


# Chapter 7


## The Dynamics of Brand Hate During a Social–Political Conflict: Empirical Evidence From Moroccan Consumers During the 2023 War on Gaza

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the antecedents of attitudinal and behavioral brand hate among Moroccan consumers during the 2023 Gaza conflict, focusing on geopolitical tensions. Using a quasi-experimental design with 520 respondents, findings reveal that symbolic incongruity, ideological incompatibility, and subjective norms drive attitudinal hate, while negative experiences influence behavioral hate. The conflict amplifies ideological incompatibility, intensifying hate levels. This research pioneers the exploration of socio-political conflict as a situational variable, demonstrating how macro-environmental factors shape brand-consumer relationships. Practical implications highlight the need for aligning brand values with consumer ideologies and employing proactive strategies, such as brand audits and sentiment analysis. While context-specific, these findings contribute to advancing strategic marketing*

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-5428-6.ch007

*in emerging markets by providing a framework to understand brand hate dynamics and actionable insights for managing brand relationships in culturally diverse and volatile environments.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

During the 2023 conflict in Gaza, many multinational brands confronted boycotts and extensive condemnation across North Africa, the Middle East and around the world. For instance, McDonald's stated a minus 4% in its share value following these events, whereas Starbucks experienced a 2% decrease during the same period. This latter was subjected to a violent attack in Turkey. A Starbucks store based in Istanbul was targeted by individuals alleging the company's support for Israel amidst the ongoing conflict in Gaza, as reported by Duvarenglish.com (2023). In Morocco, entities such as Carrefour and the Bank AXA have been denounced as "facilitators of genocide."

Theafricareport.com (2023) documented instances of activism against these brands, particularly highlighting an event at a Carrefour supermarket in Salé, northwestern Morocco, where protesters bearing Palestinian flags urged a boycott of the chain. These behaviors were amplified online, where the hashtag #boycott gained significant traction within Moroccan digital spaces. As a culmination of these pressures, Morocco World News (2023) revealed that both Starbucks and the Swedish fashion retailer H&M decided to withdraw their operations from Morocco by December 2023 based on the extensive boycott campaign led by Moroccan consumers. This series of events underscores the profound impact of geopolitical tensions on international business operations, especially in regions where such conflicts strongly influence public sentiment. Additionally, multiple videos on social media show that McDonald's restaurants are empty and avoided during this conflict.

These behaviors are linked to anti-consumption, specifically the concept of brand hate, which refers to "*the extreme negative affective component of attitude towards a brand*" (Bryson *et al.*, 2013, p. 395). Mushtaq *et al.* (2024) argue that brand hate is a multidimensional construct, composed of primary emotions such as disgust, contempt and anger, that leads to different behaviors ranging from brand avoidance to brand revenge (Bayarassou *et al.*, 2021). This widely accepted conceptualization is rooted in psychological theories such as the triangular theory of interpersonal hate (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2008) that have been validated in branding context (Fetscherin, 2019; Kucuk, 2019b; Zhang & Laroche, 2021). On this basis, for more than a decade of research, scholars have mainly investigated the antecedents of brand hate (Costa & Azevedo, 2024; Gois *et al.*, 2023; Hegner *et al.*, 2017; Pinto & Brandao, 2021; Xin Ying Ong & Vila-Lopez, 2024), behavioral outcomes of brand

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