

Making a Difference: Why Portuguese Consumers Boycott Russian Companies

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ABSTRACT:

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This article investigates whether Portuguese consumers have engaged in boycotting Russian products in response to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, which began in February 2022 and explores the motivations behind such boycotts. Consumer boycotts have a long history as expressions of dissatisfaction with organizational tactics, government policies, or social issues. However, existing models of boycott motivation are incomplete, focusing solely on beliefs and attitudes. To address this gap, our study examines the impact of six different variables on Portuguese consumers' intention to boycott. The Ukrainian conflict serves as an ideal case study for this investigation, particularly since previous research has primarily focused on financial market reactions rather than individual consumer perspectives. Based on a survey distributed in Portugal, we obtained 163 valid responses that were analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling. Our empirical study reveals that the primary trigger for Portuguese consumers to boycott is the desire to make a difference. Animosity towards Russia and social influence also play significant roles, while perceived effectiveness, ethical idealism, and counterarguments were not significant in the decision to boycott. This study enhances the understanding of consumer boycotts by providing a detailed analysis of the motivations behind Portuguese consumers' boycotts of Russian products. Our research complements previous studies by focusing on individual consumer perspectives rather than financial market reactions, contributing to

broader knowledge of consumer behavior in response to geopolitical conflicts. These findings offer valuable insights for companies that may be affected by boycotts for navigating political tensions.

KEYWORDS:

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1. Boycott Drivers
2. Consumer Behaviour
3. Social Influence
4. Russia
5. Ukraine
6. War
7. PLS-SEM

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1. Introduction

Consumer boycotts date back to at least the fourteenth century and have contributed to some successes for relatively powerless groups (Klein et al., 2004). The fact that the boycott has been practiced for so many years shows the importance of going through with this research. In a generic assumption, consumer boycotts have long been regarded as a tool by which consumers can voice their dissatisfaction with an organization's tactics, a government's policy, and social issues to influence the offending target to change its ways (Barakat & Moussa, 2016). Moreover, to emphasize the importance of this topic, according to John & Klein (2003), the use of boycotts as a coercive marketplace tactic is widespread. Some of the biggest companies in the world have somehow suffered from consumer boycotting actions. Some well-known examples of boycotts are boycotts against Microsoft (for abuse of monopoly power), Amazon.com (for attempting to patent "one-click shopping"), the Recording Industry Association of America (for the prosecution of Napster), Monsanto (for the production of genetically modified organisms); Nestlé (for promoting infant formula in underdeveloped countries); Disney (for multiple reasons, including the alleged glorification of pagan Earth-worship and promotion of homosexuality); China (for human rights violations); Ben and Jerry's (for supporting a campaign to overturn a murder conviction), and numerous others (John & Klein, 2003).

Although there are several studies regarding the topic of boycott, the investigation that has been done in this field has some gaps (Farah & Newman, 2010), as most studies relate to the act of boycott in a theoretical sense (Tiu Wright et al., 2006), or they are specific to a group of consumers or a scandal of a firm (Shaw et al., 2006). In Klein's (2004) investigation, published in the *Journal of Marketing*, where the goal is to uncover the reasons for the act of boycott, it is stated that there has been little research on an individual consumer's motivation to boycott. As Hoffmann (2013) mentioned in his paper, it is important to investigate the motivations for boycotting in a specific situation and environment. It is also stated that previous models of motivation to boycott are incomplete because they only consider beliefs and attitudes. Hoffmann (2013) argues that consumers' proximity to the consequences of the critical actions of a company is the primary trigger of the desire to boycott. In addition, the studies on the war between the two (Russia and Ukraine) mainly emphasize the financial market reaction to the crises and not so much the consumer point of view to boycott (Tosun & Eshraghi, 2022). Silva et al. (2025) highlight contrasting patterns in how Portuguese and Danish consumers express dissent toward companies continuing to operate in Russia amid its internationally condemned aggression. A specific study mentions the boycott scientists from Ukraine have called on the Russian academic community, including banning Russian citizens from being authors and reviewers in international journals (Wise, 2022). Still, the article focuses on the academic community and not the consumer. By focusing on consumers' perceptions, the current study offers a complementary perspective on the boycott phenomenon in an international marketing context. One additional advantage of doing this research now is the fact that war, whose impacts are the focus of this study, has been

happening for more than a year, and there are not any signs that it will stop soon, which aided the investigation for this study since the participants in the research had a clear memory of the present conflict. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing a contemporary analysis of boycotts associated with war conflicts focused on consumer motivations, which is uncommon in the available literature.

When countries come into conflict, consumers often feel compelled to avoid purchasing products associated with the country at odds with their own (Heilmann, 2016). For instance, recent skirmishes between the Japanese and Chinese governments over ownership of a small group of uninhabited islands (Senkaku Islands in Japanese or Diaoyu Islands in Chinese) have resulted in boycotting of Japanese products and demonstrations across metropolitan areas in China (Yang et al., 2015). International conflicts often provoke boycott calls targeting a foreign adversary, but whether consumers participate has been an enduring puzzle. Pandya and Venkatesan (2016) show that U.S. consumers reduced purchases of French-sounding supermarket brands during the 2003 U.S.-France dispute over the Iraq invasion. At the dispute's peak, they witnessed supermarkets with a higher proportion of U.S. citizens in their customer base saw a sharper decline in sales of French-sounding brands. This finding suggests animosity toward a foreign adversary taps into consumers' national identity (Pandya & Venkatesan, 2016).

As a result, considering the research gaps found in the literature regarding boycotting, the main research question of this article focuses on the motivations behind the boycott among consumers. Therefore, the study addresses the boycott motivated by the war in Ukraine, more precisely, "What motivates Portuguese consumers to boycott Russian companies amid the conflict in Ukraine?".

The article is divided into six parts. The first establishes the study's motivation, as well as the objectives and the research question. In the second part, the existing literature on boycott intentions and the different motivations behind it is discussed. Next, the hypotheses are defined, and the conceptual model is depicted. The fourth section details the methods, while the fifth presents the results. Lastly, the discussion, theoretical and managerial implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research are provided.

2. Literature Review

The theoretical focus of this article is consumer empowerment and motivations for boycotting. Boycotting is a form of consumers exercising their choices and publicizing their views. Considering Tiu Wright et al. (2006) discussion, boycotts can be seen as a form of consumer empowerment and a response to environmental stimuli and cues. This research aims to understand the reasons behind boycotting behavior from Portuguese consumers. The reasons for joining a boycott may differ (Hoffmann, 2013; John & Klein, 2003) between each group of consumers or even among consumers of the same group boycotting the same company, products, or services (Silva et al. 2025; Cruz, 2017).

According to Lasarov (2021), there are four main research streams regarding boycotts. The first research stream is the dynamic effects of boycotting and includes two relevant studies. The first research stream was developed by Ettenson & Klein (2005), with two cross-sectional studies conducted in the same market at two distinct points in time. These studies show that after one year, some consumers still carried on boycotting and provided the first indication that the boycott dynamics vary among consumers (Ettenson & Klein, 2005). In Ettenson & Klein's (2005) studies, the drivers tested were perceived control and brand image as the main factors that motivate consumers to boycott. The second study that fits this research stream of dynamic effects of boycotting is by Chavis and Leslie (2009). Their study involved field observation over eight months of boycotting French wine in the United States. The result showed a drop in sales over the first six months, but there was no impact after eight months, which provided the first indication that boycotts can ease after a period. In this study, the driver tested was subjective cost (Chavis & Leslie, 2009).

The second research stream worth analyzing is the taxonomy of boycott (Lasarov et al., 2021). There are two studies worth reference in this research stream. The first was conducted by Sen et al. (2001), where a survey with 1216 participants tested an actual boycott of a multinational firm. The results showed varying levels of determinants among different boycotter types. The drivers used in this study were perceived control, subjective cost, brand image, and self-enhancement. The second study, led by Hoffmann (2011), used a mixed-method approach (qualitative and quantitative) to address an actual boycott. The results distinguish between boycott adopter types according to when they initially joined the boycott. This study tested the drivers: perceived egregiousness, perceived control, and subjective cost (Hoffmann et al., 2011).

The third research stream concerns the specific facets of the components of boycott participation, and some studies deserve to be analyzed further. Braunsberger and Buckler (2011) conducted an ethnographic exploration of triggers and promoters in the context of an actual boycott. The results show that consumers believe in having the power to impact the targeted firm. A mixed-method approach and sentiment analysis on Twitter posts conducted by Makarem & Jae (2016) show consumer boycott messages are more commonly motivated by instrumental motives; in contrast, non-instrumental motives have a higher emotional intensity. On the other hand, Silva et al. (2025) highlight boycotts as a negative consequence of 'warwashing' and demonstrate how cultural backgrounds shape consumer perceptions of corporate responses—whether proactive or reactive—to demands for taking a stance on the Russia-Ukraine war.

The last research stream is the multi-component model of boycott participation. Regarding this last research stream, four studies are relevant to mention. The first study by Sen et al. (2001) showed that perceptions of the boycott's likelihood of success, susceptibility to normative social influence, and subjective cost (e.g., availability of substitutes) are

important determinants (Sen et al., 2001). The John and Klein (2003)'s study focused on the typology of psychological and economic motivations of boycott participation, concluded that motivations are embedded in a dynamic economic model, and offered explanations for the extent of boycott participation. The survey on an actual boycott of a multinational firm that was prompted by the closing of a factory conducted by Klein (2004) showed influences of desire to make a difference, self-enhancement, counterarguments, and the cost of constrained consumption were determinants when assessing the motives to participate in a boycott (Klein et al., 2004). Silva et al. (2025) identify the desire to make a difference as a key motivational factor underlying consumer boycott behavior. In the Hoffmann (2013) investigation, survey data on an actual boycott that was called in response to factory relocations proved that promoters and inhibitors are partly rationalizations adjusted to the boycott triggers.

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

This study proposes a new model of consumer boycott motivations. The new model studies the determinant factors in the case of Portuguese consumer boycott behavior towards Russia. Furthermore, it is conceptually based on the approach of an existing relationship between perceptions, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Klein et al., 2004).

Perceived effectiveness reflects the degree to which individuals believe their actions can produce the desired outcome. Prior research about social dilemmas suggests that boycott participants' perceived effectiveness is high when each participant believes they can contribute relatively well to achieving collective objectives (Shin & Yoon, 2018). This explains why consumers' perceived effectiveness is essential to the instrumental boycott decision-making process. Perceived effectiveness in this study refers to the boycott participants' perceived effectiveness regarding their influence as consumers on the target company. In this context, potential boycott participants who have not decided will consider whether their participation contributes to the boycott's success. Sen's (2001) previous research results also indicated that consumers' perceived efficacy of their boycott participation could influence the likelihood of its success. Prior research and theoretical evidence suggest that consumers' perceived boycott effectiveness will positively influence the likelihood of boycott success (Shin & Yoon, 2018).

H₁: Perceived effectiveness positively affects the intention to boycott.

Social influence can be defined as changes in an individual's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or behaviors resulting from interacting with other individuals or groups. According to the Palacios-Florencio (2021) study, social influence is not a variable affecting boycott behavior because there is usually no single position regarding the convenience or not of participating in it. However, according to the Social Comparison Theory, people evaluate the appropriateness of their actions and behavior compared to others' actions and behaviors

(Cialdini & Griskevicius, 2010). Family, friends, and favored ones greatly impact consumption decisions (Cialdini & Griskevicius, 2010). Thus, we propose that:

H₂: Social influence positively affects the intention to boycott.

Consumer animosity is an individual's negative feelings and attitudes toward a specific company or foreign country that are often developed by various causes, such as unethical behavior, historical or present military conflicts, and political or economic events. Several studies found that consumers responded to international conflicts with multiple behaviors (Heilmann, 2016), ranging from product quality judgments to avoidance, purchase intentions, and intentions to visit a country to boycott movements (Antonetti et al., 2019; Leonidou et al., 2019; Pandya & Venkatesan, 2016; Sánchez et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2015). One of the most important drivers of such actions is animosity or negative emotions toward a foreign country (Yang et al., 2015) (Sen, 2024). According to Park and Yoon's (2017) and Sen (2024) investigations, negative emotions or feelings toward a given country are vital in their purchasing decisions about foreign products, resulting in decreased consumption (Lee & Chon, 2021). In some cases, the animosity or the willingness to participate in boycotts results from religious convictions, as shown by Farah and Newman (2010). Therefore, it proposed that:

H₃: Animosity toward a foreign country positively affects the intention to boycott.

According to Klein (2004), the motivation to bring about societal change by participating in a boycott reflects the perceived benefits of boycotting. Boycotters may have an instrumental motivation to change the target firm's behavior and/or to signal to the firm and others the necessity of appropriate conduct (Sen, 2024). Such motivation is typically tempered by a general "willingness to boycott", influenced by perceived consumer effectiveness, that affects a consumer's participation in any specific boycott. Likewise, Sen et al. (2001) refers to "perceived efficacy" as the extent to which a consumer believes each boycott participant can contribute to achieving collective goals. Conversely, John & Klein (2003) discuss how an exaggerated view of effectiveness might explain why people boycott when the target is unlikely to be noticed. All this research is consistent with findings that people are more cooperative in social dilemmas if they expect the group to attain its goals. Based on this evidence, we propose the following:

H₄: Desire to make a difference positively affects the intention to boycott.

According to Sen (2024), ethical idealism conveys the belief that the majority of those involved can achieve positive outcomes. Very idealistic individuals believe that ethical actions should always have positive consequences and that an action that causes damage to others is always wrong and reprehensible (Sen, 2024). These individuals seek to prevent their actions from harming others. Hence, they would never choose between alternatives that may cause

negative consequences for others and reject both. On the other hand, non-idealistic people are more pragmatic in their orientation, as they consider that negative consequences are sometimes necessary to achieve greater well-being (Silva et al., 2025). Consequently, they think doing good may cause some damage (Palacios-Florencio et al., 2021). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed

H₅: Ethical idealism positively affects the intention to boycott.

Counterarguments are mental attempts or statements that refute or downplay information contained in a message. It is commonly accepted that counterarguments can moderate the relationship between perceived atrociousness and boycotting (Salma & Aji, 2023). Conflict models of choice suggest that boycotting will not be reached if a person feels powerless, shifts responsibility to others, or becomes concerned about potential consequences. Decision-making can be obstructed even when the stakes are high, resulting in inaction when the situation calls for action (Klein et al., 2004). Thus, we propose that:

H₆: Strong counterarguments negatively affect the intention to boycott.

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework for this study.

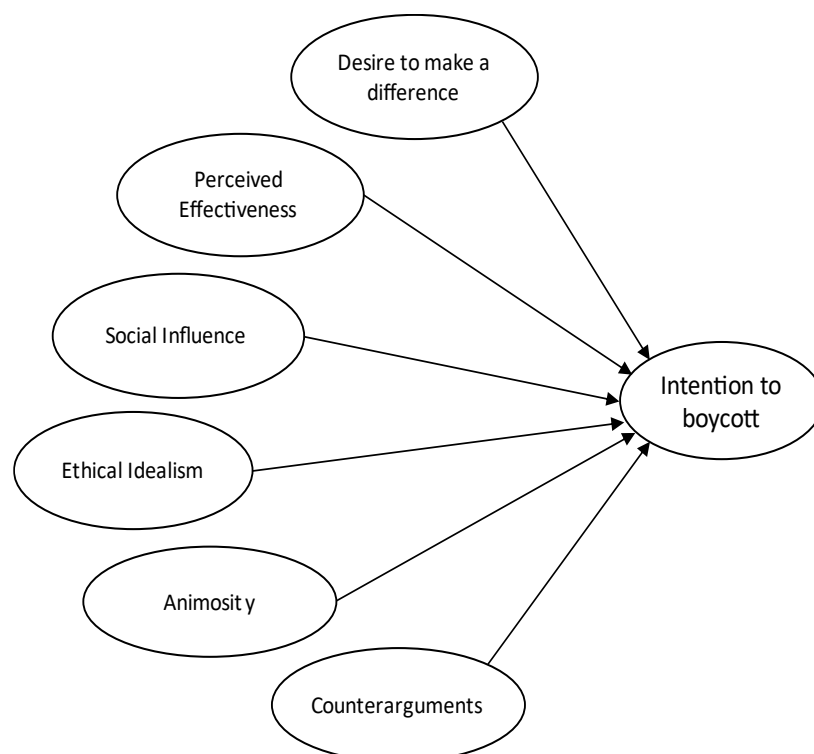


Figure 1 – Conceptual model

4. Methodology

A quantitative study data was conducted to assess the hypotheses proposed based on the literature review held among Portuguese in the case of Russian aggression towards Ukraine. The variables relate to general motivations for boycotting, the level of empathy towards Ukrainians, and the level of awareness of the Ukrainian situation. Primary motivations discovered in the literature review that will be tested are perceived effectiveness (PE), social influence (SI), animosity (AN), desire to make a difference (DMD), ethical idealism (EI), and counterarguments (CO). As the dependent variable, intention to boycott (IB) was considered. Validated scales were sourced in the literature to collect data (Table 1). The variables were measured using a Likert scale with five points, from "1-totally disagree" to "5-totally agree".

Table 1 - Constructs, measurements, and adaptations

Variables	Measurement adapted	Adapted from
Perceived effectiveness	• There is a strong possibility that the boycott of Russian products forces the country to stop aggression towards Ukraine. • Participants in the boycott will get what they want. • I think the boycott will succeed.	Garrett (1987)
Social influence	• I consider media information when deciding to take part in a boycott. • If my friends and family participate in a boycott, I'll do it too. • I would feel guilty if I bought Russian products. • I would feel uncomfortable if other people who are boycotting saw me purchasing or consuming Russian products. • My friends/my family are encouraging me to boycott Russia. • I will feel better about myself if I boycott Russia.	Klein et al., , 2004
Animosity	• I dislike Russia. • I feel angry toward Russia. • I will never forgive Russia for what they are doing to Ukraine. • Russia should pay for what they are doing to Ukraine.	Rose et al., 2009
Desire to make a difference	• Boycotts are an effective means to make a country change its actions. • Everyone should take part in the boycott because every contribution, no matter how small, is important. • By boycotting, I can help change the Ukrainian situation.	Klein et al., 2004
Ethical idealism	• People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another, even to a small degree. • Risks to another should never be tolerated, irrespective of how small the risks might be. • The existence of potential harm to others is always wrong, irrespective of the benefits to be gained. • It is never necessary to sacrifice the welfare of others.	Palacios-Florencio et al, 2021
Counterarguments	• I do not need to boycott Russia; enough other people are doing so. • I do not buy enough Russian products to be worthwhile boycotting; it would not even be noticed. • One should not boycott because it will put Russian jobs in danger.	Klein et al., 2004

Considering the several methods available to collect data and the constraints, the method considered adequate to provide respondents with the freedom to respond about the motivations that led to boycotting was the questionnaire/survey (Bose & Chen, 2009). Accordingly, an online survey was developed with Google Forms using the scales identified in the literature review. It was distributed to some individuals who shared it with their peers using snowball sampling. The sample of the questionnaire/survey is a determinant of the quality of the findings (Rowley, 2014). The field study was done in March 2023, obtaining 163 valid responses. Despite being small, the sample size is appropriate for the study according to the "10-times rule," stating that the minimum required size should be 10 times the maximum number of structural paths directed at any construct in the model (Hair et al., 2017). In the current case, the minimum is 60 cases; therefore, 163 cases largely exceed the minimum sample size required to run the analysis. The descriptive study of the sample is shown in Table 2. The resulting data was analyzed using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) path modeling technique through SmartPLS 4.0.9.0 software.

Table 2 - Sample characteristics

	N	%	Cumulative %
Age			
18 - 25	40	24.54%	24.54%
26 - 40	53	32.52%	57.06%
41 - 60	48	29.45%	86.50%
60 +	22	13.50%	100.00%
Total	163	100.00%	
Gender			
Female	91	55.83%	55.83%
Male	72	44.17%	100.00%
Total	163	100.00%	
Level of studies			
Less than High School	27	16.56%	16.56%
High School	82	50.31%	66.87%
Bachelor Degree	3	1.84%	68.71%
Master Degree	51	31.29%	100.00%
Total	163	100.00%	
In charge of the household			
No	92	56.44%	56.44%
Yes	71	43.56%	100.00%
Total	163	100.00%	

5. Results

The analysis started with the assessment of the measurement model. To ensure the validity of constructs, the loadings of the indicators needed to be over 0.708 (Hair et al., 2019) and the AVE (average variance reliable) over 0.50, as depicted in Table 3 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Items with loadings below 0.708 should be deleted if they positively impact AVE. According to that, indicators EI2 (0.369), SI1 (0.536), and SI2 (0.541) were deleted. After removing these indicators, all the constructs have a composite reliability (ρ_c) and a Cronbach's alpha superior to 0.70 (Hair et al., 2012; Wong, 2013). This indicates a high level of internal consistency and reliability for the constructs. The average variance extracted (AVE) was used to assess the convergent validity. Following Fornell and Larcker's (1981) recommendations, this indicator must be over 0.50, which, as previously mentioned, is valid for this case (Wong, 2013). To test the discriminant validity the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio was used to validate the discriminant validity, as shown in Table 4, where all the values are below 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001). The results of the measurement model assessment are shown below in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3 - Individual reliability, composed reliability, and AVE for constructs and indicators

Construct and Items		Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (ρ_c)	AVE
Perceived effectiveness (Mean=3.613; SD=0.977)			0.781	0.873	0.696
PE1	I believe it is possible to cause damage to Russian companies by boycotting their products.	0.820			
PE2	Participants in the boycott always accomplish their objectives.	0.809			
PE3	I believe boycott is a good mean to reach a goal.	0.872			
Social influence (Mean=3.068; SD=1.002)			0.729	0.811	0.521
SI3	I would feel guilty if I bought Russian products.	0.738			
SI4	I would feel uncomfortable if other people who are boycotting saw me purchasing or consuming Russian products.	0.601			
SI5	My friends/my family are encouraging me to boycott Russia.	0.677			
SI6	I will feel better about myself if I boycott Russia.	0.849			
Animosity (Mean=3.625; SD=0.872)			0.792	0.865	0.616
AN1	I dislike Russia.	0.740			
AN2	I feel angry toward Russia.	0.799			
AN3	I will never forgive Russia for what are doing to Ukraine.	0.836			
AN4	Russia should pay for what they are doing to Ukraine.	0.760			
Desire to make a difference (Mean=3.540; SD=1.100)			0.831	0.898	0.747

Construct and Items		Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	AVE
DMD1	Boycotts are an effective means to make a country change its actions.	0.907			
DMD2	Everyone should take part in the boycott because every contribution, no matter how small, is important.	0.822			
DMD3	By boycotting, I can help change the Ukrainian situation.	0.861			
Ethical Idealism (Mean=2.809; SD=1.270)			0.700	0.801	0.681
EI1	People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree.	0.607			
EI3	It is never necessary to sacrifice the welfare of others.	0.996			
Counterarguments (Mean=2.345; SD=1.023)			0.708	0.837	0.631
CO1	I do not need to boycott Russia; enough other people are doing so.	0.773			
CO2	I do not buy enough Russian products for it to be worthwhile boycotting; it would not even be noticed.	0.795			
CO3	One shouldn't boycott because it will put Russian jobs in danger.	0.815			
Intention to boycott (Mean=3.467; SD=1.214)			0.957	0.966	0.852
IB1	I will not buy more products from Russia.	0.929			
IB2	I will not buy products from Russia for other people.	0.934			
IB3	I will not make positive comments about products from Russia.	0.929			
IB4	To buy a Russian product is not an alternative for me	0.929			
IB5	I'll recommend my acquaintances not to buy Russian products.	0.894			

Table 4 - Discriminant validity - HTMT ratio

	Animosity	Counterarguments	Desire to make a difference	Ethical Idealism	Intention to boycott	Perceived Effectiveness	Social Influence
Animosity							
Counterarguments	0.345						
Desire to make a difference	0.696	0.428					
Ethical Idealism	0.282	0.675	0.179				
Intention to boycott	0.585	0.321	0.652	0.17			
Perceived Effectiveness	0.675	0.503	0.893	0.223	0.559		

Social Influence	0.625	0.234	0.596	0.253	0.529	0.549
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After validating the measurement model, the explanatory power of the model was assessed. This evaluation is done through the r-square (R^2), which indicates the variance explained by the model constructs and the path coefficient (β), representing the strength of the relationships between the constructs (Hair et al., 2012). The present model reports an $R^2=0.431$, meaning that the proposed variables predict 43,1% of the variance in the intention to boycott (Figure 2). This value is considered substantial (Memon & Rahman, 2013).

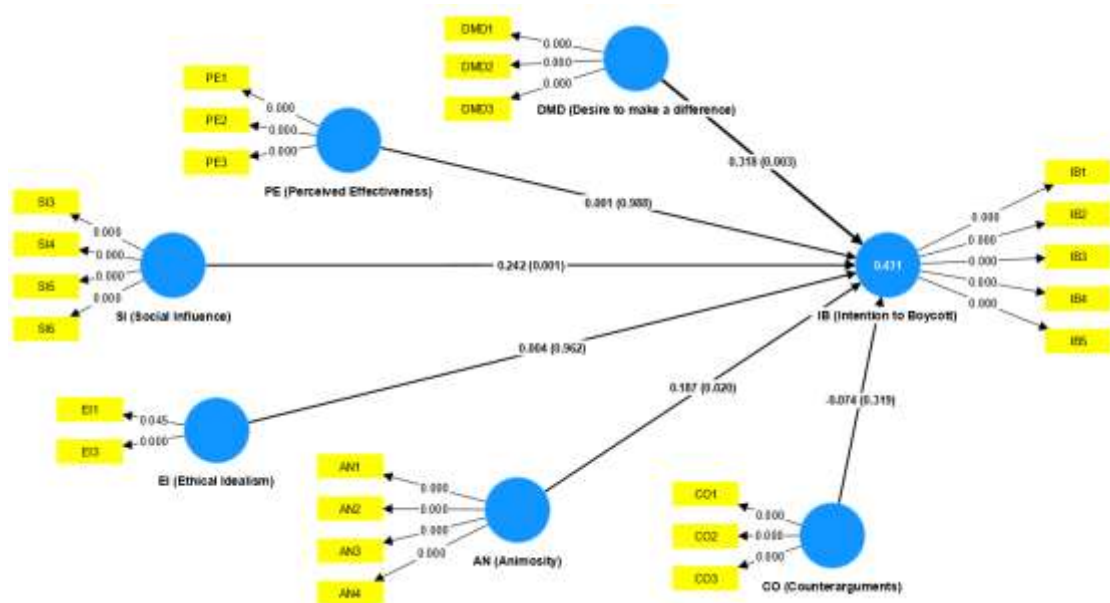


Figure 2 - Results of PLS-SEM algorithm with bootstrap values inside parenthesis.

The structural relationships were evaluated using the bootstrapping approach. A higher β value indicates a more substantial impact on the latent variable. The results in Table 5 show that social influence, animosity, and the desire to make a difference significantly affect the intention to boycott. However, perceived effectiveness, ethical idealism, and counterarguments do not predict the intention to boycott.

Table 5 – Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Predicted effect	β	t-value	p-value	Supported
H1: Perceived Effectiveness $\rightarrow$ Boycott Intention	(+)	0.001	0.015	0.988	No
H2: Social Influence $\rightarrow$ Boycott Intention	(+)	0.242	3.383	0.001	Yes
H3: Desire to make a difference $\rightarrow$ Boycott Intention	(+)	0.318	3.014	0.003	Yes
H4: Animosity $\rightarrow$ Boycott Intention	(+)	0.187	2.286	0.022	Yes
H5: Ethical idealism $\rightarrow$ Boycott Intention	(+)	0.004	0.049	0.961	No
H6: Counterarguments $\rightarrow$ Boycott Intention	(-)	-0.074	0.995	0.320	No

The observation of Table 5 suggests that for H₁, the coefficient (β) is minimal ($\beta = 0.001$), and the *t*-value is close to zero ($t = 0.015$; $p = .988$), indicating that the perceived effectiveness of boycotting does not have a significant effect on the intention to boycott. Regarding H₂, the coefficient is moderate ($\beta = 0.242$), and the *t*-value is high ($t = 3.383$; $p = 0.001$), indicating that social influence significantly predicts the intention to boycott. The relationship between animosity and the intention to boycott (H₃) presents a $\beta = 0.318$ and a *t*-value of 3.014 ($p = 0.003$), suggesting a significant positive relationship between the constructs. The path coefficient for H₄ is moderate ($\beta = 0.187$), and a *t*-value of 2.286 ($p = 0.022$), indicating a significant positive relationship between the desire to make a difference and the intention to boycott. Ethical idealism does not significantly predict the intention to boycott since the path coefficient for H₅ is 0.004, and the *t*-value is equal to 0.049 ($p = 0.961$). Finally, H₆ has a negative non-significant path coefficient ($\beta = -0.074$; *t*-value = 0.995 ($p = 0.320$), implying that counterarguments do not significantly affect the intention to boycott.

6. Discussion and implications

According to Shin and Yoon (2018), boycott participants' perceived effectiveness is high when each participant believes they can contribute relatively well to achieving collective objectives. Sen et al. (2001) agrees that consumers' perceived efficacy of their boycott participation could influence the likelihood of its success. In the present study, perceived effectiveness has a non-significant effect on the intention of boycotting, which contradicts the majority of the literature regarding this subject. Palacios-Florencio's (2021) study shows that social influence had a negative effect on the intention of a boycott, which is not based on our findings, as the effect was positive. Our findings are aligned with more traditional Social Comparison Theory (Cialdini & Griskevicius, 2010). People are more inclined to boycott Russian products when they feel that family and friends support them.

Therefore, the higher the desire of the consumer to make a difference and the higher the consumer's exposure to influence from others, the more likely the subject is willing to use the boycott. The non-significant effect of counterarguments on the intention to boycott might suggest that strong arguments against boycotting may not persuade individuals. Other factors such as personal beliefs, political or cultural tensions, and social influence may be more influential in determining one's intention to boycott.

In what concerns animosity, one of the most important drivers of such actions is animosity or negative emotions toward a foreign country (Yang et al., 2015). Our research proves that the relationship between animosity and the intention to boycott is positive and significant but not as vital as the most important one (Lee & Chon, 2021). The variable with the most significant impact on the dependent variable is the desire to make a difference. According to Klein (2004), the need to make a difference in the world is one of the most important factors to consider when analyzing the intention to boycott. The results are in

accordance with this theory, as the desire to make a difference is the variable with the most significant effect on the intention to boycott. This shows that the consumers believe boycotting can effectively change a situation. Literature shows that individuals seek to prevent their actions from harming others. Consequently, they would never choose between alternatives that may cause negative consequences for others; they would reject both (Palacios-Florencio et al., 2021). Our data aligns with this suggestion as it has shown that ethical idealism has a non-significant effect on the intention to boycott.

The non-significant effect of perceived effectiveness on the intention to boycott may suggest that individuals do not base their decision to boycott merely on this argument. Other factors, such as social influence, animosity towards a foreign country, and the belief in the boycott's success, may play a more significant role in determining one's intention to boycott. Similarly, the non-significant effect of ethical idealism on the intention to boycott may indicate that individuals may prioritize ethical considerations when deciding whether to engage in a boycott, balancing all the damages provoked by a boycott on an innocent population. So, ethical concerns imply that they should boycott products from harmful countries, and at the same time, ethical concerns prevent them from provoking damage to the harmful country's population. In contrast,

The significant positive effect of animosity towards a foreign country on the intention to boycott may imply that individuals are more likely to engage in boycotts if they hold negative emotions or attitudes towards the target country. This could be due to political or cultural tensions between the boycotting country and the target country or negative media coverage of the target country, as suggested by Heilmann (2016). These results may result from the small sample size or the lack of habit from the Portuguese community to use boycotts as a protest tool, or even because the war is happening in Ukraine and the distance between the two countries is high, which could mean a lack of interest on the situation.

The findings show that of the six variables, the one that has more impact on the intention to boycott is the desire to make a difference. The significant positive effect of the desire to make a difference on the intention to boycott may advocate that individuals are more likely to engage in boycotts if they believe their actions will make a difference. This could be due to factors such as previous successful boycotts, media coverage of successful boycotts, or a general sense of optimism about the potential impact of individual actions.

Overall, the study findings provide a critical understanding of the intentions to boycott from the consumer perspective. The outputs represent important information for all the companies associated with Russia. Specifically, those still operating there. The study's results suggest that social influence, animosity towards a foreign country, and the desire to make a difference are significant predictors of an individual's intention to boycott. Specifically, individuals are less likely to engage in boycotts if they perceive that their social group or peers do not support the boycott. However, they are more likely to engage in boycotts if they hold

negative emotions or attitudes toward the target country and believe their actions will make a difference. These findings may have implications for understanding consumer behavior and can infer strategies for promoting or discouraging boycotts in various contexts.

6.1 Theoretical implications

The results of this study provide valuable theoretical implications for understanding consumer behavior and the factors that influence their intention to engage in boycotts. The findings suggest that individuals are more likely to engage in boycotts if they have a strong desire to make a difference and hold negative emotions or attitudes towards the target country. The significant negative effect of social influence on the intention to boycott indicates that social pressure and group norms may be crucial in determining individuals' decision to participate in boycotts. Furthermore, the non-significant effect of perceived effectiveness on the intention to boycott implies that individuals' perceived effectiveness of boycotts is not the only factor influencing their decision to boycott. Other factors, such as social influence and animosity towards a foreign country, might be more influential in determining one's intention to boycott. The non-significant effect of ethical idealism on the intention to boycott suggests that individuals may not prioritize ethical considerations when deciding whether to engage in a boycott.

These findings have important theoretical implications for our understanding of consumer behavior in the context of boycotts. Specifically, the significant positive effect of the desire to make a difference on the intention to boycott supports the notion that individuals are more likely to engage in boycotts if they believe their actions can have a meaningful impact (Klein et al., 2004). This aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which suggests that individuals are more likely to engage in behaviors perceived as positively impacting the environment or society. Furthermore, the significant negative effect of social influence on the intention to boycott is consistent with the Social Identity Theory, which posits that an individual's behavior is influenced by their group membership (Sen et al., 2001) and the perceived norms of that group. In the context of boycotts, this suggests that consumers are less likely to engage in boycotting behavior if they perceive that their social group or peers do not support the boycott.

The non-significant effect of ethical idealism on the intention to boycott may suggest that consumers' engagement in boycotts is not solely motivated by ethical considerations. This highlights the importance of considering a range of factors that influence consumers' behavior, including emotional responses, social influences, and beliefs about the impact of their actions.

Overall, the theoretical implications of this study provide a better understanding of the factors that drive consumer boycott behavior and can inform strategies for promoting or

discouraging boycotts in different contexts. Further research is necessary to fully understand the complexities of consumer boycott behavior and its impact on companies and society.

Overall, the results of this study provide important insights into the factors that influence consumers' intention to engage in boycotts in the context of a political conflict in addition to Heilman's (2016) and Silva et al. (2025)'s works. These findings have important theoretical implications for our understanding of consumer behavior and can inform strategies for promoting or discouraging boycotting behavior in various contexts.

6.2 Managerial Implications

The results of this study have practical implications for companies operating in Russia and Portuguese consumers who may consider boycotting Russian products in response to the conflict in Ukraine. The finding that the desire to make a difference is a significant predictor of intention to boycott suggests that companies can promote their ethical and social responsibility values to attract consumers who prioritize making a difference through their purchasing decisions. Additionally, companies can increase their transparency and communicate their efforts to address the conflict in Ukraine to reassure consumers and mitigate the negative impact of boycotts.

These findings provide insight into the complex and multifaceted nature of consumer behavior and highlight the need for companies to consider a wide range of factors when developing strategies to respond to boycotts. Companies may need to focus on addressing negative emotions and attitudes towards their company or country and promoting a sense of optimism that individual actions can make a difference. Additionally, companies should be aware of the role of social influence and group norms and aim to build positive relationships with their customers and communities.

The finding that social influence significantly affects the intention to boycott implies that companies can leverage social influence to discourage boycotts. For example, they can use social media campaigns or influencer marketing to promote their products and brand while discouraging negative sentiment or boycotts. Alternatively, companies can engage in dialogue with consumers and address their concerns to alleviate negative attitudes and encourage continued support.

The finding related to the animosity dimension suggests that companies operating in Russia should monitor and address any negative sentiments or actions towards their country. Companies can also consider localizing their marketing strategies to mitigate the negative impact of boycotts on foreign markets. Additionally, companies can leverage their brand reputation and image to appeal to consumers who hold positive attitudes towards their country and brand.

The non-significant effect of perceived effectiveness and ethical idealism on the intention to boycott implies that companies should focus on other factors such as social influence, animosity towards a foreign country, and the desire to make a difference to understand and address consumer boycott behavior. Additionally, companies can use this information to

develop strategies that resonate with consumers and effectively communicate their values and efforts to address social and political issues.

Finally, regarding counterarguments, the findings suggest that companies should not focus on presenting counterarguments but rather on addressing the root causes of negative consumer attitudes. By engaging in dialogue and addressing concerns, companies can build consumer trust and loyalty, ultimately mitigating the negative impact of boycotts.

In conclusion, the practical implications of this study provide insights for companies operating in Russia and Portuguese consumers considering boycotting Russian products. By understanding the drivers of consumer boycott behavior, companies can develop strategies that resonate with consumers and effectively address social and political issues. This study provides a critical understanding of consumer behavior and its implications for companies in different contexts.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the efforts, the number of respondents is lower and poorly diversified, which can influence the data analysis and potential generalization of the findings. Thus, replicating the current study and longitudinal research would help develop a diversified sample and better conclusions about the relationships among the variables over time. Another significant limitation is the lack of prior research concerning intentions to boycott in a war context and its dimensions from a consumer's perspective. In the future, it would be interesting to analyze the impact of a boycott from another major international incident. The geographical and cultural distance of Portugal from the location of the war scenario may explain why the findings somewhat differ from previous studies. Therefore, conducting additional studies in other countries would be advantageous to validate the current results and evaluate missing variables.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has exposed critical gaps in IB theory, particularly in understanding how geopolitical shocks reshape consumer behavior across cultures. Our findings challenge traditional boycott models (e.g., Klein et al., 2004) by revealing that long-assumed universal drivers like ethical idealism and perceived effectiveness vary significantly across cultural contexts. Future research should develop a VUCA-sensitive boycott framework, to account for geopolitical volatility (e.g., Silva et al.'s [2025] "warwashing" concept), integrating Social Identity Theory with Institutional Theory to explain contextual shifts in how group norms override individual ethics.

Additionally, future research could also reconceptualize animosity constructs to reflect hybrid warfare (cyber, economic) and its asymmetric impact on consumer sentiment. For example, does animosity toward Russia differ between countries directly threatened by its actions (e.g., Poland) versus geographically distant markets (e.g., Portugal)? Methodologically, our PLS-SEM study's limitations—notably its static design and homogeneous sample—highlight opportunities for innovation, namely the adoption of mixed-methods designs combining sentiment analysis of social media (e.g., Twitter/X, TikTok) with experimental vignettes to capture real-time shifts in boycott motivations during escalating conflicts. Eventually, the application of fsQCA (fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis) to identify causal recipes for boycott participation, moving beyond linear relationships (e.g., how desire to make a difference interacts with social influence in collectivist vs. individualist cultures), could also be an interesting method to apply. Finally, IB scholars could engage with political science to get insights on how trade policies (e.g., EU sanctions) modulate boycott intensity or mitigate

consumer boycotts, and with behavioural economics to test "nudge" interventions (e.g., loss-avoidance vs gain-seeking boycott framing). We would like to emphasize the urgency of longitudinal and comparative studies including replications in emerging markets (e.g., Brazil, India) where anti-Western sentiment may invert boycott dynamics.

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