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The Brand Dislike Construct: Scale Development and Application to Actual Brands

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The paper aims to describe the concept of brand dislike and presents the results of implementing a brand dislike scale. First of all we analyzed brand dislike on a hypothetical brand and then we applied the measurement scale to actual brands. Data were collected in 2005 in Italy, and the sample was formed from ordinary consumers. From a theoretical/methodological point of view, this research fills a gap in brand attitude research literature: provided that negative attitudes can-not be reduced to the opposite of positive attitudes, they have to be measured with specific tools. At the operational level, this research shows interesting opportunities in terms of brand analysis and management.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Brand dislike occurs when consumers express explicit negative judgments toward a brand that can be either formed during the evaluation task or retrieved from a negative attitude stored in memory. There are several factors that lead to the emergence of brand dislike and even theoretical explanations are sparse and fragmented: the first section of the paper reviews the main research approaches that have addressed this topic, trying to integrate them in a single framework.

Specifically, three distinct stream of research will be reviewed and organized: customer/brand relationship (Fournier, 1998; Fajer, Schouten, 1995), the metaphoric, symbolic and relational properties of negative opinions and judgements (Wilk, 1997; Bourdieu, 1987; Douglas, 1996; Douglas and Isherwood, 1996) and finally, political consumption and consumer resistance (among others, Ozanne and Murray, 1995; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995 and Holt, 2002).

With this framework in mind, we have started the development of a research project to understand the brand dislike construct and to create the basis for measuring it. In detail, our research objectives in this paper are:

- A preliminary explorative qualitative analysis directed at understanding the concept of brand dislike from the consumer's perspective (Dalli et al., 2006);
- the development and validation of a brand dislike scale integrating the dimensions emerging from the literature review and the results of the qualitative analysis;
- the application of the validated scale to actual brands to test the relevance of the dislike factors identified in the previous phase.

The main result that emerged from the qualitative analysis is a complex but coherent picture that is broken down into three levels (product, user and corporate) and several factors, each of which can be strictly related to the literature outlined in the paper. In this sense, the research purpose of giving a descriptive picture of the consumers' perspective about disliked brands has been achieved.

The generation of a scale for measuring brand dislike has been the second step of this research project. Following the scale development procedure guidelines that Churchill (1979) and DeVellis (1991) proposed, we obtained a psychometrically sound and operationally valid measure for the brand dislike construct based on fifteen items.

Eight out of fifteen items clearly relate to the corporate level, broken down into three different factors: "manipulation and deceit", "carelessness toward the environment" and "outdated communication"; five additional items relate to the user level broken down into two different factors: "poor distinction capability" and "excess of distinction" and, finally, one item relate to the product level and, specifically, to "poor product performance".

Finally, to test the relevance of the dislike factors, the previously validated brand dislike scale has been applied to actual brands. This application provides some interesting results. Five factors come out from the analysis. Eight items out of fifteen clearly relate to the corporate level, broken down into three different

factors: as we found in the previous phase of analysis, these three factors are "manipulation and deceit", "carelessness toward the environment" and "outdated communication". Five additional items relate to the user level and, differently from the previous phase of analysis, we found only one factor collecting all the items related to the user level. Finally, as we found in the scale validation analysis, two items relate to the product level and, particularly, to "poor product performance".

Therefore, the factors identified seem quite stable and able to almost completely cover the theoretical model on which the empirical analysis is grounded.

The main contribution of the paper is in the direction of the development of a specific measurement tool for negative brand attitudes, provided that no special methods like this do exist, and that it's a long time that attitude literature is claiming for the development of specific instruments to measure negative attitudes.

In addition, this new scale adds to the extant literature by establishing a basis for further theoretical advances on the relationship between brand dislike and buying behavior; the focus in this case should be on the nature and strength of this relationship, given the different impact of the six identified and verified factors on overall brand dislike. In fact, according to whether or not the consumer dislikes the brand because of one or another of the identified factors, the implications in behavioral terms are not necessarily the same and of the same intensity.

Finally, the application of the scale to actual brands has lead to interesting results and seems promising not only from a theoretical point of view but also from a managerial one. The 15 item scale can serve as a useful diagnostic tool; it allows to identify the factors on which consumers build negative evaluations and to set up the necessary countermeasures.

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