

Boycott on Fast Food Industry: A Case of K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia.

Nurainnabilah Jamiran, Faizah Mohd Fakhruddin

School of Human Resource Development and Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310 Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the factors and impacts of consumer boycotts in the fast-food industry, focusing on K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia. Boycotts, as a form of consumer activism, have become increasingly prevalent, driven by social, political, and religious motives. This research adopts a qualitative approach and case study design, utilizing semi-structured, in-depth interviews with five informants, including employees and consumers, to explore the phenomenon. The findings reveal that social influence, religious obligations, and socio-political pressures are primary drivers of boycotts. The study also highlights the significant repercussions on employees, including job insecurity, and the organization, such as financial losses and reputational damage. These insights underscore the need for businesses to adopt ethical practices, enhance transparency, and actively engage in corporate social responsibility initiatives to mitigate the impacts of such actions. The research contributes to the broader understanding of consumer activism and its implications for the fast food industry.

Keywords: Boycott, fast food industry, consumer activism, corporate accountability, qualitative research.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In the digital age, consumer boycotts have become a common means of social protest (Beck, 2018). Even the fast food business, which is a major force in the world economy, has been subject to similar measures. In response to the Israel-Palestine conflict, there have been demands recently for boycotts of fast food restaurants as a way for customers to express their opinions on this very divisive research. In the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, boycotts have been used to target companies perceived as supporting or benefiting from the conflict. However, according to a study conducted by Sari, Mizerski, and Liu (2016), customers only select global brands when they are unable to select local brands. They reject global brands once local alternatives are offered.

A few places have had product boycotts, and one of the reasons for this is humanity. In the recent past, this has occurred in practically every country. The goal of boycott organizers is to make the public aware of the crimes of target companies, force them to resign, and ultimately improve society by forcing these companies to change (Barakat & Moussa, 2016). Local, national, and worldwide campaigns to forbid the purchase of particular products can have a big impact on a company's results. A reduction in volume of sales, a decline of market share, a downturn in profitability, and detrimental effects on the company's reputation and brand are some examples of these outcomes (Cossío-Silva, Revilla-Camacho, Palacios-Florencio & Garzón-Benítez, 2019).

Additionally, boycotts of the fast food industry have been driven by concerns about the social and economic impact of the fast food industry on local communities. Scholars have documented the intersectionality of the

Israel-Palestine conflict with other social justice movements, highlighting the importance of solidarity and collective action (Barghouti, 2019). This research attempts to determine and examine the issue of boycotts in a chosen organization, i.e., K Fast Food Restaurant, Malaysia.

Scholars and researchers continue to explore the motivations behind these boycotts and their implications for the fast food industry, highlighting the growing demand for transparency, accountability, and ethical practices in the global food industries. It is necessary to adopt and make sure that the boycott is increased when it is observed in the events surrounding the deaths of Muslims in Palestine as a result of Israeli atrocities (Yunus, Chik, Wahid, Daud & Hamid, 2020).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- a. To explore responsible factors that cause boycotts among the consumers of K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia.
- b. To analyze the impacts of the boycott experienced by the employees at K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia.
- c. To explore the impacts of the boycott experienced by the organization of K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Forms of Boycott

Economic Boycott

When customers stop purchasing a product because they recognize a dishonest relationship between consumption and that the corporation overstates its use of economic power over the customer, this is known as an economic boycott. This relationship may be built using factors pertaining to the supply and demand of products to consumers or market characteristics like a company's monopolistic activity (Cruz & Botelho, 2015).

Religious Boycott

When a business's actions go against the religious principles and convictions of a segment of the customer base, a religious boycott takes place. According to Muhamad et al. (2018), in a religion-based boycott, rather than relying on proximity to other religious communities, believers could be drawn together by their shared feeling of belonging and be able to relate to a boycott source that incorporates other members of their religious community, thus fostering cross-border support.

Minorities Boycott

Minorities' boycotts, which fall under the third category, happen when a business disregards or disrespects a socially marginalized group. Afro-descendant and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual/Aromantic (LGBTQIA+) boycotts are two instances of this type of boycott. For instance, in the United States (U.S.), a business named Target and Best Buy contributed to the campaign of a candidate running for governor of the state of Minnesota who openly opposed homosexual marriage (Cruz & Botelho, 2015).

Ecological Boycott

An ecological boycott is a fourth type and is triggered when a business disregards or mistreats environmental issues. Additionally, environmentalists put pressure on the business to object to the product selection (Cruz & Botelho, 2015). Because companies present such serious risks to ecological sustainability, consumers are more likely to oppose them, which helps to build environmental sustainability through the boycotts. Consumers who believe a business is mistreating the environment or acting in an abusive manner may boycott the company on an ecological level (Nguyen et al., 2018).

Labor Boycott

Finally, a labor boycott is triggered when a customer learns that a company violates human rights provisions or that the working circumstances of its employees amount to slavery or semi-slavery (Cruz & Botelho, 2015). The risk lies in the potential short-term negative impact on workers' welfare due to reduced demand for labor during the boycott (Radzik, 2017). According to Cruz (2017), this type of boycott transcends management-level conversations and deeply examines the issues of class conflict and the unequal treatment of employees in big multinational corporations.

Approach of Boycott

Direct Boycott

A direct boycott or a non-surrogate boycott should not be undertaken lightly, as the consequences could be severe and prolonged (Talib & Adnan, 2017). Boycotts can be directed against the parties that are the objective of the boycott actions, such as businesses who charge outrageous prices. When someone engages in a direct boycott, they stay away from the products and services of the firm they believe to have irresponsible policies (Lasarov et al., 2021).

Indirect Boycott

In an indirect boycott or surrogate boycott, customers refuse to buy a company's products due to the activities of a third party rather than the company's contentious conduct (Mirza et al., 2020). To put pressure on a target, participants in an indirect boycott refrain from purchasing goods from businesses connected to the target, such as suppliers or businesses established in the target nation (Hofmann et al., 2020). This kind of boycott is quite popular in the Middle East, as people who disagree with the U.S. policy there boycott the U.S. companies (Barakat & Moussa, 2016).

Social Factors

Group's influence

Sari et al. (2017) highlighted that group influence and peer pressure significantly drive boycott participation, especially among Muslim consumers in Indonesia seeking group acceptance. Ding et al. (2020) emphasized the role of reference groups, such as celebrities and opinion leaders, in shaping decisions by reducing uncertainty. Hamzah and Mustafa (2019) found that subjective norms, including encouragement from family and respected figures, strongly influence Malaysian consumers to participate in boycotts, often led by religious leaders and Non-Government Organization (NGO) like AMAN Palestin and Aqsa Syarif.

Social Pressure

Delistavrou et al. (2020) found that social pressure significantly influences boycott intentions, with individuals feeling a duty to challenge unethical practices and promote ethical business behaviors through effective

boycotts. Similarly, Abdullah (2024) examined boycotts of McDonald's in Malaysia, highlighting social pressure as a key driver. Concerns about public perception regarding social justice, humanitarian, and religious issues motivated consumers to avoid McDonald's temporarily, demonstrating the strong influence of societal expectations and geopolitical events on boycott participation.

Religious Obligation and Affiliation

Muslims boycott certain foreign businesses due to perceived harm to their community, driven by religion, moral judgment, and solidarity (Muhammad, Kamarudin & Fauzi, 2018). In Pakistan, protests stemmed from cultural exploitation and global Muslim issues (Kashif et al., 2015). In Indonesia, boycotts focus on halal concerns and national pride (Sari et al., 2017). In Malaysia, conflicts in Palestine and Iraq fueled boycotts of the U.S. companies, reflecting strong religious affiliation (Ishak et al., 2018; Abdullah et al., 2021). These actions highlight religion's role in consumer behavior and global solidarity.

Social Media

Social media is a powerful tool for spreading boycott campaigns by enabling word-of-mouth and rapid information dissemination (Sari et al., 2017; Sen, 2024). Platforms allow users to share boycott-related content, voice opinions, and build solidarity, pressuring companies and amplifying the impact of movements. In Malaysia and Singapore, hashtags like #prayforgaza and #keepboycott foster international solidarity among Muslims (Nasir, 2016). A study by Sen et al. (2024) across countries like the United Kingdom (U.K.), the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Egypt shows social media significantly influences boycotts and buycotts, with a strong correlation between platform use and consumer behavior.

Influence from celebrities and politicians

Buheji and Ahmed (2023) observed in Rwanda that cultural exchanges between artists and performers can boost boycott momentum, especially when international artists refuse to participate in events linked to Israel. These boycotts may also target film festivals or literary events. Similarly, Nasir (2016) highlighted the influence of political elites on boycotts in Malaysia and Singapore, using the Israel-Palestine conflicts of 2008 and 2014 as case studies. In Malaysia, figures like Mahathir Mohamad promoted boycotts of the U.S. goods and dollars, shaping the country's religio-political culture. In contrast, Singapore's political elites show less diversity of opinion on such boycotts.

Cultural background and societal norms

Buheji and Ahmed (2023) found that cultural norms in Rwanda, like collectivism and activism, drive boycott participation, with campaigns like the Gaza War boycott reflecting community solidarity. Similarly, Talib and Latif (2015) noted that Malay cultural values, self-enhancement, and country image influence boycotts in Malaysia, supported by NGOs like the "Coalition of Malaysian NGOs against the Persecution of Palestinians." Yunus et al. (2020) highlighted the global rise of boycotts, especially among Muslims, as a means to uphold Islamic values (Hamid & Yunus, 2020), emphasizing community-driven efforts over state-sanctioned actions.

Cultural variations in ethics

Abdullah (2024) highlights that boycotts are common in Malaysia, particularly in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Gong and Wang (2021) explore cultural differences in consumer boycotts, with Asians emphasizing loyalty and purity, contrasting with Western individualism. Shim and Cho (2021) find that Eastern cultures rely more on tradition and intuition, leading to different ethical decision-making. Their study identifies three ethical consumer groups in Malaysia and the U.S., showing that cultural values predict moral outrage and boycotting behaviors based on Moral Foundations Theory (MFT).

Political Environment and Conflict

Mirza et al. (2020) found that religious prejudice drives boycotts of French goods in Pakistan, but does not impact French companies' reputation or loyalty. Political events like 9/11 and the Iraq War can trigger such boycotts. Dorobantu et al. (2017) in Canada showed that critical events, like the Israel-Palestine conflict, lead to boycotts of American goods linked to Israel. Stakeholder opinions before the event influence reactions after it. Cuadras-Morató and Raya (2016) found that political disputes drive boycotts, with consumers in one nation avoiding goods from another due to political tensions.

The role of activists

Nasir (2016) found that boycotts and "buycotts" influence religio-political culture in Muslim communities in Singapore and Malaysia. The 2008-2009 Israel-Palestine conflict led to boycotts of brands like KFC and McDonald's in Indonesia. Also, Abdullah (2024) showed that Islamic NGOs in Malaysia encouraged boycotts, including of McDonald's, due to social, religious, and justice motivations, though some NGOs opposed the boycott.

Political consumerism trends

Kam and Deichert (2020) found that negative information strongly influences boycotts. Political consumerism, driven by ethical concerns, is growing, with more consumers making decisions based on politics. Neuireiter and Bhattacharya (2021) showed that a company's revenue depends on its consumers' political views during conflicts like boycotts. Also, Talib and Adnan (2017) found that while Malaysian consumers boycott Israel-linked products, they still view surrogate products positively, influenced by social norms.

Marketing strategies

Alyahya et al. (2023) found that consumers in the U.K., the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Egypt are more likely to boycott companies with reactive eco-innovation, while proactive eco-innovation reduces boycotts in developing countries. Boycotts can also be triggered by deceptive advertising or offensive marketing. While, Talib and Adnan (2017) found that in Malaysia, boycotts stem from marketing strategies and animosity toward Israel.

Economic monopoly

Cruz (2017) found that boycotts in Brazil are often caused by monopolistic markets. Consumers are motivated to boycott businesses based on their corporate social responsibility (CSR), including anti-corruption measures, labor conditions, and waste management. Economic boycotts, driven by unfair pricing in imperfect markets, are also common, as consumers may protest monopolistic practices or unfair pricing.

Emotional factors

Feelings

Rahmawati et al. (2020) found that animosity and religious drive cause boycotts in Indonesia. Kashif et al. (2015) showed that hostility leads to boycotts of the U.S. companies in Pakistan. Shim et al. (2018) found anger triggers boycotts in multiple countries. Fetscherin and Heinrich (2015) noted that strong emotions affect consumer-brand relationships. Surachartkumtonkun et al. (2015) highlighted emotion regulation in managing anger. While, Ishak et al. (2018) found boycott intentions depend on perceived importance and factors like self-interest and religion.

Self-esteem

Lasarov et al. (2021) found that consumers gain self-esteem from participating in boycotts and connecting with others who support a cause. Initially, boycotts are driven by emotional factors, with less focus on the

boycott's impact. A survey of 351 consumers in Germany showed that most were familiar with the company. Similarly, Makarem and Jae (2016) noted that when a company acts immorally, customers may feel anger.

Impacts on employees

Job insecurity

Naru and Rehman (2020) studied 350 fast-food sector employees in Pakistan and found that job insecurity during boycotts led to poor performance and reduced confidence. Employees feared losing their jobs, affecting their productivity. Similarly, Ridzwan et al. (2024) studied 350 retail workers in Malaysia and found that boycotts negatively impacted job security, causing stress, financial concerns, and depressive symptoms. Retail workers, often hired seasonally or part-time, faced uncertainty and poor pay, leading to job insecurity and financial stress.

Layoffs

Piatak's (2018) study of over 52,000 employees in the U.S. across nonprofit, government, and for-profit sectors shows that layoffs harm companies by reducing morale, trust, and productivity. Layoffs also have social and political consequences, with public sector downsizing focused on inefficiency and for-profit sector layoffs driven by economics. Similarly, Ridzwan et al. (2024) found that boycotts negatively impacted retail workers in Malaysia, leading to fears of job loss, lower income, and layoffs. Many workers showed signs of depression, anxiety, and lack of motivation due to job insecurity.

Impacts on the organization

Financial losses

Barakat and Moussa's (2016) study in the U.S. highlights that boycotts can negatively impact a company's reputation, sales, and stock price, pressuring firms to change. Boycotts, especially when tied to perceptions of misconduct, lead to reduced consumer purchases and brand image damage. Both local and international companies can suffer, as consumers may retaliate against global firms' political practices, harming their market share and performance.

Changes on brand loyalty

Fakriza and Nurdin (2019) found that boycotts lead to significant consequences, such as decreased brand loyalty, bankruptcy, and lost sales. Consumers often support local products to avoid politically or socially problematic brands. Abdullah et al. (2021) note that boycotts usually aim to encourage ethical business practices, not punish companies. Levesque and Nam (2019) further show that companies with a history of scandals and poor reputations are more likely to face severe market reactions during boycotts.

Theories of Boycott

Sen et al. (2001) propose that boycotts are social dilemmas, where individuals must choose between personal interests and the group's collective benefit. This decision is influenced by social dilemma theory (Dawes, 1980; Van Lange et al., 2013), as individuals face long-term consequences when addressing social issues. Consumers often join boycotts based on shared community interests, balancing personal and group goals (Barakat & Moussa, 2016). Additionally, reference group theory suggests that people's decisions are strongly influenced by social groups they identify with (Sen et al., 2001). These groups provide social pressure, guiding individuals' actions and spending patterns, including participation in boycotts. The expectancy theory by Vroom, (1964) further explains that consumers' motivation to boycott is based on their expectations about

outcomes, where they evaluate the potential rewards and consequences before taking action (Barakat & Moussa, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

This study used a qualitative approach to explore boycotts in the fast food industry, focusing on their forms, causes, and solutions. The qualitative approach allows for greater flexibility in data gathering, and thus, it is the most appropriate approach to be applied. It is also a strategic approach that guides studies aiming to explore and understand complex phenomena, behaviors, or experiences in-depth, often from the participants' perspective. In addition, a case study design was employed, with data collected through interviews. Such design was used because it provides a lens for interpreting the data and offering an in-depth exploration of specific cases, and narrative analysis to examine personal stories.

Population and Sampling

This study focused on the population of employees at K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia, aiming to uncover the reasons behind the fast food boycott and ways to address it. The purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques were used in selecting the sample in this study. Five informants, including one manager, two crew members, and two consumers who boycotted the restaurant, were selected as the informants. The data collection process continued until saturation is reached, ensuring a rich and effective study while minimizing resource use.

Table 1: Demographic Backgrounds of The Informants

<i>Informant</i>	<i>Hamizah</i>	<i>Syanizam</i>	<i>Farahana</i>	<i>Elfaraain</i>	<i>Rizwan</i>
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male
Age	22 years old	42 years old	31 years old	23 years old	23 years old
Place of Origin	Yong Peng	Batu Pahat	Kota Tinggi	Yong Peng	Yong Peng
Current Occupation	Manager	Customer	Customer	Employee	Employee
Ethnic	Malay	Malay	Malay	Malay	Malay
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam
Marital Status	Single	Married	Married	Single	Single
Level of Education	Malaysian Certificate of Education	Malaysian Certificate of Education	Diploma	Matriculation	Malaysian Certificate of Education
Work Experiences in the Field	4 years	15 Years	2 Months	4 years	2.5 years

Table 1 presents the demographic background of the five informants, who are Hamizah, Syanizam, Farahana, Elfaraain, and Rizwan. All of them are of Malay ethnicity and Muslim. The first informant, Hamizah (pseudonym), a 22-year-old female from Yong Peng with a Malaysian Certificate of Education qualification, has been working as a manager for 4 years at K Fast Food Restaurant. The second informant, Syanizam (pseudonym), is a 42-year-old male from Batu Pahat with a Malaysian Certificate of Education qualification and has 15 years of experience as a supervisor at a logistics company at Yong Peng and is a frequent customer at K Fast Food Restaurant before the boycott issue. The third informant, named Farahana (pseudonym), a 31-year-old female from Kota Tinggi but residing at Yong Peng, has been working at her new company for two months and being a regular customer at K Fast Food Restaurant before the boycott issue, same as Syanizam. The fourth informant, Elfaraain (pseudonym), a 23-year-old female, holds a matriculation qualification. From Yong Peng, she has worked part-time at K Fast Food Restaurant since 2021, primarily in the cashier department. The final informant, Rizwan (pseudonym), has two years and 6 months of part-time experience as a cook at the same restaurant. He is 23 years old, holds a Malaysian Certificate of Education, and stays at Yong Peng.

Interview Protocol

In this qualitative study, semi-structured, in-depth interviews was conducted with informants to gather detailed information about the boycott of K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor. The researchers acted as the primary instruments, using interviews to collect insights on the reasons behind the boycott, its impact on employees, and the organization. The interviews lasted around 50 minutes and was divided into four sections: Section A covered demographic data, Section B explored the factors behind the boycott, Section C discussed the impact on employees, and Section D focused on the organizational consequences.

Data Collection Procedure

In this study, semi-structured and in-depth interviews were used for effective data collection. The researchers first sought permission from the organization, then arranged interviews with informants via phone or email. Interviews were recorded with consent to ensure accuracy and maintain confidentiality. Each session lasted around 50 minutes, and informants were given an information sheet, consent form, and interview protocol beforehand. The interviews were flexible, allowing the researcher to adjust questions based on responses, and the recorded data were transcribed and analyzed for relevant themes to address the research objective

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study involved systematically organizing and evaluating the transcripts from semi-structured interviews using thematic analysis. Initially, the data were coded to label segments relevant to the research questions, with the Nvivo software ensuring precision in the process. Once coded, the segments were grouped into broader themes to identify patterns and connections. These themes were then critically examined to assess their significance and implications for the research objectives. This approach ensured that the analysis was thorough, robust, and aligned with the study's goals.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Factors of Boycott

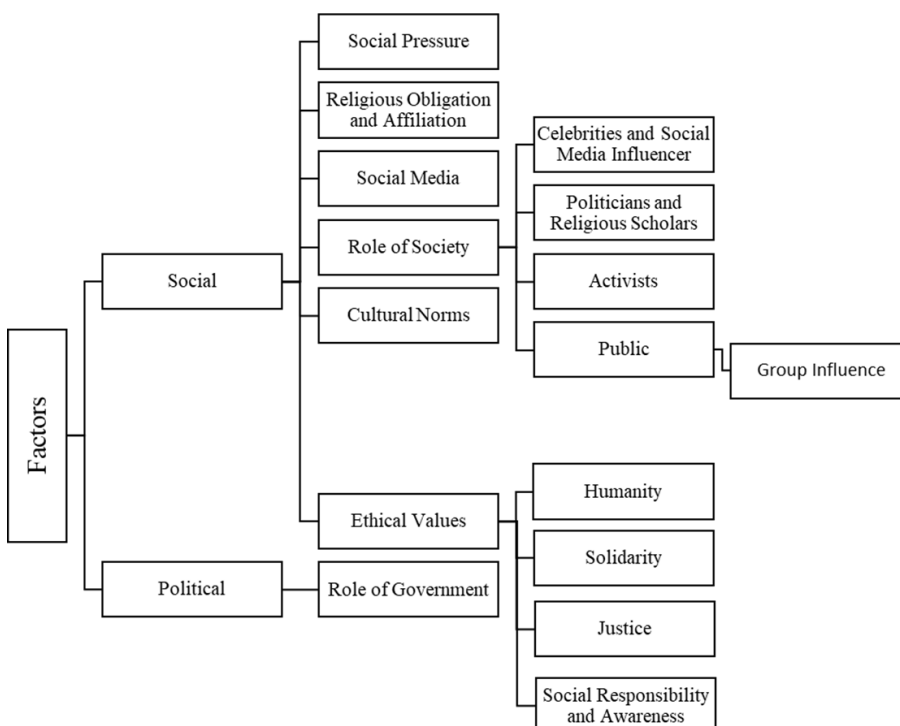


Figure 1: Factors of Boycott at K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia.

Figure 1 shows 2 factors of boycott experienced by the manager, employees, and consumers of K Fast Food Restaurant, i.e., social and political factors.

The findings revealed that the boycott against K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia is driven by two main categories, i.e., social factors and political factors. These insights were derived from in-depth interviews with five informants, including a manager (Hamizah), two crew members (Elfaraain and Rizwan), and two customers (Farahana and Syanizam). Social factors encompass various influences that motivate individuals to participate in the boycott, including social pressure, religious obligation and affiliation, social media, the role of society, and cultural norms.

Social pressure plays a significant role in motivating consumer boycotts. According to Syanizam, a frequent customer:

“Customers who experience social pressure to boycott will develop good intentions to do so, whereas customers who experience social pressure not to boycott will not plan to take part in a relevant campaign.”

This is also mentioned by Rizwan, an employee who feel pressure and ashamed to go work but he has a big commitment to survive. He explained:

“I work at K Fast Food Restaurant, so sometimes I feel pressured from friends my age who ask, “Why are you still working at K Fast Food Restaurant?” I feel that pressure.”

This highlights how societal expectations influence behavior. Elfaraain, an employee, shared that participating in the boycott helps them feel aligned with societal values, especially those related to justice and ethics. Religious beliefs are a dominant motivator for boycotts in Malaysia. Elfaraain, who is deeply involved in community and religious activities, stated:

“Muslims worldwide are obligated by their religion to boycott some foreign businesses that they believe to be hurtful to the Muslim community.”

Religious leaders and sermons further reinforce this obligation. Hamizah, the manager, noted:

“Many customers have mentioned that their participation in the boycott is driven by religious teachings and a sense of ethical responsibility.” This demonstrates how spirituality intersects with consumer activism.

Social media emerged as a vital tool for mobilizing boycotts too. Elfaraain, an employee, explained:

“Social media campaigns make it easier for people to join in. They see posts, hashtags, and even videos explaining why they should boycott.”

Elfaraain further added that these digital platforms allow activists and NGOs to share grievances and broaden the boycott’s impact. She said:

“Platforms like Twitter and Instagram amplify the movement by encouraging word-of-mouth and providing quick updates.”

While Farahana, a consumer also emphasizes the power of viral posts as a critical factor for raising awareness related to boycott. She said in her narratives:

“I believe that the power of viral posts is one of the main factors driving awareness. In today’s world, information spreads quickly and widely, leading it to be viral in a short time. With the availability of smartphones, internet access, and social media platforms, people can learn about political issues much faster and more conveniently, literally at their fingertips.”

The role of society in influencing consumer boycotts is multifaceted, involving the contributions of celebrities, social media influencers, politicians, religious scholars, activists, and the general public. These societal figures and groups play an important role in shaping opinions and mobilizing action. Rizwan explained:

“People are greatly influenced by celebrities, idols, online celebrities, and leaders. They have a significant impact on people’s attitudes, decisions, and beliefs.”

Farahana also noted in her narratives:

“Muslims tend to operate as a cohesive group, hence boycotts by a Muslim group have been shown to be successful, such as changes in marketing action.”

Cultural norms significantly shape participation in boycotts, reflecting shared values and ethical standards within a society. In Malaysia, cultural expectations encourage collective action, especially when framed as standing against injustice. Cultural variations in ethics influence how different communities perceive and respond to boycotts, often determining the extent of participation. Hamizah explained:

“Cultural variations in ethics and societal expectations shape individuals’ decisions to support boycotts, particularly in communities with strong traditions of solidarity.”

Such cultural dynamics are crucial in regions where group cohesion and collective responsibility are highly valued. These reveal how deeply cultural norms are embedded in the decision-making process, driving widespread engagement in boycott campaigns. Farahana noted:

“Our community has strong traditions of standing together, especially when it comes to matters of justice and fairness. This creates a moral obligation to participate.”

Impacts of Boycott

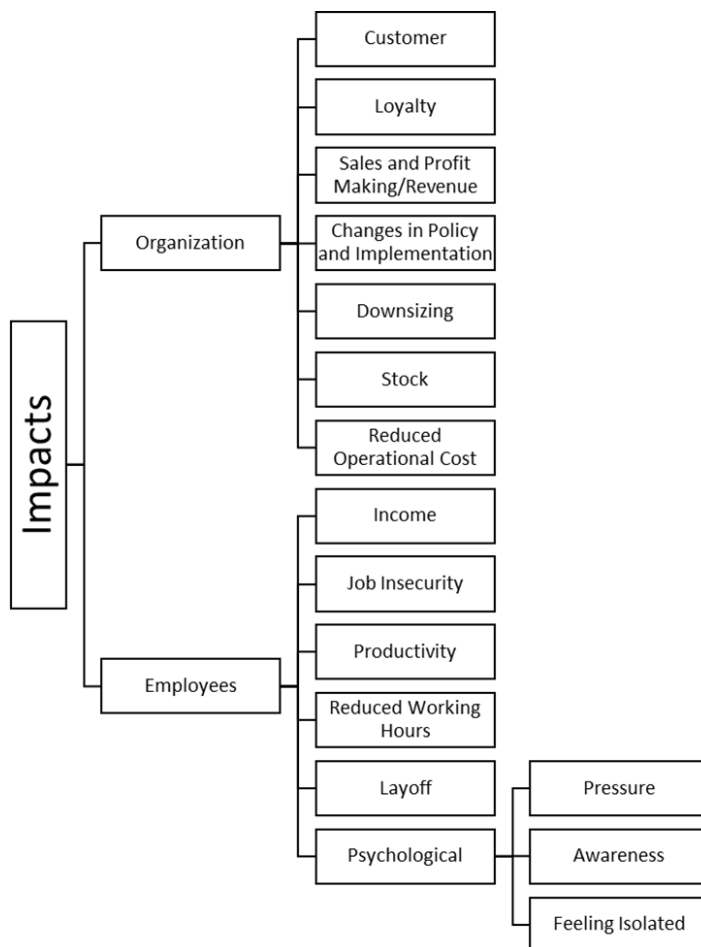


Figure 2: Impacts of Boycott to Organization and Employees towards K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia.

Figure 2 shows two major impacts from the boycott on K Fast Food Restaurant, i.e., organization and employees. The informants' thoughts and opinions said that organization and employees in the K Fast Food Restaurant faced the challenges due to boycott issues.

Impacts on the Organization

Organizations targeted by boycotts, such as K Fast Food Restaurant, face multifaceted challenges, predominantly financial losses and shifts in brand loyalty. Financial losses were highlighted as the most immediate and apparent impact. As Hamizah explained:

“Sales have dropped significantly since the boycott began. We are struggling to meet our monthly targets, let alone turn a profit.”

This also supported by Elfaraain, an employee who struggled to maintain the salary monthly because of the impact of sales at this organization. She explained:

“From what I can see, this boycott may cause significant financial losses for K Fast Food Restaurant. For example, the company’s revenue will also be affected by fewer customers. It seems the sales will drop.”

The reduced revenue stream often forces organizations to reconsider their operational strategies, including downsizing and limiting investments in marketing or expansion. Brand loyalty also suffers a notable decline during boycotts. Customers often associate the brand with broader political or ethical issues, leading to a loss of trust and repeated business. A consumer, Syanizam in the study remarked:

“I used to come here every week, but now, I feel conflicted about supporting a brand linked to these controversies.”

Furthermore, Elfaraain saw the changes of different customers who came to K Fast Food Restaurant. She said:

"This boycott has decreased loyalty towards the K Fast Food Restaurant brand. For example, many loyal customers who used to come here have switched to another brand. The local brands are being considered more ethical."

Such shifts in consumer perception are challenging to reverse, even after the boycott subsides. Beyond financial and loyalty concerns, boycotts also necessitate reputational management. Companies must invest in public relations campaigns to rebuild their image and reassure stakeholders of their values and commitments. This additional expenditure further strains already limited resources, compounding the economic impact of the boycott. An informant, Elfaraain stated:

“From what I can see, this boycott may cause significant financial losses for K Fast Food Restaurant. For example, with fewer customers, the company's revenue will also be affected. It seems their sales will drop.”

This also supported by consumers who saw the situations in K Fast Food Restaurant was changed, different like before that was a lot of customers. He explained:

“It can affect the income of the Yong Peng branch. This boycott could cause significant financial losses for K Fast Food Restaurant if many customers stop eating at their restaurants. Because this is their only source of income, what else do they expect from their sales?”

The findings emphasize that boycotts, while initiated as a form of protest, create complex challenges for organizations. The dual necessity of addressing immediate financial concerns and long-term reputational damage requires strategic agility and robust crisis management frameworks. Companies must navigate these obstacles while maintaining operational stability and employee morale, underscoring the multifaceted nature of boycott repercussions.

Impacts on the Employees

The study reveals adverse effects of boycotts on employees, primarily manifesting in income, job insecurity, productivity, reduced working hours, layoffs, and psychological problems.

First, on the issue of income, Elfaraain explains that the boycott has led the company to cut staff salaries, reducing employee income since the start of the boycott. This has created financial strain on workers, she said:

“The company was forced to cut the salary for staff. So, our income became lesser.”

Hamizah highlights that the boycott caused fewer sales, leading to reduced working hours and lower salaries for part-time workers. Full-time employees, including managers, were unaffected, showing how part-time workers are disproportionately impacted, as she said:

“Boycotting leads to fewer sales, so we must reduce working hours. When hours are cut, salaries are also reduced, especially for part-time workers. For full-time employees, including managers, their salaries remain fixed. So, the boycott’s impact is primarily felt by part-time workers, especially when the issue is at its peak.”

Second, the boycott impacts the employees in terms of their job security. Elfaraain expresses that K Fast Food Restaurant employees may voice their concerns about job insecurity through social media or discussions with colleagues regarding the possibility of job loss. This is reflected in her narrative as follows:

“As employees at K Fast Food Restaurant, we may voice our concerns through social media or discussions with fellow employees regarding the possibility of losing our jobs.”

She believes that the long-term impact of the boycott could result in fewer job opportunities, forcing some workers to seek alternative employment, and this can be proved in her view:

“I think the long-term impact of this boycott may include a reduction in job opportunities, with some employees forced to look for other jobs.”

Third, the boycott also affect employees’ productivity. Elfaraain explains that the boycott situation can create a tense work environment, negatively impacting productivity. She said:

“This situation can create a tense situation in our work environment and affect productivity.”

Fourth, regarding the issue of reduced working hours, Syanizam explains that lower-level employees who previously had overtime may now face reduced working hours due to declining customers, forcing the company to cut hours and further intensify the financial strain on these workers. As he said:

“For lower-level employees who may face reduced working hours due to the lack of customers, it leads to no overtime opportunity.”

Fifth, the boycott further affect the employees in terms of layoff issue. Farahana mentions that if the boycott continues, K Fast Food Restaurant might reduce its staff to cut costs. She said:

“If the boycott continues, K Fast Food Restaurant might reduce its staff to cut costs. This is necessary to lower salary expenses.”

The manager of K Fast Food Restaurant differs from others because only she knows how the system works in this company. In her narratives, she said that:

“In the K Fast Food Restaurant system, we cannot lay off staff except those who quit voluntarily.”

Finally, the boycott also psychologically affect the employees in the form of pressure, awareness, and the feeling of isolation. Elfaraain explains that the uncertainty caused by the situation can lead to mental stress and financial problems for employees. She said:

“The job uncertainty can cause mental stress and financial problems for employees.”

Farahana notes that many workers are beginning to worry about the uncertainty in the workplace, which is creating a tense environment. She said:

“So, this is why many workers are starting to worry about the workplace, which is becoming tense.”

In addition, Elfaraain emphasizes that the boycott is rooted in societal awareness, where individuals bring attention to important causes, such as the impact of K Fast Food Restaurant’s actions on society. This highlights a collective effort to influence change through conscious consumer choices, as she shared:

“It is more about social awareness. The impact of K Fast Food Restaurant’s actions on society influences everyone’s decisions. For example, someone feels that joining this boycott is one way to change the situation and may bring positive attention to other communities.”

Farahana expands on this notion by noting that events like running campaigns involve participation and serve as reminders for the public to stay informed about pressing issues, particularly concerning Palestine. This suggests a broader cultural movement where social consciousness is being actively promoted, as in his narratives, she said:

“So, the campaign of the running events is not just about them joining the run but also as a reminder to the people and society of Malaysia to always be aware of current issues related to Palestine.”

Rizwan further strengthens the idea of awareness by suggesting that the boycott reflects a shift in consumer behavior, where individuals, initially unaware, may eventually choose to support more ethical companies. This shift influences companies to reconsider their practices, demonstrating the power of informed consumerism and its potential to force change in corporate policies. This is reflected in his narratives as he said:

“When observing this boycott, it reflects an awareness and participation similar to community involvement. Some individuals may still purchase from companies like K Fast Food Restaurant but eventually recognize the issue and shift their purchases to more ethical food companies. This change in practice has, in several cases, pressured companies to reconsider their policies. Companies must make the necessary and appropriate changes in response to such movements.”

Syanizam adds that creative tactics within the boycott have proven effective in raising public awareness and garnering support. This highlights how innovative strategies can foster a sense of social responsibility, urging more people to join in. He said that:

“I think they have an impact, very effective in raising public awareness and support for the boycott because their creative tactics attract attention and foster a sense of social responsibility, encouraging more people to join this boycott.”

Lastly, the feeling of isolation is also found to be one of the psychological impacts of the boycott. An informant named Rizwan feel that his job secures him from being unemployed. However, sometimes, he feels isolated from his friends because he cannot boycott by resigning from the organization suddenly. This is reflected in his narratives as follows:

“I feel isolated from my friends who are still boycotting.”

However, it is different with Syanizam, who is boycotted at K Fast Food Restaurant and also gets pressure from his friends. He said:

“Do I need to do this or not? Because I usually get pressured by my circle. Colleagues and other social friends. They argue about why I want to do it. Yes, I experience pressure from those around me, saying why I need to boycott. Some of them may not understand what I am doing, but some of them do.”

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective 1: To explore responsible factors that cause boycotts among the consumers of K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia.

The first objective is to examine the factors driving consumer boycotts of K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia by identifying two major factors social and political. Key findings highlight that social factors such as group's influence, social pressure, religious obligations and affiliation, social media, influence from celebrities and politicians, cultural background and societal norms, cultural variations in ethics, political environment and conflict, the role of activists, political consumerism trends, marketing strategies, and economic monopoly play a significant role. While psychological factors such as feelings and self-esteem, amplify boycott movements by fostering collective identity and shared grievances.

Group's influence plays a significant role in consumer behavior, particularly in boycott participation. This is linked with the study by Sari et al. (2017) conducted in Indonesia, revealing that Muslim consumers often engage in boycotts due to group influence. The strong connection between “boycott” and “friends” highlights the impact of social pressure on purchasing decisions. Many individuals refrain from buying foreign brands to align with their social circles.

These findings align with the social pressure which one of the most significant ways customers may encourage socially conscious behavior and ethical business practices and pressure corporations to implement sustainable development initiatives is by forming effective boycotts. These findings are aligned with the studies done by Delistavrou et al. (2020) in Greece, customers who experience social pressure to boycott will develop good intentions to do so, whereas customers who experience social pressure not to boycott will not plan to take part in a relevant campaign.

Religious obligation and affiliation are potent motivators, with consumers viewing participation in boycotts as a moral obligation, especially when linked to controversial geopolitical issues. These findings corroborate the ones found by Dekhil, Jridi, and Farhat (2017), which found that religion also affects their way of life, dictating things like what they should buy and how much they consume. Broader societal narratives shape these ethical considerations. Economic dissatisfaction, such as opposition to monopolistic practices or profit-driven motives, also fuels boycotts.

Social media platforms provide a digital forum where people can voice their opinions, share content relating to boycotts, and interact with others who share their beliefs. This is in line with the previous studies done by Sen (2024), the rise of social media has accelerated the rapid dissemination of information and the mobilization of boycott movements, expanding their reach and impact.

Apart from that, influence from celebrities and politicians which emphasizes the important of role play by these groups. This is aligned with the studies done by Buheji and Ahmed (2023), who observed that cultural exchanges between artists and performers could significantly influence the momentum of boycott movements. Their study among consumers in Rwanda, Africa, highlighted that international artists' refusal to participate in cultural events or exhibitions directly or indirectly linked to Israel may further strengthen the boycott efforts.

The findings reveal that boycott happened among consumers because of people in such societies often feel a strong sense of duty toward their community, making them more inclined to participate in collective actions

that benefit the group. These findings are aligned with the studies done by Buheji and Ahmed (2023), who highlighted that individuals from cultures that emphasize activism and social responsibility are more likely to engage in boycotts.

In addition, the findings indicate that boycott resulted in cultural variations in ethics. Most of ethnics in Yong Peng are Chinese. These ethnics is not a pro-boycott group and they still be the customers at this K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia. This finding is aligned with the studies done by Shim and Cho (2021) in the U.S. and Malaysia denotes that holistic and analytical reasoning are valued differently in East Asian and Western cultures, and cultural variations might result in radically divergent ethical decision-making processes.

Political environment and conflict in this area is more on Chinese's politician and it is not drive a big decisions to the consumers. However as a state of Muslim country, the political environment plays a significant role to the impacts of boycott. This is aligned with the studies done by Dorobantu et al. (2017) in Toronto, Canada, where critical events cause political disputes. The ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, raises awareness among Muslim customers worldwide about the need to boycott American goods that are associated with Israel.

The role of activists also drive some individuals to make the decisions. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is one of the activists who always shout out about the issues of boycott such as Aman Palestin. This is aligned with the studies done by Abdullah (2024) among various entities and individuals such as Islamic NGOs in Malaysia, the findings show that activists play amassive role in encouraging people to boycott in the manner of collaborating with other countries on military activism helps strengthen alliances and raise awareness of regional risk in Southeast Asia.

The political consumerism is trending due to boycott issues. In the case of K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, which majorly consist of the Chinese, they not take this issue seriously because this not related to their religion. However, it should be seen on other perspective, i.e., humanity. Only Malay consumers boycott the K Fast Food Restaurant when this issue arises. These findings are aligned with the studies done by Neureiter and Bhattacharya (2021), in their study among consumers in India, the nature of the contentious topic and the political views of the company's primary consumers will determine whether revenues will rise or fall. The political context in which businesses operate, specifically the degree of division in the nation and the political composition of their primary customer base, play a significant role in determining consumer activism's occurrence, trajectory, and impact.

Malaysian customers were exasperated against Israel and hesitant to buy the related substitute products. This is demonstrated by how managers organize their marketing strategy, enabling them to outperform competitors in the Malaysian market even in the face of a boycott. This findings stated in studies done by Talib and Adnan (2017) among consumers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which shows that marketing strategies are responsible for the boycott. The finding is related to animosity and desire to boycott the stand-in products.

Furthermore, economic factors such as dissatisfaction with monopolistic practices or excessive profit-driven motives contribute to boycotts where economic groupdiscontent drives consumer activism. This is aligned with study conducted by Cruz (2017) in Brazil, which demonstrates that boycotts are caused by the monopolistic markets. The findings of the study shows that the social consumers are motivated to boycott businesses based on their assessment of a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) management orientation, which encompasses internal anti-corruption measures, organizational climate, labor conditions, and waste management during the production process.

Objective 2: To analyze the impacts of the boycott experienced by the employees at K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia.

The boycott of K Fast Food Restaurant has profoundly impacted its employees, particularly those in frontline roles. One major consequence is job insecurity, with reduced sales and foot traffic causing anxiety about

employment stability, which in turn lowers morale and productivity. Employees also feel unsupported due to poor communication from management, leaving them uninformed about strategies to address the crisis. This lack of organizational support mirrors patterns seen in similar situations, where inadequate responses lead to higher turnover intentions. This aligns with findings by Ellemers et al. (2018), who noted that external pressures such as boycotts can increase stress and lower employee job satisfaction. The uncertainty of continued employment exacerbates anxiety, diminishing team morale and productivity.

The issue of boycott reflected in the manner of retail employees who are typically hired seasonal or part-time, which might result in job insecurity and uncertainty. Most of the part-time workers feel their job is not secure when the issue is arise because the organization need to cut many costs. This aligned with studies done by Ridzwan, Ridzwan, and Zainuddin (2024) among 350 retail workers in Malaysia shows that boycotts negatively impacted job security.

K Fast Food Restaurant need to cut the costs until the management need to layoffs some employees especially part-time workers. This findings aligned with studies done by Ridzwan, Ridzwan, and Zainuddin (2024), boycotts can lower income for food and beverage companies, which may lead to staff reductions or terminations. The study's findings demonstrated that Malaysian retail employees are exhibiting depressive symptoms. They currently dread losing their jobs, as evidenced by the fact that out of 350 retail employees, 41 express this worry.

Additionally, employees face an uncomfortable work environment, with increased hostility from customers further complicating their ability to maintain service quality. Social pressure from family and friends to quit, often linked to religious and ethical objections, contributes to feelings of isolation and decreased motivation. The situation is worsened by reduced working hours, which negatively impact productivity, income, and overall morale, exacerbating financial instability and layoffs. Collectively, these factors create significant challenges for employees, both personally and professionally. These findings are aligned with studies done by Abdullah (2024), which clarifies the social pressure that propels public boycotts, as a result of people's worries about how society will perceive their allegiance to social justice, humanitarian, and religious issues.

Objective 3: To explore the impacts of the boycott experienced by the organization of K Fast Food Restaurant in Yong Peng, Johor, Malaysia.

The boycott of K Fast Food Restaurant has had severe organizational impacts, affecting its financial performance, operations, and reputation. The company has experienced a significant decline in revenue due to reduced consumer support fueled by social media campaigns and public calls for boycotts. These financial losses threaten both short-term liquidity and long-term sustainability, requiring extensive recovery efforts that are both costly and time-consuming. Operational efficiency has also been disrupted, as resources meant for growth and innovation have been redirected to crisis management and damage control, leaving the organization vulnerable to stagnation and competitive threats. This is similar to findings observed by Barakat and Moussa (2016), among consumers in the U.S. reveals that boycotting has detrimental financial effects on the target company, such as harming the company's reputation, sales, and brand image and a decline in stock price, which should put more pressure on the target company to make changes.

Reputational damage has further compounded the crisis, with negative media coverage and public scrutiny tarnishing the brand's image. This has led to diminished consumer confidence and reduced brand loyalty, making recovery even more challenging. Additionally, the company's relationships with key stakeholders, including employees, suppliers, and investors, have been strained. Suppliers face reduced orders, and investors are concerned about the business's long-term viability, creating further instability. The loss of loyal customers has been particularly detrimental, making it harder for the company to stabilize and recover during this critical period. This is aligned with the studies done by Fakriza and Nurdin (2019), in their study among 150 Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) consumers in Indonesia, which show that boycotts lead to severe outcomes, including decreased brand loyalty, bankruptcy, and lost sales as it causes the organization to incur significant losses.

Many consumers will try to support local products by buying products that do not have issues on political or environmental issues.

Recommendations for Organizations

To mitigate the impacts of boycotts and rebuild trust, organizations should adopt a comprehensive approach. Enhancing employee support systems is crucial, including structured training programs and open communication channels to improve morale, resilience, and retention. Providing transparent explanations about changes and improvements can help restore the organization's image and regain consumer trust. Utilizing social media platforms to communicate directly with the public about these efforts is recommended.

Organizations should also focus on long-term recovery strategies, such as diversifying product offerings and exploring new market segments to reduce reliance on vulnerable revenue streams. Actively showcasing social and environmental initiatives can further strengthen public perception. Creating relevant policies to ensure job security and maintaining clear communication with staff are also vital to addressing internal concerns. By combining these measures, organizations can effectively navigate boycotts and position themselves for sustainable growth.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should examine boycotts' long-term effects on employee career paths and organizational viability in greater detail. Furthermore, cross-industry comparison studies may offer a more advanced comprehension of boycott dynamics. For the purpose of gathering richer and more reliable data, future researchers can interview as many informants as possible and fully involve them in future studies. It is recommended to search for companies with greater degrees of workforce diversity in order to enhance the caliber of research findings. Strong diversity can offer a range of viewpoints, but it is also possible that certain connected problems will surface. Researchers are encouraged to approach informants directly and perform in-person interviews with them. It is believed that by doing this, informants will be more honest and focused in their responses.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper is to identify the factors and its impacts of boycott and address this issue properly. Hence, this research has provided a lot of information on the factors and impacts of boycott. This study has completed and analysed with the hope that it will benefit anyone that is eager to understand the issue of boycott to fast food restaurants.

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