

CONSUMERS' WILLINGNESS TO BUY FOREIGN PRODUCTS: EFFECTS OF CONSUMER ANIMOSITY AND ETHNOCENTRISM

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***Abstract.** Animosity can be a vital force to decide whether to buy a foreign product or not. The aim of this study is to examine the effects of animosity of Chinese consumer's willingness to buy Japanese products in general. Previous research is replete with evidences that Chinese have a special grudge against Japanese, after World War II. Previous studies in this regard were conducted in one or few cities of China, this research aimed to collect data from multiple cities, in order to generalize the concept. This study also highlighted a new construct i.e. perceived quality. What will happen if a Chinese consumer has to decide between animosity and better quality of Japanese product? A sample of 435 was collected in the Chinese city of Nanjing. Findings of the study revealed that Chinese still have high level of animosity towards Japanese products. And even at times, products with high quality are being ignored because of its Japanese background. Most important and consistent to current literature, results showed that, consumer animosity as a higher order construct which is indicated by economic animosity and war animosity. Those parts of China where we found an extreme animosity, ethnocentrism couldn't play a significant role to affect the other constructs in the animosity model.*

Keywords: Animosity, war and economic animosity, perceived quality, willingness to buy.

Introduction

In the recent studies consumer animosity is considered as an important element for customers decision making. This study is a further elaboration of some published research work in the context of consumer animosity and ethnocentrism. Same consumer animosity model has been used, but in this regard, researcher has also added one more animosity as well, that is political

animosity, in addition to this consumers knowledge of history is also used as moderator. Research gaps have been identified from the extant literatures. At first there is a need to revalidate the sturdiness of animosity model (Ang et al., 2004), and should be generalized to various settings, i.e.(social, economic, geographic, and demographic differences) (Shimp, Dunn, & Klein, 2003). Secondly Animosity models should be examined beyond the foreign products as well (Klein, 2002). Thirdly, we are lacking theories in the current literature which are not enough to support the conceptual construct of animosity (Shin, 2001). The concept of animosity is basically drawn from sociology, which is called antipathy (anger) due to previous or ongoing tensions among the different countries, like political, social, economic, religious, military and diplomatic events that can effect consumer's decision to buy those products (Klein, 2002). Mostly these antipathies are specific to a country and in many instances it leads to the customers not to buy a product of that country, and even they can boycott those products as well which are from that country (Klein, 2002). Many of researchers have highlighted this thing that animosity plays an important role in consumer's decision making, but there hasn't been lot of work done in the area hybrid products and animosity.

In the latest researches of COO, Ang et al. (2004), identified consumer animosity as one of vital issues of marketing which has been overlooked by the literature of marketing. They emphasized that Atrocities, armed conflicts and tensions of any type can affect the marketplace in general. There are lots of such examples present in the recent history; one of them is that of anti-American sentiments in the Middle East. Coca Cola was boycotted in the Middle East, and its sales dropped down immediately up to 60% in total. Another popular example of animosity and its effect was the boycott of McDonalds in the Middle East, that America support Israel. As a result, 175 McDonald's branches were closed in the Middle East in 2002. These were some of serious connotation of testing animosity models.(Klein, Ettenson, & Morris, 1998) Researchers demonstrated the seriousness of animosity and its effects on consumers purchase decisions. Due to international trade growth and globalization, businesses are under immense pressure, Marketers have to identify something for competitive advantage, to compete or staying ahead of their competitors. Most companies have changed their locations to manufacture cheaper products, but on other hand companies are also looking for the companies which have a good reputation of quality, specialised in technology and other synergies (Chao, 1993). This emerging trend shifted the focus towards hybrid products, means ingredients or parts can be from different countries or all over the world. This is a more complicated situation for buyers now, to distinguish between local and foreign products. In addition this is even

more complicated for marketers and researchers to underline the factors of motivation in such market conditions (Romani, Grappi, & Dalli, 2012). Some prominent work has been done in the field, still plenty of room to dig this deep.

This research is conducted in China in order to measure the animosity of Chinese consumers against Japanese products and hybrid products which are both associated to China and Japan specifically. There has been a long-standing tension between these two nations, started from the 19th century almost when Japan occupied China from 1931 to 1945. In the given context Japan is offending country and Chinese animosity is considerable towards them. In addition territorial disputes, political tensions and Japanese government's current stances of not taking responsibility of what happened in World War II further escalated the matter (Mostafa, 2010). There have been boycotts and protests in different parts of China against Japanese products in recent times. In the given environment, historical background and ongoing tensions between these two countries, this can be considered as ideal condition for this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Animosity

Animosity is not a new term in marketing literature but it's not new in the field of sociology, it means strong enmity, emotions, and hatred towards a nation or people based on some hostilities between them. These animosities can be violating social norms and unwarranted and unpredictable (Averill, 1983). Animosity is taken differently in the context of COO literature and marketing, initially tested by Klein et al. (1998). The concept of animosity is basically drawn from sociology, which is called antipathy (anger) due to previous or ongoing tensions among the different countries, like political, social, economic, religious, military and diplomatic events that can affect consumer's purchase behavior (Klein et al., 1998). There are few studies present in the literature regarding the generalizability of animosity model (Russell & Russell, 2010). Consumer animosity can affect the buying behavior, basically in this study animosity is a second order construct, and it is predicted by political, war and economic animosity (Klein, 2002; Shin, 2001). This research separates from traditional literature of COO, which states a direct relationship between consumer's product judgment and purchase behavior. Animosity can affect buyer behavior directly, and independently of product judgment, and secondly It may not be hard to comment that animosity is specific to a country, and can't be taken as general against all foreign countries (Klein, 2002). Talking in general it means that consumers avoid buying the products and services from a country which they have animosity with not only because of negative perception, but because exporting country has been

indulged in war, political tensions, military or any kind of animosity. Due to these past or current events it's hard for consumers to buy the products from that country. In certain cases, they even feel that products from that country are much better in design, quality, technologically advanced, and more reputable. Even with these positive judgments for a product design they will prefer the products of their own country's product over the products of country they have animosity with. Conclusively it may not be false to comment that animosity views outweigh the products' judgment and consumers will let go those products. Animosity with any country will affect consumer buying behavior negatively and it has got a direct relationship independent of product judgment (Romani et al., 2012).

2.2 Country of Origin Affect (COO)

Plenty of literature is available in the field of COO, made in cues are not only information cues, but marketers are also taking advantage of positive image of certain countries. In addition many consumers have associated quality and durability with certain nations, for example in these context Chinese consumers still believes that products which are made in Korea and japans' are more reliable and durable as compared to products which are made in China (Josiassen, 2010). It's obvious from the literature that country of origin has a positive effect on consumers purchase decisions, or willingness to buy. Whenever there is a comparison between foreign and local products, consumers decide on the basis of image of that country. There are numerous factors such as xenophobia, nationalism, dogmatism, ethnocentrism and animosity involved in purchase decision of consumer, when he has to choose between foreign and local product (Chu, 2013). Japan, Korea, Germany, and America are considered amongst those countries which are associated with the advanced level of technology as compared to other nations of the world.

2.3 Consumer Ethnocentrism

Preference of local product over foreign products is a natural phenomenon and it is very salient in the COO literature (Riefler, 2012). Due to nationalism, patriotism and ethnocentric tendencies consumers are more loyal to their domestic products, and these products are perceived and evaluated positively in comparison to foreign products (Phau & Chan, 2003). Hence it is reasonable to conclude that consumers' preference is mostly local and domestic product, due to their affiliation and attachment with their nation. Even when products are identical in all regards still local products are preferred over foreign (Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price, 2012). This condition is more vibrant and challenging for marketers, because of internationalization and globalization,

market span has broadened, but at the same time consumers basic beliefs are more rigid as well.

2.4 Hybrid Products

Hybrid products are those which involves two countries, one is the country of origin of brand and other is country of manufacturing (Lee, 1995). This is one of attribute of globalization and its effects. Another attribute which is associated with hybrid products is that of strategic benefits which firms receive. It provides them an opportunity and ability to combine, alter, emphasize and downplay the source of country (brand), which depends upon the perception of consumer of that country (Raffelt, Schmitt, & Meyer, 2013). Hybrid products and its implications further elaborated the concept of COO; it means that it's not only one dimensional concept. Product origin significantly moderates COO effect on consumer purchase intentions and product judgments (Thorndike & Kim, 2000).

3 Hypothesis development and theoretical evidences

Animosities and ethnocentrism have led few gaps to be filled in the modern literature. There is an immense need of finding out the magnitude and ratio of animosity on perceived quality, product judgment and purchase decision. That is when and how, these values can affect the purchase decisions of consumers. There are some theoretical justifications which formed the basis for development of this research hypothesis, discussed in detail below.

3.1 Cognitive Dissonance Theory

According to this theory actions can influence the subsequent attitudes and beliefs of consumers (Haenlein, 2013), furthermore it also emphasizes on the attitudinal change of individuals. This theory is relevant to animosity is because; high ethnocentric consumers may have high tendencies towards a particular company. There are few situations in which consumer may be forced to buy the foreign products when the local products are not available. In such situations consumers are always in a dilemma whether to choose those products or not. Applying the fundamentals of cognitive dissonance theory consumer may opt to purchase foreign products as well.

H1. *Perceived quality has a direct relationship with consumers' willingness to buy Japanese products.*

3.2 Attribution Theory

According to attribution theory, consumers interpret events and they relate them with their purchase decisions and thinking (Weiner, 1986). This theory rationalizes, and explains that consumers' animosities are based on some previous events and they associate them to finding answers, which influence their thinking, for example aggression, anger and boycotts etc. (Ang et al., 2004). In the current scenario Chinese consumers has anger and aggression for Japanese products due to the World War II. Due to these animistic values most of Chinese consumers are unwilling to buy foreign products. Even though it's a common perception amongst Chinese consumers that Japanese products are much better in quality, design and durability. Based on these perceptions and justifications it's obvious to hypothesize that:

H2. *Consumer animosity has a negative relationship on consumer's willingness to buy Japanese products.*

3.3 Social Identities Theory

This theory derives from motivational and cognitive theory; on the basis of inter group discrimination and differences (Maecker, Grabenströer, Clement, & Heitmann, 2013). It's obvious and fundamental that individuals are always motivated to create difference among them which creates social boundaries and always try to compare themselves in-groups positively or negatively. Similarly ethnocentric consumers will be more motivated towards their own products as compared to foreign or Japanese products (Hogg, 1988). These perceptions of consumers lead to following hypothesis:

H2. *Consumer ethnocentrism will be negatively related to willingness of Chinese customers to buy Japanese products.*

4 Methodology

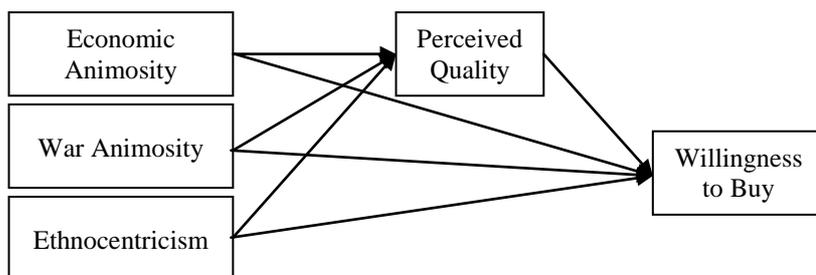
This research study is undertaken with the purpose of investigating the animosity of Chinese consumers towards the Japanese products. The population is consisting of Chinese consumers and the sample includes Chinese consumers from different cities of China.

China has harsh history with Japanese during World War II, Japanese brutally killed thousands of innocent people including women and children. Since World War II till now this historic events have been included in the text books to Passover this atrocity to the succeeding generations. Kwan (2007) states that Chinese governments, in the past and in the recent times want Japanese to admit their wrongdoing to improve diplomatic relations between both countries.

Klein et al. (1998) conducted first research study in Nanjing city to investigate the consumer animosity, then Cheah, Phau, Kea, and Huang (2016) conducted study in the recent times on consumer animosity toward Japanese. This study is undertaken to include other parts of China to research animosity, whether Chinese citizens other than Nanjing has the same feeling about Japanese and whether these feelings have impact on their behaviour towards Japanese products.

4.1 Data and Sample

Data collected through an adapted questionnaire from previous studies on animosity using the same scales as developed and used by (Klein et al., 1998). Questionnaire consists of total four following constructs 1) War Animosity (3 Items), 2) Perceived Quality (3 Items), 3) Consumer Ethnocentrism (3 Items) and 4) Willingness to Buy (4 Items). Using snowball sampling technique, we distributed questionnaire through a mobile social media application in different cities of China, in total 357 respondents filled the questionnaire and after a thorough analysis only 311 questionnaires were useable. Structural Equation Modeling technique has been applied using Smart PLS3 to investigate the relationships among independent and dependent variables. Construct validity and reliability established through measurement model. Cronbach's α measure the internal consistency of the constructs, and squared values of AVE measure the Discriminant validity of constructs.



Source: Cheah et al. (2016)

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 The Measurement Model Results

This section had confirmed the content and construct validity of the measurement model.

a. Content Validity

Content validity is confirmed through the factor loading of different items. Factor loading make sure that the questions of construct is going to measure what is intended to measure and related to the that particular construct (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Table 1 illustrates factor loading, internal reliability, convergent validity, composite reliability, and Average Variance extracted of the constructs of the study.

Table 1: *Statistics of the Constructs*

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	Internal Reliability Cronbach's α	Convergent Validity Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Economic Animosity	EA1	0.821	0.846	0.897	0.685
	EA2	0.874			
	EA3	0.812			
	EA4	0.802			
War Animosity	WA1	0.856	0.843	0.895	0.683
	WA2	0.864			
	WA3	0.864			
	WA4	0.712			
Ethnocentrism	Eth1	0.820	0.874	0.909	0.666
	Eth2	0.836			
	Eth3	0.819			
	Eth4	0.847			
	Eth5	0.754			
Perceived Quality	PQ1	0.862	0.869	0.92	0.792
	PQ2	0.888			
	PQ3	0.919			
Willingness to Buy	WB1	0.862	0.877	0.916	0.731
	WB2	0.869			
	WB3	0.838			
	WB4	0.850			

b. Convergent Validity

Reliability of item can be used to confirm the convergent validity of the constructs. The reliability of items consists of Cronbach's Alfa Coefficients, Composite reliability and Average Variance extracted. So according the results given in table I Cronbach's α values are much higher than the standard value of 0.70 to confirm internal reliability as mentioned by (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

For composite reliability the standard value suggested by (Hair et al., 2011) is 0.70 and the above given results shows that the values for all constructs are much higher than the standard value. The value of composite reliability for war animosity is 0.83, for Perceived quality is 0.89, for ethnocentrism 0.76 and for willingness to buy Japanese product the value of composite reliability is 0.82. So these values confirm the composite reliability of all the constructs. Similarly the standard value for average variance extracted is 0.50 as mentioned by (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2011). The values of AVE for war animosity, Perceived quality, Ethnocentrism, and willingness to buy, are 0.64, 0.71, 0.69 and 0.71 respectively, so these values of AVE confirm the convergent validity of the constructs used in this study.

c. *Discriminant Validity*

Discriminant validity defined by Fornell and Larcker (1981) as how the constructs are different by each other in the context of the same model. This kind of validity can be calculated by comparing the correlation values with the values of Average variance extracted. The results are shown in Table-II clearly indicate that square roots of AVE values shown diagonal in the table are much higher than the other values of correlations in its rows, so Discriminant validity is proved. Overall, it can be defined as the measurement model has proved the adequate reliability, convergent, and Discriminant validity.

Table 2: *Validity Statistics of the Constructs*

Construct	EA	WA	Ethno.	PQ	WB
Economic Animosity	1.00				
War Animosity	0.76	1.00			
Ethnocentrism	0.77	0.80	1.00		
Perceived Quality	-0.41	0.38	-0.44	1.00	
Willingness to Buy	-0.73	-0.74	-0.84	0.44	1.00

5.2 *The Structural Model Results*

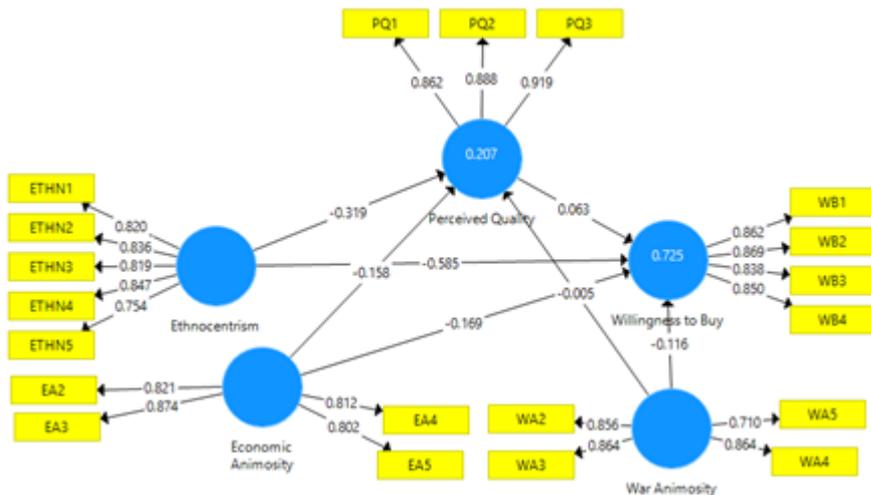
Reliability and validity of constructs and items is confirmed through the positive and significant results of the measurement model. Now we discuss the results of structural model to test and validate (negate) the hypothesis of the study that whether the results confirm the hypothesis are supported by the data or not.

Table 3 List of Hypothesis Tested

Hypothesis	Coefficient	T Values	P Values	Decision
H ₁	-0.158**	2.228	0.026	Supported
H1a	-0.169***	3.01	0.003	Supported
H ₂	-0.318***	4.356	0.00	Supported
H2a	-0.586***	9.883	0.00	Supported
H ₃	0.062***	2.602	0.009	Supported
H ₄	-0.005	0.067	0.946	Not-Supported
H4a	-0.115**	1.91	0.056	Supported

Note: ***1% level of sig., **5% level of sig.

According to the above-mentioned table economic animosity has negative impact on perceived quality of product as depicts by its path coefficient and the relationship is significant as shown by the t-value and p-value. Economic animosity has negative impact on willingness to buy Japanese products as the path coefficient has negative sign and this impact is significant at 1% level of significance. Path coefficient for H2 is -.318, t-value is 4.356 and p-value is 0.000 which means consumer ethnocentrism has negative impact on perceived quality and this relationship is significant at 1% level of significant. All other hypothesis are accepted and supported by the results of the study except H4 war animosity has negative impact on perceived quality, direction of relationship is right but the relationship is insignificant because of lower t-value and higher p-value.



6. Conclusion

Chinese consumers' animosity is associated with economic threats and post war time wrong doings, it means they associate attributes with their purchase decisions (Attribution theory). Moreover, they compare and judge the products of both countries before their actual purchases. They go in detail of in group and out group comparison as well (Realistic group theory and social identity theory). Furthermore, it may not be wrong to comment that Chinese consumers are not willing to buy foreign products when they think they got good quality local or domestic products, (cognitive dissonance theory). Animosity is also related with realistic group conflict theory.

This study has emerged from a previous literature and researches and broadened its span to next level. Previous research was conducted in Nanjing only, which means that sample was limited to one city. And people of Nanjing have a high animosity towards Japanese products, because they were badly affected in the World War II. Furthermore, animosity can be taken is subjective in Chinese customers. Also depends upon the need and quality of products as well.

Significant marketing implication extracted from the conducted research is that, if animosity towards a nation is extremely high, a country should not focus to market those products, a better option for them is to look for alternate markets in the long run. In addition, the manager should be more specific about the promotion of those products rather than promoting its quality cues. Product features, quality design and promotion efforts may minimize the effects of animosity. In this regard hybrid products and branding strategies can also be helpful. Other option to market foreign products where animosity is high is that, marketers can use celebrities' endorsements, different packaging, and different brand names can be used for survival and entry.

On the other hand from the conducted research it may not be hard to comment that, it gives domestic companies more leverage and liberty to exploit these animosities and build their own competitive advantage on this basis (Klein, 2002).

7. Future Directions and Limitations

Research conducted is a further elaboration of a proposed research model and research area, there are lots of other areas in animosity literature which can be involved in this area. With the passage of time animosity of Chinese consumers towards Japanese products is still the same. But what if their need is much higher than their animosity? In many cases like purchasing a mobile

phone, LED, a luxury car etc., do they consider their animosity towards Japanese nation?

Moreover, this research is general response of Chinese consumers towards Japanese products and evaluation of their responses, which is only one side of picture. Further researches can be conducted when this issue of animosity can be analyzed with the views of importers, marketers and retailers. How they consider or rate animosity towards Japanese while dealing in Japanese products?

Third limitation of research is that, what we take out the constructs of animosity and ethnocentrism out of the research and talk in general and note down the views of consumers on Japanese products. The compare both the responses, it may give a new direction to understand the concept in detail, which is more important animosity or product usage. Hybrid products are those which involves two countries, one is the country of origin of brand and other is country of manufacturing. This is one of attribute of globalization and its effects. Another attribute which is associated with hybrid products is that of strategic benefits which firms receive. It provides them an opportunity and ability to combine, alter, emphasize and downplay the source of country (brand), which depends upon the perception of consumer of that country. Hybrid products and its implications further elaborated the concept of COO; it means that it's not only one-dimensional concept. Product origin significantly moderates COO effect on consumer purchase intentions and product judgment but what if product is hybrid?

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Appendix

Consumers' willingness to Buy Foreign Products: Effects of Consumer Animosity & Ethnocentrism.

中国消费者基于敌视与民族优越感因素的外国商品购买意愿

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the “Impact of Consumer Animosity & Ethnocentrism on willingness to buy foreign products”. The information you provide will help me to complete my academic research work. Moreover, you are the right person, who can give accurate information about this research. It's a humble request to fill in the given questionnaire.

这份问卷旨在调查消费者敌视和民族优越感对购买外国商品意愿的影响。您提供的信息将帮助完成我的学术研究。另外，您是能够给这项研究提供准确信息的合适被调查者。在此，请求您能抽空完成这份调查问卷。

I ensure that information you provided us will be used only for academic purpose and kept confidential.

我向您保证，您所提供的信息将只用于学术研究，不会外泄。

Gender 性别

- i. Male 男性
- ii. Female 女性

Age 年龄

- i. 16-20
- ii. 21-25
- iii. 26-30
- iv. 31-35
- v. 36 and Above 36 及以上

Qualification 学历

- i. High School 高中
- ii. Undergraduate 本科
- iii. Master 硕士
- iv. PhD 博士

City. _____ 故乡

Occupation 职业

- i. Student 学生
- ii. Employee
- iii. Businessman

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

1=非常不同意 2=不同意 3=中立 4=同意 5=非常同意

#	Questions	S.D	D	N	A	S.A
War Animosity						
	战争上的敌视					
1	I feel anger towards Japanese.					
	我对日本人感到愤怒					
2	I will never forgive Japanese invading china during the world war II.					
	我将永远不会原谅日本在二战期间对中国的侵略					
3	Japan should pay for what it did with china during the invasion.					
	日本应当为其在中国的侵略行为付出代价					
4	I dislike Japanese.					
	我讨厌日本人					
Consumer Ethnocentrism						
	消费者的民族优越感					
1	Chinese products are my first, last, and foremost choice.					
	中国商品是我的首要以及唯一的选择					
2	Purchasing foreign-made products is being non-Chinese.					
	对我来说，购买外国商品就不是中国人					
3	It is not right to purchase foreign products, because it puts Chinese out of jobs.					
	购买外国商品是不对的，因为它让中国人失业					
Perceived Quality of the product						
1	Products made in Japan are carefully produced and have fine workmanship.					
	日本商品生产严谨，质量上乘。					
2	Products made in Japan are generally of a lower quality than similar products available from other countries.					
	日本商品质量逐渐不如其他国家类似商品					

3	Products made in Japan show a very high degree of technological advancement.					
	日本商品展现出高水平的技术先进性					
Willingness to buy Japanese Product						
	购买日本商品意愿					
1	I would feel guilty if I bought Japanese product.					
	我为购买日本商品而感到羞愧					
2	I would never buy a Japanese product.					
	我将永远不会购买日本商品					
3	Whenever possible, I avoid buying Japanese products.					
	无论如何我都避免购买日本商品					
4	Whenever available, I would prefer to buy products made in Japan.					
	无论如何我都优先购买日本商品					