



PAPER 25

**'Wake Up and Smell the Cynicism'
Anti-Americanism and its Implications**

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1. THE RISE OF ANTI-AMERICANISM?

Recently there have been numerous indications that feelings towards America are becoming increasingly negative. International surveys have reported widespread resentment towards various aspects of America. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Survey from March 2003¹, favourable views of the US have dropped from 75% to 48% since mid-2002. Opposition towards US government policy has also increased as a result of the US led war in Iraq. A tangible sign of this occurred in February 2003, when more than a million people took to the streets of London, accompanied by a further 6 million people in 600 cities throughout the world².

Anti-American sentiment has also become more evident in many parts of the media. Whether it be tabloid or broad-sheet headlines, the words of blockbusters like 'Stupid White Men' and 'Why do people hate America?', circular e-mails, a Radiohead Album cover or even soundbites from the Dixie Chicks, the case against America has been penetrating public consciousness more than ever before.

Several leading marketing commentators have also been talking about the decline of 'Brand America'. John Quelch of the Harvard Business school³ has said that a consumer lifestyle grounded in a rejection of American capitalism, American foreign policy and 'Brand America' is emerging. This is reflected in a recent consumer survey by Roper ASW⁴ which found that only one US brand had increased its market strength in the last year, compared to nine non-American brands.

In addition to this, at an anecdotal level, at Green Light we constantly hear comments during qualitative fieldwork that could be considered anti-American. This can manifest itself in a consumer disliking a piece of advertising because the voiceover is 'too American' or dismissing a brand because it is considered 'cheesy American'.

Despite this apparent resentment, however, Britain continues to consume American cultural and economic goods and services at a phenomenal rate. Of the top 100 global brands, 62 are US-owned, eight of which are in the Top Ten⁵. Within the film and entertainment industries, again America reigns supreme. 76% of total revenue from the top ten films in each of the last seven years has come from American productions⁵, 40% of the top ten selling singles from the 90s were by US artists⁶ and 36% of terrestrial TV dramas in 2001 were American productions.⁷

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So should anti-Americanism be considered a 'real' trend that is relevant to consumers' relationships with US brands and therefore the way they are marketed? Paul Edwards, the former Chief Executive of The Henley Centre, makes the following distinction between a "real trend" that actually affects behaviour and a more superficial "media trend":

"Newspapers pick up on certain things that are interesting to people and sell papers. A journalist spots a piece of ice and supposes that there's 9/10 of the iceberg below water but sometimes it's just a piece of ice floating. Those are newspaper trends. Real trends however, have some kind of momentum and some kind of effect. They are things that people begin to believe in generally increasing numbers and critically, that belief affects their behaviour towards something."

To evaluate the extent to which anti-Americanism is a real trend that researchers, marketers and advertisers need to be aware of to aid and inform their decision-making, Green Light International decided to conduct its own study investigating the phenomenon.

2. METHODOLOGY

Green Light's study combined secondary research with both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This multi-disciplined approach gave us a wider perspective from which to draw robust and meaningful conclusions that would be relevant for all those involved in shaping a brand's development.

Phase One: Desk Research

The initial stage of the project involved extensive desk research. Starting from the outset of 2003, Green Light accumulated media and academic coverage on the subject of anti-Americanism.

At this stage, it became clear that the definition of 'anti-Americanism' is situation-dependent and therefore takes on a number of different guises. The term is used in the context of a range of issues for example anti-war, anti-pollution, anti-globalisation, anti-gun law, anti-Israel policy and so on. Similarly, in America the term might be used by a right wing neo-conservative to describe those on the left who question the legitimacy of US foreign policy. Conversely, those on the left could then use the term in reference to that right wing criticism, on the basis that it is a contravention of freedom of speech and is therefore anti-American.

In light of this ambiguity, it became important to establish a clear definition of what anti-Americanism is and what it is not in the context of this project. Green Light came up with the following:

"Anti-Americanism refers to the willingness to represent an attitude that negatively evaluates something American and which itself forms part of a more generalised criticism of the country."

This definition is consistent with the naturalistic way in which 'anti-Americanism' occurs in everyday social discourse. The focus is on the willingness to adopt an

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anti-American stance. In other words, the more anti-American someone is, the more willing they are to adopt and express anti-American sentiments.

Phase Two: Expert Interviews

Once desk research was completed, qualitative research took place with a number of Brand and Cultural Experts. This helped broaden the scope of our analysis and focus on the issues that most concern the guardians of US brands.

First, Senior Planners with experience in the marketing of US brands were interviewed. These included:

Laurence Green, Head of Planning at Fallon
Becky Barry, Planning Director at Leo Burnett
George Bryant, Head of Planning at AMV BBDO
Neil Hourston, Head of Planning at TBWA

The US brands that these Planners have been involved with include Starbucks, McDonald's, Dr Pepper, Nike, Ben & Jerry's, I Can't Believe it's not Butter, Marlboro, Apple, Nike, Timberland and United Airlines.

We also spoke to Cultural Trends' Experts, interviewing Paul Edwards (former Chief Executive of the Henley Centre), Sean Pillot De Chenecy (AKA Captain Crikey) and Jim Butler, the deputy editor of the music magazine Jockey Slut.

The interviews looked at their opinions on the significance of anti-Americanism as a trend and its relevance to US brands as well as the more general topic of the relationship between consumerism, advertising and culture.

Phase Three: Qualitative group discussions

We also conducted 4 x 2 hour group discussions with consumers in London during May 2003. We decided that we wanted to speak to consumers who shared similar opinions towards the USA.

As mentioned previously, we had heard anti-American sentiment expressed in the past and even glib comments often generated conflict. On a topic, which we anticipated would be emotive, we decided to employ attitudinal and behavioural questions to ensure a homogeneity of opinion within each group. We felt this approach would be more conducive to eliciting insightful data and avoiding disruptive arguments, which would not progress our thinking. Our extensive desk research had enabled us to identify four broad typologies of consumers, which we used as definitions for each of our group discussions. These were as follows:

The '*anti-US*' group which consisted of consumers holding negative feelings towards America overall, negative perceptions of certain US brands and a declared willingness to boycott them

Consumers in the '*pro-US*' group held positive feelings towards America overall, positive perceptions of certain US brands and an unwillingness to boycott them

'*Indifferent*' consumers described their feelings towards the USA, US brands and boycotting as 'indifferent'

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The fourth group were 'Contradictory'. This consisted of people who expressed negative feelings towards the USA and US brands yet actively consumed them

Phase Four: Quantitative Survey

The final phase of our project involved a survey of around 600 people around the UK in June 2003. Analysis of data from the qualitative phase had led to the emergence of a number of themes that we wanted to explore quantitatively and assess whether anti-American sentiment was associated with any particular behaviours or attitudes.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Overall

What we discovered was that a minority of consumers consumes in what one might call a political way and that their anti-American feelings will often affect their consumption patterns, resulting in the reduced purchase of certain US brands. However, the vast majority of consumers remains apolitical. Although many may harbour resentment of the US, this will not translate into reduced consumption of American brands.

Despite this tendency to consumer apolitically, there are two key themes that underpin a great deal of Anti-American sentiment. The first is a trend towards cynicism that is not only directed towards certain aspects of America but also towards the UK government, the media as well as brands and marketing in general. The second theme is the tendency to resent US hegemony in its numerous forms. Both these issues have implications for the way in which US brands are marketed.

Political Consumption

Some consumers do hold the USA in such disregard that it can affect the way they perceive and consume US brands. What we found was that their negativity often arises out of a dislike of globalisation, which they feel US brands are the main, if not only, beneficiaries of. The brands that are most likely to be targeted are those that could be described as iconic US brands that the media have exposed as operating using anti-social business practices. Some political consumers we spoke to explained that they will simply stop consuming a particular brand immediately if they have read an article in a newspaper or surfed a website that has given them good reason to avoid it. More worrying though are the consumers who, due to an accumulation of data about US brands, will start to grow wary of them per se.

"I don't think I've made a conscious decision about it, but I have not bought as many American products over the last few years. It's just when you read about issues like the Nike thing...I'm not saying I've stopped completely but I think it has had a sort of drip drip effect." (Anti)

What could make this situation more difficult for US brands is if political consumers are in a strong position to influence the purchase decisions of other

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consumers. Although anti-American consumers have often been dismissed as a fringe group in the past, the widespread demonstrations up and down the UK against the war in Iraq in 2003 have normalised anti-American sentiment to some extent. Anti-American sentiment is not the preserve of left-wing political groups but a broad church including celebrities. If opinion formers, such as these, start to avoid US brands, such as Nike because it is no longer 'cool', it could leak through to the mainstream without their avoidance necessarily being an active political decision.

The opinion formers are also relevant in a more explicit way, by encouraging politically motivated consumption as an expression of anti-Americanism. The trends expert Sean Pillot De Chenecey (AKA Captain Crikey) made the following point:

"There is the notion that 5% of culture leads the rest of it. Now if the opinion formers are harbouring anti-American sentiment and therefore avoiding the likes of Nike, that can have a drip on effect. So further down the line, although style and cost might still be the highest ranking factors behind a purchase decision, ethical and political considerations could become more relevant."

However, it should be stressed that such an active avoidance of US brands, we found, is limited to a minority within the anti-American group only. The majority of consumers are likely to remain passive and apolitical, irrespective of their feelings towards America.

Apolitical Consumption

A key factor driving apolitical consumerism is the fact that many consumers often say one thing but do another. Although they can resent the USA and US brands at an attitudinal level, they will still ignore this when actually making purchase decisions. We have called this the *Contradictory Consumer*.

This inconsistency between the attitudes that people harbour in different contexts can be understood from the perspective of recent attitude theory in the discourse analysis field of social psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1999⁸):

"From a discourse analytic perspective, if a certain attitude is expressed on one occasion, it should not necessarily lead us to expect that the same attitude be expressed on another."

So people can be contradictory. Although they might condemn a US brand because of their anti-American sentiment on one occasion, they can still be willing to consume it on another. This manifests itself in consumers who in group discussions will claim that they do not like a US chain, such as Starbucks or McDonald's, yet will continue to enter their stores and buy their food and drink.

"It's like with Starbucks, they take away the intimacy of the local café experience and they are this massive chain. But then again the coffee is great and the service is professional. I really like the muffins too." (Indifferent)

There are a number of reasons that make this apolitical tendency all the more likely.

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First of all *consumption is often functionally driven*. A consumer will buy a drink because he is thirsty. Political and ethical considerations can be easily suppressed to make way for more pragmatic ones. If there is only one shop nearby and it only sells drinks manufactured by The Coca Cola Company, then a thirsty yet self-defined anti-American consumer will continue to buy what is on offer.

Second, with so many American brands on the market, and so many non-American brands that nevertheless have some kind of link with the USA, however tenuous, consumers feel that it would be difficult, if not *impossible to avoid American goods and services* entirely and it is therefore regarded by most as a futile exercise. The sandwich chain, Pret a Manger, is mentioned as a company that, despite a seemingly quintessential British image, is now partly owned by a US company (McDonald's).

Consumers are also likely to behave apolitically because anti-American issues are often *not sufficiently relevant to them personally* for it to influence their purchasing behaviour. If the impact of American foreign policy, for example, is not seen to interrupt consumers' day-to-day lives, consumers do not feel the need to adopt an anti-American stance.

Using this example, we would hypothesise that this explains why mainstream boycotting of US brands has been for the most part restricted to the Middle East. Our desk research suggested the intensity of anti-Americanism is much greater here than in the UK as the impact of American policy is felt much more directly. Zamzam Cola, for example, has made inroads into Middle Eastern markets such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, eating away at Coca Cola's market share year after year⁹. In Europe, on the other hand, it has struggled to get noticed.

Apoliticism becomes even more likely since *consumers can still identify with US brands*, in spite of their anti-American feelings. This is largely due to the way that they are marketed to consumers in the UK. A brand can still come from the USA without necessarily representing any of the negative aspects of America. Several of our Experts commented that consumers can still identify with an American brand's values because its American-ness is but one facet of its personality that can be superseded by other values that it communicates about itself:

"You don't see America when you see the trainer (Nike), you see the lifestyle and the fashion". (Contradictory)

US brands are also unlikely to become targets of anti-American sentiment if consumers are able to discern that *America is not a monolith*. They can make a distinction between what they see as the positive and negative sides of the USA. This distinction also applies to the way people consume other US cultural products including music. Anti-American sentiment does not automatically result in a resentment of US artists. Jim Butler the deputy editor of the music magazine Jockey Slut says:

"People are not stupid. They can make a distinction between the good and the bad sides of America. American cultural imperialism and imposing the American dream on others is not part of bands like Nirvana and REM. They have rallied against it and have got millions of fans around the world."

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This willingness to separate the 'good' side of America from the 'bad' is backed up by the findings from the quantitative phase of the research. There is a similar likelihood that those who could be defined as anti-US will have similarly positive feelings towards Coca-Cola (45%) as those considered pro-US (52%). Just because someone is anti-American does not mean they automatically condemn all aspects of America.

However, having said this, just because consumers tend to be apolitical does not mean that anti-Americanism is a trend that US brands should ignore. A closer analysis of the issues that we uncovered reveals why. Two threats to American brands appear in the guise of an increased cynicism amongst consumers as well as a resentment of what is perceived to be a domineering USA.

The cynical consumer

What came across when we were speaking to consumers was that cynicism is rising all the time. Consumers, regardless of age, are accessing a wide range of media; they have a plethora of newspapers to choose from, can flick through hundreds of channels on their television sets and access mainstream as well as more subversive websites as and when they choose. What this means is that consumers are scrutinising major institutions more than ever. The actions of the government, the established media, brands and marketing are being questioned, and their integrity often found to be lacking.

Conducting the group discussions shortly after the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, we found there to be little trust in either the government or media and their justifications for war. Although this sentiment was expressed across all groups, perhaps unsurprisingly it was expressed most strongly in the anti-US group.

The willingness of certain sections of the media to expose government and corporate dishonesty has also led to consumers being more likely to question their agendas and trustworthiness. The success of books like 'Stupid White Men', 'No Logo' and 'Fast Food Nation' has contributed to this tendency to be cynical and untrusting. With the rise of the internet, access to and propagation of this type of information has escalated. This cynicism and the tendency to question any 'big' agenda seems to empower people. It makes them feel less like ignorant and manipulated victims and more like aware and autonomous individuals.

This cynicism is something that brands have started to acknowledge. Neil Hourston, the Head of Planning at TBWA says:

"Companies are becoming more and more aware of the fact that a lie, or an untruth of some description, will be found out. And, increasingly, will think twice about saying something that is not entirely true."

So how does this cynicism affect consumers and how they behave? We have coined the term the *Empowered Cynic* – someone who feels empowered through knowledge and cynicism. The *Empowered Cynic* feels more like a master of consumerism than a victim of it. In today's consumer society, people are willing to pay a premium for a particular brand that provides them with a degree of reassurance and confidence.

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It is therefore important that consumers do not feel like victims in any relationship with a brand, as if they have somehow been manipulated by marketing and advertising. They are aware that a brand's ultimate agenda is to make money and know that they can always choose a competitor's product or exercise their legal rights as consumers. This is a shift acknowledged by one respondent, who said:

"People are more sophisticated nowadays. You know that if you get messed around by a brand, you can just go to a competitor or kick up a fuss." (Pro)

We discovered that brands that acknowledge the *Empowered Cynic* by treating consumers like autonomous and discerning individuals whose attention they need to earn, as opposed to passive, naive and malleable target markets, are more likely to be identified with and therefore consumed. Honest advertising that engages people creatively in aesthetic or comical ways is more likely to succeed than more patronising approaches that seem to work on the assumption that a product shot, smiling model and snappy end-line are enough to convince people to part with their money.

By appealing to individuals through more creative marketing, brands are implicitly acknowledging that the power lies with the consumer because they are actually making the effort to understand and please them and they are communicating this through the way they advertise.

Consumers mentioned a number of different executions that crystallised this idea. One example is a recent execution for Budweiser (Wedding Day):

"You don't feel like they are selling to you, it's just less in your face. They're not knocking on your door telling you to buy the product, you are given the choice to decide for yourself...you don't want to be told what to do and what to have." (Pro)

Cynicism and anti-American sentiment

So how does this cynicism tie in with anti-American sentiment? What we found was that when consumers are wearing their 'cynical hat', they are more likely to question the integrity of various aspects of America. For example, this can apply to people's perceptions of President Bush, his administration and at a business level, large US corporations, many of whom are seen by consumers to be in league with the government in any case.

At a cultural level, cynicism towards the US means values and aspirations that are considered distinctly American, such as 'The American Dream' can also be judged as lacking integrity:

"'The American Dream' can only carry on being a dream if it is achieved by someone. The truth is that most of them will not live it, instead they'll end up on Jerry Springer." (Contradictory)

This cynicism can also be leveled at US brands. When a strong anti-American sentiment is present, consumers are more likely to perceive US brands as lacking integrity. The following quote from the anti-US group illustrates this point. Consumers were asked to map a number of different US brands into clusters and describe each cluster in detail, giving each one a nickname that sums up in a nutshell what the cluster stands for. In the anti-US group discussion, consumers

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were unwilling to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' US brands. Instead they preferred to delineate brands more cynically according to whether they were merely 'bad' or 'even worse'.

"There is a bastard pile, the satellites of the bastard pile and the mini-bastards pile," (Anti)

The results from the quantitative phase of the research back up the notion that anti-Americanism is underpinned by cynicism. People who describe themselves as being anti-American are more likely to question the integrity of the UK government (figure 1) and media (figure 2) than those who we define as pro-Americans. Figure 1, shows how only 11% of the people who describe their feelings towards America as being overall anti-American said they trust the UK government to do what is right most of the time. This can be compared with the 37% of people describing themselves as being "pro-American" who said they trust the UK government to do what is right most of the time.

Figure 2, reinforces this hypothesis further. Anti-Americans show a greater degree of scepticism towards the media (62%) versus pro-Americans (46%). This would suggest anti-American sentiment and cynicism are correlated to some extent.

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Figure 1

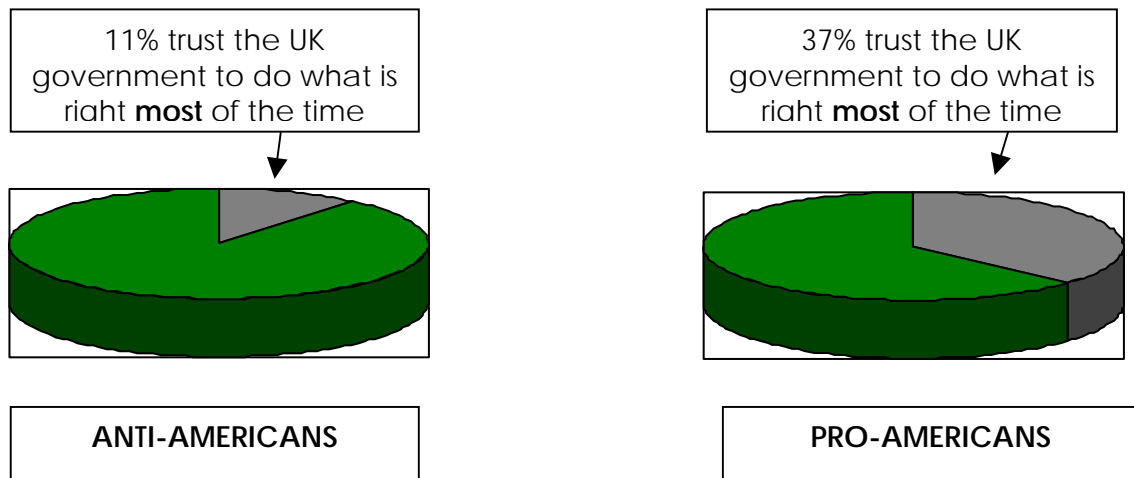
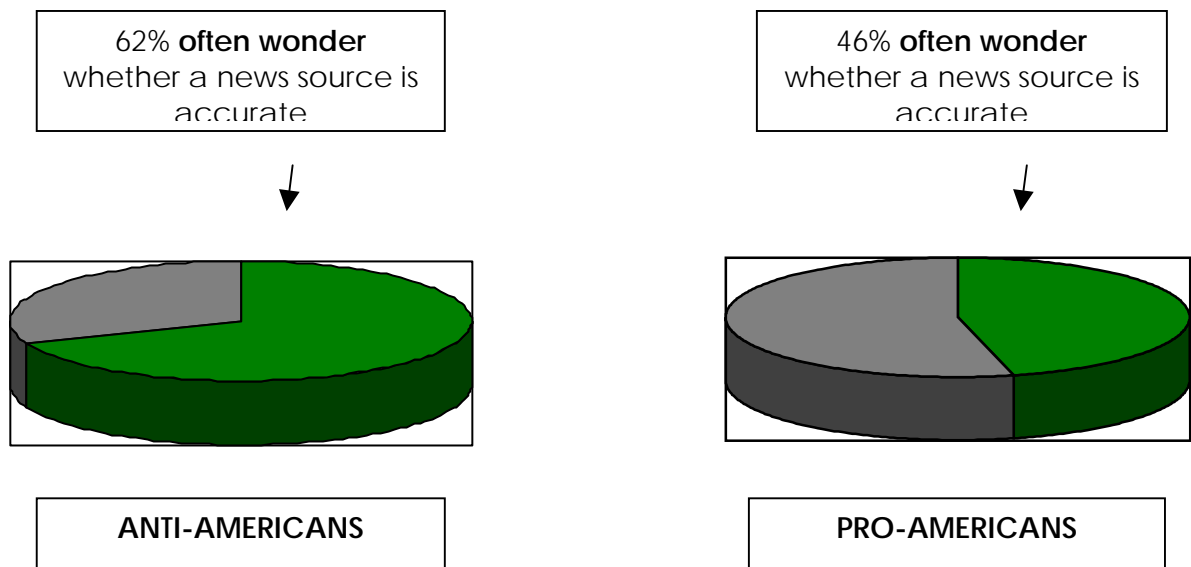


Figure 2



How can brands minimise cynicism?

In the face of such cynicism, brands have the opportunity to differentiate themselves positively by communicating 'brand integrity'. But what is 'brand integrity'? The concept can work at various levels.

Achieving 'brand integrity' requires a brand to function with a consistency between what it claims to be about through its marketing and how it is actually experienced by consumers. From this perspective, advertising that acknowledges how consumers really see a category or a brand – Skoda, United Airlines, John Smiths and Super Noodles to give some examples – is implicitly acknowledging the discernment of the 'empowered cynic'. This is more likely to gain these consumers' trust and appreciation than advertising that merely projects an ideal of how it wants consumers to see the brand, which for the cynical consumer usually lacks credibility. Similarly, 'brand integrity' requires a degree of consistency within a company, so that a synchrony between marketing and experience can be achieved. Neil Hourston (Head of Planning, TBWA) explains:

“Brand integrity’ is about living a promise. Making sure your values are true to the company as a whole.”

If 'brand integrity' is about achieving consistency between what a brand communicates and how it is experienced, then brands that have been positioned as being pro-social or family friendly, for example, need to ensure that this is true at all levels of the company, through ethical and responsible business practices. We would suggest that US brands may need to work particularly hard to communicate 'brand integrity' because they may be subject to higher levels of scrutiny and scepticism than non-US brands. An example of this is a McDonald's 2003 print campaign, which talked about the high quality of McDonald's' products and attracted one or two responses from consumers who found its messages dubious. We wonder if a similarly-sized company would have had to defend itself so fiercely if it was of French or Italian origin, for example.

US hegemony

Another significant theme that underpins anti-American sentiment is a resentment of US supremacy. The USA can now claim to be the world's only superpower or indeed hyperpower. The majority of the world's most powerful companies are US-owned. Of the top 100 companies in terms of market capitalisation, 55% are American compared to 10% that are UK owned, 7% French, 6% Japanese and 5% German.¹¹ American companies are also the most valuable in 25 of the 33 different sectors that make up the top 100 companies. This supremacy also applies at a military level. In 2002, the US spent six times as much on defence than its closest rival Russia (\$388.1 bn vs \$65 bn)¹². The ubiquity of US products such as music, films and TV programmes, means that their supremacy is also highly visible at a cultural level. This is unsurprising in light of the fact that in 1999, 83% of the \$97.86 bn made by the five largest media companies in the world was made by US owned companies.¹³

Across all group discussions a degree of resentment towards this US supremacy can be detected, although this could in part be attributed to a strain of envy related to British nostalgia at having once been the world's leading power:

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"We only knock the States because it's the world superpower. If someone else was, we'd be knocking them." (Anti)

However, the likelihood that US supremacy is resented increases when America is seen to be imposing itself without due respect for the local areas that its policies affect. Most top-of-mind with consumers we spoke to was of course the Iraq War. However, consumers are well-versed in other non-military issues and mention was made of the US's refusal to accept the Kyoto Protocol on pollution restraints, as well as anti-competitive trade arrangements with the third world.

At a business level, the undoubted success and ubiquity of many US brands can grate with consumers when they feel that their choice and autonomy is being compromised:

This resentment towards certain US brands, is all the more likely when they are seen to be imposing themselves without due sensitivity to the local markets in which they operate. In consumers' minds certain companies are considered more insensitive than others. Starbucks is mentioned most often in this respect. Consumers recite what they believe to be the company's business strategy – to enter an area, price out competitors until the close down. Even though this has never been an explicit aim of Starbucks, it is what is etched on consumers' minds:

"You are losing your independence of choice. When you buy a coffee you can either walk an extra mile to the one that is not Starbucks or you can just go to Starbucks." (Anti)

Similarly, this can apply at an advertising level. Some US brands can be seen to be imposing American values and ideals through their advertising, riding roughshod over individual discernment.

An analysis of the eight hours of group discussions that took place shows that the phrase "in your face" was used 27 times in the context of describing 'typical' US advertising. There was a sense among respondents that the 'hard sell', 'cheesy' US ads are insulting in the transparency of their intention to persuade consumers to buy a product through simplistic projections of 'typical' US ideals and values. It seems that the *Empowered Cynic* would rather be treated as discerning, Therefore creative advertising that successfully appeals to individual discernment is much more likely to be well received and engender positive relationships with that brand.

"If I see an ad that I enjoy, it's like a short film. It's entertaining so you end up concentrating on it more and maybe talking about it. I suppose I end up thinking that it must be from a company I quite like. It's not insulting like those run of the mill, 'in your face' ads that you just switch off to." (Contradictory)

Can US brands engage with the UK public?

This tendency to resent US supremacy highlights the need for US brands to be marketed with sensitivity to the local market in which they are operating. In so doing they are more likely to foster a positive relationship with consumers. Becky Barry, the Planning Director on the McDonald's account at Leo Burnett says the following:

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“Some US Brands can be like bad tourists. They come over here without understanding the language. They’ve got bad dubbing, bad ads, bad packaging and don’t feel as though they fit. McDonald’s did a lot to become part of Britain. Through its advertising it carefully tried to understand British culture and become part of the community. The Nineties were the most successful decade in part as a result of that. McDonald’s went from being a tourist to a citizen.”

Consumers do indeed appreciate the efforts that McDonald’s has made and recognise that its advertising moves the brand away from the USA towards a more British sensibility, for example reflecting peculiarly British lifestyles and acknowledging the British love of Asian food.

“It’s like that McDonald’s ad [Clever Daddy]. They have taken the time out to actually think we’re in England now, so we have to do something different to attract them in”. (Pro)

So we would suggest that when US brands are seen to respect the local market through their advertising and business operations, they are more likely to be welcomed and less likely to be resented or seen as imposing.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, although the fate of anti-Americanism is in many ways in the hands of those behind US foreign policy, its relevance to US brands is largely in the hands of those marketing them.

There are ways in which anti-American sentiment can influence consumers’ perceptions of certain US brands. Those that harbour anti-American sentiment with sufficient intensity can resent certain US brands. This is more likely for those that buy into anti-globalisation. Ironically, even though the supremacy of certain US brands may be resented, there is also an awareness that their success has ultimately been self inflicted.

However, for the most part, the majority of consumers are likely to remain apolitical. This is for several reasons. First, although people may harbour anti-American attitudes and condemn US brands as a result, these attitudes do not necessarily determine their consumption decisions. This is largely because of the *Contradictory Consumer* who is willing to condemn something in one situation and then consume it in another. Furthermore, consumption is often functionally driven and so political considerations tend to be subdued by more immediate needs. Apolitical consumption becomes even more likely because boycotting is often seen as futile. US brands are so ubiquitous that an absolute avoidance of them is near impossible. The way that some US brands have been marketed means that they have come to represent more than just America and so they are not necessarily considered valid targets. In addition to this, America is not a monolith and people can make a distinction between what they consider to be the good and bad sides. This means that anti-American sentiment does not necessarily result in a resentment of US cultural and economic products by default.

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Just because consumption is likely to remain apolitical however does not mean that US brands can ignore anti-American sentiment. First, much anti-Americanism is underpinned by cynicism and a tendency to question the integrity of various facets of America, including US brands. This highlights the importance of communicating 'brand integrity', achieved through consistency between how a brand is marketed and how it is experienced. This cynicism can be empowering as it makes people feel more like informed, autonomous agents within society rather than naïve, passive and manipulated. Brands that acknowledge the *Empowered Cynic* through creative marketing, are implicitly acknowledging that the power lies with the consumer and are more likely to be identified with and therefore consumed. Secondly, because of the tendency to resent US supremacy, it is beneficial to be seen as operating with sensitivity to the local market that the brand operates in. By acknowledging all of this, any negative impact of anti-Americanism can be minimised.

The future of anti-American sentiment is largely in the hands of US foreign policy. If America were to engage in another controversial war, then both the intensity and incidence of anti-American sentiment could increase. If people become more resentful of American supremacy, then the demand for information that condemns the US would rise. In this scenario, the media would then become more likely to provide such information and anti-American sentiment could escalate. If at the same time boycotting were seen to be a meaningful expression of anti-American sentiment, then certain US brands could suffer. This would be even more likely if the opinion formers adopted and encouraged such political purchasing.

However, for the moment, as long as a can of Coke is fizzy and costs around 55p, most consumers are unlikely to take out their resentment of America on American brands - but for how long?

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