Determinants of consumer’s willingness to boycott surrogate products

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to examine the willingness to boycott among Malaysian consumers towards the surrogate products associated with Israel. The present study was based on the previous and an ongoing war and conflict in the Middle East.

Design/methodology/approach – Several surrogate products associated with Israel were selected. A total of 468 respondents from various backgrounds participated in this study. Analysis was performed using multiple regression analysis (MRA).

Findings – Results showed that three factors were significant in predicting the willingness to boycott. They were animosity, subjective norms and product judgments. Anticipated emotions (both positive and negative emotions) were found to be insignificant in predicting the willingness to boycott the surrogate products.

Originality/value – The present study addresses the boycott intention in Malaysia where multi-races and multi-religions exist, in the context of the ongoing war and oppression by Israeli government toward the Palestinians. The results have some implications to multinational firms, especially those perceived to have direct links with the aggressors.

Keywords Islamic markets, Buying from Islamic markets, The Muslim consumption pattern, Boycott, Selling to Islamic markets, Surrogate products

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The more integrated and globalized markets around the world have certainly brought along huge opportunities for companies to expand their products worldwide and potentially to tap into new markets. Although globalization brings more opportunities, they also bring about more challenges and threats when the companies decide to venture into new markets. Multinational firms realize that any actions they make at home or in their host country and even the action or policy of their home government impact their business reputations, credibility, trust and sales[1].

Consumers are now more aware of and react toward any actions made by the companies, governments or the home country of origin. A popular method used by consumers to punish or demonstrate their anger toward companies that have committed negative or offensive actions is by boycotting their products. Friedman (1999, p. 4) defined consumer boycotts 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”. In the event where the boycotted products are not available in the marketplace, consumers could
substitute with other products that have direct or indirect link with the target boycott, which is known as surrogate products (Friedman, 1985). In fact, surrogate boycotts are even more widespread and have become the most common type of boycotts adopted by consumers (Balabanis, 2013; Friedman, 2001).

In the current business environment, companies that are not directly involved can also be subjected to a boycott. Normally, this is because of the offensive actions undertaken by either the company’s headquarter or the policy or action of the home government. A surrogate boycott is even harder to handle, as it is not the company’s fault in the first place, or in a different circumstance, it is even harder for the company to change the governments or home country’s actions that have led to the boycott in the first place. An example of a surrogate boycott is the boycott of Danish products in the Middle East because of the Muhammad cartoon controversy (Jensen, 2008).

Regardless, a direct boycott or a surrogate boycott should not be taken lightly, as the impact could be vast and may last for a long time. The American consumers boycott toward French wines caused a total loss of $112mn (Chavis and Leslie, 2009), while the Nestle boycott cost the company a total loss of $40mn and it took Nestle years to rebuild its reputation (Nelson-Horchler, 1984). As pointed out by John and Klein (2003), there has been less attention toward boycotts and consumer boycott behavior despite the increasing number of boycotts and the number of consumers participating in a boycott. The ongoing war and oppression by Israel toward the Palestinians has invoked concern, anger and dissatisfaction from people all over the world, particularly in countries with large presence of Muslim consumers. Wilson et al. (2013, p. 25) posit that “Muslim consumers tend to apply the concept of deen beyond the restricted sense of religion […] but is used to describe faith, decision allegiance, path, and way of life”. Thus, such values could lead consumers to participate in boycotts activities on issues that are close to belief systems.

A lot of boycotts and campaigns have been launched against Israel in reaction to their occupation of Gaza and West Bank which has brought a lot of sufferings and injustice toward the Palestinians. Yet lack of awareness and information has made it quite difficult to identify and boycott Israeli products or brands (Wilson and Liu, 2011). Thus, a surrogate boycott seems like a platform for consumers to express their dissatisfaction and anger toward the Israeli government’s actions against the Palestinians. Companies that are linked and perceived as being associated with Israel have been the target of consumer boycotts in many places around the world.

This research was conducted to examine the key factors that predict consumers’ willingness to participate in boycotting surrogate products (Muhamad and Mizerski, 2010). We adopted the geopolitical imperative perspective of consumer behaviors (Wilson, 2014), where global events would have affected consumers norms, values and belief systems (Zakaria and Abdul-Talib, 2010), thus influencing their purchase decisions. Eventually, to express their disapproval, consumers may opt to boycott products from the offending country (Ettenson and Klein, 2005). Specifically, we wanted to investigate the link among animosity, positive anticipated emotions, negative anticipated emotions, subjective norms and product judgments on consumers’ willingness to boycott the surrogate products in a Malaysian context. In a multi-cultural society, there may be different emotions, concerns and reactions toward the call for boycotts of the products that have direct and indirect links with Israel. Understanding the factors and willingness to purchase or boycott the surrogate products in a multi-cultural and multi-religious country like Malaysia is crucial for marketers, managers and multinational companies to help them prepare their strategic action.
Literature review

Consumer boycott and surrogate products

Garrett (1987, p. 47) defined boycott as:

[...] a concerted, but not mandatory, refusal by a group of actors (the agents) to conduct marketing transactions with one or more other actors (the target) for the purpose of communicating displeasure with certain target policies and attempting to coerce the target to modify those policies.

Friedman (1985, pp. 97-98) defined consumer boycott as “an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumer to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace”. In other words, a boycott is a refusal of one party to do business or activities with another party because of dissatisfaction to force the other party to change the source of dissatisfaction. The source of the dissatisfaction can be in various forms and reasons, but it has inflicted negative emotions and perception toward the party enough to make them take actions against the source of dissatisfaction (i.e. boycott).

Boycott actions are different in terms of functions and purposes (Friedman, 1999; John and Klein, 2003). Friedman (1999) classified boycott purposes into instrumental and expressive. An instrumental boycott aims to force the target to change a disputed policy, while an expressive boycott is a form of protest that communicates consumers’ dissatisfaction with the actions of the target. A boycott is considered successful if it has attained its objectives, while boycott effectiveness is the reduction in sales of the boycotted products (Smith, 1990). Thus, boycott effectiveness depends on the volume of the participants in the boycott.

A boycott can be classified into two types which are surrogate boycott or non-surrogate boycott (Friedman, 1999). In a non-surrogate boycott, the boycott is targeted directly to the offending party or company that has made negative actions in the first place. An example of such a boycott is the boycott of Morton Brands by young American mothers (Belkin, 2008). To combat such boycott, the offending party can directly identify the reasons for such boycott and react toward it by changing policies, apologizing to the affected parties, etc. The boycott of Morton Brands among young American mothers succeeded in obtaining the company’s apology. By apologizing, the company was actually trying to dissolve the boycott (Belkin, 2008).

In a surrogate boycott, things are much harder and complex, as normally more parties are involved than a regular direct consumer boycott. It normally consists of three parties:

1. the initial creator of displeasure or negative actions;
2. the ones who are displeased and boycott; and
3. the one who is being targeted for the boycott.

Most of the times, the creator of the displeasure or negative actions are governments or a country, as in this study, Israel, as the initial creator of the offending actions. As sometimes consumers are not able to boycott the direct target because they do not have direct contact with the target, they would boycott the third party which they believe have the power to affect the target (Friedman, 1999, 2001). A surrogate boycott is often targeted because the surrogate target is expected to pressure the offending party to change their offending and negative actions. In the case of Israel, purchasing of the surrogate products would infer support for the oppressions of Palestinians by the Israeli government.

Consumers who participate in a boycott against a party believe that they are able to turn their mere consumption into an expression of their ethical or political beliefs (Abdul-Latif and Abdul-Talib, 2015; Abd-Razak and Abdul-Talib, 2012; Shaw et al., 2006). Consumers
reflect their inner values and beliefs by what they purchase or not purchase (Dickinson and Hollander, 1991). Consumer boycott can also serve as a moral act (Smith and Li, 2010). Consumers also realize that their purchasing power can be used to better their own personal lives and also others (Glickman, 2005). Doane (2001) showed that there is an increasing numbers of individuals who not only seek to act as consumers but also consider the impact of their choices towards the society. As consumers cannot avoid consuming certain products, they can, however, exercise their influence toward the company by supporting or rejecting the specific products to achieve certain political or moral goals (Schudson, 2006). Though consumers have various reasons to participate in a boycott, their objective is quite similar, which is to change the certain negative actions or policies that have caused them or another party to be dissatisfied.

Consumer animosity
Klein et al. (1998, p. 90) introduced the concept of consumer animosity and defined it as “remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political or economic events”. This concept has gained scholarly attention over the years because it reflects hatred or strong dislike of consumers toward the offending country and impacts on the perception and willingness to purchase a product (Ettenson and Klein, 2005; Klein, 2002; Klein et al., 1998; Nijssen and Douglas, 2004). Jung et al. (2002) categorized animosity into two groups: situational animosity and stable animosity. Situational animosity is triggered by a particular episode, while stable animosity accumulates over time and evolves into a long-lasting hostility. Studies on consumer animosity have been tested in various countries, such as in China (Klein et al., 1998), Australia (Ettenson and Klein, 2005), The Netherlands (Nijssen and Douglas, 2004) and recently in Kuwait (Maher and Mady, 2010).

Animosity is often related to the emotions of consumers toward the offending country. The animosity toward Israel in reaction to the ongoing conflict and injustices toward the Palestinians is increasing in many parts of the world, including Malaysia. A large section of Malaysian consumers are expressing their anger and displeasure with how the Israeli government is treating the Palestinians (Abdul-Talib and Abdul-Latif, 2015). However, because it is difficult for Malaysian consumers to identify specific Israeli products, consumers may be targeting surrogate products that are perceived to support Israel. Hence:

**H1.** There is a positive relationship between animosity and willingness to boycott the surrogate products associated with the country.

Anticipated emotions
Studies have shown that emotions play a significant role in consumer reactions toward products from other countries (Heslop et al., 2004; Laroche et al., 2005). Emotions that are related to the purchase intention are anticipated emotions which can be divided into positively anticipated emotions and negatively anticipated emotions. Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) stated that these emotions are the result of pre-factual appraisals, that is, when individuals “think about imaginary alternatives to events in terms of the implications of these events for the future” (Gleicher et al., 1995, p. 284). An example of anticipated emotion is smoking. A person who is faced with a choice of smoking or not smoking will imagine the negative consequences of smoking (i.e. health problems) and benefits of not smoking (i.e. better health). The imagination of negative consequences of smoking will lead to negative anticipated emotions, while the benefits of not smoking will lead to positive anticipated emotions. Anticipated emotions have been found to affect decision-making in various contexts (Baumgartner et al., 2008; Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; Sierra and Hyman, 2006).
Similarly, consumers are faced with the choice of whether they wish to purchase a surrogate product or not. Against the backdrop of an ongoing conflict, they will start imagining the positive consequences of avoiding the purchase of the surrogate product or negative consequences of purchasing the surrogate product. This will lead to positively anticipated emotions of avoiding the surrogate product or negatively anticipated emotions of boycotting the surrogate product. Based on the discussion, we anticipate the following:

\[ H2. \] There is a positive relationship between positive anticipated emotions of avoiding the purchase of the surrogate products and the willingness to boycott the surrogate products.

\[ H3. \] There is a positive relationship between negative anticipated emotions of purchasing the surrogate products and the willingness to boycott the surrogate products.

**Subjective norms**

Subjective norms were first introduced by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) in their theory of reasoned action, which is the perceived social pressure toward an individual’s intention to comply with the expectations of performing or not performing the behavior. If the society expects an individual to behave or perform a certain behavior, then the person is likely to do so. Likewise, if the society expects an individual not to behave or perform a certain behavior, then the person is not likely to do so. For example, if the society perceives that boycotting the surrogate products is a sign of protest against the injustice toward the Palestinians, then the individual may not be willing to purchase the surrogate products to meet the social expectations.

Subjective norms or social pressure is an important factor in predicting a consumer’s behavioral intention in a collectivist society than in an individualist society like the USA (Lee and Green, 1991). According to Hofstede (1980), and Minkov and Hofstede (2011), the Malaysian culture, like a lot of other Asian cultures, is characterized as being collectivist in nature. Based on Hofstede’s cultural dimension, a country with a high level of collectivism tends to place the interest of a group more than the interest of individuals. Malaysians care about what people think about them when they perform certain behavior to save face. Thus, social norms play an important role in determining Malaysian consumers’ purchase intention. This means that consumers’ willingness to boycott a surrogate product will be influenced by the perceived social pressure in the society, thus:

\[ H4. \] There is a positive relationship between subjective norms and willingness to boycott the surrogate products.

**Product judgment**

The traditional country of origin indicator presumes a direct relationship between consumers’ product judgment and their purchasing intentions. A foreign product judgment refers to a consumer’s attitude toward foreign products in general and the interaction of quality judgments based on country of origin and attitudes toward foreign products in general (Klein et al., 1998).

They suggested that consumers’ attitudes toward purchasing foreign products will be affected when the products are purportedly linked to the issue presented to them. Under such circumstances and through such association, consumers are, thus, expected to choose alternative products as compared to the initial purchasing intention.
A number of studies have assessed consumers’ product judgments and their willingness to buy (Hinck, 2005; Hoon Ang et al., 2004; Kesic et al., 2005; Nijssen and Douglas, 2004; Witkowski, 2000). Klein et al. (1998) showed that animosity against the Japanese did not influence any product judgments in China. Shin (2001) also found similar results in Korea that the Korean animosity toward the Japanese did not discourage them from buying Japanese products. The higher level of product judgment will result in higher willingness to purchase. We also proposed that the judgment of Malaysian consumers toward a surrogate product is positively linked with the willingness to boycott the product:

$H5$. There is a positive relationship between product judgments and willingness to purchase the surrogate products.

The conceptual model for this research is shown in Figure 1.

**Methodology**

*Respondents and procedures*

Standardized questionnaires were used to obtain the necessary data. The questionnaires were prepared in Malay and English languages, as these are the two most common languages used in Malaysia, especially in the capital of Kuala Lumpur where there are more frequent users of English than any other states in Malaysia. The original items in English were back translated into Malay to ensure that the participants understood the items correctly and the English and Malay translations provided equal meaning (Craig and Douglas, 2005). All items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale with “1” being “strongly disagree” and “7” being “strongly agree”, similar to that in previous studies (Bagozzi and Pieters, 1998; Klein, 2002; Lee and Green, 1991).

We adopted a convenience sampling technique (Dennis et al., 2002; Darrat, 2011; Millan and Howard, 2007; Schmidt and Hollense, 2006) where data were collected through self-administered questionnaires randomly distributed at three main shopping malls in the Malaysian capital city, Kuala Lumpur. Participants were randomly approached and asked to complete the questionnaire. Following a similar approach adopted in previous studies by Klein et al. (2001) and Sen and Bhattacharya (2001), we selected four brands based on strong...
market presence and brand familiarity among Malaysian consumers. They were Starbucks, McDonald’s, L’Oreal and Coca-Cola. We provided the participants with a one-page summary attached to the questionnaire linking these brands to Israel’s egregious acts and the involvement of selected US-originated firms. The information was sourced from Viva Palestinian Malaysia’s website (Abdul-Talib and Abdul-Latif, 2015). For this study, a total of 700 participants were approached and asked whether they would like to participate in this study.

*Instruments*

The measurement of willingness to boycott surrogate products was adopted from Klein *et al.* (1998) and Huang *et al.* (2010). The measurement of animosity was adopted from Klein *et al.* (1998) and Ettenson and Klein (2005). Seven items were used to measure the extent of animosity toward Israel which includes statements such as: “I dislike Israel”, “I feel angry towards Israel” and “Israel doesn’t care about what other nations think of their actions”.

The measurements of both positive and negative anticipated emotions were adopted from Bagozzi and Pieters (1998). The positive emotions from avoiding the purchase of products that are related to Israel were happy, satisfied, proud, relieved and thankful, while the negative emotions of buying products that are related to Israel were fear, guilt, sham, worry and regret. Finally, five items were used to measure the subjective norms, which were adopted from Lee and Green (1991), to understand the social influences on the purchasing behavior of the surrogate products. The measurement of product judgments toward the surrogate products was adopted and modified from Klein *et al.* (1998). A brief description of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix.

*Analysis*

A total of 468 participants agreed in which the response rate was 66.87 per cent. Of the total, 64.5 per cent of the participants were males, while 35.5 per cent were females. Nearly half of them were between the ages of 24 to 29 (48.1 per cent). In terms of ethnic composition, 57.1 per cent of the participants were Malays, followed by Indians (23.9 per cent), Chinese (16.5 per cent) and others (2.6 per cent). In terms of religious background, the highest percentage of respondents were Muslims (58.1 per cent), followed by Christians (16.2 per cent), Hindus (15.4 per cent), Buddhists (9.4 per cent) and others (0.4 per cent). Finally, more than half of the respondents had at least an academic degree (56.8 per cent) (please refer to Table I for details).

Data were checked for multicollinearity using the formal detection tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF). For the tolerance and VIF, multicollinearity exists if the tolerance value is below 0.10 and VIF value is above 10 (Hair *et al.*, 2010a). Results showed that all independent variables had a value above 0.10, indicating no multicollinearity. The VIF values of all the independent variables were below 10, further confirming the non-existence of multicollinearity.

The data were also screened for possible outliers by comparing the Mahalanobis distance value against the critical chi-square value. The five independent variables showed a chi-square value of 20.52. The result showed that the maximum Mahalanobis distance was 19.379, which did not exceed the critical chi-square value of 20.52 ($p < 0.001$), indicating the absence of outliers.

Next, principal component analysis with factor loading of 0.4 was used to determine the unidimensionality of the items (Hair *et al.*, 2010b). To achieve this, all constructs were divided into two groups and entered into theoretically related variables (Doney and Cannon, 1997; Hewett and Bearden, 2001). The first group consisted of the variables of animosity,
willingness to purchase and negative anticipated emotions. One item from the animosity variable was deleted because of cross-loading. The second group consisted of the variables of positive anticipated emotions, subjective norms and product judgments. Result indicated that none of the items cross-loaded onto other components; hence, all items were retained for further analysis.

We also looked at the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity. The KMO result ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating diffusion in the pattern of correlation and factor analysis is likely to be inappropriate. The KMO value for Groups A and B was 0.940, which was a good value, indicating that the patterns of correlation were compact and factor analysis resulted in a distinct and reliable factor (Hutcheson and Sofroniou, 1999). The Bartlett’s test ($p < 0.05$) indicated that the factor analysis was appropriate for the data. Reliability test was conducted on all six constructs, and the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was greater than 0.8 in all cases, signifying the reliability of the data. Table II presents the reliability and validity statistics for all six constructs.

In the final model, multiple regression analyses were conducted to test all hypotheses and three hypotheses ($H1$, $H4$ and $H5$) were supported, while two hypotheses ($H2$ and $H3$) were not supported. The regression results are summarized in Tables III and IV. The regression results indicate that the model was significant statistically adjusted $F(5, 468) = 460.544, p < 0.001$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.831$. The adjusted $R^2$ showed that the model accounts for 83.1 per cent of variance in the consumer willingness to boycott the surrogated products.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Participants ($n$)</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>302</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>33.5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>18-23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>24-29</td>
<td>225</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>25.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>36-41</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11.8</td>
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<td>41 and above</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>Christianity</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
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<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>16.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
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<td>23.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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<td><strong>Education level</strong></td>
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<td>Secondary level</td>
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<td>Diploma and equivalent</td>
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<td>24.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree and above</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>56.8</td>
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Table I.
Sample characteristics
$H1$ proposed that animosity toward Israel will positively influence willingness to boycott the surrogate products. The hypothesis was supported, as animosity was found to be positively related to willingness to boycott ($\beta = 0.307$, $p < 0.05$). $H2$ and $H3$ focused on the influence of consumer anticipated emotions on willingness to boycott. Results showed that both $H2$ and $H3$ were not supported, as there was no significant relationship between positive anticipated emotions of avoiding the boycott ($\beta = -0.033$, $p > 0.05$) and negative anticipated emotions of boycotting the surrogate product ($\beta = -0.023$, $p > 0.05$). $H4$ noted that the subjective norms influence willingness to boycott the surrogate products. Result supported $H4$, as subjective norms were positively related to willingness to boycott ($\beta = 0.640$, $p < 0.05$). Finally, $H5$ proposed that product judgments have a positive effect on willingness to boycott. Result supported $H5$ ($\beta = 0.031$, $p < 0.05$). Overall, it appears from the results that subjective norms animosity, and product judgments explain 83.1 per cent of

<table>
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<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>Alpha</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
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<td>Willingness to boycott</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.968</td>
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<tr>
<td>Animosity</td>
<td>0.843**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.967</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>4.716</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive anticipated emotion</td>
<td>0.746**</td>
<td>0.811**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.956</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>6.819</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative anticipated emotion</td>
<td>0.756**</td>
<td>0.740**</td>
<td>0.893**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.956</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>7.264</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subjective norms</td>
<td>0.894**</td>
<td>0.839**</td>
<td>0.799**</td>
<td>0.850**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.952</td>
<td>0.170</td>
<td>5.866</td>
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<td>Product judgment</td>
<td>0.612**</td>
<td>0.608**</td>
<td>0.551**</td>
<td>0.533**</td>
<td>0.601**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.933</td>
<td>0.601</td>
<td>1.664</td>
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Notes: **Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (two-tailed); $n = 468$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model summary(^b)</th>
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<tr>
<td>$R$</td>
<td>0.913$^a$</td>
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<td>$R^2$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard error of the estimate</td>
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| ANOVA\(^b\)           |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |      |
| Model                   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |      |
| Sum of squares          |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |      |
| Regression              | 1,400.938 |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |      |
| Residual                | 281.074 | 462   |       |       |       |       |       |           |      |
| Total                   | 1,682.012 | 467   |       |       |       |       |       |           |      |
| Mean square             | 280.188 |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |      |
| $F$                     | 460.544 |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |      |
| Significance            | 0.000$^b$ |       |       |       |       |       |       |           |      |

Notes: $^a$Predictors: (Constant), PJ, NAE, Animosity, SN, PAE; $^b$Dependent Variable: WTB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized coefficient B</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Standardized coefficient Beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animosity</td>
<td>0.304</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.307</td>
<td>7.430</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive anticipated emotions</td>
<td>−0.306</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>−0.033</td>
<td>−0.656</td>
<td>0.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative anticipated emotions</td>
<td>−0.207</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>−0.023</td>
<td>−0.447</td>
<td>0.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective norms</td>
<td>0.659</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.640</td>
<td>13.896</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product judgment</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>2.880</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. Descriptive statistics, correlation coefficient, collinearity and reliability

Table III. Model summary and ANOVA result

Table IV. Regression analysis result
the variance of willingness to boycott. It is also worth noting that subjective norms are the most significant antecedent of willingness to boycott the surrogated product ($\beta = 0.640, p < 0.05$).

**Discussion and conclusion**

Our study examined the determinants of consumers’ willingness to boycott surrogate products. This study obtained mixed results. The first finding is related to animosity and willingness to boycott the surrogate products. We found that Malaysian consumers in the study had animosity toward Israel and were reluctant to purchase the surrogate products associated with it. Though it is debatable to what extent the Malaysian consumers are reluctant to purchase the surrogate products, our finding is in line with previous studies that showed that animosity was linked to product boycotts (Klein, 2002; Klein and Ettenson, 1999; Klein et al., 1998; Shoham et al., 2006; Shin, 2001). Such a finding could reflect the Malaysian consumers’ disapproval of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians. As they could not directly target Israeli firms or products, they do so by targeting the products associated with Israel to express their anger and disapproval. Purchasing other products that can serve as an alternative could also be a manifestation of such attitude.

We also found that anticipated emotions, regardless positive or negative, did not play a role in affecting consumers’ willingness to boycott surrogate products with Israel. The result does not support previous study done by Maher and Mady (2010), who found a significant relationship between positive and negative anticipated emotions and willingness to boycott. The result is also not consistent with several other studies that found the association between anticipated emotions and choices (Mellers et al., 1999; Savage, 1972). This might be because of the different multi-cultural backgrounds of the participants in this study in comparison to other studies whose sampled participants were more uniformed (Abd-Razak and Abdul-Talib, 2012; Maher and Mady, 2010). Previous studies also showed that there were errors in forecasting emotions which might occur during the choosing process where in this case was the purchasing or avoiding the surrogate products (Loewenstein and Schkade, 1999).

Our next finding peered into the effect of perceived social pressure toward consumers. We found that subjective norms affected the purchasing or boycotting behavior of the consumers. This shows that subjective norms determine whether the consumers are reluctant to purchase the surrogate products associated with Israel or not. The Malaysian consumers in our study showed concern about the conflict in Palestine, and this was reflected in their purchasing behavior. If the social environment views purchasing the surrogate products as being negative, then they would be reluctant to purchase the surrogate products. The finding is in line with Maher and Mady (2010), who showed that subjective norms affected the consumer’s willingness to boycott. Malaysia is reportedly a collectivist country (Hofstede, 1980, 1984) where a close, long-term commitment to the group or family is crucial. As a collectivist country, the opinions of the group members are important and deviations from the group norms are not highly tolerable. In such a society, Malaysian consumers believe that people care about their purchasing behavior, and this might explain why subjective norms affect Malaysian consumers’ purchasing behavior.

Finally, we found that Malaysian consumers still viewed the surrogate products associated with Israel positively even though they were reluctant to purchase them. Previous studies showed similar results where consumers had positive product judgments despite being reluctant to purchase the products because of animosity (Klein et al., 1998; Shin, 2001). However, the relationship between product judgments and willingness or reluctance to purchase seems to differ or consumers in different contexts, as
Maher and Mady (2010) showed no significant relationship between product judgment and willingness to purchase for Kuwaiti consumers. This indicates that Malaysian consumers may view and evaluate the surrogate products without any bias despite the feeling of animosity toward Israel and are unwilling to purchase products associated with Israel. However, their judgments of the products are not influenced by the animosity toward Israel.

Theoretical and managerial contributions

Previous research works have shown that purchase intention helps predict subsequent purchases (Abdul-Talib et al., 2016; Engel et al., 1978; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Thus, understanding consumers’ purchasing behavior helps marketers and multinational companies to anticipate and strategize toward surrogate boycotts.

The products chosen in the present study were surrogate products associated with Israel. The chosen products in this study are available in Malaysia and have substitutes. This is important, as consumers can choose to use an alternative product when they have decided not to purchase the surrogate products. Therefore, managers need to understand the intention of the consumers to purchase the products from companies associated with the offending countries. By doing so, the companies can avoid huge losses for something they do not do. Companies need to understand the implication of such boycott toward their sales and take measures to avoid being associated with the offending countries, as Malaysian consumers in this study seemed willing to participate in a surrogate boycott.

Companies also need to understand that Malaysian consumers’ purchasing intention is influenced by subjective norms as Malaysia is a collectivist country where saving face and social pressure impact their decisions. Companies can use such understanding to market their products by ensuring that the products are socially accepted. By doing so, the companies can avoid making mistakes that damage them financially and risk their local reputation.

It is important to note that Malaysian consumers judge some products independently and without bias. This is certainly a relief for managers, as they can plan their marketing strategies to compete better in the Malaysian market even in a boycott situation. Multinational and local firms should, therefore, focus on providing better products (i.e. that are reliable, have quality, better design), as Malaysian consumers make assessment of the products before making their purchase decision. Understanding the factors that could lead to a surrogate boycott in Malaysia can help managers to be able to plan and take necessary action to respond to such crisis. Managers can also position their companies in such a way that they are not associated with an offending country to prevent them from being victims of a surrogate boycott.

Limitations and future research

There are several limitations in this study. First, this study only focused on consumers in Kuala Lumpur; hence, the result may not be generalizable to the whole population of consumers in Malaysia (Ouellet, 2007). As this study was cross-sectional and the data were limited to three shopping centers in Kuala Lumpur, the results are only able to reveal the effect or relationship between the variables at a specific point of time (Cavana et al., 2001). As such, they need to be interpreted with caution. The present study was also unable to describe in full the extent of the participating decision and motivations of Malaysian consumers in boycotting the surrogate product. Thus, future research may need to incorporate more variables to get a wider perspective of the willingness to purchase the surrogate products (e.g. ethnocentrism, religiosity). Future research may also wish to consider bigger sample size, from various cities representing the regions of Malaysia for more reliable results. Additionally, with larger samples, further tests can be conducted to test the effect of various demographic factors on willingness to boycotts surrogate products.
1. This research was supported by a grant from the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, FRGS grant # 11867, for which the authors are indebted.

References


**Further reading**


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**Appendix**

Willingness to boycott surrogate products (Adopted from Klein et al., 1998; Nijssen and Douglas, 2004).

- Whenever possible, I avoid buying products that are related to Israel.
- I would feel guilty if I buy products that are related to Israel.
- I would never buy products that are related to Israel.
- I do not like the idea of owning products that are related to Israel.
- If two products with equal quality but one is related to Israel while another is non-related to Israel, I would pay 10 per cent more for the product that is not related to Israel.

Animosity (adopted from Klein et al., 1998; Ettenson and Klein, 2005).
I dislike Israel.
I feel angry towards Israel.
I will never forgive Israel for oppressing Palestinians.
Israel don’t care about what other nations think of their actions.
Israel should pay for what they have done to Palestine.
Malaysia should never have any diplomatic relationship with Israel.
Israel will always cause problems and take advantages towards others.

If I don't buy products associated with Israel, I would feel:

• Happy
• Satisfied
• Proud
• Relief
• Thankful

Negative anticipated emotions (Adopted from Bagozzi and Pieters, 1998).
If I buy products associated with Israel, I would feel:

• Fear
• Guilt
• Ashamed
• Worried
• Regret

Subjective norms (Adopted from Lee and Green, 1991).
If I buy products that are related to Israel, people around me would feel like I am supporting the oppression towards the Palestinians.

• People who are close to me feel that I should not buy products that are related to Israel.
• People who are important to me will be displeased when I buy products that are related to Israel.
• People close to me do not support of purchasing products that are related to Israel.
• People around me do not encourage me to buy products that are related to Israel.

Product judgments (Adopted from Klein et al., 1998).

• The surrogate products are carefully produced and have fine workmanship.
• The surrogate products show a high degree of technological advancements.
• The surrogate products usually show a very clever use of color and design.
• The surrogate products are quite reliable and seem to last the desired length of time.
• The surrogate products are usually a good value for money.