



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***CONSUMER ANIMOSITY, CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION
AND SOLIDARITY AS ANTECEDENTS OF BOYCOTT IN
MALAYSIA***

RAIMI NUR HAKIMI BINTI MOHAMED GHAZALI

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By

RAIMI NUR HAKIMI BINTI MOHAMED GHAZALI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Science**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Science

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May 2019

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This study addresses the consumer boycott phenomena in Malaysia. It examines the influences of Consumer Animosity, Conspicuous Consumption, and Solidarity on the decision to boycott; and to discover how Consumer Power moderates the decision to boycott. Using Social Cognitive Theory as the underpinning theory, this study proposes a conceptual framework that focuses on the relationship of: (i) Consumer Animosity on boycott, (ii) Conspicuous Consumption on boycott, (iii) Solidarity on boycott, and (iv) the moderating role of Consumer Power on the relationship between the exogenous and endogenous variables. Questionnaires were distributed to Malaysian consumers aged 18 and above. Online respondents were collected by utilising convenience sampling technique, while offline respondents were collected by employing snowballing sampling technique. Ultimately, 254 questionnaires were usable for data analysis. In this study, Variance Based-Structural Equation Modelling (VB-SEM) was used to analyse the data (SmartPLS 3.0). Our analysis reveals that all the exogenous constructs have positive relationships with the endogenous construct. In particular, solidarity – as a newly proposed construct – has a positive relationship with boycott. However, the relationships of the moderating factor showed non-significant results. In conclusion, drawing from the findings of this study, the boycott literature is extended by the result of the positive relationship between solidarity and boycott. This has also extends Social Cognitive Theory because it expands the existing knowledge and offers new insight. Practically, managers and marketers are able to strategize their marketing plans better so as to avoid consumers from boycotting their products and/or organisation.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Univeriti Putra Malaysia
Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains

PERMUSUHAN PENGGUNA, PENGGUNAAN KETARA DAN UKHWAH SEBAGAI ANTESEDEN KEPADA BOIKOT DI MALAYSIA

Oleh

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Kajian ini adalah berkaitan fenomena memboikot dalam kalangan pengguna di Malaysia. Sehubungan itu, kajian ini mengkaji pengaruh permusuhan pengguna, penggunaan ketara, dan ukhwah atas keputusan pengguna untuk memboikot; dan juga untuk menemukan bagaimana kuasa pengguna – sebagai moderator – dapat mempengaruhi keputusan untuk memboikot. Dengan menggunakan teori “Social Cognitive Theory” sebagai penyangga di dalam kajian ini, kerangka konsep yang telah diperkenalkan di dalam kajian ini memfokus kepada perhubungan di antara: (i) permusuhan pengguna terhadap boikot, (ii) penggunaan ketara terhadap boikot, (iii) ukhwah terhadap boikot, dan (iv) faktor moderator kuasa pengguna terhadap kesemua pembolehubah eksogen dan endogen yang terlibat. Soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada pengguna yang berumur 18 tahun ke atas di Malaysia. Maklum balas responden atas talian telah dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan teknik persampelan mudah manakala maklum balas responden secara bertulis telah dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan teknik persampelan 'bebola salji'. Hasilnya, sebanyak 254 soal selidik boleh digunakan untuk analisis data. Di dalam kajian ini, “Variance Based-Structural Equation Modelling” (VB-SEM) telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data (menggunakan perisian SmartPLS 3.0). Hasil analisis mendapati bahawa kesemua konstruk eksogen mempunyai hubungan positif dengan konstruk endogen. Secara khususnya, ukhwah – sebagai konstruk yang baru dicadangkan – mempunyai hubungan positif dengan boikot. Namun, hubungan faktor moderator (iaitu, kuasa pengguna) terhadap kesemua pembolehubah menunjukkan keputusan yang tidak signifikan. Kesimpulannya, berdasarkan hasil kajian ini, literatur dalam topik boikot telah berjaya diperluaskan berdasarkan pertalian positif di dalam hubungan ukhwah terhadap boikot. Kajian ini juga telah memperluaskan pengetahuan “Social Cognitive Theory” yang sedia ada dan menawarkan penemuan yang baru. Daripada perspektif praktikal pula, hasil kajian ini telah membuka peluang kepada

pengurus dan pemasar di dalam syarikat untuk mengatur strategi pemasaran yang lebih baik; dan juga dapat melindungi produk dan/atau syarikat mereka daripada diboikot oleh pengguna.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CB-SEM	Covariance-Based – Structural Equation Modelling
CMV	Common Method Variance
CR	Composite Reliability
CVR	Cross Validated Redundancy
f^2	Effect Size
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modelling
Q^2	Predictive Relevance
R^2	Co-efficient of Determination
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SRMR	Standardised Root Mean Square Error
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait
APA	Antithetical Political Attitude
CC	Conspicuous Consumption
GA	General Animosity
NPA	Negative Personal Experience
PT	Perceived Threat
CMP	Customer Market Power
CMS	Knowledgeable Consumers
CL	Large Consumers
NCDS	Switching Costs

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Boycott is an increasingly important area in business economics. This study addresses problems faced by business entities who face challenges and possible threats of being boycotted by consumers. These problems can be addressed through an in-depth study to understand the psychology of consumer boycott. In turn, this study should provide suitable strategies for preventing future boycott and financial damage. Hence, the discipline of this study belongs to marketing strategy in the consumer behaviour context. The background of this study will be discussed, along with the overview of boycott in human history, the overview of the concept of consumer boycott, and continue with the problem statement, research questions, research objectives, significance of study, scope of the study, and chapter conclusion.

1.2 Background of Study

Malaysia is a country with diverse citizens that gathers different cultures, religions, ethnicity, and beliefs. The ethnic groups that form Malaysia comprise of Bumiputera, Chinese, Indians, non-Malaysia citizens, and others. According to Malaysia's Department of Statistics, as at the second quarter of 2018, Malaysia has a total population of 32,385,000 (Population Quick Info, 2018).

Table 1.1 : Population by Ethnic Group, Malaysia

Ethnic group	Total Population
Bumiputera	20,071,900
Chinese	6,685,500
Indians	2,010,400
Others	294,500
Non-Malaysian Citizens	3,322,700
Total	32,385,000

Source: Population Quick Info (2018)

As a result of the growing population, it has also been reported that Malaysian consumers are spending more. According to the Department of Statistics, Malaysia, there has been a hike in the Malaysian monthly household

consumption. It was recorded that the total mean of monthly household consumption expenditure increased by a total of 6% from 2014 to 2016 (Report on Household Expenditure, 2016). It has also been reported that from 2014 to 2016, the urban consumers compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) increased by 5.8%, while that for rural consumers increased by 5.7%.

From the above data, it can be interpreted that the increase in consumption corresponded to the increase in needs and wants for more products and services in the market. This also implies that consumers have gained power and are more inclined to choose whether or not to consume certain products or services (Denegri-Knott, Zwick, & Schroeder, 2006). Consumers have become concerned about the ethical conduct of organisations and have the tendency to demand for organisations to practice good moral values (Pezzullo, 2011). Thus, an organisation that has been deemed unethical towards its environment and people might engender its consumers to boycott the organisation.

There are reports claiming that boycotts affect the boycotters rather than affecting the economic status of the boycotted target (Ar, 2014). However, on the contrary, there are also reports where boycotts have succeeded – as in the case of Malaysia, where boycotts have been successful in affecting the object of the boycott (Chu, 2014; Wahab, 2014).

Boycotts may be destructive toward organisations or countries that have been targeted; it may cost millions – even billions – in damage and economic cost to organisations. Moreover, boycotts in Malaysia do not only involve problems related to the food and beverage industries (e.g., Gardenia in 2012, Farm Fresh Milk in 2017, and Cadbury in 2014) but it also involves political issues, beliefs, cultures, and national issues (e.g., “Buy British Last” in 1983; “Boycott Israel” in 2005; and “Low Yat Plaza IT Mall Boycott” in 2015).

This research focuses on the role of consumers and other factors surrounding the boycott of business organisations; and the context is Malaysia.

1.3 Problem Statement

Many past research have focused their consumer boycott research on the perspective of the business organisation, e.g., how boycott devastates an organisation's business etc., (Brennan, 1992; Davidson, Worrell, & El-Jelly, 1995; Friedman, 1999; Innes, 2006; Koku, 2012; Koku, Akhigbe, & Springer, 1997; Pruitt & Friedman, 1986; Shebil, Rasheed, & Al-shammari, 2011). Hence, there is a gap in the consumer boycott body of knowledge (Hutter & Hoffmann, 2013) that can be addressed: specifically, then, this research shall focus on the psyche of the consumer *vis-à-vis* boycott (Abd-Razak & Abdul-Talib, 2012;

Ettenson & Klein, 2005). Furthermore, consumer boycott can be classified as an important dimension of consumer complaint behaviour because it is an individual's response to organisations strategy and offerings (Singh, 1988). It is important for researchers and policy makers to understand the consumers' underlying intention to boycott specific targets and the reason that influences them to boycott (Makarem & Jae, 2016).

Consumer boycotts are believed to create negative impact among consumer perception and purchasing behaviour (Ettenson & Klein, 2005; Klein *et al.*, 2002); however, they are not particularly well understood in Malaysia. This is probably the result of the limited availability of discussions and findings on consumer boycott (Abd-Razak & Abdul-Talib, 2012). To be sure, there have been research on consumer boycott in Malaysia; however, the focus of consumer boycott research in Malaysia has mainly focused on Muslim consumers (Fischer, 2007; Kamarudin, 2012; Leong, 2014; Wahab, 2014). In fact, in Malaysia, consumer boycott research is still perceived to be unimportant by managers and policy makers (Ettenson *et al.*, 2006). This view has resulted in a limited knowledge of consumer boycott in Malaysia (Abd-Razak & Abdul-Talib, 2012). Yet, if managers and policy makers understand the reasons underlying the consumer boycotts motives, it may contribute to a better knowledge of consumerism in the consumer behaviour and other related contexts (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2013). Thus, a comprehensive framework of consumer boycott is essential to help future researchers and organisations to better understand this issue.

Extant literature, consumer animosity and conspicuous consumption has been recorded to have relationship with boycott (Al-Hyari *et al.*, 2012; Amine *et al.*, 2005; Little & Singh, 2015; Sen *et al.*, 2001). Furthermore, consumer power was tested as an independent variable to boycott, and the result was significant (Desmond, 2003; Holt, 2002). However, the relationship between solidarity and boycott has never been tested. Malaysians from all generations have been reported to show high commitment in solidarity toward each other; especially toward their family members (Leeson, 2016). Furthermore, Leeson (2016) has also recorded that Malaysians are willing to give the strongest level of support toward each other in comparison to their neighbouring countries (e.g., Philippines and Singapore). This implies that Malaysian has a sense of solidarity – and this triggers the current study to test the relationship between solidarity and boycott.

1.4 Research Questions

Research questions are broad guidelines that are clear and focused. The research questions for this study are formulated based on the gaps discovered in previous research literature. This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Do consumer animosity, conspicuous consumption and solidarity influence the consumer boycott decision?
2. Does consumer power moderate the boycott decision?

1.5 Research Objectives

Research objectives are the specific list of aims and tasks that will guide this study. The research objectives for this study are developed to focus the purpose of the research questions. The objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the influences of consumer animosity, conspicuous consumption, and solidarity on the decision to boycott.
2. To investigate how consumer power moderates the decision to boycott.

1.6 Significance of Study

In this Section, the *modus operandi* to fill the gaps in the theoretical and practical contexts will be discussed and explained.

1.6.1 Theoretical Gaps

Many boycott literature focus more on the organisation-perspective (Brennan, 1992; Friedman, 1999; Innes, 2006; Shebil *et al.*, 2011) rather than on the consumer perspective (Abd-Razak & Abdul-Talib, 2012). Furthermore, past research regarding consumer boycott mainly focus on political sciences, economics, and organisational perspective rather than on the consumer behaviour field (Ettenson & Klein, 2005). Thus, there is a gap in the literature to understand the consumer behaviour and psychological theories that may explain consumer boycott.

Consequently, this study focuses more on consumers' behaviour that may influence the consumer *vis-à-vis* boycott. Moreover, this study concentrates on the effect of consumer power and its impact on consumer intention to boycott. This study is not planned to be race-based; neither, religion based – instead, it will be a broad-based study of consumer boycott in Malaysia.

The framework for this study is adopted from an original study by Al-Hyari *et al.*, (2012) (Appendix A) – from being loyal consumers to being boycotters. The framework depicts how religiosity affects consumer perception, thus resulting in consumer willingness to discontinue their relationship with targetted organisations. Furthermore, the framework also discusses the negative impact

of Country-Of-Origin on animosity towards the targetted organisations; and, also on conspicuous consumption – that eventually leads to consumer boycotts.

However, this study is an adaptation of the original framework because it only focuses on one part of the original framework, which is the final half. The reason for this is to test the usefulness of this part in Malaysia's boycott context.

The full original framework from Al-Hyari *et al.*, (2012) can be viewed in Appendix A.

Below is the adaptation part from the original framework from Al-Hyari *et al.*, (2012):

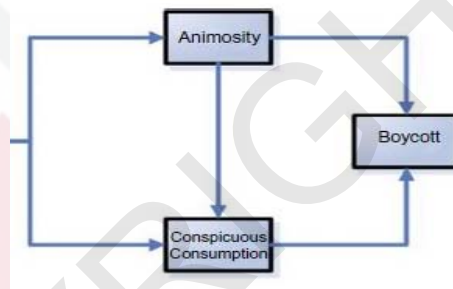


Figure 1.1 : Adaptation Part from the Original Framework

Although the original framework of Al-Hyari *et al.*, has covered quite a broad view on consumer boycott, it inheres several weaknesses:

1. Al-Hyari *et al.*'s framework did not account for the role of consumer power that may have an effect on the consumer decision making process. According to Wathieu *et al.*, (2002), to understand consumers willingness to make a choice requires the research to understand the motivation of consumers in exercising their power; this critical observation implies that consumer power is a key moderator of the consumer decision making process. Past literatures suggests that power is an essential variable in discussing human behaviour in the psychology, organisational behaviour, and sociology contexts (Fiske, 1993; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Furthermore, not many research have discovered the impact of consumer power in the consumer decision making process and consumer behaviour context (Rucker & Galinsky, 2016). Consumer power has provided a better understanding of consumer social behaviour too (Galinsky, Rucker, & Magee, 2015;

Rucker & Galinsky, 2016). However, the consumer power construct is still largely absent from the consumer behaviour context, and this entices for more research on the consumer power construct primarily because consumers' daily activities comprise of different degrees of power (Rucker, Galinsky, & Dubois, 2012). Moreover, the consumer power construct has been researched as an independent variable, dependent variable, and mediator; but there is yet enough research of it as a moderator. Thus, this opens an opportunity for researchers to examine consumer power as a moderator.

2. Individuals are enticed to be in solidarity with members of their social group because they feel the need to be dependent on each other (Hechter, 1988). Furthermore, Hechter (1988) also stated that individuals tend to be compelled by their obligations to each other. In addition, solidarity can possibly happen between strangers because these individuals feel that they are capable of being equally hurt (Linklater, 2007). However, there are limited studies that assess solidarity as a factor that may have an effect on consumer behavior – certainly, solidarity is missing in Al-Hyari *et al.*'s framework, thus, prompting its inclusion in the framework proposed by this study.
3. As stated earlier on, this study will adopt only the final half of Al-Hyari *et al.*'s framework. Thus, this study will focus more on the usefulness of this part of the framework in testing boycott behaviour among consumers.

The adopted conceptual framework of the study is shown in Chapter 3, Section 3.2 : Conceptual Framework.

1.6.2 Practical Gaps

This study develops a comprehensive framework to understand consumer boycott. It addresses the following gap:

1. Practically, managers do not fully understand consumer boycott. In fact, they seem to think that boycotts are an insignificant issue – until the boycott happens! Consequently, managers are generally ill-prepared for boycotts and their responses are usually knee-jerk reactions. This gap must be addressed because consumer boycotts can cost millions and harm the brand equity of an organisation. This framework will help managers to better understand their consumers and plan strategy to avoid consumer boycotts.
2. Furthermore, it is good for government policy makers to strengthen the national solidarity, and identity.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on consumer animosity, conspicuous consumption, and solidarity as the antecedents to boycott; and consumer power as the moderating factor. Consumer animosity and conspicuous consumption are theoretically supported by literature to have an existing positive relationship with boycott. Meanwhile, solidarity is the variable that is newly proposed in this study. Furthermore, this study also attempts to measure consumer power as a moderating factor to boycott.

Following that, this study emphasises on Malaysian as the population, and it narrows down to Malaysian consumers as the target respondents. The target respondents of Malaysian consumers are aged between 18 to more than 77 years old. This is because, this age range is considered as having sound mind, and can make their own purchasing decisions without having to ask for others' consent. Furthermore, the age of majority in Malaysia is 18 years old.

The literature of the independent variable (e.g., consumer animosity, conspicuous consumption, and solidarity), dependent variable (e.g., boycott), and moderator (e.g., consumer power) will be extensively discussed in Chapter 2 : Literature Review.

1.8 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has summed up the literature on problems faced in consumer boycott – in particular, there is limited boycott research in Malaysia, and policy makers and managers disregard consumer boycott literature as an important; then, it discusses the research questions and research objectives. Next, this chapter discusses the significance of the study and presents the theoretical and practical gaps. Finally, this chapter explains the scope of the study.

In the next chapter (Chapter 2, "Literature Review"), each construct of this research's framework will be discussed. First, the introduction and the boycott literature will be discussed thoroughly, and this follows by consumer animosity literature, conspicuous consumption literature, solidarity literature, consumer power literature, and ends with a chapter conclusion. Then, the Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development will be discussed in Chapter 3. It starts with the introduction, and follows by conceptual framework, research hypothesis, theoretical framework, overview of theories, and finally the chapter conclusions. Next, Research Methodology is discussed in Chapter 4. Firstly, the introduction is discussed, then research paradigm, research design, population of study, sample size, sampling technique, data collection method, research instrument, data analysis method, and chapter conclusion are introduced.

Following this, Data Analysis and Findings are discussed in Chapter 5. It starts with the introduction, then it follows by data preparation, assessment of reflective measurement, assessing formative measurement, assessing goodness-of-fit indices, assessment of the structural model, assessing the moderating effect, overall hypothesis result, and the chapter conclusions. Finally, the thesis is concluded with Discussion and Conclusion in Chapter 6. It starts with the introduction, discussion of major findings, contribution of research, limitations of the research, suggestions for future research, and ends with chapter conclusion.



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