

Community Blame Behavior and Product Evaluation When a Product Harm Crisis Occurs

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the process of product-harm crisis incidents that occurred in Indonesia around March 2018, which is about the behavior of the community blame on canned sardines. There are several variables observed, indicating that blame is a negative evaluation of the community, and this is due to the sentiment toward China as the country-of-origin of the brand and the brand's negative image. In this study, observations of the product evaluation process were carried out in the high-forgiveness and low-forgiveness groups. This is done to find out whether forgiveness given by someone can significantly influence the product evaluation results. In this study, the factors observed in the product evaluation process are the sentiment of the country-of-origin and the negative image. Both factors are mediated by blame behavior to obtain the product evaluation results. An online survey was conducted on 255 people in the Surakarta-Indonesian community. Then, the data was analyzed with a multi-group of Structural Equation Modeling with the IBM SPSS AMOS 26 program. The study results indicate that negative evaluation and blame behavior are significantly related to country-of-origin sentiment and negative brand image. Furthermore, it was found that forgiveness is a variable that can moderate the process of forming negative evaluation and blame behavior. In addition, this study explains the implications associated with theoretical and practical interests and the possibilities for further research.

Keywords: Product evaluation, Blame behavior, Country-of-origin, Sentiment, Negative image, Forgiveness, Product-harm crisis.

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سلوك اللوم من المجتمع وتأثيره على تسويق المنتجات عند حدوث أزمة ضرر بالمنتج

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ملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى فحص عملية أزمة ضرر المنتج التي حدثت في إندونيسيا في مارس 2018 تقريباً، والتي تتعلق بسلوك المجتمع اللوم على السردين المعلن. هناك العديد من المتغيرات التي لوحظت أن اللوم هو تقييم سلبي للمجتمع، ويرجع ذلك إلى الشعور تجاه الصين كدولة منشأ العلامة التجارية والصور السلبية للعلامة التجارية. في هذه الدراسة، تم إجراء ملاحظات عملية تقييم المنتج في مجموعات عالية التسامح ومنخفضة التسامح. يتم إجراء ذلك لمعرفة ما إذا كان التسامح الذي قدمه شخص ما يمكن أن يؤثر بشكل كبير على نتائج تقييم المنتج. في هذه الدراسة، العوامل التي لوحظت في عملية تقييم المنتج هي شعور بلد المنشأ والصورة السلبية. يتم التوسط في كلا العاملين من خلال سلوك اللوم للحصول على نتائج تقييم المنتج. تم إجراء استطلاع عبر الإنترنت على 255 شخصاً في مجتمع سوراكارتا الإندونيسي. ثم تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام مجموعة متعددة من نمذجة المعادلات الهيكلية باستخدام برنامج IBM SPSS AMOS 26. تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن التقييم السلبي وسلوك اللوم يرتبطان بشكل كبير بمشاعر البلد الأصلي والصورة السلبية للعلامة التجارية. علاوة على ذلك، وجد أيضاً أن التسامح هو متغير يمكنه تعديل عملية تكوين التقييمات السلبية وسلوك اللوم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تشرح هذه الدراسة الآثار المرتبطة بالاهتمامات النظرية والعملية وإمكانيات إجراء مزيد من البحث.

الكلمات الدالة: تقييم المنتج، سلوك اللوم، بلد المنشأ، المشاعر، الصورة السلبية، التسامح، أزمة ضرر المنتج.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Anisakis, a species of worm, was detected in canned sardines in March 2018, potentially causing allergies and digestive disorders upon consumption (Polimeno et al., 2010). This event received significant coverage in the media, prompting the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM) to mandate the removal and disposal of 22 million sardine packages from importers and manufacturers (Bashori, 2018). BPOM's assessment showed that the worms were present in sardines from 16 imported brands and 11 domestic brands. China is the source of 65% of all mackerel products, as reported by Purnamasari (2018). This significant proportion has led Indonesian media outlets to highlight mackerel products imported from China that have been found to contain worms.

In previous studies, the occurrence of flawed or hazardous products being exposed in public spaces has been described as a product-harm crisis (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1984; Siomkos & Kurtz, 1994). Product failures and adverse publicity lead to consumers developing negative relationships, resulting in reduced trust, loyalty, satisfaction, and loss of customers and potential buyers (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019; Ran et al., 2016; Xie & Peng, 2009).

Consistent with these results, the Indonesian Fish Canning Association's Chairperson (2018) stated that the sale of canned fish in Indonesia plummeted by 90% between March and December 2018 (Manalu, 2018). Based on consumer behavioral science, the drop in sales can be attributed to shifts in consumer purchasing behavior, which can be influenced by changes in overall product evaluation outcomes (Amin et al., 2020; Assael, 2001). In other words, to enhance sale figures following a product-harm crisis, the company must first improve the outcomes of the negative evaluation. Earlier studies have endeavored to establish a connection between forgiveness and enhanced consumer relationships as a means of reducing the adverse impacts of harmful incidents and publicity (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019; Ran et al., 2016; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011; Xie & Peng,

2009; Zourrig et al., 2009). These studies suggested that following a product-harm crisis, negative publicity targeted at the company can gradually recover. Even the detrimental relationship between consumers and brands/products can be restored to pre-crisis levels (McCullough et al., 1998). Consumer forgiveness is the typical determinant of the relationship (Zourrig et al., 2009). Moreover, Fetscherin and Sampedro (2019) observed that the degree of forgiveness has an adverse influence on the number of complaints directed by individuals and the public toward the company. Hence, forgiveness is considered a moderating variable in this study.

This study aims to explore the reasons behind the drop in canned-fish sales following a product-harm crisis, based on the available evidence and to address the gap in the existing literature. The study is particularly noteworthy because of the prevalence of sinophobic sentiments, which are thought to impact consumer evaluations. Furthermore, this research endeavors to include forgiveness as a moderator in the current model framework to alleviate the consequences of product-harm crises. By constructing an alternate model, this study aims to illuminate the phenomenon and reduce the negative impacts of product-harm crises.

2. Literature Review

Prior studies have been conducted to examine the connection between purchase intentions and evaluations during a product-harm crisis. Klein and Dawar (2004), for instance, investigated instances of oil products that caused engine damage in Texas, USA. The findings indicated that, during a product-harm crisis, consumers tend to attribute responsibility to behaviors that negatively impact evaluation outcomes. The study also suggested that corporate social responsibility could act as a moderating factor, weakening the impact of product-harm crises on

negative product evaluations.

Additionally, Barbarossa et al. (2018) conducted a study on product-harm crisis incidents by integrating the country-of-origin stereotype dimensions into their research model. They examined cases of counterfeit chocolate from Canada and air freshener candles with harmful contents from America as their research subjects. The results of this study suggested that country-of-origin dimensions can be attributed to blame behavior in product-harm crises. Additionally, the study explored the moderating effects of ethnocentrism, animosity, product involvement, and product type within the model framework.

The study of product-harm crises has become increasingly important. Fetscherin and Sampedro (2019) examined the role of forgiveness in reducing the negative impact of such crises, focusing on individuals who had negative feelings toward a particular brand as their respondents. The study revealed that a higher level of forgiveness can result in a decrease in complaints and brand retaliation, while increasing the likelihood of consumers purchasing products from the affected brand.

In the past decade, research on product-harm crises has been divided into two main areas: (1) identifying the determinants that influence attitudes towards companies or products (Barbarossa et al., 2018; Rea et al., 2014; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011); and (2) identifying the factors that can mitigate the negative effects of such incidents on company or product evaluations (Barbarossa et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2009; Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019; Tsarenko & Tojib, 2011). The current study explores the second part by applying the variables of country-of-origin sentiment, negative image, blame behavior, negative evaluation, and forgiveness as moderating variables. In the case of Indonesia itself, research on product-harm crises has been discussed from the viewpoint of health science (Agustina, 2014; Paratmanitya & Aprilia, 2016). The study of consumer behavior is expected to be a complement to health research through variables arranged into alternative research models.

Previous research stated that consumer evaluations of

product-harm crisis incidents are based in part on blame behavior (Folkes, 1984), the size of which is the extent to which consumers assess the level of negligence and corporate responsibility actions for these incidents (Weiner, 1985). Similarly, another study has suggested that consumer attitudes towards a company's products can be influenced by their attributions of the causes of incidents during a severe corporate disaster. Barbarossa et al. (2018) explored the stereotypes associated with the country-of-origin of the company and how they can shape consumers' beliefs during product-harm crises (Barbarossa et al., 2018; Chattalas et al., 2008). Previous studies found that the dimensions of warmth and competence of the Country-of-origin are positive and have a positive effect on evaluation, and a negative effect on blame behavior (Barbarossa et al., 2018).

Indonesia shows a unique phenomenon concerning its relationship with China, as some Indonesian individuals hold a negative sentiment toward the State of China (Tan, 2008). The negative sentiment toward China is commonly referred to as sinophobia (Dictionary of the English Language, 2018). In this study, the sentiment variable for the country-of-origin is applied as a belief derived from the stereotypical concept of the country of origin introduced by Chattalas et al. (2008). Similarly, prior research indicated that when consumers encounter brand names linked to negative images, they tend to make negative inferences about products that bear those brand names (Lee & Ganesh, 1998; Weiner, 1980, 1985).

The image of a brand can influence consumer perceptions (Mirzaee et al., 2013; Tarabieh, 2022), and in the context of product-harm crises, consumers often attribute negative events to the companies responsible (Lee & Ganesh, 1998). The long-term impact of an image can affect a brand's position and the company's competitiveness in the eyes of consumers (Al-Nsour, 2022; Park et al., 1986). Additionally, a negative image

can lead to blame behavior among consumers during product-harm crises. Previous studies suggested that consumers may engage in blame behavior in response to product errors and harmful effects (Klein & Dawar, 2004). The appearance of attributions regarding an incident is related to the image's role or effect on the event (Mirzaee et al., 2013). As such, this study employs the image variable to represent consumer beliefs during product-harm crises.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Sentiments of the Country-of-Origin

Since Schooler (1965) first discovered the "home country" effect, the concept has undergone continued development and debate. Initially, the "home country" concept did not refer to a specific context. It was used to compare perceptions between local and foreign products until Nagashima (1970; 1977) examined the effects of "made in" labeling on product image in consumer perception. Furthermore, Thakor and Kohli (1996) introduced the concept of a different country-of-origin effect; namely, brand origin. This concept explains that consumers have a perception of where a product originates (Hermawan & Haryanto, 2022).

The study of the country-of-origin is advancing, with increasing research interest. Askegaard and Ger (1998) discovered that cultural factors and relationships between countries can cause variations in the way in which the country-of-origin is perceived within the consumer country domain. The concept is known as contextualized product-place image. Furthermore, Fiske et al. (2002) conducted a more specific study of the country-of-origin by introducing the concept of the dimensions of warmth and competence of the country of origin. country-of-origin warmth refers to consumers' cognitive judgments about hospitality, harmony, and trustworthiness of a country, while country-of-origin competence refers to consumers' cognitive assessments of the capabilities, efficiency, and effectiveness of a country.

The country-of-origin effect has been applied to various contexts and used to explain different phenomena. For

example, Schooler and Sanoo (1969) used this effect to compare consumers' perceptions of a product, while Han and Terpstra (1988) linked it to the product's perception and analyzed consumer product evaluations. Research on the country-of-origin is particularly intriguing when discussing Chu et al.'s (2010) examination of the effect of country-of-origin on product evaluation during product-harm crises.

Research concluded that the country-of-origin can have a significant impact on product evaluation, particularly during product-harm crises. Research on the country-of-origin in relation to product-harm crises is expanding. Laufer et al. (2009) conducted an experimental study using the term "country-of-manufacture" to determine the attributes of blame. The study found that a country with a negative image is more likely to be blamed for product harm. Again, Barbarossa et al. (2018) applied the concept of warmth and competence dimensions of the country-of-origin to product-harm crises. The study found that positive perceptions of a home country's competence and warmth have a positive impact on consumer attitudes. However, the study also found that a positive perception of a home country's warmth can have a negative effect on attributions of blame. This suggests that the stronger the positive sentiment toward a product's Country-of-origin, the stronger the blaming behavior that may arise. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: There is a positive relationship between home country sentiments and blame behavior.

3.2 Product Negative Image

Consumer-behavior research on images has undergone a lengthy development process (Haryanto et al., 2022). Although earlier studies have revealed certain variations, researchers generally hold a common view regarding the definition of an image.

Lau and Phau (2007) defined an image as a symbol

of experience associated with an object that is stored in human associative memory. Consistent with this view, Song et al. (2019) stated that brand image is the perception of a brand formed through consumers' associations with the brand that exist in their memories. In the context of product-harm crises, consumers attribute responsibility to companies for negative events that occur in the public domain (Weiner, 1980).

Past studies suggested that consumers tend to form negative attitudes toward products associated with brand names that have negative images (Lee & Ganesh, 1998). In addition, previous research has shown that higher positive image can lead to higher satisfaction and trust in consumers (Song et al., 2019). Another study found that a positive image positively affects satisfaction, trust, and brand loyalty, whereas a negative image can lead to brand switching (Mirzaee et al., 2013). However, in the context of product-harm crises, negative images can lead to consumer blame attribution due to product errors and harmful effects (Klein & Dawar, 2004). In addition, a different study discovered that when positive beliefs are linked to an object, consumers tend to form lower blaming behavior (Barbarossa et al., 2018). As a result, it can be inferred that a higher negative image of a product would lead to a higher blaming behavior. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: There is a positive relationship between the negative image of the product and the blaming behavior.

3.3 Blame Behavior and Negative Evaluation of the Product

Weiner's attribution model (1980) outlines three dimensions of causation from attribution that contribute to evaluating the responsibility of an object: (1) the locus of causality, which can be internal or external; (2) behavior stability; and (3) the controllability of behavior, which can be either within or outside the subject's control. When the causality is internal, the behavior is stable and controllable. The subject is often held responsible by the observer, while

external triggers, temporary behavior, and lack of control lead to attributions directed towards external factors (Folkes, 1984). Investigating the case is essential to identify the locus of the trigger, level of stability, and factual control ability of an incident. However, individuals' perceptions and related knowledge play a crucial role in shaping their understanding of the situation (Malle, 2011).

According to earlier studies, when it comes to evaluating product-harm crisis incidents, consumer judgments are partly based on the degree of blame behavior (Folkes, 1984), which measures how consumers evaluate the level of carelessness and corporate responsibility for such incidents (Weiner, 1985). Similarly, another study proposed that in the case of a major corporate disaster, consumer attitudes towards a company's overall products may be altered by their attributions of the causes of the incident (Jorgensen, 1994). Klein and Dawar (2004) conducted a study focusing on product-harm crises that occurred in American oil companies, in which they used blame behavior as a mediator between product-harm crises and brand evaluation. The study found that as blaming behavior increases, positive evaluation results decrease. Barbarossa et al. (2018) similarly examined cases of counterfeit chocolate raw materials in Europe and found that higher levels of blame behavior led to lower positive evaluations. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H3: There is a positive relationship between blame behavior and negative evaluation of the product.

3.4 Forgiveness

Previous research suggested that negative publicity directed towards a company after a product-harm crisis can gradually recover, and the destructive relationship between consumers and brands/products may return to its pre-crisis level (McCullough et al., 1998). The

recovery of a normal relationship can be attributed to consumers' forgiveness (Zourrig et al., 2009). Previous research has investigated the impact of forgiveness on consumer confidence following damage to the relationship between companies and consumers, through experimental studies.

It was concluded that there is a positive relationship between forgiveness and trust, indicating that the higher the level of forgiveness, the higher the level of trust. This provides evidence that forgiveness can enhance trust even when consumers have expressed blame behavior towards the company (Xie & Peng, 2009). Moreover, past evidence showed that forgiveness associated with brands deemed violating consumers. The results further stressed that brand forgiveness can reduce switching, private complaining, public complaining, and brand revenge (Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). This indicates that higher levels of Forgiveness can weaken the relationship between country-of-origin sentiment, negative image, blaming behavior, and negative product evaluation. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Higher forgiveness weakens the relationship between home country sentiments and blame behavior.

H5: Higher forgiveness weakens the relationship between the negative image of the product and the blaming behavior.

H6: Higher forgiveness weakens the relationship between blame behavior and negative evaluation of the product.

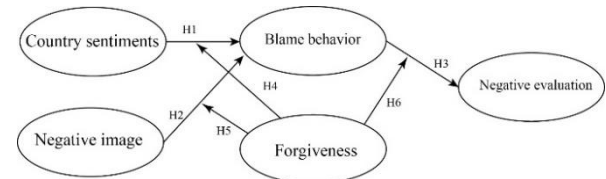


Figure (1)
Conceptual framework

4. Research Method

4.1 Population and Sample

The current study focuses on the Surakarta community in Indonesia, which has shown negativity towards canned sardines. This area is crucial to study due to Surakarta's potential as a market for sardines and its significant contribution to the decline in sardine sales across Indonesia. Statistical data showed that from the start of the product-harm crisis in 2018 until early 2019, sardine sales in Indonesia decreased by over 50% (Manalu, 2018). Data was collected through an online survey over a period of one month, and during this time, 255 respondents voluntarily completed the questionnaire. Table 1 presents the statistical results of the respondents in this study.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics

Characteristic	Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Forgiveness High (%)	Forgiveness Low (%)
Gender	Male	118	46.27	48.31	51.69
	Female	136	53.33	57.66	42.34
Domicile	Solo	139	54.51	51.80	48.20
	Karanganyar	25	9.80	52.00	48.00
	Sragen	29	11.37	31.03	68.97
	Wonogiri	6	2.35	50.00	50.00
	Sukoharjo	16	6.27	62.50	37.50
	Boyolali	18	7.06	66.67	33.33

	Klaten	22	8.63	77.27	22.73
Region	Urban	163	63.92	53.37	46.63
	Rural	92	36.08	53.26	46.74
Age	21-30 years	172	67.45	53.49	46.51
	31-40 years	30	11.76	56.67	43.33
	41-50 years	34	13.33	47.06	52.94
	> 51 years	19	7.45	57.89	42.11
Education	Senior high school	145	56.47	40.69	59.31
	Bachelor	24	9.41	70.83	29.17
	Undergraduate	74	29.02	66.22	33.78
	Master	11	4.31	90.91	9.09
	Doctorate	1	.39	100.00	.00
Occupation	Students	71	27.84	45.33	54.67
	Government employees	18	7.06	65.00	35.00
	Private employees	75	29.41	62.16	37.84
	Army	7	2.75	57.14	42.86
	House wives	29	11.37	53.33	46.67
	Business	47	18.43	46.94	53.06

The group with low forgiveness mainly comprises male respondents (51.69%), whereas the majority of the high forgiveness group consists of women (57.66%). This suggests that women tend to have a higher level of forgiveness than men. In addition, the Klaten area has the highest proportion of respondents with high forgiveness (77.27%), while the highest proportion of low forgiveness respondents is found in Sragen (68.97%).

Respondents residing in Solo, Karanganyar, and Wonogiri areas exhibit a balanced proportion of forgiveness. Among different age groups, those aged 51 years and above have the highest proportion of high forgiveness (57.89%). Education level also appears to have an impact, with higher education correlating with a greater proportion of the high forgiveness group (S3 = 100%; Master's Degree = 90.91%; Bachelor's Degree = 66.22%; Diploma = 70.83%). The only

education level with a higher proportion of low forgiveness is high school (40.96% vs. 59.31%). Among occupational groups, civil servants (65%) and private employees (62.16%) exhibit the highest proportion of forgiveness, whereas students have the lowest high forgiveness proportion, at 45.33%.

4.2 Operational Definition and Measurements

The sentiment of the country-of-origin refers to an individual's negative perceptions of a particular country that serves as the origin of a brand (as discussed in Fiske et al., 2002 and Barbarossa et al., 2018). The indicators for these sentiments include arrogance, cheating, lying, indifference, and annoyance. These indicators are measured using a 7-point semantic differential scale, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Questionnaire for sentiment towards country-of-origin

In my opinion, China is...								
Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Arrogant
Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Cheating
Trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Lying
Caring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Indifferent
Good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad

A negative image is an individual's negative perception of a product formed from experience and information (see Peter et al., 2014; Upamannyu et al., 2014). Indicators of negative product images are non-nutritious, dangerous,

unhealthy, contaminated, and preserved. These indicators are measured using a 7- point semantic differential scale (see Table 3).

Table 3
Questionnaire for negative product images

In my opinion, canned fish products are...								
Nutritious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Non-nutritious
Safe	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Harmful
Healthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unhealthy
Hygienic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Contaminated
Fresh	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Preserved

Blame refers to a negative reaction by an individual or a group of individuals towards the party that is held accountable and responsible for a negative incident (see Barbarossa et al., 2018; Klein & Dawar, 2004). The

indicators of blame include condescension, sneering, criticism, belittling, and underestimation. These indicators are evaluated using a 7-point semantic differential scale (refer to Table 4).

Table 4
Questionnaire for blame

For canned sardine products, I...								
Elevate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Lower
Flatter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Snicker
Praise	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Reproach
Appreciate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Underestimate
Respect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Disrespect

An unfavorable evaluation is defined as an individual's

negative assessment of a product (see Klein & Dawar,

2004; Chu et al., 2010). Indicators of negative evaluation are hatred, negative thinking, rejection, indifference, and

disappointment. These indicators are measured using a 7-point semantic differential scale (see Table 5).

Table 5
Questionnaire for a negative evaluation of the product

For canned fish products, I am...								
Liking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Hating
Positive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Negative
Receiving	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Refusing
Caring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Indifferent
Proud	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Disappointed

Forgiveness is an individual's willingness to release negative emotions caused by bad events (see Fiske et al., 2002; Xie & Peng, 2009). Indicators of forgiveness are understanding, empathy, forgetting, forgiving, and opening

up. Furthermore, these indicators are measured using a 7-point semantic differential scale (see Table 6).

Table 6
Questionnaire for forgiveness

I describe myself as a person with...								
Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Information
Antipathy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Empathy
Leverage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Forgetfulness
Revenge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Forgiveness
Closing myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Opening myself

4.3 Validity and Reliability

Table 7 shows that only a few indicators meet the validity test specified, with factor loadings greater than 0.60 (Fenitra & Haryanto, 2019). For Indonesians, a negative image of a country is suggested as a haughty and indifferent nation, and with the negative news circulating, canned sardine products are seen as non-nutritious, dangerous, and unhealthy.

Consequently, people hate, have negative thoughts, reject, and ignore such products. In Indonesia, people exhibit a humble behavior while expressing disapproval and criticism toward canned sardines. Survey results indicate that the community views understanding, empathy, forgetfulness, and forgiveness as key indicators of forgiveness.

Table 7
Validity and reliability test results

Variable	Indicators	Loading Factor	CR	AVE
The sentiment of country-of-origin	Arrogant	0.857	0.784	0.879
	Indifferent	0.913		
Negative Image	Non-nutritious	0.823	0.733	0.891
	Dangerous	0.917		
	Not healthy	0.825		
Blame	Downgrading	0.771	0.601	0.819
	Sneering	0.765		
	Denounced	0.790		
Negative evaluation	Hatred	0.748	0.745	0.921
	Negative	0.928		
	Refusal	0.897		
	Indifference	0.868		
Forgiveness	Understanding	0.669	0.537	0.822
	Empathy	0.739		
	Forgetfulness	0.749		
	Forgiveness	0.771		

4.4 Path Testing

Table 8 describes the correlation between country-of-origin sentiments and low product image (0.197). Similarly, the correlation between country-of-origin sentiments and negative evaluation is also low (.0232), while the correlation between country-of-origin and blame is moderate (0.360).

Moreover, the correlation between negative image and negative evaluation is moderate (0.522), while the correlation between negative image and blame is high (0.623). Finally, a high correlation between negative evaluation and blame was found (0.602).

Table 8
Partial-correlation test results

	1	2	3	4
Sentiment of country-of-origin	1			
Negative image	0.197	1		
Blame	0.360	0.623	1	
Negative evaluation	0.232	0.526	0.602	1

Note: <0.40 is low; 0.40 – 0.60 is moderate; > 0.60 is high.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing Results

The hypothesis testing begins by testing the significance

of the differences between two models: Model 1, which is the unconstrained model (a model without

moderation), and Model 2, which is the constrained model (a model that includes moderating variables). This test is intended to show that forgiveness is an influential variable in moderating the blame behavior and negative community evaluation of sardine fish products during a product-harm crisis. The test results indicate a significant difference between the unconstrained and constrained models (CMIN = 27.787; df = 11; p = 0.003) as shown in Table 9. This implies that forgiveness is a variable that can moderate blame behavior and negative evaluation of canned sardines during the product harm crisis that occurred in Indonesia. This means that among the people in the sardine market, some have high forgiveness and some have low forgiveness. People with high forgiveness are characterized by forgiveness, empathy, ease of forgetting, and ease of forgiving something that happens, while people with low forgiveness will be characterized by the opposite. The forgiveness of this community provides marketers with an understanding of product marketing during a product harm crisis. As forgiveness is an uncontrollable variable, marketing can focus on people with high forgiveness, while seeking alternative strategies to influence people with low forgiveness.

Table 9

Model difference test results

Model	DF	CMIN	P
Constrained- Unconstrained	11	27.787	0.003

The tests indicated that hypothesis 1 was supported, as the unconstrained model showed a positive relationship between country-of-origin sentiment and blame behavior ($b = 0.289$; $SE = 0.059$; $CR = 4,483$) (refer to Table 10). The findings suggest that there is a positive correlation between the community's sentiment towards the country-of-origin and the level of blame attributed to canned sardines. Specifically, negative sentiments toward China, which are perceived by some Indonesians as a haughty and indifferent

country, may have been reinforced by negative news about China in the Indonesian mass media. The incident demands significant attention to counter the negative mindset of Indonesians toward China. The perceived impact of the harm crisis on the sentiments built toward China has resulted in a blaming behavior towards canned sardines by the community. The obtained test results support the consistency of the proposed concept, which has been studied in previous research that established a positive relationship between country-of-origin sentiments and blame behavior, albeit using different variables as proxies for the sentiments of the country-of-origin (see Laufer et al., 2009; Chu et al., 2010; Barbarossa et al., 2018). While this study confirms the concept, further research is still required in different contexts to establish it as a law with a wider scope of generalization.

The subsequent test results provide support for hypothesis 2, which posits a positive relationship between negative product image and blame behavior. This relationship was found to be significant in the unconstrained model ($b = 0.681$; $SE = 0.056$; $CR = 10,740$) (see Table 10). These results indicate that as the negative image of a product increases within the community, so does the blaming behavior toward the product. During the product harm crisis, the community perceived canned sardines to be unhealthy, dangerous to health, and lacking in nutrition.

These perceptions have been triggered by the circulation of negative news in various mass media regarding the presence of worms found in canned sardines, suggesting neglect of their health and nutritional aspects in the manufacturing process. This highlights the need for marketers to address this issue in their promotional strategies to eliminate or mitigate the negative image formed among the community, as the resulting behavior is blaming of canned sardines.

The present study's findings provide confirmation of the relationship between brand image and blame

behavior during product-harm crises, as well as validating the impact of negative image on other behavioral aspects, including brand attitude (Weiner, 1980, 1985; Lee & Ganesh, 1998), satisfaction level, trust, and retention (Mirzaee et al., 2013). While the results of this study have provided support for the concept, it is important to conduct

further research in different contexts, particularly with regard to the objects and settings chosen for this study. This is necessary to assess the generalizability of the concept in explaining various phenomena.

Table 10
SEM test results of unconstrained model

Variables	Estimate	St. Error	CR
Sentiment of country-of-origin → Blame	0.289	0.059	4.483
Negative image → Blame	0.681	0.056	10.740
Blame → Negative evaluation	0.661	0.073	10.865
	Goodness-of-fit		Cut off value
Chi-square	202.994		Small
Probability of chi-square (p)	0.000		≤0.05
CMIN/DF	1.990		≤5.0
Goodness of fit index (GFI)	0.881		≥0.90
Adj. goodness of fit index (AGFI)	0.819		≥0.90
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.954		≥0.90
RMSEA	0.063		0.05≤x≤0.08
RMR	0.167		≤0.03
Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)	0.940		≥0.90
IFI	0.954		≥0.95
NFI	0.912		≥0.90

According to the results of the test, hypothesis 3, which posits a positive relationship between blame behavior and negative evaluation, is supported ($b = 0.661$; $SE = 0.073$; $CR = 10.865$) (see Table 10). This relationship implies that as blame behavior towards a product increases, so does the negative evaluation of the brand. This finding suggests that when an individual start to criticize, show displeasure, and disapprove of product, this could lead to negative emotions, such as animosity, cynicism, apathy, and ultimately rejection of the product. This occurred during the product harm crisis in Indonesia, where almost all canned fish species in the market experienced a significant decline due to negative

attitudes from the community, resulting in the rejection of the fish. The government also instructed the withdrawal and destruction of various canned fish products circulating in Indonesia (Friana, 2018), which is a wise action to counter the negative news, specifically the presence of worms in canned fish. Marketers should also take various marketing actions to improve the country-of-origin sentiment and the negative product image to mitigate blaming behavior and enhance individual product evaluations. The findings show that there is a significant positive correlation between country-of-origin sentiment and

blame behavior, in both high forgiveness ($b = 0.399$; $SE = 0.092$; $CR = 3,803$) and low Forgiveness ($b = 0.179$; $SE = 0.172$; $CR = 2403$) contexts. Hypothesis 4, which postulates this relationship, is supported by the results. Moreover, the difference between the two contexts is also significant and positive (Z score = 2.210), as shown in Table 11. Moreover, forgiveness moderates the relationship between country-of-origin sentiments and blame behavior on products, as supported by hypothesis 4. Moreover, the positive Z score suggests that the relationship is stronger for individuals with high forgiveness than for those with low forgiveness. This may be due to the fact that individuals with high forgiveness tend to be more emotional and thus exhibit more extreme behavior when reacting to a product.

In the context of the product harm crisis in Indonesia, the negative sentiment towards the country-of-origin, China, leads to excessive public blame towards canned sardines produced in China. Moreover, for individuals with high forgiveness, the relationship between the country-of-origin

sentiment and blame behavior is stronger than for individuals with low forgiveness.

The findings of this study require further study, especially those related to the influence of moderation from high-forgiveness individuals who are more vital than low forgiveness individuals. This is because individuals with high forgiveness should be easier to understand, easy to empathize with, easy to forget, and easy to forgive than individuals with low forgiveness. However, in fact, they are stronger in moderating the relationship between the sentiment of country-of-origin and blame behavior, and this is in contrast to the regularity of the phenomenon conceptualized by several previous studies (Xie & Peng, 2009; Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). Further studies are expected to provide further explanation about the possibility of potential variables that influence the behavior of blame in the condition of product harm crisis.

Table 11
SEM test results of constrained model; SEM test results of unconstrained model

	Forgiveness (High)			Forgiveness (Low)			Z Score
	Estimate	St. Error	CR	Estimate	St. Error	CR	
Blame $\leftarrow$ Sentiment of country-of-origin	0.399	0.092	3.803	0.179	0.172	2.403	2.210
Blame $\leftarrow$ Negative image	0.630	0.083	7.273	0.597	0.725	7.496	-0.751
Neg. evaluation $\leftarrow$ Blame	0.766	0.085	9.621	0.639	0.514	5.447	2.368
			Goodness-of-Fit				Cut-off
Chi-square			230.781				Small
Probability of chi-square (p)			0.000				≤ 0.05
CMIN/DF			2.040				≤ 5.0
Goodness of fit index (GFI)			0.869				≥ 0.90
Adj. goodness of fit index (AGFI)			0.819				≥ 0.90
Comparative fit index (CFI)			0.946				≥ 0.90
RMSEA			0.064				$0.05 \leq x < 0.08$
RMR			0.184				≤ 0.03
Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)			0.937				≥ 0.90
IFI			0.946				≥ 0.95
NFI			0.900				≥ 0.90

Tests carried out revealed a significant and positive relationship between the negative image of the product and the blaming behavior, both at high Forgiveness ($b = 0.630$; $SE = 0.083$; $CR = 7.273$) and at low forgiveness ($b = 0.597$; $SE = 0.725$; $CR = 7.496$). However, further testing results found that the difference between the two is insignificant and negative (Z score = -0.751) (see Table 11), so hypothesis 5 is not supported in this study. This finding means that there is no difference between individuals with high forgiveness and low forgiveness in reacting to the relationship between the negative image of the product and the blaming behavior. For them, if the brand's negative image is perceived poorly, this will impact blame behavior, and this behavior is almost with no difference between individuals with high forgiveness and individuals with low forgiveness. This study's finding does not support the regularity of phenomena as conceptualized in previous studies (Xie & Peng, 2009; Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). This can happen because, for consumers, the name of the product or a brand is critical, which is a consideration in purchasing a product or brand. Usually, consumers use the name of the product or a brand as a clue about the quality of a product or a brand, so that if the product or brand name is damaged, the impact becomes more widespread (Budhi et al., 2022). This argument is probably the reason that there is no significant difference between individuals with high forgiveness and those with low forgiveness in reacting to the relationship between the negative image of the product and the blaming behavior.

The final test found that there was a significant and positive relationship between blame behavior and negative evaluation of the product, both at high Forgiveness ($b = 0.766$; $SE = 0.085$; $CR = 9.621$) and at low forgiveness ($b = 0.639$; $SE = 0.514$; $CR = 5.447$) (see Table 11). It was also found that the difference between the two was significant and positive (Z score = 2.368). This shows that in individuals with high forgiveness, the relationship between blame behavior and negative evaluation of the product is more substantial than in individuals with low forgiveness, so hypothesis 6 is supported. This possibility can occur,

because individuals with high forgiveness are attached to higher emotional factors than individuals with low forgiveness. This in turn has implications for different ways of reacting to the relationship between blame behavior and negative evaluation of the product. In individuals with high forgiveness, the relationship between blame behavior and negative evaluation of the product is stronger than in individuals with low forgiveness.

The findings of this study require further study to provide an explanation of the existence of other factors that have the potential to influence the behavioral process as conceptualized in this study. Individual emotional factors may play a role in moderating the relationship between blame behavior and negative evaluation of the product, as is the regularity of the phenomena conceptualized in previous studies (Xie & Peng, 2009; Fetscherin & Sampedro, 2019). Through further studies, it is hoped that there is a practical explanation of the role of forgiveness in moderating the relationship between blame behavior and negative evaluation of the product.

5. Conclusion

In the event of a product harm crisis, the perception of the product's country-of-origin and the negative reputation of the product are two factors that can impact individuals' inclination to assign fault to the product. As a result of this blame attribution, a negative appraisal of the product ensues. Marketers must take into account this consumer behavior when managing products that have faced a crisis, like canned sardines in Indonesia, which have been the subject of persistent rumors in various media outlets about the existence of worms in these canned fish.

In addition, this study indicates that forgiveness is a factor that can moderate the development of blame behavior and negative product evaluation. However, some of the findings from the tests are not statistically

significant and do not provide support for the initial hypothesis. For instance, forgiveness may not have a moderating effect on the link between negative product image and blame behavior, or the opposite relationship between forgiveness and the moderation of country-of-origin sentiment on blame behavior and negative evaluation may not be as pronounced for those with high forgiveness compared to those with low forgiveness. Nevertheless, these findings do not necessarily indicate a flaw in the model's conceptualization. Instead, it is plausible that an unobserved variable, such as an individual's innate emotional factor, may also impact the relationship patterns among the conceptual variables.

Theoretically, this study offers a behavioral model that differs from previous research models by incorporating forgiveness as a moderating variable. The resulting model explains how blame behavior and negative evaluation of the product are influenced by the sentiment of the country-of-origin and negative brand image, and this relationship is strengthened by individual forgiveness that moderates the relationship. Practically, this study provides a model that marketers can use in critical situations, helping them understand the variables that trigger blame behavior and negative product or brand evaluation. Several policies must be considered, including improving the sentiment of the country of origin and the product's negative image, and packaging these in practical marketing activities to reduce public perception. Furthermore, marketers must pay attention to individual characteristics regarding forgiveness, because those with high forgiveness will behave differently from those with low forgiveness.

Regarding future studies, some findings require further explanation, particularly the concept of forgiveness. The role of forgiveness as a moderating variable has yet to be fully

elucidated, as evidenced by the insignificant test results concerning its role in moderating the relationship between negative product image and blame behavior, as well as its role in moderating the inverse relationship between country-of-origin sentiment and blame behavior, and the relationship between blame behavior and negative product evaluation. A preliminary indication that emerges from this study is the presence of excessive emotional factors in individuals with high forgiveness, which could affect the blame behavior process. Future studies are recommended to examine the emotional state of individuals, which often surfaces rapidly during product harm crises, and how this can influence the blame behavior process.

This study specifically examines the product harm crisis phenomenon that occurred in Indonesia, where news reports stated the presence of worms in packaged sardines, leading to a decline in sales for all brands of canned fish. The developed model solely focuses on the process of blame behavior and negative product evaluation related to canned sardines. Therefore, when applying this model to other phenomena beyond canned sardines, it is crucial to consider additional variables that may impact the model. Differences in individual behavior in response to different events should also be taken into account.

Conflict of Interests

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