

Boycott of Starbucks in Indonesia: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Discussions on X (Formerly Twitter)

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Abstract: The pro-Israel product boycott campaign, initiated in October 2023, has had a significant impact on consumer behavior, particularly within the coffee industry. Starbucks, often perceived as linked to Israel, has been one of the brands most affected by this movement. This study employs a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine the linguistic features and underlying motivations expressed in the discourse surrounding the boycott, with a specific focus on Starbucks in discussions on X (formerly Twitter) in Indonesia. CDA is particularly suited for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of power dynamics, ideological positioning, and social influences embedded in digital discourse. Using Martin and White's Appraisal Theory, the research analyzes how attitudes—expressed through affect, judgment, and appreciation—shape language choices and construct interpersonal meanings in boycott-related discussions, revealing how public sentiment is mobilized and reinforced through discourse. The analysis identifies three dominant types of attitudes: judgment, appreciation, and affect, with judgment being the most prevalent. The findings suggest that the discourse reflects strong sentiments of anger and concern toward the Israel-Palestine conflict, as well as a collective stance in support of the boycott. These attitudes are expressed through language that critiques Starbucks and expresses solidarity with the Palestinian cause. The study's time frame, spanning from October 25, 2023, to August 15, 2024, may limit the scope of the findings, but provides a focused view of the discourse during a key period in the boycott movement. This research contributes to understanding how social media discourse shapes consumer activism and the public's relationship with global brands during politically charged times.

Keywords: Appraisal Theory, Social Media Discourse, Palestine-Israel Conflict, Consumer Activism

1. INTRODUCTION

The Israel-Palestine conflict has been a significant and ongoing issue that has captured international attention for decades. Recently, the conflict escalated with Israel's military actions in the Gaza Strip, marking one of the most intense

military confrontations in the past 50 years. This escalation has prompted a global response, including widespread solidarity with the Palestinian people and condemnation of Israeli actions. As a result, a global boycott movement has emerged, focused on products linked to

Israel. These boycotts have garnered attention, particularly in the context of Indonesia, where a significant portion of the population has actively participated in boycotting Israeli-affiliated goods as a form of protest against Israel's policies in Palestine.

Boycotts are forms of consumer behavior that reflect disapproval of specific practices or policies. They involve collective action, where individuals choose not to purchase certain products or services due to ethical or political concerns. From a theoretical perspective, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests that consumer boycotts arise from individuals' identification with social groups, influencing their decision-making. In this context, consumers may participate in a boycott because they align with a broader collective, such as pro-Palestinian supporters or human rights advocates, and feel morally compelled to act against perceived injustices. Additionally, Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957) explains how boycotting helps individuals resolve internal conflict between their moral values and consumer behavior by aligning purchasing choices with ethical beliefs.

While these theories provide insights into why individuals engage in boycotts, this study primarily adopts Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) within a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to examine how these motivations are expressed linguistically in discourse. Appraisal Theory is particularly suited for this study because it allows for an analysis of how attitudes, emotions, and evaluative language shape public sentiment and mobilize collective action in online discussions. By exploring how individuals position themselves, judge others, and express emotions in boycott-related discourse, Appraisal Theory provides a more nuanced understanding of the persuasive and social functions of language within digital activism. The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which calls for the boycotting of Israeli goods, has gained traction globally, especially through digital platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These platforms have played an important role in amplifying the message of solidarity with Palestine by allowing people to share information on the Israel-Palestine conflict, organize boycott campaigns, and gather global support. Hashtags such as #BoycottIsrael and #FreePalestine have become emblems of this digital social movement, demonstrating global

solidarity among internet users. The involvement of social media in these movements demonstrates its potential as a tool for lobbying, activism, and social change, allowing for rapid mobilization and extensive participation in global boycotts.

Overall, the Israel-Palestine conflict has not only sparked a global boycott movement but also highlighted the power of consumer action in influencing business practices and policies. Understanding the motivations behind these boycotts, as well as their impact on both businesses and consumers, is essential in grasping the broader implications of socially driven movements. Future research could further explore the role of social media in amplifying such movements and examine the long-term effects on the global market and international trade relations.

This study aims to analyze discourse surrounding the Starbucks boycott in Indonesia on X (formerly Twitter), focusing on the linguistic strategies used to express attitudes, emotions, and ideological positioning. Specifically, it investigates how evaluative language—particularly judgment—dominates boycott-related discussions and influences public sentiment. By applying Appraisal Theory within a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, this research seeks to uncover the role of discourse in mobilizing and sustaining digital activism.

1.1 Boycott Campaign in Indonesia as a Response to Palestina & Israel Conflicts

In recent years, several elements of Indonesian society have actively advocated for a boycott of Israeli products as a show of solidarity with the Palestinian people and a rejection of Israeli policies that are perceived as harmful to Palestinian human rights. The Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Ulema Council) issued a formal statement calling for the boycott of goods associated with Israeli companies, amplifying this movement. This growing trend has sparked widespread participation in the boycott of Israeli-linked products, a sentiment that has been particularly pronounced on social media. Given the growing prominence of these campaigns, it is important to investigate the impact of these online movements on consumers' purchase intentions and the underlying attitudes and motivations driving this boycott.

Consumer boycotts are a type of collective consumer behavior in which consumers, motivated by shared values or political ideas,

refuse to buy items, brands, or goods from specified countries. Such boycotts can have significant effects on market prices and consumer demand. For instance, a consumer boycott of cottage cheese in Israel led to a noticeable reduction in prices and heightened price elasticity (Braunsberger & Buckler, 2011). In general, boycotts serve as a mechanism for consumers to voice their dissatisfaction and hold companies accountable for actions they perceive as unethical or politically charged (Prakash Pandey et al., 2020).

Motivations to participate in a boycott are multifaceted, shaped by factors such as individual beliefs, social norms, and personal attitudes (Klein et al., 2004). In many cases, religion plays a pivotal role, with religiously motivated consumers exhibiting a strong desire to align their purchasing behavior with their ethical or doctrinal beliefs. Intrinsic religious motivations are often linked to pro-social actions such as boycotting, as individuals seek to make a difference, enhance their self-image, and adhere to moral norms (N. A. H. N. Abdullah & Singam, 2015; Z. Abdullah et al., 2021; Dekhil et al., 2017).

The impact of the boycott movement in Indonesia has been particularly striking, and Starbucks has become one of the biggest company facing financial repercussions. As these companies are perceived to have connections to Israel, reports indicate that Starbucks experienced a 30-35% decrease in sales during 2023 and 2024. This decline reflects the tangible financial consequences that boycotts can have on businesses, especially those with a visible global presence. In addition to economic losses, boycotts also affect the reputation of the companies involved. Brands seen as supporting Israeli policies are often viewed negatively by consumers who perceive such support as endorsing harmful or unjust actions. This reputational damage can lead to a loss of customer loyalty and may be difficult for brands to recover from, particularly when their consumer base is politically and socially conscious.

1.2 Boycott Through Social Media Campaign

In the digital age, social media has transformed the landscape of activism, allowing individuals and groups to organize, share ideas, and mobilize support for causes in ways that were previously unimaginable. One of the most prominent forms of activism facilitated by social

media is the consumer boycott. Boycotts—organized actions where individuals refuse to buy goods or services from certain companies—have long been a tool for expressing disapproval of unethical practices or political stances. However, the rise of social media has revolutionized how these campaigns are initiated, spread, and sustained.

A social media campaign refers to a deliberate, organized set of actions carried out by users on platforms like X, aiming to influence societal attitudes, behavior, or policy changes. Unlike traditional advertising or marketing, social media campaigns often emerge organically from grassroots movements. They leverage the power of digital networks to mobilize support for causes, whether political, social, or economic. These campaigns are distinct from regular posts, as they are designed with specific objectives and strategies to achieve a particular goal (Hanaysha, 2018; Park & Lin, 2020).

The strength of social media campaigns lies in their ability to connect a large number of people across vast geographic distances, making them ideal for mobilizing collective action. The instantaneous nature of social media allows users to quickly disseminate information, share calls to action, and galvanize others to join the cause. In the context of a **boycott campaign**, social media provides a platform where individuals can exchange information, express their grievances, and coordinate efforts to influence the behavior of corporations or governments.

The boycott movement that emerged in 2023 serves as a prime example of how social media can facilitate large-scale consumer activism. The boycott, particularly targeting global brands like Starbucks, which are perceived to have connections to Israel, gained significant traction on platforms like X. By using hashtags such as #BoikotStarbucks, users shared information, expressed solidarity with Palestine, and urged others to refrain from supporting brands linked to Israeli policies. These platforms allowed the movement to spread quickly, influencing consumer behavior on a global scale.

However, social media campaigns are not without their challenges. They are often **short-lived**, driven by the rapid dissemination of information and the fast-paced nature of digital communication. Once the initial excitement or outrage fades, the momentum of the campaign may dwindle. Additionally, some companies may be able to absorb the negative publicity and continue business as usual, especially if their

consumer base is less politically or socially engaged.

1.3 Appraisal Theory and Its Application in Analyzing Boycott Campaigns

In this study, the researchers apply Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) to analyze the attitudes expressed in the discourse surrounding the pro-Israel boycott of Starbucks on social media platforms, particularly X (formerly Twitter). Appraisal Theory provides a framework for evaluating and interpreting social interactions through three subsystems: Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation. These subsystems help convey interpersonal meaning, focusing on emotional reactions (Affect), behavioral assessments (Judgment), and evaluations of things (Appreciation).

By applying this theory, this study aims to uncover the underlying emotional, moral, and evaluative aspects of the boycott discourse. It is hoped that the findings will enrich the understanding of how social media users express and interpret their feelings, judgments, and evaluations regarding the boycott, while also fostering greater language awareness. The application of Appraisal Theory in analyzing social media content, especially on platforms like X, allows readers and researchers to explore the multifaceted nature of online activism. In particular, it sheds light on how individuals communicate complex attitudes, from emotional responses to moral judgments, in the context of a socially charged campaign like a boycott.

The choice of data—discourse from X—is deliberate, as this platform is a significant site for the exchange of opinions and information related to social causes. Social media is often characterized by informal language, including sarcasm, humor, and hyperbole, all of which carry hidden meanings that are crucial to understanding the social interactions within the boycott campaign. Using Appraisal Theory to analyze such data enables the researchers to explore these meanings more deeply, identifying how the language of boycotters conveys not just opinions but also emotions and ethical evaluations.

While previous studies have applied Appraisal Theory in various contexts, such as song lyrics (Jatikusomo, 2012) and movie reviews (Crystalia & Sunardi, 2018), this study diverges in its focus on non-formal language used in social media campaigns. Jatikusomo (2012) found that emotional expressions (Affect)

dominated the discourse in song lyrics, with judgment and appreciation following behind. Similarly, Crystalia and Sunardi (2018) found that Judgment was the most frequently expressed attitude in a movie review, with Appreciation and Affect being secondary.

Building on these studies, this research extends the application of Appraisal Theory to the analysis of boycott discourse in the digital realm. This approach not only highlights the emotional and ethical dimensions of the boycott but also offers a systematic way to understand how individuals use language to engage in activism and shape public opinion. The findings will contribute to the broader field of linguistic analysis by demonstrating how the Appraisal framework can be used to decode the complex layers of meaning embedded in social media campaigns, particularly those driven by political or social causes.

In conclusion, the use of Appraisal Theory in this research helps interpret the interpersonal meanings embedded in the discourse of the pro-Israel boycott on X. By focusing on attitudes, it allows for a deeper exploration of the affective, judgmental, and evaluative language used in online activism. This not only enhances our understanding of how online users express and process emotions in reaction to global issues but also sheds light on how such expressions contribute to collective actions like boycotts.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to provide an in-depth critical analysis of social media discourse. According to Suryabrata (2010), qualitative research focuses on exploring the quality, value, or meaning underlying facts, often through linguistic or verbal expressions. The data for this study consist of words, phrases, and sentences gathered from the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) that are relevant to the research problem. The primary data collection technique used is documentary analysis, which allows the researcher to extract information from written statements available on X.

To ensure relevance and focus, posts were selected based on specific criteria, including the use of hashtags #boikotstarbucks, #FreePalestine, and #boikotisrael, as these are commonly associated with boycott-related discussions. Additionally, the data collection period spans from October 25th 2023 to August 15th 2024, capturing the evolving discourse over

time. This approach enables a comprehensive analysis of language patterns, attitudes, and ideological expressions in boycott-related discussions.

The data collection process was carried out in several systematic stages to ensure the reliability and relevance of the gathered information.

- Identifying Relevant Posts

The researcher conducted an online search on X (formerly Twitter) using the hashtags #boikotstarbucks, #FreePalestine, and #boikotisrael. Posts were selected within the specified time frame (October 2023 – October 2024) to capture discourse related to the boycott of products linked to Israel. Only posts written in Indonesian or English were included to maintain consistency in analysis.

- Categorizing the Data

Once collected, the posts were filtered and categorized based on the Appraisal Theory framework, specifically focusing on expressions of judgment, appreciation, and affect. Posts that contained evaluative language reflecting support for or opposition to the boycott were prioritized. The categorization process also considered whether the statements explicitly mentioned economic concerns, ethical motivations, or ideological positioning.

- Archiving and Organizing the Data

The selected posts were archived systematically in a structured database, including text content, timestamps, user engagement metrics (likes, retweets, replies), and contextual metadata. This ensured that the data remained traceable for subsequent analysis. Screenshots and text copies were stored securely to preserve the integrity of the dataset.

- Applying Content Analysis

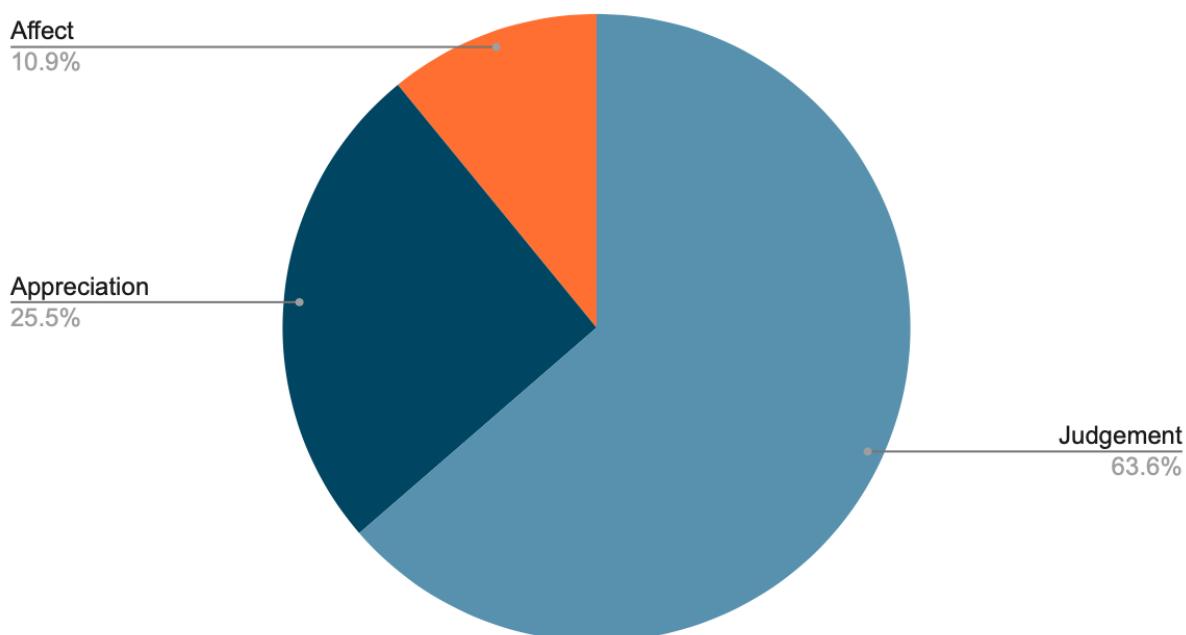
Content analysis, as defined by Snelson (2016), was applied to interpret underlying patterns and meanings in the discourse. The analysis focused on identifying recurring themes, sentiment trends, and linguistic strategies used to construct attitudes toward the boycott. Special attention was given to how the boycott of Israeli products was framed in relation to economic consequences for local businesses.

By following these steps, this study ensures a structured and rigorous approach to documentary analysis, allowing for an in-depth examination of linguistic and ideological patterns in boycott-related discussions on X.

3. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSIONS

3.1. The Distribution of Attitude Resource

Points scored



As shown in pie chart, there are 6 appraising items related to affect, 35 related to judgment, and 14 related to appreciation. Consequently, the distribution of judgment items exceeds both affect and appreciation in the data from X. The explanation of the attitude resources will be provided in the following section.

3.2. The Distribution of Affect

According to Martin and White (2005), attitude encompasses our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behavior, and

evaluations of things. Affect specifically pertains to the expression of positive or negative emotions, such as feeling happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored (White, 2005, p. 42).

In the analysis of X, the distribution of affect can be categorized into four terms: dis/desire, un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction, which represent the subsystems of affected resources. The following table illustrates the proportion of these affected subsystems within the data from X.

Affect Resources	Polarity	Context
Dis/Desire	(+)	0
	(-)	0
Un/Happiness	(+)	0
	(-)	6
In/Security	(+)	0
	(-)	0
Dis/Satisfaction	(+)	1
	(-)	5

The table above shows that X generates more instances of un/happiness and dis/satisfaction. This indicates a higher frequency of expressions of dislike and dissatisfaction, as conveyed through written statements on X.

Orang yang ada socmed mungkin tahu kenapa kita semua boikkot Sbux. Tapi tak semua org ada socmed dan kemudahan utk ada socmed. So mungkin ni salah satu marketing dia utk org yg ga tau. Idk just me using my smol brain #boikotstarbucks

The context above reflects his feelings of negative un/happiness, as evident in his use of phrases like “idk” and “just me using my small brain,” which convey frustration and discontent. These expressions align with negative un/happiness, indicating a negative emotional

response. He feels dissatisfied with the public’s lack of awareness regarding the Starbucks boycott.

Baru buka di Bengkulu dan rame. Yang ngantri banyak yg berjilbab. Ga dikit pula jilbabnya yang lebar2. Hadeh keimanannya digadaikan karena FOMO. Cape deh. Gw tetap boikot selamanya #boikotstarbucks #FreedomForPalestine

The example above demonstrates his feelings of negative dis/satisfaction. The statement reflects negative dissatisfaction, as it directs the speaker’s frustration toward individuals who continue to buy Starbucks simply due to FOMO, despite the ongoing boycott.

Bagus boss aku very attentive, dulu pake tumblr Starbucks meeting kesana

kemari, since #boikotStarbucks beliau pun tukar tumblr

The example above demonstrates his feelings of negative dis/satisfaction. The statement reflects this negative dissatisfaction, as it expresses the speaker's frustration toward individuals who continue to buy Starbucks merely due to FOMO, despite the ongoing boycott.

3.3. The Distribution of Judgment

The second objective of this study is to analyze the use of judgment in social media discourse on X. Judgment involves evaluating individuals' behavior or character, assessing their

actions or qualities to convey information during interactions (Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005). Judgment is categorized into two main types: judgments of esteem and judgments of sanction. Judgments of esteem concern "normality" (how unusual or exceptional someone is), "capacity" (how capable they are), and "tenacity" (how determined they are). Judgments of sanction, on the other hand, focus on "veracity" (how truthful someone is) and "propriety" (how ethical or appropriate someone's behavior is) (Martin & White, 2005). The distribution of judgment in X is illustrated in the following table.

Judgement Resources	Polarity	Posts
Normality	(+)	5
	(-)	6
Capacity	(+)	5
	(-)	6
Tenacity	(+)	9
	(-)	26
Propriety	(+)	10
	(-)	25

The distribution shows that X more frequently employs judgments of (-) tenacity and (-) propriety to evaluate human behavior, rather than judgments of normality and capacity. These findings suggest that X primarily focuses on assessing individuals' determination and ethical conduct in this context. The examples are explained below.

An example of negative tenacity is as follows:

Trus ngefek buat kami mencabut embargo? Gak lah yaa #BoikotStarbucks

The context above exemplifies negative (-) tenacity. The word "gak" reflects the speaker's firm refusal to lift the boycott. Many others express a similar sentiment, highlighting Israel's brutality towards Palestine. Through their words

and actions, these individuals demonstrate their unwavering resolve to maintain the boycott, emphasizing their determination to stand by their position.

Gimana rasanya minum darah anak Pa... #boikotstarbucks #FreePalestine #boikotisrael

The phrase is an example of negative (-) propriety. The word expresses ridicule, with the choice of an extreme comparison likening "coffee" to drinking the blood of Palestinian children. According to Martin and White (2005, p. 42), judgment pertains to attitudes toward behavior, and propriety specifically evaluates the ethicality of someone's actions. This example

highlights a strong condemnation of unethical behavior through harsh language.

3.4. The Distribution of Appreciation

Appreciation pertains to our evaluations of things, particularly those we create or give, as well as natural phenomena. It involves appraising

both the positive and negative qualities of objects or events. Appreciation is categorized into three main aspects: our “reaction” to things, their “composition,” and their “value.” The following section presents the distribution of appreciation in X.

Appreciation Resources	Polarity	Posts
Reaction	(+)	6
	(-)	8
Composition	(+)	4
	(-)	10
Valuation	(+)	2
	(-)	12
Propriety	(+)	10
	(-)	25

From the table, X produces (-) reaction, (-) composition, and (-) valuation. This indicates that the speaker expresses negative reactions, evaluations of the topic, especially regarding the impact, quality, and worthiness of things.

The first subsystem of appreciation is *reaction*.

*Jangan percaya tetap boikot
#EndIsraelGenocide
#EndIsraelGenocide
#EndIsraelGenocide #boikotStarbucks*

The context above indicates a (-) reaction of appreciation. This is evident with the words “Jangan percaya,” meaning the speaker provides a negative response to the boycott issue. The use of such words reflects a dismissive attitude towards the subject, suggesting disbelief or rejection of the idea behind the boycott.

*Buat pengingat aja. Kalo masih bisa
Telen berarti aku luar biasa (tega)
#Gaza Genosida #boikotfisabilillah
#boikot @McDonalds @kfc
#boikotStarbucks*

Martin and White (2005) stated that composition is related to perception, particularly our view of order. An example of composition can be seen in X as data. In the case of (-) composition, the speaker uses the word “tega,” which is often employed to express shock or disbelief. It indicates a negative perception of the situation, implying that the actions being discussed are harsh or unforgivable.

Valuation, on the other hand, relates to cognition, or our considered opinions about the worth or value of something (Martin & White, 2005). An example of positive valuation can be observed when speakers express approval or high regard for an action or object, reflecting a positive assessment of its value or importance.

*Mengejek Boikot, Jurnalis Israel Siaran
Live Sambil Bawa Gelas Starbucks
#BoikotStarbucks*

The phrase “mengejek” exemplifies a negative form of valuation. There are two potential interpretations: First, it implies sarcasm, and second, it indicates indifference toward the

boycott movement, suggesting that some people do not care about the widespread boycott.

This part demonstrates the use of appreciation within the attitude system on X. The role of appreciation in this discourse is to help readers interpret the value of things, which extends beyond natural objects to include manufactured goods, abstract concepts, and even social behaviors. Appreciation, as defined by Martin & White (2005), involves evaluating not just physical objects but also intangible constructs like policies, plans, and social actions. In the case of X, the discourse does not merely express emotional reactions toward the boycott; it also assesses and evaluates the behaviors and actions of individuals, offering a more comprehensive view of how value is ascribed to social phenomena.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of data analysis in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the attitude system most frequently used by X is judgment, accounting for 63,6 % of the expressions. This is followed by appreciation at 25,5 % and affect 10,9 %. The dominance of judgment over appreciation and affect indicates that X primarily focuses on evaluating behaviors and actions through judgments of tenacity

From the judgment category, it can be inferred that users on X (formerly Twitter) predominantly express negative emotions, such as disappointment, anger, and other unfavorable feelings, rather than positive ones. This suggests that emotional language, particularly negative expressions, plays a significant role in shaping discourse surrounding the boycott. The emphasis on evaluative judgments indicates that social media users frequently assess behaviors, moral stances, and ideological alignments, reinforcing collective sentiment within digital activism.

While this study focuses on X, future research could explore how similar patterns of judgment and emotional language manifest across other social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, or Facebook, where different forms of engagement (e.g., visual content, stories, or comment threads) might influence discourse differently.

Investigating how platform-specific affordances (e.g., text-based vs. visual-based content) influence boycott discussions, as well as how emotional language contributes to real-world boycott participation and consumer decision-making, could offer deeper insights.

Additionally, comparative studies across different cultural and linguistic contexts could help reveal variations in linguistic strategies and ideological framing of boycotts, further validating and extending the findings of this study. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that appraisal resources within the attitude system, particularly judgment, are significant in analyzing the discourse on X.

Future research in this area should explore additional sources related to attitudes—judgment, appreciation, and affect—across other social media platforms to provide a more comprehensive understanding of evaluative language in digital activism. This would enhance the analysis of written discourse using Appraisal Theory, particularly in examining the role of judgment in shaping public sentiment and ideological positioning.

This study contributes to theory by demonstrating how Appraisal Theory within a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework can be applied to analyze the linguistic mechanisms that drive consumer activism in digital spaces. By highlighting the dominance of judgment as a key discursive strategy, this research advances our understanding of how social media users construct attitudes and reinforce collective action through language.

From a practical perspective, these findings provide insights into how digital discourse influences consumer behavior, particularly in the context of boycotts and brand perception. Understanding how evaluative language mobilizes public sentiment can inform businesses, policymakers, and activists about the role of discourse in shaping consumer decisions and corporate responses. As social media continues to play a crucial role in amplifying socially driven movements, this study underscores the impact of digital discourse on market dynamics and public engagement.

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