# Chapter 4
# Antecedents to Willingness to Boycotts among Malaysian Muslims

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter examines the motivations and willingness to boycott of Malaysian Muslim consumers. Based on an ongoing boycott incited by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, the boycott movement targets American-originated firms operating in Malaysia. To examine the factors, two firms were selected based on their market presence, consumer familiarity, and product affordability. In total, 577 questionnaires were distributed to Muslim university students, and the results were validated through Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. Three factors were found to be significant in predicting the willingness to boycott; they were self-enhancement, perceived egregious behavior, and country image. This chapter addresses boycott motivations from the context of Malaysian Muslims quantitatively, based on an international issue strongly related to Muslims. The results may have some implications on multinational firms, non-government organizations, policymakers, and consumers.*

## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of consumer boycotts has been in existence in the marketplace, menacing businesses and organizations ever since more than a century ago (Smith & Li, 2010). However, the rightful and deserved attention in understanding consumer boycotts were acknowledged by academicians and researchers only within the last past decade.

Consumer boycott is a form of economic as well as social threat that may threaten the brand image (Klein, Smith & John, 2004) and corporate image of a firm (Lindenmeier, Tscheulin & Drevs, 2012) on a smaller scale. However, on a larger scale, consumer boycotts if not carefully dealt with, may affect the host country's economy and its image. As such, the threats and occurrences of boycott can possibly upset the efforts in attracting and retaining investments in a country. Consequently, it is suffice to state that boycott is a situation where marketers, businesses, organizations or firms would want to avoid at all cost (Klein et al, 2004).

Based on previous empirical researches, there are various psychological (Klein et al, 2004; Smith & Li, 2004) and social motivations underlying a boycott; as the nature of boycott is diverse (Friedman, 1985). Nonetheless, boycotts are often used widely as a "coercive marketplace tactic" (John & Klein, 2003) to achieve certain instrumental or expressive goals (Friedman, 1985).

Friedman (1985, pg. 97) has defined boycott as "an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace". This fundamental definition has been frequently quoted, referred and used as a basis by numerous boycott studies (Smith & Li, 2010; Farah & Newman, 2010; Knudsen, Aggarwal & Maamoun, 2008; Klein et al, 2004; and Sen, Gurhan-Canli & Morwitz, 2001). Adding further, John & Klein (2003, pg. 1198) described that a boycott occurs "when a number of people abstain from purchase of a product, at the same time, as a result of the same egregious act or behavior, but not necessarily for the same reasons".

Refining the boycott definition as written in *The Dictionary of American History,* Friedman (1985) argued and unveiled that the scope of boycott does not limit to "unfair employment and trade practices" but goes beyond as both items if stood alone "fail to encompass the wealth of activities revealed in the survey findings" (pg. 115).

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