



Collective efficacy as a determinant of boycott participation intentions

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Abstract

The fast-fashion industry, known for its rapid production cycles and affordability, has significantly influenced global consumer behavior. However, its environmental and ethical costs—such as high carbon emissions, labor exploitation, and excessive waste—have sparked consumer awareness and calls for action. Despite this growing awareness, many consumers continue to purchase fast fashion, illustrating a persistent "value-action gap" where ethical concerns do not translate into behavioral change. This study examines the psychological factors driving consumer boycott participation in the fast-fashion industry, with a focus on collective efficacy, participative efficacy, and perceived social responsibility (PSR and CSR). Using a quantitative survey design (N = 252), we explore how these variables influence consumer activism. Results indicate that participative efficacy and personal social responsibility (PSR) are the strongest predictors of boycott participation intentions, whereas collective efficacy and corporate social responsibility (CSR) perceptions exhibit limited explanatory power. These findings suggest that individual agency and ethical responsibility play a more decisive role in motivating boycott behavior than collective beliefs. The study contributes to the understanding of consumer activism by integrating underexplored psychological variables and offers practical implications for advocacy groups and policymakers seeking to encourage sustainable consumer action.

The Fast-Fashion Industry: A Growing Concern

Consumer behavior is not only shaped by individual preferences but also by broader social, economic, and ethical considerations. The decision to purchase or not purchase a product can often be influenced by perceptions of responsibility, group norms, and collective action (Andorfer & Liebe, 2013). One industry, where these psychological and behavioral dynamics are evident is the fast-fashion industry. Characterized by its rapid production cycles, trend replication, and affordability, the fast-fashion industry has transformed global consumer behavior. Brands such as Zara, H&M, and Shein have popularized this model, offering low-cost, trendy clothing to millions of consumers worldwide. While this business model has democratized fashion, it comes at a significant cost. Fast fashion is now synonymous with a host of environmental, ethical, and social issues. The industry is one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, with textile production alone accounting for approximately 10% of global carbon emissions (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). Additionally, the use of unsustainable materials, high water consumption, and the accumulation of non-biodegradable textile waste exacerbate its ecological footprint (Global Fashion Agenda, 2019).

From an ethical perspective, fast-fashion production often relies on exploitative labor practices, including low wages, unsafe working conditions, and even child labor in some cases. Reports indicate that garment workers in countries such as Bangladesh and India are frequently paid below subsistence wages and face hazardous working conditions (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2021). These issues mark the industry, leaving consumers caught between convenience and conscience.

The Consumer Behavior Problem

Despite growing awareness of these issues, consumer behavior has remained largely unchanged. Surveys reveal that while many consumers express concern about the environmental and ethical implications of fast fashion, they continue to purchase from these brands (McNeill & Moore, 2015). This phenomenon, often referred to as the "value-action gap," reflects a dissonance between consumers' values and their actions. Convenience, affordability, and the allure of trends often outweigh ethical considerations, leading to the continuation of fast-fashion consumption. Furthermore, this can be linked to a similar phenomenon known as the attitude-behavior gap, with the distinction that here consumers hold certain attitudes but do not behave accordingly. In the context of boycotting within the fast-fashion industry, this implies that while consumers acknowledge the harmful consequences of fast-fashion production, they continue to purchase from these brands rather than engaging in boycotts, thereby illustrating the value-action gap. Alternatively, consumers may express strong support for boycotting fast-fashion brands but fail to act on these intentions when given the opportunity, demonstrating the attitude-behavior gap. A similar inconsistency is observed in environmental behavior, where consumers often advocate for sustainable practices but struggle to align their consumption habits accordingly. This discrepancy highlights the tension between environmental awareness and actual purchasing decisions (Johnstone & Tan, 2015). Fast fashion, as a major contributor to environmental degradation—through excessive carbon emissions, water consumption, and textile waste—should, in theory, be a prime target for consumer activism. However, just as affordability and convenience lead consumers to overlook ethical concerns, these same factors often override environmental considerations. Research suggests that while individuals may acknowledge the environmental impact of their choices, they frequently underestimate their own role in contributing to systemic change, leading to continued support for unsustainable brands (Gleim et al., 2013).

To illustrate, a previous study found that even eco-conscious consumers occasionally compromise their principles due to the affordability and accessibility of fast-fashion products (Connell, 2010). This discrepancy raises critical questions about why informed consumers struggle to translate their awareness into sustainable consumption behaviors. Building on previous research, this dissonance may stem from a lack of collective efficacy—where consumers feel that a boycott movement is too small to create meaningful change, leading to inaction (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008)—or a low perceived impact, in which individuals doubt that their personal boycott will make a significant difference, ultimately discouraging participation (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004).

The Psychological Disconnect

The persistence of consumer inaction in addressing the fast-fashion industry's challenges highlights a psychological disconnect. As awareness of environmental and ethical issues is growing, the translation of this awareness into collective action, such as boycotts, remains limited. This disconnect may be better understood through better understanding the interplay of collective efficacy, participative efficacy, and perceived social responsibility. While individual consumers can feel helpless when contemplating ethical consumption and its effect, collective efforts in the form of boycotts may present themselves as a way out.

Additionally, the complexity of the issue further complicates consumer engagement. Fast-fashion supply chains are often opaque, making it difficult for individuals to trace the impact of their purchasing decisions (Boström & Micheletti, 2016). This lack of transparency may foster a sense of helplessness and detachment and thus reducing the likelihood of collective action. As a

result, while awareness of the industry's issues has grown, widespread consumer activism remains limited.

The fast-fashion industry's significant environmental, ethical, and social challenges, coupled with the psychological barriers to collective action, create a pressing need to understand the factors that drive boycott participation. By exploring variables such as collective efficacy, participative efficacy, and perceived social responsibility, this research aims to uncover insights that can empower consumers to act in alignment with their values.

Review of Existing Literature

Collective efficacy, defined as a group's shared belief in its ability to achieve collective outcomes (Bandura, 2000), has been extensively studied in the context of collective action and activism. Research demonstrates that higher levels of collective efficacy can predict greater participation in social movements (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Similarly, consumer activism, such as boycotts, has been linked to collective efficacy, suggesting that individuals are more likely to engage in boycotts when they believe their collective efforts can lead to meaningful change (Friedman, 1999).

However, boycotting as a specific form of collective action has received relatively little attention in social psychological literature on social protests. While much of the existing research on collective action focuses on traditional forms of protest, such as marches or demonstrations, consumer-driven actions like boycotts remain underexplored. This gap is particularly significant given that boycotts often involve unique psychological dynamics, such as the perceived efficacy of financial over political influence and the role of ethical consumerism (John & Klein, 2003).

In the context of the fast-fashion industry, these dynamics are especially relevant. The fast-fashion industry presents unique challenges due to its vast, globalized supply chains and the psychological barriers associated with systemic issues such as labor exploitation and environmental degradation. This gap in the literature suggests the need for a deeper understanding of how collective efficacy functions in motivating boycott intentions within this industry.

Theoretical Gap

Although the relationship between collective efficacy and boycott participation has been investigated, critical aspects of this phenomenon remain underexplored (Corcoran et al., 2015). Specifically, the role of participative efficacy, which pertains to an individual's belief in their personal ability to contribute meaningfully to collective outcomes, has not been adequately integrated into studies on consumer activism. Participative efficacy is essential in contexts like fast fashion, where individual contributions may feel insignificant against the backdrop of large-scale systemic problems.

Additionally, the concept of perceived social responsibility—comprising personal social responsibility (PSR) and corporate social responsibility (CSR)—has been insufficiently examined as a determinant of boycott participation. PSR reflects an individual's sense of ethical obligation to act in ways that benefit society, while CSR pertains to perceptions of a corporation's commitment to ethical and sustainable practices (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). The interplay between these two dimensions of responsibility may significantly influence consumer activism but remains underexplored in the context of fast-fashion boycotts.

By investigating how collective efficacy, participative efficacy, and perceived social responsibility intersect, this study addresses a theoretical gap, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological factors driving boycott participation.

Practical Gap

The fast-fashion industry is emblematic of the challenges associated with consumer inaction, even in the face of widespread awareness of ethical and environmental issues. Despite growing calls for sustainable practices, consumer engagement with collective actions such as boycotts remains limited (Fraser & Van Der Ven, 2022). This disconnect highlights the need for actionable insights that can inform interventions aimed at increasing consumer participation in collective activism.

For policymakers, understanding the factors that motivate boycott participation can guide the development of campaigns that foster collective and participative efficacy. For example, public awareness efforts could emphasize the tangible impact of individual contributions within a collective framework. Similarly, for brands within the fast-fashion industry, leveraging insights on perceived social responsibility could help align corporate practices with consumer values, fostering trust and potentially mitigating boycott risks.

Addressing these practical gaps not only contributes to academic knowledge but also offers real-world applications that could empower consumers and drive systemic change within the fast-fashion industry.

Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate the psychological factors that drive boycott participation intentions in the fast-fashion industry by examining the interplay between collective efficacy, participative efficacy, and perceived social responsibility (PSR & CSR). Specifically, the research seeks to understand how these variables influence consumers' willingness to engage in collective actions in the form of boycotts. By focusing on this, the study endeavors to address the disconnect between consumers' awareness of fast-fashion issues and their participation in meaningful action. Unlike prior research that primarily examines collective efficacy or individual moral obligations in isolation, this study integrates the concepts of personal social responsibility (PSR) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) into the broader framework of collective and participative efficacy. This approach may prove valuable to capturing the complex dynamics of consumer decision-making and activism in the fast-fashion context.

The hypotheses we developed to test this are listed as follows:

H1: Collective efficacy level positively correlates with the individual's tendency to participate in collective action

H2: Perceiving strong collective efficacy beliefs to group members positively affects boycott participation tendency

H3: Perceiving weak collective efficacy beliefs to group members negatively affects boycott participation tendency

H4: Scoring high on PSR will positively correlate with a high score on CSR

H5: An individual's score on participative efficacy positively correlates with boycott participation tendency

Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey design to explore the relationship between collective efficacy, participative efficacy, perceptions of personal and corporate social responsibility and boycott participation intentions in the context of the fast-fashion industry. A survey design was chosen for its efficiency in gathering data from a large, diverse sample while enabling the examination of relationships among psychological constructs. Data was collected through an online questionnaire administered via Prolific.com, an online participant recruitment platform.

Participants

A total of 252 participants were recruited using simple random sampling to ensure demographic diversity. Eligibility criteria included being 18 years or older and having purchased fast-fashion products within the past five years. The sample encompassed a diverse age range (18–40 years, mean = 28 years, SD = 5.5), and the gender distribution was approximately 61% male, 33% female, 4% non-binary/other and 1% undisclosed. The age range was based on the assumption that younger people would be more interested in the topic of fast fashion leading to the exclusion of participants older than 40. The participant's employment status varied, with roughly half of the participants employed and one-third students. Informed consent was obtained from all participants,

who were briefed on the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their data.

Measures

To assess the study variables, the following validated scales were employed:

Collective Efficacy and Participative Efficacy were measured using the 7-point response scale developed by van Zomeren et al. (2013) in a slightly adjusted version by focusing on consumers as a group. This scale assesses participants' beliefs about their group's ability to achieve its goals and the extent to which their individual contributions matter to collective efforts. Participants responded to items such as, "I believe that consumers can achieve their common goal of holding a company accountable for actions that are detrimental to the environment." (Collective Efficacy) and "I believe that I, as an individual, can provide a significant contribution so that, through joint actions, consumers can encourage companies to adopt more socially responsible practices." (Participative Efficacy). Response options ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). 4 items, measuring participative efficacy ($\alpha=.93$), were combined into a single mean score, as well as 4 items measuring collective efficacy ($\alpha=.89$).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was measured using the *Consumer Perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CPCSR)* scale developed by Öberseder et al. (2013). This scale evaluates the extent to which participants perceive companies as socially and environmentally responsible. Items included statements such as, "These companies should set working conditions which are safe and not hazardous to health." and "These companies should label products clearly and in a comprehensible way." The phrase "These companies should" was added to all items, with preceding information binding these statements to fast-fashion companies like H&M, Zara, and

Primark. Participants rated their expected level of responsibility on a 5-point scale, with responses ranging from 1 (low responsibility) to 5 (high responsibility). 8 selected items, representative of each domain, were combined into a single mean score ($\alpha = .86$).

Personal Social Responsibility (PSR) was measured using the scale developed by Davis et al. (2020). This scale assesses individuals' commitment to minimizing negative impacts and maximizing positive impacts on social, economic, and environmental systems. By assessing the individual's tangible behaviors, this scale serves as a measure for behavior. Items include statements such as, "I make personal sacrifices to reduce pollution." and "I buy products that I know that I will use later." Participants rated their agreement using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree and 7 = strongly disagree). This scale has been widely used and validated in studies exploring individual responsibility within consumer behavior contexts. A total of 9 selected items were combined into a single mean score ($\alpha = .70$). The original scale consists of 19 items, representing 5 dimensions of personal social responsibility including philanthropic, environmental, ethical, legal, and economic responsibility. Items were selected to fit the context of the study and to represent each domain of personal social responsibility, since including all 19 items would significantly increase the duration of the study.

Procedure

Participants completed the survey online, which took approximately 10 minutes to finish. The survey began with questions on demographics, followed by sections on participative efficacy, collective efficacy and perceived social responsibility split into the personal and corporate domain. Additional explanations relevant to the fast-fashion industry were presented to contextualize the questions.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

We started with analyzing the descriptive statistics for all variables, consisting of the predictor variables and the dependent variables. The findings are presented in the table below (Table 1). The sample ($N = 251$) showed moderate to high levels of collective efficacy ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.32$) and participative efficacy ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.58$), suggesting that participants generally believed both in the collective power of consumers and in their own ability to contribute to collective efforts. Personal social responsibility (PSR) recorded the highest mean score among the predictor variables ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 0.74$), indicating that respondents generally perceived themselves as responsible for ethical consumption and social impact. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) perceptions were also relatively high ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.59$), suggesting that participants had moderate to strong expectations regarding companies' ethical obligations. However, CSR was measured on a 5-point scale, whereas all other predictor variables were measured on a 7-point scale. Because of this scale difference, the absolute means of CSR and the other predictor variables are not directly comparable. Instead, interpretations should consider where each mean falls relative to its respective scale midpoint. The CSR mean ($M = 4.08$) is above its midpoint (3.0 on a 5-point scale), suggesting moderate to strong perceptions of corporate social responsibility, whereas the PSR mean (5.18) is above its midpoint as well (4.0 on a 7-point scale), also indicating moderate to strong personal social responsibility perceptions.

A one-sample t-test confirmed that CSR perceptions ($M=4.08$, $SD=0.59$) were significantly above the midpoint of 3.0, $t(251) = 29.25$, $p<.001$, suggesting that participants generally viewed corporations as socially responsible rather than neutral. Similarly, PSR perceptions ($M=5.18$,

$SD=0.74$) were significantly above the midpoint of 4.0, $t(251) = 3.84$, $p < .001$, indicating that participants saw themselves as personally responsible for ethical consumption.

For boycott participation intentions, mean scores varied across different types of engagement. The highest mean was observed for *intention to seek boycott information* ($M=3.45$, $SD=1.29$), suggesting that participants were most inclined to visit a website for more information about a boycott. In contrast, *intention to donate to the boycott cause* had the lowest mean ($M=1.96$, $SD=1.05$), indicating that financial contributions to a boycott were the least likely form of engagement. *Intention to actively participate in a boycott* ($M=2.97$, $SD=1.21$) and *intention to talk about the boycott website* ($M=2.97$, $SD=1.29$) were at similar levels, reflecting moderate intentions to actively participate in boycotts or talk about it with one's peers.

The standard deviations suggest substantial variability across all measures, particularly in participative efficacy ($SD=1.58$) and collective efficacy ($SD= 1.32$), which may indicate individual differences in perceived agency regarding boycott participation. Similarly, boycott participation intentions varied widely, as reflected by the standard deviations exceeding 1.0 across all six intention measures, emphasizing the heterogeneity in consumers' willingness to engage in collective action. These findings provide preliminary insights into participants' general attitudes toward collective action and their likelihood of engaging in boycott-related behaviors. Subsequent analyses explore the relationships among these variables in greater depth.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics; independent and dependent measures

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Participative Efficacy	3.98	1.58
Collective Efficacy	4.87	1.32
Personal Social Responsibility	5.18	.74
Corporate Social Responsibility	4.08	.59
Intention to research	3.45	1.29
Intention to actively participate	2.97	1.21
Intention to talk	2.97	1.29
Intention to donate	1.96	1.05
Intention to share	2.06	1.21
Intention to contemplate	2.28	1.03

Note.

Complete variable names:

Intention to research = Intention to seek boycott information

Intention to actively participate = Intention to actively participate in a boycott

Intention to talk = Intention to talk about the boycott website

Intention to donate = Intention to donate to the boycott cause

Intention to share = Intention to share boycott information on social media

Intention to contemplate = Intention to consider boycott participation

Correlational Analyses

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships between the predictor variables (collective efficacy, participative efficacy, personal social responsibility, and corporate social responsibility) and the dependent variables (boycott participation intentions). The full correlation matrix is presented in Table 2.

Predictor Variables and Boycott Participation Intentions

All four predictor variables (participative efficacy, collective efficacy, PSR, and CSR) positively correlated with all six boycott participation intentions, although the size of the correlations varied (Table 2).

Collective efficacy was positively associated with all boycott participation intentions, with the strongest correlation observed for *intention to actively participate in a boycott* ($r = .330$), supporting H1. The positive relationship suggests that individuals who believe in the effectiveness of collective consumer action are more likely to engage in a boycott. Participative efficacy was also significantly correlated with all boycott intentions, with the strongest association observed for *intention to consider boycott participation* ($r = .491$), indicating that individuals who believe their personal actions contribute to collective efforts are more likely to contemplate participating in a boycott (H5). *Intention to actively participate in a boycott* also showed a notable correlation with participative efficacy ($r = .427$).

Among all relationships, PSR demonstrated the strongest correlations with boycott participation intentions, with the highest associations found for *intention to actively participate in a boycott* ($r = .482$) and *intention to seek boycott information* ($r = .451$). These findings suggest

that individuals with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for ethical consumption were the most inclined to both gather information about a boycott and actively participate in one.

CSR perceptions were positively correlated with all boycott participation intentions, though effect sizes were weakest in comparison to the other predictor variables. The strongest correlation was found with *intention to consider boycott participation* ($r = .258$), that individuals who perceive corporations as responsible may be slightly more likely to consider engaging in boycott activities.

Relationships Among Predictor Variables

All predictor variables were positively correlated, with statistically significant associations among them. Participative efficacy was strongly correlated with collective efficacy ($r = .554$), indicating that individuals who believed in the collective power of consumers also tended to perceive their own actions as impactful. Personal social responsibility (PSR) correlated moderately with participative efficacy ($r = .424$) and collective efficacy ($r = .344$), suggesting that individuals with higher self-reported personal social responsibility were also more likely to believe in both participative and collective efficacy. CSR perceptions were positively associated with all predictor variables, with the strongest correlation observed with collective efficacy ($r = .377$), indicating that individuals who expect corporations to act responsibly also tend to believe in the power of collective consumer efforts. A significant positive correlation was found between PSR and CSR ($r = .329$), providing support for H4, which proposed that individuals who see themselves as personally responsible for ethical consumption also hold companies to high ethical standards.

Summary of Correlational Findings

Overall, the results provide empirical support for H1 and H4, confirming that both collective and participative efficacy are positively associated with boycott participation intentions. Additionally, H4 was supported, demonstrating that personal and corporate social responsibility perceptions are positively related. Notably, PSR showed the strongest relationships across all boycott participation measures, emphasizing its role in shaping consumer activism. The findings suggest that perceptions of personal social responsibility and participative efficacy may be particularly important in motivating boycott engagement.

Table 2.
Correlation Matrix

Variable	Participative Efficacy	Collective Efficacy	CSR	PSR	Intention to research	Intention to actively participate	Intention to talk	Intention to donate	Intention to share	Intention to contemplate
Participative Efficacy	1.00									
Collective Efficacy	0.55**	1.00								
CSR	0.27**	0.38**	1.00							
PSR	0.42**	0.34**	0.33**	1.00						
Intention to research	0.33**	0.22**	0.21**	0.45**	1.00					
Intention to actively participate	0.43**	0.33**	0.24**	0.48**	0.73**	1.00				
Intention to talk	0.34**	0.16*	0.17**	0.45**	0.72**	0.70**	1.00			
Intention to donate	0.37**	0.16*	0.07	0.41**	0.51**	0.57**	0.62**	1.00		
Intention to share	0.31**	0.22**	0.14*	0.37**	0.48**	0.60**	0.63**	0.64**	1.00	
Intention to contemplate	0.36**	0.31**	0.26**	0.27**	0.43**	0.49**	0.40**	0.30**	0.43**	1.00

Note.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Complete variable names:

Intention to research = Intention to seek boycott information

Intention to actively participate = Intention to actively participate in a boycott

Intention to talk = Intention to talk about the boycott website

Intention to donate = Intention to donate to the boycott cause

Intention to share = Intention to share boycott information on social media

Intention to contemplate = Intention to consider boycott participation

Regression Analyses

To examine the predictive effects of collective efficacy, participative efficacy, personal social responsibility (PSR), and corporate social responsibility (CSR) on boycott participation intentions, separate multiple regression analyses were conducted for each intention variable. Given that the boycott intention items were not part of a validated scale but developed specifically for this study, each was analyzed individually. The results of these analyses are reported below, with full statistical details available in the appendix.

Boycott Participation Intentions

Personal social responsibility (PSR) and participative efficacy accounted for, 29.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .298$) in the most central outcome variable intention to actively participate in a boycott. Participative efficacy ($B = .177, t = 3.436, p < .001$) and PSR ($B = .570, t = 5.709, p < .001$) were significant predictors, indicating that individuals who see themselves as capable of making a difference and those who feel a strong personal responsibility for ethical consumption are more likely to actively participate in a boycott. Collective efficacy ($B = .062, t = 1.004, p = .316$) and CSR perceptions ($B = .078, t = .640, p = .523$) were not significant predictors and, meaning that these factors did not uniquely contribute to explaining boycott participation intentions beyond the other variables.

Thinking About Boycott Participation

Participative efficacy accounted for 17.5% of the variance ($R^2 = .175$) in *intention to consider boycott participation*. Participative efficacy ($B = .147$, $t = 3.094$, $p = .002$) was the only significant predictor, suggesting that individuals who believe in their ability to contribute to collective efforts are more likely to contemplate participating in a boycott. CSR perceptions showed a weak effect ($B = .215$, $t = 1.910$, $p = .057$), but collective efficacy ($B = .084$, $t = 1.474$, $p = .142$) and PSR ($B = .141$, $t = 1.525$, $p = .129$) were not significant predictors.

Looking at the Boycott Website

Personal social responsibility (PSR) and participative efficacy accounted for 23% of the variance ($R^2 = .230$) PSR ($B = .644$, $t = 5.745$, $p < .001$) and participative efficacy ($B = .141$, $t = 2.447$, $p = .015$) significantly predicted website visitation, indicating that individuals who feel personally responsible for ethical consumption and those who believe in their ability to make a difference are more likely to seek information about the boycott. Neither collective efficacy ($B = -.020$, $t = -.288$, $p = .773$) nor CSR perceptions ($B = .119$, $t = .867$, $p = .387$) played a significant role in this behavior.

Talking About the Boycott

Personal social responsibility (PSR) and participative efficacy accounted for 23.2% of the variance ($R^2 = .232$) in intention to talk about the boycott website. PSR ($B = .662$, $t = 5.911$, $p < .001$) and participative efficacy ($B = .186$, $t = 3.225$, $p = .001$) were significant predictors, suggesting that those with a strong sense of ethical responsibility and those who see their own role as impactful are more likely to discuss boycott-related topics. Neither collective efficacy ($B = -.105$, $t = -.152$, $p = .129$) nor CSR perceptions ($B = .061$, $t = .446$, $p = .656$) significantly contributed to this outcome.

Donating to the Boycott Cause

Personal social responsibility (PSR) and participative efficacy accounted for 23.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .233$) in intentions to donate to the boycott cause. PSR ($B = .492, t = 5.345, p < .001$) and participative efficacy ($B = .198, t = 4.217, p < .001$) were significant predictors, indicating that individuals who feel a personal ethical obligation and those who believe in their ability to make a difference were more inclined to provide financial support to boycott causes. Neither collective efficacy ($B = -.069, t = -.1243, p = .215$) nor CSR perceptions ($B = -.174, t = -1.561, p = .120$) significantly predicted donation intentions.

Sharing the Boycott Website on Social Media

Personal social responsibility (PSR) and participative efficacy accounted for 16.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .163$) in intention to share boycott information on social media. PSR ($B = .291, t = 4.314, p < .001$) and participative efficacy ($B = .163, t = 2.210, p = .028$) significantly predicted intention to share boycott information on social media, suggesting that personal responsibility and self-efficacy influence online boycott engagement. Neither collective efficacy ($B = .035, t = .516, p = .607$) nor CSR perceptions ($B = -.043, t = -.320, p = .749$) were significant predictors.

Across all six dependent variables, participative efficacy and PSR were the most consistent and significant predictors of boycott participation intentions, while collective efficacy and CSR perceptions showed limited predictive power in the regression analyses.

Discussion

This research aimed to investigate the psychological determinants influencing consumers' intentions to participate in boycotts within the fast-fashion industry. Specifically, we explored how

collective efficacy, participative efficacy, and perceived social responsibility (both personal and corporate) influence boycott participation intentions. Our findings revealed that participative efficacy and personal social responsibility (PSR) significantly and consistently predicted boycott participation intentions across various behavioral intentions, such as actively participating, seeking information, sharing information, talking about boycotts, and financial contribution to boycott causes. Conversely, collective efficacy and perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) demonstrated limited predictive power in explaining boycott participation intentions beyond the effects of PSR and participative efficacy, diverging from initial expectations set out in our hypotheses (H1, H3, and H4).

The results notably supported hypotheses related to participative efficacy and PSR, reinforcing the importance of individual agency and ethical responsibility perceptions in consumer activism. The anticipated relationships involving collective efficacy and CSR, however, were not supported in regression analyses, indicating that these factors did not uniquely contribute to explaining boycott participation intentions beyond participative efficacy and PSR.

Interpretation of Results

The prominence of participative efficacy and PSR aligns with and extends existing research, underscoring individual beliefs in their own contributions and personal ethical commitments as critical motivational forces behind consumer activism. These findings align with van Zomeren et al. (2013), who highlight participative efficacy as a crucial factor motivating individuals to engage in collective efforts. Similarly, the significance of PSR aligns with prior research emphasizing personal ethical motivations in consumer activism (López Davis et al., 2017). Interestingly, the limited explanatory power of collective efficacy challenges existing

literature, such as Bandura (2000) and Van Zomeren et al. (2008), which traditionally emphasized the importance of collective beliefs in predicting activism. A plausible explanation for this could be the individualized nature of boycott participation, where consumers might see their own efficacy as more tangible or immediate compared to collective beliefs, particularly in contexts involving large and complex supply chains like fast fashion. Similarly, the weak role of CSR could reflect consumers' skepticism or cynicism towards corporate claims, given widespread awareness of unethical practices in the industry.

Theoretical Implications

The integration of participative efficacy and perceived social responsibility into the collective action framework enriches the theoretical understanding of boycott participation. Our findings underscore that individual-level beliefs about personal efficacy and responsibility are crucial drivers of boycott intentions, suggesting the need for an expanded theoretical approach that better incorporates individual-level psychological processes alongside collective dynamics. This highlights an important shift from collective group dynamics alone towards recognizing the pivotal role of individual perceptions and ethical accountability in motivating consumer activism. Moreover, these results provide empirical support for addressing the theoretical gap identified in the literature, illustrating that in contexts like fast fashion—marked by complexity and systemic issues—individual-level beliefs and moral convictions may indeed surpass collective-level efficacy perceptions in driving consumer action.

Furthermore, our study highlights the somewhat paradoxical nature of boycotts as a form of collective action. Unlike traditional protests, boycotts operate through inaction—the conscious choice not to purchase a product or support a company. This presents a conceptual challenge within

the social psychological models of collective action, where inaction is typically framed as passive or undesirable. However, in the case of boycotts, inaction becomes a purposeful and strategic mechanism for social influence. This distinction underscores the need for theoretical models to more explicitly account for boycott behavior as an active form of non-engagement that can exert meaningful pressure on corporations. Recognizing boycotts as a unique form of collective action—one that merges restraint with activism—further refines our understanding of how individual agency and collective efficacy intersect in consumer-driven movements.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest clear strategies for policymakers and advocacy groups aiming to promote consumer boycotts. Interventions that emphasize personal efficacy—highlighting how individual actions can concretely contribute to collective success—could effectively increase participative efficacy perceptions, thereby enhancing consumer engagement with boycott actions. Similarly, policymakers and activist groups might benefit from campaigns that explicitly target personal social responsibility, stressing how individual ethical choices directly impact broader societal and environmental outcomes.

For fast-fashion brands, these insights underscore the potential benefits of genuinely improving and transparently communicating their CSR practices. However, given the limited predictive power of CSR perceptions, companies should also recognize the necessity of addressing consumer skepticism through authentic actions rather than superficial commitments.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting these findings. Firstly, the cross-sectional nature of the survey limits the ability to infer causality or track actual boycott behavior longitudinally. Moreover, as the dependent variables focused solely on behavioral intentions rather than actual behaviors, the translation of these intentions into real-world actions remains uncertain. Another limitation is the demographic scope of our sample, which, although diverse, primarily consisted of relatively young adults recruited online, potentially limiting generalizability.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research may benefit from longitudinal approaches tracking actual boycott behaviors rather than intentions alone, thus providing clearer insights into the attitude-behavior gap. Furthermore, qualitative studies could enrich understanding by exploring in-depth motivations and psychological barriers faced by consumers. Investigating moderators or mediators, such as trust in corporate claims, the influence of peers, or the visibility of boycott impacts, may also enhance understanding of conditions under which boycott participation intentions translate into actual collective actions. Additionally, experimental methods could provide valuable insights by systematically manipulating situational characteristics and measuring their impact on boycott intentions. For example, experiments could vary the framing of boycott effectiveness, corporate responses to activism, or the perceived visibility of individual contributions to collective efforts. Another approach could involve examining how increasing consumer awareness of their collective power through boycotting influences their willingness to engage in such actions. By incorporating experimental designs, future studies can better establish

causal relationships and deepen our understanding of the psychological mechanisms driving boycott participation.

Conclusion

This study contributes theoretically and practically to the understanding of boycott participation by highlighting participative efficacy and personal social responsibility as critical drivers of consumer activism in the fast-fashion industry. By underscoring the importance of individual agency and ethical responsibility, these insights offer valuable directions for policymakers, advocacy groups, and businesses striving for sustainable change. Addressing these psychological dimensions can help bridge the disconnect between consumer awareness of fast fashion's ethical and environmental impacts and active engagement in collective boycott actions, thus promoting meaningful systemic change.

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Appendix

Intention to actively participate in a boycott

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		95.0% Confidence Interval for B		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	-1.306	.564		-2.317	.021	-2.417	-.196
Participative Efficacy	.177	.051	.231	3.436	<.001	.075	.278
Collective Efficacy	.062	.061	.067	1.004	.316	-.059	.183
PSR Mean	.570	.100	.348	5.709	<.001	.373	.767
CSR Mean	.078	.122	.038	.640	.623	-.162	.318

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to actively participate in a boycott

Intention to consider boycott participation

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		95.0% Confidence Interval for B		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	-.323	.521		-.619	.537	-1.350	.704
Participative Efficacy	.147	.048	.226	3.094	.002	.053	.241
Collective Efficacy	.084	.057	.107	1.474	.142	-.028	.196
PSR Mean	.141	.092	.101	1.525	.129	-.041	.323
CSR Mean	.215	.113	.123	1.910	.057	-.007	.438

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to consider boycott participation

Intention to seek boycott information

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		95.0% Confidence Interval for B		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	.840	.633		-1.327	.186	-2.087	.407
Participative Efficacy	.141	.058	.172	2.447	.015	.028	.255
Collective Efficacy	-.020	.069	-.020	-.288	.773	-.156	.116
PSR Mean	.644	.112	.367	5.745	<.001	-.423	.865
CSR Mean	.119	.137	.054	.867	.387	-.151	.389

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to seek boycott information

Intention to talk about the boycott website

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		95.0% Confidence Interval for B		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	-.937	.633		-1.481	.140	-2.184	.309
Participative Efficacy	.186	.058	.227	3.225	.001	.072	.300
Collective Efficacy	-.105	.069	-.107	-1.521	.129	-.241	.031
PSR Mean	.662	.112	.377	5.911	<.001	.442	.883
CSR Mean	.061	.137	.028	.446	.656	-.209	.331

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to talk about the boycott website

Intention to donate to the boycott cause

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	-.331	.513		-.645	.519	-1.340	.679
Participative Efficacy	.198	.047	.298	4.217	<.001	.106	.291
Collective Efficacy	-.069	.056	-.087	-1.243	.215	-.179	.041
PSR Mean	.492	.092	.345	5.345	<.001	.311	.674
CSR Mean	-.174	.112	-.097	-1.561	.120	-.394	.046

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to donate to the boycott cause

Intention to share boycott information on social media

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	-.913	.618		-1.476	.141	-2.131	.305
Participative Efficacy	.125	.057	.163	2.210	.028	.014	.237
Collective Efficacy	.035	.067	.038	.516	.607	-.098	.167
PSR Mean	.480	.111	.291	4.314	<.001	.261	.698
CSR Mean	-.043	.135	-.021	-.320	.749	-.309	.222

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to share boycott information on social media

Appendix 2

Boycott participation intentions

Start of Block: Participant information & consent

Q1 INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH “Your perceptions on consumer behavior”

Why do I receive this information? You are invited to participate in the research “Your perceptions on consumer behavior“. This information is to inform you about what you can expect from this specific research. The topic of the research is consumer boycotts. The research will be conducted during December 2024. This research plan has been approved by the ECP. This research is conducted by Kai Epstude, and Claude-Ferry Kameni (University of Groningen, Netherlands) **Do I have to participate in this research?** Participation in the research is voluntary. However, your consent is needed. Therefore, please read this information carefully. If there is something unclear, or you have questions about the research, please contact k.epstude@rug.nl before participating. Only afterwards you decide if you want to participate. If you decide to not participate, you do not need to explain why, and there will be no negative consequences for you. You have this right at all times, including after you have consented to participate in the research. **Why this research?** The research aims to add information on how people respond to choices they have to make as a consumer. **What do we ask of you during the research?** After agreeing to the information and signing the informed consent, an online questionnaire will take place. There are no wrong answers, and you should not have to think about any negative consequences for any of your answers. Please answer the questions in the questionnaire based on your own opinion. The research will take around 15-20 minutes of your time. You will be compensated via Prolific. **What are the consequences of participation?** As a participant in this study, you will be compensated via Prolific. There are no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life and the time that will be invested. **How will we treat your data?** Your data will be collected from the questionnaire. The measured traits cannot be linked to any personal information. We will have no direct access to directly identifying information (names, email addresses) and we will ensure privacy by keeping the data confidential. The only personal information that will be asked for during data collection are age, nationality, occupation and gender. We are not able to identify individual participants based on that, given that we have no access to information like names and emails for participants in the Prolific participant pool. **What else do you need to know?** You may always ask questions about the research: now, during

the research, and after the end of the research. You can do so by emailing (k.epstude@rug.nl). **Do you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant?** For this you may also contact the Ethics Committee of the University of Groningen: ecp@rug.nl. **Do you have questions or concerns regarding your privacy, or regarding the handling of your personal data?** For this you may also contact the Data Protection Officer of the University of Groningen: privacy@rug.nl. As a research participant you have the right to a copy of this research information.

INFORMED CONSENT “YOUR PERCEPTIONS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR” - I have read the information about the research. I have had enough opportunity to ask questions about it. - I understand what the research is about, what is being asked of me, which consequences participation can have, how my data will be handled, and what my rights as a participant are. - I understand that participation in the research is voluntary. I myself choose to participate. I can stop participating at any moment. If I stop, I do not need to explain why. Stopping will have no negative consequences for me. - Below I indicate what I am consenting to. Consent to participate in the research:

Yes, I consent to participate; this consent is valid until 29-01-2025 (1)

End of Block: Participant information & consent

Start of Block: Demographics

Thank you. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. In this survey, you will answer questions about your perceptions and opinions on consumer behavior. Please take your time and answer each question to the best of your ability. Your input is highly valuable and will contribute to advancing our understanding of consumer decision-making.

Age How old are you?

Gender What is your gender?

- Female (1)
 - Male (2)
 - Non-binary / third gender (3)
 - Prefer not to say (4)
 - Prefer to self-describe: (5) _____
-

Occupation Employment Status

- Employed (1)
- Unemployed (2)
- Student (3)
- Pension (4)
- Early Retirement (5)
- Other (6) _____

SES What is your annual income (in EUR)?

- Less then 20.000 (1)
- 20.000-30.000 (2)
- 30.000-50.000 (3)
- 50.000-70.000 (4)
- 70.000 or more (5)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: General info on fast fashion

Fast1 How frequently do you purchase fast fashion products?

- Never (1)
 - Sometimes (2)
 - Often (3)
 - Always (4)
-

Fast2 Do you prefer purchasing clothes online or in the store?

- Online (1)
 - Store (2)
 - Either (3)
 - Neither (4) _____
-

Fast3 Which of the behaviors do you think is more sustainable?

- Purchasing online (1)
 - Purchasing in store (2)
 - Both equal (3)
 - Neither (4)
 - Can't decide (5)
-

Fast4 Do you think lack of money is the main reason why people purchase fast fashion products?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Other reasons (Elaborate) (3) _____

End of Block: General info on fast fashion

Start of Block: Participative Efficacy

PE Intro Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following set of statements.

PE 1 I believe that I, as an individual, can contribute greatly so that consumers, as a group, can hold Fast-fashion companies accountable for unethical behavior in the region of their suppliers.

- Not at all (1)
 - Very little (2)
 - Somewhat little (3)
 - Neutral (4)
 - Somewhat much (5)
 - Quite a bit (6)
 - Very much (7)
-

PE 2 I believe that I, as an individual, can provide an important contribution so that consumers, together, can boycott companies that act irresponsibly.

- Not at all (1)
 - Very little (2)
 - Somewhat little (3)
 - Neutral (4)
 - Somewhat much (5)
 - Quite a bit (6)
 - Very much (7)
-

PE 3 I believe that I, as an individual, can provide a significant contribution so that, through joint actions, consumers can encourage companies to adopt more socially responsible practices.

- Not at all (1)
 - Very little (2)
 - Somewhat little (3)
 - Neutral (4)
 - Somewhat much (5)
 - Quite a bit (6)
 - Very much (7)
-

PE4 I believe that I, as an individual, can contribute meaningfully so that consumers can achieve their common goal of holding companies accountable for their actions.

- Not at all (1)
- Very little (2)
- Somewhat little (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat much (5)
- Quite a bit (6)
- Very much (7)

End of Block: Participative Efficacy

Start of Block: Group Efficacy

GE Intro Please indicate how much you believe in the following statements.

Efficacy 1 I believe that consumers, as a group, can affect corporations that act morally unethically.

- Not at all (1)
 - Very little (2)
 - Somewhat little (3)
 - Neutral (4)
 - Somewhat much (5)
 - Quite a bit (6)
 - Very much (7)
-

Q9 I believe that consumers, together, can defend their stakeholder interests of meeting the sustainability goals if a company goes against it.

- Not at all (1)
 - Very little (2)
 - Somewhat little (3)
 - Neutral (4)
 - Somewhat much (5)
 - Quite a bit (6)
 - Very much (7)
-

Q10 I believe that consumers, through joint actions, can penalize companies for exploiting their employees so they can increase their profits.

- Not at all (1)
 - Very little (2)
 - Somewhat little (3)
 - Neutral (4)
 - Somewhat much (5)
 - Quite a bit (6)
 - Very much (7)
-

Q11 I believe that consumers can achieve their common goal of holding a company accountable for actions that are detrimental to the environment.

- Not at all (1)
- Very little (2)
- Somewhat little (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat much (5)
- Quite a bit (6)
- Very much (7)

End of Block: Group Efficacy

Start of Block: PSR

PSR Intro Please indicate how much you identify with the following statements.

PSR Phil I dedicate effort and money to helping others.

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-

PSR Phil I support social and cultural activities with money or time.

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-

PSR ENV I make personal sacrifices to reduce pollution.

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-

PSR ENV I pay attention to environmental protections in daily life and consumption.

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-

PSR ETH In our family, all members are educated to be honest with others.

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-

PSR Legal I always try to follow the law.

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-

PSR Legal I meet my legal obligations.

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-

PSR ECO I do not consume more than necessary.

- Strongly agree (1)
 - Agree (2)
 - Somewhat agree (3)
 - Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - Somewhat disagree (5)
 - Disagree (6)
 - Strongly disagree (7)
-

PSR ECO I buy products that I know that I will use later.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (5)
- Disagree (6)
- Strongly disagree (7)

End of Block: PSR

Start of Block: CSR

CSR Intro This section refers to the fast fashion companies like for example H&M, Zara, Primark. Please choose the level of responsibility that you expect from such companies.

Community domain These companies should contribute to the economic development of the region in places where it is located.

- Low Responsibility (1)
 - Somewhat Low Responsibility (2)
 - Medium Responsibility (3)
 - Somewhat High Responsibility (4)
 - High Responsibility (5)
-

Community domain These should communicate openly and honestly with the local community.

- Low Responsibility (1)
 - Somewhat Low Responsibility (2)
 - Medium Responsibility (3)
 - Somewhat High Responsibility (4)
 - High Responsibility (5)
-

Employee domain These companies should set working conditions which are safe and not hazardous to health.

- Low Responsibility (1)
 - Somewhat Low Responsibility (2)
 - Medium Responsibility (3)
 - Somewhat High Responsibility (4)
 - High Responsibility (5)
-

Shareholder domain These companies should provide sustainable growth and long-term success.

- Low Responsibility (1)
 - Somewhat Low Responsibility (2)
 - Medium Responsibility (3)
 - Somewhat High Responsibility (4)
 - High Responsibility (5)
-

Environmental domain These companies should reduce emissions like CO2.

- Low Responsibility (1)
 - Somewhat Low Responsibility (2)
 - Medium Responsibility (3)
 - Somewhat High Responsibility (4)
 - High Responsibility (5)
-

Societal domain These companies should contribute to solving societal problems.

- Low Responsibility (1)
 - Somewhat Low Responsibility (2)
 - Medium Responsibility (3)
 - Somewhat High Responsibility (4)
 - High Responsibility (5)
-

Customer domain These companies should label products clearly and in a comprehensible way.

- Low Responsibility (1)
 - Somewhat Low Responsibility (2)
 - Medium Responsibility (3)
 - Somewhat High Responsibility (4)
 - High Responsibility (5)
-

Supplier domain These companies should provide fair terms and conditions for suppliers.

- Low Responsibility (1)
- Somewhat Low Responsibility (2)
- Medium Responsibility (3)
- Somewhat High Responsibility (4)
- High Responsibility (5)

End of Block: CSR

Start of Block: Boycott Participation Intentions

Previous history Have you ever participated in a boycott?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
 - Short explanation if needed (3)
-

Boycott intentions Did you ever think about participating in a boycott?

- Always (1)
 - Most of the time (2)
 - About half the time (3)
 - Sometimes (4)
 - Never (5)
-

Boycott.org The website www.boycott.org makes it simple and more effortless for consumers to commit to a certain boycott. It works similar to the website www.change.org where people can digitally commit to a petition by signing online and providing and confirming their email-address. It shows how many people already committed and interacts and updates participants on the boycott. Through www.boycott.org you will be able to effortlessly participate in various boycotts defending your consumer interests.

Boycott intentions1 How likely is it that you will take a look at the website?

- Extremely likely (1)
 - Somewhat likely (2)
 - Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
 - Somewhat unlikely (4)
 - Extremely unlikely (5)
-

Boycott intentions2 How likely is it that you will participate in a boycott of your interest via the website?

- Extremely likely (1)
 - Somewhat likely (2)
 - Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
 - Somewhat unlikely (4)
 - Extremely unlikely (5)
-

talk How likely is it that you will talk about this website with your friends?

- Extremely likely (1)
 - Somewhat likely (2)
 - Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
 - Somewhat unlikely (4)
 - Extremely unlikely (5)
-

donate How likely is it that you will donate to this website?

- Extremely likely (1)
 - Somewhat likely (2)
 - Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
 - Somewhat unlikely (4)
 - Extremely unlikely (5)
-

share How likely is it that you will share this website on a social media account of yours?

- Extremely likely (1)
- Somewhat likely (2)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
- Somewhat unlikely (4)
- Extremely unlikely (5)

End of Block: Boycott Participation Intentions
