



## How to Prevent Consumers Breaking Up With Your Brand

A Review of

*Brand Hate: Navigating Consumer Negativity in the Digital World*

by S. Umit Kucuk

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Reviewed by

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A brand needs its consumers more than consumers need the brand. Brands lose money and fail when their consumers stop using their products or services. “No consumer gets mad at a brand or company without a reason” (p. 26) is the foundation of brand hate. However, brand hate is a complex construct with shades of gray between consumers’ love and hate for the brand. Ninety percent of startup businesses fail, and one of the best practices of the surviving 10 percent is that they know how to rebrand and recover from a marketing crisis (Patel, 2015). Popp, Germelmann, and Jung (2016) examined the role of brand hate in sports teams and found that the phenomenon of brand hate does indeed impact the team’s fan community and sponsorships. Unfortunately for the brand, only one event can be the beginning of a brand losing its consumers (Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2016). These studies showed how the same people who support a brand can also turn on it, relating to revenue loss.

Written by S. Umit Kucuk, a prominent scholar and expert in marketing psychology and consumer behavior, *Brand Hate: Navigating Consumer Negativity in the Digital World* is smart and pithy. The seven chapters are each packed with punch, including research, data, tables, figures, references, and common popular culture examples of brands that chased their consumers away. There are separate chapters that distinguish between general hate and brand hate. The other chapters deeply explore the antecedents, consequences, semiotics, legality, and management of brand hate.

The intended readers are practitioners and scholars of marketing, psychology, and consumer behavior. It is presented like a textbook, with references, research, and paragraph format, so it seems to be targeted toward the scholarly subgroup. *Brand Hate* would make an ideal textbook for a branding, marketing, or psychology course that explores dimensions of consumer behavior or presents the complex dichotomy of love and hate. It is a great text to offer the alternative perspective so students learn about marketing, branding, and consumerism. It would be a helpful resource when facilitating an academic exercise of saving a brand from a marketing disaster.

Kucuk cracks the ambiguous code of the various dimensions of brand hate. A consumer gets frustrated with a brand, which is the beginning of the slippery slope toward complete detachment down the rabbit hole that leads to the array of negative emotions and behaviors. He untangles cold and hot brand hate. Cold brand hate is when a consumer devalues, rejects, and distances himself or herself by not using it anymore. Hot brand hate is the overt anger a consumer feels toward the brand by not only terminating the consumer relationship but also exercising hate and negativity by publicly complaining about the brand. Cold brand hate is an attitude of disgust toward the brand, whereas the behavioral hot brand hate includes overt aggressive nastiness toward the brand with verbal displays of anger.

Next, he describes the antecedents and consequences of brand hate in their own chapters before the chapter on semiotics, the study of the perception of meanings of different signs and symbols. How does a person feel when he or she sees a brand symbol? If people get turned off the brand's colors, codes, or voice, it leads to the consumer divorcing himself or herself from the brand. The legal implications of brand hate are described as well in terms of ownership, level of sharing, and trademark laws. The final chapter is "Managing Brand Hate," which is how an organization can listen, engage, and negotiate to control the damage to help the rebrand after a public crisis.

## **Connections Between Brand Hate and Psychology**

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Kucuk includes separate chapters that distinguish hate from brand hate. He also points out that general hate is not only related to interpersonal relationships but also to inanimate objects, such as a brand. Hate is a construct that has been researched by prominent psychologists such as Robert Sternberg, whose model of hate is described in the first chapter on general hate. Hate is also dichotomous to love, which Sternberg (1986) also presents in his triangular theory of love. This book also teaches the behavioral process involved with a consumer's detachment process from a brand.

## **Limitations and Suggestions**

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The book claims the targeted audience is scholars and practitioners. However, due to the references and layout, it seems to be more appropriately suited for an academic audience. The book should have a more reader-friendly section for practitioners with lists and summaries that are easily applicable.

An additional suggestion would be to include an academic exercise that reflects a real-world situation and would require critical thinking and demonstrate content mastery to bridge the gap between academia and industry. This could be done on an individual or group level. Kucuk could include hands-on case studies that would require the reader to act as a marketing expert. The case study would be about a brand that was involved in a scandalous situation. The reader would act as a consultant and propose a detailed project proposal to salvage or reinvent the brand. The limitations are certainly minor when compared to this book's rich content. This is an essential book to learn and recover from brand hate situations.

## References

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