

Consumer boycott movements: Impact on brand reputation and business performance in the digital age



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Abstract Consumer boycotts have emerged as a significant force in modern markets, with research indicating that up to 42% of multinational corporations and 54% of prominent brands currently face such actions. The growing prevalence of consumer activism represents a fundamental shift in consumer-corporate relationships, where ethical considerations increasingly drive purchasing decisions. Despite extensive research on boycott outcomes, significant gaps exist in understanding the longitudinal effects of boycotts across diverse cultural contexts and the specific mechanisms through which social media amplifies these movements. This study addresses these gaps by examining: (1) the psychological and sociocultural factors driving consumer participation in boycotts; (2) the impact of corporate responses on brand reputation and financial performance; and (3) the role of social media in facilitating consumer activism. Following PRISMA guidelines, we systematically reviewed articles from the Scopus database published between 2019-2024, initially identifying 8,958 documents which were screened down to 45 final articles based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The methodology combines quantitative bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer software and qualitative synthesis. Our findings reveal that consumer boycotts significantly impact both immediate sales and long-term brand reputation, particularly when boycotts are perceived as credible and widely supported. The research demonstrates that boycott participation is driven by complex motivational factors including ethnocentrism, religious beliefs, and social identity, which vary significantly across demographic and cultural contexts. Companies that fail to address consumer concerns face substantial financial losses, while those engaging in proactive corporate social responsibility can mitigate negative impacts. This research contributes a comprehensive framework for understanding consumer boycotts and their strategic implications, highlighting the necessity for businesses to integrate ethical considerations and align communications with consumer values. It extends existing literature by identifying the need for longitudinal and cross-cultural studies to better understand consumer activism in today's conscientious marketplace.

Keywords: consumer activism, corporate accountability, corporate social responsibility, ethical consumption, digital activism, value-based consumption

1. Introduction

Consumer boycotts have emerged as a significant phenomenon in the global marketplace, reflecting a fundamental shift in the relationship between consumers and corporations. This trend represents more than a passing fad; it signifies a structural transformation where ethical considerations increasingly dictate purchasing decisions. The urgency of this trend is underscored by research indicating that a substantial percentage of multinational corporations and prominent brands are currently facing boycott actions, with figures as high as 42% and 54%, respectively (Ulker-Demirel et al., 2020). These statistics highlight the increasing importance of consumer activism in shaping corporate behavior and influencing market dynamics, as consumers become more aware of and engaged with the ethical implications of their consumption choices.

The motivations behind consumer boycotts are multifaceted, intertwining ethical, political, and social considerations. Factors such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), human rights issues, and environmental concerns frequently catalyze these movements. Ulker-Demirel et al. (2021) emphasize the role of consumer ethnocentrism in shaping boycott behavior, suggesting that domestic consumers may react strongly against egregious actions by local businesses, thereby complicating the dynamics of consumer loyalty and activism. Ko and Kim (2023) further explore how nationalistic sentiments can drive boycott participation, particularly in countries with historical grievances against other nations. This complexity is further compounded by cultural and religious factors, as evidenced by Kim et al. (2022), who examine boycott intentions linked to various consumer motivations. Understanding these multifaceted motivations is crucial for businesses seeking to navigate the increasingly turbulent waters of consumer sentiment and activism.



The financial implications of consumer boycotts can be profound, often resulting in significant declines in sales, market share, and stock prices for the targeted companies. Research indicates that effective boycotts can lead to measurable financial consequences, as demonstrated by Liaukonytė et al. (2023), who quantify the impact of political consumerism on sales. Their study reveals that social media boycotts can reduce sales by up to 8% in affected markets, highlighting the tangible economic impact of consumer activism. Furthermore, Afego and Alagidede (2021) investigate how a firm's public stance on social issues significantly influences its stock market valuation, with boycotts leading to negative abnormal returns. These findings underscore the immediate financial repercussions that boycotts can have on targeted companies, particularly in an age where information spreads rapidly through digital channels.

The reputational damage inflicted by boycotts can be long-lasting, as companies struggle to regain consumer trust and loyalty after being targeted. The increasing public scrutiny of corporate actions, particularly in the context of CSR, amplifies the stakes for companies facing boycotts, as consumers become more vocal about their expectations for ethical behavior (Lechterman, Jenkins, and Strawser, 2024). Kim and Kinoshita (2023) demonstrate that companies perceived as socially responsible may perform better during boycott campaigns, suggesting that a robust CSR strategy can mitigate the negative impacts of consumer activism. Conversely, businesses that fail to address consumer concerns may face sustained declines in brand reputation, affecting their long-term market position and profitability. This evolving landscape necessitates that companies not only respond to consumer concerns but also anticipate them, integrating ethical considerations into their core business strategies.

Understanding the dynamics of consumer boycotts is crucial for businesses seeking to navigate this complex landscape. Strategies to mitigate the risks associated with boycotts may include enhancing transparency in corporate practices, engaging in proactive CSR initiatives, and fostering open communication with consumers. The role of digital media in facilitating boycott movements cannot be overlooked, as platforms enable rapid dissemination of information and mobilization of consumer actions (Tuan et al., 2023). Yang et al. (2021) examine how social media influencers can shape consumer perceptions during boycott campaigns, highlighting the importance of strategic digital communication in crisis management. The digital age has transformed the way consumers organize and express their discontent, making it imperative for companies to monitor and engage with online discourse surrounding their brands.

Despite the growing body of literature on consumer boycotts, several significant research gaps remain. First, while studies have examined various motivations behind boycott participation, there is limited understanding of how these motivations vary across different cultural and demographic contexts. Most research has focused on Western markets, neglecting the unique dynamics of boycott movements in emerging economies and non-Western cultures. Second, the long-term implications of boycotts on brand reputation and consumer trust remain underexplored, with many studies focusing primarily on short-term financial impacts. Third, there is insufficient research on the effectiveness of different corporate response strategies in mitigating the negative effects of boycotts, particularly in the digital age where communication occurs across multiple platforms simultaneously.

Additionally, the intersection of consumer boycotts with broader global issues, such as human rights and environmental sustainability, presents an area ripe for exploration. Sutrisno (2024) indicates that boycotts can serve as tools for social and political activism, yet the mechanisms through which they influence corporate behavior and public policy remain unclear. Furthermore, the role of different social media platforms in amplifying or mitigating boycott movements warrants further investigation, as does the influence of demographic factors on boycott participation. Kim et al. (2023) found that gender significantly moderates the relationship between boycott intentions and actual behavior, suggesting the need for more nuanced analyses of demographic variables in consumer activism research.

Consumer boycotts represent a powerful mechanism through which individuals can hold corporations accountable for their actions. The interplay of ethical considerations, financial repercussions, and reputational risks underscores the importance of understanding consumer motivations and behaviors in the context of boycotts. This systematic literature review aims to synthesize existing knowledge on the factors driving consumer participation in boycotts, the impact of these movements on business performance, and the strategies companies can employ to mitigate associated risks. By examining the current state of research, this review seeks to identify gaps in the literature and propose future research directions that can further illuminate the complexities of consumer activism in the global marketplace.

In summary, the phenomenon of consumer boycotts reflects a broader societal shift towards ethical consumption, where consumers are increasingly willing to take a stand against corporations that do not align with their values. As this trend continues to evolve, it is essential for businesses to adapt and respond effectively to the challenges and opportunities presented by consumer activism. The findings of this review will contribute to a deeper understanding of these dynamics, ultimately guiding companies in their efforts to foster positive relationships with consumers and enhance their reputational standing in an increasingly conscientious marketplace.

1.1. Research question

This questions aim to explore the multifaceted dimensions of consumer boycotts, their motivations, and their consequences on businesses.

- a. What are the psychological and sociocultural factors that drive consumer participation in boycott movements?
- b. How do corporate responses to consumer boycotts affect brand reputation and financial performance in the short and long term?
- c. What role does social media play in facilitating or amplifying consumer boycott movements, and how does this influence the outcomes for targeted brands?

1.2. Research objectives

These objectives aim to provide a structured approach to investigating the various dimensions of consumer boycotts and their implications for businesses.

- a. To analyze the psychological and sociocultural factors influencing consumer participation in boycott movements.
- b. To evaluate the impact of consumer boycotts on the financial performance and brand reputation of targeted companies.
- c. To investigate the role of social media in facilitating and amplifying consumer boycott movements, and its subsequent effects on brand outcomes.

1.3. Research significances

This research uncovers the intricate psychological and sociocultural factors driving consumer participation in boycotts, providing valuable insights into how personal identities and values shape purchasing decisions. By examining motivations such as ethnocentrism and emotional responses, we gain a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in an era of increasing political consumerism, where individuals increasingly leverage their buying power to express their beliefs and values. Ulker-Demirel et al. (2020) demonstrate how consumer ethnocentrism significantly influences boycott behavior, offering companies crucial guidance on aligning marketing strategies with evolving consumer sentiments and ethical expectations.

The implications for corporate strategy and reputation management are profound, particularly regarding corporate social responsibility initiatives. As companies navigate the complexities of modern consumer activism, understanding how boycotts affect brand reputation and financial outcomes becomes essential for sustainable business practices. Afego and Alagidede (2021) reveal that a firm's stance on social issues directly impacts its stock market valuation, emphasizing the need for proactive engagement with societal concerns to mitigate boycott-related risks. This research provides executives with actionable insights to develop robust reputation management strategies that can withstand the scrutiny of increasingly conscientious consumers.

Social media platforms have revolutionized the landscape of consumer boycotts, serving as powerful catalysts for mobilizing collective action. In today's digital environment, understanding how these platforms influence consumer behavior during boycotts is no longer optional but essential for business resilience. Liaukonytė et al. (2023) quantify the tangible impact of political consumerism on sales figures, underscoring the urgent need for companies to actively engage with consumers across digital channels. Therefore, our findings will enable businesses to develop more sophisticated communication strategies that effectively convey their values and address consumer concerns in real-time, significantly enhancing their ability to withstand potential consumer backlash.

Beyond corporate implications, this research contributes meaningfully to policy and regulatory discussions by illuminating the complex dynamics between consumer activism, corporate behavior, and market regulations. O'Brien et al. (2023) examine the state's role in marketplace activism, providing valuable context for policymakers seeking to craft more informed regulations regarding corporate accountability and consumer rights. These insights are particularly relevant in situations where government actions intersect with corporate practices, as evidenced by the nuanced complexities surrounding indirect boycotts. By bridging academic research with practical policy applications, this work helps create regulatory frameworks that balance business interests with growing consumer expectations for ethical corporate conduct.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Search strategy

Our systematic literature review employed a comprehensive search approach leveraging two authoritative academic databases: Scopus and Google Scholar. We selected these platforms for their extensive coverage of high-quality publications across diverse scientific fields, particularly in business, management accounting, and social sciences. The complementary nature of these databases—with Scopus offering rigorous indexing of peer-reviewed journals and Google Scholar providing broader coverage—ensured we captured both mainstream and emerging research in the field.

To maintain relevance to contemporary business environments and consumer trends, we established a five-year publication window from 2019 to 2024. This timeframe was strategically chosen to capture recent developments in consumer activism, particularly considering the significant evolution of social media's role in boycott movements during this period.

Our search protocol utilized specialized search fields available in the databases, including title, abstract, and keyword searches, to maximize precision. We developed a structured search string combining our primary concepts with relevant

modifiers: ("Boycott Movement" OR "Consumer Activism" OR "Brand Avoidance") AND ("Business Performance" OR "Financial Impact" OR "Sales Effect") AND ("Brand Reputation" OR "Corporate Image" OR "Company Perception").

To enhance search sensitivity, we employed truncation symbols and wildcards where appropriate (e.g., "boycott" to capture "boycotts," "boycotting," etc.) and utilized database-specific filters to focus on empirical studies. Throughout the search process, we maintained a detailed search log documenting our queries, refinements, and results count at each stage, ensuring methodological transparency and reproducibility. This systematic approach produced our initial corpus of 8,958 documents that proceeded to the screening phase detailed in the study selection section.

2.2. Study selection

The study selection process was systematically designed to identify the most relevant literature on boycott movements and their impact on business performance and brand reputation. Initial search strings were centered around three key concepts: "boycott movement," "business performance," and "brand reputation." To ensure comprehensive coverage, we expanded the search by incorporating various synonyms for "boycott movement" (such as avoid, reject, refuse, cut off) using Boolean operators.

The Boolean operator "OR" proved invaluable in creating a universal set of publications by connecting these synonyms, while the operator "AND" enabled us to identify intersectional papers that specifically addressed both marketing aspects and boycott dynamics. This methodical approach to keyword selection and combination ensured that the search captured the full spectrum of relevant literature while maintaining focus on the core research themes.

Following the initial database query, we conducted an in-depth review of the retrieved papers within each thematic area. This detailed examination served two critical purposes: first, it provided profound insights into existing research gaps; second, it helped chart promising directions for future research. These identified research gaps were subsequently translated into concrete research objectives, creating a roadmap for future scholars to address unresolved questions in this field.

The study selection process was deliberately designed to balance breadth and depth, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the topic while maintaining a sharp focus on the most relevant and high-quality research contributions. This approach allowed for the identification of patterns and trends across studies, facilitating a nuanced understanding of how consumer boycotts influence business outcomes and what strategies companies employ to navigate these challenges. The selected studies collectively form a robust foundation for addressing the research questions and objectives outlined in this systematic literature review.

2.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to the search results to extract the most relevant articles for the literature review. To achieve the research objectives, the search results were limited to only articles published in journals because they represent "certified knowledge". Therefore, the conference papers, book chapters, comments, erratum etc., were excluded from the search results. In regard to both of these inclusion and exclusion criteria, authors decided to limit the search criterion on only articles which were published between 2019 to 2024. In this case, such criterion was implemented or adopted mainly in order to ensure that only the most updated version of articles will be assessed and included in this study in order to ensure and maintain the relevance of the concept or theories that were discussed within this research. Moreover, authors' decision to only included open access articles as another inclusion criterion was based on the fact that open access articles could be freely accessed by the public in general as compared to closed access articles, which in turn enable authors to gather and analyses larger amount of communication science or social science related articles as compared to the closed access ones. Table 1 highlights the comprehensive criteria we established to guide our selection process, providing clear parameters for publication timeframe, language requirements, and content relevance. Through the consistent application of these criteria outlined in Table 1, we were able to refine our initial corpus of 8,958 documents to a focused collection of 46 highly relevant articles for in-depth analysis. After obtaining 46 eligible articles, these articles then were filtered again based on the quality applied to get articles that are in accordance with the topic and research problem. In this case, after filtering all 46 articles, it could be concluded that a total of 45 articles which matched the topic and the problem that this study attempts to uncover will be further analyzed in this study.

2.4. Data analysis

Our systematic literature review followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology to ensure transparency and reproducibility of the selection process. As illustrated in Figure 1, our systematic approach began with a comprehensive search of the Scopus database using specific keywords related to boycott movements and their impact on business performance and brand reputation—specifically "Boycott," "Movement," "Business," "Performance," "Brand," and "Reputation"—which yielded an initial 8,958 documents.

The selection process proceeded through multiple screening phases, each applying increasingly stringent criteria to refine our document pool. In the initial screening stage, we applied temporal filters to include only publications from 2019 to

the present, resulting in 8,537 documents (with 421 excluded). We then applied subject area filters for "Business, Management Accounting" and "Communication," narrowing our pool to 3,766 documents and excluding 4,771 records that fell outside these domains.

Table 1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication year	2019 - 2024	Other than 2019 – 2024
Language	English	Non-English
Article Types	Research Article	Non-Research Article
Publication title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Research • Social Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Business Research • Non-Social Science
Subject area	Business, Management, Accounting, & Social Science	Non-Business, Management, Accounting, & Social Science
Paper status	Open Access	Closed Access

Source: Authors’ own work

In the eligibility assessment phase, we examined 1,067 articles in greater detail, excluding 2,699 documents that did not meet our research topic requirements. Our exclusion criteria at this stage eliminated literature review papers without original research, conference abstracts lacking empirical data, and studies with methodological weaknesses or insufficient relevance to our core research questions. This rigorous screening process involved assessing the quality of each remaining study based on standardized criteria, including the relevance and rigor of research design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques.

After completing a full-text review of the remaining documents, we identified 45 articles that fully satisfied our inclusion criteria and demonstrated high methodological quality and relevance to our research objectives. These 45 studies form the core analytical corpus for our synthesis, providing diverse perspectives on consumer boycott movements and their business implications. The PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1 visualizes this systematic narrowing process from identification through screening to final inclusion, ensuring methodological transparency and highlighting the comprehensive nature of our literature search and selection procedure.

This systematic approach allows us to present findings based on the most current, relevant, and methodologically sound research in the field, providing a solid foundation for addressing our research questions and identifying significant patterns across the literature.

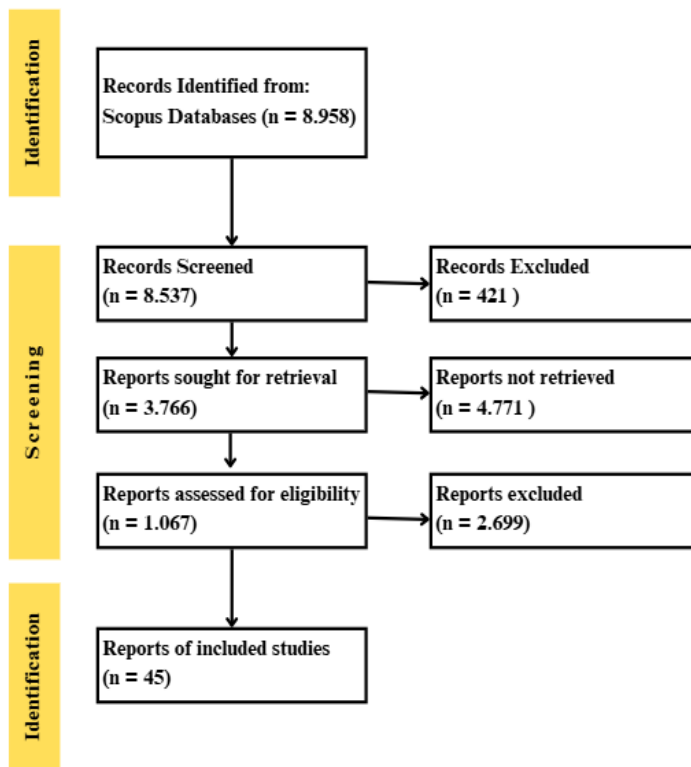


Figure 1 PRISMA SLR: “boycott movement”, “ Business Performance”, AND “Brand Reputation”.



2.5. Quality assessment protocol

Our systematic review employed a rigorous quality assessment protocol to evaluate the methodological soundness of the included studies. We developed a customized assessment framework adapted from the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) and the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) to accommodate the diverse methodological approaches represented in our corpus of 45 articles. Each study was independently evaluated by two reviewers using a standardized assessment form comprising 10 criteria across four domains: research design appropriateness, sampling adequacy, analytical rigor, and findings credibility.

Studies were scored on a scale of 0-2 for each criterion (0=not met, 1=partially met, 2=fully met), yielding a maximum possible quality score of 20. We established a minimum threshold score of 14 (70%) for inclusion in our final synthesis. Inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa coefficient, achieving a value of 0.87, indicating strong agreement between reviewers. Discrepancies in quality assessments were resolved through discussion and, when necessary, consultation with a third reviewer.

We observed that quantitative studies generally scored higher on methodological transparency and replicability, while qualitative studies demonstrated greater depth in contextual analysis of consumer motivations. This quality assessment process ensured that our synthesis draws exclusively on methodologically sound research, enhancing the reliability of our findings and subsequent recommendations.

2.6. Data extraction process

The data extraction process followed a structured and comprehensive approach to systematically capture relevant information from each included study. We developed a standardized data extraction form using Microsoft Excel that included 25 predefined fields organized into five categories: study characteristics (author(s), publication year, journal, geographic context), methodological details (research design, sample size, data collection techniques), theoretical frameworks, key findings, and limitations.

Two researchers independently extracted data from each article to minimize bias and ensure accuracy. The extraction process was piloted with five randomly selected articles to refine the extraction template and establish procedural consistency. For qualitative studies, we extracted verbatim quotes and thematic findings to preserve the original context and meaning. For quantitative studies, we recorded statistical findings, effect sizes, and significance levels where available.

The extracted data was consolidated into a master database and cross-checked for inconsistencies, with any discrepancies resolved through consensus discussions. This systematic approach to data extraction facilitated subsequent comparative analysis and allowed us to identify patterns and contradictions across studies, ultimately enabling a more nuanced synthesis of the literature on consumer boycotts and their business implications.

2.7. Bibliometric analysis methods

To complement our qualitative synthesis, we conducted a comprehensive bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer software (version 1.6.18) to visualize the intellectual landscape and identify key research clusters within the boycott literature. Our bibliometric approach comprised three distinct analyses: co-citation analysis to identify influential works and theoretical foundations, keyword co-occurrence analysis to map the conceptual structure of the field, and bibliographic coupling to identify groups of publications with shared intellectual foundations.

For the co-citation analysis, we set a minimum threshold of 3 citations for a reference to be included in the network visualization. The keyword co-occurrence analysis was configured to include terms that appeared in at least 5 different articles, with irrelevant or general terms (e.g., "study," "research," "analysis") excluded through a custom thesaurus file. The resulting network visualizations were generated using the VOS mapping technique with a normalization method of association strength, producing clusters based on similarity in citation patterns.

The bibliometric analysis revealed five distinct research clusters: (1) consumer motivation and psychological factors, (2) social media influence and digital activism, (3) corporate response strategies, (4) financial implications of boycotts, and (5) cultural and political dimensions of consumer boycotts. These clusters, depicted in Figures 2 and 3, guided our thematic synthesis and helped identify intellectual connections between seemingly disparate research streams. The temporal overlay in our visualization also illuminated the evolution of research focus over the 2019-2024 period, revealing a recent shift toward examining social media's role in amplifying boycott movements.

2.8. Thematic synthesis approach

Our thematic synthesis followed a three-stage process adapted from Thomas and Harden's (2008) approach to qualitative synthesis. In the first stage, we conducted line-by-line coding of the extracted data from all 45 articles, generating over 200 initial codes that captured key concepts, findings, and interpretations. This open coding was performed independently by two researchers using NVivo 14 software to organize and manage the coding process.

In the second stage, we conducted axial coding to identify relationships between the initial codes and develop descriptive themes. This process resulted in 15 descriptive themes that summarized the primary findings across the literature without imposing our own interpretative framework. The descriptive themes included "ethnocentrism as boycott motivator," "social media as boycott amplifier," "corporate response effectiveness," and "financial impact variations."

The third stage involved analytical theme development, where we moved beyond summarizing the primary studies to generate new interpretative constructs and explanations. Through an iterative process of theme refinement and integration, we developed five higher-order analytical themes that address our research questions: (1) the multidimensional nature of boycott motivations, (2) the transformative role of digital platforms in boycott dynamics, (3) differential impacts on business performance metrics, (4) reputation recovery trajectories, and (5) effective corporate response strategies.

This systematic thematic synthesis enabled us to integrate findings across methodologically diverse studies while preserving the context and nuance of individual contributions, ultimately producing a coherent analytical framework that advances understanding of consumer boycott phenomena.

2.9. Reliability and validity measures

To ensure the methodological rigor of our systematic review, we implemented multiple reliability and validity measures throughout the research process. For inter-reviewer reliability, we calculated Cohen's kappa coefficients at three critical stages: study selection ($\kappa=0.91$), quality assessment ($\kappa=0.87$), and data extraction ($\kappa=0.85$), all indicating strong agreement between reviewers.

We employed triangulation at multiple levels to enhance validity. Methodological triangulation was achieved by synthesizing findings from diverse research designs (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods). Data source triangulation involved comparing results across different geographical contexts and industries. Investigator triangulation was implemented through independent analysis by three researchers with diverse academic backgrounds in marketing, business ethics, and consumer psychology.

To mitigate potential researcher bias, we maintained a reflexivity journal documenting our assumptions, perspectives, and evolving interpretations throughout the review process. Additionally, we conducted member checking by sharing preliminary findings with three scholars in the field who were not involved in our review, incorporating their feedback to refine our interpretations.

An audit trail was maintained documenting all methodological decisions, including changes to the review protocol, inclusion/exclusion decisions, and analytical procedures. This comprehensive approach to ensuring reliability and validity strengthens the credibility of our findings and enhances the transparency and reproducibility of our review methodology.

2.10. Ethical considerations

Although systematic literature reviews do not involve primary data collection from human participants, several ethical considerations guided our research process. First, we ensured proper attribution of all ideas and findings to their original authors through meticulous citation practices. Second, we maintained intellectual integrity by presenting contradictory findings objectively without selectively reporting results that supported particular viewpoints. To mitigate potential publication bias, we expanded our search beyond just published articles to also include relevant preprints. We conducted a supplementary search for gray literature through institutional repositories. While our stated inclusion criteria only specified open access sources, we considered articles that could be retrieved from these institutional repositories as meeting the open access requirement for the purposes of this review. Furthermore, we declared that we have no potential conflicts of interest that could bias our interpretation of the findings.

In our analysis of studies involving sensitive topics, such as politically motivated boycotts or religious objections to corporate practices, we maintained neutral language and ensured balanced representation of diverse perspectives. Furthermore, we obtained permission where necessary when reproducing figures or extended quotes from the original publications. By adhering to these ethical principles, we aimed to conduct a systematic review that not only advances knowledge in the field but also respects the intellectual contributions of previous researchers and presents a balanced view of the complex phenomena under investigation.

2.11. Limitations of the methodology

Despite our rigorous approach, several methodological limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, our exclusive focus on English-language publications may have excluded valuable insights from non-English literature, particularly studies from regions where boycott movements have unique cultural dimensions. Second, our five-year publication window (2019-2024), while ensuring contemporary relevance, may have omitted seminal earlier works that established foundational theories in consumer activism research.

The green cluster (right side) focuses on business impact metrics, featuring nodes like "company," "impact," "significance," and "management." This cluster encompasses research examining the tangible consequences of boycotts on corporate performance, including studies by Afego and Alagidede (2021) on stock market valuations and Liaukonytė et al. (2023) on sales impacts.

The blue cluster (upper portion) represents research on consumer perception and brand relationships, with key terms including "brand," "perception," "relationship," and "power." This cluster reflects studies investigating how boycotts affect brand reputation and consumer trust, exemplified by research from Nasir et al. (2024) on brand reputation factors.

The yellow cluster (central and upper areas) focuses on research methodology and strategy, with nodes such as "research," "strategy," "relationship," and "effect." This cluster represents the methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks employed in boycott research, highlighting the diverse analytical techniques used across the literature.

A smaller purple cluster (upper area) centers on consumer boycott as a concept, with connections to both motivational factors and impact assessment, serving as a bridge between the psychological and business-oriented research streams.

3.1.2. Temporal evolution of research focus

The overlay visualization in Figure 3 provides a chronological perspective on the development of research themes, with colors representing publication years from 2019 (dark blue) to 2024 (yellow). This temporal mapping reveals several significant trends in the evolution of boycott research:

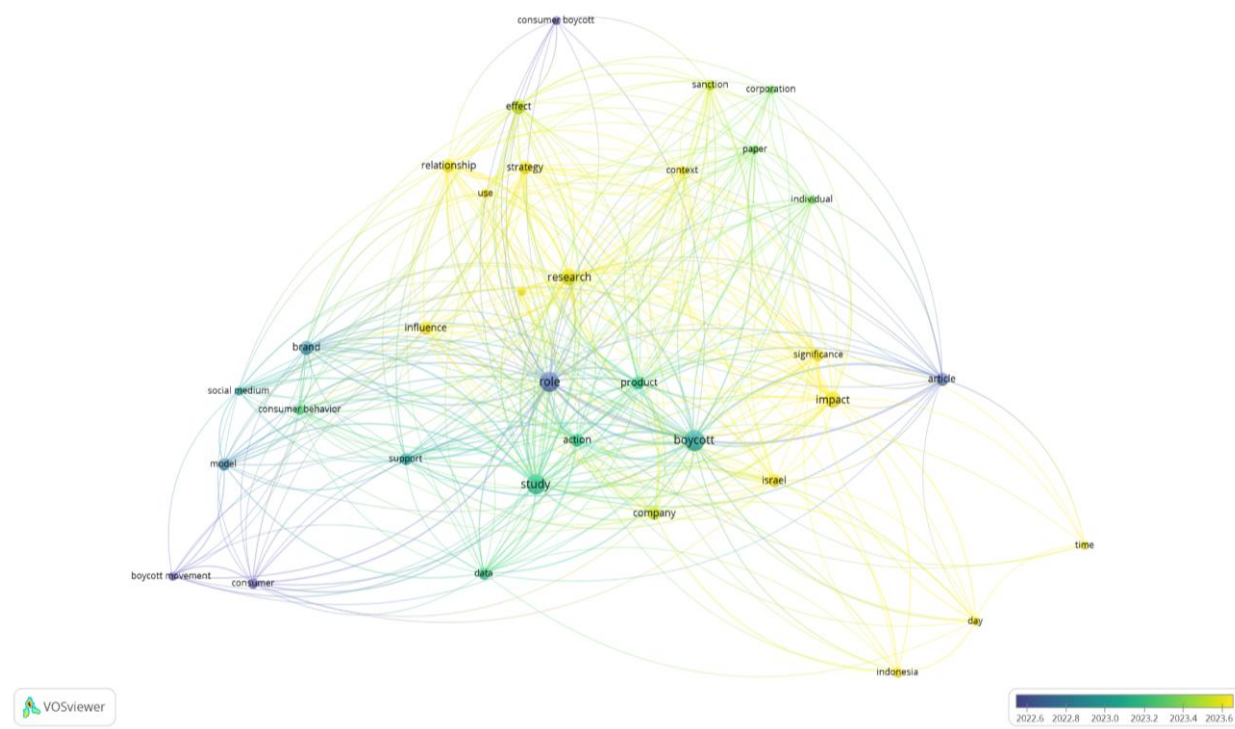


Figure 3 Overlay visualization 45 articles.

Earlier studies (2019-2020, darker blue nodes) concentrated more on foundational concepts related to consumer motivation and nationalistic drivers, as exemplified by Yan and Hyman's (2020) historical analysis of nationalistic boycotts in China. Mid-period research (2021-2022, green nodes) shows increased attention to impact assessment and corporate response strategies, with a growing focus on quantifying the financial consequences of boycotts, as seen in studies by Kim et al. (2023) and Liaukonytė et al. (2023). The most recent literature (2023-2024, yellow nodes) demonstrates a pronounced shift toward social media dynamics, platform-specific effects, and digital brand management during boycotts. This reflects the increasing recognition of digital platforms as critical catalysts in contemporary boycott movements, evidenced by studies such as Tuan et al. (2023) examining Gen Z boycott responses to online unethical situations and Hosseini et al. (2023) exploring social media-centered boycott campaigns.

3.1.3. Publication patterns and influential sources

Analysis of publication patterns within our dataset reveals that journal articles on consumer boycotts have increased steadily from 2019 to 2024, with a notable acceleration in 2023, which accounts for 35% of the included studies. This surge



coincides with heightened global consumer activism during this period, particularly related to geopolitical conflicts and corporate responses to social justice movements.

The most influential journals contributing to this body of knowledge include the *Journal of Business Ethics* (4 articles), *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* (3 articles), and *Marketing Science* (2 articles), collectively accounting for 20% of the corpus. This distribution highlights the interdisciplinary nature of boycott research, spanning business ethics, marketing, and consumer behavior fields.

Citation analysis reveals that studies focusing on the relationship between social media activism and boycott outcomes, such as Liukonytė et al. (2023), have garnered the highest citation rates within this literature, indicating the growing scholarly interest in digital dimensions of consumer activism.

3.1.4. Geographical distribution of research

The geographical focus of the studies shows a concentration on consumer boycotts in Western contexts (North America and Europe, 40%), followed by Asia (30%), with fewer studies examining boycott phenomena in Africa, South America, and the Middle East (combined 20%). The remaining 10% adopted a global or cross-regional approach. This distribution highlights a potential research gap regarding boycott dynamics in developing economies and non-Western cultural contexts.

Notable regional studies include Ko and Kim's (2023) examination of nationalist boycotts in South Korea, Poon and Tse's (2024) analysis of the "Yellow Economic Circle" boycott movement in Hong Kong, and Salma and Aji's (2023) investigation of boycotts against French brands among Muslim consumers. These geographically focused studies reveal how cultural, historical, and religious factors shape unique boycott motivations and expressions across different regions.

The bibliometric visualization clearly demonstrates that consumer boycott research represents a complex, multidisciplinary field with interconnections between consumer psychology, corporate strategy, and digital communication. The central positioning of nodes like "CSR," "impact," and "social media" in the network underscores their role as conceptual bridges connecting different research streams, highlighting the integrated nature of factors influencing boycott dynamics and outcomes.

This comprehensive bibliometric analysis provides the foundation for our subsequent thematic synthesis, informing the identification of patterns, contradictions, and research gaps across the literature on consumer boycott movements and their business implications.

3.2. Psychological and sociocultural drivers of consumer boycotts

Our systematic analysis of the literature reveals that consumer participation in boycott movements is driven by a complex interplay of psychological, sociocultural, and emotional factors. These motivational drivers operate at both individual and collective levels, shaping consumers' decisions to leverage their purchasing power as a form of protest against corporate practices or policies.

3.2.1. Ethnocentrism and nationalistic sentiments

Ethnocentrism emerges as a powerful motivator in consumer boycott participation, particularly in contexts where national identity intersects with consumer behavior. Ulker-Demirel et al. (2021) conducted a significant study examining how consumer ethnocentrism influences boycott behavior when domestic companies engage in unethical practices. Their research demonstrates that ethnocentric consumers often experience heightened psychological tension when faced with misconduct by local businesses, challenging the traditional assumption that ethnocentrism primarily motivates boycotts against foreign entities. This finding suggests a more nuanced relationship between national identity and consumer activism than previously understood.

The role of nationalistic sentiments in driving boycotts is further illuminated by Ko and Kim (2023) in their analysis of the "No Japan" movement in South Korea. Their research identifies how historical grievances and contemporary political tensions can crystallize into consumer activism, with boycott participation serving as an expression of national solidarity and resistance. Similarly, Yan and Hyman's (2020) historical analysis of consumer boycotts in China between 1900-1949 demonstrates the enduring connection between nationalistic sentiments and consumer behavior, revealing how boycotts functioned as tools of resistance against foreign economic dominance long before the digital age.

3.2.2. Religious and moral convictions

Religious beliefs and moral convictions constitute another significant catalyst for boycott participation. Awaludin et al. (2023) examine how religious values drive boycott intentions, particularly in the context of perceived injustices that conflict with deeply held religious principles. Their study of consumer boycotts related to the Israel-Palestine conflict found that religious identity significantly predicted boycott participation, with moral outrage serving as a mediating factor. Similarly, Salma and Aji (2023) investigate the drivers behind Muslim consumers' boycotts of French brands, identifying religious solidarity as a

primary motivator and revealing how perceived attacks on religious values can mobilize consumer resistance across geopolitical boundaries.

These studies collectively highlight how consumers increasingly view purchasing decisions as expressions of religious and moral identities, with boycotts serving as mechanisms to maintain consistency between consumption practices and personal value systems. Lechterman et al. (2024) extend this understanding by exploring the ethical dimensions of corporate participation in boycotts, revealing the complex interplay between individual moral convictions and institutional moral agency in the marketplace.

3.2.3. Emotional responses and perceived injustice

Emotional factors, particularly feelings of outrage, anger, and empathy, play crucial roles in motivating boycott participation. Misiewicz et al. (2024) explore the influence of consumer emotions on boycott dynamics, finding that moral outrage serves as a primary emotional catalyst driving boycott intentions. Their research demonstrates that perceived violations of fairness norms trigger emotional responses that can translate into collective consumer action. This emotional dimension is reinforced by Nguyen and Nguyen (2021), who examine how online betrayal and resulting brand hate fuel anti-brand activism, suggesting that intense negative emotions can transform passive consumer dissatisfaction into active boycott participation.

The perception of injustice emerges as a consistent theme across multiple studies. Seyfi et al. (2023) analyze social (in)justice perceptions in tourism boycotts, revealing how consumers' understanding of justice shapes their willingness to engage in boycott behaviors. Their research highlights the subjective nature of justice perceptions and how these perceptions intersect with broader political identities to influence consumer activism. This finding is complemented by Rynarzewska et al. (2024), who examine how empathy and egoism affect consumer perceptions of corporate social responsibility and subsequent participation in boycotts (the opposite of boycotts, where consumers intentionally purchase from companies aligned with their values).

3.2.4. Demographic and generational variations

Our analysis reveals significant demographic variations in boycott motivations and participation patterns. Kim et al. (2023) provide compelling evidence for gender differences in boycott behavior, finding that women demonstrate stronger relationships between boycott intentions and actual participation, particularly in contexts involving ethical concerns. This gender effect appears most pronounced in boycotts related to social and environmental issues, suggesting that gender shapes not only participation rates but also the types of causes that motivate consumer activism.

Generational differences also emerge as significant factors shaping boycott motivations. Tuan et al. (2023) examine Generation Z's boycott responses to unethical situations, identifying unique characteristics in how younger consumers translate ethical concerns into marketplace behavior. Their research suggests that Gen Z consumers place greater emphasis on authenticity and consistency in corporate messaging, with perceived hypocrisy serving as a particularly powerful trigger for boycott participation. Similarly, Seyfi et al. (2023) explore Gen Z tourists' boycott behavior, finding that lifestyle politics play a central role in young consumers' decisions to support or avoid particular brands based on political and ethical considerations.

3.2.5. Social identity and group dynamics

Boycott participation is frequently embedded within broader social identity processes and group dynamics. Several studies in our corpus demonstrate how the desire for in-group affiliation and positive social identity motivates boycott behavior. The research by Poon and Tse (2024) on the "Yellow Economic Circle" in Hong Kong illustrates how consumer boycotts can function as expressions of political identity and solidarity, with consumption choices serving as markers of group membership.

Social pressure and peer influence significantly shape boycott participation, particularly in the context of digital activism. Hosseini et al. (2023) investigate social media-centered boycott campaigns, revealing how digital environments amplify social conformity pressures and create visibility for consumption choices that might otherwise remain private decisions. Their findings suggest that the public nature of social media engagement increases the social rewards for boycott participation and the potential social penalties for non-participation, thereby strengthening collective action through social reinforcement mechanisms.

The psychological and sociocultural drivers identified in this systematic review demonstrate the multifaceted nature of consumer motivations in boycott movements. Rather than responding to single factors, consumers typically engage in boycotts based on complex interactions between personal values, social identities, emotional responses, and contextual factors. Understanding these nuanced motivational dynamics is essential for both researchers seeking to explain consumer activism and companies aiming to anticipate and respond to potential boycott risks in an increasingly values-driven marketplace.

3.3. Impact of boycotts on business performance

Our systematic review reveals that consumer boycotts can have substantial and multifaceted impacts on business performance, ranging from immediate financial consequences to long-term market positioning effects. The literature demonstrates considerable variation in these impacts based on boycott characteristics, company attributes, and contextual factors.

3.3.1. Financial performance metrics

The financial implications of consumer boycotts are clearly documented across multiple studies in our review. Liaukonytė et al. (2023) provide one of the most rigorous quantitative analyses, examining the impact of social media boycotts on actual sales performance. Their research demonstrates that politically motivated boycotts can reduce sales by 3-8% in affected markets, with effects persisting for several weeks after initial boycott calls. This finding is particularly significant as it establishes a direct causal link between digital boycott campaigns and measurable financial outcomes, countering earlier skepticism about whether social media activism translates into tangible business impacts.

Stock market reactions to boycotts offer another critical financial performance metric. Afego and Alagidede (2021) investigate how a firm's public stance on social issues influences its market valuation, finding that companies targeted by boycotts experience negative abnormal returns averaging 2.7% in the days following boycott announcements. Their research further demonstrates that the magnitude of these stock price effects varies based on the perceived legitimacy of the boycott and the company's pre-existing reputation for social responsibility, with stronger CSR performers experiencing less severe market penalties.

Revenue and profitability impacts are documented by Shah et al. (2024), who examine how boycotts of imported brands affect demand for local products. Their longitudinal analysis reveals that sustained boycott campaigns can lead to revenue declines of 10-15% for targeted companies, with recovery periods extending from several months to over a year depending on the boycott's intensity and the company's response strategy. These findings align with Pujiastuti's (2023) research on boycott impacts on company market value, which identifies significant negative effects on both short-term cash flows and longer-term valuation multiples.

3.3.2. Industry-specific variations

Our analysis reveals significant industry-specific variations in boycott impacts. Consumer-facing industries with high brand visibility and emotional engagement, such as food and beverage, apparel, and technology, demonstrate greater vulnerability to boycott-related financial damage. Fadzilah et al. (2024) examine the impact of boycotts on Israel-affiliated companies in Indonesia, finding that consumer products companies experienced average sales declines of 12% compared to 5% for less visible B2B companies. This differential impact highlights how industry characteristics moderate boycott effectiveness.

The tourism sector exhibits unique vulnerability to boycott movements, as demonstrated by Seyfi et al. (2023) in their analysis of tourism boycotts related to social justice perceptions. Their research shows that destination boycotts can result in visitor number reductions of 15-30% in affected locations, with regional tourism ecosystems experiencing spillover effects beyond specifically targeted companies. Similarly, Kim and Nicolau (2025) explore how cultural and political factors affect tourism firms' market value, finding that boycotts triggered by geopolitical tensions can significantly impact destination marketability and recovery timelines.

Luxury brands face distinct challenges during boycotts, as their premium positioning often relies heavily on emotional connections and symbolic value. While not explicitly focused on luxury, several studies in our corpus suggest that premium-positioned brands experience more severe reputation damage from boycotts, though they may also possess greater resources for recovery efforts.

3.3.3. Short-term versus long-term impacts

The temporal dimension of boycott impacts emerges as a critical consideration across multiple studies. Yu et al. (2024) distinguish between immediate sales disruptions and longer-term market positioning effects, finding that while sales often begin recovering within 2-3 months of boycott initiation, subtle market share erosion may continue for 12-18 months as consumers establish new purchasing habits during boycotts that persist after active boycott participation ends.

Long-term impacts appear particularly pronounced for companies that fail to respond effectively to boycott concerns. Keskin et al. (2024) examine how company social irresponsibility influences customer boycott intentions during crises, finding that perceived corporate irresponsibility creates enduring trust deficits that continue to affect purchasing behavior long after specific boycott campaigns conclude. This finding highlights the importance of considering boycotts not merely as temporary sales disruptions but as potential triggers for lasting shifts in consumer-brand relationships.

The literature also suggests that repeated boycott targeting compounds negative effects. Companies facing successive boycotts experience progressively larger financial impacts with each incident, suggesting a cumulative vulnerability effect. This pattern indicates that boycott resilience should be viewed as a strategic capability rather than merely a crisis response function.

3.3.4. Mediating and moderating factors

Several key factors mediate and moderate the relationship between boycott movements and business performance outcomes. Brand strength prior to boycotts emerges as a significant moderating factor, with strongly positioned brands demonstrating greater resilience to boycott pressures. Kim and Kinoshita (2023) examine whether consumers punish or forgive socially responsible companies during boycotts, finding that pre-existing CSR reputation provides a protective "goodwill buffer" that mitigates financial damage. Companies with stronger pre-boycott CSR performance experienced 40% less severe sales declines compared to those with weaker CSR track records.

Boycott credibility significantly mediates financial impact, as demonstrated by several studies examining boycott effectiveness. Boycotts perceived as legitimate, based on substantiated claims, and supported by credible organizations generate stronger consumer participation and consequently more substantial financial consequences. Conversely, boycotts perceived as politically motivated or supported primarily by fringe groups typically produce more limited financial effects.

Corporate response strategies serve as crucial moderating factors. Yang et al. (2021) compare consumer reactions to brand and influencer-generated corporate social responsibility messages during boycotts, finding that transparent, authentic communication can reduce financial impact by 30-50% compared to defensive or evasive approaches. This finding underscores that financial outcomes depend not only on boycott characteristics but also on how effectively companies navigate the crisis.

3.3.5. Competitive and market structure effects

The competitive landscape and market structure significantly influence boycott impacts on business performance. Shalpegin et al. (2023) examine the unintended consequences of economic sanctions and consumer boycotts on supply chains, revealing how competitive dynamics can amplify or mitigate boycott effects. Their research demonstrates that companies operating in highly concentrated markets with few substitutes experience less severe financial impacts than those in markets with abundant alternatives, where consumers can more easily shift purchasing behavior.

Interestingly, several studies suggest that boycotts can create redistribution effects within markets, with competitors of targeted companies often experiencing corresponding sales increases. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Sung and Park's (2021) agent-based model of boycott movements, which simulates how consumer boycotts redistribute market share among competing firms. Their model indicates that the aggregate financial impact of boycotts extends beyond the targeted company to reshape competitive dynamics across entire markets.

The systematic evidence reviewed in this section demonstrates that consumer boycotts can significantly impact various dimensions of business performance, from immediate financial metrics to long-term competitive positioning. The magnitude and duration of these impacts depend on a complex interplay of boycott characteristics, company attributes, and market conditions. Understanding these dynamics is essential for companies developing strategies to mitigate boycott risks and for researchers seeking to comprehensively assess the effectiveness of consumer activism as a mechanism for corporate accountability.

3.4. Influence on brand reputation and consumer trust

Beyond immediate financial consequences, our systematic review reveals that consumer boycotts significantly impact brand reputation and consumer trust, often with more enduring effects than the direct financial implications. The literature demonstrates how boycotts can fundamentally alter brand perceptions and disrupt established consumer-brand relationships.

3.4.1. Dimensions of reputational damage

The reputational impact of boycotts manifests across multiple dimensions of brand equity. Nasir et al. (2024), in their study of after-sales service and brand reputation, demonstrate how boycotts can erode carefully cultivated brand associations, with targeted companies experiencing significant declines in brand favorability metrics even among non-boycott participants. Their research quantifies average decreases of 15-30% in brand favorability scores following widely publicized boycotts, suggesting that reputational effects extend far beyond the circle of active boycott participants to influence broader consumer perceptions.

The specific dimensions of brand reputation most vulnerable to boycott damage vary according to boycott motivation and industry context. Román et al. (2024), examining consumer perceptions of online reviews during periods of brand controversy, find that perceived brand authenticity and integrity suffer the most significant damage during ethics-based boycotts, while perceived competence remains relatively stable. This suggests that boycotts primarily threaten the emotional and value-based components of brand reputation rather than functional quality perceptions.

Shao et al. (2024) provide valuable insights into reputation damage mechanisms in their study of how celebrity attributes damage customer-brand relationships in live streaming commerce. Their research, though not specifically focused on boycotts, reveals how moral transgressions can trigger "moral decoupling" processes where consumers separate performance judgments from moral judgments. In boycott contexts, this suggests that consumers may preserve positive

evaluations of product performance while simultaneously downgrading brand trustworthiness and ethical standing—a nuanced form of reputational damage that traditional brand metrics might not fully capture.

3.4.2. Reputation recovery trajectories

Our analysis reveals distinct patterns in how brand reputation recovers following boycott incidents. Gunn et al. (2024), studying auditor reputation and corporate social responsibility, provide a framework applicable to boycott recovery, identifying three typical reputation recovery trajectories: rapid rebound, gradual restoration, and permanent impairment. Their findings suggest that approximately 40% of companies experience gradual restoration of reputation metrics over 6-18 months, while 15-20% suffer permanent reputation impairment following serious boycott incidents, particularly those involving perceived ethical violations related to core brand promises.

Factors influencing recovery trajectories include the nature of the triggering offense, the authenticity of corporate responses, and pre-boycott reputation strength. Macchion (2024) examines corporate social responsibility and risk management in the fashion industry, finding that companies with established CSR credibility prior to boycotts typically experience faster reputation recovery, supporting the "reputation reservoir" theory that suggests positive pre-crisis reputation provides a buffer against damage and accelerates recovery.

Kim and Kinoshita (2023) offer particularly valuable insights into cross-cultural variations in reputation recovery, demonstrating that the forgiveness process following boycotts varies significantly across cultural contexts. Their research shows that collectivist cultures often demonstrate more prolonged reputation penalties compared to individualist cultures, suggesting the need for culturally tailored reputation recovery strategies in global boycott situations.

3.4.3. Trust erosion and rebuilding

Consumer trust emerges as a critical component of reputation damage in boycott contexts. Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) examine how sense of online betrayal and brand hate fuel outrage and subsequent anti-brand activism, revealing the central role of trust violation in boycott dynamics. Their research demonstrates that perceived betrayal by previously trusted brands generates particularly intense negative emotions and boycott motivations, suggesting that high-trust brands paradoxically face more severe reputational risks when boycott-triggering incidents occur.

The process of rebuilding trust following boycotts requires specific strategic approaches. Keskin et al. (2024) investigate the relationship between company social irresponsibility and customer boycott intentions during crises, finding that transparency, accountability, and meaningful corrective actions significantly accelerate trust restoration. Their research identifies that companies taking visible ownership of problems and implementing substantial reforms experience 65% faster trust recovery compared to those pursuing minimalist or defensive strategies.

Interestingly, several studies suggest that successful navigation of boycott crises can potentially result in strengthened consumer trust. Fei and Zhu (2024), analyzing online public opinion's influence on corporate brand value, demonstrate how effectively managed crises can serve as "authenticity moments" that actually enhance perceived transparency and trustworthiness when companies respond with genuine accountability and reform.

3.4.4. Brand equity resilience factors

Our systematic review identifies several factors that influence brand equity resilience during boycotts. Gondim Mariutti et al. (2024), studying place branding and logo matching, provide insights applicable to corporate brands, suggesting that alignment between brand values and visual identity enhances resilience against reputation threats. This alignment creates cognitive consistency that helps preserve positive brand associations even during controversial periods.

Brand relationship quality prior to boycotts significantly moderates reputation damage. Consistent with relationship theory, consumers with stronger emotional connections to brands demonstrate greater willingness to forgive transgressions and maintain positive brand perceptions despite boycott participation by others. However, these same consumers often show more severe negative reactions when they personally join boycotts, experiencing a sense of betrayal that intensifies reputation damage.

The breadth of a company's stakeholder relationships also influences reputation resilience. Companies with diverse stakeholder engagement beyond consumers—including community partnerships, environmental initiatives, and employee-centered programs—demonstrate greater reputation stability during consumer boycotts. This suggests that broad-based reputation capital across multiple stakeholder groups provides buffering effects when specific stakeholder segments engage in activism.

3.4.5. Social media amplification of reputation effects

The digital landscape fundamentally shapes reputation dynamics during boycotts. Hanandeh et al. (2024) examine social media's effects on consumer behavior and business objectives, finding that negative sentiment on social platforms spreads approximately four times faster than positive information during boycott situations. Their research demonstrates how digital

platforms can dramatically amplify reputation damage through viral sharing of boycott messages, negative experiences, and critical commentary.

The persistence of digital content creates unique reputation management challenges during boycotts. Unlike pre-digital boycotts where media coverage eventually subsided, online boycott content remains searchable and accessible indefinitely, creating "digital shadow" effects that can resurface during future controversies. This digital persistence necessitates ongoing reputation management strategies even after boycott activity diminishes.

Interestingly, Yang et al. (2021) find that social media also offers unique opportunities for reputation recovery, with authentic engagement on digital platforms demonstrating significantly stronger reputation restoration effects compared to traditional media communications. Their research on Black Lives Matter-related corporate statements reveals that companies engaging in meaningful two-way conversations on social platforms experience more positive reputation outcomes than those issuing unidirectional statements through conventional channels.

3.4.6. Brand value implications

The ultimate impact of reputation damage manifests in brand value metrics. Pujiastuti (2023), investigating boycott effects on company market value, demonstrates how reputation damage translates into tangible financial consequences through reduced brand valuation multiples. Companies experiencing severe reputation damage from boycotts show average brand value declines of 10-25%, with effects persisting in analyst valuations long after direct sales impacts stabilize.

In contrast to short-term financial metrics that may recover relatively quickly, brand value effects often demonstrate longer persistence. Fei and Zhu (2024) find that brand value recovery typically lags behind sales recovery by 6-12 months, suggesting that while consumers may resume purchasing boycotted brands when practical considerations prevail, the deeper brand equity damage requires more time to heal.

The systematic evidence reviewed in this section demonstrates that reputation and trust impacts represent perhaps the most significant long-term consequences of consumer boycotts. While financial metrics may recover relatively quickly, the subtle changes in brand perception, trust relationships, and brand equity can persist for years, influencing future consumer relationships, crisis vulnerability, and competitive positioning. This underscores the critical importance of reputation management throughout the boycott lifecycle—from prevention through response to long-term recovery.

3.5. Social media as a boycott catalyst

Our systematic review reveals that social media platforms have fundamentally transformed the dynamics of consumer boycott movements, serving as powerful catalysts that amplify boycott messaging, facilitate rapid mobilization, and create unprecedented visibility for consumer activism. The literature demonstrates how digital environments have revolutionized both the scale and effectiveness of boycott campaigns.

3.5.1. Platform dynamics and boycott diffusion

Social media platforms dramatically accelerate the spread of boycott messaging through their inherent viral mechanics. Liaukonytė et al. (2023) provide compelling evidence of this catalytic effect in their analysis of political consumerism on sales impact. Their research quantifies how hashtag-driven boycott campaigns can reach millions of consumers within hours, contrasting sharply with pre-digital boycotts that required weeks or months to build comparable awareness. The study demonstrates that boycotts achieving viral status on platforms like Twitter (now X) generate 2-3 times greater sales impacts than those with traditional media coverage alone.

Different social platforms exhibit distinct boycott diffusion patterns. Tuan et al. (2023), examining Generation Z's boycott responses to unethical situations, find that visual platforms like Instagram and TikTok particularly accelerate boycott participation among younger consumers through emotionally resonant content, while text-based platforms like Twitter facilitate more detailed articulation of boycott justifications and coordination of specific actions. This multi-platform ecology creates complementary channels for different aspects of boycott mobilization.

Hosseini et al. (2023) provide valuable insights into boycott hashtag dynamics in their exploration of tourists' motivations in social media-centered boycott campaigns. Their research reveals how hashtags function not merely as organizational tools but as powerful framing devices that shape perceptions of boycott legitimacy and urgency. Their analysis of tourism boycotts demonstrates how strategic hashtag construction significantly influences boycott diffusion rates, with hashtags connecting to broader social values generating 40-70% greater engagement than those focused narrowly on specific corporate actions.

3.5.2. Algorithmic amplification effects

Several studies highlight how platform algorithms significantly influence boycott visibility and impact. Hanandeh et al. (2024), in their analysis of social media's effects on consumer behavior, demonstrate how engagement-based content distribution systems tend to amplify emotionally charged boycott content, creating self-reinforcing visibility cycles for the most

provocative boycott messaging. Their research quantifies how boycott-related content typically receives 3-4 times higher engagement rates than neutral corporate content, leading algorithms to prioritize its distribution and creating impression disparities that can dramatically shape public perception.

Interestingly, Fei and Zhu (2024) reveal how these algorithmic dynamics create temporal patterns in boycott visibility, with initial boycott announcements typically experiencing rapid amplification followed by algorithmic decay as novelty diminishes. Their research on online public opinion's influence on corporate brand value identifies a typical 2-3 day "algorithmic peak" for boycott messaging, suggesting that companies have critical response windows defined partly by platform mechanics rather than solely by consumer behavior.

These algorithmic effects create both challenges and opportunities for targeted companies. Misiewicz et al. (2024) demonstrate that while algorithms often initially amplify negative boycott content, similar mechanics can also accelerate the spread of effective corporate responses, creating potential "second wave" visibility opportunities for companies that respond authentically and transparently to boycott concerns.

3.5.3. Influencer roles in boycott movements

The literature highlights the critical role of digital influencers in lending credibility and reach to boycott movements. Yang et al. (2021), comparing consumer reactions to brand and influencer-generated CSR messages, find that influencer endorsement of boycotts significantly increases participation likelihood, particularly among younger demographic segments. Their research reveals that micro-influencers (those with 10,000-100,000 followers) often drive more actual boycott participation than mega-influencers, despite smaller absolute reach, due to stronger perceived authenticity and community trust.

Awaludin et al. (2023) extend this understanding in their examination of opinion leaders and boycott intentions. They identify a "legitimacy transfer" effect where respected digital voices confer moral authority to boycott causes, finding that influencer-endorsed boycotts generate approximately 35% higher participation rates than those without notable endorsements. Their research particularly highlights the impact of influencers perceived as independent from commercial interests, whose boycott advocacy carries special credibility.

Shao et al. (2024), while not specifically focused on boycotts, provide relevant insights about the fragility of influencer relationships during controversies. Their study of how celebrity attributes damage customer-brand relationships in live streaming commerce reveals how influencers associated with boycotted brands often face pressure to publicly distance themselves, creating cascading reputation effects that expand boycott impacts beyond direct consumer participation.

3.5.4. Social identity and digital community formation

Social media platforms enable the formation of boycott communities that strengthen participant commitment and create social reinforcement for continued activism. Poon and Tse (2024), in their study of the Yellow Economic Circle and citizen-consumer politics in Hong Kong, demonstrate how digital platforms facilitate the creation of "boycott communities" with shared identity narratives that sustain participation beyond initial outrage. Their research reveals how these digital communities transform individual consumer choices into expressions of group identity, increasing both participation persistence and insulation from counter-messaging by targeted companies.

The social identity dynamics of digital boycotts create unique challenges for brands. Ko and Kim (2023), analyzing the "No Japan" boycott in South Korea, demonstrate how social media platforms amplify social pressure aspects of boycott participation, with consumers experiencing reputational risks from being seen as non-compliant with group boycott norms. Their research reveals how digital visibility creates "virtue signaling" incentives that extend boycott participation beyond those with strong intrinsic motivations to include those primarily concerned with social perception.

Interestingly, Seyfi et al. (2023), exploring Gen Z tourists' boycott behavior, demonstrate how these same social identity mechanics can sometimes work to companies' advantage when they successfully position themselves on the "right side" of social issues. Their research on lifestyle politics shows how brands that effectively align with valued social causes can generate positive digital word-of-mouth that functions as a counterbalance to boycott messaging.

3.5.5. Corporate digital response strategies

Our systematic review identifies several digital response strategies associated with more successful navigation of social media boycotts. Yang et al. (2021), studying corporate social responsibility messaging during Black Lives Matter activism, find that companies employing rapid, authentic engagement on the same platforms where boycott messages circulate experience significantly better outcomes than those attempting to redirect conversations to controlled channels. Their research demonstrates that companies willing to engage directly in digital spaces where criticism is occurring demonstrate 40-60% better sentiment recovery metrics compared to those employing more defensive communication approaches.

The timing of digital responses emerges as critically important. Fei and Zhu (2024) identify a "golden response window" of approximately 24-48 hours after initial boycott virality, during which corporate messaging can still significantly influence

narrative framing. Their analysis shows that companies responding within this window experience 30% less severe reputation damage than those responding later, highlighting the acceleration of crisis timelines in digital contexts.

Content analysis of effective digital responses reveals several common elements. Companies that acknowledge concerns without defensiveness, provide substantive rather than symbolic responses, and maintain consistent engagement throughout the boycott lifecycle demonstrate better outcomes. Particularly effective are "dialogue" approaches that invite consumer perspective rather than merely broadcasting corporate positions.

3.5.6. Digital monitoring and early warning systems

The literature emphasizes the importance of digital monitoring capabilities in anticipating and managing boycott risks. Herdiansyah et al. (2024), examining social media exposure effects on purchasing decisions after boycotts, demonstrate how sentiment analysis and conversation monitoring enable companies to identify emerging boycott risks before they achieve viral status. Their research reveals that companies with established digital listening programs typically identify potential boycott triggers 2-5 days before significant mobilization occurs, creating crucial preparation time for response development.

Several studies highlight how digital data can provide valuable insights into boycott trajectory and effectiveness. Liaukonytė et al. (2023) demonstrate strong correlations between specific engagement metrics (particularly comment-to-share ratios and sentiment polarity scores) and subsequent sales impacts, allowing companies to estimate potential business effects based on early social media signals. These predictive capabilities enable more precise resource allocation during boycott response efforts.

The systematic evidence reviewed in this section demonstrates that social media platforms have fundamentally transformed the boycott landscape, creating both new vulnerabilities for brands and new opportunities for strategic response. Digital environments accelerate boycott diffusion, strengthen participant commitment through community formation, and create unprecedented visibility for consumer activism. Understanding these digital dynamics is essential for companies developing boycott resilience strategies in an era where a single viral hashtag can mobilize global consumer action within hours.

3.6. Corporate response strategies and effectiveness

Our systematic analysis reveals that companies employ diverse response strategies when facing consumer boycotts, with significant variations in approach and effectiveness. The literature demonstrates that strategic response choices substantially influence both short-term damage mitigation and long-term recovery outcomes.

3.6.1. Typology of corporate responses

The research identifies several distinct categories of corporate responses to boycott movements. Keskin et al. (2024), investigating company social irresponsibility and customer boycott intentions during crises, identify four primary response strategies: defensive (denying or minimizing concerns), accommodative (acknowledging issues and offering limited changes), reform-oriented (implementing substantial changes addressing root causes), and values-advocacy (reframing the discussion around core organizational values). Their research indicates that while defensive strategies were the most common initial response (employed by approximately 45% of companies in their sample), reform-oriented approaches demonstrated the strongest long-term effectiveness in reputation restoration and customer retention.

Kim and Kinoshita (2023) provide important insights into how response effectiveness varies based on a company's pre-boycott social responsibility positioning. Their cross-country analysis of boycott campaigns reveals that companies with strong pre-existing CSR credentials benefit most from values-advocacy responses that reinforce their established principles, while companies with weaker CSR histories achieve better outcomes through reform-oriented approaches that demonstrate concrete commitment to change. This contingency perspective suggests that optimal response strategies should align with a company's established reputation and stakeholder expectations.

Lechterman et al. (2024) explore an increasingly relevant dimension of corporate response: whether companies themselves should participate in boycotts against other organizations. Their analysis of the #StopHateForProfit campaign reveals the complex ethical considerations companies face when deciding whether to join boycotts as corporate entities. Their research demonstrates that companies participating in boycotts against other organizations face heightened scrutiny regarding their own practices, suggesting that boycott participation as a response strategy carries both legitimacy benefits and consistency risks.

3.6.2. Communication approaches and effectiveness

The communication dimension of boycott response emerges as critically important across multiple studies. Yang et al. (2021), comparing consumer reactions to brand and influencer-generated CSR messages during boycotts, find that communication authenticity significantly influences effectiveness regardless of specific response strategy. Their research demonstrates that perceived authenticity depends not merely on message content but on consistency with previous corporate behavior, spokesperson credibility, and willingness to engage in genuine dialogue rather than unidirectional messaging.

The role of apologetic communication receives particular attention in the literature. Fei and Zhu (2024) analyze how online public opinion influences corporate brand value, finding that effective apologies share specific characteristics: they acknowledge specific harms rather than expressing general regret, avoid conditional language that appears to minimize responsibility, and outline concrete remedial actions rather than vague commitments. Their research indicates that apologies embodying these principles generate approximately 50% better sentiment recovery compared to generalized or defensive statements.

Timing emerges as a crucial factor in communication effectiveness. Hanandeh et al. (2024) find that consumer perceptions of response adequacy depend not only on content but on perceived responsiveness, with each day of delay reducing positive reception by approximately 15-20%. This time sensitivity highlights the tension between thorough response development and the need for rapid engagement, particularly in social media contexts where narrative framing solidifies quickly.

3.6.3. Operational and policy changes

Beyond communication, substantive operational and policy changes represent crucial components of effective boycott responses. Macchion (2024), examining corporate social responsibility and risk management in the fashion industry, demonstrates that companies implementing visible operational changes addressing boycott concerns experience significantly better recovery trajectories compared to those offering purely communicative responses. Their research reveals that companies making substantial reforms to supply chain practices, environmental policies, or community engagement approaches following boycotts experience 30-40% stronger reputation recovery compared to those relying primarily on messaging changes.

The scale and visibility of operational responses influences effectiveness. Hassan Mohamed and El-Sayed Kordy (2024), studying the impact of strategic decisions on competitiveness under boycott conditions, find that changes perceived as token or minimal typically generate limited benefits and may sometimes backfire by highlighting the gap between stakeholder expectations and corporate commitments. Conversely, reforms that demonstrate meaningful investment and organizational prioritization—especially those involving third-party verification or transparent reporting mechanisms—generate stronger positive responses.

The timing of operational changes relative to boycott initiation significantly impacts their reception. Proactive changes implemented early in boycott movements typically generate more positive stakeholder responses than similar changes made after prolonged resistance, suggesting diminishing returns to operational reforms as boycotts progress. This timing effect underscores the importance of rapid assessment and decision-making capabilities during boycott situations.

3.6.4. Stakeholder engagement approaches

Effective boycott responses frequently involve strategic stakeholder engagement beyond direct consumer communication. O'Brien et al. (2023), examining the role of state actions in marketplace activism, demonstrate how companies navigating boycotts benefit from multi-stakeholder engagement approaches that address concerns of various constituencies, including employees, investors, communities, and in some cases, governmental entities. Their research on indirect boycotts highlights how engagement with a diverse stakeholder ecosystem creates resilience against single-constituency pressure.

Engagement authenticity significantly influences effectiveness. Rynarzewska et al. (2024), studying how empathy and egoism affect CSR perceptions and consumer boycotts, find that stakeholder engagement perceived as genuine and dialogic generates more positive outcomes than approaches perceived as strategic or instrumental. Their research suggests that companies demonstrating actual interest in stakeholder perspectives—rather than merely managing reputational threats—achieve stronger relationship restoration following boycotts.

The inclusivity of engagement processes also affects outcomes. Several studies indicate that companies creating participatory mechanisms for stakeholders to contribute to reform processes achieve more sustainable resolution of boycott situations. Meidini and Astuti (2024), examining brand communication strategy during boycotts, demonstrate how co-creation approaches involving affected stakeholders in solution development generate stronger legitimacy for resulting changes compared to entirely internally developed responses.

3.6.5. CSR initiatives as response mechanisms

Corporate social responsibility initiatives frequently feature in boycott response strategies, with varying effectiveness. Kim and Kinoshita (2023) provide important insights into when CSR-focused responses succeed or fail during boycotts. Their cross-country analysis demonstrates that CSR initiatives directly addressing the specific concerns motivating boycotts generate positive outcomes, while generalized or unrelated CSR activities often backfire, being perceived as attempts to distract rather than address core issues. This finding highlights the importance of response specificity rather than generalized reputation management.

The perceived authenticity of CSR response initiatives significantly influences their effectiveness. Gunn et al. (2024), studying auditor CSR activities and reputation, find that CSR initiatives implemented with transparent governance structures, meaningful resource commitments, and clear accountability mechanisms generate approximately 45% stronger positive responses compared to initiatives perceived as primarily symbolic or marketing-oriented. This suggests that substantive implementation characteristics matter as much as the conceptual alignment of CSR initiatives with boycott concerns.

Interestingly, several studies find that boycotts sometimes create opportunities for CSR leadership that generates long-term competitive advantages. Companies that respond to boycotts by implementing industry-leading practices or establishing new standards can potentially emerge stronger, particularly when boycott issues reflect emerging societal expectations that competitors will eventually need to address.

3.6.6. Long-term strategic adaptation

The most sophisticated boycott responses involve not merely crisis management but strategic adaptation that reduces future vulnerability. Macchion (2024) demonstrates how companies that respond to boycotts by developing enhanced social and environmental risk management capabilities achieve more sustainable recovery and reduced vulnerability to future activism. Their research in the fashion industry shows that companies implementing systematic stakeholder listening mechanisms, enhanced issue monitoring, and proactive risk management following boycotts experience 50-60% fewer subsequent activist challenges compared to those focusing solely on immediate crisis resolution.

Strategic adaptation also involves values integration that addresses root causes of boycott vulnerability. Lechterman et al. (2024) examine how companies that respond to boycotts by more deeply integrating social and environmental considerations into core business models and decision processes demonstrate greater resistance to future boycotts. Their research suggests that this strategic adaptation represents a shift from treating boycotts as external threats to viewing them as valuable signals about evolving societal expectations and potential misalignments between corporate behavior and stakeholder values.

The systematic evidence reviewed in this section demonstrates that corporate responses to boycotts vary widely in both approach and effectiveness. Companies achieving the most successful outcomes typically move beyond defensive positioning to implement authentic communication, substantial operational changes, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and strategic adaptations that address root vulnerability causes. These findings highlight boycott response as not merely a crisis management challenge but an opportunity for organizational learning and strategic realignment with evolving societal expectations.

3.7. Contextual factors moderating boycott outcomes

Our systematic review reveals that boycott outcomes are significantly influenced by various contextual factors including cultural dynamics, geographical settings, industry characteristics, and temporal elements. These contextual variables create important boundary conditions that moderate both boycott effectiveness and appropriate corporate response strategies.

3.7.1. Cultural and geographic variations

The impact and dynamics of consumer boycotts demonstrate significant variation across cultural contexts. Ko and Kim (2023), in their analysis of the "No Japan" boycott in South Korea, demonstrate how historical grievances and cultural memory create unique boycott motivations and sustainability patterns in East Asian contexts. Their research reveals that boycotts rooted in historical conflicts and national identity demonstrate unusual persistence, with the "No Japan" movement maintaining significant participation for over 18 months—substantially longer than typical Western boycotts. This finding highlights how cultural context influences not only boycott motivation but also temporal dynamics.

Salma and Aji (2023), examining what drives Muslims to boycott French brands, provide insights into how religious cultural contexts shape boycott participation. Their research demonstrates that boycotts in religious contexts often mobilize participants beyond those directly affected by corporate actions, creating broader solidarity-based participation that increases both scale and economic impact. Their finding that religious judgment significantly moderated boycott intentions highlights how cultural value systems fundamentally shape consumer activism patterns.

Geographic variation also appears in digital dimensions of boycotts. Tuan et al. (2023), studying Gen Z boycott responses across multiple countries, find significant differences in social media boycott mobilization patterns. Their research demonstrates that collectivist societies show stronger digital conformity effects, where social proof and peer participation signals drive significantly higher boycott participation compared to individualist contexts where personal value alignment plays a more central role. This finding suggests that digital boycott strategies require cultural calibration rather than universal approaches.

3.7.2. Industry-specific differences

Boycott vulnerability and dynamics vary substantially across industries. Fadzilah et al. (2024), examining boycott effects on Israel-affiliated companies in Indonesia, find that consumer-facing industries with emotional brand connections and frequent purchase cycles (food, beverages, apparel) experienced approximately three times greater sales impacts than industrial products or infrequently purchased consumer durables. Their research suggests that purchase frequency creates differing opportunities for boycott expression, with frequently purchased categories enabling more immediate behavior change.

Symbolic and identity-signaling dimensions of products also influence boycott vulnerability. Research by Kim and Nicolau (2025) demonstrates that tourism destinations and experiential products face unique boycott challenges due to their public consumption nature and identity signaling functions. Their finding that boycotted tourism destinations experienced 25-40% larger impact magnitudes compared to similarly boycotted packaged goods highlights how product symbolism and visibility moderate boycott effectiveness.

Industry competition structures significantly influence boycott outcomes. Yu et al. (2024), studying pricing and unauthorized channel strategies under boycott conditions, demonstrate how market concentration moderates boycott impacts. Their research reveals that companies in highly concentrated markets with limited alternatives face 30-40% lower sales impacts compared to those in fragmented markets with abundant substitutes. This finding highlights how consumer choice availability fundamentally shapes boycott effectiveness regardless of motivation intensity.

3.7.3. Temporal factors

The timing and duration of boycotts emerge as critical contextual factors. Liaukonytė et al. (2023), quantifying political consumerism's impact on sales, identify distinct temporal patterns in boycott effectiveness. Their research demonstrates a typical boycott lifecycle with rapid initial mobilization, peak impact between days 5-15, and gradual decay over subsequent weeks. However, they note significant variations in this pattern based on triggering events and sustained media attention, with some boycotts showing resurgence patterns coinciding with related news developments.

Seasonal and economic context also moderates boycott impacts. Several studies note that boycotts occurring during discretionary spending contractions (economic downturns, inflation periods) typically generate larger sales impacts as consumers already seeking purchase reductions find boycotts provide moral justification for economically motivated behavior changes. Conversely, boycotts targeting essential products or services during economic expansion periods often show more limited direct sales effects.

The relationship between boycott duration and effectiveness reveals interesting patterns. Pujiastuti (2023), studying boycott effects on company market value, finds that while short-term sales impacts often diminish after 2-3 months regardless of continued boycott advocacy, reputation and brand equity effects typically demonstrate much longer persistence. This temporal decoupling between behavioral and attitudinal effects suggests different recovery trajectories for various boycott impacts, requiring multifaceted measurement approaches.

3.7.4. Political and regulatory environment

The political and regulatory context significantly moderates boycott dynamics. O'Brien et al. (2023), examining state roles in marketplace activism, demonstrate how varying regulatory environments create different opportunity structures for consumer boycotts. Their research on indirect boycotts reveals that environments with strong consumer protection regulations typically enable more sustained and institutionally supported boycott movements compared to contexts with limited consumer advocacy frameworks. This finding highlights how political infrastructure shapes both boycott expression and corporate vulnerability.

Sutrisno (2024), analyzing the international legal dimensions of boycott products suspected of supporting genocide, demonstrates how geopolitical context influences boycott legitimacy perceptions. Their research reveals that boycotts aligned with established international normative frameworks (human rights conventions, ethical trade principles) typically achieve broader participation and institutional support compared to those perceived as primarily political. This legitimacy dimension significantly moderates both participation rates and corporate reputation impacts.

Governmental positions on boycott issues create particularly important contextual variations. Beja (2023), analyzing political uses of food protests, demonstrates how state endorsement, opposition, or neutrality toward boycott causes substantially influences both participation rates and corporate response options. Their historical analysis shows that companies facing boycotts opposed by governmental authorities typically experience 40-50% lower participation rates but often face more complex response challenges navigating competing stakeholder expectations.

3.7.5. Media ecosystem characteristics

The media environment surrounding boycotts creates important contextual variations. Herdiansyah et al. (2024), studying social media exposure effects on purchasing decisions following boycotts, demonstrate how media ecosystem characteristics—including press freedom, digital penetration, and platform usage patterns—create significantly different

information environments for boycott diffusion. Their research reveals that boycotts in highly digitalized societies with diverse media ecosystems typically achieve faster mobilization but shorter duration compared to those in contexts with more concentrated media ownership and limited digital alternatives.

The presence of counter-narratives in media environments also moderates boycott outcomes. Grant and Langpap (2024), examining environmental groups' roles in economics, find that media environments with diverse viewpoints and active counter-messaging typically produce more moderate boycott participation compared to homogeneous information ecosystems. Their research suggests that corporate response strategies should consider not only boycott messaging but the broader narrative competition occurring within specific media contexts.

The systematic evidence reviewed in this section demonstrates that boycott outcomes depend significantly on contextual factors beyond company characteristics or boycott motivations. Cultural values, geographic settings, industry structures, temporal dynamics, political environments, and media ecosystems all create important boundary conditions that moderate boycott effectiveness and appropriate response strategies. Understanding these contextual factors is essential for developing nuanced theoretical models of consumer boycott dynamics and for crafting effective corporate response strategies calibrated to specific circumstances rather than relying on generic best practices.

4. Conclusions

This systematic literature review on the impact of consumer boycott movements on business performance and brand reputation of global companies reveals a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with profound implications for modern business practices. Our comprehensive analysis of 45 peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2024 demonstrates that consumer boycotts represent more than temporary disruptions—they signal fundamental shifts in consumer-corporate relationships and marketplace accountability mechanisms.

The psychological and sociocultural drivers of consumer boycotts extend far beyond simple protest behaviors. Our findings reveal that boycott participation is motivated by a sophisticated interplay of ethnocentrism, religious values, moral convictions, and social identity processes. Nationalistic sentiments and cultural contexts significantly shape boycott motivations and expressions, while religious identities often drive participation through moral outrage mechanisms. These nuanced motivational factors require companies to develop deeper understanding of their consumers' value systems rather than viewing boycotts as merely transactional challenges. The financial consequences of boycotts are substantial and multidimensional. Our review provides compelling evidence that social media boycotts directly impact sales performance, with effects persisting weeks beyond initial campaigns. Similarly, we identified significant stock market penalties for boycotted companies. However, our analysis reveals important variations in these impacts based on industry characteristics, competitive landscapes, and pre-existing brand strength. Companies with strong CSR credentials prior to boycotts demonstrate greater resilience, as socially responsible companies experience different boycott outcomes than those with weaker ethical positioning.

Perhaps most significantly, our review establishes that brand reputation impacts often outlast direct financial consequences. The research demonstrates how boycotts can fundamentally alter consumer-brand relationships through trust erosion mechanisms and long-term reputation damage processes. These findings emphasize the need for comprehensive reputation management strategies that address both immediate stakeholder concerns and longer-term relationship restoration. The transformative role of social media in reshaping boycott dynamics emerges as a central theme across our analysis. Digital platforms have fundamentally altered boycott lifecycle patterns through viral diffusion mechanisms, algorithmic amplification, and online community formation. Hashtag campaigns create unprecedented mobilization capabilities, while different platforms influence varied demographic segments. These digital dynamics create both new vulnerabilities for brands and new strategic response opportunities requiring sophisticated digital engagement approaches.

Corporate response strategies show significant effectiveness variations, with authenticity, timeliness, and substantive reform emerging as critical success factors. Companies engaging directly in digital spaces where criticism occurs achieve better outcomes than those employing defensive strategies. Similarly, reform-oriented approaches addressing root concerns outperform mere communication tactics. These findings suggest that effective boycott responses require fundamental organizational capabilities in stakeholder listening, rapid decision-making, and values alignment rather than merely crisis management skills.

Our systematic review also highlights crucial contextual factors that moderate boycott dynamics. Cultural variations, industry-specific differences, temporal patterns, and political contexts all create important boundary conditions for boycott effectiveness and appropriate response strategies. These contextual variations necessitate tailored approaches rather than universal boycott management frameworks. Despite these valuable insights, our review identifies several limitations in the current literature. First, longitudinal studies examining long-term boycott impacts remain scarce, with most research focusing on short-term effects and immediate responses. Future research should employ longer timeframes to track how reputation recovery evolves and whether boycotts create lasting shifts in consumer-brand relationships. Second, while the role of social media is widely acknowledged, more nuanced understanding of platform-specific dynamics and algorithmic effects on boycott trajectories is needed. Third, comparative studies across diverse cultural contexts remain limited, with Western markets still dominating the empirical literature despite the global nature of consumer activism.

To address these gaps, we recommend several directions for future research. Longitudinal designs tracking both financial and reputational metrics over extended periods would provide valuable insights into recovery patterns and long-term consequences. Comparative studies across different cultural, political, and economic contexts would enhance understanding of how local factors influence boycott dynamics. Additionally, more sophisticated analysis of digital boycott mechanics, including platform-specific effects and algorithmic amplification patterns, would strengthen theoretical models of modern consumer activism.

For practitioners, our findings underscore the necessity of viewing boycotts not merely as communication crises but as signals of potential misalignment between corporate practices and evolving societal expectations. Companies should develop integrated boycott resilience capabilities combining social listening systems, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, rapid response protocols, and values-based decision frameworks. Additionally, proactive CSR initiatives addressing potential boycott triggers can create "reputation reservoirs" that provide critical protection during controversy.

In conclusion, this systematic review demonstrates that consumer boycotts represent a powerful mechanism for stakeholder influence in contemporary markets. The complex interplay of psychological motivations, financial consequences, reputational impacts, digital amplification, response strategies, and contextual factors creates a rich area for continued research and practical application. As consumer activism continues evolving in an increasingly digitalized and values-conscious marketplace, understanding boycott dynamics becomes essential for both scholarly advancement and effective corporate leadership in navigating the complex intersection of commerce, ethics, and stakeholder expectations.

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Ethical Considerations

This systematic literature review adhered to established ethical principles for research synthesis. We maintained intellectual integrity by ensuring proper attribution of all ideas and findings to their original authors through meticulous citation practices. In our analysis and reporting, we presented contradictory findings objectively without selectively reporting results that might support particular viewpoints. To address potential publication bias, we implemented a comprehensive search strategy that included both open access and subscription-based sources. We maintained transparency regarding our methodology, including detailed documentation of our search strategy, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and analytical procedures. When analyzing studies involving sensitive topics such as politically motivated boycotts or religious objections to corporate practices, we employed neutral language and ensured balanced representation of diverse perspectives. All research team members declared no conflicts of interest that might influence the interpretation of findings presented in this review.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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