Surrogate Boycotts against Multinational Corporations: Consumers’ Choice of Boycott Targets

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Within the context of surrogate boycotts for multinational corporations (MNCs), the author develops a conceptual framework which examines how the interaction between expectations of boycott objectives’ attainment, the ascribed egregiousness of the principal offender and a MNC’s actions, activism, concern for the boycott issue and personal sacrifices affect consumers’ likelihood to boycott a targeted MNC. The focus is on surrogate boycotts where the targeted MNCs have some involvement with the underlying issues. One of the key objectives is to determine disparities in the boycotting of different MNCs which are targets of the same surrogate boycott. Results from two real boycotts and four real boycott targets indicate that the ascribed egregiousness of the MNC’s actions is the strongest determinant of boycott participation, followed by expectation related to the attainability of the boycott objectives. Those MNCs with lower product substitutability and higher consumer preferences will suffer less than other boycott targets. Despite the alleviating influences of low substitutability and consumer preferences on boycotts, MNCs need to proactively develop decision-making frameworks for early recognition of ethically dubious issues.

Introduction

In recent years, research has examined whether socially responsible behaviours are rewarding for corporations (Bartlett, 2003; Galbreath, 2010; Küskü and Zarkada-Fraser, 2004), emphasizing the ‘rewards’ aspect of social responsibility. However, another aspect is also common, namely the punishment of social irresponsibility, such as in the case of consumer boycotts. Boycott popularity has increased during the past 20 years. In a sample of 15,500 consumers from 17 countries, Global Market Insite Inc. (2005) found that 36% of consumers have boycotted at least one brand. The most frequently boycotted organizations tend to be well-known multinational corporations (MNCs).

John and Klein (2003, p. 196) estimated that ‘42% of the top MNCs and 54% of the top brands are facing boycotts’ from potential customers. MNCs are typically boycotted when consumers perceive them as adopting harmful policies or engaging in unfair business practices. Boycotting can have devastating effects on sales, corporate reputations, brand images and stock prices (Klein, Smith and John, 2002; Koku, Akhigbe and Springer, 1997; Pruitt and Friedman, 1986; Walsh et al., 2009).

Friedman (1985, p. 97) defined 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’. On the Ethical Consumer (2011) list of current boycotts, the most comprehensive listing available worldwide, 53% of the active boycotts are surrogate boycotts, making surrogate boycotts the most common type of boycott (Friedman, 2001). With surrogate boycotts, ‘a protest group finds itself dissatisfied with the public policies of a city, state, or foreign
nation and acts upon its feelings by boycotting surrogates (the business firms operating in the affected geographic area) (Friedman, 1985, p. 103).

Extant literature illustrates that consumers participate in boycotts out of a sense of fairness and justice (Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Littler, 2005; Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004; Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2005). The idea that many of the issues leading to boycotts are not resolvable through the legal system adds to the frustration of consumers and increases their desire to sanction ‘offenders’ through other means. In surrogate boycotts, the situation is more complicated, because consumers use boycott targets (e.g. MNCs) as a lever to pressure a government or other authority to change its policy on issues that, in many cases, have little to do with the targeted MNC itself. However, in other cases, MNCs are directly involved in the boycott issues, either as business partners with governments or through other more subtle and less visible ways. For example, many MNCs try to influence governmental policies through lobbying, political donations or other means (Grossman and Helpman, 1996; Hansen and Mitchell, 2000; Hillman, Keim and Schuler, 2004).

The study focuses on surrogate boycotts of this category (i.e. those aimed at firms that have some involvement in contentious issues). Among the key boycotting issues are environmental protection, animal rights, human rights protection, labour practices, health concerns, and social and political issues.

Although a few studies have investigated surrogate boycotts (Braunsberger and Buckler, 2010; Larry and Leslie, 2009; Ettenson and Klein, 2005; Farah and Newman, 2010), none has examined the boycott effects on specific MNCs. Instead, focus has been on the boycott per se or the boycotted products in general, not on the specific surrogate boycott targets. The current study uses a different approach and attempts to examine differences in the treatment of MNCs that are boycott targets of the same surrogate boycott. These disparities in the treatment of boycott targets may be due to differences in the degree of MNC culpability or differences in the boycotting costs.

The purpose of this paper is to develop and test a conceptual model on the likelihood that consumers will boycott the products of an MNC that is a target of a surrogate boycott. We attempt to determine which targeted MNCs in the same surrogate boycott will suffer more. The model builds on prior research in the field (Klein, Smith and John, 2004) and empirically examines the variation in consumers’ boycott likelihood of four different surrogate boycott targets, using evidence from two surrogate boycotts. The two examined boycotts include (1) the US administration’s (under President Bush) failure to ratify the Kyoto Protocol for global warming and (2) the human rights abuses by the Burma regime. The boycott targets come from three different countries and either were donors to the US Republican party at the time or were doing business in Burma. To facilitate the communication herein, we use the terms ‘boycott’ and ‘surrogate boycott’ interchangeably.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses

This study’s theoretical framework explicates the factors that influence consumers’ likelihood to participate in surrogate boycotts. It draws on prior direct boycott studies (Friedman, 1985, 1991; Garrett, 1987; John and Klein, 2003; Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Koku, Akhigbe and Springer, 1997; Miller and Sturdivant, 1977; Pruitt and Friedman, 1986; Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz, 2001), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 2001), consumer and ecological activism theories (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Stern et al., 1999), blame attribution theory (Alicke, 1992, 2000) and punishment motivation theory (Carlsmith, Darley and Robinson, 2002). The study expands on these ideas by examining the likelihood to boycott in the context of surrogate boycotts when consumer boycotting costs are high versus low. Specifically, we examine the trade-off among the following three factors: (1) the moral need to punish a complicit party; (2) the need to contribute to the achievement of the boycott’s objectives; and (3) the personal sacrifices and costs of boycotting.

With these factors, consumers’ likelihood to boycott the products of a surrogate boycott target will depend on the interplay of several factors, explained in detail subsequently. In line with the majority of boycott studies (Ettenson and Klein, 2005; Farah and Newman, 2010; John and Klein, 2003; Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Koku, Akhigbe and Springer, 1997; Sen, Gürhan-Canli
and Morwitz, 2001), the likelihood to boycott serves as the dependent variable. Meta-analytical evidence (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005; Sheeran, 2002; Sheppard, Hartwick and Warshaw, 1988) show that intentions are strong predictors of behaviour (with a mean correlation coefficient $r$ ranging from 0.47 to 0.62), especially when the behaviour is under the consumers’ control, as it is in a boycott.

**Boycotting costs: product preferences and substitutability**

Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz (2001) identified two types of costs that influence boycotting decisions: those related to consumers’ intrinsic preferences for the boycotted product and those related to the availability and cost of appropriate substitutes. It is more difficult for consumers with greater preference for a specific product or service to cease buying or using it for the duration of the boycott than it is for consumers with lesser preference for or loyalty to that product. Highly loyal consumers tend to discount any information about questionable behaviours (Ingram, Skinner and Taylor, 2005), and their judgement and actions are determined by their preference for that product (Ingram, Skinner and Taylor, 2005).

Costs related to availability and the cost of appropriate substitutes directly pertain to the costs of switching. When these costs are low, consumers are more likely to boycott the product or service; they are less likely to do so when only limited or more expensive alternatives are available. Thus:

H1a: Preferences for a boycotted MNC’s products are negatively related to the likelihood to boycott.

H1b: Substitutability of a boycotted MNC’s products is positively related to the likelihood to boycott.

**Ascribed egregiousness to offending party’s and boycott target’s actions**

Egregiousness is a term used consistently in boycott literature (Friedman, 1999; John and Klein, 2003; Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Smith, 1990) to describe the badness, offensiveness or blameworthiness of an action. The egregiousness ascribed to an action is an important trigger for boycotting behaviour (Friedman, 1999; Garrett, 1987; John and Klein, 2003; Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Smith, 1990). For consumers to respond to a boycott call, the contested issue must appeal to their sense of justice and their personal moral code.

In general, people will blame or sanction entities that have allegedly committed or contributed to an offence or transgression only when they perceive them as having a ‘causal role in the production of harm’ (Alicke, 1992, p. 368). Punishment is the final outcome of a sequential process that involves three stages: causal attribution, responsibility attribution and ascription of blame (Shaver, 1985). Thus, determining that a company’s actions are blameworthy influences punishment decisions – in this case, boycotting. Although moral philosophies and jurisprudence stipulate a set of rational criteria to establish a party’s liability, blame, according to Alicke (2000), is the outcome of psychological processes influenced by cognitive and motivational biases. The rational or legal criteria for assigning responsibility to a party are *mens rea* (a guilty mind) and *actus reus* (an action or omission that has harmful consequences). In the case of surrogate boycotts, it is not the target entity (i.e. the boycotted MNC) that has committed the transgression, but rather a third party, usually a government or governmental entity. The targeted company is viewed as an accomplice, or an accessory, to the transgression. Legally, both an *actus reus* and a relevant *mens rea* are needed to establish the complicity of an accessory. The *mens rea* can also be the intention to perform an action or the knowledge of the likely results of this action.

In the US legal system, providing an offender with the ‘means or the opportunity’ to commit an offence is sufficient to establish the liability of an accessory. Alicke (2000) argued that, outside the courts, in everyday situations, the ascription of blame is based on people’s emotive, relatively unconscious, spontaneous evaluations, which do not necessarily take into account all the evidence. In addition, the seriousness ascribed to the accessory’s actions is usually proportionate to the seriousness of the principal’s actions. For example, in the case of surrogate boycotts, a company doing business with an internationally condemned government is also condemnable because it is perceived as aiding and supporting an oppressive regime and as an accessory to its actions. The extent and severity of human rights violations in
that country will determine how egregious the company’s involvement will be deemed (Kurtz, 2000; Robbenolt, 2000). Thus, we can hypothesize that the level of egregiousness of the offending party influences that of the boycott target in a surrogate boycott:

H2a: In a surrogate boycott, the egregiousness ascribed to the offending party’s actions is positively related to the egregiousness ascribed to the target MNC’s actions.

Similar processes apply in the assignment of punishment. People tend to punish an offending party on the basis of two key rationales (Carlsmith, Darley and Robinson, 2002): the ‘just-deserts’ rationale, in which punishment is proportionate to the seriousness of the offence, and the utilitarian rationale, or deterrence from the commission of future offences. For example, the rationale may be to discourage an MNC from doing business again with other oppressive regimes. Empirical evidence (Carlsmith, Darley and Robinson, 2002) suggests that the intuitive choice of punishment tends to be motivated by the just-deserts rationale rather than by deterrence. Therefore, assignment of punishment tends to be proportionate to the seriousness of the offence (Carlsmith, Darley and Robinson, 2002).

Boycott is a form of social punishment of complicit MNCs. Accordingly, with these precepts, the egregiousness ascribed to the offence should positively influence the likelihood of boycotting. Thus:

H2b: In a surrogate boycott, the egregiousness ascribed to an MNC’s actions is positively related to the likelihood to boycott the MNC.

Taking the two hypotheses together, the perceived egregiousness of the boycotted MNC is a mediator of the relationship between the egregiousness of the offending party and the likelihood to boycott the MNC.

Boycott issue concern and boycott issue activism

Concern with a specific issue will affect consumer evaluations of the boycott issues and boycotted firms (Garrett, 1987; Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Smith, 1990). Concerned people tend to have stronger attitudes and even stronger emotional reactions in relation to that issue, so that their standards and normative expectations regarding the issue will be greater than those of the rest of the population (Stern et al., 1999). For example, if the issue of concern is the environment, concerned consumers will expect stricter environmental standards and policies (e.g. a cleaner environment, stricter legislation) than other consumers.

According to Alicke’s (2000) blame attribution theory, there are two pathways in blame attribution. In the first pathway, people’s concern with the issue is an additional motivation for the processing of the information and allegations related to the event and the punishment of those involved (Alicke, 2000). Correspondingly, such increased motivation encourages spontaneous evaluation and ascription of blame. In spontaneous evaluations, blame attribution is based more on people’s emotions and values and less on evidence. As a consequence, people who spontaneously evaluate an event or a participant ‘will exaggerate evidence that establishes causal or volitional control and de-emphasize exculpatory evidence’ (Alicke, 2000, p. 566).

The second pathway of Alicke’s (2000) theory is non-motivational, depending on normative expectations or general knowledge of the actors and events or the event schema. Accordingly, such knowledge precipitates spontaneous evaluations and blame ascription in a schematic way. Concerned people are typically more active in seeking and acquiring information on an issue and know more about the issue than other people. This knowledge allows them to access diagnostic information to link the offender’s behaviour and its harmful consequences quicker than less concerned people (Alicke, 2000). Similarly, from an interest theory perspective (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002), the enhanced receptivity and sensitivity levels of concerned people bias their appraisal of the egregiousness of the offending party’s actions. Thus:

H3a: A consumer’s level of concern with the causes underlying the boycott is positively related to the egregiousness he or she ascribes to the offending party’s actions.

However, concern with an issue alone cannot guarantee a consumer’s commitment to behaviours, such as boycotting; behavioural commitment, or activism, is also required. Activism can take many forms, including writing letters to newspapers or politicians, participating in demonstrations, signing petitions and engaging in other intentional activities to bring about social or political change – including boycotting.
Stern et al. (1999) showed that activism related to the environment is rooted in personal moral norms, specifically altruism. Accordingly, activism is prompted by concern with environmental issues and the belief that environmental deterioration is a threat to the planet. Environmental activists believe that their activities can prevent, or at least delay, those effects. Kozinets and Handelman (2004) profiled consumer activists and found that concern with social issues is an important attribute that precedes activism. However, activists are not identified only by simple environmental or social concerns; according to Kozinets and Handelman (2004), they distinguish themselves from other concerned citizens by a certain degree of selflessness and altruism, matched with spiritual awareness and a sense of self-elevation. Kozinets and Handelman (2004, p. 702) asserted that the reasons for certain consumers becoming activists 'lie in the depth of lasting commitment, legitimacy, and authenticity that can be found mainly in the realms of traditional community and religion'. Accordingly, they 'are actually rejecting many conventional Western notions of individualism and progress and encouraging the embrace of a more spiritual, communal, and holistic ethos' (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004, p. 703).

Activists, by definition, are more likely than other consumers to embrace boycotts, as well as other activities that promote the interests of their causes. Because selflessness and altruism usually guide their behaviour, they will participate in boycotts regardless of the personal costs that may be involved – or at least will have higher cost barriers than other consumers. Thus:

H3b: A consumer’s level of concern with a cause is positively related to the extent to which he or she actively promotes that cause (activism).

H3c: The extent to which the consumer is an activist moderates the effects of product substitutability on his or her likelihood to boycott that product.

H3d: The extent to which the consumer is an activist moderates the effects of his or her preferences for the product and likelihood to boycott that product.

According to the two constructs (concern and activism) and the hypothesized relationships, the effect of consumer concern on likelihood to boycott is partially mediated by activism and ascribed egregiousness to the actions of the offending party.

Expectations of boycott objective attainment

Boycotts are means to achieve certain objectives, such as changes to the policies or behaviour of boycott targets; they are not ends in themselves. Thus, the success of a boycott should not be judged by the number of participants or the amount of harm done to the target firms, but rather by the achievement of the boycott’s objectives. Many consumers will boycott blameworthy firms as a way to punish them, regardless of the attainability of boycott objectives (Friedman, 1999; Kozinets and Handelman, 1998; Smith, 1990). However, for many consumers, the decision to participate in a boycott is at least partly determined by rational criteria: the boycott objectives and their attainability (Smith, 1990). For example, if consumers expect that the boycott has a good chance of forcing the boycott targets to change their policy or conduct, they will be more likely to participate; if not, they will consider their participation a waste of time, money and effort and will not participate (John and Klein, 2003; Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz, 2001).

In a surrogate boycott, in which the chain of pressure leading to the solution of the social problem is long, greater uncertainty exists about the attainment of the boycott’s objectives, so there is less optimism for their attainment (Friedman, 1985). Bandura’s (1977, 1986) social cognitive theory explains the role of expectations in consumer intentions. Central to this theory is the notion that self-efficacy determines human behaviour. More specifically, ‘efficacy expectations are a major determinant of people’s choice of activities, of how much effort they will expend, and of how long they will sustain effort in dealing with stressful situations’ (Bandura, 1977, p. 194). Bandura (1986) identified two types of efficacy: self-efficacy and response efficacy (or outcome expectations). Self-efficacy refers to ‘people’s beliefs that they can exert control over their motivation and behaviour and over their social environment’ (Bandura, 1986, p. 128); response efficacy refers to people’s beliefs that a certain action will lead to a certain outcome (e.g. the boycott will achieve its objectives).
In general, people develop outcome expectations from experience and from the observation of the relationships between environmental events and the outcomes that certain actions produce. These outcome expectations predict behaviour (Bandura, 1986). In other words, people will engage in actions in a way that produces positive outcomes and will avoid actions with negative or no outcomes. Self-efficacy is different from outcome expectations in that it refers to the person’s belief that he or she can ‘successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes’ (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). According to social cognitive theory, a reciprocal relationship exists between self-efficacy and response efficacy, and their interaction is responsible for a person’s actions. However, Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz (2001) studied the effects of self-efficacy and response efficacy on boycott intentions and revealed no interaction between the two. In other words, a boycotter with high expectations that the boycott objectives are attainable will boycott regardless of the levels of his or her self-efficacy. This is in line with social dilemma theory (see van Lange et al., 1992), which predicts that consumers’ outcome expectations (i.e. expectations that the social problem will be solved) are the main determinants of their decision to boycott. Thus:

\[ H4: \text{Expectations of boycott objective attainment are positively related to the likelihood to boycott the targeted MNC.} \]

Figure 1 depicts the hypothesized relationships explained previously.

**Method**

We tested the proposed hypotheses on two actual, ongoing surrogate boycotts, using the survey method. The chosen boycotts cover two issues (i.e. environmental protection and human rights) and two countries to strengthen the generalizability. The first boycott, referred to as Study 1, involves the refusal of the US Government to sign the Kyoto Protocol. The second boycott, referred to as Study 2, focuses on human rights abuse by the oppressive regime of the developing country Burma.

For both studies, similarly to that of Klein, Smith and John (2004), real and ongoing boycotts were preferred to fictional experimental manipulations. Real boycotts can more effectively capture the actual costs and sacrifices of participating in a boycott, as opposed to the hypothetical ones. Simulating consumer preferences convincingly for a company would have been
difficult in an experimental setting. We selected the two surrogate boycotts on the basis of the following considerations: the boycotts are real and in progress; the boycotted products and the boycott issue are relevant to the respondents; and the surrogate boycott lists include products of both high and low levels of substitutability. A panel of five raters, who also considered eight alternative surrogate boycotts in the UK, assisted with the choice of the boycotts. Staff in the faculty of management of a British university served as raters, because they have adequate knowledge of the rating issues; they are more familiar with the concept of substitutability and the world of MNCs than the general population is. They rated boycotts according to three criteria (product and issue relevance to respondents, level of awareness and participation, and inclusion of low- and high-substitutability targets) using 7-point high/low bipolar scales. After establishing the reliability of the mean rating scores in the three criteria through intra-class correlation coefficients (scores were higher than 0.91), we selected the boycotts with the highest scores.

### Measures

All the variables used established measures (see the Appendix). Three items from Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz (2001) measured ‘product preferences’. Klein, Smith and John’s (2002) two-item Likert scale measured ‘ascribed egregiousness’. Five items measured concern with the boycott issue using the 7-point Likert scale adapted from Bohlen, Schlegelmilch and Diamantopoulos’s (1993) scale on ‘environmental concern’, because environmental protection was the key boycott issue in Study 1. For consistency purposes, we adapted the same scale for concern with ‘human right abuses’, which was the boycott issue in Study 2. We measured ‘activism’ using a five-item scale adapted from Werner and Roy (1985). We assessed ‘expectations of boycott objective attainment’, depending on the extent to which the respondents expected it to achieve its stated objectives on a three-item 7-point Likert scale. Finally, we measured ‘likelihood of boycotting’ using Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz’s (2001) 7-point scale. All reliabilities appearing in Table 1 exceed the recommended levels.

### Results

#### Study 1

The boycott for Study 1 involved global warming and the Kyoto Protocol. The boycott was organized by a UK non-governmental organization called ‘Ethical Consumer’, formed as a result of

### Table 1: Means, standard deviations and reliabilities of construct measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Composite reliability</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>Cron. α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations of boycott objective attainment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.882</td>
<td>0.712</td>
<td>0.884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascribed egregiousness to US president’s conduct</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>0.899</td>
<td>0.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascribed egregiousness to boycott target actions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>0.958</td>
<td>0.919</td>
<td>0.944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental concern</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.937</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>0.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental activism</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td>0.473</td>
<td>0.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for Autoil products</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>0.859</td>
<td>0.671</td>
<td>0.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferences for Softco products</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>0.844</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>0.823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood to boycott Autoil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood to boycott Softco</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### Study 2

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Study 2</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Composite reliability</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>Cron. α</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectation of boycott objective attainment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ascribed egregiousness to Burma’s regime conduct</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascribed egregiousness to boycott target (MNC) actions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human rights concern</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights activism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for MNC – oil products</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preferences for MNC – car products</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood to boycott MNC – oil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood to boycott MNC – car</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>–</td>
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the US’s refusal to sign the protocol. The campaign was designed to boycott the Republican Party, the largest donor to the governing party in the US at the time. All donor MNCs were members of a lobbying body that publicly opposed the Kyoto Protocol and encouraged the US administration and other international governments not to ratify it.

Study 1 was conducted in a randomly selected metropolitan area of London using the in-home survey method. In total, 232 usable responses were collected, representing a response rate of 42% of the 552 households contacted. Every questionnaire was accompanied by an explanation of how absolute anonymity was guaranteed. We used the ‘ballot box’ technique to collect completed questionnaires. Men represented 49% of the sample, and the average age of respondents was 33.4 years. The majority of respondents (65%) knew what the Kyoto Protocol was; the remaining 35% were neutrally informed (using the information provided by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change website at http://unfccc.int) about the protocol to make it easier to participate in the survey. Moderated regression analysis indicated no statistical differences in the hypothesized relationships between the aware and unaware respondents. The only exception was the effect of issue concern on activism, which was slightly stronger for the ‘aware’ group of respondents. However, the nature of the effect does not compromise the overall validity of the model.

Of the total respondents, 9.5% boycotted Autoil\(^1\) and only 3.5% boycotted Softco. As expected, a series of t-tests showed that the boycotters were statistically different from non-boycotters in all variables used in the model in the way hypothesized for Autoil. The low boycott rates for Softco may reflect its dominance in the industry (with 88.4% global market share) and provide additional evidence of low levels of substitutability of that product (reported in the manipulation checks in the next section). Additional t-tests failed to identify any differences between boycotters and non-boycotters of Softco. The only difference reported was on product preferences, which were greater for the non-boycotter group.

\(^1\)The names of the MNCs are disguised.

Substitutability of the stimuli. To test the first hypothesis regarding the availability of substitutes, we selected boycott targets that represented high and low levels of substitutability. More specifically, a panel of three faculty members independently rated the ten boycott targets according to their substitutability. The first on the list was a US oil MNC (which we called ‘Autoil’), which was involved in the exploration and distribution of oil. The MNC with the lowest ratings was a major US software company (which we called ‘Softco’), which provides operating systems and word-processing software. Softco is a near-global monopoly with a well-entrenched position that makes substitution difficult. We used manipulation checks, as suggested by Purdue and Summers (1986), to evaluate whether the chosen firms actually have the expected levels of substitutability. The results confirmed that Autoil was indeed the easiest and least costly firm for which consumers could find a substitute ($M_{\text{ease}} = 5.9$ and $M_{\text{cost}} = 2.41$), compared with Softco ($M_{\text{ease}} = 3.11$ and $M_{\text{cost}} = 3.83$). Paired sample t-test results confirmed a statistically significant difference between the two boycott targets on both accounts ($t(225)_{\text{ease}} = 17.115, \ p < 0.001$; $t(224)_{\text{cost}} = -9.964, \ p < 0.001$).

We tested the full measurement model and, after some modifications, the model had an acceptable level of fit ($\chi^2(196) = 335.9, \ p < 0.001$; $\chi^2/df = 1.714$; GFI = 0.89; CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.06).

We assessed discriminant validity of the constructs using two approaches. First, we used Bagozzi, Youjae Yi and Phillips’s (1991) approach to test all pairwise chi-square statistical differences between the constrained and unconstrained measurement models. All 36 pairwise comparisons of the latent constructs indicated a statistically significant chi-square difference statistic. Second, testing for discriminant validity showed that the average variance extracted was greater than 0.5 for all but the construct activism. The average variances extracted were greater than the squared correlations for all constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). From the results, we can conclude that the scales have discriminant validity. The correlation matrix of the nine constructs (correlations corrected for reliability) appears in Table 2. The reliability of the two single-item variables was assumed to be 0.8 for attenuation purposes.
We assessed common method variance (CMV) using Harmann’s method and the marker process that Lindell and Whitney (2001) suggest. The variables of interest did not load on a single factor (using the eigenvalue of 1 criterion for the factor extraction), as is recommended. Following the marker approach of Lindell and Whitney (2001), we used a theoretically unrelated variable (i.e. ‘How frequently do you buy crisps?’) and used the lowest correlation coefficient as a ‘method variance marker’ to estimate the CMV-adjusted (partial) correlation to outcome variables. The method variance marker correlation coefficient was 0.006. The results, after controlling for CMV (i.e. CMV adjustment of the correlation coefficients), showed that none of the significant correlation coefficients decreased to statistical non-significance (at $a = 0.05$). Furthermore, sensitivity analysis, in accordance with Lindell and Whitney (2001), produced similar results; no significant correlation coefficient decreased to statistical non-significance. Thus, even when we account for the minimal CMV (0.006), the variables still retain their practical significance and can be used with confidence in this study.

**Tests of the hypotheses.** We tested all hypotheses using a structural equation modelling approach, except for the moderation effect of Hypothesis 3c, which we tested separately. After the addition of one path (‘issue concern’→ ‘expectations of boycott objectives attainment’), the fit statistics for the resulting full model in Figure 2 had an acceptable level of fit ($\chi^2(198) = 340.2$, $p < 0.001$; RMSEA = 0.06; NNFI = 0.93; CFI = 0.94). We found that product preference for the boycotted products was strongly and negatively related to the likelihood to boycott them ($b = -0.49$, $p < 0.001$; $b = -0.54$, $p < 0.001$). This was true for the difference in strength of the effect for both the easy-to-substitute (e.g. Autoil) and the difficult-to-substitute (e.g. Softco) products. This finding supports Hypothesis 1a.

Hypothesis 1b predicts that product substitutability is positively related to a respondent’s likelihood to boycott. A paired sample t-test compared the average likelihood to boycott Autoil (M = 4.2; SD = 1.8) and Softco (M = 3.1; SD = 1.6). These results validate Hypothesis 1b ($t(169) = 9.23$, $p < 0.001$). The results in Figure 2 show that, despite the relatively high R-square for predicting the likelihood to boycott Softco and Autoil, the predictor variables seem to explain more of the variance in the likelihood to boycott Autoil (83%) than Softco (61%). Unsurprisingly, most of the hypothesized direct effects (betas) of the likelihood to boycott are stronger for the easy-to-substitute Autoil products than the Softco products.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1</th>
<th>1. Expectations of boycott objective attainment</th>
<th>1.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Ascribed egregiousness to the US president’s conduct</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ascribed egregiousness to boycott target actions</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Environmental concern</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Environmental activism</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Preference for Autoil products</td>
<td>$-0.26$</td>
<td>$-0.33$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Preferences for Softco products</td>
<td>$-0.28$</td>
<td>$-0.22$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Likelihood to boycott Autoil</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Likelihood to boycott Softco</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 2</th>
<th>1. Expectations of boycott objective attainment</th>
<th>1.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Ascribed egregiousness to Burma military regime</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ascribed egregiousness to boycott target (MNC) actions</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Human rights concern</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Human rights activism</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Preference for MNC – oil products</td>
<td>$-0.69$</td>
<td>$-0.72$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Preferences for MNC – car products</td>
<td>$-0.34$</td>
<td>$-0.26$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Likelihood to boycott MNC – oil</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Likelihood to boycott MNC – car</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlations are significant at $a = 0.0.05$. 

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products. Thus, product substitutability clearly moderates the effects of all the identified boycott predictors on the likelihood to boycott.

The study also confirmed that the egregiousness of the offender’s actions (i.e., past US administration’s refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol) influences consumers’ perceptions of the egregiousness level of the targets’ actions (i.e., making donations to the US ruling party). The effect was strong and positive ($b = 0.6$, $p < 0.001$), providing support for Hypothesis 2a. This result confirms the hypothesis that the blame ascribed to the accessory role of a donor MNC is proportionate to the blame ascribed to the principal offenders’ action or omission.

One of the strongest effects on the likelihood to boycott is the ascribed egregiousness of the target’s actions. This had the strongest effect (stronger than that of product preferences) on boycott likelihood for the easy-to-substitute Autoil products ($b = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$) and the second strongest effect (following the effect of product preference) on the likelihood to boycott Sofco ($b = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$). These results provide clear support for Hypothesis 2b, that the egregiousness ascribed to the target entity’s conduct influences (with different degrees of strength) the likelihood to boycott all types of products, regardless of their substitutability. This finding suggests that consumers feel a strong urge to punish (through boycott) blame-worthy firms, regardless of how attainable the boycott objectives are. The effect is stronger, however, for the easy-to-substitute products to such an extent that this can supersede the effects of consumer preferences for that product. As expected, the boycott costs moderated, to some extent, the consumers’ urge to boycott blame-worthy firms.

The results show a strong positive effect ($b = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$) between boycott issue concern (in this case, the environment) and the egregiousness ascribed to the US ruling party’s actions. Issue concern alone explains 45% of the ascribed egregiousness of the offending party. Thus, Hypothesis 3a is fully supported.

Hypothesis 3b predicts that boycott issue activism (in this case, environmental activism) is rooted in the level of concern (in this case, concern with the environment). The study confirms a strong, positive relationship ($b = 0.59$, $p < 0.001$) between the two variables, providing full support for Hypothesis 3b. Note that more than one-third (35%) of the variance in the level of environmental

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Figure 2. Estimated model for Study 1. Note: All standardized coefficients are significant at 0.01.
activism can be explained by the consumers’ concern with the environment.

Hypothesis 3c postulates that activism moderates the effect of substitutability on the likelihood to boycott. More specifically, activists should be more likely to boycott difficult-to-substitute products. The results fail to confirm this hypothesis; the effect of activism on the likelihood to boycott Softco products (i.e. a difficult-to-substitute condition) was statistically insignificant. Conversely, activism had a weak, positive effect ($b = 0.2$, $p = 0.087$) on the likelihood to boycott Autoil products (i.e. the easy-to-substitute condition). This result confirms a moderation effect of activism on the relationship between product substitutability and a consumer’s likelihood to boycott, but not on the predicted dimension. Thus, Hypothesis 3c is not supported.

This study also confirms that expectations of attainment of the boycott objective have a direct positive effect on consumers’ likelihood to boycott both Softco and Autoil products. Unlike the variation of effects of the other predictor variables, the effect of expectations of objective attainment was similar in both the low- and the high-substitutability conditions (Softco: $b = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$; Autoil: $b = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is fully supported.

Expectations constituted an exogenous variable in the original model. Re-specification of the model, however, showed improvement in the goodness of model fit when a path was added from ‘environmental concern’ to ‘expectations of attaining boycott objectives’. Environmental concern was strongly and positively related ($b = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$) to expectations and explained slightly more than one-quarter (26%) of its variance. Evidently, concerned citizens are also more emotional and optimistic in evaluating the success of the boycott than less concerned or indifferent citizens.

Product preference–activism interaction. To test Hypothesis 3d, we conducted two separate ordinary least squares (OLS) hierarchical moderation regression models (Jaccard and Turrisi, 2003) for Autoil and Softco, respectively. In the first block of the analysis, the two independent variables (environmental activism and product preferences) were entered, followed by the interaction term (product of the two variables in the second block). We used increases in the model’s R-square due to entering the product term as estimates of the size of the interaction effect (Jaccard and Turrisi, 2003). We mean-centred the variables (subtracting the average from the raw scores) before estimating the product to avoid undesirable collinearity effects. The results of the moderated regression analysis for the likelihood to boycott Autoil products indicated a statistically significant but weak moderation effect ($\Delta R^2 = 0.016$, $p = 0.045$) between environmental activism and preferences for Autoil products. The same analysis, however, failed to identify a moderation effect for the likelihood to boycott Softco products. This provides only weak and partial support for Hypothesis 3d, that activism can reverse the negative effect of product preferences on the likelihood to boycott. This claim is only valid for easy-to-substitute products.

Study 2

The goal of Study 2 was to confirm the findings of Study 1 in a different boycott context with different MNCs. Using the same data collection methodology as in Study 1, we surveyed a sample of 240 respondents, representing a response rate of 37% of the 650 households contacted. Women constituted 58% of the sample, and the average age of the respondents was 36.6 years. The boycott of Study 2 was organized by the ‘Burma Campaign UK’ and focused on human rights abuses in Burma. The boycott is still active today, though it was initiated in 1991, and is directed toward companies that are doing business in Burma. The stated purpose of the boycott is to persuade large MNCs to end their involvement in Burma. Despite the publicity, however, only 32.1% of the respondents in this study were aware of the boycott. Unaware respondents were informed in the same way as in Study 1. An examination of the effects of boycott awareness on the hypothesized relationships (through moderated regression) revealed no problems. The hypothesized relationships were not statistically different between the aware and unaware boycott respondents.

Using the same criteria as Study 1, we selected two MNCs trading in the UK from the boycott list: a French oil MNC and a Japanese automobile manufacturer. For comparability purposes, the same measurement scales were used with
adjustments to reflect the new boycott issue at hand – that is, human rights.

The results show that 14% of the respondents boycotted the oil MNC and 10% boycotted the difficult-to-substitute car MNC. As expected, a series of t-tests showed that the boycotters were statistically different from non-boycotters in all variables used in the model in the way hypothesized and in accordance with Study 1.

Substitutability of the stimuli. The study confirmed that the oil MNC was the easiest and least costly to substitute (M_easiness = 5.23 and M_costly = 2.91 respectively), compared with the car MNC (M_easiness = 4.91 and M_costly = 3.36, respectively). Paired sample t-test results confirmed a statistically significant difference between the two boycott targets on both accounts (t(239)_easiness = 12.790, p < 0.001; t(239)_costly = -8.890, p < 0.001). The full measurement model of Study 2 had an acceptable level of fit (χ²(68) = 192.7, p < 0.001; GFI = 0.90; CFI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.061). Reliability statistics for all measures were at an acceptable level, with the lowest Cronbach’s alpha at 0.71 (Table 1). Using the method variance marker approach (Lindell and Whitney, 2001), we again checked CMV with the same marker variable as in Study 1. The method variance marker correlation coefficient was 0.007. Additional analysis showed that CMV was not an issue in Study 2.

A paired t-test confirmed that the likelihood to boycott the easier-to-substitute oil MNC (M = 4.06; SD = 2.02) was significantly higher (t(137) = 2.918, p = 0.004) than the likelihood to boycott the car MNC (M = 3.75; SD = 2.02), providing support for Hypothesis 1b. Figure 3 depicts the results of the structural equation model used to test the study’s hypotheses. The model had an acceptable level of fit (χ²(108) = 316.2, p < 0.001; RMSEA = 0.08; NNFI = 0.90; CFI = 0.92). The results provide support for the hypotheses supported in Study 1. More specifically, Hypotheses 1a, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b and 4 are all empirically supported in Study 2. Similar to Study 1, there is an insignificant effect of activism on the likelihood to boycott the car MNC; thus, Hypothesis 3c is not supported.

Product preference–activism interaction. Two OLS hierarchical moderation regression analyses (Jaccard and Turrisi, 2003) helped test Hypothesis 3d and check the interaction effect of activism and product preferences on the likelihood to boycott
the car and oil MNCs, respectively. We employed the same procedure as in Study 1. Changes in R-square after introducing the interaction term (activism × product preference) were insignificant ($\Delta R^2 = 0.007, p = 0.411$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.003, p = 0.231$).

From these results, the interaction effect that Hypothesis 3d postulates is not supported.

**Discussion and implications**

This research investigates the factors that influence a consumer’s likelihood to boycott an MNC included on the blacklist of two surrogate boycott initiatives. The hypothesized conceptual framework was empirically supported in two samples using British consumers who evaluated four MNCs from the US, France and Japan. Broadly speaking, this study helps better understanding of the drivers that underlie decisions to participate in a boycott and, subsequently, the success of that boycott. More specifically, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge about the boycotting of MNCs.

This study extends and refines previous findings by Klein, Smith and John (2004) and also confirms that ascribed egregiousness exerts a powerful influence on consumers’ decisions to participate in boycotts. That is, it confirms the view that consumers’ desire to blame and punish culpable MNCs (even those that have only an accessory role) is stronger than the more rational motivation of a collective action calculus. Several issues, however, surround this study’s importance in surrogate boycotts. First, in surrogate boycotts, the ascribed egregiousness of an MNC’s association with an offending entity comes largely from the egregiousness ascribed to the offending entity’s conduct, something that boycott organizers actually desire to change.

Second, we found that the assigned blameworthiness to boycott targets was proportionate to that of the principal offender’s action. Of note, consumers did not seem to need any evidence to rationally establish the intentions of the donor’s actions in relation to the issue before ascribing blame. Although donors were members of a group lobbying against the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, this information was not widely known. Ascribing blame without evidence creates problems for potential boycott targets, because they may not be in a position to predict the conduct of the offending party when engaging with it. In many cases, the target MNC’s actions precede the offending party's egregious behaviour; therefore, the target company faces the potential problem that its everyday conduct and conventional relationships with other entities may unexpectedly become reasons for consumer action (or unknowingly become accessories before the fact). In the first case, for example, those who donated to the US ruling party were perceived as guilty of egregious actions (without evidence) because of the US administration’s refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol. Although research (Grossman and Helpman, 1996) on political donations shows evidence of a firm’s intent to influence government policy (either directly, by influencing the policy, or indirectly, by influencing the outcome of elections to favourable candidates), firms may not have an interest in, knowledge of, or intent to influence unpopular governmental policies. Rather, corporate political activity may actually backfire, because it can inadvertently spark spontaneous consumer blame and incite consumers’ desire to punish the firm. Thus, corporate political activity frameworks should incorporate the possibility of adverse consumer reactions. Overall, MNCs should adopt a preventative approach rather than a strategy of containment and damage control.

Boycotts have the power to draw public attention to issues that can harm an MNC’s image, beyond the direct effects on sales. Glickman (2005) argued that the increase in boycotts is a product of a decline in business ethics. MNCs should avoid ethically questionable behaviours, because consumers evaluate the ethicality of their actions. The use of a decision-making framework supported by an ethical culture would provide early recognition of the ethical components of MNCs’ actions (Ferrell, Fraedrich and Ferrell, 2010).

Klein, Smith and John (2004, p. 105) noted that ‘even high levels of perceived egregiousness are insufficient to motivate boycott participation because of cost–benefit motivations for participation’. In our study, three related issues emerged. First, the relationship of ascribed egregiousness to boycott likelihood was greater for easy-to-substitute products (i.e. Autoil and the oil MNC). Second, consumers’ likelihood to boycott was significantly lower for the difficult-to-substitute products. Third, the positive effect of ascribed
egregiousness on the likelihood to boycott was weaker than the negative effect of product preference on consumers’ likelihood to boycott the difficult-to-substitute product. Evidently, Klein, Smith and John’s (2004) finding that cost–benefit motivations outweigh ascribed egregiousness (i.e. need to punish) as a motivator for participating in a boycott is more likely to be true for difficult-to-substitute products (such as those produced by Softco) and when consumer preference is high. With these types of products, the effects of consumer preference can override the adverse influences of ascribed egregiousness. For the majority of products that do not fall into this category, however, this is probably not the case. Therefore, we can conclude that companies might be able to immunize themselves from boycott threats by raising the switching costs (or by creating substitution barriers), if possible, of their products.

Can companies defend against boycotts by building strong customer preferences for and loyalty to their products? Customer retention and loyalty are key strategic objectives for many MNCs. The results show that preferences strongly influence boycott likelihood for both difficult-to-substitute and easy-to-substitute products and act as an effective defence against boycotts and consumers’ need to punish. Additional moderated regression analysis (not reported here) shows that product preferences do not interact with egregiousness ascriptions in either condition. This means that consumers with greater preferences for a product will be less likely to boycott the company, regardless of their ascriptions of egregiousness. Alternatively, people who perceive an MNC’s actions as highly egregious are more likely to boycott its products, regardless of their preferences for those products. Thus, ascribed egregiousness and product preferences operate independently (not interactively) to shape boycott likelihood. Therefore, building a customer franchise could provide protection against boycotts, but only as long as the level of egregiousness ascriptions is not too high.

Prior research has investigated individual differences among consumers likely to boycott (Friedman, 1991; Garrett, 1987; Mahoney, 1976; Miller and Sturdivant, 1977; Smith 1990) but has not quantitatively tested the effects of activism on boycott participation. Surprisingly, research has failed to confirm whether activists would assume higher boycotting costs than other consumers. As Stern et al. (1999) suggested, boycotting might only be a mild form of action for activists, and other actions against egregious firms may be preferred. The results of the current study show that the indirect effect of environmental concerns (mediated through several variables) on boycott likelihood is stronger than the total effects of activism on boycott likelihood. The role of issue concern is critical because it influences ascriptions of egregiousness, expectations of attainment of boycott objective, and levels of environmental activism. Thus, MNCs should not isolate activists as the most likely boycott participants. When citizens are concerned with egregious actions, they are also more likely to support boycotts. Furthermore, as people become more sensitive to issues such as the environment (e.g. by directly experiencing the visible effects of global warming and climate change), they might be more likely to use their consumer power. Firms should not ignore these types of sensitivities, even when having only an accessory role. Another explanation of the weak impact of activism involves the measurement of the likelihood to boycott in this study. More specifically, the study solicits consumers’ instantaneous response regarding their likelihood to participate and does not measure how prepared they are to commit to a boycott over time.

For all types of products, expectations that the boycott will succeed had a moderate effect on consumers’ likelihood to participate. This confirms the view that the desire to blame and punish an allegedly unethical firm is stronger than rational choice deliberations related to the expected ability to attain boycott objectives. This study also agrees with Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz’s (2001) findings that expectations play an important role in boycott decisions. The results show, however, that people concerned with an issue have higher expectations. This optimism may be due to higher normative expectations, a more spontaneous and emotive assessment of the situation, or simply the need for congruency between consumer orientations/interests and expectations.

Bandura (2001) also explained that these expectations represent not only a simple prediction of future actions, but also a proactive commitment to attain them. In our case, consumers have limited personal control over achieving the boycott objectives, because participation by other...
consumers who may have divergent interests is necessary. Despite the inherent uncertainty related to attaining boycott objectives, however, our results show that expectations are potent predictors of boycott intentions. Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz (2001) contended that expectations can be changed by the interested parties (e.g. offending parties, target firms, media) through communication and the manipulation of the messages used.

Appendix. Measures used in the study

Product preferences (adapted from Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz, 2001)
- How much would you say you like or dislike product X (1 = dislike very much, 7 = Like very much).
- How frequently do you buy product X (1 = never buy, 7 = always buy).
- How 'loyal' do you consider yourself to product X (1 = not at all, 7 = very loyal the only product I use).

Product substitutability

This was manipulated experimentally by selecting (with the help of three raters) two pairs of products that were high and low in terms of substitutability. Manipulation checks of the stimuli were based on two questions.
- If you decide to boycott, how expensive will it be to switch to an alternative to product X (on a 7-point semantic differential scale ranging from not at all to extremely expensive)?
- If you decide to boycott, how easy is it for you to satisfy your needs with an alternative to product X (on a 7-point semantic differential scale ranging from extremely easy to extremely difficult)?

Ascribed egregiousness (adapted from Klein, Smith and John, 2004)

Offending party’s egregiousness
- I believe US Government’s refusal to sign the Kyoto protocol is very wrong.
- I believe US government’s refusal to sign the Kyoto protocol is inexcusable.

Boycott target’s egregiousness
- I believe that donations to the Republican Party are very wrong.
- I believe that donations to the Republican Party are inexcusable.

Issue concern (adapted from Bohlen, Schlegelmilch and Diamantopoulos, 1993)
- A substantial amount of money should be devoted to environmental protection.
- Strict global measures must be taken immediately to halt environmental decline (removed during the purification process).
- The environment is one of the most important issues facing society today.
- We should pay a considerable amount of money to preserve our environment.
- Unless each of us recognizes the need to protect the environment, future generations will suffer the consequences.

Activism (adapted from Werner and Roy, 1985)
- Trying to convince a friend or acquaintance that the environment should be better protected by the government or the governments of other countries.
- Turning a conversation to the subject of environmental protection so you could present your views against different countries’ governmental policies or inaction on the issue. (Removed during the purification process.)
- In a conversation, saying that the environment should be better protected by the government or the governments of other countries, when the subject was brought up.
- Contributing money to an organization that attempts to change public opinion or laws in a direction of adopting stricter measures to prevent further damage to the environment.
- Signing a petition to force the government to adopt stricter policies to protect the environment.

Expectation of boycott objective attainment
- This boycott is a very effective way of forcing companies to stop funding the US Republican Party.
This boycott is a very effective way to make companies publicly call on US Government to support the Kyoto protocols.

I am confident that the consumer boycott will make US Government reconsider its policies.

Likelihood of boycotting (adapted from Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz, 2001)

- How likely is it that you will boycott company X (a 7-point scale, 1 = definitely no to 7 = definitely yes)?

References


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