How do personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status influence consumers to engage in online activism and boycotts?

An Analysis of Motivational Drivers in Digital Consumer Movements

By:

Ranim Chihabi | ra7050ch

Frederikke Erlund Buur | fr4358bu

May 2024

Wordcount:

30,081

Master's Programme in International Marketing and Brand Management

Supervisor: Annette Cerne

Examiner: Carys Egan-Wyer

Abstract

This study explores the intricate dynamics and factors driving consumer engagement in online activism and boycotts, shedding light on the complex interplay between personal values, socioeconomic status, and social networks. Drawing upon and utilizing theories from other researchers, this study examines the impact of economic, social, and cultural factors that drive consumers to engage in online activism and boycotts. Through a qualitative analysis of three in-depth focus group discussions, it becomes evident that personal values serve as foundational motivators driving consumers to engage in online activism as a means of expressing solidarity and advocating for corporate change. Moreover, social networks, both online and offline, played a pivotal role in influencing participation by either mobilizing or amplifying it. Furthermore, although socioeconomic status does influence involvement, the inclusive nature of social media platforms facilitates wider participation, thereby reducing conventional obstacles linked to limited economic resources. The findings underscore the multidimensional nature of online activism, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding that considers the intersectionality of personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status. This research contributes valuable insights for academics aiming to leverage social media for social change and for corporations seeking to engage responsibly with consumers in the digital age.

Keywords: *online activism, boycotts, consumer engagement, personal values, social networks, socioeconomic status, social media, corporate practices, ethical conduct*

Acknowledgements

Ranim Chihabi   Frederikke Erlund Buur

List of Tables

List of Figures

1. Introduction

1.1 Topic

In today's digital age, the landscape of activism and consumer behavior has been significantly reshaped by the emergence of social media platforms. Social media marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for businesses to engage with consumers (Wang et al., 2019), while online activism and boycotts have become prominent means for consumers to voice their concerns and advocate for social change (Delistavrou, Krystallis, & Tilikidou, 2020). This paradigm shift has sparked considerable interest among researchers seeking to understand the factors driving consumers' participation in online activism and boycotts.

Online activism and boycotts are viewed as forms of collective action and expression of discontent towards brands. These forms of collective action involve leveraging online platforms and digital tools to advocate for social, political, and environmental causes, as well as to express against perceived unethical practices from brands (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). Online activism encompasses a wide range of activities, including petitioning, digital protests, hashtag campaigns, and online boycotts, all aimed at mobilizing individuals and amplifying their voices in the digital sphere (Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich, 2014; Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021).

Understanding the factors influencing individuals' decisions to engage in online activism and participate in boycott movements is highly beneficial to the field of business. Several factors play a crucial role in shaping individuals' motivations, attitudes, and behaviors within online activist communities (Taluy & Aycan, 2021). These factors include personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status, which are considered the three key factors that influence individuals' decisions to engage in online activism and participate in boycotts (Taluy & Aycan, 2021; Schradie, J. 2018). Understanding how these factors intersect can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of online activist communities, informing efforts to mobilize individuals and drive collective action on social, political, and environmental issues.

In summary, the growing significance of online platforms and social media apps has transformed the landscape of activism and consumer behavior. Therefore, it is essential to

understand the factors driving and influencing consumers' participation in online activism and boycotts.

1.2 Background

With the rise of social media platforms, individuals have gained extraordinary opportunities to engage in online activism on a global scale. The transformative impact of social media on activism is highlighted by its ability to democratize communication, empower marginalized voices, and mobilize support for social causes (Brown, 2011 ; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007 ; Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012). Scholars have highlighted the historical roots of social media activism, tracing its origins to the early days of platforms like Facebook and Twitter. These platforms served as catalysts for consumers to raise awareness about social and political issues, laying the groundwork for the emergence of online activism as a potent force for social change (Schradie, 2018). Over time, social media activism has evolved to encompass a diverse range of causes, from human rights and environmental justice to political activism (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). For example, the social media platform Moveon.org organized a campaign against the Iraq war, mobilizing over three million members through social media. Moreover, social media platforms also played a huge role in events spanning social injustice movements in Madrid (Indignados), New York (Occupy Wall Street), and Athens (protests against austerity measures) to overthrow an autocratic regime in Egypt (Ahuja, M. et al. 2018). Hence, evidence clearly shows that people are increasingly becoming more engaged in political and civic movements by using social media as a tool to participate in social movements.

1.1.1 Review of the Area Being Researched Through the Key Factors

Firstly, personal values which are broad, trans-situational, desirable goals that act as guiding principles in people's lives and play a crucial role in driving consumers' engagement in online activism and boycotts (Sagiv, L. et al. 2017). Consumers' values, beliefs, and ethical principles influence their commitment to social justice issues and their willingness to take action online. Alignment with specific values or moral frameworks often dictates the types of issues consumers choose to support through activism and boycotts (Vecchione et al., 2014).

Secondly, social networks, both online and offline, have a significant influence on consumers' participation in activism and boycotts. The concept of a social network is described by Garton, Haythorntwaite, and Wellman (1997) as a set of social entities connected by a set of social relationships (Garton, Haythornthwaite, & Wellman, 2006). However, with the rise of social media platforms, it is important to distinguish the difference between social networks and online social networks. As Musiał, K., & Kazienko explained '*One of the key differences is the lack of physical contact, however, also the lack of unambiguous and reliable correlation between member's identity in the virtual community – internet identity and their identity in the real world*' (Musiał, K., & Kazienko, P. 2013, pp. 35). Peer influence, social norms, and network ties play crucial roles in facilitating mobilization and collective action within online communities. Individuals are often motivated to engage in activism and boycotts through their connections with like-minded individuals and supportive networks (Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich, 2014).

Lastly, socioeconomic status (SES), which is defined as a measure of one's combined economic and social status (Baker, E, 2014), is another key determinant of individuals' engagement in online activism and boycotts. Factors such as income, education, occupation, and social class intersect to shape individuals' access to resources, opportunities, and platforms for activism (Chen. Z, 2020).

1.1.2 Research Gap and Study Objectives

Online activism has become more pervasive than ever before, however, there is still a limited number of comprehensive studies focusing on this phenomenon. Additionally, there is also a scarcity of studies examining the factors that drive consumers to participate in boycott movements as an outcome of online activism. While researchers have explored the relationship between social media platforms and civic engagement, few have delved into the complexities of online activism and its implications for collective action (Anduiza, Cantijoch, & Gallego, 2009 ; Dahlgren, 2009). Existing research has mainly focused on analyzing social movement website text or conducting interviews and surveys with activists, providing insights into collective frames and inter-organizational linkages (Ackland & O'Neil, 2011 ; Lusher & Ackland, 2011 ; Sweetser, Golan, & Wanta, 2008 ; Pickerill, 2010). These studies

have contributed to understanding the broader framework of online activism, but often lack depth in certain areas.

A few strengths from previous studies include studies that have focused mainly on how social media platforms enable collective action and highlight the importance of networked structures and communication dynamics (Earl & Kimport, 2011 ; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Additionally, examination of social movement websites and online discourse has yielded valuable insights into the framing strategies and narratives utilized by activists to gather support for their causes (Ackland & O'Neil, 2011).

A few limitations are that several studies have employed qualitative methods such as content analysis, interviews, or surveys, which do not fully capture the full spectrum of individual motivations and behaviors behind online activism and boycotts (Dahlgren, 2009). Moreover, there is a significant lack of research that systematically examines the interconnectedness of factors influencing online activism and boycotts, such as the interplay and overlap between personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status (Taluy & Aycan, 2021). Existing studies often focus on specific types of activism or platforms, neglecting the diverse spectrum of online activist practices and motives.

Despite the growing prevalence of online activism, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the factors driving consumer engagement in these activities. While some research has explored the motivations of activists and the dynamics of online mobilization, very few studies have systematically focused on examining why consumers choose to participate in online activism and boycotts. To address this gap, this study seeks to examine the underlying driving factors of online activism, focusing on the role of personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status in shaping consumer participation in online activism and boycotts. This study also aims to address the research gap regarding Instagram's influence on either facilitating or hindering online activism and boycotting movements. Instagram has become significant for social change and political action, further emphasizing its role as one of the drivers of online activism and boycotts (Taluy & Aycan, 2021).

The lack of comprehensive research on the factors driving consumer engagement in online activism and boycotts could have significant implications for companies and research. Without a nuanced understanding of why consumers participate in online activism, it is challenging to develop effective strategies for mobilization and advocacy. Moreover, overlooking the role of personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status may result in interventions that fail to resonate with target audiences or address their concerns adequately. Therefore, addressing these research gaps is crucial for advancing our understanding of online activism and its implications for collective action in the digital age.

Through qualitative focus groups, the study seeks to clarify the motivations, attitudes, and behaviors of consumers within the contexts of social networks, socioeconomic statuses, and personal values, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of contemporary activism in the digital age. In summary, even though this topic has gathered increasing attention, there is still much more to uncover.

1.2 Problem Discussion

The research problem centers around understanding the underlying factors that drive consumers' participation in online activism and boycotts. Despite their increasing prevalence and impact, the motivations behind these actions remain underexplored. This understanding is crucial for interpreting the dynamics of contemporary forms of collective action in the digital age. Additionally, gaining an appropriate comprehension of how consumer behavior is shaped by cultural and societal influences, emphasizes the significance of understanding the underlying motivations behind these actions.

Online activism and boycotts have become powerful tools for consumers to express their opinions, advocate for social change, and hold businesses accountable (González-Bailón, 2017). With the rise of social media platforms, individuals can amplify their voices and mobilize communities more effectively than ever before (Wang et al., 2019). This trend has significant implications for businesses, policymakers, and brands, as it reshapes traditional notions of consumer-brand interactions and activism (Castellacci & Tveito, 2018).

Secondly, investigating online activism and boycotts provides valuable insights into consumer behavior and preferences in the digital landscape (Broek, Langley, & Hornig, 2017). The motivations behind these behaviors are complex and multifaceted, making it difficult for organizations to react appropriately. By analyzing the motivations behind these behaviors, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of online activism as well as individual motivation (Makarem & Jae, 2016). This knowledge can inform marketing strategies, public policy initiatives, and organizational practices, helping businesses and institutions better respond to consumer demands and societal concerns (Broek, Langley, & Hornig, 2017).

Lastly, studying online activism and boycotts contributes to broader discussions about corporate social responsibility, ethical consumption, and social justice (Armstrong et al., 2019). As consumers become more socially and environmentally conscious, their expectations of businesses and brands are evolving (Lee, 2011). Companies that fail to meet these expectations risk damaging their reputation and losing consumer trust. By examining how individuals engage in activism and boycotts online, researchers can shed light on the changing dynamics of consumer-brand relationships and the role of businesses in addressing social and environmental issues.

Overall, the study of online activism and boycotts is essential for understanding contemporary consumer behavior, informing strategic decision-making in business and public policy, and advancing societal goals related to sustainability, justice, and accountability (Broek, Langley, & Hornig, 2017 ; Lee, 2011)

1.2.1 Significance of Understanding Motivations Behind Online Activism and Boycotts

Studies by Klein, Smith, and John (2004) shed light on diverse motivations for boycotting, ranging from the desire to make a difference to constrained consumption. Similarly, He, Li, and Harris (2012) explore how social identity theory explains the alignment between consumers' self-identities and brands, driving them to engage in boycotting when this alignment is disrupted. Understanding these motivations is crucial as it provides insights into consumer behavior and informs marketing strategies (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004 ; He, Li, &

Harris, 2012). By comprehending why individuals participate in activism and boycotts, businesses can tailor their approaches to resonate with consumer values and preferences, thereby enhancing brand-consumer relationships and reducing potential risks associated with consumer resistance.

Additionally, consumer motivations for engaging in online activism and boycotts are multifaceted and influenced by various factors. According to Chon and Park (2019), consumers undergo a process called situational motivation, which starts from recognizing a problem and often leads to participation in online and offline activism (Chon and Park, 2019). Individuals may participate in online activism as a means of expressing their values and beliefs, seeking social validation, or exerting influence on societal issues (Greijdanus et al., 2020 ; Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich, 2014). Similarly, a study by Greijdanus et al., (2020) suggests that psychological factors such as moral identity and perceived efficacy play significant roles in motivating individuals to take part in online activism (Greijdanus et al., 2020).

Findings by Berg, (2020) highlight the value of social media in promoting movements depending on a person's emotional involvement with the cause. Social media effectively transmits emotional and motivational messages, enhancing support for protest activities (Berg, 2020). Furthermore, research by Liu, Thomas, and Higgs (2019) underscores the influence of social identity and group norms in shaping consumer decisions, with individuals often aligning their actions with the values and beliefs of their social groups (Liu, Thomas, & Higgs, 2019).

These studies collectively emphasize the diverse array of motivations underlying consumer engagement in online activism and boycotts, ranging from personal values and beliefs to social influences and emotional responses. Understanding these motivations is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of consumer behavior in the digital age and devising effective strategies for fostering meaningful engagement with social and environmental issues.

1.3 Research Question

How do personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status influence consumers to engage in online activism and boycotts?

1.4 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the interplay of personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status in shaping and influencing consumers' decisions to participate in online activism and boycott movements. Additionally, examine the underlying factors that compel consumers to either engage or abstain in online activism and the subsequent mobilization of boycotts against corporate entities.

Through a comprehensive examination of these factors, this study aims to offer profound insight rather than a mere surface-level understanding into the intricate web of influences that guide consumers' choices to participate in online activism and boycotts. By unraveling these complexities that are considered to be profound in these interactions, this research aims to shed light on the factors that drive consumers into this web of online activism, thereby contributing to a richer comprehension of online activism and boycott movements.

1.4.1 Aim and Objectives

This study aims to explore the multifaceted drivers of consumer engagement in online activism and boycotts, shedding light on the complex interplay between personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status. The topic falls within the fields of Consumer Behavior and Social Marketing in the marketing domain. These fields encompass the study of how consumers make decisions to engage in certain behaviors, including activism and boycotting, influenced by social and cultural factors.

This study stands out from existing research in several ways. Firstly, this research aims to explore the reasons behind online activism and boycotts from a multidimensional perspective that factors in social and cultural aspects into the analysis. While some studies may focus only on one aspect, such as economic motivations or organized online activism, our approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, the study

seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence by testing the proposed relationships between variables.

While theoretical frameworks offer valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms driving online activism and boycotts, empirical research is needed to validate these theories and identify any potential nuances or discrepancies. Additionally, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining online activism and boycotts in the context of contemporary societal issues and digital platforms (mainly Instagram). With the rapid evolution of technology and the increasing prevalence of online activism, there is a need for research that reflects these changes and provides insights into emerging trends and challenges. Overall, this study offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the drivers and motivations behind online activism and boycotts, providing valuable insights into both academic scholarship and practical applications in marketing.

1.4.2 Broader Implications and Potential Contributions

By identifying the factors and motivations that drive individuals to participate in online activism and boycott movements, this study can help marketers better anticipate consumer responses to their actions and make informed decisions about brand positioning, communication, and engagement strategies. In addition, this study will examine the role of digital platforms, with a focus on Instagram, in shaping consumer behavior and activism. As online activism continues to gain momentum, understanding how individuals navigate these digital spaces and mobilize for social change is essential for marketers seeking to engage with their target audiences effectively. This research will also contribute to theoretical advancements in the field of marketing by testing and refining existing frameworks. By empirically examining the relationships between variables such as personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status, we can validate theoretical constructs and identify any gaps or discrepancies in current models.

Additionally, examine and analyze consumers' perspectives and expectations of corporate social responsibility and ethical conduct. Through an extensive analysis of the existing literature and conducting focus groups, the study seeks to shed light on the factors that

influence consumers' judgment of corporate behavior that leads to participating in online activism and boycotts. Thus, providing marketers and organizational leaders with the insights needed to navigate these challenges and foster trust and credibility among consumers.

1.5 Delimitations

This qualitative study is delimited to examine the factors influencing consumers' decisions and motivations to participate in online activism and boycotts. Additionally, it delimits its scope to the examination of personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status as factors driving engagement in online activism and boycotts. This study does not extend to explore other forms of activism or broader societal movements beyond social media.

Moreover, while this study provides some insight into the differences between immigrants and Danish citizens, it does not fully address the broader cultural, religious, or regional variations in consumer behavior regarding online activism and boycotts. Furthermore, this research is delimited to the qualitative methodology, utilizing focus groups, which could possibly limit the depth of analysis when compared to other research approaches. Last but not least, this study is delimited to a specific timeframe. This delimits the study by not considering the developments or changes in online activism and boycotts after this specific timeframe. These delimitations offer insight into the boundaries of this study.

Furthermore, this study is delimited to the geographic regions of Denmark and Sweden, where this study will be implemented. The participants are expected to be aged from 18-35 years old which delimits the scope of the study as they are naturally more tech-savvy and active online. Moreover, since the participants recruited are from diverse nationalities, the study is implemented in Denmark and Sweden which does not fully capture the perspectives and cultural influences of consumers in other parts of the world. While gender diversity is ensured, there is no focus on the impact of gender identity on the research area. These delimitations offer transparency on the boundaries of this study.

1.6 Outline of the Thesis

This study is structured into several sections, each section contributing to the comprehensive exploration of the research problem. The first section is the introduction, which begins by

addressing the research problem and its significance within the broader scholarly discourse. The background section will serve as a foundation for this study, offering an overview of online activism and boycotts and their history, the problem discussion, and the research gap. Therefore, laying the groundwork for a deeper exploration.

Following this, comes the literature review section, which focuses mainly on critically engaging with existing knowledge and research. By examining and evaluating a diverse array of sources, this section assists in seeking themes, gaps, and debates within the already existing literature and creating a conceptual framework. Subsequently, the methodology section outlines the research approach and methods employed in the study. Furthermore, an explanation of how these methods are to be utilized and the rationale behind the chosen methods. This section will also include introducing this study's participants and the focus group questions.

The analysis and discussion section will be the heart of the thesis, presenting the rich insights gathered from the focus groups. Drawing upon the participants' experiences and motivations within online activism and boycotts and analyzing it in regards to the literature review. Additionally, this section will offer an extensive exploration of the factors shaping individuals' engagement with online activism and boycotts. Finally, the conclusion section will summarize the key insights of this study and reflect on its broader significance. Moreover, by addressing the research question and summarizing the main findings, this section suggests future research possibilities for further exploration by researchers in order to advance the knowledge in this area. Together, these sections constitute a cohesive examination of the research problem, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Outline Of The Thesis

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critically examines existing research on online activism, boycotts, and the psychological factors influencing them.

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

The results of the qualitative study, followed by a discussion of the implications for theory and practice.

1

3

5

2

4

INTRODUCTION

Introducing the topic.

METHODOLOGY

The research approach and methods employed.

CONCLUSION

Summarizes the key insights and suggests avenues for future research.

Figure 1: Outline of the Thesis, 2024

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, we will delve into the findings of existing research regarding online activism and consumer boycotts. The aim is to examine and analyze theories and key insights that will assist in gaining comprehension about the research problem, as well as the factors influencing online activism and boycotts.

2.1 Introduction to the Research Topic

2.1.1 Understanding Social Media Marketing

In the past, businesses relied on traditional marketing channels such as print, TV, newspapers, and radio in order to communicate with their targeted audience (Nummila, 2015). However, since the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc., businesses have been aiming to leverage and utilize these platforms to promote their brands' products and services. Social media allows customers to form online communities, where Srinivasan et al. (2002) found that communities play a crucial role in promoting products through word-of-mouth, information exchange, product experience comparisons, and seeking advice (Srinivasan, Anderson, & Ponnavolu, 2002). The main difference between social media marketing and traditional marketing channels is that customers are now able to talk back and respond to companies' marketing efforts (Nummila, 2015). This poses a challenge for brands as they are now required to foster their customer communities and satisfy their needs.

Additionally, social media now operates as a marketplace in which both sellers and buyers engage in diverse interactions and transactions. Thus, introducing a new novel type of relationship between consumers and brands, and allowing brands to engage with their targeted audience, build brand awareness, drive traffic, and increase sales (Wang et al., 2019). Researchers and marketing practitioners have been assessing the different effects of online marketing communications, with their findings divided between two theories. One theory posits that online marketing communications are only deemed successful if they result in sales, and the other contends that customers undergo various attitudinal phases before making

a purchase (Duffett, 2020). These phases encompass attention, awareness, knowledge, comprehension, desire, liking, preference, evaluation, retention, purchase intentions, acceptance, action, and satisfaction, among others (Duffett, 2020). With the evolving landscape of online purchasing and brand research, it becomes crucial to grasp the significance of leveraging social media and the potential benefits it offers companies (Nummila, 2015).

2.1.2 Brief Overview of Social Media Activism

The emergence of social media activism has revolutionized contemporary socio-political dynamics, as outlined by Cammaerts (2015), Murthy (2018), Chon and Park (2020), Imaizumi (2014), and Obar (2012). This phenomenon represents a significant departure from traditional modes of political engagement, propelled by the fusion of digital technologies and communicative practices. Cammaerts (2015) underscores the pivotal role of communication and mediation in shaping collective identities and mobilizing protest movements, underscoring the transformative impact of social media on contentious politics (Cammaerts, 2015). Additionally, Murthy (2018) highlights the democratizing potential of social media in knowledge dissemination, community formation, and organizational communication within activist networks, fostering transparency and accessibility in information sharing (Murthy, 2018).

Building upon these insights, Chon and Park (2020) conceptualize social media activism as a communicative process characterized by information transmission and connective-type collective activities, elucidating its fundamental role in facilitating collective problem-solving and mobilization efforts (Chon & Park, 2020). At its core, social media activism aims to facilitate interactions that foster knowledge, skills, and motivation, thereby mobilizing individuals toward political, social, and ideological change (Obar, 2012). This shift from traditional activism is characterized by the utilization of social networking sites (SNSs) and Web 2.0 platforms, which enable multifaceted forms of communication and interaction (Obar, 2012). Unlike conventional media channels, SNSs provide a two-way channel of

communication, allowing for real-time engagement and dialogue among activists and supporters (Imaizumi, 2014).

During the #DeleteUber campaign, consumers sought to penalize Uber due to perceived support from its CEO for Trump's refugee ban on select Muslim countries (Isaac, 2017). The movement's momentum was largely fueled by social media accessibility and usage which facilitated real-time updates and the widespread dissemination of information (Chen, Z. 2020). Without social media, the controversy and subsequent online activism would not have gained the same level of visibility and traction, as traditional media outlets typically report news with delays compared to the instantaneous nature of social media updates. Following the #DeleteUber boycott, Uber experienced a loss of approximately 200,000 users, leading to a threefold increase in the company's "negative perceptions" to 27% (Fleming, Sen, & Yang, n.d.).

Moreover, social media activism transcends geographical boundaries, enabling individuals to connect, collaborate, and advocate for causes on a global scale (Obar, 2012). Through the dissemination of user-generated content and the amplification of voices, social media platforms empower activists to raise awareness, mobilize support, and effect change (Imaizumi, 2014). However, while social media activism offers unprecedented opportunities for civic engagement and collective action, it also poses challenges such as information overload, elitism, and surveillance (Obar, 2012 ; Imaizumi, 2014).

2.1.3 Exploring the Difference Between Activism and Boycotts

While activism and boycotts often intersect, it's important to note that not all activism necessarily leads to boycotts. Activism encompasses a wide range of actions aimed at promoting social, political, or environmental change, which can include raising awareness, petitioning for policy change, or participating in demonstrations (Diani & McAdam, 2003). Boycotts, on the other hand, involve deliberately abstaining from purchasing or supporting a particular product, brand, or company as a form of protest (Neilson, 2010).

In some cases, activism does lead to a boycott, especially when individuals or groups mobilize to express dissatisfaction with a company's practices or policies (Passy & Giugni, 2001). This can occur when traditional forms of advocacy fail to give the desired outcomes, pushing consumers to take more direct action by withholding their financial support. However, it's essential to recognize that activism can manifest in various other forms beyond boycotts, including petitioning, letter-writing campaigns, or digital advocacy efforts (Chon & Park, 2020).

Therefore, while activism and boycotts share common goals of effecting change and holding businesses accountable, they represent distinct strategies within the broader spectrum of consumer activism. Understanding the nuances of this relationship is crucial for researchers, businesses, and policymakers seeking to engage with and respond to consumer activism effectively.

2.1.4 Implications of Activism and Boycotts

Friedman (1986) implemented a descriptive study to analyze 90 separate consumer boycotts from both contemporary and historical perspectives. Findings revealed that only 24 (26.7 percent) achieved the desired consequences (Pruitt & Friedman, 1986). However, through social media platforms and online forums, activists can swiftly mobilize large audiences to advocate for social or environmental causes. Online activism and boycotts wield considerable influence over brands and consumer behavior in the digital era. Brands facing boycotts risk reputational damage and loss of market share, as negative publicity spreads quickly online. Boycotting not only influences immediate brand perception but also affects long-term consumer attitudes, as demonstrated by cognitive dissonance theory and self-perception theory (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004).

An instance of this phenomenon occurred in 2023 when McDonald's faced online activism and boycotts related to the Israel-Gaza conflict. The boycott of McDonald's due to its support for Israel has significantly impacted sales in the Arab region and the Islamic world, leading to financial losses estimated at $7 billion within hours of the campaign launch, as stated by

Chief Financial Officer Ian Borden. The company's shares plummeted by over 3 percent during Wednesday's trading session, marking one of its most substantial daily losses in five weeks. McDonald's stocks further declined by 3.37 percent, settling at $284.36 on Thursday, resulting in a massive loss of $6.87 billion (Rahhou, 2024).

Modern communication media, such as the internet, empower consumers to influence producers' ethical conduct, prompting firms to invest heavily in cultivating a positive image. This trend suggests a growing consumer influence, likely to persist despite indirect evidence. Such activism could ultimately lead to improved corporate conduct, potentially reducing the need for boycotts. Additionally, boycotts can bolster the market position of ethical firms and enhance consumer satisfaction (Glazer, Kanniainen, & Poutvaara, 2010). Thus, brands that respond proactively to activism by demonstrating a genuine commitment to social responsibility may enhance their reputation and appeal to socially conscious consumers (Glazer, Kanniainen, & Poutvaara, 2010). Boycotts are often used in activist campaigns. These campaigns aim to get attention from the media and hurt the reputation of the company being targeted (Neilson, 2010). Additionally, consumer perceptions of a brand often decline among boycott participants, regardless of the perceived severity of the company's actions, solely as a result of their participation in the boycott (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). Overall, online activism and boycotts drive brands to adapt their strategies and prioritize ethical considerations to meet changing consumer expectations.

2.2 Exploring Online Activism

2.2.1 Understanding Online Activism: The Influence of Capital and Engagement

Social media activism, also known as online activism or digital activism, has emerged as a powerful and impactful phenomenon in the 21st century. According to Chen (2020), Bourdieu's theory of capital has the power to influence who becomes an online activist. Bourdieu's concept of capital encompasses economic, social, and cultural forms of capital that individuals possess. In the context of online activism, this means that those with high levels of social and cultural capital are more likely to engage in digital activism (Chen, Z,

2020). The ability to access and mobilize resources, as well as navigate social networks, plays a significant role in determining who becomes involved in online activism. Furthermore, this is similarly indicated by other scholars who also argue that resources are critical for social movements (Schradie, J. 2018). Understanding the dynamics of capital and its influence on online activism can provide valuable insights into the patterns and motivations behind digital activism.

Furthermore, Chen's findings underscore the relevance of Bourdieu's theory in the context of online activism, revealing how different forms of capital intersect to shape individuals' engagement with political and social issues in the digital realm (Chen, Z, 2020). Specifically, Chen's identification of *"active middle class"* activists with moderate levels of capital sheds light on the nuanced relationship between socioeconomic status and online activist behavior.

Chen (2020) argues that economic, cultural, and social capital influence who engages in online activism. Elliot and Earl (2016) argue that online political participation is not associated with digital inequality. Moreover, this argument is also corroborated by other scholars who argue that the internet actually helps equalize opportunities for groups with limited resources (Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen, & Wollebaek, 2012). These arguments align with Chen's (2020) findings in his study which concludes that whereas participants in online activism surrounding the greater good are usually resourceful and well-educated people, however in the case of politized consumer activism the most active people are citizens with moderate economic capital and relatively low cultural capital (Chen, Z. 2020).

Whilst Chen's study on who becomes an online activist and why introduces valuable insights into online activism, it's important to note its limitations, especially regarding the study's applicability. Since the research mainly focuses on China, where political restrictions heavily influence activism, its findings may not fully reflect online engagement in other authoritarian contexts. In these situations, activists supporting the government might find it easier to promote their messages compared to those opposing it. Consequently, the study's conclusions may not directly be applicable to environments where disagreement faces stronger suppression. This limitation emphasizes the need to carefully consider the study's applicability across diverse political landscapes, where online activism dynamics can vary

significantly. Specifically, the different dynamics of online activism which can vary is important to understand when discussing Bourdieu's theory of capital. The distinction between organized activism and individual social media activism is complex, however, Bourdiues theory of capital provides a more nuanced distinction between the two and can help with informing the dynamics within the different forms of online activism.

2.2.2 The Dynamics of Online Activism: Organized vs. Individual Engagement

Organized activism benefits from all three capitals. It builds social capital through structured networks that enhance support and efficacy. Activists in these settings gain cultural capital in the form of specialized knowledge and competencies, which strengthen their ability to organize, strategize, and articulate their causes effectively. Economic capital is also relevant because it helps secure resources necessary for sustaining prolonged campaigns and enhancing influence. This structured approach in organized activism not only allows for the strategic use of capital but also supports sustained engagement and potentially has a greater impact on policy and public discourse (Diani & McAdam, 2003; Passy & Giugni, 2001).

Conversely, individual social media activism depends on social and cultural capitals. The social capital in this realm is drawn from the vast networks online, enabling rapid mobilization of support across a more spread-out audience with relatively weak ties compared to traditional activist organizations. Cultural capital in this context involves digital literacy, including skills in creating impactful content, navigating platform algorithms, and engaging effectively with online communities. Unlike organized activism, individual social media activism requires less economic capital, and instead, it focuses on the quick spread of information and viral movements. This type of activism benefits from the decentralized, agile nature of social media platforms and it allows consumers to participate in online activism both instantaneously and globally (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012).

2.2.3 Theoretical Frameworks and Insights into Online Activism

An important theory that impacts the realm of online activism is the social learning theory. The theory introduced by Bandura (2004) argues that people learn by modeling the behaviors of other people (Taluy & Aycan, 2021). Furthermore, the social learning theory additionally suggests that a consumer's behavior is not only determined by their own experiences and motivations but also by their environment (Lam, Kraus & Ahearne, 2010). This emphasizes the impact of a brand's failure to comply with ethical and cultural elements as it impacts not only the targeted consumers but also other consumers in the same environment. This theory could shape online activism by encouraging brands to align their actions and messaging with ethical values, thereby influencing consumer behavior and activism efforts.

Further research also underscores the critical importance of other theoretical frameworks such as social movement theory, diffusion of responsibility, and social capital theory in elucidating the dynamics of online activism (Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich, 2014). Central to their argument is the assertion that social movement theory provides a robust framework for analyzing how individuals organize and mobilize around shared goals in online spaces. Tarrow (994) defined a social movement as a "collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents, and authorities (Basu-Thakur, P & De, S, 2016). By emphasizing the significance of coordination and collective action in digital activism, Lewis, Gray, and Meierhenrich (2014) highlight the relevance of social movement theory in unpacking the strategies and tactics employed by online activists to effect social change. While some scholars researching social movements focus on the importance of the internet as a communication device within networks (Diani & McAdam 2003; Passy & Giugni 2001), Lewis, Gray, and Meierhenrich (2014) focuses on the internet as a tool for recruitment and fundraising.

Furthermore, Lewis, Gray, and Meierhenrich (2014) posit that diffusion of responsibility serves as a crucial concept for explaining the challenges of individual engagement within online activism. Through their analysis of the Save Darfur Cause, Lewis, Gray, and Meierhenrich (2014) suggest that the experience of reduced personal responsibility in large groups may obstruct active engagement and diminish the effectiveness of online activism

efforts (Lewis, Gray & Meierhenrich, 2014). Building upon the argument presented by Lewis, Gray, and Meierhenrich (2014), subsequent research further substantiates this viewpoint, suggesting that individuals feel less responsible for helping when they believe other people have already had time to intervene (Martin, K & North, A. 2015). These arguments underscore the nuanced interplay between individual agency and collective dynamics in shaping the outcomes of digital mobilization efforts.

While the study by Lewis, Gray, and Meierhenrich (2014) provided valuable insights into factors that influence online activism there were a number of limitations to the study. Firstly, the study was limited to only researching one single social movement which may result in an incomplete understanding of the broader landscape of online activism. Additionally, it also limits the generalizability of the findings which means the result of the study might not be applicable to other movements. Secondly, the study findings were also limited to a single social media platform (Facebook) which might not capture the full spectrum of online activism that occurs across several online platforms. These limitations should therefore be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings and future studies should aim to research a broader range within online activism for example including Instagram.

In the realm of online activism, the concept of digital dualism, which proposes a distinction between the online and offline realms, has been a topic of discussion. Jurgenson (2011) argues that the digital world is often perceived as virtual, while the physical world is seen as real (Jurgenson, N., 2011). Building upon this notion, Greijdanus et al. (2020) delve into the interconnectedness of online activism and offline social movements on a psychological level. Their research challenges the idea that online and offline activism are completely separate, suggesting instead that they are intertwined aspects of modern activism. The authors propose that the motivations driving participation in online activism are influenced by individuals' real-life experiences and social identities. This perspective sheds light on why people engage in digital activism and how it translates into real-world social impact. By investigating the link between online and offline activism, Greijdanus et al. (2020) offer a deeper insight into how digital engagement and physical activism are interconnected, enhancing the understanding of activist behavior in the digital era (Greijdanus et al., 2020).

2.3 Exploring Online Consumer Boycotts

2.3.1 Introduction to Online Consumer Boycotts

Boycotts pose an intriguing aspect of consumer behavior, often met with resistance from marketers. However, this often occurs due to a brand's lack of commitment to maintain sufficient customer focus. Friedman (1985, p. 97) defines a consumer boycott as "*an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace.*" (Friedman, 1999, p.97 ; Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). In the contemporary marketplace, consumers increasingly expect businesses to demonstrate environmental and ethical responsibility. Failure to do so may result in consumer resistance, manifested through public or private calls to penalize the offending company by boycotting its products or services. When such actions are organized and encouraged collectively, they constitute a boycott (Albrecht et al., 2013). Boycotting, among many other ethical consumption expressions, has been recognized as the most purposeful form of purchasing behavior (Delistavrou, Krystallis, & Tilikidou, 2020). It's important to highlight that boycotting is perceived as a form of individual action driven by ethical consumerism. Boycotting stands out as a deliberate action aimed at addressing environmental degradation and social injustice (Delistavrou, Krystallis, & Tilikidou, 2020).

Consumer activism is on the rise as individuals employ various strategies to influence firm behavior. Two prevalent forms of activism include boycotts and buycotts. Boycotts involve consumers who actively disengage from companies and brands due to objectionable or unethical conduct. Buycotts is the opposite, which entails coordinated efforts by consumers to support businesses for exhibiting positive behavior through heightened purchasing activities. These two forms of activism often stem from political controversies (Neureiter & Bhattacharya, 2021).

Additionally, as Friedman (1999) outlined, this form of protest can take two main forms; direct and indirect (Friedman, 1999 ; Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021). Direct boycotts involve consumers abstaining from purchasing products or services directly from the targeted

company due to perceived irresponsible policies (Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021). On the other hand, indirect boycotts entail consumers avoiding products from associated companies, such as suppliers or firms located in the target country, as a means to pressure the primary target (Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021). Despite the potential repercussions of boycotts on companies and their brands, there has been a notable lack of attention to consumer motivations behind these actions within marketing research (Albrecht et al., 2013).

In a split environment, when a company supports a political cause that clashes with its main customers' beliefs, it often faces a big boycott from them. Later, there's a small buycott, but overall, its sales drop. However, boycotts over political issues that don't match the main customers' beliefs usually are not effective. In fact, in divided situations, these unsuccessful boycotts often end up helping the company they're targeting. This happens because, in such situations, the company gets a boost from people on the other side of the political spectrum who support it by buying more of its products (Neureiter & Bhattacharya, 2021).

2.3.2 Personal Motives for Boycotting Participation

Boycotts, conceptualized as social dilemmas by Sen, Gürhan-Canli, and Morwitz (2001), where consumers are presented with a complex decision. Individuals must weigh the personal benefit derived from consumption against the collective desire to abstain from consumption for the greater good (Sen, Gürhan-Canli, & Morwitz, 2001 ; Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). Similarly, John and Klein (2003) regard boycott participation as a collective action problem within a theoretical economic model. They argue that individual consumers' incentives to participate are limited by their perceived impact on the market and the opportunity to free-ride on others' boycotting efforts (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004).

The social identity theory studies consumers' motives for actively forming a relationship with brands based on their self-expressions and identities (He, Li & Harris, 2012). Drawing from the social identity theory, boycotting is seen as a form of prosocial behavior driven by consumers' desire for brand alignment with their self-identities. Thus, when brands' online marketing efforts do not align with their core identities, this often leads to online activism and

boycotting. Additionally, social learning theory underscores the influence of interpersonal relationships and cultural norms in shaping consumer behavior, highlighting the importance of community in social media marketing (Taluy & Aycan, 2021). This could possibly explain why boycotts often happen as consumers are easily influenced by their surroundings and social circles, emphasizing the power of community. Additionally, since consumers only engage with brands that resonate with their self-identity, the social identity theory plays a vital role in examining the impact of social media marketing as it emphasizes the importance of brands resonating with consumers' self-identities and the influence of online communities on brand preferences (He, Li & Harris, 2012).

An illustration of this phenomenon occurred through Zara's advertising campaign which was posted in December 2023. Zara faced backlash and protests from pro-Palestinian activists after an ad campaign featuring statues wrapped in white was perceived as insensitive, resembling images of Gaza (Reid et al., 2023). The hashtag #BoycottZara trended as tens of thousands complained on Instagram. This incident underscores the significant impact of boycotts and activism in holding companies accountable for their actions.

According to a research implemented by Klein, Smith, and John (2004), the analysis of responses to open-ended questions revealed that individuals participating in boycotts often had diverse and varied reasons for their involvement, which often stemmed from their perceived advantages and disadvantages of participation (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). Drawing upon economic and psychological theories, as well as analyzing the results from their own research findings, the authors proposed four distinct categories of boycotting motivations; "*make a difference, self-enhancement, counterarguements, and constrained consumption.*" (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). Additionally, a prominent characteristic of social media is its profound influence on both companies and consumers. Within the realm of social media theory, behavior change communication emerges as a critical concept. It entails an evidence-based and research-driven approach to communication, aimed at promoting specific predetermined behaviors through a mix of interpersonal, group, and mass media strategies (Taluy & Aycan, 2021). This theory empowers activists and boycotters to spread messages more effectively and drive social change through strategic communication online.

The social media theory holds significance as it highlights how social media platforms shape and influence consumer behavior, activism, and advocacy efforts (Taluy & Aycan, 2021). Exploring the mechanisms by which these platforms facilitate communication and information dissemination offers insights into the motivations behind individuals' engagement in online activism or participation in boycotts. Moreover, investigating the impact of algorithms, user-generated content, and network dynamics on social media platforms can provide valuable insights into the factors that contribute to the success or failure of online activism campaigns and boycott initiatives. Consequently, further research into social media theory has the potential to deepen the understanding of the relationship between social media usage and consumer activism, thereby informing strategies for effective engagement and advocacy in digital spaces (Taluy & Aycan, 2021).

Several researchers have argued for the hierarchy-of-effects model which outlines three distinct attitudinal stages - cognitive, affective, and behavioral stages - that consumers undergo in response to marketing communications (Duffett, 2020). This model includes six hierarchical phases, which are; awareness (cognitive), knowledge (cognitive), liking (affective), preference (affective), purchase intention (behavioral), and purchase (behavioral) (Duffett, 2020). Limited research exists that examines the specific stage within this model where issues arise, subsequently leading to boycotts and activism. However, one might speculate that issues predominantly arise during the cognitive and affective stages. Additionally, the traditional brick-and-mortar selling philosophy is undergoing a transformation in the digital era, where social media plays a pivotal role in influencing consumer perceptions (Wang et al., 2019). The relevance of this theory to boycott participation and online activism lies in the significant influence that social media holds over consumer behavior and attitude (Taluy & Aycan, 2021).

Group communication via social media significantly influences individual decision-making by fulfilling various functions, including reducing perceived risk, offering expert references, and individual approval. This is highlighted by the social identity theory, which explains that individuals develop a social identity within different groups, shaping their self-concepts and

influencing their behavior (Taluy & Aycan, 2021). This connection plays a pivotal role in social media in the context of social media activism and boycotts. Some scholars rely on theories from social psychology and economics such as fairness of reciprocity, game theory, and social dilemma, to understand consumer motivation behind boycott participation (Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021). Lasarov, Hoffmann, and Orth (2021) established several factors that motivate consumers to engage in boycotts, including the desire for self-enhancement, while obstacles such as the absence of alternatives, inconvenience, and doubts regarding the efficiency of boycotts may deter participation (Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021).

Vermeir and Verbeke's (2006) study examined how Schwartz's list of values influenced individuals' decisions to purchase sustainable products, findings indicated that all types of values impacted the extent to which an individual's social network influenced their purchase intentions. Additionally, findings indicated that an individual's belief in their capacity to enact change affected their purchase intentions (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006 ; Delistavrou, Krystallis, & Tilikidou, 2020). In summary, to further develop the theory concerning boycotting, the researchers proposed incorporating materialism/post-materialism as a variable that could alter the dynamics of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (See Figure 2) (Delistavrou, Krystallis & Tilikidou, 2020).
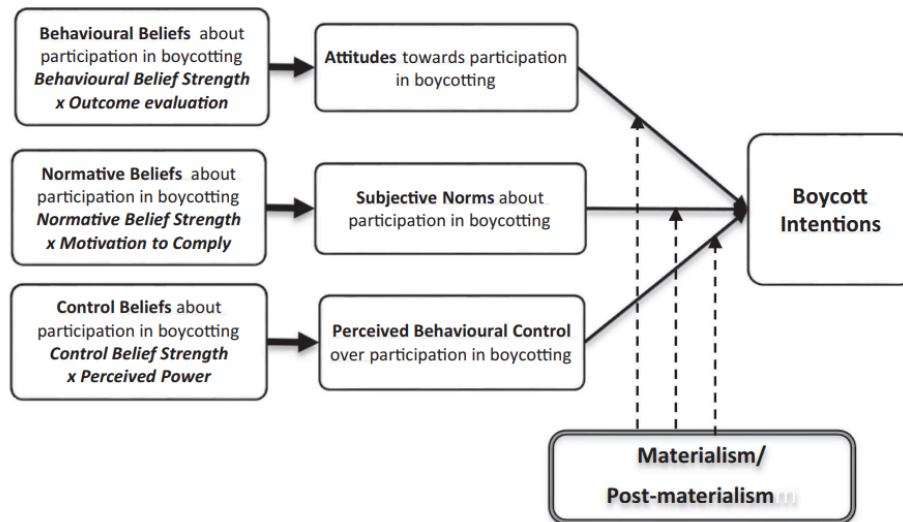
Figure 2: The Role of Materialism/Post Materialism (Delistavrou, Krystallis & Tilikidou, 2020)

The perception of a boycott's likelihood of success is influenced by the communication received by the consumer. Research has demonstrated that communication messages become more persuasive when they originate and stem from credible sources (Albrecht et al., 2013). Values significantly influence consumers' decision-making, impacting choices regarding products and brands. For instance, individuals who prioritize 'universalism' often feel compelled to buy environmentally friendly products as a result of their dedication to environmental protection (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Thus, providing direction and emotional significance, values play a crucial role in motivating actions.

Lasarov, Hoffmann, and Orth's (2021) study presents the term 'promoter' which encompasses factors that foster boycott participation and it includes instrumental and moral factors. Instrumental factors such as the belief that participation will enhance the boycott's success. Moral factors involve consumers' efforts to boost their self-esteem, viewing participation in a boycott as a moral endeavor (Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021). Consistent with the instrumental and moral factors, John and Klein (2003) interpret boycotting as a manifestation of prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior entails actions intended to benefit others rather than oneself, for example, behavior like helping, comforting, and cooperation is

referred to as 'helping behavior'. These actions act as a motivation for consumers to boycott (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004).

2.3.2 Ethical Motives for Consumer Boycotts

Media reports often associate consumer participation in boycotts by highlighting a company's socially irresponsible behavior (Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021). Boycotts typically originate from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) protesting unethical corporate practices. This reflects a broader trend where social and ethical concerns are taken into consideration and influence consumer purchase decisions (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). As the frequency of boycott campaigns rises, they present a major challenge to companies and brands that are linked to unethical conduct and are perceived as unethical (Delistavrou, Krystallis, & Tilikidou, 2020). According to Hofmann (2011), consumer behavioral response is triggered by the perception that a firm's behavior is ethically wrong. This perception negatively impacts workers, consumers, society at large, and other stakeholders. The degree to which a firm's actions are deemed wrong varies between individuals and their personal values (Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021). Therefore, perceived offensiveness acts as the main driver for engaging in boycotts, moreover, assessing the extent of anger experienced by the boycotter and signaling that the firm's actions are socially unacceptable (Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021).

Online activism and boycotts usually arise when consumers demand to address economic, social, ecological, ethical, ideological, or political objectives (Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021). Furthermore, a variety of concerns that range from human and animal rights, and environmental issues, to political matters are all reasons that prompt consumers to mobilize for boycotts (Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021). Ethical consumerism is a concept that demonstrates that consumers' purchasing behavior is impacted heavily by their ethical values (Clarke, 2008). This not only impacts social media marketing and consumer activism but also encourages brands to align their messaging and practices with ethical values, thereby fostering consumer trust and loyalty. Brands worldwide are using this as a strategy to meet their targeted audiences' ethical and moral values (Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004).

An example of the impact of ethical consumerism is Starbucks. Starbucks has faced a notable drop in its market worth, coupled with escalating calls online for a boycott. The boycotts stem partly from Starbucks' involvement in geopolitical disputes, notably its stance during the Israel-Hamas conflict, which sparked divided reactions and boycott demands from various quarters. Additionally, unionized workers within the company have mobilized for improved working conditions, adding to the strain on the brand's reputation and operational effectiveness (Fabino, 2024). Similarly, Lotte, a Korean brand, faced boycotts from Chinese citizens in response to its support for the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System (THAAD) in China. Furthermore, Chinese citizens boycotted the film "No Other Love" due to allegations that one of the actors supported Taiwanese independence (Chen, Z. 2020). In such scenarios, the organizations appear ill-equipped to engage in discussions with activists motivated by political discontent rather than economic issues.

Moreover, in addition to ethical consumerism, authenticity is another factor brands should focus on to reduce the dilemma of failed marketing efforts. Holt (2004) argues that iconic brands are required to show authenticity, especially within political and cultural sectors (Holt, 2004). Brand authenticity could be explained as how consumers perceive a brand and the extent of their loyalty and truthfulness to their consumers (Holt, 2004). Additionally, brand authenticity impacts how a brand deals with ethical and cultural dilemmas in marketing practices (Södergren, 2021 ; Holt, 2004). Brands that fail to demonstrate authenticity in addressing ethical and cultural concerns may face heightened scrutiny from consumers, increasing the likelihood of boycotts. Additionally, boycotts stem from political controversies, which are unethical company behavior that defies societal norms, values, or beliefs. In most cases, such controversies are typically sparked by critical events where companies publicly address social or environmental issues unrelated to their core business and primary operations (Neureiter & Bhattacharya, 2021). Therefore, ethical considerations, corporate misconduct, and values alignment are all reasons that influence consumer boycotts (Lasarov, Hoffmann, & Orth, 2021).

2.4 Outline of Theory

2.4.1 Utilizing Theoretical Frameworks

To effectively analyze the drivers and dynamics of online activism and boycotts in this research, the plan is to utilize a combination of relevant theoretical frameworks that complement each other. Bourdieu's theory of capital offers a lens through which can be used to understand how individuals' economic, social, and cultural resources influence their tendency to engage in online activism (Chen, 2020). This understanding will be enhanced by integrating the social movement theory, which provides a framework for examining collective action and strategies used by activists to achieve social change (Tarrow, 1994). Additionally, the social capital theory will assist in exploring how social connections and trust within networks facilitate cooperation and mobilization for advocacy efforts, aligning closely with the concepts of Bourdieu's capitals (Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich, 2014 ; Chen, 2020).

To further elucidate the group dynamics inherent in online activism, the research will draw on the diffusion of responsibility theory, which sheds light on how reduced personal responsibility in large groups may impact individual engagement and the overall effectiveness of activism efforts (Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich, 2014 ; Martin & North, 2015). Furthermore, the research aims to incorporate social dilemma theory to conceptualize boycotts as collective action dilemmas, complementing the insights gained from social capital and social movement theories (Sen, Gürhan-Canli, & Morwitz, 2001). Moreover, using social identity theory will allow an exploration of how individuals' self-identities drive their participation in boycotts and online activism, offering a deeper understanding of the motivations behind consumer behavior (He, Li & Harris, 2012). By integrating these diverse theoretical perspectives, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the complex interplay between individual factors such as personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status in online activism and boycotts.

2.4.2 Challenging the Theoretical Framework

In this research, the aim is to challenge the assumptions and limitations of these theoretical frameworks to provide a more nuanced understanding of online activism and boycotts. While

Bourdieu's theory of capitals highlights the influence of economic, social, and cultural resources on activism engagement (Chen, 2020), it could also be used to critically examine whether these forms of capital adequately capture the complexities of digital activism in diverse sociopolitical contexts. Similarly, while social movement theory offers valuable insights into collective action strategies (Tarrow, 1994), an exploration of its applicability to online spaces and its ability to account for the fluidity and diversity of contemporary activism movements could be implemented. Additionally, social capital theory's emphasis on social connections and trust (Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich, 2014 ; Chen, 2020) may overlook power dynamics and inequalities within networks, prompting this research to interrogate its assumptions about collective cooperation and mobilization.

Moreover, an assessment of the diffusion of responsibilities theory and its relevance to online activism, considering its focus on individual behavior in offline contexts and its potential limitations in capturing the dynamics of digital collective action (Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich, 2014 ; Martin & North, 2015). Furthermore, while social dilemma theory provides a framework for understanding the challenges of collective decision-making (Sen, Gürhan-Canli, & Morwitz, 2001), an examination of its ability to address the complexities of consumer behavior and activism engagement on digital platforms is to be implemented. Finally, while social identity theory offers valuable insights into the role of self-identities in activism participation (He, Li & Harris, 2012), this study will critically evaluate the theory's applicability to digital spaces and its potential to overlook intersectional identities and power dynamics. By critically engaging with these theoretical frameworks, the aim is to add a new perspective to the field of online activism and boycotts which will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomena.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework consists of various variables. It is important to keep in mind that since this study aims to explore both the factors leading up to the participation in online activism without boycotting and the factors leading up to the participation in online activism and boycotts, this leads to two conceptual frameworks. The conceptual frameworks might seem similar now, however, after analyzing the data, numerous variables will surface to

explain both phenomenons. The main difference between both conceptual frameworks is the *'participation in boycott movements'* which the authors deemed important as an outcome of online activism and is impacted by Instagram's influence (See Figures 3 and 4). For the conceptual framework of online activists who are not boycotting, the study aims to examine the relationship between the independent and dependent. However, for the second conceptual framework comprising activists who also boycott, this study aims to examine the relationship between the independent and dependent as well as analyze the factors that drive consumers to join boycott movements.

Firstly, the dependent variable in both is defined as the level of engagement in online activism and/or boycotts which is what the study aims to explain (Singh, S, 2023). Secondly, the independent variable in this research is the factors impacting the dependent variable include personal values, socioeconomic status, and social networks. Besides these variables, several other variables must also be taken into consideration. The factors, which extend beyond the primary variables of interest, encompass, moderating variable, mediating variable, control variable, and lastly the confounding variable (Singh, S, 2023).

The moderating variable in this case is the level of internet access and/or digital literacy, as it has the potential to influence how personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status impact individuals' engagement in online activism and boycotts. For example, people with higher internet access and/or are more tech-savvy may be more inclined to participate in online activism and boycotts. The mediating variable is the perceived effectiveness of online activism. This variable can explain how personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status influence individuals' engagement in online activism and boycotts. For instance, individuals with strong personal values may perceive online activism as an effective means to promote change, thus mediating the relationship between personal values and engagement in activism.

Moreover, the control variable in this conceptual framework is the participants' demographics and geographic location. Controlling the participants' demographics and geographical location, allows this study to avoid their influence on the relationship between personal values, socioeconomic status and social networks, and the level of engagement in

online activism and boycotts. This ensures that any gathered insights focus more on the previously mentioned factors of interest rather than demographic differences. Lastly, the confounding variable in this framework is political ideology. Political ideology relates to both the factors aimed to be examined and the level of engagement in online activism and boycotts. Hence, not taking political ideology into consideration could potentially lead to a false relationship between the dependent and independent variables in this study. By controlling the political ideology, this study will be able to minimize the risk of confounding effects of the findings. Last but not least, Instagram influence was also added as a variable as the aim of this study is to examine the role of Instagram and its impact on online activism and boycotts.
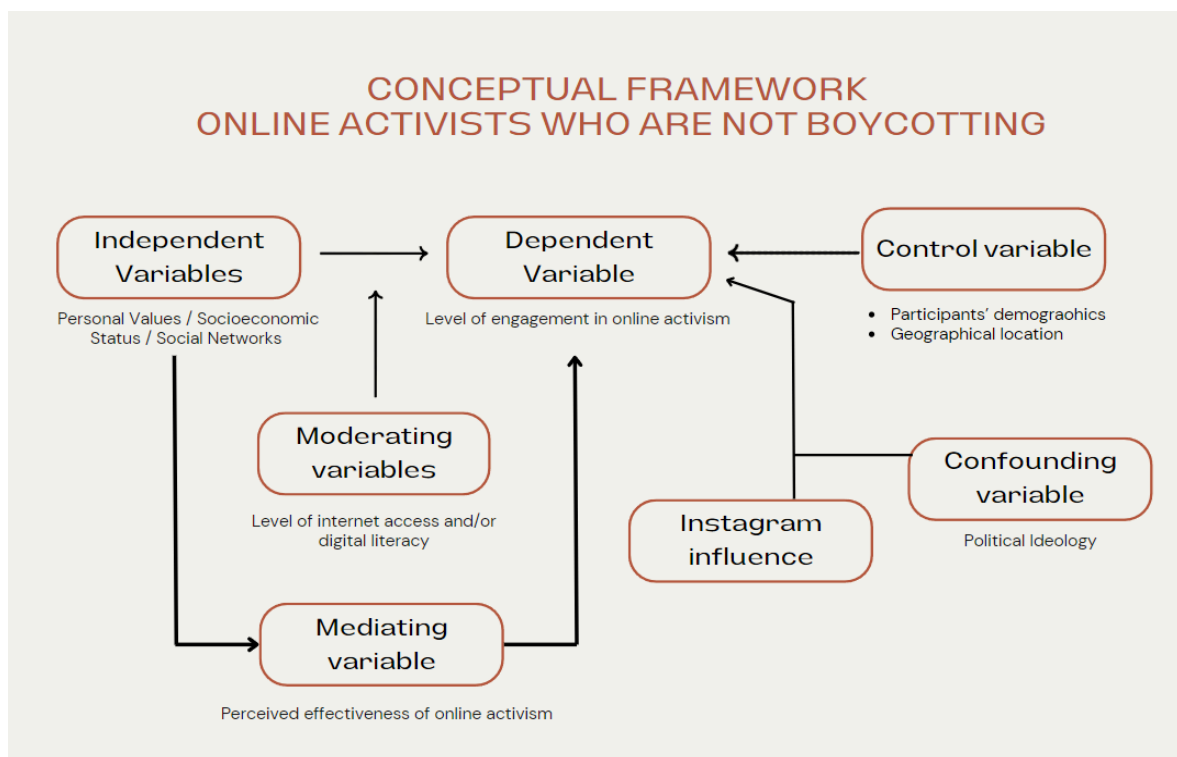
Figure 3: Conceptual Framework (Online Activists), 2024
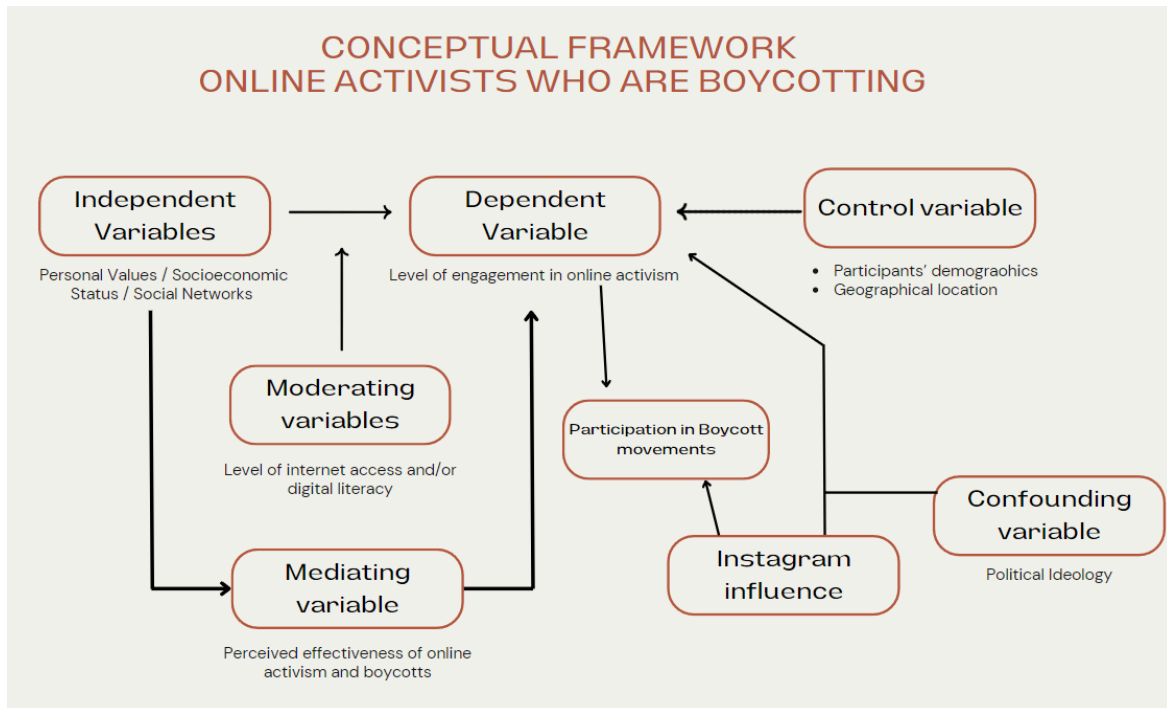
Figure 4: Conceptual Framework (Online Activists Who Are Boycotting), 2024

3. Methodology

The following chapter presents the chosen methodological approach to address the research question. Firstly, the research approach is outlined through the chosen research strategy, followed by a description of the data collection method, and finally the data analysis process.

3.1 Research Approach

This research paper is a qualitative phenomenological study that focuses on uncovering and interpreting the inner essence of the participants' cognitive processing regarding some common experience (Worthington, M, 2003). Thus meaning that this paper intends to examine human experiences regarding online activism and boycotts, through the descriptions provided by participants in our focus groups - therefore our respondents were asked about their own experience with online activism and boycotts as they perceive them (Nieswiadomy, R & Bailey, C, 2012). As the aim of the study is to explore the lived experiences of the consumers participating in online activism and boycotts, a phenomenological approach is well-suited, because it allows for a more in-depth exploration of these experiences and can assist in uncovering the underlying motivations behind consumer behavior in the digital age. Furthermore, phenomenology provided us with a framework for understanding the subjective experiences and perceptions of our participants, and with this approach, we were able to capture the complexities of the participants' experiences in their own words. Additionally, phenomenology fits this study particularly well as it is a study of direct experience which refers to built-in opportunities for active engagement in a learning environment that "*decisively shape individual understandings*" (Ewell, 1997, p.7).

Within phenomenology there are two branches; descriptive phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology and this research will focus on descriptive phenomenology, which was developed by Husserl and Girogi (Jackson, C. et al, 2018). Unlike hermeneutic phenomenology which is more subjective and personal from the researcher's side (Jackson, C. et al, 2018), descriptive phenomenology aims for a more thorough description of the experiences as they are presented. Thus, descriptive phenomenology was beneficial for this

study as it aligns well with the intention to delineate the factors that influence consumer behavior and motivation within online activism and boycotts.

An important aspect when doing a descriptive phenomenological study is for the researcher to take their own beliefs and feelings into consideration. Therefore it was important for us to first identify what we as researchers expected to discover about what drives consumers to participate in online activism and boycotts and then put these expectations to the side. The process is called bracketing, and it enables us to be unbiased and also to explore the subject strictly from our participant's perspective (Nieswiadomy, R & Bailey, C, 2012). Bracketing is a methodological rigor that is highly important for this study as it strengthened the validity of the findings and ensured that they accurately reflected the participants' experiences rather than our own interpretations. An example of our bracketing process was that we assumed that online activists who did not boycott refrained from it because they might feel overwhelmed by the complexities of boycotting and that boycotting is financially challenging. However, the findings indicated that the real reason why some online activists do not participate in boycotts is because they do not believe it will induce any corporate change. Thus, by bracketing our assumptions, we were able to approach the study with open minds and uncover the true motivations behind the drivers of online activism and boycotts.

Furthermore, phenomenology is an inductive research approach, thus this study used induction to develop theories. As Goddard, W., & Melville, S., (2001) mention *'Induction is the process of formulating general theories from specific observations'* (Goddard, W., & Melville, S., 2001, pp. 32). Through induction, the aim was to derive themes and patterns from the collected data, without imposing preconceived theories. This approach allowed for the themes and patterns to emerge organically which ensured that the findings were grounded in the participants' experiences.

Overall, using inductive descriptive phenomenology in this research increased our understanding of why consumers choose to participate in online activism and boycotts. Focusing on genuine examples of participants' experiences whilst also using bracketing to

minimize researcher bias, ensured that the findings were grounded in the actual perspectives of the participants.

3.2 Paradigm

In investigating the factors that drive consumers to engage in online activism and boycotts, this study is grounded in a relativist ontology. This philosophical approach recognizes that reality is multifaceted and socially constructed, differing across individual experiences and perspectives (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). The relativist perspective acknowledges that each individual's engagement in online activism is shaped by their unique set of personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status, reflecting a reality that is personally and culturally specific. Adopting a relativist ontology aligned with phenomenology, as phenomenology's ontology views phenomena as human beings experience them (Jackson, C. et al, 2018) additionally, it is important to also note that phenomenology studies the consciousness which is also a central factor in ontology (Smith, 2013).

By adopting this ontology, the research underscored the importance of understanding how consumers themselves perceived and reacted to calls for activism and boycotts within the digital space. It recognized that these perceptions were influenced not just by simple factors, but also by deeper, often subconscious cultural norms and social conditioning. This approach allowed for a more nuanced exploration of how individual backgrounds and societal structures interacted to influence consumer behavior on online platforms.

Thus, the relativist ontology provided a critical lens through which to examine the subjective meanings that consumers attached to their actions and the broader social implications of these actions. It ensured that the study did not merely catalog behaviors but also interpreted them within the complex world of social relations and cultural meanings. Through this lens, the research aimed to capture a comprehensive picture of the motivational dynamics behind consumer participation in online activism and boycotts, offering insights into how digital interactions were influenced by and reflective of broader social realities.

3.3 Data Required

Data was collected on the participants' personal values such as environmental concerns, human rights, and political ideologies, to understand how these values drive and motivate consumers' engagement in online activism and boycotts. Furthermore, we gathered insights into the influence of social networks on participants' decision to partake in these activities. Lastly, the data collection process also examined the role of socioeconomic status and how this influences participants' behaviors and perceptions regarding online activism and boycotts. By choosing to conduct focus groups, we managed to foster diverse viewpoints and nuanced insights into the phenomenon that this research investigates (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.4 Instagram as the Primary Platform for Social Change

For this study, we have chosen Instagram as our primary platform to gather data from the participants and as a focal point for analysis. Our decision to focus solely on Instagram activism and the platform's role in facilitating online activism and boycott movements stems from its significant influence in contemporary socio-political discourse. By delving into the impact of activism within our research area, we aimed to gather insights into the dynamics of digital advocacy, the efficacy of Instagram as a tool for mobilization, and the broader implications of online activism on societal change.

Instagram serves as a powerful ally for online activists and boycotters, offering a dynamic platform to raise awareness, gather support, and implement change through compelling visuals (Tufekci, 2017). This will be further analyzed by examining the participants' perceptions of Instagram when implementing online activism and boycott efforts. Furthermore, activists use social media platforms to build communities and increase visibility, which will be explored further in regard to Instagram and online activism (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2016). Another factor that could highlight the influence of Instagram is how celebrities and influencers with a huge amount of followers utilize their pages to amplify messages to wider audiences (Conde and Casais, 2023). Moreover, Instagram serves as a hub

for boycott campaigns, enabling activists to share information, propose alternatives, and rally support against unethical practices (Haq et al., 2022).

Instagram's global reach unites activists worldwide, fostering solidarity and driving change on an international scale (Haq et al., 2022). Users who prioritize pro-social values like social justice and environmentalism mobilize followers aligned with their values (Vecchione et al., 2014). Even though Instagram offers many opportunities for engagement and interaction, it also presents risks and limitations. Instagram is known to alter content distribution within the feed. The algorithm determines content placement based on user interests, with updates constantly evolving, companies find it challenging to steer strategies and enhance the visibility of their contributions (Frölich, 2021).

In conclusion, Instagram plays a crucial role in online activism and boycott movements, facilitating visual storytelling, community engagement, influencer collaboration, and campaign organization. Understanding the influence of personal values, socioeconomic status, and social networks on Instagram activism is essential for comprehensively analyzing participants' engagement, motivations, and behaviors within this digital realm.

3.5 Data Collection Method

To ensure a comprehensive and nuanced grasp of the subject matter, our research aimed to employ a diverse range of data sources. Our primary data collection efforts focused on individuals aged 18-35 who are active on Instagram. This direct engagement (online activism) from the target demographic was vital for capturing authentic insights into their attitudes, behaviors, and motivations regarding online activism and boycotts. The strategy aimed to bring together a diverse group of participants to capture a broad range of perspectives and experiences related to our research problem. Furthermore, selecting 4 participants in each focus group ensured a manageable yet diverse pool of perspectives.

Since data collection was carried out through semi-structured focus group discussions guided by a predetermined set of open-ended questions (Patton, 2015), these questions were

designed to explore participants' behaviors, actions, motivations, and perceptions related to consumer boycotts and online activism. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility and spontaneity in the discussions while ensuring that key topics and themes were systematically addressed. Additionally, these questions were divided into categories to assist in the analysis methods and bring the authors closer to answering the research question.

According to Morgan (1996), focus groups are considered an effective way to gather information as they not only focused on what information participants offered but also delved into their motivations and rationales. Additionally, focus groups offered a unique perspective for understanding how discussions evolved, how individuals behaved, and how arguments unfolded within a group setting (Morgan, 1996). The flexibility and group interaction inherited in focus groups enabled the authors to capture complex behaviors and motivations resulting from group dynamics (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). Furthermore, focus groups offered efficiency in terms of time, providing the equivalent of multiple individual interviews in a single session. Therefore, the choice of using focus groups over other data collection methods was due to the research rationale and appropriateness (Kitzinger, 1995).

One of the authors was the moderator who facilitated the discussions, guiding the conversation, encouraging participation, and ensuring that all voices were heard. The second author ensured that sessions were video recorded, with participants' consent, to capture detailed responses accurately. Each focus group session was conducted virtually, specifically on Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams allowed the authors to record and transcribe simultaneously and directly in real-time. The recording and text transcription were then saved on the program alongside the speakers' names and a time stamp (Microsoft Teams, n.d.). This assisted us in transcribing the interviews more efficiently.

Furthermore, the moderator employed active listening techniques and probing questions that encouraged participants to share their experiences and perspectives fully (Louw and Jimarkon, 2018). Active listening technique is beneficial for deepening and extending the participants' responses as it involves strategies like paraphrasing, empathetic responses, reflective listening, and seeking clarifications in order to gain comprehensive insights (Louw

and Jimarkon, 2018). By creating a supportive and inclusive atmosphere, the study aimed to generate rich qualitative data that shed light on the motivations and behaviors driving consumer activism and online advocacy by creating a safe space for the participants to answer with full authenticity.

3.5.1 Sampling Strategy

A non-probability sampling strategy was employed to gather participants' who were relevant to the research problem and who provided valuable insight that assisted in answering the study's research question (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Firstly, a purposive sampling strategy was implemented to recruit participants who possessed direct experience or involvement in consumer boycotts and online activism (Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2017). For the purposive sampling strategy, we reached out to our friends and acquaintances who we know actively engage in online activism and boycotts and who met our participant criteria. Additionally, we scouted participants on Instagram by focusing on company profiles that are currently facing online activism or boycotts. We contacted these individuals through direct messages where we provided them with information about our thesis topic and the criteria for participation in our focus groups. From the pool of individuals who responded to our texts, we selected the participants based on who fit the criteria. Additionally, the authors ensured the participants of this study were diverse in demographics and factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status. This assisted in capturing a broad spectrum of experiences and opinions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Using a purposive sampling strategy, allowed the authors to access a broader range of perspectives that might have remained unexplored.

After applying a purposive sampling strategy, a snowball sampling strategy was followed (Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2017 ; Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). Subsequently, snowball sampling techniques assisted in finding similar participants that fit the characteristics of the original stakeholders. Several factors are emphasized in this study in order to gather a comprehensive range of perspectives such as transparency, confidentiality, and inclusivity. For the snowball sampling process, we asked the participants we had already recruited if they knew of anyone in their social networks who met our criteria and who might be willing and

interested in participating. This approach allowed us to contact and access additional participants who we might not have reached out to with our initial recruitment methods. The sample size was 12 participants, 4 participants per focus group.

By incorporating a diverse range of perspectives, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the motivations and dynamics driving consumer activism in different contexts. Recruitment materials clearly outlined the study's objectives, eligibility criteria, confidentiality measures, and participant rights to ensure informed consent. Moreover, recruitment efforts prioritized inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring that individuals from various backgrounds had the opportunity to participate. By actively seeking input from diverse voices, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive range of perspectives and motives behind online activism and boycotts.

The participants played a vital role in addressing the research question and research area since they presented a diverse range of individuals who have a direct connection to online activism and boycotts. The participants' experiences, perspectives, thoughts, and motivations influencing them to participate in online activism and boycotts provided valuable insight to this study. All the participants are required to fit the characteristics determined by the authors as this ensured the diverse array of answers gathered. The diverse backgrounds, nationalities, ages, genders, and educational levels assisted in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics shaping consumer activism in Sweden and Denmark. Ultimately, the participants' experiences have laid the foundation for the analysis and shed light on the factors influencing this phenomenon.

3.5.2 Introducing the Participants

The focus groups conducted, targeted individuals between the ages of 18 to 35 years old, located both in Denmark and Sweden. This demographic has proven to be incredibly active in online activism and boycotts (Wong, 2021). Additionally, by focusing on Denmark and Sweden, the study leveraged the high levels of internet penetration in these countries, which could have impacted the research area (Jones & Petersen, 2020). The participants represented diverse nationalities and included both males and females. The decision to include

participants from diverse nationalities and genders ensured a broader spectrum of viewpoints and acknowledged gender diversity in social movements (Fábián, Johnson, & Lazda, 2021). The educational background of the participants targeted was a minimum of a high school degree, allowing for diversity within the participants while still maintaining consistency among them.

Finally, one focus group consisted of participants who were only involved in online activism, and two focus groups consisted of participants who were involved in both online activism and boycotts. Dividing the focus groups into these two categories aimed at providing a more comprehensive insight into the participants' feelings, motivations beliefs, and challenges associated with these forms of collective actions (Gundumogula, 2020). By acknowledging and determining these characteristics of the participants before recruiting them, the study captured a broad range of perspectives on the topics of online activism and boycotts from their diverse backgrounds and experiences. The specifics surrounding the participants, such as age, location of study, and gender, are illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Introducing the Participants, 2024

Name	Age	Location of the study	Nationality of the participants	Gender	Participation in Online activism - Boycotts
Participant 1	28	Sweden	Montenegrin	Male	Online activism only
Participant 2	25	Sweden	Swedish / American	Female	Online activism only
Participant 3	26	Sweden	Indian	Male	Online activism only
Participant 4	27	Sweden	Armernian	Male	Online activism only
Participant 5	22	Sweden	Somalian	Male	Online activism & Boycotts
Participant 6	29	Sweden	Palestinian / Swedish	Male	Online activism & Boycotts
Participant 7	28	Sweden	Persian / Polish	Male	Online activism & Boycotts
Participant 8	21	Sweden	German	Female	Online activism & Boycotts
Participant 9	27	Denmark	Danish	Female	Online activism & Boycotts
Participant 10	26	Denmark	Danish	Male	Online activism & Boycotts
Participant 11	29	Denmark	Danish / Swedish	Female	Online activism & Boycotts
Participant 12	23	Denmark	Iraqi	Male	Online activism & Boycotts

3.5.3 Focus Group Structure

Three focus groups comprised four participants each from diverse backgrounds and age groups. The focus groups were conducted using semi-structured formats with open-ended questions. This approach allowed for flexibility and encouraged in-depth discussions within the group, consequently allowing the authors to explore various perspectives (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021 ; Krueger & Casey, 2015). Each focus group session lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. This provided sufficient time for participants to express their insights and perspectives. The authors determined that this structure delved into the participants' perspectives and insights, which assisted in generating an efficient analysis. Additionally,

limiting the number of participants in each group provided a comfortable setting for participants to share their motives and opinions.

In addition to the focus group consisting of participants from diverse backgrounds, age groups, and genders, the research design included two focus groups where online activism did not lead to boycotts and two focus groups where online activism did lead to boycotts. This intentional selection of examining the research area from these two perspectives offered the authors valuable insights and allowed for a thematic analysis. Through this approach, the study aimed to explain the factors that differentiated individuals who only engaged in activism from those who extended their activism to boycott actions. This allowed us to identify recurring themes and patterns, which then enhanced the understanding of online activism behavior and the drivers leading to boycott practices.

3.5.3 Key Questions for Focus Group Discussions

With the employment of open-ended questions, the authors did not exert complete control over the direction of the conversation, in order not to restrict the range of perspectives shared by the participants. Additionally, if participants required assistance in determining the next topic of discussion, these questions were utilized. For example, when the participants did not have anything further to add to the current conversation, we prompted them with a question that helped guide the conversation and maintain its flow. However, if the conversation naturally progressed and had a natural flow, the authors refrained from intervening. The questions were categorized into distinct groups with an explanation of how they contributed to addressing the research question. Furthermore, organizing the focus group questions into these categories enabled and improved the data analysis methods. Most importantly, the questions were slightly altered based on whether the focus group included only online activists or included participants who were both online activists and boycotting.

All focus groups followed a similar structured framework, which included various segments related to the research area. For the first focus group for consumers who were only participating in online activism and not boycotting, the first segment involved the participants

introducing themselves and their background, as well as providing demographic information and initial insights into their experiences with brands and potential motivations for consumer activism. The second segment examined participants' past engagement with online activism, motivations behind participation, and specific examples of campaigns they had encountered or participated in. The third segment explored participants' views on the role of social media platforms like Instagram, and expectations from corporate responses to either online activism efforts or boycotts. The fourth segment investigated the impact of unethical corporate practices on consumer behavior and factors influencing participation in activism campaigns. Finally, the fifth segment explored participants' perspectives on the effectiveness of online activism, factors contributing to success, and potential consequences and implications for businesses and society.

Similarly to the previous structure, focus groups two and three were asked similar questions to analyze their motivations to participate in online activism. However, focus groups two and three included more questions regarding the factors influencing them to participate in boycott movements, as well as how effective they perceived their boycotting efforts to be. Furthermore, they were asked how they expected companies to respond to their activism and boycotting efforts.

3.5.4 Data Saturation

The selection of 12 participants from diverse backgrounds and demographics has ensured a diverse array of perspectives. Each participant brought unique experiences and insights to the research that contributed greatly to the comprehension of the research area. Through intensive discussions within the three focus groups that lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, the valuable data gathered shed light on the various aspects of the research inquiry.

According to Morse (2004), the concept 'Data saturation' refers to the stage in a qualitative data analysis where the researcher continues analyzing data until no new data emerge and all of the concepts of theory are well-developed. (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018) Despite the richness in the participants' insights, no new significant perspectives or themes were

emerging, signaling to the authors that they had reached a point of saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Considering this, the authors have concluded that the data gathered from the 12 participants was sufficient and beneficial to addressing the research question and research objectives efficiently.

3.6 Data Analysis

Doing a thematic analysis served as the primary method for analyzing the qualitative data collected from the focus group discussions. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this analytical approach involved several steps such as identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns and themes within the collected data. Thematic analysis is considered a flexible and widely used method of interpreting and analyzing data obtained from the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, the method allows researchers to explore the meanings and experiences conveyed by the participants. Thematic analysis also includes getting familiar with the data, generating initial codes, and searching for themes to produce a comprehensive analysis. (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In thematic analysis, a descriptive phenomenological approach is a useful framework when analyzing participants' lived experiences (Sundler, A. et al. 2019). In this study, the phenomenological approach allowed us to explore the lived experiences of consumers engaging in online activism and boycotts, thus enabling us to understand their emotions, perceptions, and behavior. Subsequently, this enabled us to compare and contrast the responses from the participants based on the distinct differences of what influenced the participants to either participate in boycotting or what prevented them. A thematic analysis complemented this by helping us identify recurring patterns and themes within the collected data. By combining these two methods, we were able to conduct a detailed exploration of the participants' experiences (phenomenology) whilst simultaneously identifying common themes and patterns between different participants (thematic analysis).

Additionally, the conceptual framework aided in identifying the factors we aimed to analyze and the connection between them, as well as determining the variables we sought to control.

A careful selection of the participant's demographics ensured the data aligned with the research objectives. Moreover, acknowledgment and account for other influential factors beyond our control that could affect the results of this study. Therefore, the combination of thematic analysis and a descriptive phenomenological approach was deemed the optimal method to achieve the best results.

3.6.1 Coding and Categorization

The authors employed methods such as transcribing the focus group discussions. Transcripts of the focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim and systematically coded to identify recurring concepts, ideas, and experiences expressed by participants (Patton, 2015). Subsequently, color coding was beneficial to its nature in assisting in identifying patterns and themes within the research problem and the participants, thus gaining a more structured analysis. Not only that, but color coding assisted the thematic analysis greatly as it visually highlighted the key themes within the data. This allowed the authors to effectively and efficiently identify patterns as well as organize and clarify the analysis process (Patton, 2015 ; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, organizing the data established a stable groundwork for comprehending the unique perspectives of the participants. The coding process involved assigning descriptive labels to segments of text based on their content and meaning. Initial codes were generated through an inductive approach, allowing patterns and themes to emerge directly from the data.

The final themes and codes that were derived from the transcriptions are illustrated in Table 2 below. Regarding the themes that were identified in the online activism focus group, several key areas emerged that shaped the focus of the research. Participants expressed concerns about certain marketing campaigns, unethical company conduct, and corporate practices, highlighting the significant role of corporate behavior within online activism. Various motivations drove the participants to engage in online activism, including personal motivations, social networks, and celebrity influence. These motivations were further heightened by external factors and the impact of their perceived social media identity. The participants also highlighted the impact of resources such as time constraints, financial

limitations, and the digitalization of activism on their engagement levels. Insights on offline vs. online activism underscored the evolving nature of consumer engagement strategies and the need to adapt to the digital landscape.

The themes from the online activism and boycott focus groups were also pivotal in influencing the research area. The themes from these groups included marketing and branding, ethical considerations, consumer practices, motivations, and resource constraints. Participants showed concerns about marketing campaigns, unethical conduct by companies, and the impact of a brand's values and responses on consumer activism. Motivations for participating in online activism and boycotts included environmental concerns, human rights, and political ideologies, intersected by external factors such as celebrity endorsements, Instagram's influence, and social network dynamics. The perceived impact of consumer boycotts, company responses, backlash, and the long-term impact of their efforts motivated individuals to participate in online activism and boycotts. Resource accessibility and constraints, such as time constraints, financial limitations, digitalization of activism, and alternative products, shaped the efficiency and effectiveness of their activism and boycotting efforts. The thematic analysis highlighted nuanced responses and emotions evoked by brands' actions, ranging from negative emotions to increased self-awareness, impacting their perceived online identity. This underscored the view of online activism and boycotts as a strong force for holding companies accountable and influencing societal change.

Table 2: Themes and Colour Codes, 2024

Theme	Code	Description
ONLINE ACTIVISM		
Marketing and corporate practices	1.1	Marketing campaigns
	1.2	Unethical companies
	1.3	Company response
Consumer practices	2.1	Online activism
	2.2	Boycotting
	2.3	Social media identity

	2.4	Motivations
	2.5	Offline vs. online activism
Resource constraints and accessibility	3.1	Time
	3.2	Economics
	3.3	Digitalization
External factors influencing online activism and boycotts	4.1	Instagram influence
	4.2	Celebrity influence
	4.3	Social network influence
BOYCOTT AND ONLINE ACTIVISM		
Marketing and corporate practices	1.1	Marketing campaigns
	1.2	Unethical conduct
	1.3	Brands' value
	1.4	Company responses
Consumer practices	2.1	Environment
	2.2	Human rights
	2.3	Politics
	2.4	Judgement of actions
	2.5	Negative emotions
	2.6	Self-awareness
	2.7	Boycotting
	2.8	Online identity
	2.9	Impact of consumer boycotts
	2.10	Backlash
	2.11	Long-term impact

	2.12	Offline vs. online activism
Resource constraints and accessibility	3.1	Time constraints
	3.2	Finance
	3.3	Digitalization
	3.4	Alternative products
External factors influencing online activism and boycotts	4.1	Celebrities
	4.2	Instagram
	4.3	Social network

Since each transcript was reviewed independently, this allowed the researchers to ensure reliability and consistency in coding. Any dissimilarities or variations in interpretations were settled through discussion and agreement. This observant and perceptive coding process aimed at capturing the full extent of the participants' experiences in terms of the richness of their narratives and perspectives. This allowed the authors to delve deeper into the exploration of the research area, subsequently assisting in answering the research question.

Through a repetitive process of review and refinement, coded segments were organized into overarching themes and sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved closely examining the data, comparing and contrasting different perspectives, and identifying patterns of meaning across the dataset. The identification of themes was conducted collaboratively by the authors of this study, drawing on diverse viewpoints and expertise to ensure comprehensiveness and thoroughness. Themes were refined and revised, taking into account the nuances and complexities of participants' narratives. By adopting a systematic and transparent approach to theme identification, the study aimed to generate robust and credible findings that contributed to the understanding of the factors that influenced individuals to participate in online activism and consumer boycotts.

3.6.3 Interpretation and Synthesis

The final step of data analysis involves interpreting the identified themes in relation to the research question and integrating the findings to generate meaningful insights (Krueger & Casey, 2015). This process required careful reflection on the implications of the findings, consideration of existing literature and theoretical frameworks, and exploration of potential explanations and interpretations. The authors of this study engaged in in-depth discussions to critically analyze the emerging themes and their implications for theory and practice.

3.7 Validity, Reliability and Generalizability

In this research, both internal and external validity are important factors to consider in order to ensure that the findings of the study are trustworthy and credible. To address the internal validity, the chosen research approach was the phenomenological approach. This specific approach was employed to explore the subjective experiences of consumers regarding online activism and boycotts. This approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the participants' experiences which ensured that the study was able to capture the complexities of the participants' lived experiences in their own words. Furthermore, the adoption of a relativist ontology acknowledged that reality is multifaceted and socially constructed, which increased the external validity of the study, by taking into consideration the diverse perspectives across different sociocultural contexts.

Our primary data collection approach consisted of semi-structured focus groups with open-ended questions, which allowed for an extensive exploration of different dimensions of online activism and boycotts. The sampling strategy was a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques, which we used to recruit the participants and ensure they had direct experience or involvement in consumer boycotts and/or online activism. Moreover, a thematic analysis was used as the primary method for analyzing the empirical data from the focus groups. By employing a thematic analysis in combination with a phenomenological approach, this research conducted a detailed exploration of the participants' experiences whilst also identifying common themes and patterns. Combined,

these methodological choices increase the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings and contribute to a well-rounded understanding of the factors that drive consumers to engage in online activism and boycotts.

Even though the findings of this research provided us with valuable insight into what factors drive consumers to engage in online activism and boycotts, it is also important to consider the level of generalizability of the findings. The study focused on participants in the age range of 18-35 from Denmark and Sweden, who were active on Instagram and had direct experience in consumer boycotts and online activism. While the purposive sampling strategy in the study aimed to recruit participants from diverse backgrounds and experiences, there is a risk that the findings are not representative of all consumer groups. Although the findings do offer good insights into what drives consumers to participate in online activism and boycotts in Denmark and Sweden, generalizing these findings to other populations might not be accurate. Further research with a more diverse range of participants would be necessary in order to increase the generalizability of the findings.

3.8 Limitations

In this research, several limitations were identified which should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. Firstly, during the focus groups, certain participants exhibited lower levels of engagement compared to other participants. This could be due to some participants dominating the conversation, thus leading to other participants withholding their opinions. This difference in activity levels in the focus groups may have impacted the depth of perspectives represented in the data that was collected.

Secondly, during the analysis process, the influence of bias and reflexivity on the interpretation of the data became apparent. Initially, there was a predisposition toward some of the perspectives among the researchers which tainted the analysis. However, conscious efforts were made to mitigate this bias by adopting a more critical stance and reevaluating findings from an unbiased standpoint. During the process of recruiting participants, we encountered the challenge that many potential participants expressed concerns about the

safety of discussing their engagement in online activism and boycotts. Although we assured them about anonymity and confidentiality, some individuals chose not to participate which limited the number of participants in the focus groups. This affected the diversity of perspectives represented and also the credibility and generalizability of our findings.

Moreover, two of the conducted focus groups were in English, even though the majority of the participant's native language is not English. This language barrier could potentially hinder the participant's ability to fully express themselves as they would in their native language. This might affect the depth and the richness of the data, as nuances could be lost in the translation. Although efforts were made to decrease these issues such as explanation assistance of the questions, it is an important limitation to consider in the study. Lastly, one of the conducted focus groups was done in Danish and while doing this can be beneficial as the participants might express themselves more fluently in their native language there can be consequences to translating the Danish focus group into English. One significant challenge is accurately capturing nuances, expressions, and cultural references that are specific to the Danish language and culture. These might not have direct equivalents in English which can make it complex to convey the intended meaning effectively. This can result in the translated text not fully reflecting the participant's original intentions or expressions, thus leading to a loss of context and depth in the data analysis.

4. Analysis

In this chapter, the authors will explore the factors driving consumers to engage in online activism and boycott movements with a focus on personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status. The accompanying tables below categorize these influences across themes and sub-themes such as ethical concerns in marketing, corporate ethics, and the impact of online activism. The table offers a comprehensive overview of the diverse factors that drive online activism and boycotts, paving the way for a deeper exploration of the themes. The following sections will provide more context and detailed analysis and further illustrate the main insights and contextualize the findings within the broader landscape of consumer activism.

Table 3: Thematic and Comparative Analysis Overview

Theme	Sub-theme	Focus group 1	Focus group 2	Focus group 3
Marketing and corporate practices	Ethical concerns in marketing campaigns	Sensitivity to socio-political issues	Geopolitical conflicts	Offensive advertising
	Exploring corporate ethics	Labor rights violations	Accountability for unethical practices	Transparency and fair labor practices
	Impact and challenges of online and boycott movements	Skepticism about impact	Belief in collective action	Emotional investment in ethical consumption
Consumer practices	Factors driving engagement in online activism and boycott movements	Convenience over ethics	Environmental sustainability and human rights	Ethical values and political activism
	The role of anonymity in facilitating online activism	Comfort of anonymity	Privacy and personal security	Protecting identity
	Differences between offline and online activism	Preference for a combination	Recognises unique impact of both methods	Online activism for broader reach
	Differences in Consumer Behavior and Engagement in Online Activism and Boycott Movements	Skepticism about personal impact	Strong belief in individual actions	High self-awareness and integrity
Resource constraints and accessibility	Impact of free time on online activism	Free time limitations	Small actions despite busy schedule	Everyday actions regardless of schedule
	The intersection of financial status activism	Social media accessibility	Financial limitations affecting boycotts	Privilige in making ethical choices
	Impact of digitalisation on online activism and boycott movements	Efficient through social media	Reach and speed of information sharing	Global connectivity and awareness
	Exploring alternative consumption choices in boycotting efforts	Financial constraints on ethical choices	Willingness to seek ethical alternatives	Proactive in aligning consumption with values
External factors influencing online activism and boycotting	The influence of celebrities on online activism and boycotting	Celebrities as role models	Celebrity endorsement impact	Celebrities swaying public opinion
	Instagram's role in shaping online activism and boycott movements	Efficient platform for activism	Amplifying voices, fostering collective action	A way of public expression
	The influence of social networks on online activism and boycotts	Trust in social networks for information	Influence of social networks on activism	Social networks motivating boycott participation

4.1 Marketing and Corporate Practices

4.1.1 Ethical Concerns in Marketing Campaigns

Participants from all focus groups showed concerns regarding various marketing campaigns that they viewed as problematic and controversial. Key examples that were highlighted included Zara's advertisement related to the Gaza conflict, McDonald's support of IDF soldiers, and the Danish gambling ad featuring Oddset Janni. These examples illustrate the

strong reaction that can be evoked by marketing campaigns that consumers perceive to be ethically insensitive or politically biased.

All the participants expressed a strong sense of dissatisfaction and disappointment towards Zara's campaign, which they linked to the sensitive socio-political issue in Gaza. The participants found the campaign to be incredibly offensive and interpreted it as an exploitation of a geopolitical conflict for commercial purposes. This example underscores how online activists are extremely attentive to the ethical considerations behind marketing campaigns especially those that involve cultural and political sensitivities. All the participants viewed the campaign as a misuse of a highly sensitive issue, thus reflecting their broader concerns about the ethical obligations of companies and their marketing practices.

Another example that was discussed during the focus groups was McDonald's and how the company offered food to IDF soldiers during a political conflict. This was interpreted by some of the participants as McDonald's taking sides in a conflict, which brought up strong negative reactions from the participants who had opposing views on the conflict. Particularly participant 7 found this action controversial and biased and they argued that McDonald's should maintain a neutral stance and avoid supporting one side over another. This example underscores the potential for marketing campaigns to have an impact on societal perceptions and values.

Furthermore, an example that surfaced as well was a Danish gambling advertisement with a character called Oddset Janni. Regarding the Oddset Janni campaign, participant 10 exhibited irritation as they remarked *"I just start thinking about some older campaigns where maybe in hindsight you can see a problem with it. For example, there was that Danish gambling ad with Oddset Janni. Where it's like women don't understand anything about soccer."* (Participant 10, 2024). This advertisement was deemed offensive by the participant as it reinforces gender stereotypes and discrimination against women, which was not appreciated by participant 10. This example further illustrates the focus group participants' concerns about marketing campaigns and practices that fail to consider cultural and gender sensitivities.

When comparing the findings between the different focus groups, there were no notable differences between those who only participate in online activism and those who participate in both online activism and boycotts. Findings revealed overlapping concerns in regards to ethical marketing practices and brand perception. Additionally, all focus groups shed light on the importance of brand-consumer relationships by offering insights into the multifaceted dynamics of marketing campaigns, ethical considerations, and consumer activism.

4.1.2 Exploring Corporate Ethics

Findings indicated similar opinions from all participants regarding the questionable practices of certain corporations. A few examples that emerged were the ethics of prominent companies such as Apple and McDonald's. Participant 3 expressed dissatisfaction with Apple's outsourcing practices as they stated "*Apple outsources all its manufacturing. India actually does lot of manufacturing for Apple and the way they treat people. the workers is not up to the mark. Like oftentimes people work more than 10/12 hours. Their rights are not met and they know this.*" (Participant 3, 2024) Participant 3 proceeded to provide another example of Zara's involvement in sweatshops and labor rights violations in the production process. Reports of labor exploitation and inadequate working conditions in manufacturing facilities highlight a broader concern about corporate responsibility and companies prioritizing profit over ethical standards (Participant 3, 2024). Additionally, participant 8 explained their reasons for not supporting Shein by stating "*I saw a lot of posts about Shein and what I personally don't support at all is at the end of the day, they are using kids. The kids are also not getting paid because they already have so bad life standards. So it's even worse for them that they work for free.*" (Participant 8, 2024) This was reinforced by participant 11 who also mentioned Shein's unethical conduct (Participant 11, 2024). The participants raised concerns about the labor practices in companies like Zara and Shein as it goes against their personal values, thus motivating them to join online activism and boycott movements against them. Additionally, the participants viewed their online activism and boycotting efforts as a way to pressure companies such as Zara and Shein to adopt fair labor practices.

Furthermore, McDonald's faced scrutiny for its involvement in geopolitical conflicts, such as the situation in Palestine and Israel. Most participants criticized the company's decisions and questioned its ethical stance by taking a public stance on this issue. Similarly, with Zara's previously mentioned campaign, participant 11 stated "*They chose to promote this ad after October 7th after the escalation of the conflict there, and that's where they say it becomes problematic, because it's an image we see on the net with people lying in these body bags being buried among rubble, and yet they choose to go ahead with this campaign, which they know will be seen by a really large number of people.*" (Participant 11, 2024). The discussions within the activist-focused focus group and the combined activist-boycotting focus groups underscored a collective awareness of unethical behavior within the corporate sector. Many participants stated that many big corporations are unethical, as participant 2 asserted their belief that most companies have ethical shortcomings (Participant 2, 2024).

Participant 6 expressed frustration with deceptive advertising practices when they stated "*At the same time, a lot of these big companies do some kind of false advertisement or do some pink washing or greenwashing for their products or services.*" (Participant 6, 2024) This shows that participants are well aware of company intentions when viewing marketing campaigns. Findings indicated that brands' failure to be transparent in their marketing practices has significant repercussions and serves as a motive for individuals to engage in online activism or boycott.

Participant 8 expressed additional concerns, particularly about purchasing from companies like Nestle, citing worries about the reported harmful effects of their baby milk on children (Participant 8, 2024). This raises questions about corporate responsibility when it comes to consumer safety and how they aim to address these issues. Thus, this prompted participant 8 to fully boycott the brand due to concerns regarding their personal health. Findings highlighted the intersectionality of ethical concerns that connect corporate behavior with broader issues such as diversity in advertising and marketing campaigns. Additionally, findings indicated a growing demand for ethical business practices that uphold ethical standards across all their corporate operations. Not only that but also the need for greater accountability and transparency within the corporate sector. The issue regarding ethical

behavior served as a strong motive for the participants to either engage in online activism or boycott the company completely.

The discussion revolved around the motivations behind either participating or refraining from boycott movements leading to various perspectives emerging from the discussion. One participant talked about their decision to boycott brands, stating *"I boycott all of them. I took Tele2 off. I don't pay them no more. That's when I heard about it. McDonald's. I boycott too"* (Participant 1, 2024). As opposed to this statement participant 4 expressed their indifference towards boycotting and the ethical practices of certain companies and stated *"I don't care. I eat their food. Maybe the company is doing bad things. Maybe they have done worse things than this thing with Palestine. That's not my business."* (Participant 4, 2024). The different perspectives specifically between these two participants highlight the different approaches that individuals take towards online consumer activism and their motivations. While some consumers like participant 1 are motivated by a strong sense of social responsibility and a desire to promote ethical consumption practices, other consumers like participant 4 might be more indifferent to ethical consumption and may prioritize convenience and personal preference.

Across all focus groups, there was a shared recognition of unethical practices within the corporate sector. All participants were well aware of the perceived misconduct committed by these companies. However, the key distinction between those who solely engage in activism and those who also participate in boycotts lies in their response to this awareness. Conversely, boycotters are more committed to holding these companies accountable for their actions and are emotionally invested in seeing them face consequences for their mistakes.

4.1.3 Impact and Challenges of Online Activism and Boycott Movements

Discussing the impact of boycotting companies the participants emphasized the limited impact of individual actions, in particular participant 6 stated *"Like a single consumer, you know that your impact might not be that strong or big like for these kind of gigantic companies."* (Participant 6, 2024). This comment implies a sense of awareness of the scale of the issues the participants are addressing. However, despite being aware of the limitations of

their actions, other participants also expressed a feeling of personal responsibility. Participant 5 highlighted the moral burden they feel when contributing to what they perceive as unethical practices, adding *"It's about being able to sleep good at night because if I go to work, earn money, and then spend it with this company. Then I have contributed to this war"* (Participant 5, 2024). Likewise, participant 11 discussed the importance of maintaining personal integrity and shared the following answer *"Is this actually the image, which I want to show towards myself, or is it this with actually being compassionate towards other people?"* (Participant 11, 2024). Combined, these responses clearly indicate a general high sense of self-awareness and personal responsibility between the participants in focus group 2 and 3 and a strong desire to align their actions with their values which is why they are strongly motivated to engage in boycotting.

During focus group 2 and 3, the discussion weighed heavily on boycotting, and it became evident that boycotting is a multifaceted phenomenon that is influenced by several factors. One of these factors include the complexities that are associated with boycott practices. The participants acknowledged the challenges of boycotting products or companies that are highly integrated in their everyday life. Participant 12 highlights this complexity by stating *"But in these kind of cases like you're kind of like you can't boycott 100% like a company. Or like their products in this kind of sense, when it's like, it's almost in every like technology like in every device you know. So I would say like it's really hard."* (Participant 12, 2024). This statement suggests that they recognize that some companies with a wide reach make the task of boycotting nearly impossible and avoiding some products entirely is not possible. However, despite the complexities involved with boycotting companies, the participants demonstrate a strong commitment to ethical consumption practices and that they are willing to navigate these challenges in order to align their purchasing decisions with their personal values. This commitment was shown by participant 12 who stated *"I try to boycott as much as possible. I boycott McDonald's, all sodas from, like, Fanta, Coca-Cola. Those who support Israel, I boycott"* (Participant 12, 2024). This further shows that consumers are motivated by a strong desire to live in accordance with their ethical principles and to avoid supporting companies whose values contradict their own.

Moreover, the participants in focus group 2 and 3 recognize, as opposed to some of the participants in focus group 1, the importance of individual actions in effecting change in society. This difference in perspective becomes clear by two statements in particular, in focus group 1, participant 3 expresses the following *"In modern society, like if, if you're boycotting a company completely doesn't mean you're actually causing them any profit or loss in any way"* (Participant 3, 2024). This answer suggests that some consumers who do not participate in boycotting practices, refrain from it because they do not believe their individual actions will make a difference and the complexities of boycotting leads to a sense of futility.

Additionally, as focus group 1 focused on consumers who engage in online activism but not in boycotting, the participants provided several reasons for their hesitancy towards boycotting practices. Participant 4 expressed an approach where they separated the product from the company. They stated *"I'm not supporting the company. I'm just eating food... The food is food like they have good food. Yes, maybe the company is shit"* (Participant 4, 2024). This answer explains that some online activists who do not participate in boycotts see no direct link between consuming a product and supporting a company's unethical practices. Moreover, participant 2 highlighted the convenience part of consuming products, stating *"It just feels like they're not gonna care. And the convenience part of it kind of takes over"* (Participant 2, 2024). This answer reflects the internal conflict that some consumers who might prioritize convenience over ethical concerns, are faced with. While the participants in focus group 1 did in fact express a desire for change, they also demonstrated a degree of skepticism about the impact of their actions and the willingness of companies to listen to consumer demands.

Unlike this perspective, consumers who participate in boycotts strongly believe that individual actions make a difference, this idea is supported by participant 11's statement *"So, I boycott extremely much, even more than just what we know because personally, I go in and investigate every single thing that I buy. Who owns it? Where is the copyright from? Who has shares in it, and how do they make their money? So, it's definitely something about, you know, now I've changed my toothpaste because Colgate, they support Israel. I buy nothing from Nestle, McDonald's, Starbucks"* (Participant 11, 2024).

Within the topic of the effectiveness of online activism and boycotting, participants in both focus group 2 and 3 underscored the impact of consumer boycotts as an approach to change companies actions. These participants strongly believed in collective actions and that this could force companies to change or reconsider their actions and values. In focus group 2, participant 8 highlighted the power that collective actions hold by stating *"If we boycott the companies and so many more people are starting to do it, the companies realize that they did something wrong. And maybe, just maybe, they will get better"* (Participant 8, 2024). This statement was furthermore supported by participant 6 who expressed *"So as an individual, maybe, as I said before, like you won't make that impact. But like when a group of people raise up those concerns and do like a collective boycott"* (Participant 6, 2024) and additionally participant 5 who emphasized the importance of boycotting companies as a means of changing corporate behavior, stating *"A boycott is an effective way to make change"* (Participant 5, 2024). The participants' regarded both individual and collective action to have a severe impact on demanding a change in corporate behavior.

However, there were also doubts about the effectiveness of boycotting large global corporations. Participant 7 in particular expressed skepticism about the impact of boycotting companies like Apple or H&M, pointing out that while boycotting might have an affect on smaller regional companies, they are less impactful against huge global companies, they stated *"So some will do like smaller companies or regional stuff usually do these changes because they are dependent on the regional stuff. But then if you go like a bigger scale like Apple, they don't care if I or like 10 thousands of people don't buy phone because I said that and we are active about it and spread a lot of information around it. They still have their image, their status in the society in general from other people, and they don't really care that much. If a group of people don't buy or do something against them because they usually don't care about because they already have such a big image"* (Participant 7, 2024). These answers suggest that consumers do recognize the effectiveness of boycotts and the level of impact that boycotts can cause, but also that the impact may vary depending on the size and influence that the company holds.

Furthermore, participants from focus groups 2 and 3 acknowledged the fact that companies needed to be held accountable for their actions, as participant 11 remarked *"You just have to*

be aware that there are consequences for the choices you make. So yes, I think you have to be quick as a company and listen to what the consumer thinks and what's going on in society and political things. Unfortunately, but that's how it is." (Participant 11, 2024) The participants recognized the pressure on companies to prioritize profitability while considering consumer sentiments, however, suggested that companies must be attentive to societal trends and consumer opinions, thus motivating consumers to engage in boycott movements.

Similarly, participants in focus group 3 further emphasized the impact of consumer activism and the online pressure it puts on companies to induce change, and participant 10 provided a concrete example of how online activism can lead to change. The participant cited the case of McDonald's franchise owners in Israel giving free food to Israeli soldiers, they stated *"Now there was all that stuff with some of the franchise owners in Israel who had given free food to Israeli soldiers from the JDF. Right? And McDonald's went in based on all the negative publicity they got. So they went in and bought all the franchise owners' restaurants. So they couldn't do it anymore. So something actually happened based on that online activism."* (Participant 10, 2024). This specific example shows how negative public concerns and online activism can in fact lead to actual change by companies. Overall these discussions and answers accentuate the deep impact of consumer activism in holding companies accountable and advocating for a change. While the participants were optimistic about the effectiveness of collective actions, they also acknowledged the limitations, particularly when being up against global corporations with a lot of influence.

The discussion highlighted the significant differences between focus group 1 and focus group 2 and 3 in their perspectives on the impact of their actions. Participants in focus group 1 recognized the unethical nature of certain companies but believed their individual actions would not make a difference. In contrast, participants in focus group 2 and 3 actively sought to hold companies accountable and believed in their capacity to effect change through collective action. They viewed themselves as agents of change and were confident that their efforts would not go unnoticed. This explains their strong motivation to engage in boycotting and online activism which demonstrates their commitment to ethical consumption and corporate accountability.

4.2 Consumer Practices

4.2.1 Factors Influencing Engagement in Online Activism and Boycott Movements

In the two focus groups specifically about boycotting, one significant factor emerged as a highly motivational reason for the participants to boycott certain companies which was environmental sustainability. As an example, one of the participants expressed their concerns about companies who are involved in animal testing and stated *"There are a lot of companies that have nothing to do with cruelty-free policies and do a lot of animal testing."* (Participant 6, 2024). Similarly, participant 10 also conveyed their worry about climate change and stated *"What could make me boycott? There need to be some pretty serious consequences for the climate"* (Participant 10, 2024). These responses suggest that environmental concerns specifically including animal testing and climate change significantly motivate the participants to boycott certain brands. It also suggests that the participants prioritize environmental sustainability and their willingness to boycott companies that do not adhere to cruelty-free policies or contribute negatively to climate change.

When asked about their motivation for boycotting, human rights were also a key motivator for the participants and one of the main reasons many of them chose to boycott companies. Exemplary, participant 5 discussed the working conditions of employees in Zara, saying the following *"Supposedly, they have this small square that they've put on the ground with tape, where the worker cannot leave until their break or lunch"* (Participant 5, 2024) Similarly participant 11 also mentioned their decision to boycott brands was due to human rights violations, particularly regarding child labor, they stated *"I don't buy from Shein anymore because they have Uyghur detainees, so I'm not going to support them either."* (Participant 11, 2024). These responses indicate that the participants are highly concerned about the ethical implications of brands' actions and that they are motivated to boycott them based on moral considerations. It furthermore indicates a deep alignment between the participants' own ethical values and their consumer behavior, highlighting the importance of human rights and fair labor practices in their consumption choices. Within this topic, the participants additionally touched upon the political implications of companies' actions and their choice to participate in boycotts based on political considerations. Participant 6 highlighted their

decision to boycott companies that support Israel's actions. The participant stated *"There are a lot of companies that provide support for Israel's actions on the Palestinian territories, so that would be the core reason for me to boycott"* (Participant 6, 2024). Analyzing participant 6's response suggests that political activism is indeed a driving force behind the participants' activism efforts and highlights how boycotts can become a form of political expression and protest against consumers' perceived injustices. However, apart from these social and ethical motivations for the consumers' participation in online activism and boycott movements, there were additionally some emotional responses as to what drives them to participate.

When asked if they ever felt strongly influenced by a company's actions values or campaign and if this ever evoked negative feelings in them participants from focus group 3, participant 11 in particular expressed outrage over Zara's advertisement and stated *"there are obviously some campaigns that become problematic in relation to let's say Zara, who have launched their new campaign in line with the war in Palestine and we know that Zara or their parent company supports the Israeli side. I think it's problematic that they're launching a campaign that or that shows the way Muslims are wrapped up when they die, so they share their campaign, the way they sort of imitate these rubble, and I think it's deeply problematic that we actually allow such campaigns to come out in our society today, and that one is not a bit critical of it"* (Participant 11, 2024). This negative emotion was also supported by participant 9 who further added *"Was it the way, where they were wrapped up in some sort of white sheets? Yes, I can also remember now that you mention it, that I was also really outraged over."* (Participant 9, 2024). Additionally this was echoed by participant 12, who personally felt affected by the advertisement and said *"personally feel affected by it because it's something I can relate to with my family since I am Muslim."* (Participant 12, 2024). This shows that participants collectively found it offensive regardless of their religious background due to shared personal values, indicating a shared ethical perspective.

Participants also indicated a strong emotional reaction to what they perceived as insensitive marketing and that consumers are highly critical of companies whose campaigns they perceive as offensive. Moreover, the emotional intensity of these reactions underscores that consumers are affected deeply when advertisements offend their cultural or moral

sensibilities. Similarly, participants from focus group 2 also voiced feelings of anger and frustration when asked about this topic *" It's definitely a lot of anger and a lot of frustration but at the same time you definitely want to do something about it otherwise like, yeah, a lot of frustration and anger, I would say."* (Participant 6, 2024). This statement further supports the idea that participants are emotionally affected by what they perceive as unethical actions by companies.

4.2.2 The Role of Anonymity in Facilitating Online Activism

The participants also reflected on the anonymity that social media platforms provide. This anonymity allows them to express their views and engage in online activism more freely without having to be concerned about facing any personal backlash. One participant emphasized the level of anonymity of social media and stated *"Everyone can be a superhero on the Internet"* (Participant 4, 2024). Additionally, participant 3 also highlighted the freedom they believe social media provides by saying *"It's like, you can be a whole another person on social media. And in real life, you're just like a normal person."* (Participant 3, 2024). These statements highlight the significant role of social media in facilitating online activism. In addition to the motivations and emotional responses previously mentioned for participating in online activism and boycott movements, the anonymity provided by social media allows individuals to advocate for social issues without fearing repercussions.

Furthermore, during focus group 2 and 3, the topic of anonymity was also discussed, in particular the need for anonymity on social media platforms, explaining *"Even for me like I have social media accounts. But I don't write them in my own name. If I do post about this like I post with fake names because I don't want it to be connected to my name itself. So I don't come into that situation like even if I do say something wrong, in my opinion it's not written with my own name."* (Participant 7, 2024). This statement highlights a concern amongst social media activists about privacy and personal security. By using a fake name on for example Instagram, consumers like participant 7 are able to express themselves freely without fearing any personal consequences.

The importance of anonymity on social media serves as a way of protecting one's identity and maintaining privacy in an increased digital world. The idea of having to be anonymous on social media when engaging in online activism and boycotts due to the personal backlash that can occur is supported by the reality of this concern. One participant explained *"I work in ICA and I know that they do a background check on your social medias and stuff depending on what stuff you follow."* They further elaborated *"I've heard of people getting fired for posting stuff and whenever it came to a situation they had like a background of him being a pro-Palestinian"* (Participant 7, 2024). Another participant shared their experience, stating *"I've heard that one of my friends told her friend, who is an influencer. She lost 3 collaborations or something because she posted something about Palestine"* (Participant 9, 2024). This further elucidates the importance of being able to participate in online activism whilst having the ability to stay anonymous and poses as a significant factor driving the use of fake names on social media platforms.

4.2.3 Difference Between Offline and Online Activism

The discussion in all three focus groups also revolved around the difference between offline versus online activism and the level of impact and reach that each approach has on implementing change. In focus group 2, the participants acknowledged the effectiveness of practicing both physical and online activism and they recognized that each approach has its own unique impact. Participant 6 added to this idea by stating *"I would say both. I mean both have their effect in their own way. I mean it's like kind of different audience"* (Participant 6, 2024). They further underscored that physical activism such as demonstrations or public boycotts can have a meaningful impact particularly in terms of creating a visible presence. However, they also recognized the global reach that online activism has and highlighted the online approach's ability to connect with a more broad audience, they stated *"I would say It's what participant 6 said too, but there's also, like a different thing, because like, if usually when you wanna do something globally, like try to be more active in the global way in general, it's usually the social media platforms are easier to reach"* (Participant 7, 2024).

Similarly, participants in focus group 1 also highlighted the effectiveness of both approaches and actually preferred a combination of both offline and online activism. Participant 3 in

particular emphasized that they felt a need for a combination and said *"So like, I feel like activism has to be like there has to be a combination. It has to be online as well. But then there has to be some sort of physical presence"* (Participant 3, 2024). In contrast to this, participant 4 expressed a preference towards offline and physical activism, they added, *"For me, protest and like, doing things physically is like better than people saying things on the Internet, they can help directly"* (Participant 4, 2024). This answer suggests a distrust in the effect that online activism has. However conversely, both focus group 2 and 3 discussed the effectiveness of online activism and the factors contributing to a valuable online activism movement.

In focus group 2, the participants highlighted that credible information and a large engagement base would contribute to making online activism valuable, they added *"An efficient one and a successful one. Has the information you need to understand what it is first and foremost"* (Participant 5, 2024) and *"The effectiveness is as you get as much as people and it has the information as much as possible of the thing"* (Participant 7, 2024). Likewise, participants in focus group 3 also stressed the importance of evidence-based information, credible sources, and the volume of engagement in order to make online activism work, adding *"Yes, I think the fact is that it should be evidence-based. And so that there should be sources on it important to me"* (Participant 9, 2024) and *"Volume but also where does it come from? Well, you can easily put something up, which you don't really have any basis for"* (Participant 11, 2024). These perspectives suggest that online activism can indeed be effective and create value if it includes credible information and engages a large audience, thus contradicting participant 3's and the other participants in focus group 1's distrust in the impact of online activism.

4.2.4 Differences in Consumer Practices and Engagement in Online Activism and Boycott Movements

When conducting the three focus groups and differentiating between consumers who participate in online activism but not boycotts and consumers who participate in both, several differences in consumer behavior can be derived from the participants' answers. All focus

groups exhibited a high level of self-awareness. However, they differ in their approaches to online activism and boycotting, as well as their beliefs in the effectiveness of individual actions. Participants in focus group 1, who primarily engaged in online activism do not associate their personal lives with corporate actions. Furthermore, they express high skepticism about the impact of their individual actions against large corporations which makes them prioritize convenience over ethical concerns. While they do desire a change, they are doubtful of their ability to influence and change corporate behavior they deem unethical. In contrast, participants from focus group 2 and 3, who actively boycott, demonstrate a strong belief in the direct impact of their individual actions against corporate behavior. These participants are highly self-aware and confident of the implications of their consumption choices and are motivated by a desire to avoid contributing to what they believe are unethical companies.

Moreover, unlike the participants in focus group 1, the boycotting participants prioritize personal integrity and while all groups value their online identity, there are distinct differences between their approaches. Participants from focus group 1 focus on expressing their perspectives and views freely without having to associate them with their personal lives and emphasize the comfort and freedom of being able to express themselves through the online anonymity that social media can provide. Subsequently, participants from focus group 2 and 3 highlighted the importance of maintaining personal integrity on social media. While they recognize the importance of online anonymity as a way of protecting identity and privacy, they also believe that personal integrity is important which is why they choose to use their own names on social media platforms. Thus, illustrating an interesting contradictory perspective, in the urge to be both anonymous as well as sharing the perspective to be transparent in their online identity when participating in online activism.

Lastly, the participants across all three focus groups engaged in a discussion comparing offline and online activism and explored the respective impacts and reach of each approach in facilitating social change. The consensus among the participants acknowledged the effectiveness of both methods, while also recognizing the unique contributions each approach can make. Participants in focus group 2 highlighted the significance of integrating both

offline and online activism and emphasized that offline activism enhances visibility, while online activism extends the reach to a broader and more global audience. Conversely, participants in focus group 1 expressed a preference for simultaneously employing both approaches to maximize their efficacy. One participant specifically articulated a preference for offline activism expressing a lack of trust in the effectiveness of online activism. This nuanced discussion underscores the flexible nature of activism, where the combination of offline and online approaches can be tailored to optimize the impact and engagement, thus catering to diverse perspectives and trust levels among activists.

4.3 Resource Constraints and Accessibility

4.3.1 The Impact of Free Time on Online Activism

Findings indicated that the level of engagement in online activism is influenced by various factors, including the amount of free time individuals have available. However, focus group 1 conveyed this issue more prominently compared to focus groups 2 and 3. A few participants from focus group 1 indicated that it was difficult and challenging to balance their online activism efforts with other responsibilities like work or daily commitments. As participant 2 stated "*I think how much time you have does play an influence because if you're busy and you're working all the time, then you don't have time to go on social media and perform, like, engage in activism all the time. When you have a lot more free time, of course, you will maybe dedicate more time to that.*" (Participant 2, 2024). Although the participants expressed a strong desire to participate in online activism, as previously mentioned, this statement indicates that those with limited free time face difficulties in dedicating themselves fully to activism. As emphasized by participant 4 "*I don't have time to be on social media as much as I had time before because I'm working two jobs.*" (Participant 4, 2024).

Furthermore, participants emphasized the importance of their circumstances in determining the level of engagement they portray in online activism efforts. While some acknowledged their awareness of the impact of time constraints in activism, others highlighted the significance of small actions and gestures in contributing to larger causes. As stated by

participant 9 "*If you don't actively participate, you don't have to. I know that you also have other things, that you have a job and everyday life and such, but just those little things.*" (Participant 9, 2024). The observed difference between the activist-focused group and the activist-boycotting group is that those who boycotted valued small gestures and they expressed a desire to contribute in whatever way they possibly could. Focus group 1, the activist-focused group, emphasized the significant impact of free time on their participation in online activism, noting that busy schedules oftentimes limited their ability to engage the amount they desired. On the contrary, focus group 2 and 3 did not perceive time as a major barrier to their activist practices. They viewed activism as everyday actions that anyone could perform regardless of their schedule. These participants expressed a more flexible and integrative approach to activism which indicates that these participants found ways to engage in online activism even with limited free time.

4.3.2 The Intersection of Financial Status and Activism

When asked about how their financial status impacts their ability to participate in online activism and boycotts, findings indicated different insights between the different focus groups. In focus group 1, participants emphasized the accessibility of social media for activism regardless of their financial constraints. As participant 2 stated "*I think social media is quite accessible to most people. I mean, not everybody I guess, but I think the nice thing about social media is that as long if you have a phone, social media is mostly free, so you're able to engage regardless of your financial situation.*" (Participant 2, 2024). This suggests that participants in focus group 1 recognized the power of social media in activism as well as perceived online platforms as an enabler of participation in online activism regardless of financial constraints. Overall, this highlights that financial limitations did not significantly affect participants in focus group 1's efforts in online activism.

Conversely, in focus group 2 and 3, their financial limitations played a more significant role in determining their activism and boycott decisions. Participants discussed the economic realities that influence their purchasing decisions. Several participants mentioned that lower income makes it more challenging to engage in boycotts extensively or as desired. Participant

8 expressed frustration as to how their financial situation impacted some of their boycotting efforts by having to prioritize affordability over ethical considerations, as they stated "*Since I don't get best paid sometimes I tend to buy more cheap stuff than the expensive ones because it's just so hard for us normal people. I mean us not getting getting paid good. It's like we just have to buy the cheap stuff.*" (Participant 8, 2024). Despite this difficulty, they still manage to boycott certain companies, even if it is not to the desired extent.

Participants from focus group 2 and 3 discussed how the better income one has, the easier it is to implement acts of boycotting. Which subsequently could lead to individuals with lower income, opting for cheaper products regardless of whether or not they align with their ethical values. As emphasized by participant 6 "*If you have a better income, you have more choices and then the whole comparison between ethical companies and other non ethical companies becomes kind of easier.*" (Participant 6, 2024). Furthermore, both participants 9 and 10 expressed frustration and anger towards their current financial limitations and how this limits their ability to decide what to boycott and limits their options when selecting more ethical alternatives (Participant 9, 2024 ; Participant 10, 2024).

Furthermore, the participants from focus group 2 and 3 delved into the discussion of privilege in the context of choosing more ethical alternatives and engaging in boycotts. As participant 6 stated "*And those in the Scandinavians countries give you that kind of privilege to be like first kind of isolated. Second to have these many choices and, like, privileges to choose to boycott.*" (Participant 6, 2024) Which was emphasized by participant 5 "*In Sweden, I'd say it's only to a certain extent. You don't have to be a two household income with with an enormous salary to boycott H&M, for example.*" (Participant 5, 2024) The participants acknowledged and were very aware of their privilege in comparison to individuals in countries with less income. They were aware that being able to select alternative products based on ethical considerations could be seen as a privilege that is not accessible to everyone. The recognition of privilege among participants from focus groups 2 and 3 likely drives them to engage in online activism and boycott movements with a sense of responsibility and awareness. This is reflected by participant 6's perspective when they stated "*Being able to choose another product or another service in itself could be like a privilege, you know, like a*

lot of people don't have it. Like a lot of countries that do totally believe in boycotting, but maybe they they can't afford like other products that more ethically in line with their values." Participant 6 then proceeded to add *"There is like Palestinian people that do not have access for anything other than Israeli products in this way like they are the most people that need to believe in the whole boycotting but they can't cause like there is no accessibility for them for other choices or like products."* (Participant 6, 2024) The participants' recognized the limitations of individuals with less fortunate circumstances, such as Palestinian people who may not have access to the same alternatives as they do. Understanding their own advantages in being able to make ethical choices and participate in boycotts may motivate them to use their platform and resources to advocate for social justice. This awareness of privilege may fuel their desire to take action and make a difference in addressing systemic inequalities and injustices.

4.3.3 Impact of Digitalization on Online Activism and Boycott Movements

Participants from focus group one engaged in detailed discussions about their involvement in online activism, particularly through social media platforms. Many of the participants shared their own experiences and strategies for utilizing social media as a tool to raise awareness and advocate for various causes. For instance, one participant emphasized the importance of social media activism and stated *"I think it's a great way to like stay connected and reach a lot of people by like engaging online"* (Participant 2, 2024). Furthermore, one participant also highlighted their own personal efforts to promote activism on social media, stating *"So, I think everybody needs to participate on social media, for example. Just to show the world, because everybody sees what's happening, but nobody does nothing."* (Participant 1, 2024). The participants highlighted the power of social media platforms as tools for raising awareness and mobilizing support for causes they viewed as important. This suggests that the participants view social media as a platform that facilitates their activist efforts in a more efficient way.

The focus groups provided diverse perspectives on the impact of digitalization on online activism and boycotting efforts. Participants from all focus groups acknowledged and

emphasized the significant role of social media platforms in encouraging activism. Participant 3 remarked "*Why online activism would be good is because the reach that it has like since we are so hyperconnected these days.*" (Participant 3, 2024). Additionally, all participants highlighted that online platforms gave the possibility of reaching a wider audience as well as sharing information faster than ever. Participant 7 stated *"Like connective and especially nowadays when we have like social media, it's very easy to. Spread the information so it goes around easily and you can reach way more people than you used to for 15 or 20 years ago."* (Participant 7, 2024) This was further emphasized by participant 10 "*Well, I think it's pretty effective because it spreads incredibly fast. Well, it's a bit like a wildfire. Where you can see messages spread.*" (Participant 10, 2024). As well as participant 1 "*It's the best access for people, social media nowadays you know, so you can reach a lot of people so they can see what's happening.*" (Participant 1, 2024). This indicates that the participants are well aware of the impact these platforms have on raising awareness, mobilizing support, and affecting change on a larger scale.

Furthermore, individuals across all focus groups reported obtaining their information mainly from social media platforms. As participant 4 said "*Without social media, we can't know anything. For me, 80% of everything that's happening in the world, I get the information from my phone from like Instagram from Facebook.*" (Participant 4, 2024) Participants across all focus groups demonstrated a heavy reliance on social media platforms for accessing information, with many perceiving the world as highly digitalized, however, participant 3 highlighted the disparities in digital access, suggesting that for some individuals, particularly those in regions with limited connectivity or resources, traditional offline methods like protests may remain the primary means of engaging in activism. They stated "*Yeah, I have a slightly different opinion on that. It's probably because where I where I am from because we have like, 1.3 billion people. And I would say like 700 million people don't even have a phone. They can't afford a phone. So for them to if they don't have a phone, they don't have social media. If they have to, like raise their voice against something for them. It's like they actually have to go to the state and protest.*" (Participant 3, 2024).

All participants acknowledged having access to social media platforms has facilitated online activism, especially by influencing participation, information sharing, and collective action. An example of this could be when participant 12 said "*I actually didn't know there were so many demonstrations, because I'm in Hobro. Not much happens, but by using social media, I actually see that Copenhagen is full.*" (Participant 12, 2024) This indicates that individual's activism efforts, either online or offline, as well as their information sources, stem from social media platforms. Participants who boycott also mentioned how easy it is to research and identify which companies were unethical and needed to be held accountable, either through online activism or boycotting. Participant 6 remarked "*It does require like a deep research or like real dirt digging to like see how these associations and these companies are like connected to this kind of like countries or actions in general and the whole accessibility thing is also like a major factor in the whole thing.*" (Participant 6, 2024). This indicates that digitalization both facilitates online activism and enables consumers to easily access information.

Furthermore, participant 2 discussed the tremendous impact of social media on online activism efforts as they gave an example "*Black Lives Matter. It was also something that started out on social media, which also really became a big thing, because you could share it as quickly as you could. It became a global phenomenon, so I definitely think it is. It is really. Makes a big difference. to share things on media.*" (Participant 2, 2024). Overall, the findings indicate the important role of digitalization in shaping online activism and simplifying the process of engaging in online activism and boycott movements.

4.3.4 Exploring Alternative Consumption Choices in Boycotting Efforts

When analyzing the data from focus group 2 and 3 regarding alternative products, there were notable differences between the two groups' perspectives and approaches. Focus group 2 participants emphasized the importance of having more alternatives within the same price range when boycotting, as participant 5 highlighted "*There are other boutiques with the same price range.*" (Participant 5, 2024) They also emphasized the significance of seeking more ethical alternatives when attempting boycotting efforts. Participant 6 expressed intentionally

altering their purchasing behaviour towards more ethically sourced products as they stated *"If they're like discriminating or like maybe, badly using, I would definitely like search for a more ethical choice."* (Participant 6, 2024). This suggests the willingness of the participants' to actively seek alternatives when attempting to boycott.

Conversely, focus 3 participants took a more proactive approach in altering their consumption habits to align with their ethical values. They discussed making intentional choices to support products from countries that are known to align with their ethical values, as well as prioritizing locally sourced and organic food. Participant 11 highlighted this proactive approach by stating *"I've chosen to change my everyday life in terms of what I buy. I generally only buy things from countries that I know support a good cause, for example, I buy from Spain. I also buy a lot locally, very organically."* (Participant 11, 2024) Additionally, their tendency to purchase more from thrift stores highlights their commitment to sustainability and conscious consumption, as participant 10 highlighted *"It's nice and easy to boycott because there are 7 thrift stores right in front of my apartment."* (Participant 10, 2024). The findings indicate that participants exhibit a proactive stance toward aligning their consumption habits with their ethical values.

There were some similarities within the data gathered from both groups, such as the difficulty of substituting certain products, indicating shared challenges. This suggests a nuanced understanding between both groups regarding the complexities of ethical consumption and seeking alternatives to their boycotting efforts. As participant 9 stated *"There are also many of the big banks in Denmark, like Danish bank and Nordea and such. I would like to move your bank to a bank that doesn't support them, but it's also difficult to find like a bank that is independent of it."* (Participant 9, 2024). However, findings indicated that focus group 2 addressed the issue from a financial standpoint. They noted that while some products could easily be substituted with their budget range, others posed bigger challenges. They also acknowledged the limited alternatives available to individuals from other parts of the world, which restricts their ability to boycott. This was highlighted by participant 5 stating *"Bangladesh, let's say in poverty. And I don't know where people buy their clothes there, but let's say that's the only choice you have."* (Participant 5, 2024).

Conversely, participants in focus group 3 approached the topic of alternatives from an ethical standpoint. Participant 9 highlighted the availability of alternatives as they stated *"We have access. We have so much access to things."* (Participant 9, 2024) Participant 12 also acknowledged potential differences from the original boycotted products, stating *"So I buy something else. Blue Keld, I think it's Danish at least, some Harbo sodas which are as Danish as I've read a little about that it shouldn't support Israel. And then I have to adapt to that routine. Even though Coca-Cola normally tastes better, but I'll manage. So yeah, I'm trying to do as well as I can anyway."* (Participant 12, 2024). This indicates that despite these challenges, participants' are committed to navigating these challenges in order to purchase more ethical alternatives. This was further emphasized by participant 11 *"But it's also about finding alternatives, you could say, right? I mean, you can easily adapt if you feel strongly enough about it."* (Participant 11, 2024). Moreover, participants' highlighted the availability of alternatives and their commitment to prioritize ethical considerations in their purchasing decisions.

4.4 External factors Influencing Online Activism and Boycotting

4.4.1 The Influence of Celebrities on Online Activism and Boycott Movements

The data findings regarding the influence of celebrities on online activism and boycott movements revealed that participants from all focus groups acknowledged the significant influence that celebrities wield. Participant 6 highlighted that individuals are more inclined to follow when a celebrity takes action, regardless of the significance of the action itself, as they stated *"I would say it's huge. like huge effect since like a lot of people do concern them as role models and they might listen to them to do the dumbest shit. So maybe when they are like raising concerns to a serious matter, people really start like thinking this person that I really like admire maybe talking about something that's worth searching about, thinking about, like taking a stand for."* (Participant 6, 2024) Findings indicated that when well-known celebrities express their opinions on social platforms, their followers are most likely to pay attention and may align themselves with the celebrity's stance. Furthermore, participants also highlighted the importance of celebrity endorsement in gathering support for activist campaigns, which

was emphasized by participant 2 "*I think if you have like a famous person that is part of your campaign or like your activism campaign or whatever, I think that also does affect a lot because people follow celebrities, especially on social media like they're very much like whatever you say, I'm gonna follow. And if you have a big name that's supporting your like movement, I think that does influence people a lot more than it was.*" (Participant 2, 2024) Findings suggests that the endorsement of a celebrity could significantly strengthen the visibility and credibility of a movement. This could act as a factor driving many consumers' to participate in online activism and boycott movements, simply because of the influence of celebrities.

Participants also acknowledged that celebrities can serve as powerful role models whose endorsements can sway public opinion and prompt individuals to take action. Participant 7 provided an example of when Jason Statham publicly supported causes such as Palestine, leading to increased awareness and engagement among his fan bases. As a result, this actually increased his admiration for Jason Statham. Conversely, participant 7 gave a contrasting example involving Ben Shapiro and his current stand on the Palestine-Israel war as they perceived his celebrity influence is misguided and misused. They stated "*I doubt most of the credibility of what he said before too, because it sounds it goes opposite against the stuff that I used to listen to him about. And now when I heard the other stuff, it makes like, OK, maybe he's not worth listening to.*" (Participant 7, 2024) This indicates that on occasions when celebrities publicly express views that contradict the participants' values, it prompts them to question the credibility of the celebrity and may lead to a shift towards disliking them.

Furthermore, findings suggest that celebrities yield substantial influence on activism and boycott movements by utilizing their social media platforms to advocate for social causes and push for positive change. As participant 11 remarked "*I think they should participate more. I think that. Well, you have such a great influence, and I think many of them don't realize how much influence they have on people.*" (Participant 11, 2024) This indicates that celebrities wield considerable influence over public discussions and should harness their power to address urgent social issues.

4.4.2 Instagram's Role in Shaping Online Activism and Boycott Movements

The data collected regarding Instagram's role in online activism and boycotting movements yielded interesting insights. All participants acknowledged the impact and influence of Instagram and regarded it as a powerful platform to raise awareness about social issues. Additionally, they highlighted the platform's capacity to amplify voices and foster global collective actions. The participants also emphasized the ability to advocate to a bigger audience on Instagram, as well as acquire a substantial amount of information. Furthermore, participant 1 highlighted that Instagram reveals the truth as it unfolds. Participant 10 also highlighted the effectiveness of Instagram as they mentioned "*I think it's extremely effective at motivating people, also because it becomes, part of, that you can brand yourself.*" (Participant 10, 2024) These findings emphasize Instagram's role in fostering online activism by allowing individuals to brand themselves as advocates for social causes.

All participants highlighted the impact of Instagram on online activism. Participant 10 emphasized "*When there comes like a conflict and people, and online activists begin, well, then there are a whole lot of people who start following a whole lot more profiles to get into it and start following each other and well it sets something in motion.*" (Participant 10, 2024) Subsequently, participant 12 added "*But on Instagram, I find it easy to select and deselect my friends, who supports. Yes, Israel or Palestine? Or who is on the right side and the wrong side, and I just think that's clearly visible.*" (Participant 12, 2024) This illustrates that participants perceived Instagram as an effective platform for publicly expressing their stance on social issues and following like-minded individuals whose values align with their own.

Moreover, participants viewed Instagram as a platform where individuals can be more open and publicly express their feelings. Participant 3 stated "*So I guess like social media would give you that opportunity where you can display to a very large number of people like what is actually happening and how you feel. And then in a way people will get affected by that as well.*" (Participant 3, 2024) Participant 4 proceeded to explain how it's much easier to engage in acts of activism online than offline, highlighting that expressing opinions on a social platform like Instagram is more convenient. As they explained "*Because when you're doing it online like. It's a big difference because then you are like more open if you compare it to do it*

in real life. Because then when you're doing it online, you're doing it for your computer or for your phone, they can't see you, they can't touch you, they can't look at you, they can't, like physically like, aggressively, hit you." (Participant 4, 2024) Conversely, Participant 1 noted that Instagram could have the opposite effect as well. They highlighted the possibility of encountering social movements on Instagram that are completely opposite to what you are advocating for, indicating that the platform caters to both sides of any social issue (Participant 1, 2024).

Another intriguing aspect a few participants discussed was Instagram's algorithm and it's impact on the visibility of activist content. Participant 7 highlighted "*They have the Social media algorithms. And they either block information or like, let some people see it or some stuff they even remove because it's not according to them not allowed to talk about. It also shows how they show, like how they can use the technology to their advantage or disadvantage depending on what they do, because as I said the social media algorithm basically pinpoints who's acceptable to like information*" (Participant 7, 2024) This shows awareness on Instagram's algorithm and the impact it has on their activism efforts, which was emphasized by participant 5 "*I believe there is an issue with how the algorithm works. As participant 7 said, they choose to promote a specific kind of content and minimise the other.*" (Participant 5, 2024) Participant 7 further added "*I think they're subjective and more, I would say because they choose what kind of information they want to get through and not through. So they basically allow some of the information to get through.*" (Participant 7, 2024) These statements reveal participants' concerns about algorithmic biases and how it may shape the narrative by either amplifying or suppressing certain perspectives within activist movements.

4.4.3 The Influence of Social Networks on Online Activism and Boycotts

Analyzing the data gathered from the focus groups provided valuable insights into the role that an individual's social network plays in facilitating online activism and boycotting movements. Participants from all focus groups expressed how they engage in discussions with friends online, share information ,and join discussions about social issues.

Participants from all focus groups highlighted the significance of social networks in engaging with activism. Participant 2 stated "*Yeah. So I think it depends like of course with friends I have that are like on other parts of the world. But like for example, this is a while ago, but like during the Black Lives Matter movement then I was communicating to a lot of my friends in America about it through social media*" (Participant 2, 2024). Similarly, participant 4 mentioned joining an activist group based on a recommendation from someone on their social network (Participant 4, 20249: These examples demonstrate the role of social networks in motivating and influencing consumers to engage in activism. Moreover, participant 3 mentioned that they engage in discussions about social issues with their friends online and collectively decide whether they want to explore alternative options (Participant 3, 2024). This highlights how the participants' view their social networks as sources of motivation and validation for their activism efforts.

Moreover, participants from all focus groups viewed their social networks as invaluable resources for obtaining in-depth information and conducting thorough research on social issues. As participant 11 remarked "*I definitely think people are good at influencing each other in the positive end. You know, you keep updating each other on where you get the information from, or have you seen this also and actually have some generally good discussions about what's going on actually maybe also motivates better to continue.*" (Participant 11, 2024) Additionally, participant 5 highlighted that "*real change comes from knowledge*" and that they get updated fairly quickly because of their social network sharing information with each other (Participant 5, 2024). This indicates that the fundamental influence of social networks on online activism and boycott movements lies in individuals exchanging information with one another online.

In focus groups 2 and 3, particularly concerning boycotting movements, participants expressed a strong reliance on their social networks and the individuals or pages they follow on social media. As highlighted by participant 11 "*We are influenced. Well, all of us you can say that if I hadn't followed all sorts of, let's say pro-Palestinian pages, I wouldn't have known from the start that it was McDonald's that should be boycotted or Starbucks or all sorts of others because that's not what I see in my, well, what should I say mainstream media? So yes, my circle of friends is where I choose to get my news. Definitely affects me.*"

(Participant 11, 2024) Participants acknowledged the significant influence exerted by their social networks, noting that if someone within their social network advocated for a boycott, they would likely follow. As participant 6 stated "*There is like numerous companies that I do boycott and I do like do first a lot of research and like there's a small network that I'm involved in like where we share like new links for new companies that are involved.*" (Participant 6, 2024) This emphasizes the impact of social networks on encouraging online activism and boycotting movements.

Moreover, participants expressed a sense of trust and reliability in the information shared within their social networks. Participant 5 mentioned "*Let's say my brother boycotts Coca-Cola because they support Israel in some kind of way. And he shares that information with me. Of course, it's going to resonate with me and also change my my views on it. So it's not because of the reason that my brother told me it, but more more that he had a piece of information I didn't.*" (Participant 5, 2024) This shows that participant 5 does not base his decision to boycott solely on the recommendations of others, however, he trusts his social network to provide him with additional information, thus influencing his choices. This underscores the perceived reliability of their social networks, not only for obtaining information but also for guiding their decisions on what to boycott. This was further emphasized by participant 9 as they remarked "*I've also, well, done quite a bit of that, follow some profiles on Instagram that, like get updated faster than me, and then they write like don't do this and boycott this and support this. And then I'm influenced by that and then I do it.*" (Participant 9, 2024)

Another noteworthy insight was the influence of social networks on the types of social movements participants engaged in. Participant 11 explained "*Well, you're influenced by your circle of friends. Well, you are definitely because now it's very much about Palestine-Israel, but is there particularly much focus on what's going on in Sudan for example? It's also well, it's horrible too, but why don't we have more focus on this here? It's because I'm not in that circle of friends, so well you could say, we will always influence each other in terms of who we associate with.*" (Participant 11, 2024) Participant 10 also added "*By going to the University of Copenhagen, you're also in another way mobilized. More into it than you might*

otherwise be if you weren't there or were somewhere else, or where there wasn't the same support for the cause.” (Participant 10, 2024) This highlights the role of social networks in shaping individuals' activism and emphasizes the interconnectedness between social circles and participation in social causes. These statements highlight the role of social networks in shaping consumer activism and emphasize the interconnectedness between social circles and participation in social causes. Overall, these findings indicate that online activists tend to associate predominantly with other online activists, while boycotters similarly gravitate towards those who share their stance on boycotting. This describes how interactions with like-minded consumers on social media platforms inspire consumers to continue their advocacy work, whether it is online activism or boycotting movements. Ultimately, findings suggest that consumers rely heavily on their social networks as a motivational factor, simplifying their advocacy for social change through online activism and boycott movements.

4.5 Development of the Conceptual Frameworks

In the literature review, the initial conceptual framework was based on a summary of previous research on this topic. According to the authors' findings, several new variables were added to both conceptual frameworks (See Figures 5 & 6) that influence and drive consumers' engagement in online activism and boycotts. For both conceptual frameworks, the authors acknowledged that personal values, socioeconomic status, and social networks played significant roles as independent variables impacting the level of engagement in online activism. However, after conducting focus groups and analyzing the data, we expanded the independent variables for both frameworks to include additional factors. These factors include ethical motivations, alignment with social justice issues, economic resources, technological access, influence of peers and acquaintances, supportive communities, perception of unethical corporate practices, and emotional triggers.

These new factors offer a comprehensive understanding of the diverse factors shaping and influencing consumers' engagement in online activism and boycotts. At the core of this engagement are ethical motivations, reflecting individuals' personal moral principles that drive their involvement. These personal values often trigger emotional responses such as

empathy, disappointment and anger. Aligned with these ethical motivations is a dedication to addressing societal inequalities, showing a commitment to implement social change. However, the realization of these intentions often intersects with individuals' economic resources, where financial means influence their level of participation.

Additionally, technological access plays a crucial role, as the availability of digital tools determines the extent to which individuals can engage in online activism. Social networks further amplify these dynamics, with the influence of peers and acquaintances impacting decision-making processes. Within these networks, supportive communities emerge as essential sources of encouragement and resources for activists. Moreover, perceptions of unethical corporate practices act as catalysts for activism, with individuals driven by their belief in companies' immoral actions to advocate for change.

We determined that these variables significantly impact the dependent variable, as they are the primary drivers behind consumers' engagement in online activism. For both conceptual frameworks, the variables identified play crucial roles in elucidating the factors influencing consumers' engagement in online activism and boycotts.

The main distinction emerges when examining why activists from focus group 1 refrained from initiating boycotts, while activists from focus groups 2 and 3 have opted to participate in boycotts. In the developed conceptual framework for activists who are not boycotting (See Figure 5), we incorporated 'individual commitment' and 'perceived impact on change' as variables influencing the dependent variable, as they directly affect the level of engagement in online activism. Additionally, following the analysis of the study's findings, 'reasons for not boycotting' has been included as a variable, encompassing 'Convenience or Habit', 'No Perceived Personal Impact', and 'No Perceived Corporate Change'. These were the reasons for not boycotting as reported by our participants.
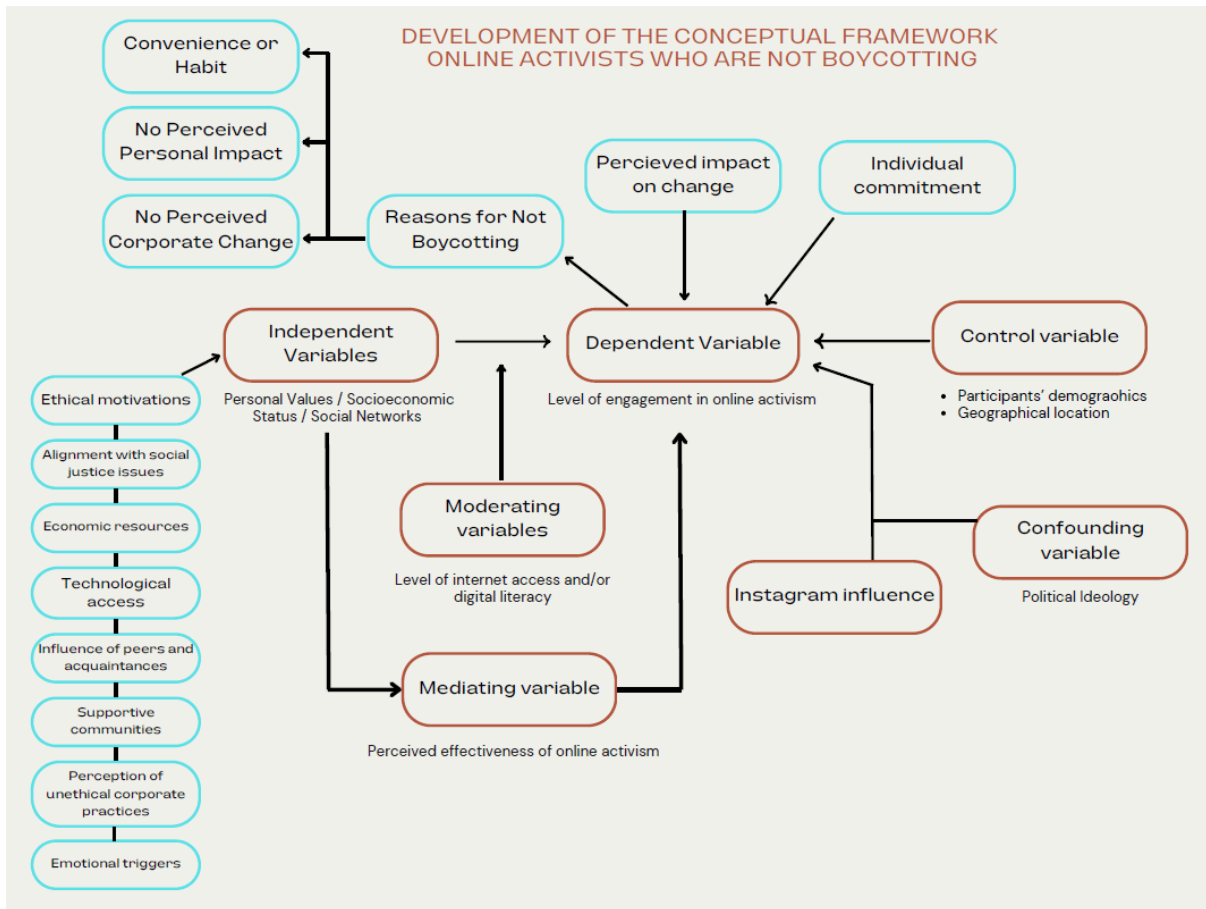
Figure 5: Development of the Conceptual Framework, Online Activists Who Are Not Boycotting

Regarding the developed conceptual framework of activists who are boycotting (See Figure 6), a notable addition is the variable 'Participation in boycott movements'. This variable includes various factors influencing consumers' decisions to engage in boycott movements. Among these factors are the 'Perceived Impact on Change', reflecting consumers' beliefs about the effectiveness of their actions in driving meaningful outcomes. Additionally, 'Individual Commitment' emerges as a key driver, highlighting the strength of consumers' dedication to making a difference through their activism. Furthermore, the 'Perceived Personal Impact' and 'Perceived Impact on Corporate Change' are integral aspects, explaining how consumers perceive the consequences of their actions on both personal and corporate levels. These factors were identified as significant drivers influencing participants' engagement in both online activism and boycotting.
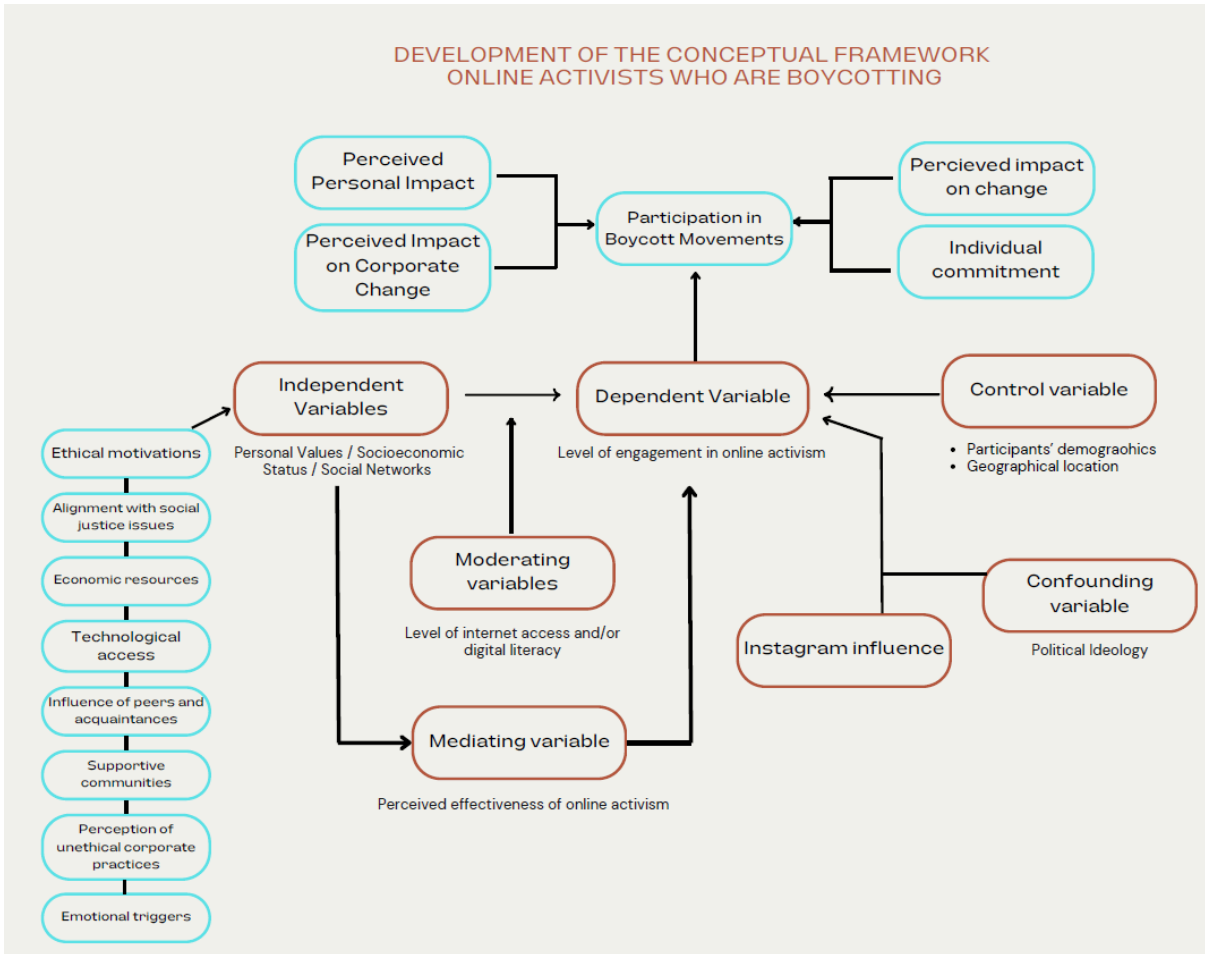
Figure 6: Development of the Conceptual Framework, Online Activists Who Are Boycotting

This integrated conceptual framework includes both online activists who are boycotting and those who are not. It illustrates the differences in their reasoning for boycotting versus not boycotting. Some variables, such as the 'Independent Variable', 'Individual Commitment', and 'Perceived Impact on Change' remain the same. We have estimated that the variables presented in Figure 7 influence consumers to either participate in boycott movements or refrain, as those are both possible outcomes of online activism.
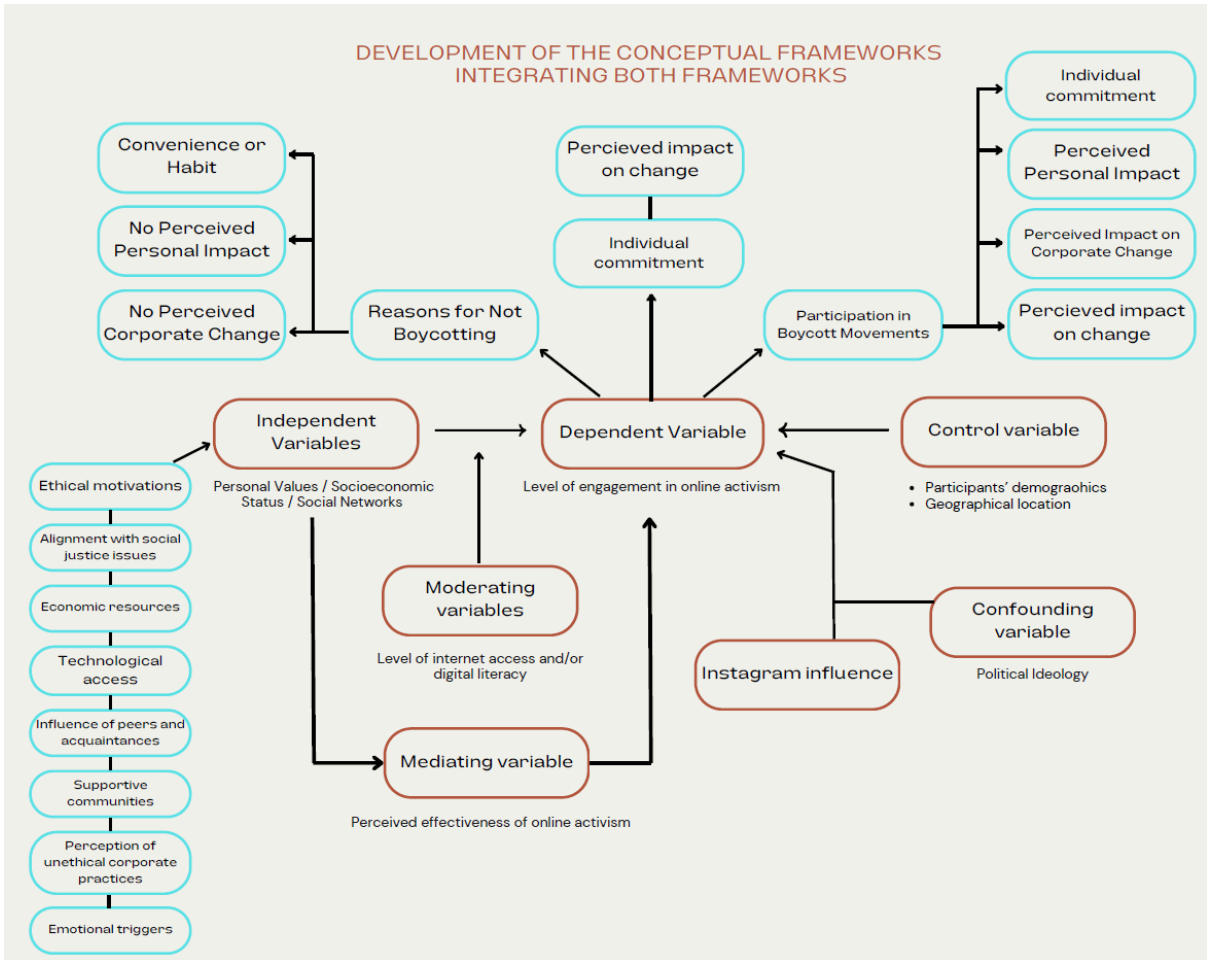
Figure 7: Integration of the Two Developed Conceptual Frameworks

5. Discussion

When examining what factors drove consumers to participate and engage in online activism and boycotts, we have observed that these factors encompass a complex interplay of personal values, socioeconomic status, and social networks. Bourdieu's theory of capital offers a strong framework for understanding the influence of economic, social, and cultural resources on individuals' engagement in online activism (Chen, Z. 2020). Findings aligned with Bourdieu's theory, as participants highlighted the role of various forms of capital in shaping and influencing their efforts in online activism and boycotts. As highlighted by participant 11 when they expressed their strong belief in individual actions making a difference, which emphasizes the concept of agency and empowerment within Bourdieu's framework.

Additionally, the analysis revealed that economic resources and technological access played a significant role in online activism and boycott participation. Participants with greater financial means noted how access to smartphones and the internet empowered their engagement in social media activism and boycott movements. As highlighted by participant 10 which delved into their experiences with political activism and how they perceived their efforts of engaging in boycott movements serve as a form of protest against perceived unethical corporate practices. However, it's important to note that while economic resources and technology either facilitated or hindered participation, personal values were the primary motivator for engagement, with participants driven by their ethical motivations rather than their economic circumstances.

When addressing economic constraints in the context of boycotting, participants in both focus group 2 and 3 exhibited a strong commitment to engaging in boycott movements, however, their approaches to seeking alternative products during boycotts differed. Participants in focus group 2 were more concerned with the affordability of alternative products, likely influenced by their immigrant backgrounds originating from countries with lower incomes than Sweden and Denmark. In contrast, participants in focus group 3, predominantly Danish, prioritized seeking out ethical products over products within their price range. In this case, the participants' economic background shaped their approach to boycotting, with affordability

playing a crucial role in their decision-making process. This observation aligns with Bourdieu's capital theory, where economic capital influences individuals' choices and behaviors, as well as their approach to participating in certain movements (Chen, Z. 2020).

Expanding upon Bourdieu's capitals, the social capital theory provides insights into how social connections and trust within networks facilitate cooperation and mobilization for advocacy efforts (Lewis et al., 2014 ; Chen, 2020) Findings from the analysis underscore the significance of social networks in driving participation in online activism. Social capital theory played a vital role in influencing and driving engagement in online activism and boycotts, as participants emphasized the importance of their social network and connections in increasing engagement and mobilizing support for social causes. Participant 8 highlighted the power that collective actions hold by stating *"If we boycott the companies and so many more people are starting to do it, the companies realize that they did something wrong. And maybe, just maybe, they will get better."*

A critical perspective on this theory suggests that while participants did indeed immerse themselves in social networks that fueled their motivation for online activism and boycotts, this association may not necessarily be the primary driving force behind their participation. Rather, participants actively chose to engage with like-minded individuals in these networks as a result of their individual decision to advocate for social change. Their initiation to participate in online activism and boycott movements was not solely due to their social network. However, their social network was more of an influencer than a primary motivator. As previously discussed in the analysis, online activists' networks involved other activists while boycotters' networks involved other boycotters. While findings indicated that their social networks may have influenced their involvement in certain activist and boycott movements, it is also apparent that they would have engaged regardless of these networks. Thus, while the role of social networks adds to the theory, it does not fully account for participants' engagement.

Another factor that emerged as a key factor that influences consumer engagement was cultural capital. Cultural capital involves digital literacy, navigating platform algorithms as well as skills in online spaces (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Rosenfeld & Thomas,

2012), which was emphasized by the participants in influencing their efforts of online activism. Participant 6 emphasized the importance of digital literacy, stating *"It's very easy to spread information so it goes around easily and you can reach way more people than you used to 15 or 20 years ago."* Moreover, findings indicated that participants with higher levels of cultural capital demonstrated a greater potential for online activism by creating impactful content and engaging with online communities to advocate for social change. Additionally, findings revealed that boycotters specifically are more aware of platform algorithms than non-boycotters, as participant 7 highlighted the significant role of Instagram algorithms in online activism, noting that they can either block information or minimize certain content.

Our data findings showed that despite lower economic capital, the participants were actively engaged in online activism and driven largely by strong social networks and cultural capital. This suggests a partial contradiction to Bourdieu's emphasis on economic capital but supports the importance of social and cultural capitals. Thus, our findings develop the traditional understanding of online activism's reliance on economic capital as a driver, contrary to previous theories that emphasize economic capital (Chen, Z. 2020), our study highlights that cultural and social capitals are more significant. Furthermore, findings indicated that consumers with strong social networks reported feeling a sense of obligation to participate in online activism, which is driven by peer influence and collective identity (Schradie, J. 2018). Similarly, participant 7 emphasized how sharing information with their social network, as well as their awareness of social issues, informed their decision-making process in supporting movements and boycotting companies.

Moreover, findings revealed the pivotal role of online platforms in connecting, collaborating, and advocating for social change on a global scale. The participants highlighted that these online platforms empower activists to raise awareness and impact change. This aligns with Social Movement Theory as it highlights the transformative impact of social media in facilitating interactions that foster knowledge, skills, and motivation (Lewis, Gray and Meierhenrich, 2014). By using social media as a tool, individuals mobilize towards political, social, and ideological change, aligning closely with the principles of Social Movement Theory.

However, the theory oversimplifies the complexities of online activism by focusing mainly on collective mobilization. Findings indicated that individual empowerment and personal beliefs also act as drivers that influence engagement in online activism and boycott movements, thus, suggesting a more nuanced interplay between individual and collective factors. Moreover, findings indicated that online activism appears to be more episodic and driven by viral social media trends rather than continuous resource buildup. For example, activists quickly mobilize around a viral issue but often do not sustain engagement or lack organizational depth, pointing to a deviation from traditional movement dynamics. The episodic nature of online activism was evident in our findings, as the conversation primarily revolved around the Israel-Palestine conflict. Given the ongoing conflict in those countries, this issue has gained significant attention in the media as well as among online activists and boycotters. This episodic nature of digital activism highlights a gap in social movement theory when applied to digital contexts, where transient, rapid-response actions predominate over long-term strategic planning.

The diffusion of responsibility theory assumes that reduced personal responsibility in large groups might hinder individual engagement in online activism and boycotts, thus decreasing the effectiveness of activism efforts (Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich, 2014). While this theory sheds light on the potential challenges in online activism, findings indicate a more nuanced perspective. Findings revealed that some participants did express feelings of powerlessness and skepticism about the impact of their actions which aligns with the theory. However, the theory overlooks the proactive approaches and strong convictions demonstrated in the focus groups. This indicates that personal responsibility is not generally reduced in online activism, in contrast, it is increased. The participants emphasized the importance of strategic communication and collective mobilization, which contradicts the theory's implication of indifference in large groups. Therefore, while diffusion of responsibility theory offers valuable insights, this study's findings suggest that individual agency and collective actions play a more complex role in driving online activism and boycott participation.

Moreover, when examining boycotts through the lens of social dilemma theory, our findings challenged certain aspects of this theory. While social dilemma theory suggests that

individuals may experience reduced personal responsibility in large groups (Sen, Gürhan-Canli, & Morwitz, 2001), our participants expressed individual motivations and personal values that influenced their engagement in boycotts. These motivations included personal values, being influenced by their surroundings, and unethical conduct by companies. While some participants expressed skepticism about their ability to influence large corporate companies, they still felt a heightened sense of responsibility due to the collective action within their online social networks. A few remarks from participants that highlighted the importance of individual action and responsibility was that participants' said remarks such as *"It is about making a change, but it's also about being able to sleep good at night"* and *"This is the bare minimum that I can do"*. This indicates that despite being influenced by their surroundings, participants felt their high sense of responsibility remained intact.

Similarly, social identity theory sheds light on how individuals' self-identities influence their engagement in activism and boycotts, emphasizing the alignment between brands and consumers' values (He, Li, & Harris, 2012). Our findings support this notion to a certain extent, revealing that participants were strongly influenced by their self-identities, which impacted their motivation to engage in online activism and boycotts. Additionally, while social identity theory proposes that individuals seek validation within online communities, participants emphasized that their involvement in activism was driven by personal values rather than a need for validation. In fact, findings indicated that some of the participants actually did not care about seeking validation and acknowledged that their online activism might irritate some of their followers. However, despite the fact they still remained committed to their cause and continued posting and prioritized their advocacy over the approval of others. While communities provided support and shared information, participants were motivated to participate based on their personal values and beliefs.

Moreover, while social identity theory highlights the impact of group dynamics on consumer behavior (He, Li, & Harris, 2012), our participants found empowerment and solidarity through individual advocacy efforts within online groups. This suggests that individual motivations play a significant role in driving activism and boycott participation. Thus, while

social identity theory offers valuable insights, our study underscores the importance of recognizing the interplay between personal values, collective identity, and online activism.

6. Conclusion

Throughout this research, we investigate the question *'How do personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status influence consumers to engage in online activism and boycotts?'*. Several factors emerged as significant influencers on consumers' decisions to engage in online activism and boycotts.

Firstly, personal values emerge as foundational drivers and act as internal moral compasses that guide consumers' behaviors and purchasing decisions. Personal values often resonate with broader ethical considerations and social justice issues, such as human rights violations, environmental issues, and political values. Individuals with strong ethical beliefs and moral convictions are more likely to participate in online activism and boycott movements, as they feel a sense of duty to act against perceived injustices. Personal political ideologies also play a significant role in online activism and boycott movements as those with progressive views may be more inclined to support environmental causes or social justice movements. Moreover, online activism often serves as a means for individuals to express their identities and align their actions with their personal values, providing a platform to publicly reveal what they stand for.

Secondly, social networks are crucial in shaping behaviors through peer influence. Social networks both online and offline play a crucial role in the mobilization and effectiveness of online activism and boycotts and acted as an influencer for the participants. Social networks not only facilitate the rapid dissemination of information, raising awareness and promoting participation but also create communities of support and shared purpose. Being part of a community or group that shares similar values and goals enhances an individual's motivation to engage in collective actions such as boycotts, with online platforms enabling the formation and development of these communities. Furthermore, social media platforms such as Instagram have changed the way people connect and mobilize which has enabled more rapid and widespread engagement across geographical boundaries.

Socioeconomic status significantly impacts access to resources, including technology and the internet, which are essential for participating in online activism. Access to digital and economic resources can either facilitate or hinder participation. Consumers who have better access to these resources are often increasingly able to navigate and utilize online platforms more effectively in online activism and boycott movements. Financial stability offers individuals the time and resources to engage in such activities. Furthermore, individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds may feel more empowered to participate in online activism and boycotts, believing their economic influence can drive change. While those with lower socioeconomic status might see online activism and boycotts as a means to protest against inequalities and corporate practices that negatively affect them.

Personal values and social networks often intersect in regards to individuals with shared values forming networks for collective action and the aim to implement change. This amplifies the impact of online activism and boycotts. Additionally, individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds might use their social networks to increase their activism and join boycott movements. Social platforms, specifically Instagram, play a significant role in shaping consumers' awareness of social issues as well as their motivations to engage in online activism and boycotts.

Other factors that also influence consumers to engage in online activism and boycotts include factors such as perceived personal impact, perceived impact on corporate change, and individual commitment. Moreover, emotional triggers such as empathy, disappointment, and anger are critical in motivating consumers to engage in online activism and boycott. In summary, understanding the drivers that influence online activism and boycotts requires a multidimensional approach that considers the interplay between personal values, social networks, and socioeconomic status. Comprehending these factors provides insights into how and why individuals mobilize for collective actions in the digital age. This research contributes to the broader discourse on online activism by highlighting the complexities and different nuances of these interactions. This understanding is critical for both academics who aim to leverage social media for social change and corporations who seek to engage responsibly with their consumers.

6.1 Recommendations

Our study reveals critical insights into the dynamic world of online activism, boycotts, and the role of social media in changing and shaping corporate practices. Firstly, based on our findings it is recommended that companies should monitor social media trends closely and that they need to stay updated on the fast-paced environment of social media, in order to quickly identify and respond to emerging issues before they evolve into a crisis. This is highly important as our analysis shows that viral trends can significantly influence public perceptions of corporations. However, another perspective and suggestion could involve corporations choosing not to respond to political movements altogether. Findings suggested that an upsetting factor for the participants was the fact that certain companies engaged in a political issue, thus remaining unbiased and silent could eliminate consumer backlash.

Furthermore, it is important for companies to engage proactively with online activists and boycotters. Thus, rather than waiting for a ' crisis' to emerge, they should actively engage with them to build some sort of trust and goodwill which will then foster a positive brand image amongst consumers. In other words, companies should ensure that their engagement with consumers is genuine and avoid capitalizing on social movements, as this could potentially create a negative brand image and lead to backlash from consumers who view such actions as insincere or exploitative. Additionally, it is recommended to develop a rapid response strategy, given the episodic nature of online activism that our findings suggest. Companies should create agile and flexible response strategies that will enable them to address issues quickly as they arise. This could involve having a crisis management team equipped with decision-making authority.

This study also underscores the importance of being transparent and authentic in corporate communications. Therefore, companies should strive for transparency regarding their practices as it could mitigate the risk of facing negative activism and ultimately increase consumer trust. While transparency can enhance trust and credibility, some argue that it may also expose vulnerabilities and invite criticism. However, in an era where consumers demand accountability and ethical conduct from corporations, transparency is increasingly seen as

essential for maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders. Finally, it is crucial to align business practices and ethical standards, especially in the digital age where consumers are increasingly determined to hold companies accountable for their practices. By implementing sustainable and socially responsible practices, companies can potentially prevent boycotts and negative activism against them.

6.2 Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into online activism and boycotts, it also highlights several areas for future research. Future research and studies should aim to include a more geographically and demographically diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings. This includes participants with various cultural backgrounds, different socio-economic statuses, and ages as this could provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the global nature of online activism and boycotts.

Moreover, as technology evolves, so does online activism. Therefore, future research should explore new technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning and how this could potentially impact online activism, and also what this means for corporations and their response strategies. Lastly, future research could also focus on examining the role of non-consumer stakeholders including regulators, NGOs, and media, and how their influence could shape the outcomes of online activism. This could provide a more nuanced view of the ecosystem of stakeholders that corporations operate with.

By addressing these areas, future studies can build on our findings to offer a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of online activism and boycotts and their broader implications.

References

Ahuja, M., Patel, P. and Suh, A. (2018). The Influence of Social Media on Collective Action in the Context of Digital Activism: An Affordance Approach. *Proceedings of the 51st Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*. [online] doi:https://doi.org/10.24251/hicss.2018.275.

Albrecht, C.-M., Campbell, C., Heinrich, D. and Lammel, M. (2013). Exploring why consumers engage in boycotts: toward a unified model. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 13(2), pp.180–189. doi:https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1473.

Aldiabat, K. and Le Navenec, C.-L. (2018). Data saturation: The mysterious step in grounded theory method. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(1), pp.245–261. doi:https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.2994.

Anduiza, E., Cantijoch, M. and Gallego, A. (2009). POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND THE INTERNET. *Information, Communication & Society*, 12(6), pp.860–878. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/13691180802282720.

Armstrong, G., Kotler, P., Harker, M. and Brennan, R. (2019). *Marketing : An introduction*. 4th ed. Harlow, United Kingdom: Pearson.

Baker, E.H. (2014). Socioeconomic Status, Definition. *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Health, Illness, Behavior, and Society*, [online] 1(1), pp.2210–2214. doi:https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118410868.wbehibs395.

Berg, B. van den (2020). *The Influence of Emotional Involvement on Online Activism beyond Slacktivism*. [online] studenttheses.uu.nl. Available at: https://studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/39047

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2008). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, [online] 3(2), pp.77–101. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Broek, T. van den , Langley, D. and Hornig, T. (2017). The Effect of Online Protests and Firm Responses on Shareholder and Consumer Evaluation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 146(2), pp.279–294. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3653-9.

Cammaerts, B. (2015). *Social media and activism*. [online] eprints.lse.ac.uk. Available at: https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/62090/.

Castellacci, F. and Tveito, V. (2018). Internet use and well-being: A survey and a theoretical framework. *Research Policy*, [online] 47(1), pp.308–325. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2017.11.007.

Castleberry, A. and Nolen, A. (2018). Stewart [online] 10(6), pp.807–815. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2018.03.019.

Chen, Z. (2019). Who becomes an online activist and why: Understanding the publics in politicized consumer activism. *Public Relations Review*, 46(1), p.101854. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.101854.

Chon, M.-G. and Park, H. (2019). Social Media Activism in the Digital Age: Testing an Integrative Model of Activism on Contentious Issues. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 97(1), pp.72–97. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699019835896.

Chung, J. and Monroe , G.S. (2003). Exploring Social Desirability Bias. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 44(4), pp.291–302. doi:https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1023648703356.

Clarke, N. (2008). From Ethical Consumerism to Political Consumption. *Geography Compass*, 2(6), pp.1870–1884. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2008.00170.x.

Collaborators, Q. (2023). *Grounded Theory: What It Is + Approach in Qualitative Research*. [online] QuestionPro. Available at: https://www.questionpro.com/blog/grounded-theory/. [Accessed 15 May 2024].

Conde, R. and Casais, B. (2023). Micro, macro and mega-influencers on instagram: The power of persuasion via the parasocial relationship. *Journal of Business Research*, [online] 158(0148-2963), p.113708. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113708.

Dahlgren, P. (2009). *Media and Political Engagement: Citizens, Communication and Democracy*. [online] *Google Books*. Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://books.google.se/books?hl=en&lr=&id=OQgWYQCZ310C&oi=fnd&pg=PA12&dq=Media+and+political+engagement:+Citizens

Delistavrou, A., Krystallis, A. and Tilikidou, I. (2020). Consumers' decision to boycott 'unethical' products: the role of materialism/post materialism. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 48(10), pp.1121–1138. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-04-2019-0126.

Diani, M. and McAdam, D. (2003). Social Movements and Networks. *Oxford University Press*. doi:https://doi.org/10.1093/0199251789.001.0001.

Dixon, S.J. (2023). *Instagram Users Worldwide 2023*. [online] Statista. Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/183585/instagram-number-of-global-users/. [Accessed 15 May 2024].

Duffett, R. (2020). The YouTube Marketing Communication Effect on Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural Attitudes among Generation Z Consumers. *Sustainability*, 12(12), p.5075. doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/su12125075.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., Jackson, P. and Jaspersen, L.J. (2021). *Management & Business Research*. 7th ed. Los Angeles: Sage.

Elliott, T. and Earl, J. (2016). Online protest participation and the digital divide: Modeling the effect of the digital divide on online petition-signing. *New Media & Society, 20(2), pp.698–719. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816669159*.

Ellison, N.B., Steinfield, C. and Lampe, C. (2007). The Benefits of Facebook 'Friends:' Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4), pp.1143–1168. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00367.x.

Enjolras, B., Steen-Johnsen, K. and Wollebæk, D. (2012). Social media and mobilization to offline demonstrations: Transcending participatory divides? *New Media & Society*, 15(6), pp.890–908. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812462844.

Ethical Consumer (2019). *Boycotts List | Ethical Consumer*. [online] Ethical Consumer. Available at: https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/ethicalcampaigns/boycotts. [Accessed 15 May 2024].

Ewell, P.T. (1997). *ORGANIZING FOR LEARNING: A POINT OF ENTRY | InTime*. [online] intime.uni.edu. Available at: https://intime.uni.edu/organizing-learning-point-entry. [Accessed 15 May 2024].

Fábián, K., Johnson, J.E. and Lazda, M. (2021). *The Routledge Handbook of Gender in Central-Eastern Europe and Eurasia*. [online] *Google Books*. Routledge. Available at: https://books.google.se/books?hl=en&lr=&id=SoAxEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT31&dq=Johnson

Fabino, A. (2024). *Starbucks' earnings disappoint as coffee giant battles boycotts*. [online] Newsweek. Available at: https://www.newsweek.com/starbucks-earnings-miss-boycotts-china-challenges-global-expansion-1865447. [Accessed 15 May. 2024]

Fichman, P. and Sanfilippo, M.R. (2016). *Online Trolling and Its Perpetrators: Under the Cyberbridge*. [online] *Google Books*, Rowman & Littlefield, pp.924–942. Available at: https://books.google.se/books?hl=en&lr=&id=fa_NCwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=Fichman

Fleming, S., Sen, D. and Yang, J. (n.d.). *#DeleteUber Social Movement on Social Media*. [online] #MoveMe. Available at: https://moveme.studentorg.berkeley.edu/project/deleteuber/#:~:text=People%20quickly%20tagged%20onto%20the. [Accessed 15 Apr. 2024]

Friedman, M. (1999). *Consumer Boycotts*. Routledge. doi:https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203900406.

Frölich , J. (2021). *USE OF INSTAGRAM IN MARKETING -AN ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENT APPROACHES IN THE WINE INDUSTRY* . [online] Available at: https://htwk-leipzig.qucosa.de/api/qucosa%3A75746/attachment/ATT-0/

Fusch, P. and Ness, L. (2015). Are We There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research. *Walden Faculty and Staff Publications*, [online] 20(9). Available at: https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/facpubs/455/.

Garton, L., Haythornthwaite, C. and Wellman, B. (2006). Studying Online Social Networks. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 3(1). doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.1997.tb00062.x.

Glaser, B.G., Strauss, A.L. and Strutzel, E. (1968). The Discovery of Grounded Theory; Strategies for Qualitative Research. *Nursing Research*, [online] 17(4), p.364. Available at: https://journals.lww.com/nursingresearchonline/Citation/1968/07000/The_Discovery_of_Grounded_Theory__Strategies_for.14.aspx.

Glazer, A., Kanniainen, V. and Poutvaara, P. (2010). Firms' ethics, consumer boycotts, and signalling. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 26(3), pp.340–350. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2009.12.002.

Goddard, W. and Melville, S. (2004). *Research Methodology: An Introduction*. [online] *Google Books*. Juta and Company Ltd. Available at: https://books.google.se/books/about/Research_Methodology.html?id=bJQJpsU2a10C&redir_esc=y

González-Bailón, S. (2017). *Decoding the social world: Data science and the unintended consequences of communication.* MIT Press.

Greijdanus, H., de Matos Fernandes, C.A., Turner-Zwinkels, F., Honari, A., Roos, C.A., Rosenbusch, H. and Postmes, T. (2020). The psychology of online activism and social movements: relations between online and offline collective action. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, [online] 35, pp.49–54. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.03.003.

Guest, G., Namey, E. and McKenna, K. (2016). How Many Focus Groups Are Enough? Building an Evidence Base for Nonprobability Sample Sizes. *Field Methods*, 29(1), pp.3–22. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X16639015.

Gundumogula, M. (2020). Importance of Focus Groups in Qualitative Research. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies*, [online] 8(11), pp.299–302. doi:https://doi.org/10.24940/theijhss/2020/v8/i11/hs2011-082.

Holt, D.B. (2004). *How brands become icons : the principles of cultural branding*. Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, p.89.

Imaizumi, S. (2014). Understanding Online Activism: The Dynamics of Online Support for a Cause and the Role of Slacktivists. *repository.tcu.edu*. [online] Available at: https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/10356.

Jackson, C., Vaughan, D.R. and Brown, L. (2018). Discovering lived experiences through descriptive phenomenology. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(11), pp.3309–3325. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/ijchm-10-2017-0707.

Jurgenson, N. (2011). *Digital Dualism versus Augmented Reality*. [online] Cyborgology. Available at: https://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2011/02/24/digital-dualism-versus-augmented-reality/. [Accessed 19 May 2024].

Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative Research: Introducing focus groups. *BMJ*, [online] 311(7000), pp.299–302. doi:https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.311.7000.299.

Klein, J.G., Smith, N.C. and John, A. (2004). Why We Boycott: Consumer Motivations for Boycott Participation. *Journal of Marketing*, [online] 68(3), pp.92–109. doi:https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.68.3.92.34770.

Krueger, R.A. and Casey, M.A. (2015). *Focus groups: a Practical Guide for Applied Research*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Lam, S.K., Kraus, F. and Ahearne, M. (2010). The Diffusion of Market Orientation Throughout the Organization: A Social Learning Theory Perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(5), pp.61–79. doi:https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.5.061.

Lasarov, W., Hoffmann, S. and Orth, U. (2021). Vanishing Boycott Impetus: Why and How Consumer Participation in a Boycott Decreases Over Time. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 182(4). doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04997-9.

Lee, S. (2011). Consumers' Value, Environmental Consciousness, and Willingness to Pay more toward Green-Apparel Products. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 2(3), pp.161–169. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2011.10593094.

Lewis, K., Gray, K. and Meierhenrich, J. (2014). The Structure of Online Activism. *Sociological Science*, 1(1), pp.1–9. doi:https://doi.org/10.15195/v1.a1.

Liu, J., Thomas, J.M. and Higgs, S. (2019). The relationship between social identity, descriptive social norms and eating intentions and behaviors. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 82, pp.217–230. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2019.02.002.

Louw, S. and Jimarkon, P. (2018). *Active Listening in Qualitative Research Interviews*. [online] Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326982626_Active_Listening_in_Qualitative_Research_Interviews. [Accessed 19 May 2024].

Makarem, S.C. and Jae, H. (2016). Consumer Boycott Behavior: an Exploratory Analysis of Twitter Feeds. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 50(1), pp.193–223. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.12080.

Martin, K.K. and North, A.C. (2015). Diffusion of responsibility on social networking sites. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 44, pp.124–131. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.11.049.

Microsoft Teams (n.d.). *View live transcription in Microsoft Teams meetings - Microsoft Support*. [online] support.microsoft.com. Available at:

https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/view-live-transcription-in-microsoft-teams-meetin gs-dc1a8f23-2e20-4684-885e-2152e06a4a8b. [Accessed 19 May 2024].

Miller, W. (2015). Understanding Grounded Theory. *American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science*, 28(3), pp.197–200. doi:https://doi.org/10.29074/ascls.28.3.197.

Morgan, D.L. (1996). Focus Groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22(1), pp.129–152. doi:https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.129.

Murthy, D. (2018). Introduction to Social Media, Activism, and Organizations. *Social Media + Society*, [online] 4(1), p.205630511775071. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117750716.

Musiał, K. and Kazienko, P. (2012). Social networks on the Internet. *World Wide Web*, 16(1), pp.31–72. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s11280-011-0155-z.

Neilson, L.A. (2010). Boycott or buycott? Understanding political consumerism. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 9(3), pp.214–227. doi:https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.313.

Neureiter, M. and Bhattacharya, C.B. (2021). Why Do Boycotts Sometimes Increase Sales? Consumer Activism in the Age of Political Polarization. *Business Horizons*, 64(5). doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2021.02.025.

Nieswiadomy, R.M. and Bailey, C. (2018). *Foundations of nursing research*. 6th ed. New York: Pearson, p.126.

Nummila, M. (2015). *Successful social media marketing on Instagram. Case @minoshoes*. [online] www.theseus.fi. Available at: https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/98853.

Obar, J.A., Zube, P. and Lampe, C. (2011). Advocacy 2.0: An Analysis of How Advocacy Groups in the United States Perceive and Use Social Media as Tools for Facilitating Civic Engagement and Collective Action. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. doi:https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1956352.

Passy, F. and Giugni, M. (2001). Social Networks and Individual Perceptions: Explaining Differential Participation in Social Movements. *Sociological Forum*, [online] 16(1), pp.123–153. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/685032.

Patton, M.Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Pickerill, J. (2010). *Cyberprotest : environmental activism online*. Manchester: Manchester University Press ; New York.

Pruitt, S.W. and Friedman, M. (1986). Determining the effectiveness of consumer boycotts: A stock price analysis of their impact on corporate targets. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 9(4), pp.375–387. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00380573.

Rahhou, J. (2024). *McDonald's Loses $7 Billion in Boycott Over Israel Support*. [online] www.moroccoworldnews.com. Available at: https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2024/03/361418/mcdonalds-loses-7-billion-in-boycott-over-israel-support. [Accessed 19 May 2024].

Reid, H., Pons, C., Shamonova, D. and Grzanka, P. (2023). *Zara regrets campaign 'misunderstanding' after Gaza boycott calls*. [online] Available at: https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/zara-regrets-misunderstanding-over-photoshoot-after-gaza-boycott-calls-2023-12-12/ [Accessed 19 May 2024].

Rosenfeld, M.J. and Thomas, R.J. (2012). Searching for a Mate: The Rise of the Internet as a Social Intermediary. *American Sociological Review*, [online] 77(4), pp.523–547. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122412448050.

Schradie, J. (2018). The Digital Activism Gap: How Class and Costs Shape Online Collective Action. *Social Problems*, [online] 65(1), pp.51–74. doi:https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spx042.

Sen, S., Gürhan-Canli, Z. and Morwitz, V. (2001). Withholding Consumption: A Social Dilemma Perspective on Consumer Boycotts. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(3), pp.399–417. doi:https://doi.org/10.1086/323729.

Singh, S. (2023). *What is a Conceptual Framework and How to Make It (with Examples) | Researcher.Life*. [online] Researcher.life. Available at: https://researcher.life/blog/article/what-is-a-conceptual-framework-and-how-to-make-it-with-examples/ [Accessed 19 May 2024].

Smith, D.W. (2013). *Phenomenology*. [online] Stanford.edu. Available at: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/.

Södergren, J. (2021). Brand authenticity: 25 Years of research. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 45(4), pp.645–663. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12651.

Srinivasan, S.S., Anderson, R. and Ponnavolu, K. (2002). Customer loyalty in e-commerce: an exploration of its antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Retailing*, 78(1), pp.41–50. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/s0022-4359(01)00065-3.

Stewart, D.W. and Prem (2014). *Focus Groups : Theory and Practice*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.

Sundler, A.J., Lindberg, E., Nilsson, C. and Palmér, L. (2019b). Qualitative Thematic Analysis Based on Descriptive Phenomenology. *Nursing Open*, [online] 6(3), pp.733–739. doi:https://doi.org/10.1002/nop2.275.

Sweetser, K.D., Golan, G.J. and Wanta, W. (2008). Intermedia Agenda Setting in Television, Advertising, and Blogs During the 2004 Election. *Mass Communication and Society*, 11(2), pp.197–216. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/15205430701590267.

Taluy, T.C. and Aycan, K. (2021). Improving the Melodic and Rhythmic Hearing Skills in Children with Autism. *Peter Lang Publishing*. doi:https://doi.org/10.3726/b18979.

Thakur, P.B. (2016b). Social Media and Social Movement: Contemporary Online Activism in Asia. *Media Watch*, [online] 7(2), pp.226–243. doi:https://doi.org/10.15655/mw/2016/v7i2/98745.

Thomas, D.R. (2016). A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, [online] 27(2), pp.237–246. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748.

Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest.* Yale University Press.

Uusitalo, O. and Oksanen, R. (2004). Ethical consumerism: a view from Finland. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 28(3), pp.214–221. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2003.00339.x.

Vecchione, M., Schwartz, S.H., Caprara, G.V., Schoen, H., Cieciuch, J., Silvester, J., Bain, P., Bianchi, G., Kirmanoglu, H., Baslevent, C., Mamali, C., Manzi, J., Pavlopoulos, V., Posnova, T., Torres, C., Verkasalo, M., Lönnqvist, J.-E., Vondráková, E., Welzel, C. and Alessandri, G. (2014). Personal values and political activism: A cross-national study. *British Journal of Psychology*, 106(1), pp.84–106. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/bjop.12067.

Vermeir, I. and Verbeke, W. (2006). Sustainable Food Consumption: Exploring the Consumer 'Attitude – Behavioral Intention' Gap. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 19(2), pp.169–194. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-005-5485-3.

Wang, Y., Ahmed, S.C., Deng, S. and Wang, H. (2019). Success of Social Media Marketing Efforts in Retaining Sustainable Online Consumers: an Empirical Analysis on the Online Fashion Retail Market. *Sustainability*, [online] 11(13), p.3596. doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/su11133596.

Wong, W. (2021). Youth Participation and Social Media: Evidence from the Youth Activism and Social Movement of Hong Kong. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. doi:https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3923515.

Worthington, M. (2013). *Differences between Phenomenological Research and a Basic Qualitative Research Design*. [online] Available at: http://a1149861.sites.myregisteredsite.com/DifferencesBetweenPhenomenologicalResearchAndBasicQualitativeResearchDesign.pdf

Zote, J. (2024). *Instagram statistics you need to know for 2023*. [online] Sprout Social. Available at: https://sproutsocial.com/insights/instagram-stats/. [Accessed 19 May 2024].

Appendices

Appendix A: Focus Group 1 Questions for Activists Who Are Not Boycotting

1. Participant Background
   a. State your name, age, gender, nationality, and the country you are residing in.
   b. Have you ever felt strongly about a brand's actions, values, or campaigns that brought negative feelings to you? Has this led you to dislike the brand and take any action against it?

Contribution to Research Question: Provides demographic information and initial insights into participants' experiences with brands and potential motivations for consumer activism.

2. Engagement in Online Activism
   a. Have you ever participated in online activism?
   b. What motivates or has motivated you to participate in online activism?
   c. Can you share an example of a recent online activism campaign that you've been involved in or observed on Instagram specifically?

Contribution to Research Question: Examines participants' past engagement with online activism, motivations behind participation, and specific examples of campaigns they've encountered or participated in.

3. Perception of Online Activism
   a. How do you perceive the effectiveness of online activism compared to traditional forms of activism?
   b. What role does Instagram play in facilitating or hindering online activism?
   c. How do you think companies should respond to consumer activism on social media?

Contribution to Research Question: Explores participants' views on the effectiveness of online activism, the role of social media platforms like Instagram, and expectations for corporate responses to boycotts.

4. Influence on Consumer Behavior
    a. Have you ever changed your purchasing behavior as a result of a company's unethical practices? If so, can you describe the situation?
    b. What factors influence your decision to participate in an activism campaign?
    c. If you feel strongly about the factors influencing your decision to participate in an online activism campaign, why aren't you boycotting that company?

Contribution to Research Question: Investigates the impact of unethical corporate practices on consumer behavior and factors influencing participation in activism campaigns.

5. Effectiveness and Implications
    a. How do you think online activism can influence real-world change or impact corporate behavior?
    b. In your opinion, what distinguishes an effective online activism campaign from an ineffective one?
    c. How do you perceive the role of celebrities or influencers in driving online activism movements?
    d. Have you ever experienced backlash or negative consequences for participating in online activism or boycotts?
    e. What do you believe are the long-term implications of consumer activism for businesses and society?

Contribution to Research Question: Explores participants' perspectives on the effectiveness of online activism, factors contributing to success, and potential consequences and implications for businesses and society.

Snowball Sampling:
1. Do you have any acquaintances who you think we should also interview regarding our topic?

Appendix B: Focus Group 2 and 3 Questions for Activists Who Are Boycotting

Participant Background

1. State your name, age, gender, nationality, and the country you are residing in.
2. Have you ever felt strongly about a brand's actions, values, or campaigns that brought negative feelings to you? Has this led you to dislike the brand and take any action against it?

Contribution to Research Question: Provides demographic information and initial insights into participants' experiences with brands and potential motivations for consumer activism.

Engagement in Online Activism and Boycotting

3. Have you ever participated in online activism or boycotts?
4. What motivates or has motivated you to participate in online activism and boycotts?
5. Can you share an example of a recent online boycott or activism campaign that you've been involved in or observed on Instagram specifically?
6. Why do you choose to boycott certain brands or companies?

Contribution to Research Question: Examines participants' past engagement with online activism and boycotts, motivations behind participation, and specific examples of campaigns they've encountered or participated in.

Perception of Online Activism and Boycotting

7. How do you perceive the effectiveness of online activism compared to traditional forms of activism?
8. What role does Instagram play in facilitating or hindering online activism and boycotts?
9. How do you think companies should respond to consumer activism and boycotts on social media?

Contribution to Research Question: Explores participants' views on the effectiveness of online activism and boycotts, the role of social media platforms like Instagram, and expectations for corporate responses to boycotts.

Influence on Consumer Behavior

10. Have you ever changed your purchasing behavior as a result of a company's unethical practices? If so, can you describe the situation?

11. What factors influence your decision to participate in a boycott or activism campaign?

12. Have you ever boycotted a company because someone you know asked you to?

13. Would you boycott a company even if its conduct does not affect you personally?

Contribution to Research Question: Investigates the impact of unethical corporate practices on consumer behavior and factors influencing participation in activism campaigns.

Effectiveness and Implications

12. How do you think online activism and boycotts can influence real-world change or impact corporate behavior?

13. In your opinion, what distinguishes an effective online activism or boycott campaign from an ineffective one?

14. How do you perceive the role of celebrities or influencers in driving online activism and boycott movements?

15. Have you ever experienced backlash or negative consequences for participating in online activism or boycotts?

16. What do you believe are the long-term implications of consumer activism and online boycotts for businesses and society?

Contribution to Research Question: Explores participants' perspectives on the effectiveness of online activism and boycotts, factors contributing to success, and potential consequences and implications for businesses and society.

Snowball Sampling:

17. Do you have any acquaintances who you think we should also interview regarding our topic?