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The Effect of Boycott and Brand Image on Customer Loyalty of Aqua Brand Mineral Water in Bungo Regency

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the influence of boycott movements and brand image on customer loyalty to Aqua bottled water products in Bungo Regency, Indonesia, particularly in response to socio-political tensions such as the Israel–Hamas conflict. A quantitative descriptive approach was employed. Data were collected through an online questionnaire completed by 96 Aqua consumers in Bungo Regency. The study used multiple linear regression analysis to assess the partial and simultaneous effects of boycott (X_1) and brand image (X_2) on customer loyalty (Y). The findings indicate that brand image has a significantly positive effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = 1.049$, $p < 0.001$), while boycott exerts a significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.111$, $p = 0.034$). Although consumer awareness of the boycott movement was high, active participation was relatively low. The brand image variable proved dominant in influencing customer decisions to remain loyal, despite the presence of socio-political pressures. A strong brand image serves as a critical buffer against the negative impact of boycotts, preserving customer loyalty amid social and political turbulence. The study underscores the importance for companies to maintain brand integrity and engage in socially responsive communication strategies. These findings contribute to marketing and brand management literature by offering insights into consumer behavior in politically sensitive environments.

Keywords: Boycott, Brand Image, Customer Loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's economic development over the past five years has demonstrated significant dynamism, with a relatively stable growth rate since the post-pandemic recovery began in 2021. However, alongside this economic resurgence and increased market activity, new challenges have emerged—most notably, the influence of global social and political issues on consumer behavior

(Ulani & Aprirachman, 2025). In October 2023, escalating geopolitical tensions, particularly the Israel–Hamas conflict that erupted on October 7, prompted widespread calls for boycotts against various global brands, including Aqua (Thalia et al., 2024). These calls, amplified through social media, received considerable support from the Indonesian public, who viewed economic action as a means of expressing solidarity with Palestine. The boycott phenomenon reflects a form of collective social pressure directed at companies or brands perceived to be associated with controversial issues (Mustofa & Alfikri, 2025). It represents one of the contemporary dynamics that shape marketing strategies and influence consumer loyalty. In such contexts, customer loyalty is not solely driven by product quality or price but is also shaped by consumers' moral and social perceptions of a brand (Afrillana et al., 2023).

Aqua, founded by Tirto Utomo in 1973 through PT Golden Mississippi, was a pioneer in Indonesia's bottled water industry. The company's first factory was located in Bekasi, and its initial product was a 950 ml glass bottle priced at Rp.75. In 1998, Aqua formed a strategic alliance with Danone, which initially joined as a minority shareholder through Danone Asia Holding Pte. Ltd. Over time, Danone increased its ownership, becoming the majority shareholder of PT Tirta Investama in 2001. Following the October 2023 conflict, Aqua, as a subsidiary under Danone, became a central target of boycotts across Indonesia, including in Bungo Regency, Jambi Province. Bungo Regency is known for its high consumption of bottled drinking water (AMDK) (Putri et al., 2024). However, recent data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) indicates a notable decline in AMDK consumption in the area, which is suspected to be partially driven by the boycott campaign. This suggests a shift in consumption behavior, influenced not only by economic rationality but also by social values and political solidarity. The boycott movement in Bungo Regency poses a significant threat to the market performance of targeted brands, particularly Aqua. According to research by the Kurious–Katadata Insight Center (2023), 36% of Indonesians actively participate in product boycotts, while an additional 47% express support without taking direct action. In Bungo Regency, awareness of the boycott was largely motivated by solidarity with the Palestinian cause and opposition to Israeli actions. Locally, such awareness may also stem from perceived socio-economic impacts associated with certain brands. The boycott against Aqua was largely driven by allegations of corporate affiliation with entities believed to support controversial global actors. Danone's status as a multinational corporation intensified public speculation about its involvement in such policies, thereby influencing consumer purchasing decisions (Arraf & BIDDOU, 2019). Many consumers chose to avoid brands perceived as misaligned with their ethical or moral values. Furthermore, heightened political and social awareness in Indonesian society continues to fuel such boycotts as a form of economic resistance (Pasaribu & Deni, 2025).

Previous studies have shown that Indonesia's bottled drinking water industry is experiencing rapid growth, driven by rising public awareness of the importance of clean water consumption. Bottled mineral water has become an essential commodity that supports a healthy lifestyle, with consumption increasing steadily each year. According to (I Gusti Made Oka Astana, 2023), key factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions in this sector include price, product quality, and promotional strategies. Meanwhile, research by (Susanti et al., 2024) found that social media-driven boycott campaigns against products perceived as pro-Israel have a measurable impact on consumer buying interest. Similarly, a study by (Margareth, A., Dandi, B., Desi, N., Siregar, D. S., Provisions,

D. A., Berutu, R. A., & Coal, 2024) suggests that boycotts are frequently employed as a form of global resistance and solidarity in response to political and humanitarian issues. These movements are amplified by the widespread dissemination of information via social media, particularly influencing younger consumers who are more attuned to global socio-political developments (Syarif & Herman, 2024).

Theoretically, this study explores the relationship among brand image, consumer boycotts, and customer loyalty, with a focus on their interaction within the bottled water industry. Boycotts, as socio-political phenomena, are complex and often influenced by psychological, social media, and peer-group dynamics (Khasanah & Kaha, 2024). On the other hand, brand image—developed over time through product quality and corporate communication—faces a test of resilience under such external pressures. In this context, customer loyalty serves as a key indicator of a brand's ability to endure reputational crises (Noer & Megan, 2020). Based on the discussion above, this study aims to address the following research questions: 1. Does the boycott have a partial effect on the loyalty of Aqua mineral water customers in Bungo Regency? 2. Does brand image have a partial effect on the loyalty of Aqua mineral water customers in Bungo Regency? 3. Do boycott and brand image simultaneously influence the loyalty of Aqua mineral water customers in Bungo Regency? 4. This research is significant as it relates to business sustainability, strategic corporate decision-making, and the understanding of consumer behavior in politically and socially sensitive environments. The study seeks to empirically assess the effects of boycott movements and brand image on customer loyalty toward Aqua products in Bungo Regency. The findings are expected to contribute to the academic literature on marketing and brand management, particularly in contexts influenced by social movements. Furthermore, the results may serve as a practical reference for companies in developing more adaptive communication strategies and brand positioning in response to dynamic social pressures in the digital era.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

This theoretical framework illustrates the relationship between two independent variables—boycott (X_1) and brand image (X_2)—and one dependent variable, customer loyalty (Y). The arrows extending from X_1 to Y (H_1) and from X_2 to Y (H_2) represent partial testing, in which each independent variable is analyzed separately to determine its individual impact on customer loyalty. In contrast, the dotted arrow represents simultaneous testing (H_3), which assesses the combined effect of boycott and brand image on customer loyalty within a single analytical model. This framework is grounded in consumer behavior and brand management theory, which posits that consumers' perceptions of a brand and their responses to socio-political issues—such as boycott campaigns—can significantly influence purchasing behavior and brand loyalty (Chea, 2024). Boycotts embody moral or social pressure that may weaken consumer attachment to a brand, whereas a strong and positive brand image can reinforce loyalty even amid external threats (Kim et al., 2025). Accordingly, this conceptual model forms the basis for the development of research hypotheses and guides the analysis of how both variables interact and influence customer loyalty in the specific context of Aqua consumers.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework
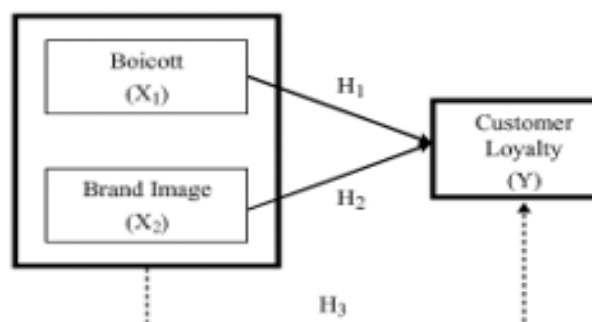
Description :

_____→   : Partial Testing

- - - - - - - - - - - - →   : Simultaneous Testing

Hypothesis is a temporary statement made based on theory and previous research to be tested for truth in a study. In this study, there are three main variables, namely boycott (X_1), brand image (X_2), and customer loyalty (Y). HHypothesis proposed in this study are as follows:

1. H_1: boycott (X_1) has a partial effect on customer loyalty (Y)on Aqua brand mineral Water Products.
2. H_2: brand image(X_2) has a partial effect on customer loyalty (Y) in aqua brand mineral Water Products.

H_2: boycott (X_1) and brand image (X_2) simultaneously affect customer loyalty (Y) in aqua brand mineral Water Products.

METHOD

This section describes the approach used in the study to assess the impact of the boycott movement on the brand image and customer loyalty of Aqua Products. The description includes the type of research, sampling techniques, study locations, instruments used, to data collection and analysis procedures that are carried out systematically.

Types Of Research

This study employs a quantitative descriptive approach. The respondents consisted of consumers of Aqua brand bottled mineral water in Bungo Regency, Jambi Province. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to Aqua customers within the region. The questionnaire was developed based on validated indicators for three key variables: boycott, brand image, and customer loyalty. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression to assess the effects of consumer perceptions regarding the boycott movement and brand image on customer loyalty. This method enabled the examination of both the individual (partial) and combined (simultaneous) influence of the independent variables—boycott and brand

image—on the dependent variable, customer loyalty (Saputro, 2023). The findings from this quantitative analysis are expected to provide a robust empirical foundation for understanding consumer behavior in response to socio-political pressures, particularly in the context of brand loyalty during boycott campaigns (Utama et al., 2023).

Population and sample / informant

The population of this study was Aqua consumers in Bungo regency who had consumed the product before and after the emergence of boycott issues related to the Israel–Hamas conflict. Since the number of populations is not known exactly, the determination of the sample uses the Lemeshow formula, assuming a margin of error of 10%. The minimum total of respondents obtained is 96 people, selected using accidental sampling, that is, anyone who meets the criteria and is willing to fill out the questionnaire voluntarily.

Research Locations

The study was conducted in Bungo regency, Jambi province, an area that represents middle-class consumers with access to information on social issues through digital media. This location was chosen because it was relevant in seeing consumer reactions to the boycott movement in a local context.

Instrumentation or tools

This study used closed questionnaires that were prepared based on indicators from each of the research variables: boycott awareness, brand image perception, and customer loyalty. The questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The validity and reliability of the instrument were tested using item-total correlation and Cronbach's Alpha with the help of SPSS (Kusmaryono et al., 2022)Click or tap here to enter text..

Data Collection Procedure

This study employed several data collection techniques to obtain comprehensive insights. First, questionnaires were used as the primary instrument for collecting data from respondents. These questionnaires consisted of structured items designed to assess customer attitudes, perceptions, and experiences related to Aqua products following the emergence of the boycott issue. The questionnaires were distributed online via Google Forms to facilitate wider and more efficient respondent reach. Second, interviews were conducted with a selected number of respondents and relevant stakeholders to gather deeper qualitative insights into the reasons behind customer loyalty or decisions to switch from the Aqua brand. Third, observational methods were employed to directly examine consumer behavior, particularly in relation to purchasing decisions during the ongoing boycott campaign. This triangulated approach provided both quantitative and qualitative data to strengthen the validity of the research findings (Hardani, N. H. A., Andriani, H., Fardani, R. A., Ustiawaty, J., Ulfa, E. F., & Sukmana, 2020).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe respondent profiles and response trends. Furthermore, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to test the effect of boycott

variables (X_1) and brand image (X_2) on customer loyalty (Y). Validity and reliability tests were conducted on all questionnaire items. Classical assumption tests were also carried out, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. Hypothesis testing is done by F test (simultaneous), t test (partial), and calculation of the coefficient of determination (R2).

Ethical Approval

This study involved voluntary participation with informed consent submitted in writing at the beginning of the questionnaire. Respondent Data is anonymous and guaranteed confidentiality. The study did not pose any physical or psychological risk to the participants.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a significant relationship between brand image and customer loyalty, as well as a negative impact of the boycott campaign on loyalty toward the Aqua brand. Respondents who held a positive perception of Aqua's brand image were 1.049 times more likely to remain loyal (B = 1.049; $p < 0.001$), whereas an increase in boycott attitudes was associated with a 0.111-point decline in loyalty (B = -0.111; $p = 0.034$). Although the overall level of awareness regarding the boycott campaign was relatively high (average score = 347.5), the levels of active participation, behavioral consistency, and perceived social influence remained low (average score = 308.4). In contrast, brand image indicators received strong positive evaluations from respondents (average score = 361.4), reflecting favorable perceptions of product quality, trustworthiness, reputation, and brand differentiation. Customer loyalty recorded an average score of 334.8, which falls within the "less favorable" category. This outcome is primarily attributed to the relatively high inclination among consumers to recommend alternatives and to consider switching brands, despite continued repurchase behavior and overall satisfaction with the product (Cherlin et al., 2021).

Table 1. Distribution of The Average Score of Research Variables

Variable	Main indicator variables	Average score	Boycott Category Average Score
Boycott (X_1)	Awareness, Participation, Consistency, Social	Influence	308.4 less good
Brand Image (X_2)	Quality, Trust, Reputation, Differentiation	361.4	better

Customer Loyalty (Y)	Repurchase, Recommendation, Satisfaction, Anti-Switching	334.8	less good

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 1. presents the results of the multiple linear regression analysis conducted to examine the effects of the independent variables—boycott (X_1) and brand image (X_2)—on customer loyalty (Y) toward Aqua products. The regression coefficient (B) reflects the direction and magnitude of each variable's influence, while the p-value indicates the statistical significance of the effect. The analysis shows that the boycott variable (X_1) has a statistically significant negative effect on customer loyalty, with a coefficient of -0.111 and a p-value of 0.034. This indicates that increased consumer awareness or involvement in the boycott movement tends to reduce loyalty toward the Aqua brand, although the effect is moderate. The significance level confirms the reliability of this relationship, as the p-value is below the conventional threshold of 0.05. In contrast, the brand image variable (X_2) demonstrates a significant positive influence on customer loyalty, with a coefficient of 1.049 and a p-value of 0.000. This finding suggests that stronger positive consumer perceptions of the Aqua brand—regarding aspects such as quality, trust, and reputation—substantially enhance customer loyalty. Among the two variables, brand image emerged as the more dominant factor, effectively counteracting the negative effects of the boycott movement. Overall, the results indicate that customer loyalty to Aqua is influenced not only by socio-political and emotional considerations associated with boycott campaigns but also, and more strongly, by consumers' evaluations of the brand's inherent value and credibility (Karim, 2024).

Table 2. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Independent variable	coefficient (B)	*p-value*	effect
of Boycott (X_1)	-0.111	0.034	significant negative
Brand Image (X_2)	1,049	0,000	1.049 significant positive 0.000

Sumber: Primary Data, 2025

Furthermore, the results indicate that, out of a total of 96 respondents, the majority continued to purchase Aqua products despite being aware of the ongoing boycott movement. This suggests a degree of brand resilience under conditions of social and political pressure. Most respondents reported satisfaction with the quality and trustworthiness of the Aqua brand, although many expressed hesitation or inconsistency in actively participating in the boycott initiative. The regression analysis produced a coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.472, indicating that 47.2% of the variation in customer loyalty can be explained by the boycott and brand image variables. The remaining 52.8% is likely influenced by factors not included in the model, such as price sensitivity, product availability, and personal preferences. The F-test yielded an F-value of 41.174 with a significance level of 0.000, demonstrating that the regression model is statistically significant when considering the combined effects of boycott and brand image on customer

loyalty. In summary, these findings reinforce that while boycott movements negatively affect customer loyalty, a strong brand image can substantially mitigate this impact, thereby preserving a significant portion of the customer base.

Table 3. F and R2 regression Model

Statistical	Value	Interpretation
Count	41,174	of 41,174 significant regression models
. F	0.000	$p < 0.05$
coefficient of determination R2	0.472	47.2% variation described model

Sumber: Primary Data, 2025

The study found that the consumer boycott movement had a statistically significant negative effect on customer loyalty to the Aqua brand, whereas brand image exhibited a stronger and positive influence. These findings align with prior research (Utama et al., 2023), which indicates that socio-political boycott campaigns can damage brand perception and reduce customer loyalty, particularly when consumers are morally invested in the issue. However, a strong brand image—characterized by perceptions of product quality, trustworthiness, reputation, and differentiation—can act as a protective buffer against such external pressures. From a practical standpoint, these results underscore the strategic importance of maintaining a resilient brand image to mitigate the impact of socio-political disruptions. Brands operating in politically sensitive markets should focus not only on product excellence but also on building emotional connections through ethical positioning and value-driven communication. In light of the growing frequency of global political conflicts that shape consumer sentiment, companies must remain proactive in monitoring public opinion and adapting their communication strategies accordingly.

This study offers several strengths, including the application of a rigorous quantitative method and the collection of primary data directly from Aqua consumers in regions affected by boycott sentiment. The use of multiple regression analysis enhances the internal validity of the study by clarifying the distinct contributions of each independent variable to customer loyalty outcomes (Daryati, 2023). However, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the geographic scope of the study is restricted to Bungo Regency, Indonesia, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Second, the analytical model does not incorporate other potentially influential factors, such as price sensitivity, distribution accessibility, or long-term emotional loyalty. Third, data collection was conducted via online questionnaires, potentially excluding respondents with limited access to digital platforms or low digital literacy. For future research, it is recommended to:

1. Expand the geographic scope to compare consumer behavior across diverse socio-demographic settings;

2. Employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to explore the emotional and ideological motivations underlying boycott behavior;
3. Incorporate moderating or mediating variables, such as consumer trust, religiosity, or media influence, to enhance the explanatory depth of the model.

Interpretation Of Key Findings

The results of this study confirm that brand image has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty, while the boycott movement exerts a significant negative effect on customer loyalty toward Aqua in Bungo Regency. These findings are consistent with customer loyalty theory, which posits that consumers' perceptions of brand image play a critical role in repeat purchase behavior and long-term brand commitment. The regression coefficient for the brand image variable was 1.049 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that an increase in positive brand perception significantly enhances customer loyalty. This suggests that, despite the widespread boycott campaign, customers who have strong confidence in the quality, reputation, and distinctiveness of Aqua products tend to remain loyal. Key brand image indicators—such as perceived quality and reputation—contribute significantly to consumer satisfaction and repurchase behavior.

In contrast, the boycott variable yielded a negative regression coefficient of -0.111 ($p = 0.034$), signifying that higher levels of boycott sentiment are associated with a decline in customer loyalty. Although public awareness of the boycott campaign is relatively high, active engagement and behavioral consistency remain low. This implies that awareness does not necessarily translate into action, and many consumers continue to purchase products despite their knowledge of the campaign. Moreover, the average customer loyalty score of 334.8—categorized as "less favorable"—indicates that most consumers are in a state of cognitive dissonance. While they continue to repurchase due to product quality and availability, they are also beginning to consider alternative brands due to moral concerns and socio-political pressures. This reflects a fragmentation of consumer attitudes, in which affective and normative loyalty may conflict with previously established behavioral loyalty. These findings support previous research by (Ryan Mawendy et al., 2025), which demonstrated that boycott movements can erode brand loyalty, particularly when the underlying social issues carry strong symbolic meaning. Therefore, companies need to strengthen their brand image through empathetic and socially responsive communication strategies, while ensuring that their corporate values align with the ethical and social expectations of their consumer base (Motadi, 2024).

Comparison with previous studies

The findings of this study are consistent with the results reported by (Utama et al., 2023), which demonstrated that the boycott movement targeting McDonald's had a negative impact on both brand image and customer loyalty. Similarly, the present study shows that although the boycott campaign against Aqua products has gained considerable social traction, customer loyalty remains significantly influenced by positive perceptions of the brand image. This reinforces the argument that strong brand equity can serve as a buffer against external social and political pressures. However, the results diverge from the findings of (Munadiyan, 2024), who emphasized that the effect of boycotts on customer loyalty is highly dependent on consumers' levels of awareness and

active involvement. In Munadiyan's study, the negative impact was statistically significant only among consumer groups that actively participated in the boycott movement. In contrast, the current study found that boycott sentiment exerted a general negative effect on customer loyalty, even though most respondents did not engage in active participation. This discrepancy may be attributed to contextual differences, particularly regarding regional characteristics and access to public information (Robertus Suraji et al., 2023). The present study was conducted in Bungo Regency, a semi-urban area with varying levels of information access, whereas Munadiyan's research focused on urban populations in Indonesia with likely greater exposure to media and activist networks. Overall, these findings suggest that the influence of boycott campaigns on customer loyalty is context-specific and shaped by multiple factors, including brand image strength, consumer values, and information accessibility. Consequently, it is essential fhurtor companies to consider local dynamics when developing brand communication strategies in response to evolving social issues (Khelil et al., 2025).

Limitations and warnings

While this study provides a valuable contribution to understanding the influence of boycott movements and brand image on customer loyalty, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the use of a cross-sectional research design restricts the ability to draw causal inferences. The relationships identified are correlational rather than causal, as also noted by (Margareth, A., Dandi, B., Desi, N., Siregar, D. S., Provisions, D. A., Berutu, R. A., & Coal, 2024) in a similar study examining consumer responses to social issues. Second, the study relies on self-reported data collected through online questionnaires. This method introduces the potential for perceptual biases, such as social desirability bias, wherein respondents may provide answers they believe are more socially acceptable—particularly relevant when addressing morally and politically sensitive topics like boycotts. Third, the geographic scope of the study is confined to Bungo Regency, a region with unique cultural and economic characteristics. This contextual specificity may limit the generalizability of the findings to consumers in other areas who may exhibit differing levels of political awareness, brand loyalty, and access to information. To address these limitations, future research should consider employing a longitudinal design to observe changes in customer attitudes and behavior over time. Additionally, broader and more demographically diverse sampling—combined with a mixed-methods approach—could yield a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding customer loyalty in the context of socio-political pressures (Khelil et al., 2025).

Recommendations for future research

Future research is encouraged to address the geographical limitations of this study by expanding the research scope to include regions with diverse demographic, cultural, and informational characteristics. Such expansion would enhance the generalizability of the findings regarding the influence of boycott movements and brand image on customer loyalty (Dzikhrullah & Vania, 2024). Moreover, adopting a longitudinal research design is recommended to capture temporal changes in consumer attitudes and behaviors toward brands, particularly in the context of evolving social crises or dynamic boycott campaigns. This would provide a more nuanced understanding of how loyalty develops or diminishes over time in response to socio-political influences. Subsequent

studies may also benefit from employing a mixed-methods approach that integrates both quantitative and qualitative techniques (Sari & Games, 2024). This would allow for a deeper exploration of the emotional and moral motivations behind consumer engagement or resistance to boycott actions, enriching the understanding of the psychological and sociological underpinnings of customer loyalty (Ulfah et al., 2025). Finally, future research should consider incorporating mediating or moderating variables—such as social media influence, religiosity, or consumer trust in corporations—to develop a more comprehensive and explanatory analytical model.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the influence of the boycott movement and brand image on customer loyalty to the Aqua brand in Bungo Regency. It aims to assess the extent to which these two variables affect consumer decisions in maintaining loyalty to products impacted by socio-political issues. The findings indicate that brand image has a significantly positive effect on customer loyalty, whereas the boycott movement exerts a negative, albeit statistically significant, effect. This highlights a tension between consumers' collective moral values and their positive perceptions of product quality and brand reputation. Notably, the study reveals that many consumers continue to exhibit purchase loyalty despite being aware of the boycott campaign, underscoring the strength of Aqua's brand equity under conditions of social pressure. These results emphasize the strategic importance of reinforcing brand image as a means of mitigating the adverse effects of socio-political challenges. They also suggest the necessity for brand communication strategies that are sensitive to ethical and social concerns. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that customer loyalty is shaped not only by moral or ideological considerations but also by prior experiences, satisfaction levels, and habitual purchasing behavior. While the study offers meaningful insights into consumer behavior in the context of issue-driven boycotts, several limitations should be acknowledged. These include the restricted geographic scope and the exclusion of other potentially influential external factors such as pricing, product distribution, and media exposure. Future research should aim to expand the study area, adopt mixed-method approaches, and incorporate mediating or moderating variables. Doing so may enhance our understanding of the complex interactions between social dynamics, brand perception, and consumer loyalty, while also contributing to the development of ethical marketing practices and more adaptive crisis communication strategies.

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