting, we conducted a comprehensive qualitative study to gain in-depth insights into the studied phenomenon in this particular context. A large majority of extant studies engage in quantitative research where it is the researchers themselves who predetermine the animosity targets and the reasons for animosity. Recently, however, there have been several calls to address consumer animosity in a different manner. Riefler and Diamantopoulos (2007) and Nes et al. (2012) stressed the need to conduct exploratory research to determine the actual domain, animosity targets and reasons for animosity. To date, only a handful of studies have employed qualitative methods such as ethnography (Amine, 2008), in-depth interviews (Podoshen & Hunt, 2009), experiments (Hong & Kang, 2006), scenario-based research (Fong, Lee & Du, 2014) and case studies (Amine, Chao & Arnold, 2005).

To acquire a deeper understanding of consumer animosity in the Slovenian context, 82 in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals residing in various geographical regions in the country. The key research questions addressed in this study included: (1) Which of the animosity dimensions identified in previous research apply to the Slovenian context; (2) Which countries are animosity targets and what is the intensity of the animosity sentiment toward these countries; and (3) What is the role of animosity in consumer foreign product purchase behavior and which product and service categories are affected?

In the next section, we provide a review of the country-of-origin and consumer animosity literature. We then report on the methods used to address the aforementioned research questions and discuss the techniques utilized to analyze the large set of primary qualitative data. Following this, we present the findings and discuss the main results. Finally, we elaborate on the theoretical and managerial implications and note the limitations of our study along with suggestions for future research.

## 2. CONSUMER ANIMOSITY

Consumer animosity describes the negative attitudes held by certain individuals toward a specific foreign country. The construct was first conceptualized by Klein et al. (1998) who defined it as “the remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political, or economic events” (p. 90). Theoretical and empirical extension of the concept in the years that followed led to an expanded conceptualization. Nes et al. (2012) define consumer animosity as “strong hostility toward a country due to that country’s previous or ongoing military, economic, or political actions, or the perception of that country’s people as being hostile with unsympathetic mentality” (p. 755).

The pioneer study carried out by Klein et al. (1998) paved the way for later researchers who studied the impact of anger, dislike, or even hatred toward a specific foreign entity on foreign purchase behavior. Animosity was studied in North America (e.g. Klein, 2002; Little, Little & Cox, 2009), Europe (e.g. Amine, 2008; Jiménez & San Martín, 2010; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007), the Middle East (e.g. Bahae & Pisani, 2009a; Mostafa, 2010) and Asia (e.g. Ang et al., 2004; Huang, Phau & Lin, 2010a). The majority of studies followed the original approach set out by Klein et al. (1998) and focused on animosity on the country level, i.e. between two countries (e.g. Klein & Ettenson, 1999; Nakos & Hajidimitriou, 2007; Nes, Yelkur & Silkoset, 2012; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004; Russell & Russell, 2006; Shin, 2001). However, some other studies focused on the animosity of a specific subgroup toward a foreign country (Shah & Halim, 2011; Rose, Rose & Shoham, 2009; Podoshen & Hunt, 2009), animosity between two subgroups belonging to different countries (Guido et al., 2010), or animosity between subgroups within a single country (Shimp, Dunn & Klein, 2004; Hinck, 2005; Shoham et al., 2006).

A number of authors chose to omit specific product categories from their inquiries either because they examined the consequences of consumer animosity on products in general (Hinck, 2005; Leong et al., 2008; Shin, 2001) or because their focus was not purchase behavior (e.g. Little et al., 2009; Matić & Puh, 2011; Shah & Halim, 2011). Other researchers applied consumer animosity to specific groups of products that ranged from durables (Klein et al., 1998; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004; Shimp et al., 2004) to fast-moving consumer goods (Guido et al., 2010; Shoham et al., 2006), apparel (Ettenson & Klein, 2005), luxury goods (Amine, 2008) and cultural products (Russell, Russell & Neijens, 2011). Some studies investigated whether animosity holds consequences for the consumption of services like tourism, restaurant services and car repairs (Guido et al., 2010; Shoham et al., 2006), travel to the animosity country (Amine, 2008), and electricity, Internet and wireless cell phone services (Shimp et al., 2004).

## 2.1 Typology of consumer animosity

Jung et al. (2002) argue that animosity is a dynamic concept that stems from various sources and is constantly updated through different events and experiences. To better conceptualize how animosity is formed and then internalized, Jung et al. (2002) and Ang et al. (2004) developed a typology that categorizes animosity within a grid depending on its sources and its locus. Based on the sources of animosity, the authors distinguished between stable and situational animosity. According to the locus of manifestation, they then defined national and personal animosity.

**Situational animosity** is driven by a specific event, whereas **stable animosity** accumulates over a longer period of time due to historical events between countries, for example, military or economic hostilities. Over time, situational animosity may evolve into stable animosity characterized by a long-lasting and deeply-rooted general antagonistic emotion toward a particular country. This evolution can transpire without an individual actually having had any personal experience with the animosity target. Stable animosity can be passed from one generation to another via formal (e.g. history texts) or informal (e.g. word-of-mouth) channels (Jung et al., 2002). Little et al. (2009) showed that American animosity toward Vietnam stemming from the Vietnam War was passed from one generation to another. The existence of situational animosity was confirmed by Ettenson and Klein's (2005) longitudinal study in which Australian consumers' animosity toward France was measured at two points in time, namely during France's engagement in nuclear testing in the South Pacific (the first measurement) and one year after that situation had come to an end (the second measurement). The results confirm the notion that animosity is a dynamic concept since the level of animosity was lower in the second study. Similarly, Maher, Clark and Maher (2010) found that Americans' feelings of animosity toward Japan have gradually decreased since World War II and have been replaced by admiration.

At the macro level, **national animosity** refers to the perception of how much one's country was affected and suffered due to the actions of another country (Jung et al., 2002). Most existing studies focus on national animosity (e.g. Hinck, 2005; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004; Shimp et al., 2004; Shoham et al., 2006). At the micro level, **personal animosity** refers to one's resentment toward another country stemming from negative experiences with that country or its people (Jung et al., 2002) or from personal feelings of dislike toward the target country (Hoffmann, Mai & Smirnova, 2011). For example, Podoshen and Hunt's (2009) qualitative study revealed that American Jews who survived the Holocaust still harbor personal animosity toward Germany. One of the early studies focusing on the personal aspect of animosity was Ang et al.'s (2004) research into personal animosity of five other Asian nations toward Japan and the U.S.. Riefler and Diamantopoulos (2007) believed this type of animosity was so essential that they called for further studies in this area.

## 2.2 The sources underlying animosity

Animosity toward another country can vary in strength ranging from instances when it is relatively benign (e.g. minor territorial disputes between two neighboring countries), to

others where the feelings of antipathy are more serious (e.g. previous military events or recent specific economic or diplomatic disputes).

The existing literature on animosity suggests that the sources of animosity can be many and diverse. The original authors of consumer animosity (Klein et al., 1998) distinguished only between general, war- and economic-related animosity. They studied **war-related** animosity by focusing on a past historical military event, i.e., the Nanjing massacre in 1937 during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Subsequent studies investigated both historical and more recent war-related events. For example, Shin (2001), Klein (2002), and Nijssen and Douglas (2004) investigated World War II actions and their repercussions. Podoshen and Hunt (2009) concluded that the Holocaust still persists in the collective memory of many Jewish consumers living in the U.S., resulting in their animosity toward Germany and their refusal to purchase German-made cars. Some studies focused on other war events such as the U.S. Civil War (Shimp et al., 2004), the Vietnam War (Little et al., 2009), and the Second Intifada of the Palestinians (Shoham et al., 2006).

Klein et al. (1998) suggest that **economic-related** animosity is based on the perception that a foreign animosity country is an unfair and unreliable trading partner, and it exerts excessive influence in the home country. Several subsequent studies have conceptualized economic-related animosity in a similar manner (Bahae & Pisani, 2009b; Klein, 2002; Mostafa, 2010; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004; Russell & Russell, 2006; Shoham et al., 2006). Other authors have studied different sources of economic animosity. For example, Ang et al. (2004) investigated animosity in five Asian countries in the context of the 1997 Asian crisis. Funk et al. (2010) studied American animosity toward India, partially explained by the perception that India is taking jobs away from Americans.

However, the reasons for animosity do not merely stem from war and economic events. Animosity may be rooted in issues related to politics, religion, or culture. **Political** reasons for animosity can encompass events such as the Australian-French diplomatic incident during French nuclear testing in the South Pacific (Ettenson & Klein, 2005), France's opposition to American foreign policies (Russell & Russell, 2006), territorial disputes between Taiwan and Japan (Huang, Phau & Lin, 2010a; 2010b) and strained relations between Iran and the U.S. (Bahae & Pisani, 2009a; 2009b; Funk et al., 2010).

Nes et al. (2012) extended the political dimension of animosity further to include internal political issues such as authoritarian government, government regulation and policies, imposed censorship on the people, lack of freedom, and violation of human rights. Maher and Mady (2010) examined the **religious** animosity of Kuwaitis toward Denmark ignited by the depiction of the prophet Mohammad in a Danish newspaper. Russell et al. (2011) based their research on **cultural** animosity on France's ideological resistance to the U.S. which was reflected in the anti-consumption of American movies. Amine (2008), on the other hand, focused on a **non-specific** source of animosity between France and the U.S., which she describes as a basic "continuing rivalry between France and America" (p. 414). Similarly, Nakos and Hajidimitriou (2007) did not indicate any specific contemporary source of animosity between Greece and Turkey, but instead focused their study on the ancient hatreds between these two nations.

### 2.3 Behavioral consequences of animosity

The animosity model posits that negative feelings and attitudes toward a certain country or ethnic group may lead to refusal to buy products and services from the hostility-evoking countries, regardless of their product quality or judgment (Klein et al., 1998). Several other researchers have subsequently explored animosity effects related to various behavioral outcomes.

Klein et al. (1998) discovered a direct negative impact of animosity on the **willingness to buy** products from the offending country, which then further predicted product ownership. The negative relationship between consumer animosity and the willingness to buy was later confirmed in many other studies (e.g. Ettenson & Klein, 2005; Funk et al., 2010; Hinck, 2005; Leong et al., 2008; Maher & Mady, 2010; Mostafa, 2010; Nakos & Hajidimitriou, 2007; Rose et al., 2009; Shin, 2001; Shoham et al., 2006). Nijssen and Douglas (2004) discovered that war animosity had a positive direct impact on the reluctance to buy foreign products, whereas the influence of economic animosity was not as significant. Similarly, Nakos and Hajidimitriou (2007) found that economic animosity did not influence the willingness of Greek consumers to buy Turkish products. The authors justified these results by suggesting that Turkey is a less developed country than Greece, and thus Greeks do not perceive Turkey as a major economic threat.

Some researchers also measured how willingness to buy translates into actual **product ownership**. Klein et al. (1998), Shin (2001), Klein (2002) and Mostafa (2010) found a positive relationship between willingness to buy and foreign product ownership, whereas Klein (2002) found a positive relationship between preferences for a Japanese product (an animosity country) over a South Korean product (a neutral country) and the ownership of a Japanese car. In their empirical study, Shoham et al. (2006) found a positive relationship between willingness to buy and **purchase behavior change**.

Other direct consequences of consumer animosity examined in the existing literature included **intention to buy** (Bahae & Pisani, 2009a; Guido et al., 2010; Hoffmann et al., 2011; Huang et al., 2010a), **preferences for products from an animosity country** (Klein, 2002), **preferences for products/services from one's in-group** (Russell et al., 2011; Shimp et al., 2004), **boycott participation** (Ettenson & Klein, 2005; Hoffmann et al., 2011), **change in purchase behavior** (Guido et al., 2010), **past consumption of movies from an animosity country** (Russell et al., 2011), **willingness to pay a price premium** (Shimp et al., 2004), **consumer trust in foreign firms** (Jiménez & San Martín, 2010), and **country-of-origin image** (Hoffmann et al., 2011).

While the original animosity model (Klein et al., 1998) predicted that quality judgments exert no influence on the relationship between animosity and purchase behavior, some subsequent studies found mediating effects. Shoham et al. (2006) were the first to find an inverse relationship between **product quality judgments** and animosity, with the finding being later confirmed in other studies (Guido et al., 2010; Huang et al., 2010a; Mostafa, 2010; Urbonavicius et al., 2010). Shoham et al. (2006) argued that the inverse relationship

between animosity and product judgments may be the result of the situational and recent nature of animosity, which in turn leads to product denigration. Further, they posited that it is difficult for Jewish Israelis to be angry with Arab Israelis without denigrating products and services that represent the Arab culture and their habits. Rose et al. (2009) found an inverse relationship in the context of Arab Israeli animosity toward the United Kingdom. However, this relationship was not significant in the context of Jewish Israeli animosity toward the United Kingdom. When product judgment mediated the relationship between animosity and willingness/intention to buy, the effect of product judgment on willingness/intention to buy was found to be positive (Guido et al., 2010; Huang et al., 2010a; Mostafa, 2010; Rose et al., 2009; Shoham et al., 2006).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DATA COLLECTION, AND ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES

To uncover the sources underlying consumer animosity in the local Slovenian context, examine the hostility-evoking countries, and explore its effects on foreign product purchase, we conducted 82 semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews. Prior to the main data collection, we carried out a pre-test by conducting 14 interviews that were later excluded from the main analysis. The interviewees in the pre-test were between 17 and 75 years old, and six of them were female. The interviewees were generally reluctant to speak about countries they disliked and tended to provide vague answers. This exploratory study allowed us to develop procedures and design a detailed interview protocol document to be used in our research.

The interviews for the main study were conducted in five Slovenian regions, each of which has been historically, geographically and socially linked to different foreign countries and events: Central Slovenia, Northeastern (NE) Slovenia, Tri-border area, Southeastern (SE) Slovenia, Western (W) Slovenia. We utilized the maximum variation (heterogeneity) type of sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002) by selecting the interviewees carefully to match the various demographic requirements. Characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 1.

The respondents were contacted through our personal networks as well as in cooperation with various Slovenian companies. Strict confidentiality was assured to all participants, and each was given a code name for the purpose of analysis. Prior to the interview, each respondent was informed about the purpose of our research and how the collected data would be used. All interviewees gave their consent to record their conversations. The average duration of an interview was just under 22 minutes.

Table 1: *Demographic characteristics of the interviewees by region*

Demographic Characteristics		Number of Interviewees					
		Total	Central Slovenia	Northeastern Slovenia	Tri-border area	Southeastern Slovenia	Western Slovenia
Number of interviews		82	20	15	13	16	18
Average age		44.1	44.7	38.3	40.9	47.6	47.5
Gender	Female	54	13	10	9	8	14
	Male	28	7	5	4	8	4
Education	Elementary education or less	4	1	0	2	1	0
	Secondary education	26	6	4	4	7	5
	University education or more	52	13	11	7	8	13
Work Status	Student	10	1	3	1	3	2
	Employed or self-employed	60	17	11	11	8	13
	Retired	12	2	1	1	5	3
Income	Below average	3	0	0	1	1	1
	Average	64	16	12	11	11	14
	Above average	15	4	3	1	4	3

The first part of the interview consisted of questions on animosity countries and their origins. Given that the interviewees in the pre-test were generally unwilling to talk about the countries they disliked, we avoided asking direct questions about feelings of hostility, hatred, and animosity at the beginning of an interview in the main study. Instead, we asked respondents to name the countries “they are not very fond of” or “they find less appealing”. In the second part of the interview, we asked the interviewees about their purchase behavior (e.g. whether they paid attention to the origin of the products they buy, which information cues were important to them when buying fast-moving consumer goods and durable products). Finally, we presented each interviewee with a hypothetical situation of choosing between equal refrigerators which differed only in their country of origin. The respondents had to choose from among three countries of origin: Slovenia, a “neutral” country (not mentioned during the interview) and the country identified by each respondent as their animosity target. Hence, the two countries of origin were always adapted to the content of the conversation with the interviewee. While the choice of the refrigerator in our hypothetical scenario may not have been entirely realistic with respect



to whether or not the specific country in reality offered any refrigerator brands in the Slovenian market, these responses helped us assess the possible link between consumer animosity and willingness to buy or own a product from the hostility-evoking country. If we had used a durable product that is applicable to the actual situation in each market, we would have needed to pre-select the animosity countries, an approach believed to represent a major limitation in previous studies (Riefler & Dimantopoulos, 2007).

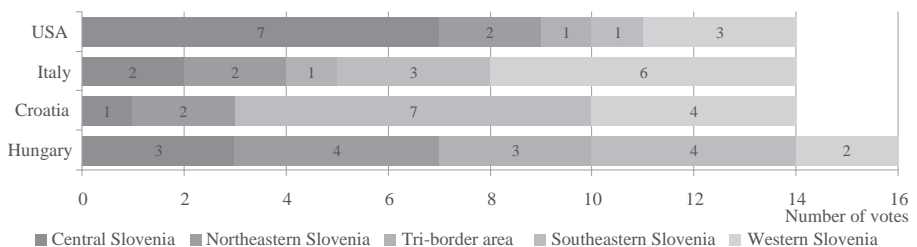
The first step in the data analysis was data reduction (Berg, 2001) where we manually transformed the raw data into coded data. We prepared a worksheet containing categories of information obtained during the interviews, including animosity countries, reasons for animosity, effects of animosity on purchase behavior, purchase behavior for the product categories of food, textiles/shoes, cosmetics/cleaning products and durables and, finally, the refrigerator scenario. To reduce subjectivity in the data analysis, two researchers independently listened to the audio recordings and analyzed the data, with their work subsequently being compared and any inconsistencies in the researchers' interpretations resolved. Only when a satisfactory agreement on the interpretation of data had been achieved were the data entered as concise summaries and partly as direct quotations. When writing up the summaries, the researchers were careful to use as much of the original interviewees' terminology as possible.

Following Miles and Huberman's (1994) two-stage approach, the next step in the data analysis was a content analysis of the research notes. The primary unit of analysis was the individual person, i.e. one interviewee. The analysis was conducted in two steps: first, we performed a within-case analysis, followed by a cross-case analysis.

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS

The interviewees specified a total of 48 animosity countries and distributed 196 votes among them. We limit our discussion herein to the top four animosity countries identified by our interviewees: Hungary (16 votes), Croatia, Italy and the US (14 votes each). Figure 1 shows substantial differences in the distribution of votes to the animosity countries among the five regions of Slovenia where the interviews took place. The exception was Hungary, where the number of votes remained somewhat stable across the different regions (see Fig. 1).

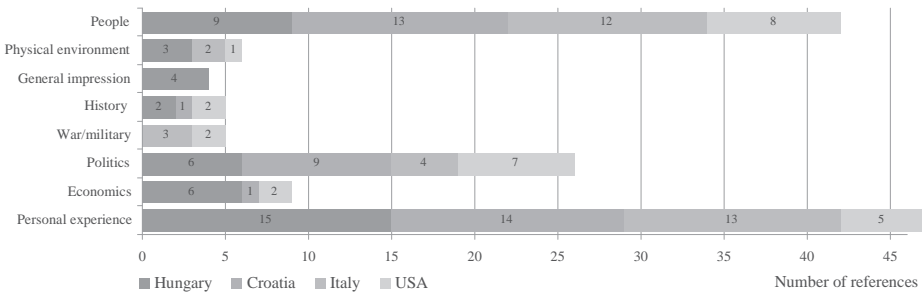
Figure 1: *Distribution of votes by region for the top four animosity countries*



### 4.1 Sources of consumer animosity

When classifying our data according to sources underlying consumer animosity, we adopted the categories previously used in the literature, i.e. the war/military and economics dimensions (e.g. Klein et al., 1998; Mostafa, 2010; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004), the politics and people dimensions (e.g. Nes et al., 2012; Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007) and negative personal experiences (Hoffmann et al., 2011). In addition, the data analysis pointed to three additional dimensions, i.e., physical environment, general impression, and history. The references per animosity category/dimension and country are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Sources of animosity toward selected countries per number of references



Based on the number of references, personal experience (combined with at least one other reason) was the main driver of animosity toward Hungary, Croatia and Italy. The second most important reason was the people category. The responses regarding the people dimension were also quite diverse, and for classification purposes we thus introduced the three sub-dimensions (see Table 2) originally proposed by Oberecker, Riefler and Diamantopoulos (2008) for the affinity construct. We found the same categorization to be applicable to the animosity construct. The third most frequently mentioned reason was politics and, in the case of Hungary, economics. On the other hand, personal experience was not the most frequently mentioned driver in the case of the U.S., which is not surprising given that this country is physically much further away than the other three (neighboring) countries. Consequently, the interviewees’ opinions of the U.S. are mainly shaped by the influence of the mass media and to some extent by stereotypes. The most frequently mentioned reason for disliking the U.S. was the people category, followed by the (foreign) politics category. The sources of animosity are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Sources of consumer animosity toward identified target countries

Category	Hungary	Croatia	Italy	USA
	Introverted people, unpredictable, bad manners, they overcharge for their goods/services, unusual mentality, temperament and behavior, more and more (gypsy) immigrants from Hungary in the rest of the EU	Selfish, arrogant, envious, self-sufficient, greedy, unpleasant, dishonest, unfriendly, inhospitable people; bad character, feeling of superiority compared to others; disregard others; immigrants do not learn Slovenian; inappropriate behavior and attitude toward Slovenians	Arrogant, cunning, inaccurate, sloppy, lazy, inadaptabile, nervous, impatient, unreliable, unappealing, silly, whiny people; strange gypsy nation; wild, southern temperament; aggressive drivers; inappropriate behavior; corny and overly feminine men	Arrogant, careless, sloppy, self-sufficient, insincere, foolish, stupid people; feeling of superiority compared to others; character of the people; hypocrites
<b>People</b>	Young people passive (legacy of socialism) and incapable of adapting to a new and/or changed system	The further south you travel, the lazier are the people	-	Lavish, consumerism, instant culture, unrealistic portrayal of life, unattractive lifestyle
	Lifestyle in general	Hard to communicate with them; they expect Slovenians to adapt to them	Hard to communicate with them; they expect Slovenians to adapt to them	The English language dominates; everybody has to adapt to them
	Language	Hard to communicate with them, do not speak foreign languages, unattractive language, the way they speak	Hard to communicate with them; they expect Slovenians to adapt to them	The English language dominates; everybody has to adapt to them
<b>Physical environment</b>	Untidy and dirty country, untidy nature	-	Dirtyness, lack of hygiene	Concrete; many people, feeling of claustrophobia

<b>General impression</b>	Unappealing, strange vibrations, gypsy country, old-fashioned, unsafe, bad, grey and black	-	-	-
<b>History</b>	Iron Curtain	Always treated Slovenians as servants	-	No history; imperialistic past
<b>War/military</b>	-	-	World War II (fascism, mobilization, bombing, hunger) and occupation	War industry; actively create conflicts and wars; a killing machine
<b>Politics</b>	Politically unstable system; current domestic political situation getting worse; corruption and bribery of civil servants	Corruption, bribery of police officers, constant problems with all neighbors, border issues, gained territory at our expense; take care of themselves only	Berlusconi and right-wing politics, loose immigration policy, socio-political role of Italy, twisting of historical facts, political opportunism	Aggressive politics, superpower, consider the rest of the world inferior (not concerned about others), support Israel; their means do not justify the ends
<b>Economics</b>	Low-quality goods, low economic development, low living standard, inadequate services and choice in restaurants	Higher prices compared to other countries	-	Concerned for their own capital only, exploit and hinder the development of others, unequal criteria for different nations
<b>Personal experience</b>	Traveled there and did not like it; Hungarians wanted to mislead her	Traveled there; negative previous experience; bad memories of performing military service there	Traveled there; unpleasant previous experience	Traveled there, contact with people

**Personal experiences** result from events that occurred while visiting or living in a country, the respondents' feelings and memories that were forged during that time and from contacts with people from this country (the latter is particularly relevant for the U.S.). For example, Viktor (age 74, SE Slovenia) does not think about the period he spent in Croatia fondly; even after more than half a century, his resentment is still overwhelming:

I served in the army in Croatia for two years, and there I realized what sort of nation they [Croats] are. We often say for ourselves [Slovenians] that we are envious of each other. The Croats don't say this about themselves, but I know that they are far worse than we are. They have their own way ... they are dishonest people. [...] I don't go to Croatia, even though we live close to the border. Other people shop in Samobor [a city in Croatia], but I never visit Croatia [...] God forbid if I'd have to live there.

Negative sentiments toward **people** may stem from their mentality and behavior. Sara (age 48, NE Slovenia) stated:

The Italians are one of a kind. For me, a prototype of an Italian is the poor guy they've been lately constantly talking about [in the news] ... the captain of the Costa Concordia. To me, all Italians are like him, even though I'm aware that not all are like that. [...] They are unreliable, charlatans ... like this captain. I mean, one look at him is enough to say that you'll not cruise anywhere with him. Also, the Italians don't strike me as real men. An Italian is the kind of man that is too corny. And also the people ... on the outside everything looks nice, but there's nothing on the inside.

Negative sentiments toward people are also driven by the culture and lifestyle in general. This component of the people category is most obvious in the case of the U.S. We presume that the reason lies in the greater cultural dissimilarity between Slovenia and the U.S. compared to the other three animosity countries. Flora (age 26, Tri-border area) emphasized the cultural differences:

Maybe I have this image of consumerism and instant culture that is in dissonance with my life philosophy. Also generally, I feel very European. Maybe because of that I don't feel a connection ... and I have already been to the USA, but ...

Patricija (age 49, Central Slovenia), on the other hand, was concerned:

[...] because I believe they negatively influence our youth who are fascinated by the American lifestyle and adopt many unhealthy habits. I think they bring a lot of bad things because they paint an unrealistic picture of life in their movies and literature. They always have their happy endings, but it's not like that in real life. And our adolescents take that literally.

Language, the third component of the people category, may be a bridge to communication, but it may also be a barrier. In the former case, it is a window to the world and can be a source of affinity. In the latter case, it hinders communication and encourages people

animosity. One of the sources of animosity toward Hungary is undoubtedly the language itself, which seems so odd and unfamiliar to some of our interviewees. Olivija (age 49, SE Slovenia) expressed her feelings of antipathy in this way:

[...] mostly because of the language. I don't know how to express myself ... for example, if I see them speak on TV, I immediately switch the channel. [...] You see, Hungarian is kind of weird.

As far as the other three animosity countries are concerned, communication is not hindered because of the unfamiliar language but because of the attitudes of inhabitants who expect that others will adapt to them. Valentin (age 30, SE Slovenia) said:

I find it irritating because they [Croats] always claim they don't understand us [Slovenians]. But when they come to Slovenia they always expect that everybody will speak and understand Croatian. I think it's quite funny because the languages are pretty similar. If we understand them, why can't they understand us? And that's really stupid.

Simona (age 33, W Slovenia) had similar thoughts:

We Slovenians have to adjust everywhere, don't you think? Nobody adapts to us. If an Italian comes to Slovenia, we have to speak Italian with them. This is ridiculous. I don't know ... I just don't get that.

**Politics** was the second for the U.S. and the third for the other three animosity countries the most important driver of animosity. The recent changes in Hungary's domestic politics did not go unnoticed among our interviewees. At the time of collecting our data, the Hungarian government led by center-right Prime Minister Viktor Orban had adopted a new constitution and passed several laws and controversial measures, all of which were the subject of severe criticism by the local opposition and the international public (BBC News, 2012). These events also triggered quite a few negative reactions from our interviewees, leading to situational animosity according to the typology by Jung et al. (2002). For example, this is how Rudolf (36, Central Slovenia) expressed his views:

Well, up until recently, I had quite a good opinion of Hungarians. But since this Orban guy has come, their president or whatever he is, and started messing with their politics ... I have a couple of friends in Hungary and they say the situation is getting worse by the day.

Ingrid (age 25, NE Slovenia) shares a similar opinion:

Especially now, it [Hungary] has an even more negative connotation, ever since they elected a majority government that has the power to change the constitution on their own, violate the rights of citizens, disregard minorities [...] the Slovenian minority and also other minorities in the country or the opposition for that matter [...] because this domestic politics issue is such a serious matter.

Contrary to the recent situation in Hungary, negative perceptions of American politics seemed to be of a more durable nature. America, as a strong economy and political/military superpower, and its foreign policy have been a source of divided opinions around the world, and Slovenians, as citizens of the international arena, are no exception. Rudolf's (age 36, Central Slovenia) comment offers an insight into how he perceives American politics:

They meddle in everything. They were lucky because their country wasn't torn apart in World War II. Their economy was at a peak at that time, mainly because of their demand for that [war goods] ... and they exploited that. They have had an upper hand ever since. The only ones that could probably kick their asses are the Chinese or Indians. And it actually serves them right. Because they [Americans] have been actively attempting to make sure that there is always a situation going on somewhere in the world and this obstructs others from developing in the desired direction. Instead, they have to deal with Americans and this annoys me ... I can't stand them [Americans]. They are in search of conflicts ... or to put it otherwise ... I'd rather say they *create* conflicts.

Rivalry between neighboring countries can also be a source of animosity (Klein et al., 1998). In the case of Croatia and Italy, this can be clearly observed through traditional political disputes that have become intertwined with historical events. For example, Simon (age 64, W Slovenia) commented:

I also don't like their [Croatian] politics regarding the maritime border. Because the Croats have so much sea, and here they are fussing about these measly two kilometers and causing us trouble. It is a question what will happen with this arbitration, probably nothing good. [...] Actually, we also lost Trieste and other territory [after World War II] because of Croatia. Croats have forgotten this.

Natalia's (age 84, W Slovenia) memories of World War II are still very vivid. She described the **war** period as:

Terrible. Bombing. We used to live in Solkan, where Nova Gorica is today. And they [Italians] were determined to tear that bridge down. You know, where that fine bridge is. And they kept shooting. A railroad is there, and our house was very close to it. And they completely ... we would come to the house and there were no more windows, the other time the door was blown out. You know, when the bombs were falling and everything was ... We moved up into the hills, to a village. We had to hide. A peasant gave us one room and my mother helped her with the farm. [...] Times were tough. Oh, and the Italians ... they didn't give us anything. We were starving, we had to steal. We got ten decagrams of bread per person a day.

Interestingly, Natalia does not feel anger toward the Italians and their involvement in World War II. The 1975 Treaty of Osimo enabled her to receive remuneration in the form of a monthly pension and, by virtue of this act, she feels that her lost equity has been restored:

I like it [Italy] only because they give me money. As long as they give me money, I have nothing against it. But when they stop ... You see, for three years I worked there, I get 320 euros and I've been receiving that for more than 30 years. How could I not like them?

Natalia's reflection is in line with the finding of Podoshen and Hunt (2009) who suggested that many Jewish Americans felt their equity was restored when Germany paid reparation money to Israel.

The cross-case analysis of our interviews leads us to believe that animosity toward Italy is present in Slovenia in a stable form. Jung et al. (2002) suggest that a person need not have had any personal experience for animosity to become stable. Animosity can be transmitted to younger generations via formal or informal channels, such as the personal experience of others and stories that are told to new generations. Such storytelling causes older animosity to become part of the collective memory, which then lingers in the minds of many people (Podoshen & Hunt, 2009). Indeed, Viktorija (age 30, W Slovenia) explained:

I resent its [Italy's] socio-political role in the sense ... for example, during my childhood I used to hear many stories about the Italian occupation and how they oppressed Slovenians. I also resent the fact that they haven't admitted their role to this day and that they totally ignore these historical facts. This is something I unconditionally disapprove of.

The economic dimension of animosity was found to be most important in the case of Hungary. The main reason for it seems to be related to Hungary's state of development. As a consequence, some interviewees suggested that the offering of goods and services in Hungary is limited. During her trip to Hungary, Patricija (49, Central Slovenia) was not at all satisfied because:

[...] their service was inadequate. Their confectionery wasn't real confectionary. They served drinks in dirty cups. I imagine you can't even get normal food, but just their traditional specialties ... It was so unappealing to see them roast those chickens outside. There was a foul odor right across the street.

Economic reasons for animosity toward the U.S. were mentioned only twice; however, they were different than those expressed for Hungary. An illustration is provided by Kristijan (age 55, Central Slovenia):

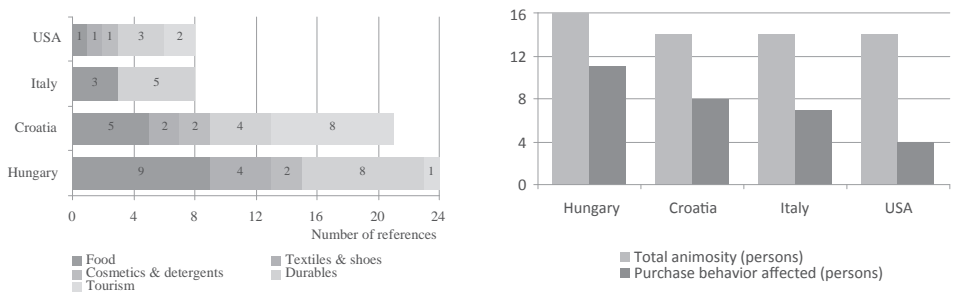
I dislike America because they are interested in their capital only. They don't care about others. In these crisis situations, the rich should give up some of their wealth and give it to the poor." [*Did they do that?*] "No, they didn't." [*What did they do?*] "They stuffed everything into their own pockets... exploitation. Each person should get something so that an individual can survive.



## 4.2 Resistance to purchasing products from animosity targets and product categories

Our analysis of qualitative data suggests that country of origin plays a somewhat prominent role in consumer purchase behavior. Specifically, our respondents exhibited resistance to buy products from countries identified as hostility-evoking countries in at least half of the cases when interviewees expressed animosity toward Hungary, Croatia and Italy (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: *Effect of animosity on purchase behavior by person and product category*



The respondents were asked to list product categories for which country of origin may represent a factor in their purchase decisions. Feelings of animosity toward Hungary were manifested mainly in the food and durables product category. Animosity toward Croatia was mostly reflected in respondents' unwillingness to travel to that country. In fact, the majority of interviewees whose animosity country was Croatia did not consider it as a desired holiday destination. Animosity toward Italy chiefly resulted in the avoidance of purchasing durable goods from that country, in some cases even food products. In contrast, consumer animosity toward the U.S did not seem strongly manifested in consumer purchase intentions. While the respondents expressed some resistance to buying U.S. products in the durable goods category, the U.S. origin seemed irrelevant in other categories.

In contrast, the explicitly stated reasons for refraining to purchase products from the animosity countries varied greatly, ranging from the respondents' dissatisfaction with product or service quality from that country to outright boycotting products from that country irrespective of the product characteristics. We identified quite a few examples of intense feelings of hostility that led to consumer boycotts. An interesting case was Rudolf (age 36, Central Slovenia), whose disapproval of Hungary's domestic political situation was so strong that it resulted in his boycott of all Hungarian products, regardless of their quality:

There aren't really a lot of Hungarian products here [in Slovenia]. But in any case, Hungarian salami is always good. However, I don't buy Pick salami anymore ... Lately I've been boycotting Hungarian products. I know that the actions of just one person have hardly any effect. But I don't think they [Hungarians] deserve to be supported in that way.

Similarly, Valentin (age 30, SE Slovenia) strictly avoids Croatian products. With regard to Croatian food, he said:

I wouldn't buy Croatian. Why would I support their economy if we have a poor relationship with them?

When asked whether he perceives Croatian products to be low in quality, Valentin responded:

No, I don't think so. For example, since Kolinska [a Slovenian company] has been acquired by the Croats I don't buy Cockta [a soft drink brand] anymore. I also don't drink Coca-Cola. You see, Coca-Cola for the Slovenian market is bottled in Croatia. I'd rather buy Pepsi, which is bottled in Rogaška [in Slovenia]. As far as chocolates are concerned I don't mind eating Kraš [a Croatian brand] chocolates as long as I receive them as a gift. But I personally would never buy them.

While consumer animosity toward the U.S. did not seem to have much of an effect on the interviewees' willingness to buy American products, two interviewees expressed a different stance. Daniel (age 48, SE Slovenia) told us that not only does he have no desire to ever travel to America, but that he also boycotts all American products because he disagrees with American foreign policy:

Actually, there are not a lot of American products available here, not as many as Chinese. In principle, I would not buy them [American products], especially if I had an alternative.

Similarly, David (age 38, Central Slovenia) explained he would never purchase an American refrigerator:

[...] because I have this strange negative association when I think about American refrigerators. [*Why?*] I don't know, I don't know, maybe because of American movies. I am not too fond of those big refrigerators. That is not my style. I find it wasteful. I don't believe they are energy efficient. [*What if it had the same characteristics as the other refrigerators?*] Look, maybe it says that they are the same, but I simply don't believe it.

Moreover, the perception that Croats discriminate against Slovenians also deterred some of the respondents from spending their vacations in Croatia. An illustrative example comes from Tea (age 51, W Slovenia) who feels that Slovenians are treated differently (i.e. with less respect) than other tourists and she has been boycotting Croatia for ten years:

I'd rather give my money to the Greeks, I'd rather give my money to the Spanish, but my money won't go to Croatia.

However, the most frequently stated reason for avoiding products from the animosity country in our sample was the issue of perceived **low product/service quality**. For example,

when discussing Hungary as the animosity country, all but one interviewee who refrained from purchasing Hungarian **food**, associate that choice with low quality. The interviewees frequently emphasized their unwillingness to buy Hungarian meat products. The fact that meat and like products are perishable goods made the interviewees especially careful when buying them. The majority prefer to buy domestic (Slovenian) meat products, suggesting that it is consumer ethnocentrism<sup>5</sup> (Shimp & Sharma, 1987) rather than animosity that plays a role in their consumer buying intentions. While consumer animosity seemed to exert less of an influence on interviewees' purchase behavior for Italian food, we identified three interviewees who avoided buying Italian food because of its low quality. For example, Sara's (age 48, NE Slovenia) dislike of Italians resulted in her avoidance of all Italian food products:

I don't buy Italian olive oil. Ever since that affair when it was discovered that they poured something in it ... They are so unreliable, so sloppy. Italians are ... and also Italian products ... I don't buy them. If I had to choose between two products of the same quality, I wouldn't buy the Italian one because I always have this idea that they are kind of cheating.

In addition, our data analysis suggests that the quality concerns may prevail over emotional (animosity) or normative (ethnocentrism) issues not only in the aforementioned (fresh) food product category, but also in the case of **durables** as revealed by the findings of our hypothetical scenario. Namely, when the interviewees were faced with the choice between different refrigerators that differed only in their country of origin, they seemed to avoid purchasing Hungarian durables as they associated them with low quality. Similarly, Martin (age 35, W Slovenia) explained that the Italian and Croatian refrigerators would be his second to last and last choices:

The Italian one would at least be pretty. Otherwise, it would be produced in the same careless manner as the Croatian one.

Despite the fact that Italy is (unlike Hungary and Croatia) an established global producer of durable goods (e.g. Italian brands like Candy and Zanussi in household appliances or Fiat and Lancia in automobiles are widely recognized among consumers worldwide), in our research consumer animosity toward Italy was manifested in the avoidance of purchasing Italian durable goods. All the interviewees who refrained from purchasing Italian durable goods perceived them to be low in quality. For example, Rudolf (age 36, Central Slovenia) shared the following opinion about Italian cars:

For instance, I'd never drive an Italian car. I'd never buy an Alfa Romeo brand. A friend of mine once said to me that, if I ever lost my job, I should retrain as a mechanic because Alfas need constant repair. I wouldn't buy a Fiat. It seems to me that every time they assemble one of these cars, they do it more quickly. They say: "let's finish it five minutes faster than the previous one." And everything is so slapdash, hurried and cheap. I don't trust them.

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<sup>5</sup> Consumer ethnocentrism has been defined as "the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed morality, of purchasing foreign made products" (Shimp & Sharma, 1987, p. 280).

Further, the issue of **service quality concerns** seemed strongly expressed among the respondents who identified Croatia as the animosity target. Even though Croatia is the number one tourist destination for Slovenians<sup>6</sup>, several interviewees who had expressed feelings of some antipathy towards the country also avoided it as their travel destination. For instance, Patricija (age 49, Central Slovenia) is aware of Croatia's natural beauty, but at the same time she pointed out her dissatisfaction with the quality of services Croatsians provide:

I've been to Croatia many times. I'd still go there, but much further south, to Dalmatia. The seaside is beautiful in Dalmatia, but the offer [of product and services] is still quite limited, even though they've shown some progress in the last couple of years. However, a beautiful seaside and fresh air are not enough ... They have to do more. Their people, also, have to contribute something in order to make the atmosphere more pleasant ... especially considering today's competition. So, Dalmatia yes, but I certainly wouldn't go to Istria. I also don't like Zagreb because the people are quite arrogant and they have a negative attitude to Slovenians.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The intensity of antipathy feelings among the interviewees varied among the respondents and across the hostility-evoking countries analyzed. Even though Hungary emerged as the most frequently mentioned animosity target, the feelings of animosity that surfaced did not seem as powerful as in relation to the other three countries. The interviewees were sparing with their words, and their thoughts were often vague, short, and scant which is not unusual when delving into implicit and negative emotions in a face-to-face interview context. We detected much more overtly expressed animosity in the case of Croatia, Italy and the U.S., as evident from the collection of interviewees' quotes on these countries presented in the previous section of this paper.

Our first research objective addressed the composition of the consumer animosity construct. We found that the animosity dimensions that emerged were not entirely consistent with previous conceptualizations. For example, the "people" dimension appeared to be multifaceted, consisting of several sub-dimensions. We categorized these into three groups: people & mentality, lifestyle, and language. In addition, the "economic" dimension seemed more complex than previously thought. When an animosity target was a highly developed country (e.g. the U.S. in our case), then the original conceptualization by Klein et al. (1998) referring to trade and power relationships between the two countries applied. However, when the animosity target was a less-developed country, then economic-based animosity was activated by a general impression of under-development, a perception of low quality products and services (e.g. Hungary), or overpricing with respect to quality (e.g. Croatia). Hence, animosity seems closely intertwined with the negative quality evaluations.

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<sup>6</sup> Among all European countries, more than one out of two Slovenian tourists selected Croatia as their holiday destination in 2010, resulting in almost 5.9 million overnight stays by Slovenians in Croatia (Official Travel Guide by the Slovenian Tourist Board, 2011).

Our findings indicate that the animosity dimensions are not consistent across the hostility-evoking countries identified in this study. Overall, contrary to previous studies (e.g. Klein, 2002; Russell & Russell, 2006), the economic dimension did not emerge as an important driver of animosity in our dataset; personal experiences and people dimensions seemed to generate much stronger animosity sentiments in Slovenian consumers. The applicability of individual dimensions/sources underlying consumer animosity depends on the particular (national) context, confirming that a contextual approach is called for in animosity research (Riefler & Diamantopoulos, 2007).

Our second research objective pertained to the identification of possible hostility-evoking countries in the eyes of Slovenian consumers. The top animosity countries included three neighboring countries (Hungary, Croatia and Italy), and the U.S. The other country neighboring on Slovenia, i.e. Austria, ranked much lower on our list of animosity countries (15 to 20th place out of 48 countries). This study was part of a broader investigation of consumer behavior in Slovenia (Geč & Perviz, 2012) which shows that all four of Slovenia's neighboring countries are also Slovenians' top affinity countries. The prominence of both affinity and animosity constructs seems to be enhanced by geographical proximity as well as the frequency and strength of bilateral interactions among nations.

Cultural (dis)similarity does not appear to play any important role in the arousal of antipathy sentiments among our sample of consumers in Slovenia. Our interviewees held negative sentiments regarding both culturally similar and culturally dissimilar countries. Croatia ranked as one of the top animosity countries, even though Slovenia and Croatia are culturally similar according to Hofstede's dimensions (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). This finding is in line with Riefler and Diamantopoulos's results (2007). They discovered that despite the cultural similarity between Austria and Germany, the latter ranked second as an animosity target among Austrian respondents.

In our qualitative inquiry, we found evidence of situational as well as stable animosity. Situational animosity was detected particularly in the case of Hungary and was prompted by its internal political situation at the time of the data collection. Our findings are consistent with Jung et al. (2002) who argue that animosity is a shifting concept that arises from different sources and is continuously being updated through different events and experiences. On the other hand, we also detected a more stable component of animosity toward Hungary, especially because of its perceived low economic development and the interviewees' unfamiliarity with the Hungarian people and their culture (e.g. different customs and an unusual language).

Animosity toward the other three countries – Croatia, Italy and the U.S., appeared to have a relatively stable nature. Feelings of antipathy toward Croatia and Italy were fueled by occasional political/diplomatic incidents. In the case of Croatia, consumer animosity appeared quite powerful and stemmed mainly from negative personal experiences with nationals from that country, a negative perception of the people, and the unsettled political issues. Animosity toward Croatia was especially obvious from the respondents located in Southeastern and Western Slovenia, where Croatia received the most animosity votes.

Similarly, feelings of antipathy toward Italy seemed quite intense. Stable animosity toward Italy, especially in Western Slovenia, was further perpetuated by storytelling passed from one generation to another. The interviewees did not resent Italy's role in World War II *per se*, as much as they resented Italy's attitude to the role this country played in that war. The interviewees expressed their anger because they perceived that Italy continuously still denies and twists the actual historical facts. However, relative to other sources of animosity identified in our study, World War II events did not appear as a dominant reason for animosity in our sample. While it is difficult to compare findings from our qualitative inquiry with the results of existing quantitative surveys, this finding is not consistent with those in previous studies (e.g. Klein et al., 1998; Nijssen & Douglas, 2004; Shin, 2001) which revealed strong war-related animosity in their samples of respondents. The time distance from World War II, coupled with the fact that both Italy and Slovenia are now EU members, may have contributed to a dispersal of history-related reasons for consumer animosity.

Feelings of animosity toward the U.S. appeared relatively potent, particularly considering the absence of the interviewees' personal experience with the country or its people. The animosity largely stemmed from the interviewees' negative perception of American ("wasteful") lifestyles depicted in pop-culture products (e.g. movies, TV shows) and their apparent disapproval of American foreign policy which they considered as aggressive and enduring.

With respect to our third research objective related to behavioral manifestations of animosity and the purchase situations (e.g. product categories), we identified various cases where the respondents explicitly expressed resistance to purchase products from their hostility-evoking countries, but stated different reasons for doing so in relation to food products, durable consumer goods and (travel) services. Comparisons of data across the four animosity countries and consumer behavioral manifestations reveal Croatia was the country where consumer animosity strongly translated into an apparent resistance to purchase Croatian products. This finding was most obvious in tourism and travel-related services which are closely tied to providers of these services. The interviewees' descriptions were relatively emotional, suggesting that their animosity appeared on a personal level. Intense personal negative experiences while traveling seemed closely intertwined with the feelings of antipathy, leading to the overall avoidance of Croatia as a tourist destination. Our findings are consistent with those of Shoham et al. (2006) who found that, compared to products, services are much more difficult to disentangle from those people who produce them. Consequently, consumer animosity is more personal and may also lead to the denigration of the service quality. A similar situation was observed in the case of Italy where the feelings of animosity were somewhat intense and seemed to translate into consumer resistance to purchase Italian durables, in some cases even food products. The majority of our interviewees expressed resistance to buying Italian durables, which they associated with low quality. In fact, the interviewees frequently labeled the Italians as "lazy", "sloppy" and "unreliable" and tended to suggest that the Italians' casual stance (e.g. *la dolce vita*) prevents them from producing high quality durable goods.

On the other hand, we observed a different pattern of results in the other two animosity countries, i.e., Hungary and the U.S. An inverse relationship appeared between the inten-

sity of the interviewees' reasons for animosity and the intensity of their manifestation in purchase behavior. For example, while feelings of antipathy were not so strongly expressed in the case of Hungary, consumer resistance to purchase Hungarian products was quite powerful, mostly due to the perceived low quality of products in both food and durable categories (e.g. refrigerators, clothes, shoes). This may be attributed to the argument raised by Pharr (2005) that country-specific beliefs or cognitions are influenced by both the level of economic development (exogenous antecedent) and animosity (endogenous antecedent).

Contrary to Hungary, the feelings of animosity toward the U.S. were strongly expressed; however, they seemed to have hardly affected purchase behavior, perhaps because the interviewees did not have any issues with the quality of U.S. products. While animosity toward Slovenian neighboring countries seemed almost exclusively based on personal negative experience, animosity toward the U.S. was mainly based on the influence of media and pop-culture products. Consequently, animosity toward the U.S. was less personal and its purchase behavior manifestations thus less intense. This result echoes Shoham et al. (2006) who argue that closer contact between people makes animosity more personal, while anger toward a physically distant entity likely results in a more abstract form of animosity.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS, RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Our qualitative analysis of consumer animosity in the Slovenian context offers insightful implications. In our study, animosity manifestations in purchase behavior ranged from product boycotts<sup>7</sup> to the avoidance of products from the hostility-evoking country, most commonly rationalized by poor product quality evaluations. Indeed, our analysis suggests that economic-related animosity of a target country is closely intertwined with product/service quality perceptions. This finding questions the premise of the original model (Klein et al., 1998) positing that animosity translates into an aversion to buying goods from a particular country, regardless of product quality evaluations. While the cause and effect cannot be established from our qualitative data, our results seem more consistent with Shoham et al.'s (2006) and Hoffmann et al.'s (2011) animosity models where product-quality judgments and country-of-origin image (respectively) are the consequences of consumer animosity. In discussing their results, Shoham et al. (2006) apply the principle of cognitive consistency, whereby consumers achieve an internal balance (harmony) by adjusting their judgments about imports from a country to their feelings of antipathy toward that same country.

In this study, the relationship between an animosity target and resistance to buying a foreign product does not seem related to the economic development of the animosity-

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7 Major reasons for consumer boycotts of products from the animosity-evoking foreign country that emerged from our study included disagreements with the animosity country's internal politics (e.g. Hungary), poor relationships with the neighboring country (e.g. Croatia) or disagreements with a country's international politics and/or its people's lifestyles (the U.S.).

evoking foreign country. While the quality of U.S. (a developed country) products was not questioned by our respondents, the issue of poor quality emerged in the cases of animosity countries with a perceived lower level of economic development (Hungary and Croatia) as well as with a developed country like Italy. Hence, it seems that quality evaluations and consumer animosity are closely associated; however, more research is needed to understand the true nature of this relationship.

Clearly, animosity is not the sole factor that deters consumers from purchasing products from an animosity-evoking foreign country. The nature of consumers' purchasing decisions is complex and the ultimate choice depends on numerous factors, including product category, consideration set, consumer knowledge and involvement as well as the intensity of emotions regarding the country in question. It is evident that consumer animosity merely provides information about what a consumer may not choose at a certain moment. That is, if the intensity of antipathy towards the country is particularly strong, consumers will eschew products from that country. However, consumers' purchase decisions can be influenced by conflicting attitudes at the same time. For instance, consumer affinity<sup>8</sup> (Oberecker et al., 2008) provides information about a consumer's preferred foreign alternative, whereas consumer ethnocentrism (Shimp & Sharma, 1987) results in preferences for domestic products and services. Therefore, future research should investigate various rational, affective and normative rationales simultaneously to better understand how consumers resolve their purchasing dilemmas related to the country of origin issue (Herz & Diamantopoulos, 2013; Vida & Dmitrović, 2009).

The animosity of local consumers toward a host country marketer may be an important factor international managers should consider when making decisions to enter a new market (Klein, 2002). Cultural differences between nations, such as language, religion, customs and habits, and also politics, can represent potential sources of conflict. Sometimes such conflicts can culminate in feelings of anger, contempt, or even hatred. International marketing managers should be aware that there may be segments of people who harbor animosity toward a specific entity. In the Slovenian context, our qualitative inquiry suggests such negative feelings are rooted in various categories (predominantly related to people, personal experience and politics) and seem to exert a profound impact on consumers' purchase decisions ranging from product boycotts to simply avoiding products from hostility-evoking countries. Managers must be prepared to address these issues and devise marketing strategies that mitigate the negative consequences of consumer animosity.

Our analysis of three out of four countries that evoked hostility among our respondents (e.g. Croatia, Hungary and Italy) showed that the impact of consumer animosity on purchase behavior is intertwined with product quality judgments. In such cases, marketing managers can downplay the negative consequences of consumer animosity by emphasizing the quality of their products, superiority of the design, reliability, attractiveness, etc.

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8 Consumer affinity captures favorable sentiments toward a specific foreign country which affect behavioral consequences, such as intentions to consume products from the affinity country (Oberecker et al., 2008, p. 25).



However, segments of consumers with intense feelings of animosity should be addressed in a different manner because traditional approaches such as price promotions and advertising efforts will most likely remain ineffective. Instead, it is important for foreign companies to deemphasize the origin of their products (Amine et al., 2005). They can create an impression that their products have a local origin by using brand names and advertisements featuring local country themes or engage in local-foreign co-branding strategies. Product endorsements by local celebrities and opinion leaders can also help foreign companies bypass the negative behavioral effects of consumer animosity. Indeed, a recent empirical study (Fong, Lee & Du, 2014) demonstrates that a proper selection of entry modes into the hostile host market (e.g. an acquisition joint venture) and relevant post-entry branding strategies (e.g. local and local-foreign co-branding) that are associated with a more salient host country identity can actually reduce consumer animosity.

While in our study we identified some situational animosity (e.g. internal politics and territorial disputes in Hungary and Croatia, respectively), other instances of expressed animosity seemed to be more durable in nature. In order to gain further insights into the overall dynamics of consumer animosity, longitudinal research should be undertaken. For example, it would be fruitful to understand whether the levels of political animosity toward Hungary will alter at future points in time. Similarly, it would be interesting to observe whether levels of political animosity toward Croatia will decline now that Croatia has joined the European Union and whether that new political reality will arouse feelings of solidarity and commonality of destiny between the two neighboring countries, Slovenia and Croatia.

While the large number of in-depth interviews with individuals residing in various geographical areas in Slovenia offers deep insights into how consumers feel and think about foreign countries and their products in the local context, some limitations are inherent in our research approach. First, in our interviews, research questions related to both consumer animosity sources and their behavioral manifestations were discussed with the same respondents during a single interview, suggesting that the issue of the respondents' priming and demand effects may have been a problem (Berg, 2001). While we recognized this issue a-priori and made attempts to mitigate it through appropriate wording of our questions and the probing techniques, it is quite likely that the problem persisted. Second, despite the many advantages of personal interviews, this data collection technique (similar to consumer surveys) requires participants to express, on a conscious level, the type of emotions that are implicit, inaccessible to introspection and may even operate automatically (Cai et al., 2012). Further, this data collection method is prone to elicit socially desirable responses (Steenkamp, de Jong & Baumgartner, 2010), which may be particularly problematic when discussing hostile feelings<sup>9</sup>. Hence, we suggest that future qualitative inquiries apply a multi-stage qualitative design combining expressive projective techniques (that help uncover hidden or unconscious content), an experimental approach along with semi-structured interviews (Cai et al., 2012; Herz & Diamantopolous, 2013; Zaltman, 1997) to triangulate our findings.

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<sup>9</sup> The authors wish to thank the anonymous reviewer for his/her constructive remarks regarding these limitations.

Clearly, the qualitative methodological approach also suffers from generalization and external validity limitations. We suggest that future research engage in quantitative research that enables the drawing of valid inferences when delving into the sources and consequences of consumer animosity. Our results indicate that additional clarity is needed regarding whether consumer animosity has a direct negative effect on foreign purchase behavior or whether is mediated and/or moderated by other constructs (e.g. product quality judgments, brand loyalty, etc.). Moreover, we found that Croatia and Italy received the most animosity votes from the Slovenian regions that share a border with these two countries. Future studies may wish to delve into the role of geographical proximity to the hostility evoking target and its effects on behavioral consequences.

Finally, in this study we identified various product categories that are potentially affected by consumer animosity, including food, consumer durables and services. Given the context specific nature of consumer animosity, its sources and effects (with respect to hostility-evoking countries), future quantitative surveys should address the issue of product specificity (Leong et al., 2008; Russell, Russell & Neijens, 2011). Given that services represent an ever growing sector in many economies, research investigating the effects of consumer animosity on a diverse set of services may represent a fruitful research venue.

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