

Consumer animosity towards Russia and Russian products in Estonia

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Abstract: Consumer animosity towards Russia and its products were surveyed in Estonia in the context of Russian war in Ukraine. The article examines consumer animosity through associations with product judgement, willingness to purchase, product ownership and constructs of consumer ethnocentrism. Consumer animosity covers general animosity, war and economic animosity. The survey conducted for the paper employed quantitative methodology, combining convenience and snowball sampling. The results revealed that 82.7% of respondents in Estonia show clear consumer animosity towards Russia and its products. Consumer animosity varied by age group but no statistically significant variation was found between consumer animosity scores and gender, education level or income groups. The article also explores the overestimation of digital transformation in consumer behaviour in both the European Union and Estonia due to certain consumer segments who prefer in-store shopping and are willing to spend time to seek out desired products that are not available in online retail.

Keywords: *consumer animosity, digital transformation, Estonia, European Union, online boycotts, product judgment, Russian war in Ukraine, willingness to purchase*

1. Introduction

Globalisation has led to an increasing diversity of products becoming available on supermarket shelves, which has led to the need to investigate people's negative attitudes towards products of different origins and factors influencing them (Aichner, 2014, p. 81; Nijssen and Douglas, 2004, p. 23). Among the causes for the negative attitudes are current or past political, economic or military conflicts that consumers view as unforgivable and too serious, and these conflicts significantly impact a country's image (Leonidou *et al.*, 2022; Yarimoglu and Paker, 2024). Consumer animosity was described by Klein *et al.* (1998) as a phenomenon that can profoundly impact consumers' willingness to purchase foreign products.

There have been several studies about consumer animosity in the world. For instance, Chinese animosity towards Japanese goods, Kurdish consumers' resentment towards Turkish products, Jewish consumers' unwillingness to buy German products (Podoshen, 2009; Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2017), the Turkic nations' animosity towards Armenian products and Armenian consumers' negative view towards products from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Kandogan, 2023). Vietnamese consumers have exhibited particularly strong animosity towards Chinese products (Dang and Doan, 2024) and the same has been expressed by Indonesian consumers (Suhud and Allan, 2021; Akhtar, 2024). Perviz *et al.* (2021) found that Slovenian consumers' animosity was the highest towards products from Hungary, Italy, Croatia and the United States.

Issues in consumer animosity in the Russian–Ukrainian context have so far been left unresolved. A notable exception is a study by Akhtar *et al.* (2024), who examined European customers' attitudes toward Russian brands and brand images and found a strong negative influence of European consumer animosity on brand attitude, leading to brand boycotts and a negative brand-country image. Researching Estonian consumers' animosity about Russian products bridges this existing research gap in the literature on the (un)willingness of buying Russian-made products. This topic has not been addressed in Estonia before, even though the knowledge is vital from consumer behaviour perspective: given the strong local support to Ukraine during the war, the study aims to determine whether Estonians show consumer animosity towards Russia and its products in one of the smallest European Union's markets.

Current academic research measures consumer animosity as anti-consumption behaviour, which manifests as resistance, distaste or even rejection of consumption (Krüger *et al.*, 2024; Zavestoski, 2002). Our results will show how Estonian respondents think about Russia and their willingness to buy Russian products.

The research tasks of the study were the following: (1) analysing the level of and changes in Russian imports to Estonia and the EU during the large-scale Russian war in Ukraine; (2) investigating the digital channels used by Estonian consumers to express their anti-consumption behaviour towards hostile country's products; (3) assessing the level of consumer animosity in Estonia towards Russia and its products; (4) examining the impact of gender, income, age and education on the evaluations of consumer animosity towards Russia; (5) studying the role of digital transformation on consumers' shopping preferences (physical stores versus online channels) and (6) offering practical recommendations for businesses, consumers and further research.

The article is structured into five main parts: the general background of the study, literature review, applied research methods, data analysis and results, as well as discussion and conclusions (including recommendations for companies, consumers and further research).

2. General background

Historically, relations between neighbouring Estonia and Russia have been strained by various conflicts, including occupations, deportations, wars. In addition, Estonia was part of the Soviet Union for several decades. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, continuing diplomatic efforts aimed at improving the relations between the neighbouring countries made little progress, only to deteriorate sharply on 24 February 2022, when Russia started a large-scale war against Ukraine.

Retailers responded immediately to the situation and quickly withdrew products of Russian origin from their shelves, although some Estonian chains continued to stock Russian goods (Merila, 2022; Tido, 2023; A1000Market, 2024). A1000Market, for example, is among the Estonian retailers which is still selling Russian products (such as beer, chips, praline candies, etc.) in its physical stores. The CEO of A1000Market commented to the local *Delfi* news portal that it is not at all unethical to sell Russian-origin products

in Estonia in the current geopolitical situation (A1000Market, 2024). The Estonian government has not officially banned Russian products in the Estonian market, but has strongly discouraged retailers to do any business with Russia.

Data from trade also confirms a decrease in the import of Russian products in the European Union as well as in Estonia compared to the year 2022. The EU's imports from Russia dropped by 85% between Q1 2022 and Q1 2024 (Eurostat, 2024), with Estonia showing even steeper decline than the EU average—the drop was 90%. Estonia's imports from Russia decreased nearly tenfold, from 393 million euros (4.7% of Estonia's GDP) in Q4 2021 to 40.5 million euros (0.4% of GDP) in Q1 2024 (*ERR*, 2024a). Some reports, however, indicate that the imports of certain Russian food products to Estonia (nuts, canned fruits and vegetables, Russian ketchup, tomato sauce and mustard) have increased during the war in Ukraine (Rohemäe, 2024).

In addition to what happened in the retail chains or in foreign trade with Russia, the war has also had an impact on the wider Estonian economy, with the pace of accelerated inflation driven by rising energy prices (Müller, 2022) and additional defence costs with increase in value added tax in 2025 (*ERR*, 2024b).

A recent poll commissioned by the local newspaper *Eesti Päevaleht* revealed Estonians' negative attitudes towards Russia: 98% of respondents consider the war in Ukraine as unforgivable (Palgi, 2022). Mihr and Pierobon (2024) have found that 70% of ethnic Estonians view Russia as an aggressive and hostile actor, while 75% of ethnic Estonians support sanctions against Russia. In contrast, only about 25% of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia endorsed these sanctions (Krumm *et al.*, 2023). Negative emotions evoked by geopolitical events spill over to product evaluations, leading consumers to avoid products from the target country (Krüger *et al.*, 2024). A poll about military aid to Ukraine, conducted by Turu-uuringute AS in February 2023, revealed that 84% of Estonian respondents approved of providing military aid to Ukraine, while only 5% were against it. Among the respondents of other nationalities, 27% supported providing military aid and 39% were against it. Also, 67% of Estonian residents supported accepting war refugees from Ukraine (*ERR*, 2023).

Russian products are usually sold in smaller physical stores in the European Union as well as in Estonia, and they are typically not available in online stores. From the digitalisation perspective, there are ongoing consumer-

led online boycotts towards Russian products. Special websites (Reddit.com, leave-Russia.org, boycottrussia.info and brandsinrussia.com) have been established on which consumers organise boycotts against Western companies that continue to conduct business in Russia. Various consumer-driven initiatives have emerged to support these boycotts. For instance, a subreddit was created on the Reddit platform to help consumers identify and avoid companies that continue to do business in Russia, thereby aiding in the boycott efforts. Reddit (2025) provides an easy-to-use tool for consumers to search for brand names and make informed purchasing decisions. It can also provide information about Russian products that are still available for purchase in the European Union, indicating which items people should avoid buying. Both Leave-Russia.org and Reddit are also very frequently used as online boycott platforms by Estonians.

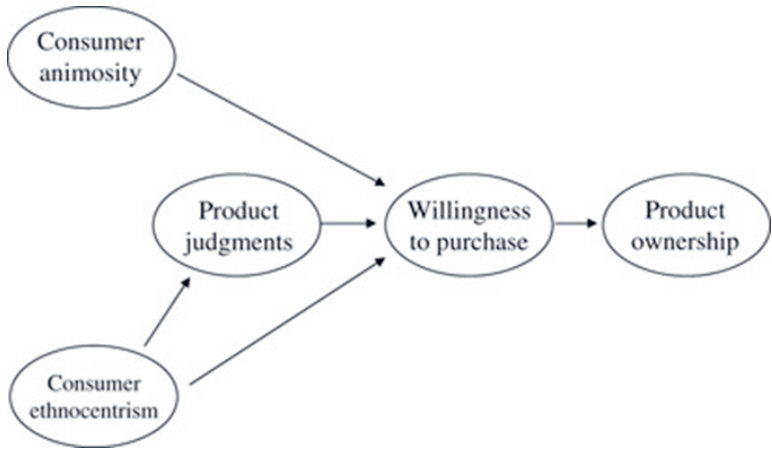
3. Literature review

Klein *et al.* (1998) have developed a theoretical framework for measuring consumer animosity for foreign product purchase, associating consumer animosity with three other variables in the study: product judgment, willingness to purchase and consumer ethnocentrism. The authors categorised consumer animosity into general animosity, war animosity and economic animosity. They researched it in the context of the Chinese animosity towards Japan, rooted in economic problems and the 1937 Nanjing Massacre, and found that the Chinese do not have willingness to purchase Japanese products due to consumer animosity towards this country. The theoretical framework in Klein *et al.* (1998) also forms the basis of the current study (see Figure 1).

Consumer ethnocentrism was added to the study, adapted from Shimp and Sharma (1987), who argued that purchasing foreign products may be perceived as morally questionable. Earlier research has confirmed that consumer ethnocentrism and animosity are strongly linked. As consumer animosity increases, consumer ethnocentrism is also likely to rise (Chan *et al.*, 2010, p. 220; Huang *et al.*, 2010, p. 368; Jung and Yuan, 2013, p. 200; Giang and Khoi, 2015, p. 31).

Product judgment was the next construct for the study. Product judgment evaluations are usually based on consumer opinions and viewpoints (Chaudhry *et al.*, 2021, p. 1481). Klein *et al.* (1998), drawing on a

Figure 1. The animosity framework for foreign product purchase.
(Source: Klein *et al.*, 1998.)



questionnaire by Darling and Arnold (1988), used statements for product judgments evaluations. Workmanship, technological advancement, quality, design, reliability and value for money were selected for measuring product judgment construct. Prior studies indicate that consumer ethnocentrism affects negatively product judgment evaluations by consumers (Klein *et al.*, 1998; Klein, 2002, p. 348; Ettenson and Klein, 2005, p. 207; Nakos and Hajidimitriou, 2007, p. 65; Guo and Zhou, 2017, p. 171). Ethnocentric consumers' evaluations of foreign products are much lower compared to those of non-ethnocentric consumers.

The willingness to purchase construct is strongly related to consumer animosity and ethnocentrism (Klein *et al.*, 1998). Willingness to purchase can be described as a likelihood to buy a certain product or brand in future purchases, and this choice is based on consumer perception (Dodds *et al.*, 1991, p. 318). Several studies have consistently shown that consumer animosity towards a specific country is negatively affected by consumer willingness to purchase this country's products (Klein *et al.*, 1998; Shin, 2001; Nijssen and Douglas, 2004; Ettenson and Klein, 2005; Gupta and Singh, 2019). Moreover, it has been found that ethnocentric attitudes of consumers negatively impact their willingness to purchase products from an antagonistic country (Klein *et al.*, 1998, p. 96; Shin, 2001, p. 8; Nijssen and Douglas, 2004, p. 31; Cutura, 2006, p. 58; Nakos and Hajidimitriou, 2007, p. 65).

The last construct examined for this consumer animosity study is product ownership, which has already been influenced by all three previous constructs. If consumer has a willingness to purchase a certain product and has already considered the views, emotions and events of the past, the likelihood of actual purchase increases. Conversely, the purchase will not be made if consumer ethnocentrism and animosity together with product judgment evaluations have significantly influenced consumers' willingness to purchase certain product (Klein *et al.*, 1998).

Digitalisation is defined as the processes of adopting and using digital technologies in individual, organisational and societal contexts (Bollweg *et al.*, 2020). Retailers need to understand that traditional sales methods must adapt to the implementation of new technologies to enhance customer engagement and improve the sales performance of products and services (Ioniță, 2017). Digital transformation sweeping through the retail sector presents many challenges and therefore some retailers (such as A1000Market or Mere store in Estonia) have not set up an e-commerce platform to sell their products. The challenges they are facing are technological adoption costs, resistance to change and privacy concerns (Sagar, 2024, p. 10). Resistance to change may be caused by a retailer's organisational leadership and frontline employees, who may impede the seamless integration of digital technologies into existing operational workflows (Hannan and Freeman, 1984). Resistance towards digital transformation may exist also among consumers. Physical stores are usually preferred by technologically adverse consumers, whose resistance to innovation is one of the main causes behind the market failure of innovations (Talwar *et al.*, 2020).

4. Research methods

4.1 Data collection and sample characteristics

Convenience sampling and snow-ball sampling methods were used on a sample of adult consumers in Estonia. The questionnaire was distributed via internet forums and Facebook groups, with respondents kindly asked to share the survey with others. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling are widely used under time and budget constraints (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 129). Both are related to non-probability sampling, therefore the results cannot be generalised to the entire Estonian population and instead only reflect the behaviour of the current study's sample (Stratton, 2021, p. 373).

The final sample consisted of 808 adult respondents in Estonia. Women and men were almost equally represented in the sample (52.2% and 47.8%, respectively). The most active age group to respond was between ages 27 and 35. The smaller number of elderly people in the sample may be attributable to using online data collection methods and therefore can result in slightly lower consumer animosity level in current research compared to representative studies (see Table 1).

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

Gender	%
Men	47.8
Women	52.2
Age groups (in years)	
18–26	21.4
27–35	30.2
36–44	24
45–53	16.2
54–62	5.9
63–71	1.9
72 and older	0.4
Level of education	
Lower secondary education	3.8
Secondary education	42.5
Tertiary education	53.7
Personal net income per month (in euros)	
Below 500	5.8
500–800	6.8
801–1100	11
1101–1400	20.8
1401–1700	16.8
1701 or above	38.7

4.2 Instrument development and measures

The measures used in the survey were derived from the existing literature and adapted to the cultural context of Estonia, following the guidelines outlined by Craig and Douglas (2000). In this iterative process, measurement items in the double-blind translated instrument (originally constructed in Estonian) were carefully inspected by multilingual researchers to (a) eliminate items with limited conceptual equivalence and (b) to ensure the translation is decentred from literal language translation (Douglas and Nijssen, 2003; Douglas and Craig, 2007). The questionnaire was pretested on a convenience sample of consumers (5 respondents), after which only minor amendments were necessary.

Cronbach's alpha is the most common measure of internal consistency. It is commonly used when the research has multiple Likert questions in a survey/questionnaire that form a scale and there is a need to determine the reliability of the scale (Taber, 2018). Internal consistency was measured for all the scales used in the current study. In addition, t-test, chi-square test and correlation analyses were applied for the data analysis. T-test and chi-square tests are mostly used for identifying demographic differences in consumer animosity statements (e.g., gender, age, level of education and income).

4.3 Measured items

The questionnaire is based on the consumer animosity study by Klein *et al.* (1998). All the statements were evaluated on the seven-point Likert-type agreement scale, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 strongly agree. The survey combined four main constructs: product judgement (Darling and Arnold, 1988; Darling and Wood, 1990; Wood and Darling, 1993), willingness to purchase (Klein *et al.*, 1998), consumer ethnocentrism (Shimp and Sharma, 1987) and consumer animosity (Klein *et al.*, 1998). In the current study, drawing on Klein *et al.* (1998), consumer animosity was divided into three parts: consumer animosity, war animosity and economic animosity.

Product judgment (Klein *et al.*, 1998; Darling and Arnold, 1988; Darling and Wood, 1990; Wood and Darling, 1993)

Products made in Russia are carefully produced and have fine workmanship

Products made in Russia are generally of lower quality than similar products available from other countries

Products made in Russia show a very high degree of technological advancement

Products made in Russia usually show a very clever use of colour and design

Products made in Russia are usually quite reliable and seem to last the desired length of time

Products made in Russia are usually a good value for the money

Willingness to buy (Klein *et al.*, 1998; Darling and Arnold, 1988; Darling and Wood, 1990; Wood and Darling, 1993)

I would feel guilty if I bought a Russian product

I would never buy a Russian food or alcoholic beverages

Whenever possible, I avoid buying Russian products

Whenever available, I would prefer to buy products made in Russian

I do not like the idea of owning Russian products

If two products were equal in quality, but one was from Estonia and one was from Russia, I would pay 10% more for the product from Estonia

Consumer ethnocentrism (Shimp and Sharma, 1987).

Estonian products, first, last, and foremost.

Purchasing foreign-made products is un-Estonian.

It is not right to purchase foreign products, because it puts Estonians out of jobs

We should purchase products manufactured in Estonia instead of letting other countries get rich off us

We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country

Estonian consumers who purchase products made in other countries are responsible for putting their fellow Estonian out of work

Consumer animosity (Klein *et al.*, 1998)

I dislike the Russian

War animosity (Klein *et al.*, 1998)

I feel angry toward the Russian

I will never forgive Russia for the Ukraine.

Russia should pay for what it does to Ukraine during the occupation.

Economic animosity (Klein *et al.*, 1998)

Russia is not a reliable trading partner

Russia wants to gain economic power over Estonia.
 Russia is taking advantage of Estonia
 Russia has too much economic influence in Estonia
 The Russian are doing business unfairly with Estonia

5. Data analysis and results

Table 2 presents the mean values, standard deviations, variance and Cronbach's alpha results for scales used in the study.

Tabel 2. Mean values, standard deviation, dispersions and Cronbach's alpha values for the scales used in the study (n=808).

	Statements (items)	Mean*	Standard deviation	Variance	Cronbach's alpha
Consumer animosity	9	4.75	2.050	4.201	0.886
Product judgment	6	2.98	1.682	2.829	0.817
Consumer ethnocentrism	6	2.95	1.838	3.377	0.857
Willingness to purchase Russian products	6	2.81	2.180	4.752	0.869

Note: Mean values are calculated based on 7-step Likert-type agreement scales.

As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha values are greater than 0.8 for all scales, thus alpha values indicate high reliability for the scales. The highest Cronbach's alpha value was achieved for consumer animosity scale (0.886) and the lowest for product judgement (0.817). Respondents agreed the most with the statement from the consumer animosity scale (4.75 of 7, average for 9 items), which shows that the respondents were more antagonistic towards Russia compared to the scale average value (3.5). Consumer animosity greater than 3.5 was identified as high animosity for 82.7% of the sample (668 respondents). Low animosity toward Russia was revealed for 17.3% respondents (140), whose animosity value was lower than 3.5. Standard deviation for consumer animosity was 2.05, indicating substantial variation in responses.

Table 2 reveals that most of the respondents expressed somewhat lower agreement with the willingness to purchase Russian products statements (mean value 2.81), compared to other constructs applied in the study.

Consumer animosity has also different types: war animosity, economic animosity and general animosity. Respondents' evaluations of these constructs are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Consumer evaluations about war animosity, economic animosity and general animosity (mean value based on a 7-step scale).

War animosity (3 statements)	5.17
Economic animosity (6 statements)	4.69
General animosity (1 statement)	3.75

Table 3 reveals that the highest levels of animosity were found in war animosity (mean 5.17), followed by economic animosity (mean 4.69) and general animosity (mean 3.75). General animosity was measured by one statement: “I dislike the Russian” (average agreement 3.75). Different animosities were all higher than the scale average (3.5).

Table 4 outlines the respondents' agreement about different consumer animosity statements (including all animosities: war animosity, economic animosity and general animosity). The table reveals that the respondents agreed the most with the statement “Russia should pay for what it does to Ukraine during the occupation” (totally agreed 75%). Nearly 50% of the sample agreed with the following statements: “Russia is not reliable trading partner” (49%) and with “I will never forgive Russia for the Ukraine.” (46%). The least agreed statement was “I dislike the Russian” (12% of the respondents).

Table 4. Consumer evaluations about consumer animosity statements (% of respondents, including war animosity, economic animosity and general animosity).

	Do not agree at all (1)	2	3	4	5	6	Totally agree (7)
Russia should pay for what it does to Ukraine during the occupation	5	2	3	3	5	7	75
Russia is not a reliable trading partner	5	3	6	9	11	17	49
I will never forgive Russia for the Ukraine	9	5	6	11	9	14	46
Russia wants to gain economic power over Estonia	6	7	7	15	18	18	29
Russia is taking advantage of Estonia	9	10	11	18	19	13	20
I feel angry toward the Russian	20	12	11	14	16	11	16
Russia has too much economic influence in Estonia	9	12	15	20	17	13	14
The Russian are doing business unfairly with Estonia	9	10	15	25	15	12	14
I dislike the Russian	21	13	11	15	17	11	12

5.1 Significance tests

Demographic data was also incorporated in the analysis to investigate the phenomenon of consumer animosity in the context of Russian war in Ukraine.

First, gender was applied to identify differences in consumer animosity statement evaluations between men and women, using the t-test. The resulting p-value was 0.135, thus exceeding the alpha value (0.05), and based on gender approach. This indicates no statistically significant difference in consumer animosity scores between male and female respondents.

Second, age was applied using the t-test. Researchers divided the sample into two age groups based on the median age in the current study (35 years).

The first group comprised younger respondents, aged 35 years or younger (417 respondents), and the second group included those aged 36 and older (391 respondents). The p-value was 0.0019 and the significance level 0.05. Consumer evaluations related to the Russian war in Ukraine were different (alfa value was greater than the p-value) and especially older respondents reported higher consumer animosity values.

Third, a chi-square test was applied to measure the role of income on respondents' evaluations on consumer animosity related to the Russian war in Ukraine. The test-statistic for the chi-square test was 5.339 and the critical value for chi-square reached 37.652 at the 0.05 significance level. Thus, it can be concluded that the level of agreement with consumer animosity statements is not dependent on income (confirming the hypothesis).

5.2 Relationship analysis

Spearman's correlation analysis was applied to analyse the relationship between the variables in the study.

Firstly, the relationship between respondents' evaluations about the statements of consumer animosity and product judgement was analysed. The Spearman's correlation was found using the additional Real Statistics module in Excel. A moderate negative correlation of -0.486 was observed at the 0.05 significance level. The next step was to evaluate whether there is also statistically significant monotonous relation between the constructs. The absolute value of empirical value for the test-statistic (-15.775) was found to be greater than critical value (1.963), which confirms the first hypothesis and is evidence of a monotonous relationship between consumer animosity and product judgment. The results allowed us to conclude that as consumer animosity increases, the respondents' judgment of the quality, workmanship and technological innovativeness of Russian products declines.

Secondly, the relationship between willingness to purchase and consumer animosity was studied. Again, the Spearman's correlation was found via the additional Real Statistics module in Excel. The Spearman's correlation was -0.632 at the significance level of 0.05, showing a strong negative correlation (Duman and Ozkur, 2019). The correlation coefficient -0.632 is also statistically significant because the empirical value for the test statistic was 23.142 and the test-statistic critical value was 1.963. The empirical value of test-statistic is greater than critical value itself, which confirms the first hypothesis and is evidence of a monotonous relationship. If consumer

animosity toward Russia increases, respondents' willingness to purchase Russian products decreases. This has also been confirmed in earlier studies (Klein *et al.*, 1998; Shin, 2001; Nijssen and Douglas, 2004; Ettenson and Klein, 2005; Gupta and Singh, 2019).

Thirdly, the relationship between respondents' evaluations about statements of consumer animosity and consumer ethnocentrism were applied. The Spearman's correlation was found via the additional Real Statistics module in Excel. A weak positive correlation of 0.172 was found at the significance level 0.05. The next step was to determine the relationship significance between consumer animosity and ethnocentrism. The empirical value of the test statistic (4.961) was found to be greater than the critical value itself (1.883), which is evidence of an existing monotonous relationship. A positive statistically significant, albeit weak, relationship between consumer animosity and ethnocentrism was confirmed.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The majority of retailers have found that an integrated approach should combine online and offline channels as a key strategy for retailers to address challenges and capitalise on opportunities. Adopting digital transformation in retailing ensures a consistent customer experience across various touchpoints, leveraging the strengths of both physical and digital channels (Verhoef *et al.*, 2015; Sagar, 2024).

The research of Verhoef *et al.* (2015) and Sagar (2024) have supported the idea that stores should sell their products online, even though digital transformation is sometimes overemphasised, especially because products of Russian origin are sold mostly by smaller retailers who do not trade online (A1000Market, Mere store, etc.). This trend is consistent not only in Estonia but also across the European Union. It does not matter through which sales channels the products perceived as hostile are available; they need to be removed from consideration due to ethical concerns. Consumers whose consumption behaviour is not affected by ethics are willing to invest time in finding desired products without moral concerns. Fortunately, there are many boycott websites which direct consumers' attention to avoiding Russian-made products and the Western companies that have not left the Russian market. On the other hand, smaller retailers do not have a motivation to deal with digital transformation since a share of their

consumers continue to be technologically adverse (especially women and older customers) or simply prefer in-person shopping experience to online shopping (Talwar *et al.*, 2020).

Compared to traditional retailing, online shopping usually involves additional risks in terms of technology implementation and digital transformation, such as uncertainties and complexities arising from the spatial separation between buyers and sellers, their inability to physically try the product before purchase, but also security issues. The distant and impersonal nature of the online environment has been considered a perceived risk (Zerbini *et al.*, 2022). Technologically adverse consumers, who may prefer traditional shopping channels, their hesitation and perceived risks in online shopping are important drawbacks of the omnichannel approach.

The survey results confirm the Estonians' anti-consumption behaviour towards Russian products due to consumer animosity, revealing that consumer animosity towards Russia is above average at 4.75 on a 7-point Likert scale for 9 measured items. Of the respondents, 82.7% had an above average rating of consumer animosity (>3.50) and only 17.3% of the respondents had a rating below 3.50. The survey covered general animosity and two other constructs of animosity: military and economic. The score for animosity towards war (5.17) was the highest, followed by economic animosity (4.69) and general animosity (3.75).

The current study also analysed consumers' evaluations of differences in animosity towards Russia in the Estonian market according to the following demographic factors: gender, age, level of education and income. The survey revealed age as the only significant factor influencing consumer animosity scores, with older consumers having higher levels of animosity than younger. However, no statistically significant differences were found between consumer animosity scores and gender, level of education or income groups. Other consumer animosity studies have found contractionary results regarding the level of education and gender: some studies have shown a statistically significant effect on animosity, while others have not (Klein and Ettenson, 1999; Nakos and Hajidimitriou, 2007; Richardson, 2012). Also, some studies have found no statistically significant association between income and animosity (Bahae and Pisani, 2009, p. 206; Richardson, 2012, p. 12; Leonidou *et al.*, 2019, p. 85).

The analysis revealed a moderate negative correlation between animosity and product judgement of Russian products ($r_s \approx -0.486$) and a strong negative

relationship with willingness to purchase ($r_s \approx -0.632$), which means that as consumer animosity towards Russia increases, consumers evaluate Russian products less favourably and their willingness to purchase decreases.

A weak positive correlation was observed between consumer ethnocentrism and animosity ($r_s \approx 0.172$). Previous studies have found that consumer ethnocentrism and animosity are positively correlated—that is, the value of ethnocentrism increases as animosity increases (Chan *et al.*, 2010, p. 220; Huang *et al.*, 2010, p. 368; Jung and Yuan, 2013, p. 200; Giang and Khoi, 2015, p. 31).

Scholars have found that consumer animosity stems from hatred, political or economic injustice. The current study confirms that consumer animosity toward Russia and its products exists in Estonia. Moreover, negative evaluations toward a country would be more likely to elicit boycotts and consumer regret. Estonian consumers prefer to warn each other to encourage boycotts and discourage the use of Russian products (Akhtar, 2024). Importantly, the findings of this animosity study are linked to consumer psychology, as consumers' anger and fear overshadow their hopes and wellbeing.

6.1 Recommendations for business enterprises

Based on the findings of the study, the authors put forward the following recommendations for local businesses, retail chains and distributors:

- Given the higher-than-average level of consumer animosity and its negative impact on willingness to purchase, the range of Russian products should be reduced or Russian supplies should be discontinued to avoid a drop in sales.
- When selling Russian products, sales and marketing strategies should be targeted at younger consumers, as their animosity level was not as high as that of older consumers. There is no need to segment consumers by gender, income or level of education, as the consumer animosity scores did not significantly differ across these demographic characteristics (based on significance testing and relationship analysis).
- The results showed that consumer animosity towards Russia is positively correlated with ethnocentrism, which indicates preference of domestic products. Local producers should similarly consider emphasising the local origin of Russian-made products, for example through packaging design.

6.2 Recommendations for foreign companies entering the Estonian market

As a result of the analysis, recommendations are also made for foreign companies who intend to enter the Estonian market with online or physical stores:

- Market research should be carried out to assess consumer animosity towards the home country before entering a foreign market. This will help prevent a drop in sales due to animosity. For example, in the case here, if Russian companies had analysed animosity before entering the Estonian market, they could have prevented a decrease in sales.
- It is also important to ensure that the production quality in the country is globally strong. In this case, the ratings of Russian products were generally low in Estonia. Consumers' poor perception of the country's production image should be countered by further development efforts and the establishing of a pricing policy that would enhance the market confidence of the products and ensures that they meet consumer expectations.

6.3 Recommendation for consumers

Recommendations for consumers related to online consumer animosity towards Russian products are the following:

- Digital platforms should provide consumers with a clearer identification of the origin of products (all platforms are not equipped with bar code readers to facilitate checking the actual origin of the product).
- Encouraging more frequent use of hashtags such as #BoycottRussia and #StopRussianBusiness or #StopwestcompaniesinRussia in posts on digital platforms. This ensures that the message of the digital platform will become viral and has a greater effect on people's awareness about the need to change their consumption patterns.
- Using augmented reality applications that overlay the information about the product's origin, manufacturing location and supply chain details, helping consumers identify and avoid products associated with Russia. Earlier studies have found that augmented reality focuses on the role of product information and presence (Kim and Choo, 2021); moreover, Xu *et al.* (2019) found that augmented reality technology shapes attitudes towards products.

- More social media influencers should be engaged to advocate for boycotts against Russian products or companies that still run their businesses in Russia. Influencers from different fields can be engaged to reach the widest possible target audience.

A limitation of the work is the use of non-probability sampling, which means that the results are not generalisable to the entire population. Therefore, an analogous study using probability sampling principles should be conducted to confirm the results. It would also be worth to consider using a more in-depth questionnaire survey, addressing other constructs of animosity or applying a qualitative method when conducting a similar study to get a broader overview of consumer attitudes. It would be interesting to analyse the role of media in generating animosity as well as different marketing and branding strategies to address consumer animosity when entering a new market. A similar study on animosity towards some other country would certainly add value for local businesses.

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