

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN STRENGTHENING THE BOYCOTT MOVEMENT OF ISRAELI PRODUCTS DURING THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE WAR 2023-2024

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Abstract

This research aims to find out the mechanism of social media in the boycott of Israeli and American products since Israel's brutal attack on Palestine in 2023, the attacks carried out by Israel against Palestine have claimed thousands of civilian victims. This issue concerns humanity, where the oppression of fellow human beings is a violation of human rights, even genocide. Research that uses a qualitative approach, library research. The result is one of social media, Instagram, has an important role in increasing boycotts by people around the world. It is able to reduce the value of shares and profits of well-known companies affiliated with Israel. It is caused by social media in the boycott is supported by live video shows, photos and narratives that describe all Israeli crimes against Palestine strengthened by the algorithm. The process of share, shape, boycott and algorithm become integrated, accelerate and the success stages.

Keywords: *Boycott, Hyperconnected Society, Palestine.*

A. INTRODUCTION

What happened at the end of 2023 shocked all human beings on earth for the dehumanization committed by Israel against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. Israel's inhumane war crimes against the Palestinian people made the entire human race carry out protests in almost all countries, even the occupation or colonization carried out by the Israeli army has killed tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians in just two months, starting from 7 October to the end of November 2023, the death toll reached 15,441 Palestinian civilians consisting of 6,387 children and 4,527 women as well as 280 medical personnel, 76 journalists and the rest are victims other than those mentioned. This number does not include the victims who suffered serious injuries and minor injuries totaling 48,178 as a result of missile attacks fired by the Israeli army day and night (Indonesia, n.d.).

Of course the news about the genocide committed by the Israeli army known as the IDF (*Israel Defense Forces*) spread almost to all human beings around the world, the development of digital era information technology makes it difficult for western countries to control news on social media, because with the digitalisation of news information becomes more open, easy to spread and easily viral (Moerdijati, 2012). This is supported by social media users who are increasing from year to year, especially the use of social media *platforms* that are global or used by almost all humans in the world such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. The spread of information through social media is easily viral because it is supported by an algorithm system created by the owner of the social media *platform* (itsrys, 2020).

Suddenly the news went viral around the world and caused outrage and condemnation of the actions of the Israeli army which has shown its attacks on Palestinian civilians not

against Hamas soldiers as the defense front of the Palestinian people. As a form of humanity's anger towards the humanitarian crisis that occurred in the country of Palestine, various humanitarian movements and massive defense of Palestine were carried out in almost every country around the world, including those who protested on the main road as carried out by the people of America, Britain, Australia, Turkey, Jordan, Qatar, Russia, Indonesia, Malaysia and several other countries in the world. In addition to protests, there are also actions in the form of content containing satire against state leaders and public figures who are pro-Israel war crimes. After these two actions, there is the most extreme and popular action carried out by humanity in almost every country in the world, namely the boycott carried out against Israeli company products and company products from pro-Israel countries such as food products, goods and services from the United States including Puma, McDonald's (Tim Detik Finance, 2023), Burger Kings, KFC, Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza, Dunkin Donuts, Snikers, Lays, Twix, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Nestle, Starbuck, Soda Steam, Sabra and Papa Jhons. Israeli products sold in Indonesia include Puma, HP, Siemens, AXA, Ahava, Dr Fischer, L'oreal Israel and other goods and services (Yullah, 2016).

Based on these facts, this research is important to emphasize to all business people in the era of society 5.0 that with the development of information technology and social media, people as consumers have become more sensitive to boycott. However, the results of other studies show that boycotts that occur in Muslim-majority countries based on religious interests against American products do not significantly affect American companies because boycotts only occur briefly (Laili et al., 2021). While the boycott that occurred when the Palestinian and Israeli conflict broke out in October 2023, the call to boycott all products of the state of Israel and pro-Israel countries was quite massive, but in several urban points the boycott was not affected by the Israeli polemic, such as McDonald's stores in the city center of Tangerang and Banten remained crowded with visitors, even though the news that McDonald's Israel distributed its food products to Israeli soldiers was busy on social media and is perceived by McDonald's globally as a pro-Israel company. By using the framework adopted from (Kasali, 2019), this research uses the theory by using new things in the framework, namely sharing, shaping and boycott. This research also aims to find out, how social media is able to mobilize the boycott movement of Israeli and American products during the Palestinian and Gaza wars in 2023.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Boycotts in Consumer Behavior Literature

In terms of consumer behavior, a boycott is a movement to stop buying some products or services from a company that carries out certain policies or has carried out a series of actions that are considered impartial and do not represent the interests of each stakeholder element. (Friedman, 1999). One of the root causes of the boycott is ideological (John & Jill, 2003) or it could be because the boycotted company has monopolized the market (Cruz & Delane, 2015). Boycotts are a specific type of action used by consumers as a way of showing their preference or a way of expressing their social policy preferences. The act of boycotting is an act of volunteering to join a social political movement that is influenced by the moral values upheld by consumers (Zomeren, 2013). The act of boycotting is also defined as a social dilemma between the individual consumption benefits of buying boycotted goods and the consumer satisfaction of not buying boycotted goods as a form of collective social care (John & Jill, 2003). The moral value of Boycott refers to morally believing something is right or wrong (Skitka & Mullen, 2002). Moral values can justify actions that aim to protect and affirm moral principles (Zomeron, 2013). Social movement supporters have a shared understanding of what is right or wrong (Graham & Haidt, 2012).

Based on the boycott actions that have been described, the reasons for consumers to join boycott actions are different. In terms of consumer behavior studies, there are 5 types of boycotts, including economic boycotts, religious boycotts, minority boycotts, environmental boycotts and labor boycotts (Cruz & Delane, 2015). The phrase boycott is commonly used by the media and some groups in general to report any form of individual or group or social movement rejection of the Company's actions (Culcas, 2016) and analyze customer condescension towards a Company's products or services (Suzanne & Jae, 2016).

2. Social Media as a Boycott Campaign Tool

Bittner has put forward a simple definition of mass communication, namely: mass communication is a message communicated through mass media to a large number of people (Soemirat, 2003). (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993) argues that social movements and the media have a transactional relationship. Where the role of social media is very important in social movements and vice versa.

In the era of society 5.0, consumers are increasingly aware of their role as actors of consumption through their virtual political engagement on social media (Loader et al., 2014). This is a form of effort so that their aspirations are heard by the Company (Joyce, 2012). Especially in the process of product communication and socialization, when consumer power is very strong, companies must start considering marketing and communication strategies in order to avoid various possibilities that can lead to boycotts from consumers in both online and off line environments Digital platforms that facilitate virtual interactions between consumers have provided a large amount of data on consumer boycotts. Several studies have shown consumer engagement in boycott calls through social media to other consumers (Cruz & Delane, 2015). Social media can be used as an effective tool to convey consumers' feelings by posting messages that contain reasons why consumers should boycott products from certain companies (Suzanne & Jae, 2016).

3. Algorithmic System Accelerates Boycott Action

Algorithms are effective methods or steps arranged in writing and sequentially containing several commands in solving a problem. Every problem must be solved logistically, systematically, and organized. (Pebriani & Yahfizham, 2023). Algorithms can also be used to sort sets of numbers or for more complex tasks, such as recommending user content on social media. Algorithms have a function to regulate the flow of information circulating in the system, where on average the way algorithms work on social media *platforms* records user habits. In addition to how algorithms work based on user information searches, some *platforms* also implement an algorithm system based on popularity where when a news story is popular, it will appear on every social media user's homepage.

4. Sharing, Shaping, and Funding Concepts in Boycott Action

Rhenald Kasali said that in this era of hyperconnected society, the role of consumers has shifted. Humans shift from mere consumption to participation that has a broad level of involvement. So, the success cannot be measured by mere consumption but rather, how we shape consumers into participants, encourage their level of participation to a higher level, become a community, crowd and even participate in funding. In the process, active consumers can turn into participants. Or in other words, they become more involved as active participants in consumption. Consumers shift to become participants, so the level of participation has a scale. Some just share (sharing) stories, pictures / photos obtained, believed to be consumed or owned, but not a few who process them by sharpening (shaping). They edit the news, give a certain touch, reviews and enrich it with pieces of video and add

music, text or illustrations. Some become so passionate that they are willing to become contributors and join in crowd funding. (Kasali, 2019).

C. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative library research approach. The method used is to collect data by searching for sources and reconstructing from various sources such as books, journals, and existing research. The result is that qualitative research is carried out with a research design whose findings are not obtained through statistical analysis, but aims to reveal phenomena in a holistic-contextual manner by collecting relevant data (Adlini et al., 2022). In research, when viewed from the source, there are two types of data used, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data is information that researchers get directly from the source. In this case, the researcher acts as a data collector, whereas, secondary data is information that has been collected by other parties. Secondary data sources used in the research are sourced from a collection of news about the boycott of Zionist Israeli products. Secondary data is in the form of reference books, reports/journals relevant to the object of study obtained by researchers from various sources and other supporting data indirectly. To analyze secondary data, the Miles and Huberman model technique was used by performing data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification activities.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on 1,827 tweets, the sentiment of the majority of Indonesian netizens towards the boycott of pro-Israel products is positive. The majority of Indonesian netizens fully support the boycott of pro-Israel products. MUI Fatwa No.83/2023 affects the sentiment of Indonesian netizens. This can be seen from the decrease in negative and neutral sentiments after the fatwa was released, and on the contrary, positive sentiments increased. The emotion analysis conducted illustrates that before and after the release of MUI Fatwa No.83/2023, the dominant emotions felt by Indonesian netizens are joy and surprise. Both emotions indicate that Indonesian netizens are quite happy and fully support the boycott of pro-Israel products as an act of rejection against the genocide committed by Israel in Gaza, Palestine. (Munandar et al., 2023). Thus, every large national and international company must be careful in addressing developing issues, whether related to economic issues, religious issues, minority issues, environmental issues, war issues, political issues and humanitarian issues. The social attitudes shown by the general public as consumers can lead to *framing* in social media where *framing* is a strategy of how reality / the world is shaped and simplified in such a way as to be displayed to the audience of readers. In other words, *framing* is a package of news or a package of news or a cluster of ideas that are organized and present the construction of the meaning of events related to the object of a discourse. (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993).

Packaging is also a scheme or structure of understanding that individuals use to construct the meaning of the messages they convey, as well as to interpret the meaning of the messages they receive (Eriyanto, 2012). With technological advances in the field of information, framing activities about boycott actions through social media *platforms* have become easier and the scope of information recipients is wider and global. This phenomenon occurs because social media has an algorithm system where the algorithm works to make news easily viral and more open, as showing by the picture below here.

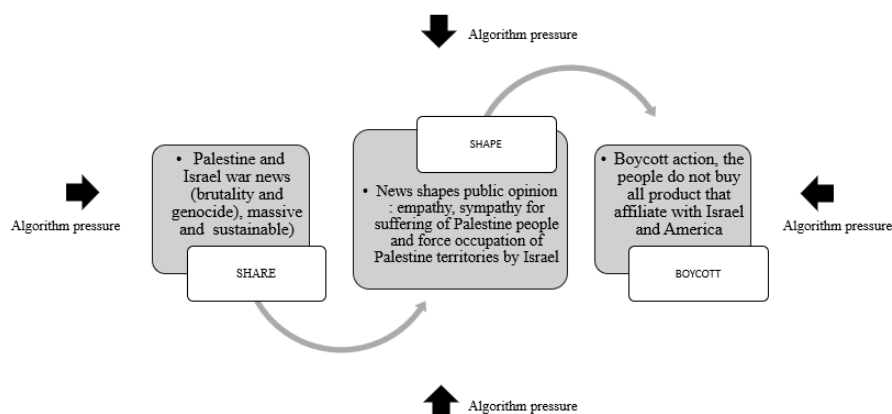


Figure 1. Frame of Thinking of Boycott

Source: Adapted from (Kasali, 2019)

Using the above way of thinking, through the use of social media the boycott call was made. The call is in the form of information that is shared, then social media users sharpen the information (shape) with live videos for example, which then reinforces the boycott action. All of these processes are supported by algorithms. The way it works is that when users open one news story, they will automatically get related news regularly. As mentioned above, it will easily create viral news, grabbing the attention of the public that reaches billions of users.

According to the latest report by *We Are Social* and Hootsuite, the number of social media users worldwide will reach 4.76 billion by January 2023. This figure is equivalent to 59.4% of the total world population today. (Annur, n.d.).

Meanwhile, as of October 2023, there are 4.95 billion social media users worldwide, equivalent to 61.4% of the total global population (Kemp, 2024). The number of social media users has continued to grow over the past 12 months, with 215 million new users joining social media since last year. This equates to an annual growth of 4.5 percent, with an average of 6.8 new users every second (Kemp, 2024). Meanwhile, data from the Indonesian journalists Association revealed that the average active social media user visits 6.7 different social platforms every month, and spends 2 hours 24 minutes per day using social media or people spend about 15 percent of their lives using social media. Meanwhile, the most used social media platform in the world in January 2023 is the social media platform created by Mark Zuckerberg, namely Facebook which already has 2.95 billion users. YouTube is ranked second with 2.51 billion active users (Kemp, 2024).

In its development, social media has become important not only as a promotional forum for digital marketers, but also as a place for news portals to publish their news. In social media, algorithms regulate the flow of information circulating within the system. Each social media platform certainly has its own way of managing how its algorithm works. "So how our content can be delivered to this audience depends on how the social media algorithm works." (itsrys, 2020): for example Facebook. He revealed that in the past, everything uploaded by friends would always appear in the *news feed* regardless of whether we were interested or not. Now, Facebook's algorithm works by delivering content that users are interested in. So, if the user never searches for a topic of content that he is not interested in then the content will not appear in the user's *news feed*, regardless of whether they are friends or not.

The way algorithms work on social media makes it difficult for news to be regulated by people who are interested in not spreading news that does not want to be known by the general public. The algorithm makes news about Israeli atrocities against Palestinians spread

quickly and widely among social users, while based on data that the number of social media users until 2023 reaches 60% of the world's population

Thus, the outbreak of the Palestinian Israeli war since October 7, 2023 is news that is consumed by the public and most in demand, so that the Israeli genocide is known by the public almost all over the world. Israeli war crimes have opened many people's eyes to what is really happening in Palestine. This fact made people around the world angry and triggered people to take various actions, including boycotts and demonstrations to defend Palestine. Of all the actions taken by the community, boycott action is the most impactful action, because it can reduce the value of shares and the level of profits of boycotted companies, this can be proven by direct reports from companies affected by the boycott such as Starbucks, McDonald's, PT. Unilever and other companies affiliated with Israel.

The boycott this time is the action that has the most impact on companies affiliated with Israel. These companies do not take into account that the power of consumers in the digital era 4.0 or in the era of *society* 5.0 is stronger than they imagine. Starbucks is one of the Israeli products that has been targeted for boycott by the world community. The value of Starbucks has decreased by billions of dollars. Its share price has also fallen sharply since mid-November, down about 9 percent, which translates to a decrease in market capitalization of about USD11 billion. According to Reuters news, McDonald's franchises also suffered losses of more than USD1 million. KFC products under the management of PT Fast Food Tbk (FAST) stated that the boycott call affected the restaurant chain's sales. KFC became one of the brands on the boycott list after providing support to the Israeli army. With the decline in sales of KFC products, FAST management revised its growth projection for 2024 from 15 per cent to 10 per cent. Throughout the third quarter of 2023, FAST recorded a net loss of IDR152.41 billion. The boycott for Unilever also had an impact. Reporting from Replubika, Unilever's performance also experienced a decline in the third quarter of 2023. In that period, Unilever Indonesia posted a 9.16 per cent decline in profit to Rp 4.18 trillion triggered by a 3.28 per cent decline in sales to Rp 30.50 trillion. 30.50 trillion (Sentosa & Sitepu, 2024). Another source stated about the decline in the movement of Starbucks' share price from 16 October to 31 November 2023, which decreased, especially on 28 October 2023, which decreased sharply after the tragic actions in Gaza. (Rahmani, 2023).

In Morocco, the famous American coffee shop and the H&M brand have announced to stop operating from mid-December 2023. While in Indonesia, a number of Starbucks outlets are empty of visitors at two points of the capital and buffer cities. This caused MAPI, which through its subsidiary PT MAP Boga Adiperkasa Tbk. (MAPB) manages the well-known coffee brand Starbucks Indonesia, its shares have collapsed 11.87% during October to early November. Even in mid-November, MAPI became the number one stock most 'dumped' by foreign investors, with a net sell of IDR 56.8 billion. In addition to Starbucks, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) fast food restaurant which is shaded by PT Fast Food Indonesia Tbk. (FAST) was also affected. FAST's stock has collapsed 9.15% (Firdaus, 2023).

In a Polish study that analysed content posted by members of a Polish-language Facebook group around boycott issues. The results proved that boycotts nowadays cross media boundaries and reach the form of market boycotts. Consumers participating in boycotts use both communication media (such as unfavourable comments posted on the boycotted brand's social media) and concrete actions (such as protests in front of boycotted stores). Moreover, the data shows that the most significant triggers of boycotting behaviour exhibited by Polish consumers are moral outrage and compassion (Zralek, 2022). Consumers as citizens in society seem realize their role virtually in social networks (Loader et al., 2014).

E. CONCLUSION

The genocide committed by Israel against Palestinian civilians is a very popular news. In the era of society 5.0, people began to be smart in utilizing technology, as a form of resistance to Israel's actions by conducting: first, boycott campaigns through social media. Secondly, social activist movements calling for a boycott of products affiliated with Israel take place massively on social media. Third, the algorithm works responsively according to its character, when responded to by social media users through *like* or *subscribe* buttons so that in a short time it sends news related to Israeli war crimes against Palestinians with various narratives, photos and videos on social media. Fourth, the news of Israel's genocide has led people around the world to boycott products affiliated with Israel and America. This action is proven to be able to reduce the stock value and profit level of the boycotted company. The fact that the increasing number of social media users is directly proportional to the increasing boycott of company products that are contrary to human values. The results of this study confirm that in the era of *society* 5.0, business actors must be more sensitive to moral values, social values and even environmental values. Consumers as one of the *stakeholders* in business activities have a very important role for the sustainability of the business.

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