

# CONSUMER BOYCOTT RESPONSES TO CORPORATE SOCIAL IRRESPONSIBILITY: EVIDENCE FROM TAIWAN

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## ABSTRACT

*The irresponsible practices of financial institutions could raise concerns about damaging the environment or stakeholders' rights, thereby prompting consumers to impose boycott sanctions. Drawing upon previous literature, this study develops a conceptual framework incorporating both external and internal antecedents of the perceived egregiousness and anticipated guilt that subsequently induce consumers' boycott. This study collects 377 valid samples and employs structural equation model (SEM) to test the hypotheses. The findings show that negative publicity is insignificantly associated with the perceived egregiousness; however, blame attribution could generate consumers' perceived egregiousness and, in turn, lead to consumers' boycott. On the other hand, internal factors (i.e., self-accountability and justice restoration potential) are found to directly or indirectly influence boycott participation. Specifically, a greater extent of self-accountability will yield boycott intention via the anticipated guilt whereas justice restoration potential will directly facilitate boycotting. As expected, a higher substitute cost will reduce boycott intention. Compared with those who had prior consumption experiences, those who did not tended to reveal higher levels of boycott intention. In addition, consumers are more likely to engage in a boycott when the corporate social irresponsibility is related to a product/service crisis rather than corporate culture.*

**JEL:** M14

**KEYWORDS:** Boycott, Negative Publicity, Blame Attribution, Self-Accountability, Justice Restoration Potential, Substitute Cost

## INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been construed to be a sustainable way of doing business because CSR initiatives help a company strengthen stakeholder relationships by demonstrating its “commitment to maximize long-term economic, societal and environment well-being through business practices, policies, and resources” (Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen, 2011; Peloza and Shang, 2011). Meanwhile, corporate social irresponsibility (CSI), the counterpart of CSR, could be devastating for a company by jeopardizing its revenue and brand reputation (Laufer and Coombs, 2006), eliciting negative word-of-mouth (Grappi, Romani, and Bagozzi, 2013), and leading to even stronger consumer reactions against brands (e.g., Xie and Bagozzi, 2019). As a violation of the social contract between society and the company, CSI may cause various types of harms (physical, financial, or mental) to other societal members (He, Kim, and Gustafsson, 2021), which in turn yield the expected downward volatility of a firm's earnings (Kolbel, Bush, and Jancso, 2017) via stakeholder sanctions at both individual and collective levels (Xie and Bagozzi, 2019; He et al., 2021).

Banks have been served an essential role in the development of economies and societies by providing people and businesses with everyday financial services (Chamber and Day, 2009; Herold, Dietrich, and Breitbarth,

2021). A stream of studies in the banking sector has revealed that stakeholders, especially customers, assess the ethics and social facets of their banks after a series of outrageous bank frauds and irresponsible practices break out (Bennett and Kottasz, 2012). In particular, financial institutions financing projects with concerns about damaging the environment or stakeholders' rights are condemned to be immoral and thus face customer boycott, even if they may not be the company that directly takes the transgressing actions. One of the well-known events spawning customers' boycotts against financial institutions is Wells Fargo's participation in making loans to the developers of Dakota Access Pipeline, which raised concerns about environmental sustainability and the rights of Indigenous communities. Recent bank boycotts also include #BoycottAccessBank within a Nigerian community on Twitter for freezing protesters' accounts and calls for boycotting Bank of America for handing over the account information of hundreds of customers. Other irresponsible practices of financial institutions, such as excessive and disputed lending, may also generate human misery and financial distress (Richards, Palmer, and Bogdanova, 2008). As society becomes more concerned about banks'/insurance companies' sustainable practices (Palazzo, Vollero, and Siano, 2020), researching the impact of CSI and consumer reactions could provide valuable managerial implications.

In light of the public's rapidly increasing attention to firms' ethics and corporate social responsibility, consumer boycotts has become especially relevant for management and public policy implications because they represents a social control mechanism to prevent consumers from purchasing unethical products while fighting against the dark side of capitalism (Klein, Smith, and John, 2004). Put differently, consumers are empowered to make a "purchase vote" or "responsible consumption," not only to favor companies with positive societal impact, but also to force those condemned to take responsibilities for their egregious misconduct, which Klein et al. (2004) called consumer sovereignty. In doing so, consumers express their disapproval of a company's wrongdoings and dissatisfactions toward the injustice (Braunsberger and Buckler, 2011; Yuksel and Mryteza, 2009; Zeng, Audrain-Pontevia, and Durif, 2021). As a form of anti-consumption behavior, John and Klein (2003, p. 1198) defined boycott as "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." In an extreme case, consumers may even exert aggressive actions against a brand or company, such as retaliation and sabotage, to restore their own or others' interests and to harm the brand image (Kahr, Nyffenegger, Krohmer, and Hoyer, 2016). Evidently, consumers' concerns about safety, the environment, and society dominate their purchase decisions. Therefore, a better understanding of consumer boycott and its psychological mechanisms is useful in helping managers prepare organizations to better handle the risks caused by CSI (Xie and Bagozzi, 2019).

A growing body of literature documents consumer boycott in response to CSI. Such research has been conceptual or descriptive in nature, with a focus on the distinctive process of boycotting in a single case, mostly regarding four concerns: the underlying motivations of boycott participation (e.g., De Matos and Vargas Rossi, 2007; Klein et al., 2004; Sen, Gürhan-Canli, and Morwitz, 2001), types of boycott behavior (Kozinets and Handelman, 1998; He et al., 2021), consumers' emotional intensity (Antonetti and Maklan, 2016), and a company's strategic responses toward consumer boycott (Cleeren, Heerde, and Dekimpe, 2013; Yuksel and Mryteza, 2009; Yilmaz and Alhumoud, 2017). Most of these studies have revealed that cognitive constructs such as the cost-benefit analysis (e.g., Klein et al., 2004), moral justification (e.g., Ishak, Khalid, and Sulaiman, 2018), justice evaluation (Carlsmith, Darley, and Robinson, 2002), and egregious judgment (e.g., Yilmaz and Alhumoud, 2017) are pivotal in precipitating boycott participation.

All these studies probe distinctive facets of consumer boycotts, yet researchers argue that consumer boycotts are still underexplored and warrant more attention to examine consumer boycotts either from a more holistic perspective (Braunsberger and Buckler, 2011; De Matos and Vargas Rossi, 2007) or based on a psycho-cognitive framework (Zeng et al., 2021). Thus, in addition to the cognitive drivers of consumer boycotts, the emotional facet (e.g., angry feeling) should also be considered to understand boycotts (Trautwein and Lindenmeier, 2019). Xie and Bagozzi (2019) proposed two distinct mediating processes in terms of emotional and evaluative reactions to understand the psychological mechanisms underlying how

consumers react to irresponsible practices. Negative moral emotions such as contempt, anger, moral outrage, and disgust could be provoked and become informational to consumers, which subsequently yield anti-consumption behaviors (Antonetti and Maklan, 2017). With relatively limited research on the effect of negative emotions, Scheidler and Edinger-Schons (2020) have called for more research to examine the effect of negative emotions on boycotts. As a result, the current work aims to probe the mediating effect of the anticipated guilt, a salient self-conscious emotion, to fill the research gap.

Moreover, concerns about justice for others are relevant to consumers' behavior in supporting ethical consumption (White, MacDonnell, and Ellard, 2012). A firm's wrongdoings could generate injustice and harms for stakeholders. However, despite the current knowledge, limited studies have examined consumer boycotts from the perspective of the just-world theory, which embraces the belief that people in the world receive the rewards and punishments they deserve. Therefore, this work aims to incorporate the concept of justice restoration potential to explain boycott and extend the just-world literature on consumer boycott. However, participating in a boycott often incurs some cost for consumers, particularly when they have built an emotional bonding or behavioral loyalty with the transgressing companies. Seeking a substitute product or service also implies a higher cost of the boycott. The current work, thus, includes justice restoration potential and substitute cost in the conceptual framework.

In addition, extant research with various foci on consumer boycotts often collects data and tests models by examining a specific case of CSI (e.g., He et al., 2021) via a field study or survey. Such studies have generated important managerial insights for the specific context of a case. However, the type of CSI could be diverse, and consumers' responses may differ accordingly. To provide advanced insights for companies, the present study examines consumer responses in four cases, among which half relate to a product/service crisis and half pertain to corporate culture crisis. With the CSI typology, the study may provide further managerial insights.

To recap, this study aims to address the antecedents of consumer boycotts by developing a psycho-cognitive framework that incorporates both cognitive and emotional facets (i.e., the anticipated guilt) precipitating consumer boycotts. This research further synthesizes the just-world theory and cost-benefit perspective into the conceptual framework. In addition, the effect of the typology of CSI is considered and analyzed. The rest of the paper is organized as follows: This study first reviews the related literature and develops the conceptual framework and hypotheses. Next, this paper describes the data and methodology, followed by the empirical results. The concluding comments and contributions are then discussed, along with managerial implications, limitations, and future directions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Friedman (1985, p. 97), a consumer boycott refers to “an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace.” In other words, consumers can purposely refrain from consuming a specific product, product category, or brand in response to a company's perceived wrongdoing and subsequently impinge upon the company's brand equity. A consumer boycott is construed to be a type of collective behavior that prevents market transactions because its success depends on the constant participation of a large group of consumers (Sen et al., 2001). Boycotting could be instrumental or expressive (Cissé-Depardon and N'Goala, 2009). An instrumental boycott involves consumers' active decision to refuse to consume or conduct marketing transactions with another actor due to its misconduct. Being aware of their sovereignty, boycotters believe that they can make a noticeable impact and determine what products or services will be produced or capitalized by coercing the boycott target to cease its egregious behavior and even take social responsibility for its actions (Klein et al., 2004), such as using eco-friendly materials in product manufacturing, improving employees' working conditions, and prioritizing consumers' benefits. As a kind of social movement and collective action, a boycott is viewed as the catalyst for social and economic change (e.g., Friedman, 1999;

Yang and Rhee, 2019). Meanwhile, an expressive boycott is a more abstract form of protest that simply expresses consumers' displeasure and negative psychological states caused by the transgressing company, allowing consumers to unleash their negative emotions (Zeng et al., 2021). Ishak et al. (2018), drawing upon the moral sentiment theory (Smith, 1991), argued that human beings are moral creatures who can feel the misery of the sufferers of egregious misconduct and, therefore, urge individuals to take actions to address their sentimental feelings.

Drawing on the helping literature as well as cost-benefit evaluations, Klein et al. (2004) construed boycotting as a pro-social behavior by which individuals benefit one or more people other than themselves. In their preliminary study using an open-ended questionnaire, the researchers examined why some consumers engage in boycotts while others do not by categorizing motivations into four categories: make a difference (i.e., the extent to which boycott participation can contribute to the achievement of collective goals), self-enhancement (i.e., boycott participation boosts self-esteem and makes boycotters feel good about themselves), counterarguments (i.e., individuals choose not to boycott because they believe their participation may induce intended harm), and constrained consumption (i.e., the direct costs of boycotting).

An egregious act is regarded as the fundamental trigger of a boycott action (John and Klein, 2003). According to Klein et al. (2004, p. 96), perceived egregiousness refers to the extent to which an individual believes that "a firm has engaged in conduct that is strikingly wrong and that has negative and possibly harmful consequences for various parties (e.g., workers, consumers, society at large)." Research has suggested that consumers who perceive higher levels of egregiousness show a higher motivation to engage in boycotts (Klein et al., 2004; John and Klein, 2003). In this way, boycott behavior may serve as an approach for consumers to unleash their condemnation and angry feelings toward the transgressing companies (Trautwein and Lindenmeier, 2019). A boycott serves as a response to a company's wrongdoings that are perceived to be harmful to one or more parties. Although such a perception may vary notably across consumers under different circumstances, not all consumers will engage in boycotts, especially when some of them may interpret a firm's actions as not being seriously wrong (Klein et al., 2004; Yuksel and Mryteza, 2009). As a result, H1, is developed as:

*H1: Perceived egregiousness is positively associated with consumer boycott.*

Media news reporting and message content about business wrongdoings could draw attention and stimulate public concerns on certain issues, in turn motivating boycott intention (Hoffmann, 2013; Trautwein and Lindenmeier, 2019). Empirical studies have found that consumers are more sensitive to negative information (Sun and Ding, 2020). Media communication and reporting could elicit ethical concerns among consumers, thereby increasing boycott intention (Hoffmann, 2013; Trautwein and Lindenmeier, 2019).

Negative publicity refers to the extent to which the media report on the product harm crisis (Cleeren et al., 2013), which will influence a firm's reactions to crisis, business performance, and brand equity (Liu and Shankar, 2015). Negative publicity also implies issue salience that reflects the extent to which the issue received attention or resonance from society (He et al., 2021). Issue salience can further influence the social expectations of the focal firm and drive it to take actions for failure recovery (Clark, Bryant, and Griffin, 2017). Thus, CSI with salient publicity may yield a greater degree of consumers' perceived violation of the social contract and thus increase the perceived harms.

Negative publicity is derived from media reports and public concerns rather than from company-generated communications; as a result, the messages are construed to be more credible (Wang, 2006). Dean (2004) argued that negative publicity is more powerful and influential with a longer-lasting effect and greater public impression, so it may incur substantial revenue losses. Researchers have also found that negative publicity can harm a firm's performance (e.g., Lei, Dawar, and Lemmink, 2008) and elicit negative online reviews (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006). As Zhu and Chang (2013) suggested, negative publicity is

associated with a perceived severity of unethical behavior, public intensity of media concerns, and recovery performance of a firm's remedial measures. Moreover, He et al. (2021) argued that the salience of an issue will influence the extent to which consumers negatively respond to the transgressing company due to the perceived harm. In other words, the negative publicity unravels the egregious act and potential damages, thereby influencing consumers' perceptions and responses. The negative publicity determines the way consumers receive, process, and interpret the egregious act of a company. Thus, the more negative the publicity, the more likely consumers perceive the egregiousness of the company. Hence,

*H2: Negative publicity is positively associated with perceived egregiousness.*

Attribution theory could be used to infer stakeholders' reactions toward brand culpability (He et al., 2021). According to Weiner (1986), individuals need to impute a negative incident to a specific individual. Lei, Dawar, and Gürhan-Canli (2012) found that consumers tend to impute the rise of an event to a specific target, especially those incidental negative events. Being associated with whether a company should take responsibility for product/service harm crisis, blame attribution may damage firm value via stakeholder sanctions.

Blame attribution, also known as "locus of causality," includes internal and external attribution (Weiner, 1986). The former relates to the originator of an irresponsible practice whereas the latter mainly pertains to situational and environmental causes (Lange and Washburn, 2012; Scheidler and Edinger-Schons, 2020). Compared to an externally attributed cause, an internally attributed originator of irresponsible actions often elicits stronger reactions in consumers (Carvalho, Muralidharan, and Bapuji, 2015). Studies have also demonstrated that consumers tend to take negative reactions against the transgressing company when they perceive that the company has the ability to control incidents and should take responsibility (Scheidler and Edinger-Schons, 2020). A greater level of control implies that the company could have prevented the incidents and, thus, is more likely to be judged culpable (Scheidler and Edinger-Schons, 2020). In other words, internal blame attribution may amplify corporate culpability, decrease consumers' intention to forgive, and in turn develop negative reactions toward the focal company. Consequently,

*H3: Internal blame attribution is positively associated with perceived egregiousness.*

Consumers' moral beliefs and ethical ideologies are believed to influence their responses to a firm's irresponsible behavior (He et al., 2016). Researchers have examined the concept of self-accountability, drawing upon the literature on self-standard and self-discrepancy theory. The former refers to self-beliefs that guide a person's behavior; the latter relates to the discrepancy between the real self and ideal self in order to eliminate which individuals would change their behavior to avoid potential negative feelings (Peloza, White, and Shang, 2013; Rowe, Wilson, Dimitriu, Breiter, and Charnley, 2017). Self-accountability, defined as "the activation of a person's desire to live up to internal self-standards" (Peloza, et al., 2013, p. 105), refers to consumers holding the standards and beliefs that they should behave in an ethical and sustainable manner. Accordingly, consumers with greater self-accountability are more likely to opt for ethical products because they want to stay with their intrinsic self-standards and take responsibilities for their choices. As previous researchers have suggested, the intrinsic morality of consumers could influence their moral judgment and evoke sympathetic feelings toward the aggrieved parties or victims, thereby motivating individuals to adopt pro-social behaviors (Ishak et al., 2018). In a similar vein, Scheidler and Edinger-Schons (2020) proposed "consumer culpability" to describe consumers' acknowledgment that their behavior may partially encourage CSI if they choose to do nothing. In order to stay in line with their moral standards and reestablish a positive self-perception, consumers tend to engage in helping behaviors and boycott the transgressing company for moral identity restoration (Scheidler and Edinger-Schons, 2020; Klein et al., 2004).

Gregory-Smith, Smith, and Winklhofer (2013) further examined the effect of emotional feelings (both positive and negative) on consumers' ethical choice. They found guilt to be the most salient negative emotion that consumers feel and use to manage cognitive dissonance in an ethical purchase. In general, guilt refers to an individual's unpleasant emotional state (Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton, 1994). Pelozo et al. (2013) suggested that guilt arises when a person is unable to maintain his/her own standards. They argue that self-accountability will yield anticipated guilt, which will in turn influence the individual's ethical and pro-social behavior. In other words, due to the self-appraisal of morality about how one should act or behave, guilt serves as an antecedent to refrain consumers from making unethical choices (Kroll and Egan, 2004; Gregory-Smith et al., 2013).

According to the helping behavior literature, individuals are likely to engage in pro-social behavior because of a good self-feeling. Self-blame and public blame may occur if they do not engage in the helping behavior (Dovidio, Piliavin, Gaertner, Schroeder, and Clark, 1991), which could lead to guilt. Previous researchers have suggested that feelings of guilt may provoke ethical purchase decisions (Antonetti and Baines, 2015) and motivate an individual to act in favor of other people's interests (Yilmaz and Alhumoud, 2017). Thus, the avoidance of feelings of guilt could predict the willingness to boycott (Yilmaz and Alhumoud, 2017). Based upon the literature, H4 is inferred.

*H4: Self-accountability will lead to consumer boycott via an increase in anticipated guilt.*

Researchers have also suggested that people need to believe in a just world, where good and evil are always rewarded and punished, respectfully, because such a belief enables people to view the world as stable (e.g., Lerner, 1980; White et al., 2012). This paper uses the just-world theory in the context of corporate social irresponsibility, in which an injustice is presented to stakeholders. To redress the injustice, consumers may choose ethical products/services and punish the transgressing companies, particularly when the irresponsible practice is pronounced and has the potential to be restored (White et al., 2012).

Justice restoration potential refers to "whether the particular avenue is perceived of having the possibility to restore justice" (White et al., 2012, p. 104). Specifically, consumers may evaluate the extent to which they can rely on their actions or a specific approach to restore fairness for people. In the context of fair trade consumption, White et al. (2012) concluded that the potential for justice restoration influences consumers' willingness to support fair trade products because it reflects a belief that consumers' purchases will substantially contribute to those in need of help, improve the quality of life of third-place farmers, and save them from exploitation at the hands of intermediaries. In other words, the support of ethical choices will be enhanced when consumers believe that they can actually bring forth impact (White et al., 2012). In contrast, a low level of justice restoration potential is less likely to generate helping behavior. Instead, consumers tend to adopt defensive strategies rather than providing assistance or engaging in pro-social responses (Lerner and Simmons, 1966). Thus, the potential for justice restoration gives consumers an opportunity to resolve the threat of injustice so that bad guys are punished and good things happen to good people (Lerner, 1980). As a result, this study argues that a high level of justice restoration potential will lead to boycott intention.

Some researchers have also referred to "make a difference" (Klein et al., 2004) or "perceived efficacy" (Braunsberger and Buckler, 2011; Sen et al., 2001) as the extent to which a boycott participant believes his/her boycott participation can contribute to the attainment of collective social goals. That is to say, when consumers believe they are competent in helping others and their actions will bring forth positive change in outcomes, boycott participation is more likely to take place (Klein et al., 2004). Thus,

*H5: Justice restoration potential is positively associated with consumer boycott.*

Previous researchers have conceptualized consumers' decision to boycott as a cost-benefit analysis wherein consumers weigh the potential gains from boycotting (e.g., to change a firm's behavior and contribute to collective goals) against the potential costs of boycotting (Klein et al., 2004; Yuksel and Mryteza, 2009; Zeng et al., 2021). In some irresponsible initiatives, consumers may reap the benefits. For example, unpaid labors in the supply chain usually indicate low costs to the manufacturers and low prices for obtaining the goods. As such, consumers are likely to downplay unethical behaviors due to economic benefits and reduce their boycott intention (Scheidler and Edinger-Schons, 2020). Moreover, heavy users or loyal customers need to spend more time and effort searching for and adapting to other substitute brands. As consumers develop a stronger preference or commitment to a product, they will feel a higher cost for resisting the product, making them reluctant to boycott the company (Klein et al., 2004; Yuksel and Mryteza, 2009). Similarly, He et al. (2021) argued that consumers are less likely to participate in a boycott when they have built a stronger consumer-brand relationship, especially if other satisfactory substitutes are not yet readily available (Braunsberger and Buckler, 2011; Sen et al., 2001). Due to the switching cost and lock-in behavior, this study infers that:

*H6: Perceived boycott costs are negatively associated with consumer boycott.*

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The current study develops a psycho-cognitive framework comprising both external and internal antecedents that precipitate boycott participation (shown in Figure 1). Specifically, negative publicity and blame attribution serve as the external motivators that prompt consumers' perceived egregiousness and, in turn, boycotting behavior. Self-accountability, justice restoration potential, and substitute cost serve as the individual-level antecedents that either directly or indirectly influence boycotts via an increase in individuals' anticipated guilt. This study employs structural equation model (SEM) to test the hypotheses.

This study selects four infamous negative incidents from the last decade, including both domestic and international corporate misconduct: Ting-Hsin's oil scandal in Taiwan, Zara's sweatshop of its supply chain, Uber's sexual harassment, and United Airlines (UA) dragging a customer off a flight after overbooking the flight. The four incidents cover both product/service-related crises (i.e., Ting-Hsin and UA) and corporate culture-related scandals (i.e., ZARA and Uber). Two of the four incidents (i.e., Uber and UA) are listed in the top 10 corporate scandals and misconduct in the United States in 2017 (Shen, 2017). The Ting-Hsin scandal, which occurred in 2014, yielded large-scale boycotting in Taiwan for years, with follow-up reports continuing for more than 5 years, forcing the corporation to withdraw from Taiwan. Furthermore, ZARA—a company known worldwide—faced an unpaid labor issue in its supply chain a few years ago.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework

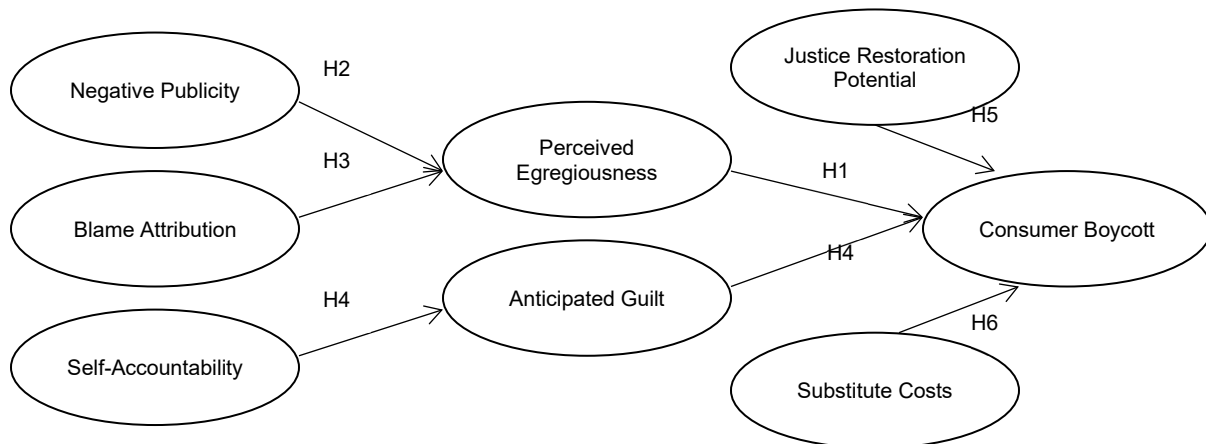


Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework and hypotheses. This study infers that perceived egregiousness and anticipated guilt serve as the mediators leading to consumer boycotts. Although negative publicity and blame attribution evoke the cognitive perception of a firm’s egregiousness, self-accountability elicits a negative feeling of guilt that then results in boycotting. Justice restoration potential and substitute costs also influence consumer boycotts.

This study used convenience sampling, recruiting subjects both online and offline to answer the survey questions in the first quarter of 2018. Subjects were general consumers in Taiwan who were randomly assigned to one of the four cases of corporate irresponsibility shown on the first page of the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to carefully read a news passage about a firm’s irresponsible practice before completing the questionnaire, which measured items for each construct in terms of boycott participation, perceive negative publicity, blame attribution, self-accountability, substitute cost, egregiousness, anticipated guilt, and justice restoration potential. The research collected 400 samples in total. After eliminating samples with omitted and invalid answers, 377 usable responses were analyzed, for a response rate of 94%. The 377 responses included 134 online responses and 247 offline responses. The online responses were collected via Facebook posts and Line group messages. This study collected offline responses in public spaces such as university campuses, shopping malls, and department stores. Our samples included 118 responses to Ting-Hsin’s oil scandal, 89 responses to ZARA’s unpaid labor in the supply chain, 83 responses to Uber’s sexual harassment, and 87 responses to UA’s overbooked flight.

This study used modified measures from previous studies (shown in Table 1). Specifically, this study employed 5 items to assess the negative publicity (Zhu and Chang, 2013), 3 to measure blame attribution (Lei, Dawar, and Gurhan-Canli 2012; Klein and Dawar, 2004), 3 to measure self-accountability (Rowe et al., 2017; Peloza et al., 2013), 2 to assess substitute cost (Klein et al., 2004), 2 to measure perceived egregiousness (Klein et al., 2004), 2 to evaluate the anticipated guilt (Rowe et al., 2017), 2 to measure the justice restoration potential (White et al., 2012), and 2 to measure consumer boycott behavior (Klein et al., 2004; Hoffman and Müller, 2009).



Table 1: Constructs and Measures

Construct	Measures	Reference
Negative publicity	Received long-term attention from the media and public Had high exposure frequency Was a concern of a lot of media and people Was a concern of reputable media and people Generated intense discussions among the media and public	Zhu and Chang, 2013
Blame attribution	This company is to blame for consumers' illnesses This company is responsible for consumers' illnesses This company is at fault for consumers' illnesses	Lei, Dawar, and Gurhan-Canli 2012; Klein and Dawar, 2004
Self-accountability	Feel accountable to behave in an ethical manner Motivated to live up to my own standards Feel accountable for my own standards	Rowe et al., 2017; Pelozo et al., 2013
Substitute cost	The targeted product has satisfactory substitutes Substitutes are easy to identify	Klein et al. (2004)
Perceived egregiousness	The firm's actions are very wrong The firm's action is inexcusable	Klein et al. (2004)
Anticipated guilt	Feel remorse Feel guilt	Rowe et al. (2017)
Justice restoration potential	To help make the world a fairer place To contribute to restoring fair and just outcomes	White et al. (2012)
Consumer boycott behaviors	I am boycotting the products of XX I am not boycotting the products of XX	Klein et al., 2004; Hoffman and Müller, 2009

*This table reveals the relevant variables and measures included in the analysis. Based upon previous literature, this study modified items in the questionnaire, which used 5 items to assess negative publicity, 3 to measure blame attribution, 3 to measure self-accountability, 2 to assess substitute cost, 2 to measure perceived egregiousness, 2 to assess anticipated guilt, 2 to measure justice restoration potential, and 2 to measure consumer boycott behaviors.*

## RESULTS

Of the 377 usable samples, 51% were male and 49% were female. Approximately 73% of respondents had heard of irresponsible practice before and 31% of them had prior consumption experience with the company. Most respondents (80%) ranged in age from 18 to 34 years old. Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) suggestion, this study conducted a two-stage approach to test the conceptual model, including a confirmatory factor analysis to assess the quality of the measurement model and a structural model to test the hypotheses.

Despite of the significant  $\chi^2$  that may be induced by the large sample size ( $\chi^2=280.96$ ;  $p=0.00$ )(Bagozzi, 1981), all other goodness-of-fit indicators are higher than the suggested value (Bagozzi and Dholaki, 2002): the  $\chi^2$  ratio=1.7, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=0.045, goodness-of-fit index (GFI)=0.93, adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)=0.90, normed fit index (NFI)=0.97, non-normed fit index (NNFI)=0.98, comparative-fit index (CFI)=0.99, and incremental fit index (IFI)=0.99. Table 2 shows that the lambda loadings of each measure are higher than the threshold of 0.6, whereas the square multiple correlations (SMCs) are higher than the suggested value of 0.5, except for one item (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black, 1998). To keep the complete measures of a construct, this item was not eliminated. The results show that the measures are adequate. Moreover, the composite reliability (CR) ranged from 0.56 to 0.89. Almost all the CRs were higher than the suggested threshold of 0.6 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The average variance extracted (AVE) ranged from 0.40 to 0.77. Almost all the AVEs of the constructs exceeded the 0.5 threshold (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), indicating acceptable convergent validity.

Table 2: Measurement Model

Measures	SMC	Factor Loadings	CRs	AVEs
<b>Perceived Egregiousness</b>				
The firm’s actions are very wrong	0.59	0.77	0.68	0.52
The firm’s action is inexcusable	0.70	0.84		
<b>Anticipated Guilt</b>				
Feel remorse	0.91	0.95	0.87	0.77
Feel guilt	0.88	0.94		
<b>Justice Restoration Potential</b>				
To help make the world a fairer place	0.83	0.91	0.78	0.64
To contribute to restoring fair and just outcomes	0.83	0.91		
<b>Substitute Cost</b>				
The targeted product has satisfactory substitutes	0.81	0.90	0.86	0.75
Substitutes are easy to identify	0.84	0.91		
<b>Consumer Boycott Behaviors</b>				
I am boycotting the products of XX	0.73	0.85	0.56	0.40
I am not boycotting the products of XX	0.55	0.74		
<b>Negative Publicity</b>				
Received long-term attention from the media and public	0.44	0.66		
Had high exposure frequency	0.73	0.85	0.86	0.56
Was a concern of a lot of media and people	0.80	0.90		
Was a concern of reputable media and people	0.90	0.95		
Generated intense discussions among the media and public	0.85	0.92		
<b>Blame Attribution</b>				
This company is to blame for consumers’ illnesses	0.77	0.88	0.78	0.54
This company is responsible for consumers’ illnesses	0.45	0.67		
This company is at fault for consumers’ illnesses	0.80	0.90		
<b>Self-Accountability</b>				
Feel accountable to behave in an ethical manner	0.58	0.76	0.89	0.72
Motivated to live up to my own standards	0.91	0.95		
Feel accountable to my own standards	0.85	0.92		

This table shows the measure items of each construct as well as the reliability and validity of the construct measures. The lambda loadings here are standardized solutions. The squared multiple correlations (SMCs), factor loadings, and composite reliability (CR) reflect the reliability of construct measures, whereas the average variance extracted (AVE) reflects the discriminant validity of the constructs. Most values are higher than the suggested threshold. In the formulas,  $CR = \frac{(\sum \lambda)^2}{(\sum \lambda)^2 + \sum(\theta)}$  and  $AVE = \frac{(\sum \lambda^2)}{(\sum \lambda^2) + \sum(\theta)}$

This study also checked the discriminant validity using the chi-square difference test suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). First, the study estimated the correlations between all the possible pairs of constructs and then constrained each correlation to equal 1 to examine whether the constraint statistically degraded the model fit. The results indicated that most pairs of constructs revealed significant chi-square differences except for the differences between anticipated guilt and blame attribution ( $\Delta x^2 = 1, \Delta df=1$ ), between justice restoration potential and consumer boycott behavior ( $\Delta x^2 = 1.62, \Delta df=1$ ), and between justice restoration potential and blame attribution ( $\Delta x^2 = 0, \Delta df=1$ ), which may imply an inferior discriminant validity in the three pairs of constructs. To further confirm the discriminant validity, this study adopted Espinoza’s (1999) and Fornell and Larker’s (1981)’s approach, according to which, AVEs should be higher than any square of correlations between two latent constructs. The results in Table 3 present satisfactory discriminant validity.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

Latent Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Perceived Egregiousness	0.52							
2. Anticipated Guilt	0.16	0.77						
3. Justice Restoration Potential	0.09	0.39	0.64					
4. Substitute Costs	0.07	0.08	0.04	0.75				
5. Consumer Boycott Behaviors	0.13	0.38	0.23	0.10	0.40			
6. Negative Publicity	0.05	0.09	0.08	0.01	0.04	0.56		
7. Blame Attribution	0.17	0.15	0.21	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.54	
8. Self-Accountability	0.07	0.12	0.06	0.04	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.72

The values on the diagonal reveal the AVEs of each latent variable, whereas the values in the lower triangular matrix show the square of correlation between two latent variables. According to past researchers' suggestion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), the AVEs should be higher than any square of correlations between two latent variables. Hence, this table reveals satisfactory discriminant validity.

The structural model showed an acceptable goodness of fit, with  $\chi^2$  ratio of 2.33, RMSEA of 0.06, GFI of 0.91, AGFI of 0.88, PGFI of 0.66, IFI of 0.97, and CFI of 0.97. The  $\chi^2$  ratio was below the threshold of 3 suggested by Kline (1998), and the RMSEA was below the cut-off value of 0.08 (McDonald and Ho, 2002). The GFI was higher than the suggested value of 0.9, but the AGFI was slightly lower (Tanaka and Huba, 1989). The PGFI was higher than the suggested value of 0.5 (Mulaik et al., 1989). Both IFI and CFI were far higher than threshold of 0.9 (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). All indicators implied a satisfactory model fit.

Table 4 shows that most hypotheses were supported. Specifically, perceived egregiousness was significantly and positively associated with consumer boycott ( $\beta_{31}=0.14$ , t-value=1.97), supporting H<sub>1</sub>. However, the effect of negative publicity on perceived egregiousness was insignificant ( $\gamma_{11}=0.07$ , t-value=1.37), showing no support for H<sub>2</sub>. Moreover, blame attribution appeared to be a significant predictor of perceived egregiousness ( $\gamma_{12}=0.47$ , t-value=6.99), supporting H<sub>3</sub>. Justice restoration potential was significantly and positively associated with consumer boycott ( $\gamma_{34}=0.14$ , t-value=3.43). Thus, H<sub>5</sub> was statistically supported. As expected, a lower substitute cost yielded a higher possibility to engage in a boycott, with a coefficient of 0.18 (t-value=3.14). H<sub>6</sub> was therefore supported.

Table 4: Hypotheses' Tests

Hypothesis	Standardized Coefficient (t-value)	Results
H <sub>1</sub> : Perceived egregiousness → Consumer boycott behavior	0.14*(1.97)	Accepted
H <sub>2</sub> : Negative publicity → Perceived egregiousness	0.07(1.37)	Unaccepted
H <sub>3</sub> : Blame attribution → Perceived egregiousness	0.47***(6.99)	Accepted
H <sub>4</sub> : Self-accountability → Anticipated guilt → Consumer boycott behavior	0.69***(8.35); 0.44***(9.63)	Accepted
H <sub>5</sub> : Justice restoration potential → Consumer boycott behavior	0.15***(3.33)	Accepted
H <sub>6</sub> : Substitute costs → Consumer boycott behavior	0.18***(3.14)	Accepted

This table shows the results of hypothesis testing. The sign \* denotes that  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* denotes that  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* denotes that  $p < 0.001$ . The value in the parentheses following the standard coefficient shows the t-value. All hypotheses were statistically supported except H<sub>2</sub>, in which negative publicity is inferred to be positively associated with perceived egregiousness.

As for the mediating role of anticipated guilt, this study compares the overall goodness of model fit among the nested model, full mediation model, and partial mediation model in Table 5. In the nested model, the relationships among self-accountability, anticipated guilt, and consumer boycott are unconstrained. The direct path effect of self-accountability on consumer boycott is constrained in the partial mediation model

and unconstrained in the full mediation model. The results show that the chi-square difference between the full mediation model and the nested model was significant, with a  $\chi^2$  difference of 82.63 and degree of freedom difference of 2, whereas the difference between the full mediation model and partial mediation model revealed insignificant results ( $\chi^2$  difference=0.22; degree of freedom difference=1). The direct effect of self-accountability on consumer boycott was insignificant, with a coefficient of -0.01 (t-value=-0.17). As expected, self-accountability was significantly associated with anticipated guilt ( $\gamma_{23}$ =0.69, t-value=8.34), which then influenced consumer boycott behavior ( $\beta_{32}$ =0.44, t-value=10.82). Hence, the results support H<sub>4</sub>.

Table 5: Mediating Effect of Anticipated Guilt between Self-accountability and Boycott Behavior

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2$ ratio	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	CFI	IFI	PGFI
Nested model	476.92	171	2.79	0.069	0.89	0.85	0.96	0.96	0.66
Full mediation	394.29	169	2.33	0.060	0.91	0.88	0.97	0.97	0.67
Partial mediation	394.51	168	2.33	0.060	0.91	0.88	0.97	0.97	0.66

*This table shows the comparison of goodness-of-fit indexes among three models: the nested model, full mediation model, and partial mediation model. The results show that the chi-square difference between the full mediation model and nested model was significant, whereas between the full mediation model and partial mediation model it was insignificant. The goodness-of-fit indicators all showed that the full mediation and partial mediation models performed better fitness than the nested model. These results imply that anticipated guilt serves as a mediator between self-accountability and consumer boycott behavior. Thus, H<sub>4</sub> is supported.*

To gain more insights into the potential influence of CSI typology on consumer boycott behavior, the present study further distinguished the four CSI incidents into product/service-related CSIs (N=205) and corporate culture-related CSIs (N=172). This study conducted T tests and found that, in cases of corporate culture-related CSIs, consumers showed a significantly lower boycott intention (Mean<sub>product/service crisis</sub>=3.64 < Mean<sub>culture crisis</sub>=4.7,  $p$ -value<0.001) than those in the cases of product/service-related CSIs, implying that a product/service-related crisis is more likely to induce consumer boycott behavior. The results may be ascribed to the potential damages to personal consumption rights and physical risks. However, these two groups of consumers reveal indifferent purchase intention in their near future (Mean<sub>product/service crisis</sub>=1.97 < Mean<sub>culture crisis</sub>=2.10,  $p$ -value=0.12).

This study further distinguished between respondents who had consumed the brand (N=115) and those who never had (N=262) by employing the T test to examine consumer responses in the boycott intention and purchase intention. The data indicated that consumers who had consumed products or services of the company involved in the scandal indicated a significantly lower intention to boycott the company (Mean=3.9, SD=1.38,  $p$ -value=0.006) than those who had never consumed its products or services (Mean=4.36, SD=1.49). These consumers also revealed greater purchase intention (Mean=2.61, SD=0.78,  $p$ -value<0.001) than those with no prior experiences with the products or services (Mean=1.77, SD=0.70). Among consumers with prior consumption experiences (N=115), subjects in the product/service-related CSI scenario (N=46) were more inclined to boycott the company than those in the corporate culture-related CSI scenario (N=69) (Mean<sub>culture CSIs</sub>=3.19; Mean<sub>product/service CSIs</sub> = 4.38,  $p$ -value <0.001). For subjects with no prior consumption experiences (N=262), their boycott intention was still significantly higher in the product/service-related CSI scenario (N=136) than the corporate culture-related CSI scenario (N=126) (Mean<sub>product/service CSIs</sub>=4.86; Mean<sub>culture CSIs</sub>=3.81,  $p$ -value<0.001).

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

With stakeholders becoming more interested in the ethics and sustainable actions of their banks, financial institutions have started publishing CSR reports or disclosing their CSR initiatives on their websites to address their sustainability engagement (Botshabelo, Mbekomize, and Phatshwane, 2017; Palazzo et al., 2020). Researchers have suggested that banks/insurance organizations, like many other companies, are dedicated to showing stakeholders their long-term commitment via a variety of CSR communication

strategies (Palazzo et al., 2020). A more holistic understanding of CSI is also pivotal in the banking industry because irresponsible practices may harm stakeholders' trust and generate customer sanctions that then cause financial risks. Therefore, the findings of this research may shed light on developing communication strategies in response to CSI.

This present study answered previous researchers' call (Scheidler and Edinger-Schons, 2020) for the further investigation of consumers' boycott behaviors based upon a psycho-cognitive framework that incorporates both external and internal drivers of consumer boycotts. The perceived egregiousness and anticipated guilt served as mediators triggering consumer boycotts. This study also examined consumers' boycott intention in four different cases with the typology of product-related irresponsible practices and corporate culture-related irresponsible practices. Consumers' prior consumption experience, which may yield higher substitute costs, was considered. This study aimed to contribute to the current understanding of consumer boycotts, providing insights for organizations facing CSI issues. By employing SEM to analyze 377 samples collected online and offline, the research provided statistical evidence to test the hypotheses.

This study results led to four major findings. First, the results revealed that negative publicity will not necessarily increase perceived egregiousness, whereas internal blame attribution serves as a critical antecedent of perceived egregiousness and, consequently, consumer boycott behaviors. Second, consumers' intrinsic self-accountability leads to a greater extent of anticipated guilt and, thus, boycott intention. Third, justice restoration potential and substitute costs are influential in yielding consumer boycott behaviors. Finally, compared with corporate culture-related irresponsible practices, product/service-related irresponsible practices are more likely to induce boycotts due to the direct linkage to consumers' rights and risks. Interestingly, consistent with the cost-benefit analysis perspective, consumers with prior consumption experiences were more reluctant to participate in a boycott due to the higher substitute cost.

Furthermore, this study demonstrated an insignificant relationship between negative publicity and perceived egregiousness. The researcher ascribes this outcome to the design of the communication message. Although negative publicity may yield negative image association (Einwiller, Fedorikhin, Johnson, and Kamins, 2006), the effect may depend on the media source credibility, the disclosure of message argument, the exposure frequency as well as intensity, and the follow-up reports of the transgressing company's remedies. In other words, despite the negative exposure putting the target company under the spotlight, it does not necessarily lead to a greater extent of perceived egregiousness. As some researchers have suggested, negative information can serve as a double-edged sword that increases a firm's awareness and product accessibility in the meantime because, over time, people may forget the negative content but still remember the product or brand name (Cleeren et al., 2013). On the other hand, whether consumers can access sufficient information and how they process information are also critical in forming consumers' ethical judgment, thereby influencing their perception of egregious misconduct. Future researches are needed for further examination.

Moreover, the findings indicate that consumers' perceived egregiousness is mainly derived from the blame attribution—that is, whether they can ascribe the harm of CSI to a specific target (Carvalho et al., 2015; Lei et al., 2012; Scheidler and Edinger-Schons, 2020). Consistent with previous findings (Kahr et al., 2016; Scheidler and Edinger-Schons, 2020), this study has provided additional evidence demonstrating that consumers tend to evaluate a company's culpability and ability to control the occurrence of incidents. In this way, blame attribution influences perceived egregiousness and negative emotions that then encourage consumer boycotts.

Drawing on the self-standard and self-discrepancy theory, this study found that self-accountability motivates boycott participation via the anticipated feeling of guilt. This finding is in line with the arguments presented in previous literature. Consumers with higher self-standards in ethics are inclined to engage in ethical and pro-social choices in order to avoid the anticipated guilt (Antonetti and Baines, 2015;

Braunsberger and Buckler, 2011; Pelozo et al., 2013). Although Rowe et al. (2017) found that the effect of pride can better predict ethical consumer behavior than the effect of guilt can, the current study demonstrated that anticipated guilt indeed acts as a mediating role in influencing boycott participation. As Gregory-Smith et al. (2013) indicated, negative emotions can discourage consumers from making unethical decisions. Although consumers may feel determined to maintain their intrinsic morality, they are more likely to feel culpable for irresponsible practices and have negative emotions toward the suffering parties. To avoid such negative feelings, consumers are motivated to take helping or pro-social actions (i.e., boycott the transgressing company) to restore their moral identity as well as reduce the vicarious emotional tension.

According to this study's findings, when consumers believe that their actions can substantially redress justice and fairness, their willingness to boycott a company will be higher. This result is consistent with prior researchers' findings (White et al., 2012) and the concept of "make a difference" proposed by Klein et al. (2004). Reflecting the belief and confidence of restoring fairness in the world, justice restoration potential can encourage consumer boycotts. Once individuals believe their engagement and actions are able to coerce the transgressing company to change and contribute to improving the welfare of the third party, they are more willing to boycott the company.

As the findings indicate, consumer boycotts are also closely related to boycott costs. The additional time and efforts that consumers need to pay for similar products and services will constrain their boycott participation, implying that boycott activity is driven by not only helping behavior, but also self-benefitting behavior. Specifically, consumers will assess the pros and cons they receive from boycotts. Furthermore, consumers with prior consumption experiences revealed significantly lower boycott intention and were more likely to purchase the target case's product/service in the near future. These results are not surprising as these consumers often face higher substitution and switching costs. When benefitting from the product/service of the transgressing company, consumers are inclined to tolerate the irresponsibility. Meanwhile, consumers with no prior consumption experience showed a greater willingness to avoid future purchases after the CSI. Without the constraint of substitute costs, they face no conflicts between benefits and costs.

Finally, this study has provided evidence showing that, in different types of CSIs, consumers react differently in terms of their boycott decisions. In particular, product/service-related CSIs are associated with consumers' consumption rights and risks. For example, the Ting-Hsin food oil product crisis directly jeopardized consumers' physical health, whereas the UA's overbooked flight that resulting in dragging customers off the plane evidently damaged customers' benefits. In contrast, CSIs involving unpaid labors and sexual harassment—although both pertinent to stakeholders' interests—showed relatively less power in triggering consumer boycotts. These misconducts impinge less urgently or immediately on individuals' consumption rights.

### Managerial Implications

Despite more than 40% of companies listed Fortune's top 50 facing consumer boycotts (John and Klein, 2003), marketers and policy makers still have an insufficient understanding of boycott behaviors and motivations (Braunsberger and Buckler, 2011; Yuksel and Mryteza, 2009). Boycotts not only damage a firm's revenues, but also encourage consumers to switch to competitors' products. Beyond the theoretical contributions to understanding consumer boycotts, the findings from this study provide several practical implications for companies.

First, companies should try to measure the level of perceived egregiousness and learn the antecedents of this perception so they can craft more effective strategies in response to boycott participation. The current study found that, although external communication plays a pivotal role for a company facing CSI issues, it is not so much a question of whether the public relations department is able to reduce the exposure of

negative publicity but rather how the company influences consumers' blame attribution and takes immediate as well as accountable actions in response to the scandals. As demonstrated in the present study, the latter is conducive for mitigating the egregiousness perception and, subsequently, consumers' resistance reactions. In other words, firms should consider approaches that can abate their culpability and consumers' egregiousness perceptions. Transferring the public focus to the subsequent initiatives may be feasible. For example, response actions like immediately apologizing with sincerity and showing a firm's accountability as well as the locus of causality of the specific event may allow consumers to modify their judgments of the company's culpability by providing them with relatively sufficient information. These remedial measures may alleviate consumers' perceived egregiousness and, in turn, their participation in a boycott.

Second, the results of this study indicated that consumers' self-accountability can lead to boycotts because they attempt to avoid feelings of guilt. Although this study did not focus understanding consumers' morality standards, the findings suggest that marketers should learn more about the ethical self-perception of consumers nowadays because their standards of morality are actually associated with a firm's business sustainability by motivating consumers to adopt pro-social behaviors against transgressing companies. According to Kotler, Kartajay, and Setiawan (2021), young consumers, particularly the Generation Z, tend to reveal a greater extent of self-accountability than other generations because they have been educated to care about sustainability issues and show a higher preference for ethical products or brands with social and environmental responsibilities (Kotler et al., 2021). More importantly, marketers should consider how to leverage the salient self-conscious emotion, guilt, in its crisis communication strategies to influence consumers' boycott behaviors as well as future purchase decisions. Considering the negative feelings of guilt and ethically conscious consumers, crisis communication messages may convey credible information demonstrating the remedial actions taken to fix societal contracts. The communication strategies could not only sway consumers' judgments, but also attenuate the effect of negative emotions on consumer boycotts. Furthermore, with a belief of making a difference in the world, consumers may feel responsible for society and the environment. As the findings of this study indicated, stronger justice restoration potential will increase the intention to boycott. Thus, companies should conduct market research to get a better understanding of consumers' ethical attitudes, the issues they are concerned about, and their self-perceptions, which may be conducive for enacting remedial strategies as well as message appeal design.

Third, a boycott often implies higher substitute costs for some customers due to the existing emotional bond or purchase inertia stemming from past consumption. This does not suggest that companies can neglect irresponsible events; rather, these companies should make even more efforts in their remedial initiatives. By doing so, they are more likely to expand markets and sustain their long-term profits, not only enhancing existing customers' trust and belief, but also convincing current non-users that they are taking their responsibilities seriously and worthy of trust. In addition, companies involved in a CSI crisis should prioritize resource allocation when dedicated to CSR or societal impacts. A firm or brand should be more cautious in campaigns and communication strategies when the incidents are directly associated with the product or service crisis, which would especially attract consumers' attention and concerns in view of the potential harm to individual self-benefits. In this circumstance, companies should placate the target audience by ensuring their benefits of consumption, health, and safety.

### Limitation and Future Research

This study is limited in several ways. Despite this study's attempts to develop a conceptual framework that includes both psycho and cognitive antecedents of consumer boycott, consumer boycott per se could be a complex process driven by intertwined motivations and a wide array of reasons under different contexts. For example, Although the present study categorized these antecedents into external factors (e.g., negative publicity) and individual-level factors (e.g., self-accountability and justice restoration potential), more individual-level factors in terms of demographics may also be incorporated to understand consumer boycott behaviors. Specifically, will an individual's geographic area and cultural context influence their boycott

behaviors? The herding effect and bandwagon effect might be more prominent in some cultural contexts, making it more likely to yield group animosity and encourage boycott participation. Are young consumers, such as Generation Z or Centennials, more likely to use their purchase power to impose sanctions against unethical brands because of their rising consciousness of CSR and sustainability concerns (Kotler et al., 2021)? In this vein, it would be interesting to examine whether these groups of consumers experience stronger anticipated guilt and perceived egregiousness if their favored brands become involved in product/service-related versus corporate culture-related CSI issues. By considering different individual-level factors and sample distributions, future research can investigate whether the significant results still hold and whether new findings emerge in boycott behaviors.

In addition, when a negative corporate scandal or CSI occurs, a firm's subsequent remedy may immediately attenuate or intensify the perceived egregiousness and boycott behaviors. Further research should scrutinize the circumstances and corporate initiatives that may alleviate consumers' negative emotions and revenge behavior. As Yilmaz and Alhumoud (2017) suggested, the accused company's response to crisis—whether appropriate or inappropriate—will influence perceived egregiousness. Therefore, future research could explore how and which type of CSI response strategies can be effectively used to alleviate perceived egregiousness and boycott intention.

Finally, the generalizability of the framework needs to be addressed. Although the research objects in this study included both domestic and international cases that share high awareness and publicity, covered key incidents in early 2017, and encompassed product/service-related and corporate culture-related crises, the selection of research cases could still be biased due to the researchers' subjective interpretations. Using consumers' recall of CSI incidents may enable subjects to experience real-life scandals; however, multiple factors may be out of the researchers' control and, consequently, influence the research findings (Scheidler and Schons, 2020). As a result, an interesting avenue for future research would be to conduct an experimental design to clarify the effect of different CSI types on perceived egregiousness and consumer boycott behaviors. In the present study, CSI scenarios were simplified and categorized into product/service-related harm and corporate culture-related harm involving customers and employees as stakeholders. The current academic contributions could be extended, by examining boycott participation in different typologies of CSI incidents. Furthermore, the majority of subjects (80%) in the current study were between 18 and 34 years old, which may constrain the generalizability of the framework. Extended groups of respondents should be recruited. The sample in this study corresponded to Centennials, who care deeply about sustainability issues and prefer brands that contribute to social and environmental responsibilities (Kotler et al., 2021). Moreover, this study was limited in its cross-sectional data analysis. A longitudinal analysis or process study could clarify the complicated relationships among variables.

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