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TO BUY OR BOYCOTT: KEY DRIVERS OF CONSUMER ACTIVISM IN MALAYSIA'S FOOD AND BEVERAGE (F&B) SECTOR

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Abstract:

Recently, consumer boycotts have attracted considerable attention within the Malaysian food and beverage (F&B) sector, particularly due to their responses to international moral and political issues. Although there appears to be substantial consumer awareness in relation to such phenomena, participation rates are quite inconsistent. This study aims to identify the main determinants of consumer boycott participation involving F&B brands in Malaysia, with an emphasis on

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religiosity, exposure to social media, consumer product judgement, perceived efficacy of the boycott participation, and peer and group influence. Using a quantitative research design, the data were collected from a sample of 401 adult Malaysian consumers using an online survey questionnaire. The results indicated that the regression model was highly significant ($F(5, 395) = 204.12, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.721$). Perceived efficacy emerged as the strongest positive predictor ($\beta = .672$), followed by social media exposure ($\beta = .121$), peer and group influence ($\beta = .116$), and religiosity ($\beta = .084$), while consumer product judgement demonstrated a significant negative relationship with boycott participation ($\beta = -.111, p < 0.001$). These findings highlight the critical social, moral, and psychological drivers of consumer activism, providing valuable insights into the dynamics underlying consumer boycotts in Malaysia.

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Keyword:

Boycott, Consumer Product Judgement, Social Media, Peer and Group Influence, Perceived Efficacy, Religiosity



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Introduction

Due to ongoing social and political issues, the last few years have seen an increase in boycott participation around the globe. Boycotts are often driven by individuals' desire to express dissatisfaction and opposition toward firms engaged in unethical or controversial activities. Likewise, boycott participation is influenced by factors such as personal beliefs, social media exposure, perceptions of product ethics, perceived efficacy, and social influence. These factors have motivated Malaysian consumers to engage in boycott movements, which have become a collective means of expressing disapproval toward unethical brands and businesses.

The consumer boycott movement targeting Israeli products is more than just an act of expression in Malaysia; it is also a practical measure to assess the organisations' commitment to their Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals. From a business perspective, such boycott movements pose both challenges and opportunities for firms (Ahmad Sanusi et al., 2025). Shah Alam and Mohamed Sayuti (2011) reported that boycott behaviour among Muslim consumers can be related to religious factors, since most are likely to be guided by community sentiments and recommendations from their families and friends. The emergence of global tensions has played an important role in shaping consumer behaviour towards boycotting products associated with ethical violations (Abdullah et al., 2021).

Thus, this study aims to identify the factors that significantly influence participation in F&B brand boycott movements in Malaysia. The findings and insights gained from this research can assist marketers, policymakers, and companies in navigating Malaysia's increasingly socially conscious consumer environment.

Literature Review

Consumer Participation in Boycotts

Consumer participation in boycotts can be defined as the extent to which people change their consumption practices in response to moral, social, or political issues. Consumers have become more outspoken about their ideas and opinions and no longer hide their disregard for corporations (Wang et al., 2021). In addition, this behaviour can also be categorized as a form of consumer activism, where consumers consciously avoid purchasing products from controversial companies (Saifullah, 2025). External influences such as peer pressure and media exposure, as well as internal factors, including consumers' moral values, product evaluations, and perceptions of consumer efficacy, play important roles in consumers' boycott participation. In addition, consumers have become more informed and socially responsible over time (Hamzah & Mustafa, 2019).

Religiosity and Boycott Participation

In moral decision-making and consumption behaviour, religiosity plays an important role. Conflicts across countries are known to spark consumer boycotts, as religion and ethics are among the most important factors determining consumer action (Abdullah et al., 2021).

Religious boycotts often take the form of a moral duty to act rather than a lifestyle choice. For example, Muslim consumers often have collective feelings related to religion and align their purchase decisions according to their religious values (Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011).

H1: Religiosity positively influences consumer involvement in F&B brand boycotts in Malaysia.

Social Media and Boycott Participation

Digital activism and online discussions can enhance consumer participation in boycotts (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020). These platforms make consumer responses highly visible and immediate. Individuals' actions can be made public through social media platforms. In Malaysia, social media is highly influential, as young consumers use these platforms to exchange opinions and information related to boycotts (Jacobsen et al., 2021). Thus, social media serves as an effective platform for mobilizing mass consumer boycott campaigns among young consumers in Malaysia (Putri & Herman, 2022).

H2: Social media has a positive relationship with consumer involvement in F&B brand boycotts in Malaysia.

Consumer Product Judgement and Boycott Participation

Consumer product judgement refers to individuals' perceptions of the quality, trustworthiness, and brand loyalty of a specific company's products. At the micro-level, the anti-consumption of food items may emerge from ethical concerns, environmental sustainability, health awareness, religiosity, or personal values (García-de-Frutos et al., 2018; Attiq et al., 2023). Consumers' evaluations of perceived unethical corporate practices or nonconformity to societal values are primary drivers of boycotts. Negative evaluations of a brand can generate strong

consumer animosity, which directly strengthens boycott intentions (Awaludin & Al-Khaidar, 2023).

H3: Consumer product judgement has a positive relationship with consumer involvement in F&B brand boycotts in Malaysia.

Perceived Boycott Efficacy and Boycott Participation

Perceived efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capability to execute the actions required to achieve an outcome, serving as a self-belief system used to exert control over one's environment (Garlin & McGuiggan, 2002). Perceived boycott efficacy refers to the consumer's belief that individual or collective boycott actions can successfully alter a company's behaviour or reputation. Consumers who are convinced that their individual actions contribute to a meaningful outcome are more likely to join boycott campaigns. Cevher (2025) stated that perceived efficacy, characterized by consumers' conviction in their collective ability to generate a desired impact, significantly amplifies the success of a boycott. Additionally, perceived efficacy plays a critical role in transitioning consumers from passive awareness to active participation. This is supported by Salma and Aji (2023), who found that efficacy perceptions have a significant impact on the intentions of Muslim consumers to participate in boycott campaigns.

H4: Perceived boycott efficacy has a positive relationship with consumer involvement in F&B brand boycotts in Malaysia.

Peer and Group Influence and Boycott Participation

Nafees et al. (2020) reported that peer and reference group influence exerts a strong impact on consumer behaviour; interacting with peers, observing social behaviour, and learning from the immediate social environment shape consumer knowledge and buying experiences. Consequently, peer and group influence strongly shapes behaviour in collectivistic societies like Malaysia, where consumers adopt group preferences and prioritize harmony to sustain community-led initiatives, including boycotts (Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011).

H5: Peer and group influence has a positive relationship with consumer involvement in F&B brand boycotts in Malaysia.

Methodology

Given the multifaceted nature of boycott events involving various stakeholders, this study focuses on F&B brand boycotts and their impact on the Malaysian market. In addressing the research questions, the researchers employed a correlational, quantitative, and cross-sectional research design to test the relationships between independent variables, such as social media, peer and group influence, religiosity, consumer product judgement, perceived efficacy, and the dependent variable, namely consumer participation in F&B brand boycotts.

The structured questionnaire was divided into seven sections, which captured demographic profiles, measures for the five independent variables, and measures for the dependent variable. Measurement items were adapted from established literature with minor contextual adjustments

and evaluated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The population comprised Malaysian consumers aged 18 years and older who had purchase F&B products. This age cohort was selected because these individuals generally possess independent purchasing power and financial autonomy. Given the large size of the adult Malaysian population, Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table was utilized. For populations exceeding 100,000, the recommended minimum sample size to achieve a 95% confidence level at a 5% margin of error is 384 respondents.

Data Analysis

Respondents' Demographic Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents; a total of 401 valid responses were collected. Most respondents were female ($n = 349$, 87.0%), while male respondents accounted for 52 individuals (13.0%). This distribution indicates that female respondents constituted the majority of the sample and were more actively represented in the study. Consequently, the empirical results primarily reflect the perspectives and attitudes of female consumers.

Table 1: Demographic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	349	87.0	87.0	87.0
	Male	52	13.0	13.0	100.0
	Total	401	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	>50	15	3.7	3.7	3.7
	18 – 35	379	94.5	94.5	98.3
	36 – 49	7	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	401	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that most respondents fell within the 18–35 age bracket (94.5%). This was followed by respondents aged 50 and above ($n = 15$, 3.7%), while those aged 36–49 represented the smallest cohort ($n = 7$, 1.7%). Overall, the sample was predominantly composed of young adults aged 18 to 35 years old, who are typically more active on digital platforms compared to older demographics.

Table 3: Race

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Malay	393	98.0	98.0	99.8
Chinese	3	.7	.7	1.0
Indian	2	.5	.5	1.7
Others (Iban, Bajau, and	3	.6	.6	100.0

Punjabi)				
Total	401	100.0	100.0	

The racial demographic profile in Table 3 reveals that most respondents were Malay (n = 393, 98.0%), followed by Chinese (n = 3, 0.7%), Indian (n = 2, 0.5%), and other ethnicities, including Iban, Bajau, and Punjabi (n = 3, 0.6% combined). Thus, the sample is heavily representative of the Malay demographic.

Table 4: Highest Educational Level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SPM / SPMV or Equivalent	53	13.2	13.2	13.2
	STPM or Equivalent	2	0.5	0.5	13.7
	Certificate or Equivalent	7	1.7	1.7	15.4
	Foundation	1	0.2	0.2	15.6
	Diploma or Equivalent (including pre-diploma)	188	46.9	46.9	62.5
	Bachelor's Degree	147	36.7	36.7	99.2
	Master's Degree	2	0.5	0.5	99.7
	PhD	1	0.2	0.2	99.9
	Total	401	100.0	100.0	—

Regarding educational level in Table 4, a plurality of respondents held a Diploma or equivalent (n = 188, 46.9%), followed closely by those with a bachelor's degree (n = 147, 36.7%). Respondents with SPM/SPMV or equivalent qualifications accounted for 13.2% (n = 53). Minor percentages were recorded for STPM or equivalent (0.5%), Certificates (1.7%), and Foundation programs (0.2%). Postgraduate qualification holders were also minimally represented, with master's degrees and PhD accounting for 0.5% and 0.2% of the sample, respectively. Overall, the sample was highly educated, with the majority holding undergraduate diplomas or degrees.

Table 5: Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Married	33	8.2	8.2	8.2
	Single	368	91.8	91.8	100.0
	Total	401	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: States

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Johor	54	13.5	13.5	13.5
	Kedah	8	2.0	2.0	15.5
	Kelantan	48	12.0	12.0	27.4
	Melaka	5	1.2	1.2	28.7
	Negeri Sembilan	7	1.7	1.7	30.4
	Pahang	36	9.0	9.0	39.4
	Perak	3	.7	.7	40.1
	Perlis	2	.5	.5	40.6
	Pulau Pinang	2	.5	.5	41.1
	Sabah	2	.5	.5	41.6
	Selangor	77	19.2	19.2	60.8
	Terengganu	134	33.4	33.4	94.3
	Wilayah Persekutuan	23	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	401	100.0	100.0	

Analyses of marital status in Table 5 indicated that 91.8% ($n = 368$) of the respondents were single, while the remaining 8.2% ($n = 33$) were married. Geographic distribution in Table 6 across Malaysian states showed that Terengganu yielded the highest response rate ($n = 134$, 33.4%), followed by Selangor ($n = 77$, 19.2%), Johor ($n = 54$, 13.5%), and Kelantan ($n = 48$, 12.0%). Pahang and Wilayah Persekutuan accounted for 9.0% and 5.7%, respectively, while the remaining states (Kedah, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Perak, Perlis, Pulau Pinang, and Sabah) collectively formed a small fraction of the sample.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 7: Independent Variable 1 – Religiosity

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I obey my parents for religious reasons.	401	1	5	4.42	.974
2. I prefer to deal with people who have a high level of religious commitment.	401	1	5	4.04	.980
3. My religious beliefs guide my choices, including the decision to refrain from purchasing certain products.	401	1	5	4.35	.877
4. I feel it is my duty to stop buying products that go against my religious beliefs.	401	1	5	4.51	.858

5. I boycott products produced by companies that support actions contrary to my religious beliefs.	401	1	5	4.43	.858
Valid N (listwise)	401				

Respondents reported high levels of religiosity, with religiosity measured on a five-point scale, where average scores ranged from 4.04 to 4.51. The statement with the highest mean score was *"I feel it is my duty to stop buying products that go against my religious beliefs."* ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 0.858$). The other statements with the highest mean scores were *"I boycott products produced by companies that support actions contrary to my religious beliefs."* ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.858$) and *"I obey my parents for religious reasons."* ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.974$).

Respondents strongly agreed that their religious beliefs guide their decisions ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.877$), including decisions not to purchase certain products. They also agreed that they prefer to interact with individuals who exhibit a high degree of religious commitment, however, the mean score for this statement was comparatively lower than those previously mentioned ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.980$). The findings suggest that religiosity influences the respondents' attitudes and behaviours to a considerable extent, particularly with regard to boycott participation and their consumption behaviours.

Table 8: Independent Variable 2 – Social Media

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I felt that Brand X was cruel after seeing it on social media.	401	1	5	4.34	.833
2. I believe that what people post about the boycotted Brand X cruelty is true.	401	1	5	4.25	.871
3. I became convinced of Brand X's cruelty after viewing the images shared on social media.	401	1	5	4.28	.876
4. The remarks made by individuals regarding Brand X that are being boycotted on social media are accurate.	401	1	5	4.11	.920
5. Images and videos concerning Brand X that are being boycotted on social media reflect the current reality.	401	1	5	4.24	.883
Valid N (listwise)	401				

According to this variable, respondents appear to hold similar views regarding how social media influences their perception of Brand X and how credible they consider social media as a source of information about Brand X's alleged cruelty. The average scores for all items

measuring this aspect of social media were between 4.11 and 4.34, suggesting that respondents perceived Brand X as cruel based on the images they saw on social media.

For instance, the statement *“I felt that Brand X was cruel after seeing it on social media”* obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.833$), while the second highest mean was for the statement *“I became convinced of Brand X's cruelty after viewing the images shared on social media”* ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.876$). Respondents also believed that information provided by other individuals about Brand X's cruelty was credible ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.871$) and felt that the images and videos posted about Brand X on social media accurately reflected the current situation ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.883$). While still a strong agreement, the statement *“The remarks made by individuals regarding Brand X that are being boycotted on social media are accurate”* had a slightly lower mean score of 4.11 ($SD = 0.920$). Overall, the data suggests that social media has a considerable impact on respondents' perceptions and beliefs about the boycott of Brand X.

Table 9: Independent Variable 3 – Consumer Product Judgement

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using.	401	1	5	3.99	.999
2. When I have limited experience with a product, I frequently consult my friends for their opinions on it.	401	1	5	4.15	.893
3. Despite the boycott, I continue to trust and support Brand X.	401	1	5	2.59	1.441
4. I have a positive impression of the boycotted Brand X.	401	1	5	2.65	1.426
5. I am very familiar with the boycotted Brand X.	401	1	5	3.81	1.152
Valid N (listwise)	401				

The descriptive statistics for this variable indicate that respondents exhibit mixed responses with the mean scores ranging from 2.59 and 4.15. There was a strong tendency to rely on social influence among the respondents when making their purchasing decisions. The highest mean ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.893$) was in the statement *“When I have limited experience with a product, I frequently consult my friends for their opinions on it”*, then the statement *“To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using”* ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.999$). The findings suggest that the opinions of peers and watching other people are part of the process that consumers use in their decision-making.

Conversely, there was a low level of agreement with the statements pertaining to the extension of support and favourable attitudes towards the boycotted Brand X. Particularly, the lowest mean scores were recorded with the statements, *“Despite the boycott, I continue to trust and support Brand X”* ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 1.441$) and *“I have a positive impression of the boycotted Brand X”* ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 1.426$) indicating that people generally withdrew their trust and

positive impressions about the brand after the boycott. In the meantime, the respondents stated that they were moderately familiar with Brand X ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.152$).

In conclusion, the results indicate that although social influence is a potent influence on purchasing behaviour, the boycott negatively affected respondents' trust and perceptions towards Brand X.

The descriptive analysis of Perceived Efficacy (IV4) in Table 10 showed that respondents strongly agreed with all 5 items relating to how effective the boycott was in influencing corporations' behaviour. The mean scores all fell within the range of 4.15 to 4.45 on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating high levels of agreement with statements regarding the capacity of boycotts to affect change. The statement with the highest mean score (4.45) was that *"Everyone should boycott because any contribution, no matter how tiny, is valuable"*. The standard deviations of the items ranged from 0.817 to 1.009, suggesting homogeneous responses within each item, while the item stating that the boycott served as a means of expressing anger had a slightly higher degree of variability compared to others. Overall, it can be concluded that respondents viewed boycotts as a viable and effective method of influencing corporations' behaviour.

Table 10: Independent Variable 4 – Perceived Efficacy

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Boycotting Brand X can help change the situation.	401	1	5	4.31	.872
2. Boycotting Brand X is one way to express anger.	401	1	5	4.15	1.009
3. Boycotts can be a powerful way to create change.	401	1	5	4.39	.827
4. Avoiding support for Brand X can reduce purchases and usage of their products.	401	1	5	4.39	.818
5. Everyone should boycott because any contribution, no matter how tiny, is valuable.	401	1	5	4.45	.817
Valid N (listwise)	401				

The descriptive statistics indicate for peer and group influence (IV5), there is a moderate influence of the opinions of others on participants in their food and beverage choices. The mean scores for Items 1 and 2, which relate to purchasing decisions based on others' approval were 3.55 and 3.54, respectively. On the other hand, there are higher mean scores for Items 3 (4.14) and 4 (3.88), which are related to encouraging others to engage in a boycott and sharing negative information about brands being boycotted. These two items suggest that the respondents were more likely to encourage collective boycott behaviours than when there is social pressure regarding brand-related decisions.

Table 11: Independent Variable 5 – Peer and Group Influence

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. When buying fast food, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.	401	1	5	3.55	1.135
2. When buying/consuming F&B products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.	401	1	5	3.54	1.118
3. I will encourage my friends and relatives to avoid purchasing products that have been subjected to a boycott.	401	1	5	4.14	.953
4. I will share the negative information about the subject of boycott brand.	401	1	5	3.88	1.075
5. I must always obey my group's decisions when boycotting F&B products.	401	1	5	3.92	.994
6. I always follow my group's opinion when boycotting F&B products.	401	1	5	3.88	1.005
Valid N (listwise)	401				

In addition, participants expressed a relatively high level of adherence to the group during a boycott (Items 5 = 3.92 and 6 = 3.88), suggesting that group norms are an important factor for influencing whether an individual will choose to participate in a boycott. The standard deviation for individual items ranged from 0.953 to 1.135. Overall, the data show that while there is a moderate effect of social influence and group forms of social influence on participants' general consumption decisions, they do have a greater impact on engagement in active participation in boycott-related behaviours.

Table 12: Dependent Variable – Factors Influencing Consumer Participation in F&B Brand Boycotts in Malaysia

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Boycotts are an effective means to make firms change their actions.	401	1	5	4.35	.853
2. When all of us support the boycott, the firms will listen to us.	401	1	5	4.31	.866

3. Everyone should support the boycott because every contribution, no matter how small, is important.	401	1	5	4.41	.839
4. By boycotting, I can help change the firm's decision.	401	1	5	4.32	.873
Valid N (listwise)	401				

Respondents generally viewed boycotting as an effective means of influencing change within corporations. The descriptive analysis of factors influencing consumers' participation in F&B brand boycotts in Malaysia showed a high level of agreement across all four items. The mean scores on the 5-point Likert scale range from 4.31 to 4.41. Among these items, the statement, "Everyone should support the boycott because every contribution, no matter how small, is important", received the highest mean score ($M = 4.41$). In addition, the standard deviations were relatively low, ranging from 0.839 to 0.873, indicating a high degree of consistency in respondents' answers. These findings suggest that Malaysian consumers view boycotting as meaningful and as a viable means of influencing a firm's behaviour when undertaken collectively.

Reliability Test

Based on the reliability guidelines proposed by Cohen et al. (2002), Cronbach's alpha values between 0.60 and 0.69 indicate marginally or minimally reliable internal consistency, whereas values of 0.70 and above indicate reliable scales. Therefore, all constructs in this study demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.697 to 0.948.

Table 13: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Table

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items	Reliability Level
Religiosity	0.861	5	Good
Social media	0.948	5	Excellent
Consumer's Product Judgement	0.697	5	Acceptable
Perceived Efficacy	0.910	5	Excellent
Peer and Group Influence	0.860	6	Good
Consumer Participation in Boycotts	0.934	4	Excellent

Collinearity Analysis

Table 14: Collinearity Statistics

Predictor	Tolerance	VIF	Interpretation
Religiosity	0.642	1.577	Good
Social media	0.392	2.550	Excellent
Consumer's Product Judgement	0.679	1.473	Acceptable
Perceived Efficacy	0.433	2.308	Excellent
Peer and Group Influence	0.487	2.052	Good

Table 14 presents the collinearity statistics for the independent variables. The tolerance values ranged from 0.392 to 0.679, while the VIF values ranged from 1.473 to 2.550. All tolerance values exceeded the recommended minimum threshold of 0.20, and all VIF values were well below the recommended maximum threshold of 5.0 (Hair et al., 2018). These results indicate that multicollinearity is not a concern in this study, suggesting that the regression coefficients are stable and reliable.

Inferential Analysis

Table 15: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Correlations		Religiosity	Social Media	Consumer's Product Judgement	Perceived Efficacy	Peer and Group Influence	Consumer Participation in F&B Brand Boycott
Religiosity	Pearson Correlation	1	.559**	.294**	.537**	.422**	.530**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	401	401	401	401	401	401
Social media	Pearson Correlation	.559**	1	.351**	.725**	.594**	.686**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	401	401	401	401	401	401
Consumer's Product Judgement	Pearson Correlation	.294**	.351**	1	.336**	.563**	.248**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	401	401	401	401	401	401
Perceived Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.537**	.725**	.336**	1	.547**	.832**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	401	401	401	401	401	401
Peer and Group Influence	Pearson Correlation	.422**	.594**	.563**	.547**	1	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	401	401	401	401	401	401
Factors Influencing Consumer Participation in F&B Brand Boycotts in Malaysia	Pearson Correlation	.530**	.686**	.248**	.832**	.529**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	401	401	401	401	401	401

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 16: ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

ANOVA^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	177.135	5	35.427	204.116	<.001 ^b
	Residual	68.557	395	.174		
	Total	245.693	400			
a. Dependent Variable: Factors Influencing Consumer Participation in F&B Brand Boycotts in Malaysia						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Efficacy, Religiosity, Consumer Product Judgement, Peer and Group Influence, social media						

Table 17: Model Summary

Model Summary^b										
					Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change	Durbin - Watson
1	.849 ^a	.721	.717	.41661	.721	204.116	5	395	<.001	2.012
a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Efficacy, Religiosity, Consumer Product Judgement, Peer and Group Influence, Social Media										
b. Dependent Variable: Factors influencing consumer participation in F&B brand boycotts in Malaysia										

The Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the study variables. All correlations were significant at the 0.01 level, indicating meaningful associations among the constructs. Perceived efficacy showed a strong positive correlation with consumer participation in boycotts ($r = .832$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that respondents who believe in the effectiveness of boycotts are more likely to engage in boycott behaviours. Perceived efficacy ($r = .725$, $p < 0.001$) and consumer participation ($r = .686$, $p < 0.001$) had a strong relationship with social media influence, which clearly indicated the influence that social media has on attitude and action formation.

Peer and group influence and religiosity were moderately correlated with participation ($r = .529$ and $r = .530$, $p < 0.001$, respectively), and consumer product judgement was less strongly, but significantly correlated with participation ($r = .248$, $p < 0.001$). Overall, the results suggest that perceived efficacy, social media influence, peer and group influence, and religiosity are positively associated with consumer engagement in F&B brand boycotts in Malaysia.

Table 18: Multiple Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	.328	.148		2.222	.027	.038	.618
Religiosity	.091	.036	.084	2.547	.011	.021	.161
Social Media	.119	.042	.121	2.858	.004	.037	.201
Consumer Product Judgement	-.107	.031	-.111	-3.427	<.001	-.169	-.046
Perceived Efficacy	.705	.042	.672	16.639	<.001	.621	.788
Peer and Group Influence	.113	.037	.116	3.056	.002	.040	.186
<i>a. Dependent Variable: Factors Influencing Consumer Participation in F&B Brand Boycotts in Malaysia</i>							

Statistical analysis indicated that the regression model was statistically significant, $p < 0.001$, and explained 72.1% of the variance ($R^2 = .721$) in consumers' participation in boycotts. This indicates that the combined predictive power of all five variables provides a strong framework for understanding boycott behaviour among consumers in Malaysia. In addition, the Durbin-Watson statistic (2.012) indicated that the model did not exhibit autocorrelation. Finally, the results of the ANOVA demonstrated that the predictors were collectively significant, and the multiple regression analysis showed that the strongest predictor of boycott behaviour was perceived efficacy ($\beta = .672$, $p < 0.001$), while social media, peer and group influence, and religiosity were also significant positive predictors. However, consumer product judgement had a statistically significant negative relationship with boycott behaviour. Consequently, H3, which proposed a positive relationship between consumer product judgement and boycott participation, was not supported.

Perceived efficacy had the highest beta value ($\beta = .672$), suggesting that individuals who believe their participation can make a difference are significantly more likely to engage in boycotts. This is consistent with theories of collective action, which propose that perceived efficacy is a prerequisite for mobilization. Social media ($\beta = .121$) was also positively associated with boycott participation due to its role in organizing campaigns, increasing awareness, and shaping perceptions of collective action through information sharing.

The influence of peers and social groups ($\beta = .116$) also highlights important social processes, as collective behaviour is often shaped by community norms. This reflects social pressure and the psychological phenomenon known as social proof, where individuals rely on the behaviour and judgements of others when making a decision (Babić Rosario et al., 2020). Religiosity was also positively associated with boycott participation ($\beta = .084$), indicating that individuals with stronger religious commitments may feel a moral obligation to participate in boycotts. In this

sense, boycott participation is perceived as more than a form of protest; it becomes a moral act.

The results indicate that consumer product judgement has a significant negative relationship with boycott participation ($\beta = -.111, p < .001$). Therefore, H3 is not supported. This suggests that as consumers develop more favourable evaluations and stronger familiarity with a brand, their likelihood of participating in a boycott decreases. According to Trump (2014), loyal consumers are often more forgiving of negative actions by their preferred brands, including ethical transgressions.

Overall, religiosity, social media, perceived efficacy, and consumer product judgement significantly influence boycott behaviour. Consumers are more likely to participate in boycotts when they believe their actions are effective and when supported by social and moral influences.

Discussion

This study examined the factors driving Malaysian consumers to participate in F&B boycotts. The key variables such as religious factors, social media influence, perceived efficacy, consumer product judgement, and peer and group influence accounted for a substantial share of the variance in boycott participation ($R^2 = 0.721$). All four independent variables showed a significant positive link with boycott participation. Whereas consumer product judgement demonstrated a significant negative relationship with boycott participation, therefore, H3 was not supported.

The most influential factor is perceived efficacy, as the finding suggests that consumers are far more inclined to join a boycott when they believe their individual participation, combined with collective effort, can force real change. This aligns with collective action theory, which posits that individuals are more likely to engage in social movements when they perceive their contribution as impactful rather than symbolic.

Social media ranks as the second most influential factor. Recent high-profile boycott campaigns demonstrate that digital platforms do more than just spread news. They actively shape public sentiment and organize consumer resistance. Rather than viewing boycotts as mere statements, Malaysian consumers increasingly use digital channels to coordinate action, challenge corporate behaviour, and reinforce shared expectations around corporate responsibility.

Conversely, moderate positive relationships are found for religiosity and peer and group influence, suggesting that moral values and social conformity play important roles in shaping boycott behaviour, particularly in the Malaysian context. Peer and group influence had a clear positive effect which aligns naturally with Malaysia's collectivist culture. Rather than deciding in isolation, individuals heavily rely on family, friends and community networks when navigating ethical purchases. Similarly, higher religiosity directly increases boycott participation, as personal faith provides a moral compass when a brand's actions conflict with religious values. Intriguingly, consumer product judgement showed a negative relationship with boycott behaviour. When consumers hold a highly favourable view of a brand driven by product quality, familiarity or past positive experiences, they are less likely to join a boycott, even amidst strong external pressure. This highlights the power of brand loyalty, which can partially cushion companies against social and ethical pushbacks.

These findings offer practical implications for policymakers and consumer advocacy groups, and business operators. Companies must recognize that modern consumer activism is rooted in perceptions of ethics and transparency. To reduce the risk of becoming boycott targets, business should communicate transparently, respond promptly to public concerns, and demonstrate genuine social responsibility.

It is important to state that the demographic structure of the respondent profile consisted mainly of 87% females, young people aged from 18 to 35 years old, and Malay consumers. These demographic characteristics reflect the respondents who were most accessible through online data collection; they may also indicate that younger female consumers are more likely to take part in online surveys and more actively engage with social media discussions related to ethical consumption. Nevertheless, this demographic imbalance limits the extent to which findings can be generalised to the broader Malaysian population, whose motivations and purchasing behaviour may differ, particularly male consumers and older age groups.

Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

Future studies should include a more diverse sample in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and geographical location to improve the generalizability of the findings. This study was limited because the sample was predominantly composed of young adults aged 18–35 years, female respondents, and Malay consumers. Thus, the population sampled does not necessarily provide an accurate view of the Malaysian population's behaviour.

This study examined five predictors of boycott participation: religiosity, social media, consumer product judgement, perceived efficacy, and peer and group influence. Although these variables explained a substantial proportion of the variance in boycott participation, other potentially important factors were not considered. Thus, future research may explore additional variables such as consumer ethnocentrism, political ideology, trust in institutions, moral obligation, brand attachment, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) perceptions. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing consumer participation in F&B brand boycotts in Malaysia and offers a foundation for future research on consumer activism, ethical consumption, and corporate responsibility.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results indicate that religiosity, social media influence, perceived efficacy, and peer and group influence positively influence boycott behaviour, whereas consumer product judgement exerts a significant negative influence. The belief in the effectiveness of boycott participation and the perception that individual and collective participation can make a difference, facilitated through social media and group dynamics, was observed among respondents.

Even though the study achieved an adequate sample size of 401 respondents, the sample was composed mainly of young females and Malay respondents. Hence, the findings of this study may reflect only the perception of these demographic groups, rather than the Malaysian population. Nevertheless, marketers, policymakers, and researchers can use these findings to better understand the growing influence of ethical consumption and consumer activism. Overall, as consumer activism continues to expand through digital communication platforms,

it can be suggested that organisations need to be more aware of the social and ethical considerations affecting consumers' buying decisions apart from marketing tools.

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