Research Paper

Attitudes of Bamenda Traders Vis-A-Vis "Ghost Towns" and Management of Psychological Reactance

Louis-Cristel Urbain Ava Dit Beyeme[1]*, Chandel Ebale Moneze[2]

ABSTRACT

Since 2016 in Cameroon, an internal armed conflict with multifaceted repercussions opposes the State to separatists who are requesting their independence by force after the failure of negotiation. The perverse effect of that situation is the deprivation of economic actor's freedoms through the phenomenon of ghost towns. It is also have pressure on the State giving his role as guarantor of fundamental rights of citizens. The deprivation of freedoms among Bamenda traders is manifested by the prohibition of selling on Mondays, which is considered a working day in Cameroon. That situation of deprivation made those traders to use some circumvented strategies to sell behind closed doors generally or by the use of various means. It is a situation in which the separatists forbid economic activities with "ghost towns" and the traders challenge that embargo despite the risks. Those traders finally developed a kind of resistance aimed to defy the interdiction. That particular form of resistance is called by psychologists the psychological reactance. The theory states that, individuals have certain freedoms with regards to their behavior. If these behavioral freedoms are reduced or threatened with reduction, the individual will be motivationally aroused to regain them (Brehm, 1966). However, researches on reactance do not usually include a conative component in strategies of recovering freedoms. This article, is based on an investigation carried out during "ghost towns" with a sample of 146 traders from the subdivisions of Bamenda I, II and III. In light of attitudes the conative component intervenes intensively in the Bamenda trader's reactance vis-à-vis "ghost towns". Moreover, the circumvented strategies used by traders in front of their shops suggested a new form of resistance that we considered as instrumental or operant reactance. From the quantitative (SPSS 25) and qualitative (content analysis) methods that we used, we confirmed our general hypotheses that the attitudes of Bamenda traders afferent to "ghost towns" predict their management of the psychological reactance.

Keywords: *Attitude, ghost towns, psychological reactance*

In a given environment, individual reacts to stimulation by trying to take advantage of the situation. That's why Lescaret (2020) said he evaluates events, physical and social objects around, understand them and act. From this perspective, when he feels threatened, he then seeks to resist, by putting in place an attitude to maintain certain

[1]PHD Fellow in Psychology, University of Yaounde I
[2]Full Professor, University of Yaoundé I
*Corresponding Author

constancy, or to recover a threatened freedom. Thus, depending on their positive or negative valence, attitudes are likely to generate attracted behaviors or avoidance of the object (Krosnick et al., 1993), or even trigger a process of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966). The theory of psychological reactance tells us that any threat perceived as weighing on individual freedom has the effect of making the forbidden option desirable (Dillard and Shen, 2006). Noubisssie (2019) stipulated that a general attitude does not predict a singular action but a category of conducts, which form the composite behavioral index. Consequently, attitude appears as a warning element, precursor of psychological reactance. It makes it possible to predict in advance how Bamenda traders will react or behave in a situation of deprivation, during "ghost towns". Observing the statistics from MINEPAT concerning the PPRB (2016-2020) of North-West and South-West, we noted a slight peak in growth despite "ghost towns". This situation indicates the resilience of Bamenda traders despite the deprivation of freedoms. Thus, we could therefore say that despite the persistence of the crisis and "ghost towns" the traders of Bamenda found circumvented strategies to carry out their commercial activities despite reprisals from separatists. It is a situation in which a minority prohibits commercial activities by establishing "ghost towns" while the majority transgresses them by setting up circumvented strategies which reveal an experience of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966). Thus, research on psychological reactance has shown that every time an individual finds himself in a situation of deprivation of freedom he develops a motivational state aiming of preservation of his autonomy or recovering freedom. According to Brehm (1966) this motivation to regain freedom directs the behavior of the individual towards the reestablishment of this freedom lost virtually or in reality. The psychological reactance model of Dillard and Shen (2005) is considered as the most complete and successful model (Wihlem, 2015). Dillard and Shen (2005) developed four items to assess people's perceived threat to freedom with regard to the message. He compared four structural equation models: a single-process cognitive model, a single-process affective model, a dual-process model in which affective and cognitive reactions had unique effects on people's responses to the persuasive message, and an intertwined model in which affect and cognition were considered an alloy that could not be disentangled. Worthy to note that other studies on psychological reactance also considered the same cognitive and affective components in recovering freedoms (Dillard and Shen, 2005; Cacioppo, 1986; Kelly and Nauta, 1997; Dillard and Meijenders, 2002; Nabi, 2002, Seltzer, 1983; White and Zimbardo, 1980; Wicklund, 1974; Leventhal, 1970, Dillard and Peck, 2000, 2001; White, 1994; Gadner, 2010, Gadner, 2010, Wihlem, 2014). Looking at it carefully, the conative component of reactance is not mentioned in those studies, while our study on Bamenda traders during "ghost towns" has highlighted the conative aspect. Moreover, a new form of reactance called operant or instrumental emerged regarding the circumvented strategies used by those traders. That's the reason why the theory of psychological reactance requires some adjustments. This component is not mentioned in studies concerning reactance, and has not yet been operationalized. Nevertheless, psychologists use the concept of conation to describe and analyze the way the movement is generated, or an ideology of action. Moreover, the volitional and directional aspect in recovery freedoms has been studied by some psychologists. Damasio (2003), for example, explained that conation is an encompassing and non-excluding notion of cognition; it makes it possible to point out more clearly the role of feelings. Thus, we believe that Bamenda traders are guided by their own values, their own choices, and their own wills, their own desires, confronted with the surrounding environment also carrying its specificities (Warren 1933). Duchateau (2006) goes further, specifying that conation is linked to what an individual does at a given moment, in a given situation. Even more, it is a predisposition to undertake an action, a behavior to satisfy a

need (Lernoud, 2002). In Bamenda, the circumvented strategies trough the manipulation of the environment suggests an instrumental or operant reactance. On the field, the modification of instruments in front of shops by withdrawing some unfavorable tools, adding some favorable or displacing some tools are positive reinforcement. So, this is an operant conditioning (Skinner cited by Sincero, 2011; Kendra, 2023). This manipulation of the environment through instruments gives rise to three modalities of reactance, notably: the reorganization of the immediate environment of shops; the positive reinforcement; the negative reinforcement during "ghost towns". In any case, those objects increase the probability that the traders should continue their activities without being kidnapped or sanctioned during "ghost towns".

MATERIALS AND METHODS

First of all, this study has objectives

Objectives

The general objective of this study is to verify if the attitudes of Bamenda traders afferent to "ghost towns" predict their management of psychological reactance. We have five specifics objectives which are to verify if the reading of reality concerning "ghost towns" by Bamenda traders predicts their management of psychological reactance (1); if the mediation of internal and external factors concerning "ghost towns" by Bamenda traders predicts their management of the psychological reactance (2); if the organization of the behavior concerning "ghost towns" by Bamenda traders predicts their management of the psychological reactance(3) if the self-defense concerning "ghost towns" by Bamenda traders predicts their management of the psychological reactance(4) if the expression of the embodies values concerning « ghost towns » by Bamenda traders predicts their management of the psychological (5).

Hypothesis

The general hypothesis states that the attitudes of Bamenda traders afferent to "ghost towns" predict their management of psychological reactance. That general hypothesis was operationalized and raised five (05) research hypotheses. RH1: the reading of reality concerning "ghost towns" by Bamenda traders predicts their management of psychological reactance; RH2: the mediation of internal and external factors concerning "ghost towns" by Bamenda traders predicts their management of the psychological reactance; RH3 : the organization of the behavior concerning "ghost towns" by Bamenda traders predicts their management of the psychological reactance; RH4 : the self-defense concerning "ghost towns" by Bamenda traders predicts their management of the psychological reactance; RH5 : the expression of the embodies values concerning « ghost towns » by Bamenda traders predicts their management of the psychological.

Participants

To verify these hypotheses, we conducted a survey during "ghost towns" days in Bamenda I, II and III sub-divisions with a sample of 150 participants.

Materials

We administered the questionnaires proportionately selecting 50 from each of the three subdivisions. Thereafter, we selected five traders for interviews according to their answers for better explanations.

Data collection
We collected data only the days of "ghost towns" to make sure that our respondant are really the traders who defy the interdiction. The process was to distribute those questionnaires in the morning at 9 o'clock for traders who want to answer and come back in the evening at 5 O'clock to collect them. The interview occurred two month after counting of data from the quantitative method. Then, we selected 5 traders for interviews according to their answers from the questionnaires and our objectives. It is important to highlight that this section aimed to verify if the so-called operant reactance is pertinent. The tool that can permit us to verify it is interview. So, the results from the semi-structured interviews that we carried out on the field are presented as follows from the interview of Jacques, Mary, Kingsley, Perpetua and Beanka. They are traders. They were selected giving the richness of their responses during questionnaire. These interviews were done in their respective workplaces. Those very interviews were carried out during "ghost towns" to remain in the same context. The duration of each interview was between 30 and 40 minutes.

Measurement of variables
The table below presents the different variables of the study and their operationalization.
Table 1. Table representing the operationalization of variables

	VARIABLES OF STUDY	MESURES	AUTORS
Independent variables	The reality reading by Bamenda traders afferent to ghost towns	Likert scale in 5 points	Langlois and Cormier (2022) ; Jones et Leagon (2014)
	The mediation of external and internal factor by Bamenda traders afferent to ghost towns	Likert scale in 5 points	Langlois and Cormier (2022) ; Mvomo(2020)
	The organisation of the behaviour of Bamenda traders afferent to ghost towns	Likert scale in 5 points	Langlois and Cormier (2022), Leila Hnana and Akrout (sd)
	The embodies values of Bamenda traders afferent to ghost towns	Likert scale in 5 points	Schwartz(1992)
	The self defense of Bamenda traders afferetnt to ghost towns	Likert scale in 5 points	Auzoult (2012).
Dependent variable	The management of the psychological reactance : INS	Likert scale in 5 points	Hong and Faedda(1996) ; Marc Richelle(1969) ;Skinner(1938)

Given the nature of our variables the data analysis was carried out at several stages:
- Principal Component Analysis (PCA): this analysis is to determine the items for each variable that better explain it;

- Principal Factor Analysis (AFP): this analysis enable us to determine the factors relating to each variable;
- Determination of indices relating to each variable: here we determined the minimum and maximum values using the formula below:

$$IDVAR = \frac{ID\ VARi - Min\ (IDVAR)}{Max\ (IDVAR) - Min(\ IDVAR)}$$

with:
- IDVAR: Index of the variable,
- ID VARi: value of the variable obtained after factorization (AFP);
- Min (IDVAR): the minimum of the value of the variable obtained after factorization;
- Max (IDVAR): the maximum value of the variable obtained after factorization.

These two steps made it possible to construct an index (IDVAR) which was subsequently standardized on a scale going from 0 to 1. 0 indicating the lowest level of the constructed index and 1 the highest level.

Scoring

Table 2. Table representing the summary of the calculation of the constructed indices of the variables

Descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
INDINS	146	0,00	1,00	.4209	.27398
INDCOG	146	0,00	1,00	.5698	.23086
INDAFF	146	0,00	1,00	.4441	.25427
INDCON	146	0,00	1,00	.4152	.28636
INDDEF	146	0,00	1,00	.5684	.22710
INDEXP	146	0,00	1,00	.4484	.22854

INDCOG: The reality reading by traders
INDAFF: The mediation of internal and external factors by traders
INDCON: The organization of behavior by traders
INDDEF: Self-defense by traders
INDEXP: The expression of embodied values by traders
INDINS: Instrumentalization of frontage of shops by traders

Note. Ourselves from SPSS outputs

From this table 2, we see that the management of psychological reactance is not effective enough among traders in Bamenda, because the average of INDINS is less than 0.5. Regarding the attitudes of traders in the city of Bamenda, we observe that only INDCOG and INDDEF are satisfactory, because their average is respectively 0.5698 and 0.5684 and therefore greater than 0.5.

- The estimation of the parameters of the specific model below, which was carried out using the OLS (Ordinary Least Square) method, constituted the final step.

The model below comes in two forms: the general model and the specific model.
The general model is:

$$Management\ of\ the\ psychological\ reactance = \beta_0 + \beta_n \sum_{i=1}^{n} X_n + \varepsilon$$

With β_0 q which represents constancy, β_n the different coefficients of the independent variables which are represented by X_n ; ε being the error term.
The specific research model is presented as follows:

$$INS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 COG + \beta_2 AFF + \beta_3 CON + \beta_4 DEF + \beta_5 EXP + \varepsilon$$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We will present in turn the results from the quantitative data and those from the qualitative data.

From the regression, we are going to verify whether the attitudes of traders in Bamenda relate to "ghost towns", through reality reading (COG), the mediation of internal and external factors (AFF), the organization of behavior (CON), embodied values (EXP), and self-defense (DEF); have predict their management of psychological reactance. We will equally measure the instrumental or operant reactance (INS). This will subsequently allow us to validate or refute our research hypotheses. So, the table below presents the results of the regression of our variables.

Table 3. Regression table

Dependent variable: INDINS				
Model	**B**	**Error**	**T**	**Sig.**
(Constance)	.085	.057	1.502	.135
INDCOG	.248**	.095	2.602	.010
INDAFF	.688***	.086	8.017	.000
INDCON	.084	.083	1.011	.314
INDDEF	.123	.093	1.320	.189
INDEXP	.305**	.095	3.206	.002

$R^2 = 0,533$ R^2 ajusté $= 0,516$
$F = 31,905^{***}$ $P = 0,000$

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
 INDCOG: The reality reading relating to ghost town by traders
INDAFF: The mediation of internal and external factors relating to ghost town by traders
INDCON: The organization of behavior relating to ghost towns by traders
INDDEF: Self-defense relating to "ghost towns" by traders
INDEXP: The expression of embodied values relating to "ghost towns" by traders
INDINS: the instrumentalisation of frontage of shops relating to "ghost towns" by traders
Note. Ourselves from SPSS outputs

The results from the estimation reveals a positive and significant value at 1% threshold for the variable representing unspecified factors (Constant). Moreover, the Fisher statistic is significant at the 1% level with an adjusted R^2 of 0.516. We note three significant variables at the respective threshold of 5% and 1%. Another laudable observation is that the R2 of the variables identified to characterize the independent variables (INDCOG, INDAFF,

INDCON, INDDEF and INDEXP) explain 53.3% of the management of psychological reactance. This means unspecified factors explain INDINS up to 46.7%.

An additional and careful reading of this table states that the reading of reality by traders (INDCOG) has a negative and significant prediction at the threshold of 5% of the management of psychological reactance when it is measured by INDINS "Instrumentalization of the frontage of shops during ghost towns".

The mediation of internal and external factors by Bamenda traders (INDAFF) has a positive and significant prediction successively at 1% thresholds of psychological reactance management when measured by INDINS "Instrumentalization of frontage of shops during ghost towns".

The organization of trader's behavior (INDCON) is negatively and significantly predictive, successively at the 1%, 5% and 1% thresholds, of the management of psychological reactance when it is successively measured by INDAGR "Counter argumentation to advice and to the recommendation to observe ghost towns", INDCOF "Resistance to comply with the ban on selling during ghost towns" and INDINT "Emergence of emotional responses due to the ban".

The expression of embodied values by Bamenda traders (INDEXP) is positively and significantly predictive at the 5% threshold of the management of psychological reactance when measured by INDINS "Instrumentalization of frontage of shops during ghost towns". The table below brings together all the results to facilitate analysis and a best understanding.

Table 4.Table representing the overall results of the hypothesis testing

		Situation des hypothèses
INDCOG : The reading of reality by Bamenda traders afferent to « ghost towns »	**-Sig.**	**RH1 validate**
INDAFF : The mediation between internal and external factors by Bamenda traders afferent to « ghost tows »	**+Sig.**	**RH2 validate**
INDCON : The organization of behaviour of Bamenda traders afferent to « ghost towns »	**-**	**RH3 validate**
INDDEF : The self-defence of Bamenda traders afferent to « ghost towns »	**+**	**RH4 validate**
INDEXP : The expression of mbodies values by Bamenda traders afferent to « ghost towns »	**+Sig.**	**RH5 validate**

Note. Ourselves from SPSS sources

It is generally clear that our five research hypotheses are confirmed.

Table 5. Table representing the summary of the results of the interviews of our five subjects on instrumental reactance.

Center of interest	Codes	Modalities	Percentages			
			YES	NO	NR	±
Instrumentalisation of frontage of shops	E	Positive reinforcement	40%	10%		
		Negative reinforcement	40%	10%		

The result of this qualitative analysis fully supports the previous results of quantitative analysis. With the qualitative results, the conative reactance is really expressive with a rate of 40% in positive reinforcement and 40% in negative reinforcement. That means that all our tools of investigation from SPSS 25, accommodate with our findings.

CONCLUSION

This study focused on the attitudes of Bamenda traders during "ghost towns" and the management of psychological reactance. The objective was to verify whether the attitudes of Bamenda traders relating to "Ghost towns" are predictive of their management of psychological reactance. Our study was both quantitative and qualitative. In the quantitative approach we used the SPSS 25 software, which is mainly predominant as this study is descriptive and correlational. To consolidate our positions, the qualitative dimension allowed us to analyze the deeply some statements to make assorted analysis. Considering the overall results of the hypothesis testing (Table 4.), our five hypotheses were confirmed. We can therefore say that the attitudes of Bamenda traders afferent to "ghost towns" are predictive of their management of psychological reactance. The prediction of attitudes on the management of psychological reactance is therefore undeniable and should now be taken into account. Even more, the new variable that we added which is instrumental or operant was very expressive. Hence the unspecified factors which explain the INDINS up to 46.7%, in the regression table (Table 3.). At the end of this research, we can suggest to the scientific community to be interested the relation between attitude and psychological reactance in ordered to better examine the conative side of reactance. The introduction of a conative component of reactance to complete the diagram of Dillard and Shen (2005), is an important asset in theory and methodology.

REFERENCES

Barais, W. (1997). *Methods in psychology. Grand Amphi Collection.*

Brehm, J.W. (1966). *A theory of psychological reactance, Academic Press.*

Brehm, J. L. (1984). *Intimate relationships. In Moscovici (Ed), social psychology, 169-191. PUF*

Brehm, J.W. (1972). *Responses to the loss of freedom: A theory of psychology, reactance. General Learning Press.*

Brehm,S.S. & Brehm, J.W. (1981). *Psychological reactance: A Theory of freedom and control. Academic Press.*

Creveld, M. V. (1988). *The transformations of war. Foreign politic. 444-445.*

Darpy.D. & Prim-Allaz.I.(2007). *The role of individual psychological variable in a relational framework. https://shs.hd.sciences/halshs-00470589.*

Dillard, J. P. & Shen, L. (2005). *The Nature of Reactance and its Role in Persuasive Health Communication. 72(2) 144-168.*

Dillard,J.P & Peck,E.(2001). *Persuasion and the structure of affect. Human Communication. Research, 23.44-72.*

Dillard,J.P. & Meijenders, A. (2002). *Persuasion and the structure of affect. In Dillard, J.P. & Pfau,M.(Eds). The persuasion handbook: Development in theory and practice. Newbury Park. CA, Sage, 309-327*

Eagly,A. & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The Psychology of Attitudes. Belmont,CA, Thomson Wadsworth.*

Ebale, M. C. (2019). *Social psychology in Cameroon. Social sciences series, Monange.*

Ebale, M. C. (2001). *Theoretical analysis of man's behavior in his ecosystem. PUY.*

Ebale, M. C. (2001). *The theoretical development of social psychology. PUY.*

Fischer, G. N. (1996). *Fundamental concepts of social psychology. Dunod.*

Fischer, G. N. (2003). *Fundamental concepts of social psychology. Dunod.*

Heider, F. (1946). *Attitude and cognitive organization. Journal of psychology, 21, 107-112.*

Moscovici, S. & Plon, M. (1968). *Choice and autonomy of the subject: The theory of psychological reactance, The psychological year (2) pp 467-490.*

Moscovici, S. (1976). *Psychology of active minorities. Phew.*

Mvessomba, A.E. (2013). *Methodology guide for an introduction to experimental method in psychology and the diffusion of social science research. Inter Press group printing company.*

Mvessomba, A.E., Ngah Essomba, H.C. & Vigto, P.C. (2017). *Taking road risks in Cameroon. L'Harmattan Cameroun. ISBN: 978-2-343-13304-4 Accessed on 08/05/20 23 on https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Edouard-Mvessomba*

Noubissie, C. D. (2019). *The so-called "Anglophone" crisis in Cameroon: Attribution causal, Social categorization, Social identity, Active minority. CAD.*

Noubissie, C.D. (2019). *The theoretical landscape of social psychology since 1882: Between pleonasm and inconvenience. Edi-CAD.*

Wicklund, R. A. & Brehm, J. W. (1968). *Attitude Change as a Function of Felt Competence and Threat Role of Attitudinal Freedom)), Journal of Experimental Social Psychology , (4) 64-75.*

Wilhelm, M.C. (2014). *Understanding how the appeal to fear and mediating role of situational reactance in preventive communication of anorexia [Published doctoral thesis, University of Grenoble]. Theses. hal. science. https://theses.hal.science*

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.