



Consumers' Meaning-Making of The Starbucks Boycott Campaign in The Context of The Israel-Palestine Conflict

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ABSTRACT

The escalating Israel-Palestine conflict has triggered a wave of global consumer activism, one of which is a boycott campaign targeting multinational brands such as Starbucks. This phenomenon highlights the strong connection between political identity, moral expression, and consumer behavior. This study aims to explore how individuals receive, interpret, and respond to boycott messages against Starbucks within the context of the conflict. Employing a qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews and digital archive analysis. Informants were purposively selected based on shared characteristics and the intensity of their engagement with the issue. The findings reveal diverse decoding positions, dominant, negotiated, and oppositional, shaped by cultural background, political orientation, personal experience, and brand loyalty. Social media shapes emotional narratives, reinforces symbolic resistance, and shifts perception and consumption behavior. These findings underscore the complexity of political consumerism and demonstrate the active role of consumers in redefining brand image amid socio-political crises. This study offers theoretical and practical contributions to understanding meaning-making dynamics in digital communication and emphasizes the urgency of audience-based approaches in brand communication strategies.

Keywords: Negative campaign, Boycott, Reception theory, Starbucks, Israel Palestine conflict.

INTRODUCTION

The Israel–Palestine conflict is one of the most complex and prolonged geopolitical conflicts in modern history. The roots of this conflict can be traced back to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 when the British government expressed its support for establishing a "national home" for the Jewish people in Palestine (Hammond, 2017). Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, a series of wars, occupations, and territorial expansions have occurred, sparking global debates over the legality, morality, and justice of this conflict. One of the most controversial aspects of the conflict is Israel's use of military force against Palestinian civilians, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Repeated military operations, such as the 2023 Gaza War, have resulted in thousands of deaths and injuries, including women and children.

According to reports from the United Nations, the number of civilian casualties in this conflict is highly significant. It has raised serious concerns about potential human rights violations and war crimes. Some observers and human rights organizations have even accused these actions of constituting genocide, although such claims remain subject to ongoing debate within the realm of international law. (Culverwell, 2017). Israel insists that its actions are acts of self-defense against Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza (Hasan & Buheji, 2024).

In response to Israel's military aggression, various global social movements have emerged. One of the most prominent non-violent resistance strategies is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. This movement aims to exert economic, political, and social pressure on Israel to end its human rights violations against the Palestinian people. As one of the key elements of this movement, boycotting is defined as the deliberate act of refraining from buying, using, or cooperating with specific individuals or institutions as a form of protest (Strawson, 2023). This strategy harnesses consumer power to influence state policies by putting pressure on corporations directly or indirectly involved in occupation or oppression.

One of the primary targets of the boycott campaign is multinational companies such as Starbucks. As the largest coffeehouse chain in the world, with over 32,000 stores in 80 countries, Starbucks holds significant economic and symbolic influence. The boycott against Starbucks emerged from the perception that the company supports Israel through business ties or social donations. Although Starbucks has officially denied direct involvement in funding the Israeli military, records show that the company donated \$200,000 in 2021 to support social programs operating in Israel, which sparked controversy (Dalakas, Melancon, & Szczytynski, 2023). As a result, pro-Palestinian organizations have called for a boycott of Starbucks as part of broader efforts to halt the flow of

funds to a state perceived to be committing severe human rights violations. The boycott of Starbucks is not only economic but also political and symbolic. It represents a rejection of the hegemonic narrative that obscures corporate involvement in humanitarian conflicts.

In practice, the boycott of Starbucks has already produced significant initial impacts. Several reports have indicated a decline in the company's stock value, the closure of stores in certain regions, employee layoffs, and incidents of vandalism against Starbucks outlets. If this movement grows and gains broader support, its long-term consequences could include a decline in the company's goodwill, threats to operating licenses in certain countries, and even pressure to change its corporate social policies. However, the long-term effectiveness of the boycott largely depends on the movement's ability to sustain momentum and expand its global support base.

The boycott of Starbucks reflects the complexity of the relationship between consumption, political identity, and digital mediation in society. Boycott calls are viewed as ethical responses to geopolitical conflict and symbolic acts of communication that shape public discourse and shift values among consumers. Exploring how individuals subjectively interpret campaign messages is important to understand this phenomenon fully. An approach that views consumers as active agents in the interpretive process allows us to map out the variation in responses, from acceptance to rejection of the boycott message. This, in turn, reveals how meaning is constructed and how such dynamics impact consumer behavior and brand perception, ultimately opening up space for more reflective and responsive communication strategies that address the diversity of audience interpretations.

A relevant framework to explain the process of meaning-making in boycott campaigns can be found in Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model. "Encoding" refers to how messages are encoded by media producers or institutions, while "decoding" refers to how audiences interpret messages. Hall posits that meaning is not fixed but depends on the reader's or audience's position, which can be dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, or oppositional (Fuchs, 2023; Hall, 2019). Starbucks encodes its brand image as a company that upholds progressive values, social responsibility, and ethical sustainability. However, pro-Palestinian audiences engage in oppositional decoding of this message, interpreting Starbucks' involvement as support for oppression and human rights violations. This decoding process creates alternative meanings contrasting with the intended message and fuels collective actions such as boycotts. Thus, the boycott manifests consumer resistance to dominant narratives conveyed through corporate branding strategies.

Previous studies have explored the dynamics of consumer behavior in

boycott campaigns, particularly regarding political motivation, social pressure, and the role of media. [Flecha-Ortiz, Rivera-Guevarrez, Santos-Corrada, & Fonseca \(2024\)](#) argue that ideological representation in advertising can shape the political image of a brand as a commodity consumed within the framework of the "society of the spectacle," where consumers' ideological and symbolic identification influences boycott or buycott preferences. In a broader context, [Mulyono and Rolando \(2025\)](#) affirm that consumer boycotts have evolved into digital activism that affects brand reputation and business performance. However, they highlight that most existing research lacks attention to audience reception in diverse cultural settings. Meanwhile, [Avci \(2024\)](#) investigated 'Turkish consumers' boycott intentions toward brands associated with the Israel–Palestine conflict and found that perceived efficacy and social pressure are key predictors of participation, with social media playing a significant mediating role. Similarly, studies by [Kelm & Dohle \(2018\)](#) and [Boulianne \(2022\)](#) emphasize that online communication strengthens the link between political information exposure and consumer action, with symbolism and digital community affiliation accelerating the spread and internalization of campaign messages. Nevertheless, existing research emphasizes behavioral intention or campaign outcomes rather than delving deeply into how symbolic consumers reconstruct messages. Studies that integrate audience reception perspectives through Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding theory, especially within digital campaigns in Indonesia related to geopolitical conflicts like Palestine–Israel, remain very limited.

This research further explores the subjective experiences of individuals who participated in the boycott against Starbucks, focusing on the psychological, social, and political motivations behind their involvement. Using a phenomenological approach, this study seeks to identify intrinsic factors such as moral outrage at injustice, empathy toward victims, and a commitment to social justice values, as well as extrinsic factors such as social pressure, media influence, and community trends. The research will reveal the factors influencing consumer responses and behaviors toward the Starbucks boycott campaign in the context of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Additionally, the study will show how consumers decode the messages encoded within the boycott campaign based on their stance toward the issue. This study integrates communication theory, consumer behavior, and social psychology into a cohesive theoretical framework. It is expected to contribute meaningfully to the development of media reception theory, the study of political consumer behavior, and the discourse on individual agency in confronting hegemonic narratives. The findings may serve as a reference for companies in designing communication strategies and responses to reputational crises, particularly when facing oppositional decoding by increasingly critical and

politically engaged consumers. Understanding how consumers construct meaning and act based on their interpretations of corporate messages becomes crucial in a global landscape that is increasingly interconnected both digitally and socially.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive phenomenological design (Husserl & Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Nasir, Nurjana, Shah, Sirodj, & Afghani, 2023). This approach was chosen to explore the subjective experiences of consumers in receiving and interpreting the boycott campaign against Starbucks in the context of the Israel–Palestine conflict. The phenomenological design describes the phenomena and meanings that emerge from individuals in response to the issues surrounding Starbucks. The object of this research is the negative campaign in the form of provocative boycott messages circulating on social media, encouraging people to refrain from consuming Starbucks products as a show of support for Palestine amid the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. To facilitate curating these provocative messages, the researcher selected several posts containing the hashtag #boycottstarbucks on the social media platform X.

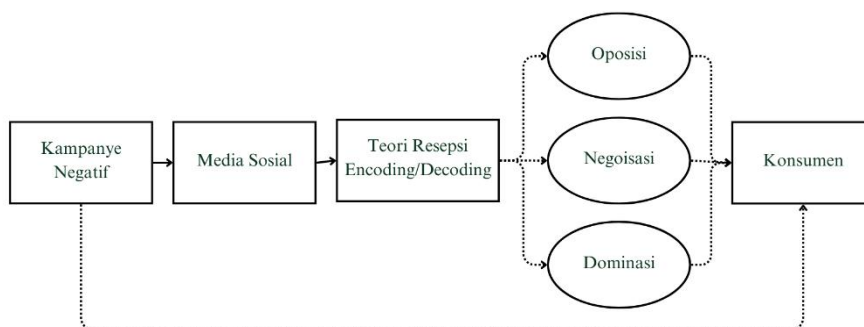


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Compiled from various sources

This study uses purposive sampling with an intensity and homogeneity approach, as Patton (2002) explained. The intensity approach is based on informants who demonstrate a high level of engagement with the phenomenon being studied. In contrast, the homogeneity approach ensures a similar diversity standard across all informants, making the data collected more specific and focused. Based on these criteria, the sample was selected from informants who actively consume Starbucks products at least three times a week, each with varying levels of involvement intensity.

Data in this study were collected through interviews and archival research (Neuman, 2013). The research instrument consists of an interview guide designed to deeply explore consumers' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations regarding the Starbucks boycott campaign. The archival study was conducted by reviewing previous similar research and relevant articles and monitoring the development of the issue through social media platforms. The collected data will be analyzed using Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding framework as the foundation for understanding how consumers interpret boycott campaign messages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interview results generally reveal that respondents held diverse perspectives in response to the questions. This diversity reflects the complexity of understanding consumer reactions to sociopolitical issues involving global brands such as Starbucks. The responses indicate consumers' differing decoding positions regarding the boycott messages circulated widely on social media. From the qualitative data analysis, six major themes emerged that significantly marked the response patterns of participants: (1) respondents' initial experiences with Starbucks; (2) reasons for choosing Starbucks as a preferred brand; (3) responses to information regarding the Israel–Palestine conflict; (4) perceptions of the boycott campaign; (5) views on the boycott's impact on Starbucks, such as declining sales and store closures; and (6) respondents' concrete actions after learning about the issue affecting Starbucks. These themes form the foundation for identifying the decoding orientation of each respondent, whether it aligns with dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, or oppositional readings of the meanings encoded in the boycott campaign.

Variations in responses were influenced by personal experiences with the brand, social and cultural background, access to and understanding of media information, and personal attitudes toward social justice and ethical consumption. Some respondents demonstrated strong emotional involvement and shifted toward concrete actions such as boycotting, while others remained neutral or skeptical about the boycott's effectiveness. These findings highlight the importance of an interpretive approach to understanding consumer responses to controversial issues in the public sphere.

Based on the research findings, the phenomenon suggests that the Starbucks boycott campaign has generated varying impacts on the consumer behavior of participants. Some informants participated in the boycott, while others remained loyal Starbucks customers. This difference suggests that responses to the campaign are not uniform but are shaped by each individual's subjective context. Among those who engaged in the boycott, changes were

observed in their consumption patterns and a more negative attitude toward the Starbucks brand. In contrast, informants who did not participate in the boycott tended to maintain their consumption habits and positive brand perceptions.

The behaviors that emerged in response to the boycott campaign can be understood through a dynamic decoding framework. The findings indicate that boycott campaigns can significantly affect consumer behavior, including participation decisions, consumption patterns shifts, and brand perception changes. However, these effects are not uniform and depend on individual backgrounds, values, and personal experiences. These findings suggest that the meanings embedded in the campaign messages are not passively accepted but are reinterpreted by consumers through their frames of reference.

This study provides valuable insights into how consumers respond to and interpret boycott campaigns targeting specific brands, in this case, Starbucks, in the context of the Israel–Palestine conflict. By applying Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding theory and the concept of audience reception, the research uncovers the complex dynamics involved in the reception and interpretation of messages conveyed through boycott campaigns.

Encoding Process and Decoding Positions in the Starbucks Boycott Campaign

In the Starbucks boycott campaign linked to the Israel–Palestine conflict, organizers and activists have strategically encoded messages through strong narratives, symbols, and ideologies to shape public opinion and influence consumer behavior. One prominent expression used in the campaign is "From The River to The Sea," which refers to Palestine's historical, geographical boundaries from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Jordan River in the east. This phrase carries political and symbolic dimensions to articulate resistance and global solidarity with the Palestinian people. Based on interviews with informants, the encoding process is most often conveyed through social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, where visuals, slogans, and testimonials are used to construct collective meaning. Social media is the primary channel for disseminating ideological interpretations and emotionally and politically engaging consumers in the boycott campaign.

The narrative constructed in the boycott campaign accuses Starbucks of supporting and contributing to Israel's occupation of Palestine. This narrative also includes brands like McDonald's, Unilever, and Zara. As noted by Medina:

"On social media, most people voicing the boycott do not provide references or data to support it. They just list products and brands we are supposedly not allowed to use or buy, just saying, 'do not use these.'"

This statement reflects that the spread of boycott narratives is not always based on verified information but rather on a logic of social repetition and emotional affiliation reinforced by digital communities. This narrative is strengthened through the use of symbols such as the Palestinian flag, images of injured Palestinian children, and slogans like "Stop Genocide" or "Boycott Starbucks for Palestine." As explained by Erlina Savitri:

"There are a lot of brands and food items being boycotted. They say it is because they support Israel."

These visual symbols aim to maximize emotional and moral resonance, turning the boycott campaign into effective political communication. This aligns with Stuart Hall's encoding theory, in which message producers encode political meaning into messages, hoping audiences will interpret them according to a specific ideological framework (Hall, 2019). The ideology encoded in the boycott campaign suggests that consuming products from brands associated with Israel constitutes indirect involvement in acts of genocide against Palestinians. It also portrays resistance against injustice and oppression faced by the Palestinian people. This encoding process relies heavily on the power of social media to spread messages widely and mobilize collective action.

Research findings show that the encoding process in the Starbucks boycott campaign involves constructing narratives, using powerful symbols, and transmitting specific ideologies by organizers and activists. The narrative centers on allegations of Starbucks' involvement in Israel's occupation of Palestine, supported by visuals such as the Palestinian flag, images of wounded children, and slogans like "Stop Genocide" or "Boycott Starbucks for Palestine." These symbols function as visual markers and tools for shaping collective meaning and triggering emotional and moral responses from the audience. The ideology conveyed is resistance against injustice and oppression. Encoding is carried out through social media practices, where activists utilize visuals and hashtags to amplify the narrative and foster digital solidarity.

The decoding process, or the interpretation of messages by informants, shows variations in reception positions, consistent with Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding theory. Informants in the oppositional position rejected the messages for various reasons, including questioning the validity of the claims or favoring a more moderate approach to the conflict. Those in the negotiated position may recognize the concerns raised by the campaign but find the symbols or ideology too provocative or radical. Meanwhile, some informants occupied a dominant-hegemonic position, feeling compelled to support the Palestinian cause and pressure Starbucks to change policies perceived as violating human rights in Palestine.

These findings confirm that the reception of boycott campaign messages is not a one-way process but a negotiation of meaning between message producers and receivers. This aligns with previous studies using the encoding/decoding framework to analyze audience reception. For example, Alasuutari (1999) in Aitken, Gray, & Lawson (2008) revealed variation in decoding positions among audiences watching the television program *Dallas*, with some accepting the dominant reading and others taking oppositional or negotiated positions. Another study by Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel (2002) also found diverse decoding positions among audiences responding to gender representations in advertising.

The Starbucks boycott campaign related to the Israel–Palestine conflict produced varying effects on the consumption behavior of informants. Some chose to support the boycott and stopped purchasing Starbucks products as an act of solidarity with Palestine. Others remained loyal customers, motivated by personal preferences or disagreement with the politicization of consumption. Interviews identified four key factors influencing these responses: (1) cultural background shaping sensitivity to the Palestine issue, (2) personal experience with the Starbucks brand, (3) individual political views on the conflict, and (4) pre-established brand loyalty formed through emotional attachment or service satisfaction.

Cultural background plays a significant role in shaping how informants interpret and respond to the boycott campaign. Culture shapes individuals' values concerning justice, solidarity, and collective identity. Informants with cultural backgrounds that support the Palestinian struggle or who were raised in environments with intense sensitivity to the Palestinian issue tended to support the boycott. As stated by Erlina and Medina:

"I feel deeply sad and disturbed by what is happening in Palestine. Especially with how social media is filled with it, it feels more like a one-sided attack than a war." (Erlina)

"I have known about this war for a long time, not just from the last six months. It is heartbreaking. It is unbelievable that this could happen for so many years." (Medina)

These statements show that cultural background shapes emotional and moral engagement with humanitarian issues, making the boycott message feel like an ethical obligation.

Personal experiences, either directly or via media, also play a role in contextualizing the meaning of the boycott campaign. This factor is crucial because personal experience fosters empathy and moral urgency. Information is not processed neutrally but through an affective lens that reinforces dominant or

negotiated decoding positions, depending on emotional intensity and individual interpretation. Informants who have experienced discrimination or witnessed conflict tend to be more receptive to morally charged messages. For example:

"Seeing what is happening in Palestine on social media is very upsetting. Even though I have not experienced it personally, I can feel their suffering." (Erlina)

"I have known about the conflict for a while. It is frustrating to see how some media just spin the narrative to support Israel. Every time I see news about violence there, I feel deeply concerned. It is not just political; it is a human rights issue." (Meidina)

Informants' political views influence their decoding positions toward the Starbucks boycott campaign. This factor acts as a mechanism of rationalization. Some informants applied a critical or defensive approach to the boycott narrative, especially when they perceived the messages as biased or lacking context. As expressed by Erlina and Tommy:

"At first, I was skeptical about Starbucks' connection to Israel, but after seeing the campaign on social media, I started questioning it and eventually decided to visit Starbucks less." (Erlina)

"Honestly, I care about what is happening, but I do not think it is directly related to the Starbucks outlets in Indonesia. So I do not see the connection." (Tommy)

Brand loyalty also shaped how informants interpreted and responded to the boycott campaign. Loyalty involves emotional and historical dimensions that create resistance to negative information. Informants with a long-standing relationship with Starbucks, through positive experiences, routines, or brand comfort, tended to reject or ignore the boycott narrative. Loyalty functions as an interpretive filter that preserves the brand image. In decoding terms, loyalty can drive consumers toward oppositional positions, as they perceive boycott messages as contradicting their personal experiences with the brand. As stated by Meidina and Tommy:

"I started going to Starbucks a lot during the pandemic because of great promos like buy one get one. That made me more loyal to Starbucks, even though I know about the boycott." (Meidina)

"I enjoy working at Starbucks; the place is comfortable and makes me more productive, especially with all the promotions. Starbucks also released a statement saying they're not involved as people claim." (Tommy)

Research findings indicate that informants' decoding positions toward the Starbucks boycott campaign are influenced by four main factors: cultural background shaping social sensitivity, personal experiences with the brand, political views on the Israel–Palestine conflict, and pre-existing brand loyalty. These four factors form the interpretive framework through which individuals filter and assign meaning to the campaign messages they encounter.

Cultural background determines how informants interpret and respond to the boycott. Cultural context defines core values, including perceptions of global justice, empathy toward oppressed groups, and sensitivity to humanitarian issues. Informants raised in environments with cultural or religious affiliations to Palestine tended to adopt dominant-hegemonic decoding positions, as their values aligned with the messages encoded in the campaign. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the role of cultural context in decoding processes. For example, [Katz & Liebes \(1990\)](#) found that audience reception of the television show *Dallas* varied significantly across countries, depending on cultural background.

Personal experiences, such as exposure to discrimination or witnessing conflict, also shaped how informants interpreted the boycott campaign. These experiences add emotional depth and personal relevance, enhancing the resonance of campaign messages. Informants with emotional proximity to the Palestinian conflict responded more empathetically and reflectively. This aligns with previous studies highlighting the role of lived experience in decoding ([Lewis-Peacock & Postle, 2012](#); [Philo, 2008](#)).

Political views also played a significant role in shaping decoding positions. Individuals sympathetic to the Palestinian struggle were more likely to affirm the encoded meanings of the boycott campaign. This supports earlier findings on the link between political orientation and media message reception ([Borah, Thorson, & Hwang, 2015](#); [Ribeiro, Calais, Almeida, & Meira Jr., 2017](#)).

Finally, brand loyalty influenced how informants responded to the campaign. Loyalty functions as a psychological buffer, resisting negative brand information. Consumers with long-standing emotional ties to Starbucks were likelier to reject or negotiate the encoded message due to product quality, positive experiences, or habitual use. High brand loyalty thus creates resistance to the boycott message, consistent with prior research linking brand loyalty to resistance against negative brand information ([Ahluwalia & Kaikati, 2023](#)).

Social Determinants of Informants' Decoding Positions

In response to the Starbucks boycott campaign related to the Israel–Palestine conflict, informants demonstrated a range of decoding processes toward the messages conveyed, reflecting the three leading positions described in Stuart

Hall's theory: oppositional, negotiated, and dominant-hegemonic. Informants in the oppositional position actively rejected the meanings encoded by boycott activists. They refused to accept the narrative that consuming Starbucks products is equivalent to supporting violence or oppression. This rejection was generally rooted in skepticism about the validity of the information, distrust of the political motives behind the campaign, or the belief that boycotts are ineffective in bringing about real change.

One informant who occupied an oppositional position was Tomi, who explained:

"Because once I looked into it, for example, I have brand loyalty, so if I like something, I will verify the facts first. And then, if it does not have any effect, I will not boycott."

Tomi's statement shows that decoding from an oppositional position is not purely a rejection of the message but involves meaning construction through information verification and brand loyalty.

In the negotiated position, informants neither entirely accepted nor outright rejected the meanings encoded in the Starbucks boycott campaign. Instead, they tended to interpret the message based on personal context and experience, selectively agreeing with or rejecting certain aspects. One such informant was Erlina Savitri, who said:

"Maybe those campaigning want people to stop using products from these companies, encouraging people to boycott. I guess that message did affect me a bit."

Erlina's response shows ambivalence; she understands the campaign's urgency but has not fully internalized its encoded meaning. This reflects a critical and selective reading of the message.

The dominant-hegemonic position is marked by the complete acceptance of the encoded meaning in the Starbucks boycott campaign. Informants in this position tend to agree with the narratives, symbols, and ideologies the campaign promotes. One such informant was Medina, who said:

"I did not boycott immediately. It was not a full boycott, but I started to cut back..."

Although Medina did not stop consuming, her response suggests a significant shift in values and awareness, acknowledging consumption's ethical and political dimensions. This indicates acceptance of the dominant meaning encoded by the campaign.

The findings also confirm the central role of social media as the primary

medium for disseminating the Starbucks boycott campaign. Social media is a distribution channel for information and a discursive space for exchanging views, forming opinions, and coordinating collective action. Campaign organizers and activists use platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok to share visual content, emotional narratives, and evidence linking Starbucks to the Israel–Palestine conflict. With a strong emphasis on visual appeal and storytelling, these messages evoke emotional reactions and inspire active participation in the boycott (Palacios-Florencio, Revilla-Camacho, Garzón, & Prado-Román, 2021).

These findings align with prior research that highlights the role of social media in the dynamics of social movements and negative campaigns. Stache (2015) argued that social media facilitates rapid and efficient mass mobilization in various resistance contexts. Similarly, Pfeffer, Zorbach, and Carley (2014) emphasized the effectiveness of social media in spreading harmful campaign content, influencing public perceptions of brands or institutions targeted. Thus, social media has become crucial in redefining power relations between consumers and corporations in digital arenas.

Impact of the Boycott Campaign on Consumer Attitudes and Behavior

The Starbucks boycott campaign related to the Israel–Palestine conflict has had varied impacts on informants' consumer behavior. These impacts can be observed through their decisions to participate or not in the boycott. Behavioral changes were also seen in the extent to which consumers spread boycott content via their social media and changes in their consumption patterns before and after exposure to the campaign. Moreover, changes occurred in their attitudes toward the Starbucks brand.

Informants' decisions to participate in the boycott were strongly influenced by internal factors such as beliefs, cultural background, and personal experiences before encountering the campaign on social media. These decisions also varied according to their decoding position.

“At first, I was unsure about the boycott, but after seeing many campaigns on social media, I started to reduce my Starbucks consumption to once or twice a week.” (Erlina)

“The boycott messages affected me. I did not stop completely, but I started cutting back.” (Meidina)

“If people are easily influenced by provocation without looking deeper, they will just attack or boycott outright. But if we dig deeper, we can avoid that kind of reaction.” (Tommy)

Erlina's statement reflects a transitional dynamic from a negotiated to a dominant position, where her decision was not immediate but was shaped gradually through meaning construction. Medina also acknowledges the campaign's influence, responding with a gradual reduction rather than complete rejection. On the other hand, Tommy demonstrates an oppositional decoding stance, arguing that boycott messages should be critically verified and rejecting participation when perceived as unfounded. His view illustrates how skepticism and brand loyalty can dilute the influence of campaign messages.

For some informants, the boycott campaign triggered critical reflection on their consumption habits, eventually leading to behavioral change. They began to avoid purchasing Starbucks products, sought local alternatives, and considered ethical and humanitarian values in their purchasing decisions. As expressed:

"Since the boycott campaign became viral on social media, I have become more selective and rarely go to Starbucks, now only once or twice a week." (Erlina)

"At first, I cut back little by little. I used to go weekly; now it is more like once a month." (Medina)

These changing consumption patterns, marked by reduced purchase frequency, indicate a gradual internalization of values, where campaign exposure led to critical reflection. Both informants represent consumers experiencing cognitive dissonance between prior brand loyalty and new socio-political awareness, responding through a gradual reduction in consumption. This change is an important indicator of the boycott campaign's effectiveness in transforming consumption from a purely economic act into a symbolic and moral action.

The campaign also affected and reshaped informants' attitudes and perceptions of the Starbucks brand:

"After learning about the boycott campaign, my attitude toward Starbucks became more negative, even though I used to be loyal." (Erlina)

"The boycott messages and news about the conflict made me rethink everything. I feel like Starbucks no longer aligns with my values, so I stopped buying their products." (Meidina)

Interview results reveal a brand meaning shift triggered by the boycott campaign. Once built through personal experience, loyalty was overtaken by ethical and moral considerations. Consumer identification with brand values became heavily influenced by prevailing social narratives. Consumers no longer assess brands solely by product quality but also by their perceived socio-political stance. This reflects a growing demand for value-brand coherence, where

consumers expect alignment between brand image and personal values.

This shift marks a transition in consumer orientation, from individual satisfaction-based consumption to value-based consumption, where ethical alignment and social responsibility are prioritized over convenience or habit.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that consumers are not passive recipients of campaign messages; instead, they engage in diverse decoding processes—ranging from dominant-hegemonic to negotiated and oppositional positions—based on their cultural background, personal experiences, political views, and brand loyalty. The boycott campaign, strategically encoded through visual symbols, emotional narratives, and resistance ideologies, is received and reinterpreted by consumers in complex ways. For some, the campaign prompted a shift in consumption patterns and a change in brand perception. However, the messages were either rejected or negotiated for those with strong brand loyalty. These findings reinforce the relevance of Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding theory in explaining communication processes within digital spaces marked by symbolic intensity and the politicization of consumption.

The effectiveness of socio-political campaigns largely depends on how well their messages align with their audience's value structures and lived experiences. In today's highly fragmented digital communication environment, message reception is not determined solely by message content but rather by the interaction between the encoded narrative and the interpretive frameworks of individual consumers.

This study broadens the application of Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding theory in digital communication studies, positioning it as a relevant framework for analyzing meaning-making dynamics in socio-political campaigns. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of deeply understanding the audience when designing communication strategies, considering their background, culture, and brand loyalty. The study also emphasizes the need for companies to respond strategically to socio-political issues circulating on social media and to ensure consistency between brand image and claimed values, as any discrepancy can affect public perception and consumer loyalty.

This research opens up opportunities for further exploration into the dynamics of audience reception in digital socio-political campaigns. Future studies are encouraged to expand the unit of analysis to include more diverse social groups to examine how socio-cultural characteristics influence decoding positions in response to boycott campaigns. Research may also investigate the internal factors shaping individual behavior within a community that influence how encoding and

decoding processes are constructed from within the self. Additionally, further studies can be directed toward analyzing the thought processes of individuals who disseminate content related to the Israel-Palestine conflict on social media. Such research could focus on interpersonal communication among individuals, leading to their engagement and participation in campaigns on Indonesian social media platforms.

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