

Research Paper

## You've Over the Line! Muslim Consumers are Resistant to Opposite Brand Values

Firdan Thoriq Faza<sup>a,1</sup>, Yan Putra Timur<sup>a,2</sup>, Lu'liyatul Mutmainah<sup>b,3\*</sup>, Sulistya Rusgianto<sup>a,4</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia

<sup>b</sup> Faculty of Islamic Religion, Universitas Siliwangi, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup> [firdan.thoriq.faza-2021@feb.unair.ac.id](mailto:firdan.thoriq.faza-2021@feb.unair.ac.id), <sup>2</sup> [yan.putra.timur@feb.unair.ac.id](mailto:yan.putra.timur@feb.unair.ac.id)

<sup>3</sup> [luly@unsil.ac.id](mailto:luly@unsil.ac.id)\*, <sup>4</sup> [sulistya@feb.unair.ac.id](mailto:sulistya@feb.unair.ac.id)

\*corresponding author

### ARTICLE INFO

#### *Keywords:*

Religious Boycott; Brand Hate; Muslim Consumer-Brand Relationships

#### *Article history:*

Received: 07 August 2022

Revised: 16 November 2022

Accepted: 17 November 2022

Available online: 12 December 2022

#### *To cite in APA style:*

Faza, F. T., Timur, Y. P., Mutmainah, L., & Rusgiyanto, S. (2022). You've Over the Line! Muslim Consumers are Resistant to Opposite Brand Values. *Shirkah: Journal of Economics and Business*, 7(3), 219-238.

### ABSTRACT

The consumer's antagonistic behavior towards brands is hotly discussed because of the political issues it carries. However, factors affecting Muslim consumers to reject a product still requires more paucity of empirical evidence. The current study casts the light on antecedent factors that influence Muslim consumers to reject a product, and on a pattern between the reasons for refusal and the intention to boycott a brand. The online survey was able to reach 450 respondents from the Muslim community. This paper uses scenarios from confirmed cases of Muslim consumer boycotts against Unilever brands in Indonesia. Using the snowball-sampling technique, many of the respondents were from the educated young urban Muslim community. The model was tested using partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). Moreover, the interaction moderation technique was applied to examine the effect of moderators on the structural model. The results showed that brand hate fully mediates all variables except symbolic incongruity. The results further revealed that brand hate is a construct with three first-order formative triggers (religious animosity, ideological incompatibility, and subjective norms). In addition, this study theoretically contributes to providing clear delineation that brand hate is a dichotomous concept consisting of the dimensions of intention to boycott (intention to incite, intention to avoid, and intention to punish).

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## Introduction

Muslims often refrain from purchasing foreign products because of the contentious political problems that they raise. The Cases of desecration of religious symbols in Indonesia also triggered widespread hostility among Indonesian Muslims, which led to religious boycotts. Muslim customers have become more and more likely to boycott foreign goods. Their boycotts are directed towards goods with various origins (Sari et al., 2017). This encourages people to have antagonistic behavior towards certain brands.

Consumers' antagonistic behavior toward brands and the publications that describe them has multiplied since Putnam, writer-editor of the National Boycott News, called the "boycott boom of the 1990s" (Koenenn, 1992). The theme explains three points: why consumers resist, how consumers struggle, and what consumers fight. Boycotts have become a growing form of protest, such as spreading negative word-of-mouth (Baghi & Gabrielli, 2019) or social media (Sharma et al., 2021), unwillingness to buy (Abdelwahab et al., 2020), and extreme act activism (Cambefort & Roux, 2019).

One type is a religiously-motivated boycott, in which consumers fight against institutions or individuals that conflict with their religious values or beliefs (Cruz & Botelho, 2015). The impact of the religious boycott has an adverse and detrimental effect on sales and disrupts marketing activities for the targeted companies (Dekhil et al., 2017). Because boycotted companies will suffer a damaged brand image and decreased consumer loyalty (Abosag & Farah, 2014). This assumption makes the writer question why brands generate hatred, whereas nowadays, the brand-consumer relationship is considered an emotional behavior and an expression of identity. Recent empirical studies have described despised brands due to religious animosity (Roswinanto & Suwanda, 2021) and ideological incompatibility (Brandão & Popoli, 2022).

Farah and Newman (2010) describe boycott behavior as an attempt by a group to urge consumers to withhold or not buy a particular product. This boycott effort has the aim of pressuring a company or country against an action or policy that is considered unethical (Hong & Li, 2021; Klein et al., 2004; Song, 2020). Boycott's behavior is often juxtaposed with disputes over one's religion or beliefs. Religious animosity is an animosity response that is affected by identity as followers of a religion and also forms individual motives for boycotts (Sari et al., 2017). In addition to religious issues, the incompatibility of brand values with consumer concepts is also often a trigger for boycotts. Symbolic incongruity happens when a brand's meaning is perceived by a consumer to be inconsistent with their own self-concept (Lee et al., 2009).

Different views regarding some aspects can also encourage people to reject a brand. Consumers' agreement or disagreement with the ideologies associated with companies, such as religion, politics, and morals, is referred to as ideological compatibility (Hegner et al., 2017). Additionally, someone may be influenced to act similarly by the viewpoint or actions of a close relative, it is called subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991). There are several factors that lead consumers to do boycott of certain brand. Consumers can then take additional action to express their animosity toward the brand. Some of them aim to provoke, deter, or punish the brand. Intention to incite is a notion that encompasses all informal communication actions and the intended recipient, frequently referring to word-of-mouth evaluations of the company's products and services (Wetzer et al., 2007). Anti-consumption conducts brand rejection by deliberate and active avoidance (Kim et al.,

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2013). Customers want to exact retribution and harm the corporation for their mistakes or irresponsibility (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008).

The cases about the religious boycotts that often occur are comments considered demeaning or offensive to the Muslim community. A recent example is a study of the boycott movement against French brands such as Danone, Garnier, and L'Oréal (Salma & Aji, 2022). The hostility of the Muslim community in Indonesia sparked by French President Macron's statements that led to Islamophobia does not seem to have a significant impact because trade between France and Indonesia is relatively low compared to other developed countries. In addition, a study on the boycott of local brand Sari Roti (Roswinanto & Suwanda, 2021). The company released a statement that rejected the "212" (December 2) demonstration in 2016 to prosecute Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or called "Ahok" for insulting the Quran. This boycott occurred in the context of the ongoing Jakarta gubernatorial election, thus a massive religious boycott by one of the supporters of the gubernatorial candidate against Sari Roti through online media.

In addition, there was also an Islamic-based religious boycott with various other motives. Boycotts of brands associated with the US and Israel because they are considered to support the occupation of Palestine occurred in Malaysia (Abdul-Talib & Mohd Adnan, 2017; Muhamad et al., 2019) and the Middle East (Dekhil et al., 2017). In the Muslim community, cultural morality and religious norms have a strong influence on behavior. For example, Danish daily newspapers mocking the Prophet Muhammad influenced boycott intentions in Middle Eastern countries (Albayati et al., 2012). There is also a boycott of food franchises due to uncertainty about the halalness of the product (Omar et al., 2017; Sari et al., 2017). Religion is also essential where religious beliefs are rooted in consumption, such as in the context of strict prohibitions on non-halal food and drink.

This study seeks to broaden a theoretical perspective on the extreme negative brand feelings of religious boycott in terms of collective values. Hence participation in the community encourages individuals' desire to find other like-minded individuals to articulate the brand, including strong negative feelings towards a brand by developing feelings of belonging, interaction, and socially approving (Dessart et al., 2020). This paper argues that Muslim consumers capture the desire to engage in boycotts resulting from negative associations due to religious infringement by a brand.

There are three stages to be conducted in this research. First, investigate the relevance of the antecedents that triggered the religious boycott. This stage is to identify the factors that influence Muslim consumers to hate a brand. Second, for the first time, we also compiled three dimensions of boycott intention from various relevant literatures on boycott willingness: intention to incite, intention to avoid, and intention to punish. Finally, we bridged the gap in previous studies by identifying patterns and relationships between reasons for resistance and intention to boycott brands.

This research provides new insights related to consumers' behavior toward a brand that focuses on the concept of religion, ideological, and brand-consumer value relationships. This study also integrates three dimension of boycott intention as the outcome of brand hate. In addition, this paper also provides recommendations on academic and managerial aspects. This current study explores the factors that can be expanded in future research about Muslim consumers' behavior in boycotting a brand. Brand managers also must pay attention to what aspects can cause consumers to act to incite, avoid, and punish the brand.

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### Hypotheses Development

According to the previous studies, this study established the research framework that illustrates the connection between the variables. The variables are religious animosity, symbolic incongruity, ideological incompatibility, subjective norms, brand hate, intention to incite, intention to avoid and intention to punish (see Figure 1).

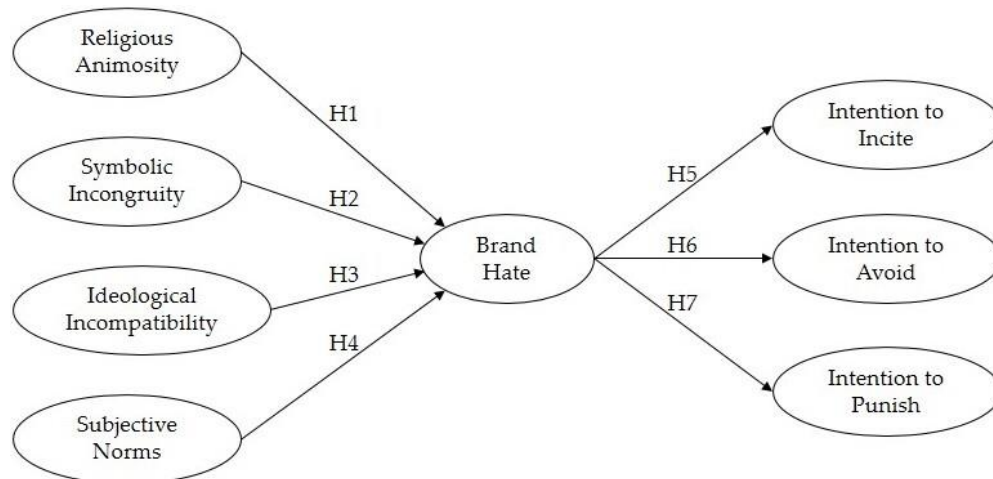


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

### Antecedents of Religious Boycott

Religious animosity is often identified as an animosity response influenced by identity as a follower of religion and forms the behavioral motives of individual attitudes towards boycotts (Sari et al., 2017). The perceived behavioral impact will be more stable and lasting than other types of hatred. Hence, the boycott campaign for religious violations attacking the core beliefs and identities of consumers' religion is considered adequate and durable (Al-Hyari et al., 2012) and more persistent (Kalliny & Lemaster, 2005), thereby damaging the brand image negatively and reducing customer loyalty (Abosag & Farah, 2014). Consumers offended by violating religious rules by an individual, company, or state will assert their position of animosity against that party (Kalliny & Lemaster, 2005). Thus, Muslim consumers tend to develop a positive attitude to hate the targeted company's brands and products.

**H1:** Religious animosity positively affects brand hate.

Symbolic incongruity occurs when the constellation of the meaning of a brand is considered incongruity with the consumer's self-concept (Lee et al., 2009). An image attached to color and shape will be the identity of how consumers interpret it. As a result, when consumers are committed to a particular set of values, such as religion, their identity as adherents of that teaching is at stake if the brand alignment is inconsistent with the values held (Farah & Newman, 2010). In addition, it was argued that an unreliable brand identity image causes consumers not to want to be closely identified with the brand (Lee et al., 2009) and deliberately keep their distance from the brand (Wolter et al., 2016). As a result, brands that are not relevant to consumers lead to brand hate.

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**H2:** *Symbolic incongruity positively affects brand hate.*

Ideological incompatibility is related to whether consumers agree or disagree with the ideologies attached to brands, such as religion, politics, and morals (Hegner et al., 2017). Brands have been labeled as having the potential to reflect specific societal belief systems and values (Holt, 2004). Strong evidence shows that ideology influences consumer attitudes and beliefs (Essoo & Dibb, 2004). It can be argued that religion mobilizes consumers to pursue social change (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012), potentially leads to anti-consumption (Kaynak & Eksi, 2011), and reduces purchase intention (Mukhtar & Butt, 2012). For example, Muslim consumers reacted negatively to the Coca-Cola company for supporting the Israeli army annexing the Palestinian territories (Dekhil et al., 2017). Thus, religious-political ideology has an impact on how consumers relate to brands.

**H3:** *Ideological incompatibility positively affects brand hate.*

The reference group influences the decision to perform a specific behavior (Lahno & Serra-Garcia, 2015). The choices made by the reference friends or family, whether agreeing or not, are considered in carrying out specific behaviors (Gardner & Steinberg, 2005). That belief gives the enthusiasm to adjust to the circle of friends in the group (Gillmore et al., 2002). This study, in the context of Muslim religious groups, shows that the concepts of "friend" and "boycott" are side by side on the brand boycott map (Sari et al., 2017). A Muslim is motivated to participate in a brand boycott for personal gain, be like fellow Muslims, and adhere to collective goals (Al-Hyari et al., 2012). Thus, reference groups motivate Muslims in the community to hate a brand.

**H4:** *Subjective norms positively affect brand hate.**Outcome of Brand Hate*

The term intention to incite is a conceptualization of all informal communication activities and the targeted object, often referring to word of mouth evaluating the goods and services offered by the company (Wetzer et al., 2007). In practice, consumers will complain about ugliness, mistakes, or defects through conversation or social media. This dysfunctional behavior aims to warn other consumers to rethink using a particular service provider (Alvarez & Fournier, 2016). Touching on the power of community, Ward and Ostrom (2006) show that complaining to the masses can influence others to seek revenge. Arguably, this behavior reflects the consumer's connection with the brand and embeds negative brand information in consumers' minds resulting in negative brand associations (Demiray & Burnaz, 2019; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009). Research has shown that the intention to incite can be intensified when the problem is severe, such as anger, disappointment, and frustration (Wetzer et al., 2007). Thus, overflowing negative emotions are associated with destructive purposes by venting feelings through word of mouth.

**H5:** *Brand hate positively affects the intention to incite.*

Anti-consumption behavior also carries out brand rejection by intentional and active avoidance (Kim et al., 2013). In short, the consumer's desire to refrain from interacting is justified (McCullough et al., 1998). It motivates consumers to "let go" by liking future damage to the target company (Grégoire et al., 2009). However, it should be noted that avoidance behavior is not mutually exclusive with revenge. Brand avoidance is a

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multidimensional construct with identity and morals (Odoom et al., 2019). When consumer identity is not symbolically compatible, identity avoidance with brand image develops, and when consumers' ideological beliefs conflict, moral avoidance with specific brand associations occurs (Lee et al., 2009). In addition, another type of avoidance related to advertising comes from the ad's content (e.g., themes, music, endorsers, and images), which influences consumers unintentionally to avoid furthering the brand (Knittel et al., 2016). Long-term effects can cause consumers to react consistently unfavorably and result in negative brand equity (Lee et al., 2009). Thus as a way of rejecting a brand, consumers who hate the brand show "avoidance-like" intentions.

**H6:** *Brand hate positively affects the intention to avoid.*

Consumers have a revenge desire to punish and hurt the company for their mistakes (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008). The context of vengeful anger is directly related to high intensity and distorted expressions (Antonetti, 2016), thus developing a desire to punish brands. In this domain, aggressive and intentional hostile behavior puts some consumers at a disadvantage to the company, such as brand sabotage (Kähr et al., 2016). It can also be argued that there is a difference between direct retaliation "face to face" and indirect retaliation "behind the back of the company" (Grégoire et al., 2010). The consumer's desire to punish the brand will most likely occur after the dissolution of the brand-consumer relationship that is considered irrelevant (Johnson et al., 2011), especially if consumers are dealing with corporate and socially irresponsible brands (Sweetin et al., 2013). Retaliatory behavior is not an impulsive act but the result of cognitive processing (Funches et al., 2009); it also reflects how consumers established relationships with brands in the past. Thus, consumers who hate the brand have thought of being willing to take revenge through a set of punishments.

**H7:** *Brand hate positively affects the intention to punish*

## Method

### Scenario

The scenario used as a stimulus in this study is the Unilever brand which manages many of the leading household products in Indonesia. Unilever's brand logo in "rainbow colors" is a symbol of recognition for LGBTQI+. In addition, Unilever stated that it had signed the Amsterdam Declaration to strengthen LGBTQI+ inclusion. On the other hand, many Indonesian netizens reacted strongly after the statement came out by threatening to boycott Unilever. Unilever is a giant global company engaged in consumer goods services and has a branch office in Indonesia. Unilever Indonesia branch did not make the same statement because it could invite anger from local Muslim consumers. LGBTQI+ sexual activity and orientation are believed to be against local values and Islamic religious law.

### Procedure

The written scenario used as a stimulus is a confirmed case of a religious community commotion that triggered a brand boycott in Indonesia. Case scenarios are used because they help reflect the actual situation, which maximizes variance through the resulting emotional responses. Respondents selected in general are individuals in the religious community. Since it measures the intention to participate, the relevance of the selected individual knows the boycott scenario. We hope to find acceptable differences in

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the case of individual responses to this boycott.

The online questionnaire was distributed through social media using the snowball sampling technique. At the beginning of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to read the terms and conditions. Respondents must complete demographic questions: gender, age, occupation, income, and education level. Statements regarding consent to become a respondent and participation in the boycott are also included. Then the 2020 Unilever case was presented to wake them up or remind them of what happened. Respondents were directed to answer many questions to measure the eight variables provided using an adjusted number scale.

### *Variable Measurement*

The questionnaire was applied and a six-point Likert scale for all perceptions measures: 1 indicating "strongly disagree," 2 indicating "disagree", 3 indicating "somewhat disagree", 4 indicating "somewhat agree", 5 indicating "agree", 6 indicating "strongly agree". Table 1 summarizes questions about each operational dimension's measurement items. This section discusses the research methodology.

Table 1. Dimensions and Measurement Items of Variable

Variables	Code Items	Source
Religious Animosity	RA1 I feel angry toward the statement of brand X	(Roswinanto & Suwanda, 2021)
	RA2 The brand X's statement is inappropriate	
	RA3 I feel that brand X's statement is over line	
	RA4 I feel offended by brand X's statement	
	RA5 A Muslim should not justify brand X's statement	
Symbolic Incongruity	SI1 The rainbow logo of brand X do not reflect who am I	(Hegner et al., 2017)
	SI2 The rainbow logo of brand X does not fit my personality	
	SI3 I do not want to be seen with brand X's rainbow logo	
	SI4 The rainbow logo of brand X does not represent what I am	
	SI5 The rainbow logo of brand X symbolizes the kind of person I would never to be	
Ideological Incompatibility	II1 In my opinion, the brand X acts irresponsibly	(Hegner et al., 2017; Rodrigues et al., 2021)
	II2 In my opinion, the brand X acts unethically	
	II3 The brand X's corporation violates moral standards	
	II4 The brand X does not my values and beliefs	
	II5 Respecting ethical principles doesn't have priority on brand X over achieving superior economic performance	
Subjective Norm	SN1 If I buy a product related to brand X, the people around me will feel like I support the campaign against LGBTQI+	(Charseatd, 2016; George, 2004)
	SN2 People close to me feel that I shouldn't buy brand X's products because it's related to LGBTQI+	
	SN3 People important to me won't be happy when I buy brand X's products because it's relate to LGBTQI+	
	SN4 People close to me don't support to buy brand X's products because it's related to LGBTQI+	
	SN5 People around me don't encourage me to buy brand X's products because it's related to LGBTQI+	

Variables	Code Items	Source
Brand Hate	BH1 I can't tolerate brand X's corporation	(Rodrigues et al., 2021)
	BH2 I don't tolerate brand X's rainbow logo	
	BH3 The world would be a better place without brand X	
	BH4 The brand X is a disgusting brand	
Intention to Incite	ITI1 I intend to spread negative word of mouth about brand X	(Hegner et al., 2017)
	ITI2 I mean to denigrate brand X to others	
	ITI3 When my friends were looking for a product/service, I will tell them not to buy from brand X	
	ITI4 Whenever possible, I tell my friends about my negative feelings toward brand X	
	ITI5 I try to influence a lot of people not to purchasing the brand X's products	
Intention to Avoid	ITA1 I consider and think about withholding purchase of the brand X's products	(Hollebeek et al., 2014; Klein et al., 1998)
	ITA2 Whenever possible, I avoid buying the brand X's products	
	ITA3 I will feel guilty when I buy the brand X's products	
	ITA4 I try to refrain from buying the brand X's products or using its services	
	ITA5 If two products with equal quality but one is from the brand X while another is not, then I would pay 10% more for the product that is not from the brand X	
Intention to Punish	ITP1 I intend to participate in the boycott of the brand X	(Klein et al., 1998; Rodrigues et al., 2021)
	ITP2 I do not like the idea of owning products that are related to brand X	
	ITP3 I will not encourage my friends and relatives to buy the brand X to punish it	
	ITP4 I will not recommend the brand X to others who seek my advice to punish it	
	ITP5 I will complain to others if I experience a problem with the brand X to punish it	

## Results

### *Demographic Information*

Data was collected from the answers entered into an online questionnaire administered to 450 Muslim respondents. Respondents are dominant those age 18-24 years old (65.1%), female (57.5%), and college/university students (53.8%). The majority of the respondent's domiciles are in metropolitan cities such as Semarang and its satellite cities (16.9%), Surabaya and the satellite cities (15.3%), and Jakarta and the satellite cities (14.2%). The rest are domiciled in other cities such as Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung, Malang, Aceh, Pontianak, Bali, and Manado. The urban's educated young Muslim cohort is deliberately targeted to reflect the social media literate generation and is considered the main agent for religious boycotts.

In addition, respondents were asked whether they had ever boycotted Unilever for supporting LGBTQI+ (e.g., not buying its products anymore, spreading negative news



about the brand, or protesting against Unilever). The majority of respondents answered that they had never done so, as many as 288 samples (64%). The demographic information that presents the frequency and percentage of the study sample is summarized in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Demographic Information of the Respondents

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	259	57.5%
	Male	191	42.5%
Age	18 – 24	293	65.1%
	25 – 32	118	26.2%
	33 – 40	24	5.3%
	More than 40	15	3.3%
Education	Basic	165	36.7%
	Higher	285	63.3%
Occupation	Student	242	53.8%
	Civil Servant	13	2.9%
	Private Employee	79	17.5%
	Entrepreneur	16	3.5%
	Teacher/Lecturer	62	13.8%
	Others	38	8.4%
Income	Less than Rp. 1.500.000	245	54.4%
	Rp. 1.500.000 – 3.000.000	105	23.3%
	Rp. 3.000.000 – Rp 6.000.000	62	13.8%
	More than Rp. 6.000.000	38	8.4%
Region	Semarang and surrounding cities	76	16.9%
	Surabaya and surrounding cities	69	15.3%
	Jakarta and surrounding cities	64	14.2%
	Others	241	53.5%

### *Measurement Assessment*

The model was analyzed using the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) because it was most suitable for theory development ([Hair Jr. et al., 2016](#)). PLS model testing is generally divided into measurement and structural model testing. The measurement model was worked on afterward to ensure the items' validity and reliability, including the model's fit. In this phase, the process is also known as confirmatory factor analysis. Item validity can be categorized into convergent and discriminant validity.

Construct validity and reliability were determined by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, item-to-construction loading, composite reliability (CR), and mean value of average extracted variance (AVE). If Cronbach is above 0.70, it can be accepted, and all scales in this test are proven reliable. Convergent validity is evaluated by considering the loading factor, which must be greater than 0.50 (see [Table 3](#) for the test summary).

Table 3. Convergent Validity and Reliability

Constructs	Items	Standardized Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Religious Animosity	RA1	0.887	0.918	0.939	0.756
	RA2	0.917			
	RA3	0.920			
	RA4	0.868			
	RA5	0.743			
Symbolic Incongruity	SI1	0.807	0.921	0.940	0.757
	SI2	0.896			
	SI3	0.893			
	SI4	0.880			
	SI5	0.872			
Ideological Incompability	II1	0.873	0.900	0.926	0.717
	II2	0.922			
	II3	0.920			
	II4	0.741			
	II5	0.761			
Subjective Norm	SN1	0.876	0.946	0.959	0.823
	SN2	0.934			
	SN3	0.938			
	SN4	0.934			
	SN5	0.852			
Brand Hate	BH1	0.897	0.896	0.928	0.763
	BH2	0.799			
	BH3	0.900			
	BH4	0.894			
Intention to Incite	ITI1	0.887	0.952	0.963	0.839
	ITI2	0.920			
	ITI3	0.922			
	ITI4	0.909			
	ITI5	0.942			
Intention to Avoid	ITA1	0.920	0.954	0.965	0.847
	ITA2	0.947			
	ITA3	0.912			
	ITA4	0.958			
	ITA5	0.862			
Intention to Punish	ITP1	0.913	0.941	0.955	0.808
	ITP2	0.913			
	ITP3	0.882			
	ITP4	0.925			
	ITP5	0.859			

Notes: Cronbach's Alpha:  $***p < 0.001$ ; CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted

In addition, all items must also be included in certain factors by calculating the AVE and CR must be greater than 0.50 according to the recommended threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Regarding the extracted mean-variance, all values equal or, in most cases, exceed 0.60, so convergent validity is supported. Therefore, the model is free from the validity of the convergent problem.

Furthermore, a step is operationalized while the previous section passes the test. Discriminant validity was assessed based on Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggestion by considering the correlation matrix between variables. The correlation matrix must be larger, between similar variables, than the correlation with other variables. We obtain evidence of a correlation between similar variables shown in the diagonal section, and scores are more significant than scores under the diagonal. Discriminant validity for almost all constructs should have the squared correlation between each pair of constructs lower than the corresponding extracted mean variance. The calculation results of each correlation for the pairs of variables are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

Variables	RA	SI	II	SN	BH	ITI	ITA	ITP
RA	0.870							
SI	0.621	0.870						
II	0.801	0.671	0.847					
SN	0.533	0.424	0.585	0.907				
BH	0.711	0.531	0.749	0.727	0.874			
ITI	0.588	0.426	0.603	0.711	0.762	0.916		
ITA	0.670	0.524	0.669	0.701	0.788	0.748	0.920	
ITP	0.647	0.481	0.664	0.696	0.794	0.846	0.845	0.899

Another analysis is the value of R square, which is the determination coefficient in the endogenous construct, which is divided into three categories, namely strong (0.67), moderate (0.33), and weak (0.19). Based on the calculation results, it can be explained that BH has an R2 value of 0.708, meaning that BH as an endogenous variable can be explained by its exogenous latent variables, namely RA, SI, II, and SN of 70.7%, and other variables outside the study explain the remaining 29.3%. Then, to explain the exogenous elastic variable BH, the ITI variable has an R2 value of 0.581 or 58.1%, the ITA variable has an R2 value of 0.620 or 62%, and the ITP variable has an R2 value of 0.631 or 63.1%.

### Structural Model Evaluation

Brand hate from the test results is a second-order construction. In addition, it also shows that brand hate is a construction with the first three formative triggers, namely religious animosity, ideological incompatibility, and subjective norms. While symbolic incongruity is rejected, it is an effort to develop the hypothesis of religious animosity based on the findings of Roswinanto and Suwanda (2021), as well as Salma and Aji (2022). Hence the results of empirical studies contradict Rodrigues et al. (2021), where symbolic incongruity (in the case of Unilever's rainbow logo) does not affect brand hate. The findings show that brand hate leads to "intention to boycott participation," which we developed into three constructs: intention to incite, intention to avoid, and intention to

punish. Our results are interesting because they show that brand hate has a more significant and direct impact on the intention to punish ( $b = 0.794$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), an essential emotional outcome for engaging in boycotts. In addition, the effect of brand hate on intention to avoid ( $b = 0.788$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) as a result of not using the brand and intention to incite ( $b = 0.762$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) as a result of behavior to influence others. Structural model testing is summarized in [Table 5](#).

Table 5. Direct Effects of the Determinants and Outcomes of Brand Hate

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Result
H1	RA→BH	0.237	3.519	0.000*	Supported
H2	SI→BH	-0.007	0.149	0.881	Not Supported
H3	II→BH	0.320	3.799	0.000*	Supported
H4	SN→BH	0.417	9.163	0.000*	Supported
H5	BH→ITI	0.762	32.637	0.000*	Supported
H6	BH→ITA	0.788	35.569	0.000*	Supported
H7	BH→ITP	0.794	32.696	0.000*	Supported

After direct estimation, following the directions suggested by [Zhao et al. \(2010\)](#), the bootstrap method was used to analyze the indirect effect for each mediation effects.

Table 6. Assessing the Indirect Effects

Mediation Effects	Original Sample	Mean	SD	T Statistics	P Values
RA→BH→ITI	0.180	0.178	0.053	3.417	0.001
RA→BH→ITA	0.186	0.184	0.055	3.394	0.001
RA→BH→ITP	0.188	0.185	0.056	3.342	0.001
SI→BH→ITI	-0.006	-0.005	0.037	0.150	0.881
SI→BH→ITA	-0.006	-0.005	0.038	0.150	0.881
SI→BH→ITP	-0.006	-0.005	0.038	0.150	0.880
II→BH→ITI	0.244	0.245	0.062	3.906	0.000
II→BH→ITA	0.252	0.253	0.064	3.931	0.000
II→BH→ITP	0.254	0.254	0.062	4.074	0.000
SN→BH→ITI	0.318	0.321	0.039	8.178	0.000
SN→BH→ITA	0.328	0.331	0.039	8.440	0.000
SN→BH→ITP	0.331	0.333	0.040	8.321	0.000

[Table 6](#) shows the results of the bootstrap estimation procedure, which obtained an indirect effect, standard error, and 95% bias-corrected confidence interval. We argue that the direct effect of brand hate rejection on the outcome is not significant as following the interpretation of the mediation effect by [Iglesias et al. \(2019\)](#). Hence this can be seen as a mediator between the antecedent and the outcome. Therefore, the results of this study reveal that brand hate fully mediates all variables except symbolic incongruity. As a result, brand hate is a partial mediator of the impact of religious animosity, ideological incompatibility, and subjective norms on the intention to incite, avoid, and punish.

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## Discussion

This paper confirms that the animosity of the Muslim community in Indonesia towards Unilever is strongly related to the influence of values that are important to them, especially religion. This finding extends the literature on brand hate tested in multidimensional constructs, thus strengthening the negative consumer-brand relationship hypothesis in previous studies (Fetscherin, 2019; Rodrigues et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2021). The result showed that religious animosity, ideological incompatibility, and subjective norms are antecedents of brand hate. This investigation is relevant for consumer antagonism towards brands that are not sensitive to religious disapproval. It can contribute to the branding literature on the main drivers of brand hate caused by conflicting values between consumers and global brands, thereby advancing knowledge of negative consumer-brand relationships.

The literature on the antecedent of brand hate will be explored further. First, these findings confirm that religious animosity is essential in explaining why Indonesian consumers hate a brand. In the context of the previous boycott in Indonesia against Sari Roti (Roswinanto & Suwanda, 2021) and French brands (Salma & Aji, 2022) triggered by the same phenomenon, each of them was due to Muslim animosity. In addition, in other parts of the world, Muslim animosity has also hit companies that mock the Prophet Muhammad (the noblest man in Islam) (Albayati et al., 2012; Knight et al., 2009), as well as animosity to brands associated with Israel (Abdul-Talib & Mohd Adnan, 2017; Shoham et al., 2006). There is a desire for revenge against the company (Grégoire et al., 2010). Anger against a leading brand with close ties to Israel is as relevant today as in the case of Unilever.

Second, this study shows that ideological incompatibility affects Unilever's brand hate. In line with the findings of (Khan et al., 2013), strong evidence shows how the impact of religious-political ideology affects consumer-brand relationships. It is related to the context of repeated political dynamics, which led to the boycott movement (Roswinanto & Suwanda, 2021; Salma & Aji, 2022). This finding is exciting and valuable because it reinforces the assumption that consumers consciously reject brands that misrepresent themselves and their motives for use (Wolter et al., 2016). Thus consumer ideological self-brand distance can lead to feelings of hatred (Hegner et al., 2017; Rodrigues et al., 2021). A potential reason for consumers cognitively distancing themselves from Unilever's image is the ideological incompatibility it might result from their parent company blatantly supporting the equality movement for the LGBTQI+ community (unilever.com). However, the Unilever branch in Indonesia later defended itself by issuing an official statement that respects local culture, norms, and values (Septianto, 2020).

Third, the relationship between subjective norms and Unilever's brand shows significant positive results. Empirical studies show that hatred towards Unilever is strongly related to the influence of subjective norms on people who are essential and close to them. Al-Hyari et al. (2012) also revealed the same results. It shows that important people in a Muslim's life influence their perception of the success of the call to hate Unilever. These results follow related studies that effect of subjective norms for boycott movements will be more substantial in the context of collectivist countries. Anderson (2012) noted that the more people they have in common, the easier it is for them to spread hatred, including similarities in religious groups. Hence scholars describe the Muslim

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community as a univocal entity (Abdi, 2009). In addition, Hofstede (1980) theory of cultural dimensions also reveals that countries such as Indonesia, which have a higher level of collectivism, tend to have more substantial subjective norms. Things that violate Islam will also be believed by Muslims collectively.

Another relevant contribution from our research focuses on the subsequent impact of brand hate. This difference in how consumers hate brands requires a more profound understanding which, according to Rodrigues et al. (2021), are classified into passionate consumers ("remaining opponents"), non-excited users ("disappointed admirers"), discouraged users ("unimpressed testers") and passionate former users ("disappointed fanboys") by developing a feeling of potential negative Muslim brand-consumer relationship. This study also emphasizes the outcome of brand hate that leads to intentional attacks on brands, such as word of mouth and punishment, as well as avoiding the purchase of products/services from the targeted brand, which confirms the findings of previous research on brand hate (Rodrigues et al., 2021; Zarantonello et al., 2016). Another significant theoretical contribution from this research is that brand hate involves behavioral dimensions: negative word of mouth, avoidance of product purchases, and willingness to punish brands. This finding emphasizes how the feeling when consumers hate has implications for consumer actions; thus, a dichotomous concept is needed to see brand hate either voice the opposition or ignore it.

More importantly, for the first time, this paper shows that boycott intentions are organized into three dimensions: intention to incite, intention to avoid, and intention to punish. The development of this theory notes how consumers cognitively express their hatred to reduce their level of conscious interaction with the brand, which then dissolves or at least weakens the affective bond between the two parties (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Perrin-Martinenq, 2004). In short, brand haters may exhibit brand disengagement traits such as brand avoidance or unwillingness to associate with the brand again. Meanwhile, brand haters who express and voice their feelings of hatred through word of mouth and punishment tend to have enduring opposition towards the brand. These two destructive retaliatory behaviors reflect how consumers behave concerning the brand.

Finally, brand haters influence others by venting their feelings and judgments against a brand. This gives the power to warn other consumers not to take advantage of the products of the targeted brand and stop trading (Wetzer et al., 2007). Brand haters will be actively involved in spreading negative word of mouth, especially to convey arguments in informal spaces that affect the community where they are associated collectively to carry out specific anti-brand actions (Bailey, 2004; Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009). In addition, the desire of brand haters to retaliate through punitive measures causes damage to the brand as a form of retaliation for the damage that the opposing brand inflicts (Bechwati & Morrin, 2003). In severe cases, brand haters may intentionally engage in unlawful and destructive actions (Romani et al., 2013) and show retaliation through aggressive behavior towards the brand. Meanwhile, consumers who reply with passive behavior will be more challenging to identify by companies as potential brand haters.

## Conclusion

Overall, this study confirms that brand hate can harm the consumer-brand relationship, which further causes incite, avoidance, and punishment behavior.

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Explanations of negative consumer-brand relationships confirm brand-consumer disidentification resulting in brand hate. The current findings provide essential knowledge for brand managers to take action. Brand managers allow a variety of alternatives to offer measures to prevent online and offline anti-brand activism before the boycott becomes more extensive and more damaging. Furthermore, brand managers must develop public relations strategies to appease brand haters rather than oppose them.

Another important finding is that brand hate due to worsening brand-consumer relationships in several ways affects brands both directly and latently. Therefore, strategy making should prevent potential brand haters from avoiding or disengaging from the brand. Thus, there is still hope of restoring the negative brand-consumer relationship. It is crucial to reduce the impact of retaliatory behavior that can damage brand reputation. It is also helpful for companies to manage the size of the boycott so as not to cause potential instability and chaos in the sales of their products. By understanding the antecedents of brand hate, companies can have the insight to manage consumers' negative emotions and plan social engineering initiatives for corrective action.


On the other hand, this study cannot explain why symbolic incongruity does not affect brand hate. More specifically, whether the rainbow logo is not worthy of being hated even though, in a modern context, it is the identity of the LGBTQI+ community. Future research is suggested to explore further how symbols can cause brand hate, to show that consumers have their perceptions. For example, a qualitative study conducting interviews with brand-hating Muslim consumers would provide valuable insights to address the current phenomenon of consumer-brand disidentification. Information taken directly from respondents will provide a perspective that can re-examine previous theories and their different implications.

### Authors' Declaration

The authors made substantial contribution to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript. The paper has awarded as the first best paper in the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Islamic Economics Studies (ICIES) held in July 26-27, 2022 at Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, Stated Islamic University of Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia. Thus, we thank all the organizers for creating such an extraordinary event.

### ORCID

Firdan Thoriq Faza  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5089-4140>

Yan Putra Timur  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3457-2712>

Lu'liyatul Mutmainah.  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6009-9538>

Sulistya Rusgianto  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1331-0641>

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