The Role of Social Media, Voice of Boycott, and Boycott Intention in Shaping Boycott Behavior among Malaysian Students

Ruqaiyah Ab Rahim
Faculty of Business Management, UiTM Johor, Kampus Pasir Gudang, Malaysia

Nurul Fahana Aini Harun*
Faculty of Business Management, UiTM Johor, Kampus Pasir Gudang, Malaysia
Corresponding Author Email: fahana_aini@uitm.edu.my

Fairuz Ramli
Faculty of Accountancy, UiTM Johor, Kampus Pasir Gudang, Malaysia

Nurmunirah Azami
Faculty of Management, Universiti Technology Malaysia

Abstract
Consumer boycotts have become a prominent form of civic activism, especially in the digital era, where social media enhances awareness, mobilization, and collective engagement. While previous studies recognize the role of psychological and social factors, little is known about how social media, voice of boycott, and boycott intention together influence actual boycott behavior among Malaysian students. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this study examines the combined effects of these three factors on boycott behavior. A quantitative survey was conducted with 123 Malaysian students using a purposive sampling approach. The questionnaire included validated measures of social media use, boycott intention, voice of boycott, and boycott behavior. Correlation and regression analyses were employed to evaluate relationships and predictive capabilities. Results show that boycott intention is the most influential factor in driving boycott behavior, while the voice of boycott also plays a supporting role by reinforcing group norms and legitimizing collective action. In contrast, social media has an insignificant effect on boycott behavior. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening boycott intention and encouraging the voice of the boycott to promote active participation. Policy recommendations include integrating digital literacy

and activism programs in universities and developing strategies to help students move from private intention to public advocacy in boycott movements.

Keywords: Social Media, Voice of Boycott, Boycott Intention, Boycott Behavior, Theory of Planned Behavior

Introduction

Consumer boycotts have become one of the most visible and influential forms of modern activism, allowing individuals to protest against corporations, governments, or institutions by deliberately avoiding their goods or services (Misiewicz et al., 2024; Ramazan Ahmad, 2021). Unlike earlier boycott movements that depended heavily on organized groups, traditional media, and physical mobilization, today's boycotts are increasingly driven by social media platforms. These digital spaces enable quick dissemination of information, real-time mobilization, and widespread participation that cross geographical boundaries (Adi et al., 2025; Pan & Lee, 2025). As a result, boycotts have transformed from sporadic, localized acts of resistance into global, highly connected, and emotionally driven social movements.

The importance of studying boycotts today is their increasing role as a form of political and economic influence. Recently, boycott movements have been used to show collective disapproval of issues like environmental damage, human rights violations, unethical corporate practices, and geopolitical conflicts. These movements not only change how consumers interact with brands but also pressure governments and companies to respond to public concerns. The growth of digital activism has made boycotts more accessible, visible, and impactful, making it important for scholars to understand how individuals move from online engagement to real behavioral change.

This study holds particular importance in the Malaysian context. Malaysia has a young, digitally connected population, with students among the most active users of social media platforms. They are frequently exposed to advocacy-driven content and often participate in online discussions about social justice, politics, religion, and international affairs. As future leaders and decision-makers, Malaysian students' consumer choices and activism hold both symbolic and practical significance. Analyzing their boycott behavior offers insights into how digital activism influences societal values, consumption habits, and political awareness in Southeast Asia.

The importance of this research reaches multiple stakeholders. For advocacy groups, the findings will help identify effective digital strategies for mobilizing public support. For policymakers, understanding the dynamics of boycotts can assist in predicting and managing social movements that might affect national stability or international relations. For businesses, this research provides practical guidance on how to reduce reputational risks, restore consumer trust, and engage ethically with increasingly conscious consumers. Academically, the study adds to the growing body of literature on digital activism, consumer behavior, and the psychology of protest by linking social media engagement, communicative expression (boycott voice), and psychological readiness (boycott intention) with actual boycott behavior.

Despite the increasing prevalence of boycott movements in the digital age, several research gaps still exist. First, much of the current literature has studied boycotts either through

consumer motivation or general social media activism, but few studies have empirically combined the effects of social media use, boycott voice, and boycott intention on actual boycott behavior. Second, while intention is widely recognized as a strong predictor of behavior in consumer psychology, there is limited empirical evidence on how digital expressions of protest—such as sharing, posting, or using hashtags—support or turn intention into actual action. Third, most existing studies focus on Western contexts, leaving a limited understanding of how youth in developing, multi-ethnic societies like Malaysia experience and engage in boycott movements. Since Malaysian students are both digitally savvy and socially conscious, ignoring this group risks missing important insights into the future of activism and consumer resistance in the region.

Therefore, given these gaps, the present study sets out to systematically investigate the drivers of boycott behavior in a digital context. Specifically, it focuses on how social media usage, boycott voice, and boycott intention interact to influence actual boycott practices among Malaysian students. To achieve this aim, the research is guided by the following objectives:

RO1: To determine the effect of social media on boycott intention.
RO2: To examine the relationship between boycott practice and boycott intention.
RO3: To assess the influence of boycott voice on boycott intention.
RO4: To identify the most dominant factor influencing boycott intention among social media, boycott practice, and boycott voice.

Literature Review
Theoretical Framework
This study adopts the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) to explain the mechanisms that lead individuals from psychological readiness to actual boycott participation. TPB emphasizes that intention is the most immediate predictor of behavior, shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the boycott context, attitudes reflect moral or ethical evaluations of the targeted company, subjective norms represent the social pressure or approval from peers and communities, and perceived behavioral control captures the perceived ease or difficulty of participating in a boycott (Klein et al., 2004). These three components converge to determine whether an individual intends to engage in and ultimately performs boycott behavior.

In this study, boycott intention, social media, and voice of boycott are conceptualized as the main predictors of boycott behavior. Boycott intention reflects the motivational readiness to act, social media strengthens both attitudes and norms by exposing individuals to collective action, and the voice of boycott reinforces social legitimacy and mobilization. TPB thus provides a coherent lens for understanding how these predictors interact, both directly and indirectly, to shape the likelihood that individuals transform willingness into actual participation in boycott campaigns.

Boycott Behaviour
Boycott behavior refers to the visible action of refusing to buy goods or services from targeted entities as a form of protest or ethical resistance. It goes beyond simple expressions of dissatisfaction, representing concrete consumer activism that can influence a company's

reputation, market performance, and socio-political discussions. While earlier literature defines boycott behavior as the result of collective or individual grievances (Friedman, 1999), recent research has shifted focus toward how this behavior takes shape in the digital age, especially through social media-enabled mechanisms.

Empirical evidence consistently emphasizes the importance of social media in enabling and accelerating boycott behavior. For example, Andrus et al. (2025) demonstrate that the tone on social media surrounding boycott announcements causes real-time stock market reactions, suggesting that online consumer activity leads to economic consequences. This supports the idea that boycott behavior, when powered by digital networks, has a measurable impact on corporate outcomes. Similarly, Adi et al. (2025), in their analysis of the "#boycott" movement on X, show how digital boycott campaigns, unlike their traditional counterparts, are decentralized, rapid, and driven by online engagement, making it easy for individuals to turn dissatisfaction into action.

The link between social media engagement and actual boycott participation is further demonstrated in Ginder & Kwon (2020), where higher peer engagement (e.g., likes on boycott pages) was associated with greater active involvement in brand boycotts on Facebook. This indicates that social validation and visibility are crucial in encouraging users to move from passive support to active behavioral resistance. These patterns are also evident in conflict-driven boycotts, such as the study by Misiewicz et al. (2024), which shows how consumer outrage during the Russia-Ukraine war led to more boycott actions against brands perceived as unethical, especially when publicly shared through emotionally charged social media posts. Cultural and national contexts greatly influence boycott behavior. Ramazan Ahmad (2021) highlights how Kurdish consumers in Iraq viewed their participation in a Facebook-based boycott of Turkish products as more than just a political act; it was considered a national duty. In this context, boycott behavior is seen as a way to affirm identity and resist perceived oppression, showing how cultural stories profoundly impact the likelihood of engaging in such actions. Similarly, Syarif & Herman (2024) found that within the Indonesian Muslim community, religiosity and social media exposure were strong predictors of actual boycott actions against Israel-affiliated products. This confirms that ideological and moral motivations can translate into real behavior, especially when reinforced through online platforms.

Boycott Intention
Boycott intention is defined as an individual's willingness to participate in boycott actions (Klein et al., 2002). Within the framework of TPB, intention acts as the immediate precursor to behavior, representing the motivational forces that drive individuals toward activism (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, individuals with strong boycott intentions are more likely to consider alternatives, resist targeted products, and prepare to participate actively in collective movements.

Boycott intention is a key variable in understanding the shift from awareness to action. Defined as the willingness or readiness to participate in boycott activities, intention is heavily influenced by personal values, moral beliefs, and social norms (Klein et al., 2002). Ginder & Kwon (2020) found that boycott intentions on Facebook were positively linked to perceived issue importance and the participation of others, highlighting the role of social cues in shaping motivation. Among Malaysian consumers boycotting Israel-linked products, attitude and

perceived behavioral control strongly impacted intentions, and TPB explained over 70% of the variance in intentions (Nordin et al., 2024).

In contexts like Iran (Hosseini et al., 2024) and Indonesia (Syarif & Herman, 2024), intention is influenced not only by political or ethical concerns but also by religious identity, nationalism, and the impact of online peer networks. Consumer emotions and moral reasoning are key factors in boycott behavior within digital environments. Misiewicz et al. (2024) analyze Ukrainian consumer boycotts against brands still operating in Russia, using sentiment analysis of Facebook posts. Their results indicate that emotionally charged events (such as war) significantly boost boycott momentum, especially when users view brand inaction as morally unacceptable. Additionally, Jedicke et al. (2025) add more complexity by exploring the psychological processes behind boycott intentions, particularly moral rationalization, moral decoupling, and cognitive dissonance. These frameworks reveal how consumers navigate internal conflicts between their values and actions, with self-congruence serving as a strong moderator. This suggests that students' online participation in boycotts may originate from moral judgments that resonate with their personal identity.

Social Media
Traditional boycott movements have long relied on structured, often hierarchical Organizations and mainstream media coverage pressure firms or governments. However, the rise of social media has transformed the landscape of activism. Andrus et al. (2025) explore how boycotts now influence financial markets, showing that social media discussions about boycott announcements impact stock price returns, indicating investor sensitivity to online shared public sentiment. This marks a significant shift in how activism is recognized by economic institutions in the digital age.

Social media platforms now serve as fertile ground for decentralized, spontaneous activism. Adi et al. (2025) use social network analysis to examine the "#boycott" movement on X (formerly Twitter), demonstrating how digital boycotts can mobilize large-scale, decentralized participation, bypassing traditional leadership and physical mobilization. These movements are rapid, emotional, and globally connected, shifting power into the hands of ordinary users. Cultural context influences social media boycotts. Ahmad (2021) shows that national identity and grievances drive online mobilization in Iraqi Kurds' Facebook boycott of Turkish products; it was rooted in nationalism rather than ethics or religion. Syarif & Herman (2024) find that religiosity and social media exposure affect boycott attitudes in Greater Jakarta's Muslim community. Their SEM analysis reveals attitudes directly lead to boycotting, highlighting moral beliefs and information networks' role in consumer decisions.

Cevher (2024) examines regional differences in Turkey, highlighting social media's role in mediating perceived efficacy's influence on boycott intention. While social media mediates efficacy's link to boycott behavior, it does not do so for consumer animosity, implying platforms mainly amplify practical reasoning over emotional outrage. Social media generally promotes boycott campaigns, but effectiveness varies with campaign design and engagement. A Filipino youth study (ages 18–45, including students) shows social media boycotts raise awareness and spur action despite reach and overload issues (Allam et al., 2024).

The role of influencers in shaping boycott behavior is another emerging aspect. Pan & Lee (2025) analyze social media influencer (SMI) boycotts, revealing that the scale and context of the violation influence consumer responses. For example, financial deception provokes stronger reactions than misinformation, and large-scale boycotts increase individuals' willingness to participate. This indicates that for Malaysian students, the context of the boycott and who leads it (peers versus public figures) can significantly influence engagement. Unlike traditional media, social platforms enable two-way interaction, allowing users not only to receive information but also to actively shape and share messages. This participatory nature increases the perceived legitimacy of boycott movements, as people see others endorsing, sharing, and supporting campaigns. As a result, social media strengthens subjective norms and encourages individuals to align their behavior with visible collective expectations (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013).

Empirical evidence shows that social media can greatly increase both the intention to boycott and the actual behavior by raising awareness, emotional engagement, and collective efficacy (Lee & Hsieh, 2013). Hashtag activism, viral campaigns, and influencer endorsements enhance the visibility of boycotts and put pressure on consumers and companies alike. Additionally, the constant flow of updates and peer discussions helps maintain momentum and reduces the likelihood of intention fading into inaction. Therefore, social media serves as a structural enabler, linking psychological readiness with real boycott actions.

Voice of Boycott
The voice of boycott refers to communicative actions through which individuals advocate, persuade, or mobilize support for boycott movements (John & Klein, 2003). This includes both offline advocacy and online expressions such as posting content, sharing campaign messages, or creating narratives that highlight the legitimacy of boycotts. The voice of boycott serves a dual purpose: it legitimizes the campaign by providing moral and social justification, and it amplifies social pressure by signaling that many others share the same stance (Soule, 2009). In doing so, it boosts subjective norms and attitudes, which are key factors in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

Research indicates that the voice of boycott contributes to the overall landscape of boycott activism but acts as a weaker and less reliable predictor of actual boycott participation compared to behavioral intention or social media engagement (Chiang & Arif, 2024). Its limited impact can be explained by barriers to public advocacy, such as social hesitation or fear of backlash, especially in collectivist or conservative settings where open dissent might lead to reputational or social consequences (Delistavrou, 2021). Nonetheless, while its direct influence may be limited, the voice of boycott still plays an indirect but supportive role in shaping group norms and reinforcing collective action, particularly when amplified through social media and peer networks.

Gap of the Studies
In the digital age, the voice of boycott has become even more powerful, because user-generated content can reach large audiences and quickly shape public discussion. By participating in such advocacy, individuals not only strengthen their own commitment to action but also influence others to turn intention into real behavior. Additionally, the communicative nature of the boycott voice helps sustain campaigns over time, as shared

narratives build solidarity and persistence. Therefore, the voice of boycott is a key factor in predicting boycott behavior, complementing the effects of intention and social media exposure.

Collectively, these studies show that social media enables individuals to start and join boycotts based on moral, emotional, social, and cultural reasons. Social validation features (likes, shares), identity expression, and real-time mobilization through hashtags create ideal conditions for digital activism. However, most existing research focuses on global or regional groups such as consumers in Turkey, Iran, Indonesia, or Europe, and none have specifically examined Malaysian students, a digitally skilled group with growing political awareness.

Understanding Malaysian students' boycott behavior requires integrating the moral reasoning, social identity, and digital mobilization theories established in these studies. Their behavior likely reflects both individual values and social group dynamics making the role of hashtags, influencers, and peer pressure particularly crucial. There remains a gap in exploring how students' motivations align with their digital behavior and how perceived social impact or self-enhancement influences their actions.

Research Framework
Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this study positions boycott behaviour as the dependent variable (DV), shaped by three independent variables: boycott intention, social media, and voice of boycott. Boycott intention captures the motivational readiness to act, social media reinforces social norms and collective efficacy, and the voice of boycott provides legitimacy and mobilization. Together, these predictors explain the pathways through which psychological, social, and communicative factors converge to produce actual boycott participation.
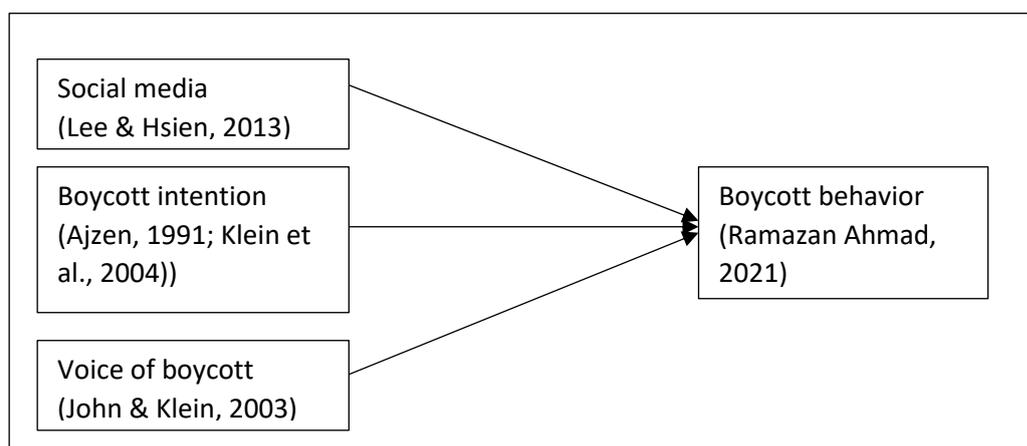

Figure 1: Research Framework for this study (Adopted from Lee & Hsien., 2013; Ajzen, 1991; Klein et al., 2004; John & Klein, 2003: Ramazan Ahmad, 2021)
H1: Social media has a positive influence on boycott behaviour.
H2: Boycott intention has a positive influence on boycott behaviour.
H3: Voice of boycott has a positive influence on boycott behaviour.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey with a cross-sectional design to examine the influence of boycott intention, social media, and the voice of boycott on actual boycott behaviour. A cross-sectional approach was selected as it enables data collection at a single point in time, offering a snapshot of participants' attitudes and behaviours. The framework was guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which explains how attitudes, social influences, and perceived control shape both intentions and actions, providing a useful lens for linking psychological and social drivers of boycott behaviour.

Population and Sample

The study focused on Malaysian students who were familiar with or involved in consumer boycotts. Since the emphasis was on social media–driven activism, participants were recruited from online spaces where boycott campaigns are actively shared and discussed. A purposive sampling method was used to ensure relevance, following Harun et al. (2024) and N. Azami et al. (2023). In total, 123 valid responses (N = 123) were collected. Although modest, this sample size was sufficient for descriptive and regression analyses, providing meaningful insights into consumer attitudes and behaviors.

Instrumentation

Data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire, which enabled wide reach, particularly among social media users where boycott campaigns are most active. Respondents were informed about the study, provided consent, and were assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections. The first gathered demographic details (age, gender, education, and social media usage). The second measured boycott behaviour (DV) using items from Ramazan Ahmad (2021), focusing on actual avoidance of products or brands. The third assessed boycott intention (IV), adapted from Ajzen (1991) and Klein et al. (2004), capturing willingness to join future boycotts. The fourth examined social media use, based on Lee and Hsieh (2013), highlighting its role in awareness, engagement, and participation. The final section measured the voice of boycott, adapted from John and Klein (2003) and Soule (2009), reflecting whether respondents encouraged others or promoted boycotts through networks.

All constructs were measured using validated scales on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Boycott behaviour represented actual product avoidance, boycott intention reflected psychological readiness (Ajzen, 1991), social media captured digital mobilization (Lee & Hsieh, 2013), and the voice of boycott indicated advocacy within networks (John & Klein, 2003; Soule, 2009). Using established measures ensured both content validity and comparability with prior studies.

Result

Validity and Reliability

To ensure that the measurement instruments were consistent and dependable, a reliability analysis was carried out using Cronbach's alpha (α). Table 1 presents the reliability values for each construct examined in this study, based on the responses of 123 participants.

The results show that all four variables achieved Cronbach's alpha values above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, which indicates good internal consistency. Specifically, the social media construct, measured with three items, recorded an alpha of .865, reflecting strong reliability. The voice of boycotting variable, which included six items, demonstrated very high consistency with an alpha value of .91. Similarly, boycott intention, also measured with six items, produced an alpha of .91, suggesting excellent reliability and alignment of the scale items. Lastly, boycott behaviour, measured with five items, had an alpha of .837, which is well above the minimum standard and confirms the stability of the construct.

Table 1
Reliability Analysis of Study Variables (n = 123)

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	No of Item
Social media	.865	3
Voice of boycotting	.91	6
Boycott intention	.91	6
Boycott behavior	.837	5

Demographic Profile of Respondents
Table 2 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents (N = 123). With respect to gender, females accounted for the majority of the sample (61.8%, n = 76), while males represented 38.2% (n = 47). The distribution suggests that female participants were more engaged in this study, which may reflect gender differences in willingness to participate in survey-based research on consumer behaviour.

Regarding age, most respondents were between 17 and 19 years old (62.6%, n = 77), followed by those aged 20–22 years (29.3%, n = 36), and a smaller group aged 23–25 years (8.1%, n = 10). This shows that the study mainly involved late adolescents and young adults, an age group often active on social media and potentially more exposed to boycott campaigns. Religious and ethnic identities were uniform, with all participants identifying as Muslim (100%) and Malay/Bumiputra (100%). While this consistency ensures cultural uniformity, it also limits the diversity of perspectives, especially regarding religious or ethnic differences in consumer activism.

Regarding the academic program, the majority of respondents were enrolled in social science fields (80.5%, n = 99), while a smaller proportion were from science and technology disciplines (19.5%, n = 24). This distribution suggests that the findings may mainly reflect viewpoints influenced by social science students, who are more likely to engage with topics of social responsibility and consumer activism. Overall, the demographic profile shows that the study sample was predominantly young, female, Muslim, Malay/Bumiputra, and oriented towards social science. These characteristics provide important context for interpreting the results, especially considering the potential impact of age, academic background, and cultural homogeneity on boycott-related attitudes and behaviors.

Table 2
Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 123)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	76	61.8
	Male	47	38.2
Age	17–19	77	62.6
	20–22	36	29.3
	23–25	10	8.1
Religion	Islam	123	100.0
Ethnicity	Malay/Bumiputra	123	100.0
Program	Social Science	99	80.5
	Science & Technology	24	19.5
Note: percentage based on valid response			

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 shows the Pearson correlation analysis between the independent variables and boycott behavior. The results reveal that all independent variables are significantly and positively related to boycott behavior at the 0.01 significance level. Specifically, boycott intention shows the strongest correlation with behavior ($r = 0.817$, $p < 0.001$), followed by social media ($r = 0.517$, $p < 0.001$) and voice of boycott ($r = 0.442$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3
Correlation Analysis

Correlation	N	r	Sig. (2 tailed)
Social media and boycott behavior	123	0.517	0.000
Voice of boycott and boycott behavior	123	0.442	0.000
Boycott intention and boycott behavior	123	0.817	0.000

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

The correlations among the independent variables were moderate ($r = 0.384$ to 0.517), indicating that while the constructs are related, they are not redundant. This suggests that intention, social media, and voice of boycott each uniquely contribute to boycott behavior, with intention being the most influential factor.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 4 summarizes the results of the multiple regression analysis used to examine the contribution of each independent variable to boycott behavior. The overall model was significant with $R = 0.832$, $R^2 = 0.693$, and Adjusted $R^2 = 0.685$, indicating that approximately 69.3% of the variance in boycott behavior can be explained by the predictors.

Table 4

Coefficient of Multiple Regression Analysis

Variable	Unstandardized coefficient (beta)	Standardized coefficient (beta)	T	Sig
Constant	0.556		2.259	0.026
Social media	0.083	0.094	1.529	0.129
Voice of boycott	0.084**	0.129	2.277	0.025
Boycott intention	0.709**	0.179	11.789	0.001
R = 0.832				
R square = 0.693				
Adjusted R Square = 0.685				
Standard error of the estimation = 0.345				
Dependent variable = Boycott behavior				

** Significant at 5% level

The analysis shows that boycott intention was the strongest predictor of boycott behavior (β = 0.709, t = 11.789, p < 0.001). This highlights the central role of intention in transforming attitudes into actual boycott practices. The voice of boycott was also significant at the 5% level (β = 0.129, t = 2.277, p = 0.025), suggesting that opportunities to express and advocate for boycott causes moderately enhance participation. In contrast, social media, although positively correlated with boycott behavior, did not significantly predict it in the regression model (β = 0.094, t = 1.529, p = 0.129). This finding indicates that its influence is more indirect, possibly by shaping awareness and intention rather than directly predicting behavior.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of boycott intention, social media, and voice of boycott on boycott behaviour. The findings demonstrated that respondents reported high levels of boycott intention and boycott behaviour, moderate levels of boycott voice, and consistently strong reliance on social media for awareness and mobilisation. These results provide important insights into the dynamics of consumer activism in the digital era.

The high scores for boycott intention and boycott behavior align with the expectations of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which states that intention is the most immediate predictor of behavior. Similar results have been observed in earlier boycott studies, where strong moral conviction and perceptions of injustice led to actual avoidance of targeted products (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004; Farah & Newman, 2010). These findings confirm that intention is not only an attitude but also a reliable driver of consumer action, especially among younger populations who comprise the majority of the sample. Among Malaysian university students, TPB variables such as attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly predicted boycott intentions, with attitude being the most influential factor (Chiang & Arif, 2024).

The results also show that social media does not influence boycott behavior. Students agree that social media does not significantly raise their awareness of boycott campaigns, possibly because they are around the age of Gen Z and are not heavily involved in social media campaigns. This finding contrasts with previous studies that highlight the transformative role of social media in shaping political consumerism and connecting individuals to broader

movements (Alam et al., 2024; Lee & Hsieh, 2013; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). By closing information gaps and offering platforms for collective expression, social media reduces barriers to participation and keeps boycott efforts visible.

In contrast, the voice of boycott was reported as significant at a 5 percent level, with considerable variation across items. This suggests that while individuals were willing to boycott privately, fewer were ready to actively advocate for boycotts in public or online spaces. Similar trends have been noted by John and Klein (2003), who argued that while consumers are motivated to avoid products, they may be less inclined to persuade others due to social costs or fear of conflict. Soule (2009) further noted that advocacy is often concentrated among a small group of highly committed individuals, while the majority participate through quieter forms of resistance. This finding points to a gap between personal boycott behavior and public boycott advocacy, which future research should explore in greater depth.

Surprisingly, the results highlight the interplay between personal motivation (intention), structural enablers (social media), and social expression (the voice of boycott) in predicting boycott behavior. The consistency of boycott intention and voice of boycott emphasizes their importance as predictors, while the insignificance of the social media variable underscores the complexity of public advocacy in digital environments.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing literature on consumer activism by presenting an integrated framework that links boycott intention, social media use, and the expression of boycott-related views ("voice of boycott") to actual boycott behavior. In line with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the findings confirm that intention is the strongest predictor of whether individuals follow through with boycott actions. The voice of boycott also plays a key role, offering both informational and normative support that helps translate intention into behavior. On the other hand, although social media influences the discussion, its impact was not significant, likely because students among Gen Z do not fully trust what they see on social media.

From a practical perspective, the findings indicate that advocacy campaigns should actively leverage social media not only to inform but also to mobilize students and other young people. Educational institutions and student organizations can take a proactive role by creating platforms and workshops that develop critical digital activism skills. These efforts could help students feel more confident in publicly supporting ethical causes, thereby increasing the visibility and legitimacy of boycott movements.

For future research, a wider and more diverse sample is needed. The current study's focus on Malay-Muslim students limits its broader applicability. Comparative studies involving different cultural, religious, and generational groups could reveal significant differences in boycott motivations and barriers. Additionally, longitudinal studies are recommended to track how boycott behaviors evolve over time, especially in response to changing digital environments and campaign strategies.

In conclusion, the study highlights that student boycotts remain a powerful form of civic expression, especially when motivated by strong intentions and supported through the voice of those participating in the boycott. To maximize impact, future strategies should not only promote private acts of boycott but also foster public displays of support, particularly among younger, digitally engaged populations like students.

References

Allam, K. R., Dichoso, K., Frago, K. C., Igcalinos, W. M., Idang, L. M., Oliquino, S. L., ... & Vallespin, M. R. (2024). Unmasking Consumer Behavior: A Deep Dive into Brand Boycotts in the Social Media Age–Exploring Filipino Demographic Variances, Perceptual Constructs, and Activist Actions. International Journal of Current Science Research and Review, 07 (05), 2559–2569. https://doi. org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V7-i5, 15.

Andrus, J., Chen, Y., Wang, X. J., & Reger, R. K. (2021). To tweet or not to tweet? the role of social media boycotts on stock market reactions. In Academy of Management Proceedings (Vol. 2021, No. 1, p. 16116). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Adi, Y. A., Adi, A. F., & Bahri, M. T. (2025). # Boycott as a Social Movement: Evidence from the X Platform. Observatorio (OBS*), 19(1).

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50*(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978%2891%2990020-T)

Chiang, L. F., & Arif, A. M. M. (2024). The intention to participate in the boycott movement among university students. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 14(10), 1932-1944.

Delistavrou, A. (2022). Theory of planned behaviour and boycotting: The moderating role of socio-political control and demographics. EuroMed Journal of Business, 17(2), 270-

Ginder, W., & Kwon, W. S. (2020). Hopping on the brand boycotting bandwagon on Facebook: Because of the issue, others, or self-enhancement?. Journal of Customer Behaviour, 19(4), 375-400.

Harun, N. F. A., Azami, N., Ab Rahim, R., & Ramli, F. (2024). Exploring Motivating and Demotivating Factors for Learning. International Journal of Academic Research in Business & Social Science, Vol 14, Issue 7, (2024) E-ISSN: 2222-6990 .

Jedicke, E. M., Arnold, C., & Lindenmeier, J. (2025). The dynamics of consumer boycott intention: Examining the roles of moral reasoning, cognitive dissonance, and self-congruence. Journal of Business Research, 189, 115127.

John, A., & Klein, J. G. (2003). The boycott puzzle: Consumer motivations for purchase sacrifice. Management Science, 49(9), 1196–1209.

Hosseini, S., Siyamiyan Gorji, A., Vo-Thanh, T., & Zaman, M. (2023). Behind the hashtags: Exploring tourists' motivations in a social media-centred boycott campaign. Tourism Recreation Research, 1-13.

Klein, J. G., Smith, N. C., & John, A. (2004). Why we boycott: Consumer motivations for boycott participation. Journal of Marketing, 68(3), 92–109.

Lee, F. L. F., & Hsieh, Y. M. (2013). Traditional media use and online civic participation in Hong Kong: Complementary or displacement? Mass Communication and Society, 16(6), 876–896.

Misiewicz, C., Małagocka, K., & Duś-Prieto, E. (2024). Exploring boycott dynamics: The influence of consumer emotions and social media activism. Marketing i Rynek, (4), 43-57.

Nordin, F. S. S., Khalid, N. R., & Hassan, R. (2024). Beyond purchase decisions: Understanding the drivers of consumer boycott intentions in Malaysia. Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, 6(22), 260-275.

Pan, L. Y., & Lee, C. T. (2025). Beyond the unfollow button: Navigating social media influencer boycotts in the digital marketplace. Technology in Society, 103017.

Ramazan Ahmad, A. (2021). Effects of the Facebook boycott campaign on Turkish products and its influence on demand of Kurdish consumers 2020. UKH Journal of social sciences, 5(1), 98-106.

Soule, S. A. (2009). Contention and corporate social responsibility. Cambridge University Press.

Stolle, D., & Micheletti, M. (2013). Political consumerism: Global responsibility in action. Cambridge University Press.

Syarif, M., & Herman, S. (2024). The influence of social media on the decision to boycott Israel-affiliated products among the Muslim community in Jabodetabek. Journal of Islamic Economics Lariba, 10(2).