

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EFFECT OF BRAND PROTESTS ON PURCHASE INTENTIONS: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM A BRAND BOYCOTT CALL IN TURKEY

Asli Kuscu 

Management Department, Bogazici University, Bebek/Istanbul, Turkey

asli.kuscu@yahoo.com

Dilek Saglik Ozcam

Business Administration Department, Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Turkey

Abstract

This study, relying on brand avoidance, boycotting, and consumer-brand relationships literatures, tries to analyze the effects of protests on consumers' purchasing intentions. Specifically, we try to understand whether consumers changed their buying intentions due to boycott calls regarding a bank, a multinational and a domestic coffee chain brand and whether consumers' trust, loyalty, perceived quality, and perceived social responsibility evaluations towards the brands, along with their self-construal displayed any effect in this change. Face-to-face surveys were conducted with 299 consumers. A hierarchical logistic regression procedure with Forward Wald method was used to test the proposed relationships for each brand. The findings are in line with the latest literature emphasizing the importance of social responsibility to firms from a managerial perspective. Specifically, for the multinational coffee chain brand, social responsibility turned out to be even more important than loyalty. However, for the bank brand, only loyalty was found to be a significant contributor, whereas for the domestic coffee brand, only social responsibility provided positive influence. Overall the results indicate that different factors are important for the three brands within the study. The article closes with further implications of the findings and limitations and suggestions for further research.

Keywords: *Consumer Behavior, Corporate Social Responsibility, Cultural Values, Loyalty, Willingness to Buy, Brands*

INTRODUCTION

On May 28, 2013 people from Istanbul, Turkey started to occupy Gezi Park in Taksim. Gezi Park witnessed a continuous influx of protestors who communicated with each other through various social media channels, particularly Facebook and Twitter; and a significant amount of their communication revolved around the brands. During the protests, some major brands were criticized within social media either for what they did or did not. By forwarding, sharing, liking, or commenting content, consumers used social media very effectively to create a common ground to boycott some brands such as a bank, a multinational, and a domestic coffee chain. They were all accused of not being helpful to protestors and witnessed boycotts or even vandalism. Many consumers distributed extensive negative word-of-mouth (WOM) and encouraged others to show their disapproval, such that a social pressure to boycott those brands was felt especially by the people of Istanbul. This study, relying on consumer-brand relationships, brand avoidance, and boycotting literatures, tries to analyze the effects of these boycott calls on consumers' purchasing intentions. Specifically, we try to understand whether consumers really changed their buying intentions due to protest calls and whether consumers' trust, loyalty, perceived quality, and perceived social responsibility evaluations towards the brand, along with their self-construal displayed any effect in this change.

The paper extends the literature mainly in three ways. First, majority of research on brands so far concentrated on the positive side of consumer-brand relationships, where consumers develop and nurture strong bonds with brands. However, on the directly opposing direction, lie behaviors that reflect consumers' extreme negative reactions towards brands, such as anti-consumption, brand avoidance, brand rejection, or boycotts, that also need to be studied, to be able to capture the whole relationship domain (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015). Boycotts are serious crises companies can face (Hunter et al., 2008) and this study is part of the limited literature dealing with the dark-side of consumer brand relationships providing interesting managerial findings for companies. Second, previous research suggests that, in the case of negative experiential, moral, or identity incongruence, consumers' pre-occupied feelings and perceptions regarding the brand play an important role in consumers' action-related evaluations (Trump, 2014). Nevertheless, studies that try to demonstrate that effect provided contradictory findings, where in some cases consumers positive evaluations regarding the brand helped them to get over a misconduct (Swaminathan et al., 2007), whereas in others the consumers do not forget and act accordingly (Trump, 2014). This study demonstrates empirically that consumers' prior evaluations regarding the brand do play a role in their reactions, but this is also dependable on the product category. And finally, we try to demonstrate those effects within a real setting, rather than in an artificial, experimental environment. We believe that this enabled

us to better capture the influence of prior brand-related affective and cognitive evaluations on the change of consumers' purchase intentions.

The paper is organized as follows: In the following section, the relevant literature is reviewed and a set of hypotheses are postulated. Sampling and measurement are discussed in the methodology section. Next, results are presented. Finally, the paper ends with a discussion and limitations and future research sections.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Consumers refuse to use some brands, not because of financial constraints but because of mainly experiential, moral or identity concerns (Lee et al., 2009). When consumers perceive that the brand or its products are not delivering what have been promised, either due to brand misconduct of not meeting expectations, or due to symbolic incongruence and ideological incompatibility between themselves and the brand (Sen et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2009; Huber et al., 2010; Johnson *et al.*, 2011), the positive relationship between the brand and the consumer may turn into negative, where consumers simply may not want to associate themselves with those brands and eventually reject to include them into their own selves. They express their disapproval with the products of a brand or with its corporate behavior (Zack, 1991) by either brand avoidance or in extreme forms in boycotting or anti-consumption. A consumer boycott is "an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace" (Friedman, 1985). According to Sen et al. (2001), consumer boycotts are more detrimental than anti-consumption or brand avoidance activities, in that they are organized and collective actions, which effected most prominent companies and brands (John & Klein, 2003; Thompson et al., 2006; Pal, 2009; Cissé-Depardon & N'Goala, 2009).

Previous research about boycotting behavior suggests that consumers evaluate their losses and gains when deciding about boycotting a brand/product or not (Sen et al., 2001; John & Klein, 2003) and further demonstrates that consumers' evaluations regarding the brand are important in shaping their decisions and actions in the case of negative experiential, moral, or identity evaluations (Trump, 2014). As a result, previous attitudes and perceptions of the consumers towards the brand are believed to be influential in decisions regarding participating to a brand boycott or not. As brand boycotts are one form of consumer-brand relationships, factors identified in the literature that may positively or negatively influence the negative effects of brand misconduct can be grouped as either brand or consumer related. Among the brand related factors, expectations and evaluations regarding the brand (Dawar & Pillutla, 2000) in the form of perceived quality (Mai & Conti, 2008), brand trust (Cissé-Depardon & N'Goala, 2009;

Johnson et al., 2011), brand loyalty (Trump, 2014), and perceived social responsibility (Lee et al., 2009; Garrett, 1987) will be taken into consideration. Previous research further mentions cultural values (Laufer & Coombs, 2006) as well as social pressure and susceptibility to normative social influences (Sen et al., 2001) as an important factor that can be referred as consumer-related.

Next, we discuss and set hypotheses regarding every factor that may influence a change in consumers' purchase decisions about the bank, multinational, and domestic coffee chain.

Brand Related Factors

Trust

Trust is one of the highly studied concepts within consumer-brand relationships. As a key variable in the development of long-term relationships, trust is defined by Morgan and Hunt (1994) as confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity. As it is in interpersonal relationships, trust plays a significant role in shaping the future of the relationship between the brand and the consumer. Several definitions are provided in literature for brand trust. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) define brand trust as the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function and believe that it leads to both purchase and attitudinal loyalty. Dawar and Pillutla (2000) describe brand trust in terms of reliability and dependability; and Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2003) define brand trust as feelings of security held by the consumer in his/her interaction with the brand, that it is based on the perceptions that the brand is reliable and responsible for the interests and welfare of the consumer. Trust is viewed as the most important element of any brand (Scott, 2000), providing the essence of the value consumers perceive from the brand (Berry, 2000). Brand trust leads to higher levels of loyalty (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), which is one of the reasons why trust is highly valuable for consumers and companies especially in high risk environments. In such environments, consumers try to reduce the uncertainty and complexity of their buying processes (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) by applying mental shortcuts and search for a trustworthy brand (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alema'n, 1999). As such, trust plays a significant role in consumers' decisions regarding to be involved in the boycott, or not. Moreover, previous research shows that consumers who trust in the management are less likely to boycott the organization, even if they are dissatisfied with its actions (Hoffmann & Müller, 2009). Based on these statements hypothesis as

Hypothesis 1: Level of consumers' trust towards the (a) bank (b) multinational coffee chain (c) domestic coffee chain brand will be negatively associated with likelihood of change in purchase decision.

Loyalty

Brand loyalty is the attachment that a customer has to a brand (Aaker, 1991). Brand loyalty directly translates into sales, reduces marketing costs, attracts new customers, and provides time to respond to competitive threats (Aaker, 1991). It is often considered as the manifestation of brand equity since consumers with strong brand equity often display loyalty to that brand. In line with that, Light (1994) suggests that brand-loyal consumers may be up to nine times as profitable as disloyal ones for companies. It is a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same brand or same brand set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior (Oliver, 1997). The relationship between loyalty and repeat purchase is strong; nevertheless it is moderated by social and situational factors (Dick & Basu, 1994).

Consumers do not buy products solely due to their functional utilities but also due to their symbolic meanings (Belk, 1988). Thus, all voluntary consumption carries in fact, either consciously or unconsciously, a symbolic meaning (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Reed & Forehand, 2003, unpublished). Consumers by using specific products or brands not only gain self-enhancement (Grubb & Grathwahl, 1967), but also approval, acceptance, and status within the social environment, which significantly affects a person's social behavior (Jackson and Smith, 1999). The direct effect of self congruence on loyalty has also been empirically demonstrated (Samli and Sirgy, 1981; Han & Back, 2008; Kressmann et al., 2006), with social forces moderating this relationship (Malär et al., 2011). The meaning and value of a brand is not just its ability to express the self, but also its role in helping consumers create and build their self-identities (McCracken, 1989). What makes social identity so important for marketers is that consumers are attracted to products and brands that are linked to their social identity (Forehand et al., 2002). Thus, factors like social pressure must also be considered within consumer-brand relationships, and one significant effect can be visible when consumers avoid certain products or brands due to their negative associations (Levy, 1959; Englis & Solomon, 1997; Thompson & Arsel, 2004). Consumers reject those brands in order to avoid adding undesired meaning to them. This effect is particularly evident for initially loyal consumers when they are dissatisfied because of the undelivered promise of the brand (Lee, 2007). Loyal consumers are frequently users or buyers of that particular brand and highly associate themselves with the brand and its products. As a result, when they experience brand misconduct they are the ones who would first consider their loyalty and thus change their purchase intention. Consequently, we believe that strong negative WOM during the Gezi Park protests regarding the brands would mainly affect the highly loyal segment.

Hypothesis 2: Level of consumers' loyalty towards the (a) bank (b) multinational coffee chain (c) domestic coffee chain brand will be positively associated with likelihood of change in purchase decision.

Perceived Quality

Perceived quality can be defined as the customers' perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, relative to alternatives (Aaker, 1991). It involves performance, features, reliability, durability of the products and services perceived by the consumers. High perceived quality drives consumers to choose the brand rather than other competing brands (Yoo *et al.*, 2000). Erdem and Swait (1998) argue that brand investments and consistency, credibility and clarity of brand signals increase perceived quality, decrease perceived risk and information costs, and thus increase brand equity. Consequently brand equity is defined as the value of a brand signal to consumers, whereas a brand signal is composed of a firm's past and present marketing mix strategies and activities associated with that brand.

Perceived quality has received attention within boycott literature dealing with the impact of a boycott on quality judgments, reflecting mixed findings. Klein *et al.* (1998) found that consumer anger was related to purchase refusal but unrelated to consumers' judgments of product quality. On the contrary, in a later study, the authors suggested that consumers' quality judgments fall when they participate in a boycott (Klein *et al.*, 2004). Giving these findings, no previous study has demonstrated the effect of perceived quality on the change of purchase intention during a call for boycott.

Hypothesis 3: Level of consumers' quality perception towards the (a) bank (b) multinational coffee chain (c) domestic coffee chain brand will be negatively associated with likelihood of change in purchase decision.

Perceived Social Responsibility

Kotler (2000) defines social responsibility in a more abstract way as doing business in a way that maintains or improves both the customer's and society's well-being. According to Carroll (1979) corporate social responsibility has three components: economic, legal/ethical and philanthropic. Petkus and Woodruff (1992) also add avoiding harm and doing good into this definition. The management literature acknowledges social responsibility as an important corporate duty and tries to establish a link between corporate social responsibility and a firm's financial performance (Pava & Krause, 1996; Stanwick & Stanwick, 1998). Previous research also looks at the relationship between social initiatives and positive affective, cognitive, and

behavioral responses by the consumers (Folkes & Kamins, 1999; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). However, the findings are somewhat contradictory; Mohr et al. (2001) cite several studies that show consumers develop neither positive attitudes nor higher purchase intentions towards firms after receiving socially responsible messages from those companies. Over interviews, the researchers further find that most respondents do not use social responsibility as a criterion for their purchase decisions. On the directly opposing direction, though, Maignan & Ferrell (2004) provide evidence that some consumers are ready to sanction companies by boycotting their products and services, when companies are perceived to behave in a socially irresponsible way. Citing with Maignan and Ferrell (2004), we post the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Level of consumers' perceived social responsibility of the (a) bank (b) multinational coffee chain (c) domestic coffee chain brand will be negatively associated with likelihood of change in purchase decision.

Consumer-Related Factors

Self-Construal (Independent/Interdependent)

Culture can be defined as a system of shared meanings like symbols, language, or values that grows out of cultural qualities and this system provides a common lens for perception (Veroff & Goldberger, 1995). Moreover, culture not only influences the self-concept (Marsella et al., 1985), but also the social identities of the individual. Previous research dealing with boycotting behavior identified cultural values (Laufer & Coombs, 2006), as well as social pressure and susceptibility to normative social influences (Sen et al., 2001) as important factors influencing consumers decisions regarding boycotts. As demonstrated by Chattaraman et al. (2010), especially cultural based identity salience is influential in consumers' brand choices playing an important role in consumers' brand evaluations and their connections with brands (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Swaminathan et al., 2007). Two of the dominant constructs that are used to identify cultural influences on the self are Hofstede's (1980) dimensions of collectivism and individualism. However, not all consumers within a country can have the same preferences that are affected by the country's overall culture. Good examples may be United States, scoring high on individualism dimension and Turkey, scoring high on collectivism dimension. Both countries reflect great cultural heterogeneity that mainly originates from the sub-cultures within the country. Identifying all individuals as individualistic within the USA and all individuals as collectivistic within Turkey, may be a big generalization. As suggested by Singelis (1994) and by Oyserman and Lee (2008), each society may have a culture that includes both individualism and collectivism, which is reflected in the individual's self-construal as independent and interdependent. Individuals with an independent self-construal view themselves as separate

individuals, and their opinions are altered by individual thoughts and personal opinions; whereas individuals with an interdependent self-construal view themselves as part of a group and base their attitudes and behavior on the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). During the Gezi Park protests, the brands in question were accused of not being helpful to protesters and witnessed large protests in terms negative WOM within social media. John and Klein (2003) argue that consumer boycotts are collective social actions. Moreover, Garret (1987) states that social pressure plays a significant role in boycotting behavior. Sen *et al.* (2001) further state that the success of a boycott depends on the extent that the consumers are susceptible to normative influence. It can therefore be expected that the ones with an interdependent self-construal, being more sensitive to public opinion, may start to question their relationship with those brands and thus may change their buying intention. As such, we formulate the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5: Level of consumers' (a) independent / (b) interdependent self-construal will be negatively / positively associated with the likelihood of change in purchase decision.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a self-administered, paper-based questionnaire to measure the constructs. In order to decrease the non-response bias, one of researchers was present in all instances during the data collection stage. The items were assessed on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The wording was translated and then back translated from English to Turkish to increase face validity; and pre-tested with a small sample (n=30) to eliminate redundant and ambiguous items. Convenience sampled respondents were initially asked to state whether and how often they shop from the brands in question. They were also requested to name other brands within the category (bank/coffee shop) that they visit on a regular basis, to increase their cognitive involvement with the study. To measure respondents' brand related evaluations, four questions measuring perceived quality and four questions about loyalty were adopted from Yoo *et al.* (2000). Two additional self-developed questions were added to assess loyalty, in order to capture the price premium sub-dimension of loyalty (Aaker, 1996). Additionally, three questions regarding brand trust were self-constructed by the researchers. In the third part of the questionnaire, the respondents were requested to fill out fifteen questions adopted from Singelis (1994) measuring their self-construal. The last part of the instrument was about the demographic classification of the respondents.

The data used in the analysis consists of 357 usable cases. After purification based on missing data, the final usable sample consists of 299 respondents, 154 females and 144 males, ranging from 16 to 62. The biggest groups in terms of demographics are respondents with

university education (54.5 %), earning more than 8000 TL per month (25.4 %), and identifying themselves as upper-middle class (42.8%). 54.2% are assessed as independent, whereas 45.8% are found as interdependent. For all three brands under study (i.e. bank, multinational, and domestic coffee shop), the percentage of the consumers who declared that they have changed their purchase intention due to what happened, is 60.9%, 19.3%, and 53.3%, respectively. The respondents were found to have above average perceived quality perceptions ($\mu_{\text{bank}}=3$; $\mu_{\text{multinational}}=3.4$; $\mu_{\text{domestic}}=3.3$ out of 5), but below average loyalty ($\mu_{\text{bank}}=1.7$; $\mu_{\text{multinational}}=1.9$; $\mu_{\text{domestic}}=1.8$ out of 5) to the brands within the study.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Table 1 provides demographic profiles for the sample divided in terms of those who declared that they have changed their purchase intention (PI = 1) versus those who did not (PI = 0). As can be seen, the demographic profile between the two groups is not significantly different, reflecting a similar distribution.

Table 1: Demographics of the Sample

Demographic profile	Percentage of Sample			Percentage of Sample	
	PI = 0 n=117	PI = 1 n=182		PI = 0 n=117	PI = 1 n=182
Age			Income		
16-20	12.8	12.1	under 3000 TL	27.4	34.1
21-30	66.6	65.9	3001 TL - 5000 TL	21.4	23.6
31-40	18.8	17.6	5001 TL - 8000 TL	23.9	18.1
41-50	0.9	3.3	over 8001 TL	27.4	24.2
51-62	0.9	1.1			
Gender			Social Status		
Female	56.4	58.4	Lower class	0.9	2.2
Male	43.6	51.1	Lower-middle class	1.7	4.4
			Middle class	38.5	43.4
			Upper-middle class	47	40.1
Education			Upper class	12	8.2
Primary school	0	0.5			
Junior high school	1.7	0			
High school	34.2	36.8			
University	54.7	54.4			
Master	6.8	3.3			
PhD	2.6	4.4			

* PI = 0 refers to consumers who have not changed their purchase intention

PI = 1 refers to consumers who have changed their purchase intention

The items measuring the constructs within the study were first subjected to exploratory factor and reliability analyses to test the factor structure. Following a series of iterative procedures, a final structure is obtained and five items from self-construal were removed from the analysis due

to low loadings (< 0.5) to improve discriminant validity. The items measuring perceived quality and trust emerged into one dimension. We did not forced the items into the hypothesized structure, as the amalgamation of trust with perceived quality perfectly reflects the essence of partner quality, which is an important indicator of consumer-brand relationships (Fournier; 1998; Delgado-Ballester *et al.*, 2003). The reliabilities of each factor using Cronbach's alpha as a measure of internal consistency were further encouraging with all values being greater than the benchmark of 0.60, as recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (1988). Factor loadings and reliability coefficients (current and original) of the constructs are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Factor and Reliability Analyses Results

			Cronbach's Alpha for original scale				Cronbach's Alpha for original scale
Dimension	Item	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Dimension	Item	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Loyalty	I consider myself to be loyal to this brand	0.768	0.85	Interdependent self-construal	I will stay in a group if they need me even when I am not happy with the group	0.707	0.73
	I usually buy this brand	0.701	I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans		0.714		
	X would be my first choice.	0.696	It is important to me to respect the decision made within the group		0.733		
	I will not buy other brands if this brand is not available.	0.79	I would offer my seat to my professor		0.615		
	I would buy another brand only if this brands' prices are too high	0.707	My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me		0.56		
	I am willing to pay extra	0.692					
Perceived Quality/Trust				Independent self-construal	I enjoy being unique and different from others	0.664	0.71
	This brand has high quality products	0.815	My personal identity independent of others is very important for me		0.664		
	The likely quality of this brand is extremely high.	0.813	I act the same way no matter who I am with		0.702		
	The products of this brand must be of very good quality.	0.645	I prefer to be direct with someone who I just met		0.619		
	This brand appears to be of very poor quality.	0.744	Being able to take care of myself is my priority		0.653		
	The likelihood that this brand is reliable is very high.	0.793					
	I trust this brand	0.64					
	I trust products/services of this brand	0.678					

A hierarchical logistic regression procedure with Forward Wald method was used to test the proposed relationships for each brand. As can be seen from Table 3, baseline model is the model where none of the predictors are included into the model to see the improvement between the models. The first step estimated Model 1 testing the main effects of perceived

quality/trust and loyalty on the change in consumers' purchase intent. In the second step, Model 2 analyzes the incremental effects of perceived social responsibility and self-construal of the respondents to see whether they add any value to the overall understanding. The demographic indicators were not added to the model since descriptive analyses revealed that there is no significant difference between the ones who changed their purchase intention and those who did not. For all the brands within the study, Hosmer-Lemeshow test indicates that all models (base model, model 1 and model 2) are significant and fit the data, showing an improvement for every model as reflected in the decrease of -2LL values for all brands respectfully.

Table 3: Model summaries

		B (p)	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R ²	Nagelkerke R ²	Pseudo R ²
Baseline Model	Bank		287,439			
	M. Coffee Chain		394,511			
	D. Coffee Chain		418,608			
Model 1	Bank		266,881	0,068	0,109	0,072
	M. Coffee Chain		384,013	0,048	0,053	0,027
	D. Coffee Chain		413,831	0,016	0,021	0,011
Loyalty	Bank	(-)0,493 (0,012)				
	M. Coffee Chain	(-)0,482 (0,001)				
	D. Coffee Chain	n.s.				
Perceived quality/trust	Bank	n.s.				
	M. Coffee Chain	n.s.				
	D. Coffee Chain	n.s.				
Model 2	Bank		266,651	0,069	0,11	0,072
	M. Coffee Chain		379,306	0,068	0,092	0,039
	D. Coffee Chain		403,065	0,05	0,067	0,037
Loyalty	Bank	(-)0.479 (0.017)				
	M. Coffee Chain	(-)0.457 (0.001)				
	D. Coffee Chain	n.s.				
Perceived quality/trust	Bank	n.s.				
	M. Coffee Chain	n.s.				
	D. Coffee Chain	n.s.				
Per. Social Responsibility	Bank	n.s.				
	M. Coffee Chain	(-)0.725(0.036)				
	D. Coffee Chain	(-)0.867(0.005)				

For Model 1, when perceived quality/trust and loyalty were added to the model, only loyalty was found as a significant negative predictor for the bank ($b_{\text{Loyalty}} = -0.493$) and the multinational

coffee chain ($mcc_{Loyalty} = -0.482$) under study. For the domestic coffee chain, neither quality/trust nor loyalty turned out to be significant. As a result, hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were all not supported. In hypothesis 2, we suggested a positive relationship between loyalty and change in purchase intention which turned out to be in the negative direction. For the hypotheses 1 and 3, as trust and perceived quality merged into a single concept, we evaluate the results accordingly, and thus reject both hypotheses. As the incremental effects of perceived social responsibility and self-construal of the respondents were added in Model 2; for the bank, still loyalty continued to be the single contributor ($b_{Loyalty} = -0.479$), whereas for the multinational coffee chain, perceived social responsibility ($mcc_{PSC} = -0.725$) was also found to negatively influence purchase decisions along with loyalty ($mcc_{Loyalty} = -0.458$). For the domestic coffee brand, only perceived social responsibility displayed a negative effect ($dcc_{PSC} = -0.867$). Thus, hypotheses hypotheses 4B and 4C were accepted.

As a summary out of all the hypotheses listed within the conceptual framework and hypotheses section, only H4B and H4C, which are the hypotheses regarding perceived social responsibility of the domestic and multinational coffee chain brands, are supported. The relationships stated in H1, H3, and H5 are found to be insignificant. And finally, proposed relationships in H2A and H2B are found to be in the opposite direction.

DISCUSSION

Overall, it should be kept in mind that the study tries to take a snapshot of an important incident which found large space in both local and international media. Many newspaper articles highlighted the fact that the protests might have affected consumers' brand related knowledge. This study goes a step further and tries to empirically analyze this effect.

Although not formulated as a hypothesis, the present study, from a practical perspective, seeks to investigate whether consumers really change their purchase intentions after a major negative communication towards a particular brand. As can be seen in Table 1, overall only 39% of the sample declared that they changed their buying decisions, where the majority continue their positive attitude towards the brands within the study. For the bank, multinational, and domestic coffee chain brand, the percentage of the consumers who declared that they changed their purchase intention due to what happened, is 60.9%, 19.3%, and 53.3%, respectively. As can be seen from these figures, domestic brands were more affected from the protest calls, which suggest that multinational brands, as they are less included into the selves of the consumers are in a way more prone to misconduct.

Secondly, the paper tries to find out which factors play a significant role in purchase intention change. The findings are in line with the latest literature emphasizing the importance of

social responsibility to firms from a managerial perspective. Specifically, for the multinational coffee chain brand, social responsibility turned out to be even more important than loyalty. Consumers more and more are expecting companies to be socially responsible (Broderick et al., 2003), and are more forgettable in the case of a misconduct with those companies, when they act accordingly (Klein & Dawar, 2004). As a result, companies should make the public aware of their social responsible acts, to be able to recover from an unpredictable crisis more easily. However, this communication should not be in the form of advertisements and consumers must sense congruence between the company and the social responsibility act (Mohr et al., 2001). We did not find this effect for the bank brand, though. This may be attributed to the category of the brand, as financial institutions are regarded as being oriented towards short-term economical results, rather than long-term welfare of the society.

Another finding is the negative influence of loyalty on purchase intentions. Previous research suggests that loyal consumers would be more open to withdraw their consumption from the brand, when they believe that the brand does something which they don't approve (Lee, 2007). However, in the present study, loyalty was found to be in a negative relationship with likelihood of change in consumption. More specifically, loyal consumers were found less likely to change their buying pattern, which is contrary to our expectations. Even though the results of our study reassures the strong relationship between loyalty and repurchase intention, it may also point that there might be a threshold for the initial loyalty level of the consumers. The respondents in our study have below average loyalty both for the multinational coffee brand and the bank under study ($\mu_{\text{bank}}=1.7$; $\mu_{\text{multinational}}= 1.9$ out of 5), which may have influenced the results. It may indicate that for less loyal consumers, the brand's negative actions may not be considered as an issue to change their consumption; as it is the case in our study. However, for heavy loyal consumers, i.e. real admirers of the brand, negative actions may still trigger a cognitive calculation concerning their relationship with the brand.

Perceived quality/trust and consumers' self-construal were found to have no effect on the change of consumers' intention to repurchase. The non-significant effect of perceived quality/trust may be attributed to the fact that none of the negative communication regarding the brands was about the quality of the products or services offered. As a result, consumers quality perceptions and trust towards the brand did not play a role in their repurchase decision process. This finding further reflects that if consumers' boycott decisions are not due to experiential avoidance motivations, brands' evaluations regarding quality and trust are not substantial. The non-significant effect of self-construal is interesting and signifies that both independents and interdependent were not affected by the social pressure to boycott the brands and did not change their attitude towards re-consumption.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has several limitations. First, the study uses a convenience sample even though the researchers tried to approach different demographic segments. Second, the research design enables only a static analysis. However, with the depth of issue at hand, the study may benefit from triangulation with some qualitative methods, like personal or group interviews. This could widen up the view and add more variables to the analysis which may increase the exploratory power. As a suggestion, investigating the influence of whether consumers are exposed to the negative communication regarding the brand misconduct through strong or weak ties may add a different aspect to the findings. Moreover, whether the company apologizes or not may be one of the additional determinants of the proposed relationships. This strategy is called mortification and encompasses apologizing, delivering admissions of guilt, and expressing regret to seek forgiveness from the consumers (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). Research suggests that consumers forgive and forget more easily when companies apologize of what they did wrong (Lyan & Cameron, 2004). Another venue for future research is stated within the discussion section. As mentioned, a threshold may exist for the loyalty of the consumers, where the highly engaged ones may be more affected by the negative communication. However, this effect may not be visible for the less loyal ones. As a result, analyzing a suggested s-shaped relationship may create interesting findings.

REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. (1991). *Managing Brand Equity*. Macmillan, New York, NY.
- Aaker, D. (1996). Measuring Brand Equity Across Products and Markets. *California Management Review*, 38(3), 102-120.
- Aaker, D. A., & Joachimsthaler, E. (2000). The brand Relationship Spectrum. *California Management Review*, 42(4), 8-23.
- Bagozzi, R. P., & Yi, Y. (1988). On the evaluation of structural equation models. *Journal of the academy of marketing science*, 16(1), 74-94.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139–168.
- Berry, L. (2000). Cultivating Service Brand Equity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 29(1), 128-137.
- Broderick, A., Amandeep, J. & Tony, G. (2003). Tickled Pink: The Personal Meaning of Cause- Related Marketing for Customers. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 19(5/6), 583-610.
- Carroll, A. B. (1979). A Three-Dimensional Conceptual Model of Corporate Performance?. *Academy of Management Review*, 4 (4), 497-505.
- Chattaraman, V., Lennon, S. J. & Rudd, N.A. (2010). Social identity salience: Effects on identity-based brand choices of Hispanic consumers. *Psychology and Marketing*, 7, 263–284.
- Chaudhuri, A. and Holbrook, M.B. (2001). The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, 65, 81-93.

- Cissé-Depardon, K., & N'Goala, G. (2009). Les effets de la satisfaction, de la confiance et de l'engagement vis-à-vis d'une marque sur la participation des consommateurs à un boycott. *Recherche et applications en marketing*, 24(1), 43-67.
- Coombs, W. T. & Holladay, S.J. (2001). An Extended Examination of the Crisis Situation: A Fusion of the Relational Management and Symbolic Approaches. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13, 321-340.
- Dawar, N. & Pillutla, M.M. (2000). Impact of Product-Harm Crisis on Brand Equity: The Moderating Role of Consumer Expectations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 37, 215-226.
- Delgado-Ballester, E. & Munuera-Alema'n, J.L. (1999). Does Brand Trust Matter to Brand Equity. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 14 (2/3), 187-196.
- Delgado-Ballester, E., Munuera-Aleman, J. L., & Yague-Guillen, M. J. (2003). Development and validation of a brand trust scale. *International Journal of Market Research*, 45(1), 35-54.
- Dick, A. S. & Basu, K. (1994). Customer Loyalty: Toward an Integrated Conceptual Framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 22(2), 99-113.
- Elliot R. & Wattanasuwan, K. (1998). Brands as Symbolic Resources for the Construction of Identity. *International Journal of Advertising*, 17(2), 131-144.
- Englis, B. G. & Solomon, M.R. (1997). I am not... Therefore, I am: The role of avoidance products in shaping consumer behavior. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 24, 61-63.
- Erdem, T. & Swait, J. (1998). Brand Equity as a Signalling Phenomenon. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 7(2), 131-157
- Escalas, J. E. & Bettman, J.R. (2005). Self-Construal, Reference Groups, and Brand Meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32, 378-389.
- Fetscherin, M., & Heinrich, D. (2015). Consumer brand relationships research: A bibliometric citation meta-analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(2), 380-390.
- Folkes, V. S. & Kamins, M.A. (1999). Effects of Information about Firms' Ethical and Unethical Actions on Consumers' Attitudes. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 8(3), 243-259.
- Forehand, M. R., Deshpande, R. & Reed, A. II. (2002). Identity Salience and the Influence of Differential Activation of the Social Self-Schema on Advertising Response. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(6), 1086-1099.
- Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of consumer research*, 24(4), 343-353.
- Friedman, M. (1985). Consumer boycotts in the United States, 1970-1980: Contemporary events in historical perspective. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 19 (Summer), 96-117.
- Garret D. E. (1987). The Effectiveness of Marketing Policy Boycotts: Environmental Opposition to Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 46-57.
- Grubb, E. L. & Grathwohl, H. L. (1967). Consumer Self Concept, Symbolism, and Market Behavior: A Theoretical Approach. *Journal of Marketing*, 3:1, 22-27.
- Han, H. & Back, K. (2008). Relationships Among Image Congruence, Consumption Emotions, and Customer Loyalty in the Lodging Industry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 32(4), 467-490.
- Hoffmann, S. & Müller, S. (2009). Consumer Boycotts due to Factory Relocation. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(2), 239-247.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Huber, F., Vollhardt, K., Matthes, I., & Vogel, J. (2010). Brand misconduct: Consequences on consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(11), 1113-1120.
- Hunter, M. L., Le Menestrel, M. & De Bettignies, H. (2008). Beyond Control: Crisis Strategies and Stakeholder Media in the Danone Boycott of 2001. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 11(4), 335-350.

- Jackson, J. W. & Smith, A.R. (1999). Conceptualizing Social Identity: a New Framework and Evidence for the Impact of Different Dimensions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25(1), 120-135.
- John, A. & Klein, J. (2003). The Boycott Puzzle: Consumer Motivations for Purchase Sacrifice. *Management Science*, 49(9), 1196-1209.
- Johnson, A. R., Matear, M., & Thomson, M. (2011). A coal in the heart: Self-relevance as a post-exit predictor of consumer anti-brand actions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38(1), 108-125.
- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57,1-22.
- Delgado-Ballester, E. & Munuera-Alema'n, J.L. (1999). Does Brand Trust Matter to Brand Equity. *The Journal of Product and Brand Manager*, 14 (2/3), 187-196.
- Klein, J. G. & Niraj, D. (2004). Corporate Social Responsibility, Consumers' Attribution and Consumers' Brand Evaluation in a Product-Harm Crisis. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 21(3), 203-217.
- Klein, J. G., Smith, N.C. & John, A. (2004). Why We Boycott: Consumer Motivations for Boycott Participation. *Journal of Marketing*, 2004, 92-109.
- Kotler, P. (2000). *Marketing Management The Millenium Addition*. Prentice Hall.
- Kressmann F. M.; Sirgy, J. ; Herrmann, A. ; Huber, F. ; Huber, S. & Lee, D. (2006). Direct and indirect effects of self-image congruence on brand loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 59, 955–964.
- Laufer, D., & Coombs, W. T. (2006). How should a company respond to a product harm crisis? The role of corporate reputation and consumer-based cues. *Business Horizons*, 49(5), 379-385.
- Lee, M. S. W. (2008). *Brands we Love to Hate: An Exploration of Brand aAvoidance*. PhD Thesis. ResearchSpace@Auckland.
- Lee, M. S. W.; Motion, J. & Conroy, D. (2009). Anti-consumption and Brand Avoidance. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(2), 169-180.
- Levy, S. J. (1959). Symbols for Sale. *Harvard Business Review*, 37(4), 117–124.
- Light, L (1994). Brand Loyalty Marketing Key to Enduring Growth. *Advertising Age*, 65(42), 20.
- Lyan, L. & Cameron, G.T. (2004). A Relational Approach Examining the Interplay of Prior Reputation and Immediate Response to a Crisis. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 16(3), 213-241.
- Mai, L. W., & Conti, P. G. (2008). Dissolution of a person-brand relationship: an understanding of brand-detachment. *European Advances in Consumer Research*, 8, 421-429.
- Maignan, I. & Ferrell, O.C. (2004). Corporate Social Responsibility and Marketing: An Integrative Framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 32(1), 3-19.
- Malär, L.; Hoyer, W. D. & Nyffenegger, B. (2011). Emotional Brand Attachment and Brand Personality: The Relative Importance of the Actual and the Ideal Self. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(4), 35-52.
- Markus, H. R. & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation. *Psychological review*, 98(2), 224.
- Marsella, A.J.; Devos, G. & Hsu, F.K.L. (1985). Introduction: Approaches to Culture and Self. in A.J. Marsella, G. Devos and F.K.L. Hsu (ed.) *Culture and Self: Asian and western perspectives* (pp. 2-23), New York:Tavistock Pub.
- McCracken, G. (1989). Who Is the Celebrity Endorser? Cultural Foundations of the Endorsement Process. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (December), 310-321.
- Mohr, L. A., Webb, D.J. & Harris, K.E. (2001). Do Consumers Expect Companies to be Socially Responsible? The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Buying Behavior. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 35(1), 45-70.
- Morgan, R. M. & Hunt, S. (1994). The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 20-38.

- Oliver, R. L. (1997). *Satisfaction: A Behavioral Perspective on the Consumer*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Oyserman, D. & Lee, S.W.S. (2008). Does Culture Influence What and How We Think? Effects of Priming Individualism and Collectivism. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134 (2), 311–342.
- Pal, N. (2009). From Starbucks to Carrefour: Consumer Boycotts, Nationalism and Taste in Contemporary China. *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, 6(2), 1-25.
- Pava, M. L. & Krause, J. (1996). *Corporate Social Responsibility and Financial Performance: The Paradox of Social Cost*. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.
- Petkus, E. & Woodruff, R.B. (1992). A Model of the Socially Responsible Decision-Making Process in Marketing: Linking Decision Makers and Stakeholders. *Marketing Theory and Applications*, 3, 154-61.
- Reed, A. II & Forehand, M. (2003). Social identity and marketing research: An integrative framework, Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved on 10 August 2013, from <http://marketing.wharton.upenn.edu/ideas/pdf/Reed/Simktstrategy-ar14.pdf>.
- Richardson, P. S.; Jain, A.K. & Dick, A. (1996). Household Store Brand Proneness: a Framework. *Journal of Retailing*, 72(2), 159-185.
- Samli, A. C. & Sirgy, M. J. (1981). A multi-dimensional approach to analyzing store loyalty: A predictive model. In K. Bernhardt and B. Kehoe (Ed.), *The changing marketing environment: New theories and applications* (pp. 113-116). Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- Scott, D. (2000). One Day and a Lifetime of Brand Lessons. *Brandweek*, 41 (34), 30-32.
- Sen, S. & Bhattacharya, C.B. (2001). Does Doing Good always Lead to Doing Better? Consumer Reactions to Corporate Social Responsibility. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 225-243.
- Sen, S.; Gürhan Canli, Z. & Morwitz, V. (2001). Withholding Consumption: A Social Dilemma Perspective on Consumer Boycotts. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(3), 399-417.
- Singelis, T. M. (1994). The measurement of Independent and Interdependent Self-Construals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20(5), 580-591.
- Simon C.J. & Sullivan, M.W. (1993). The Measurement and Determinants of Brand Equity: A Financial Approach. *Marketing Science*, 12, 28-52.
- Stanwick, P.A. & Stanwick, S.D. (1998). The Relationship between Corporate Social Performance, and Organizational Size, Financial Performance, and Environmental Performance: An Empirical Examination. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17(2), 195-204.
- Swaminathan, V.; Page, K. & Gurhan-Canli, Z. (2007). My Brand or Our Brand: The Effects of Brand Relationship Dimensions and Self-Construal on Brand Evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (August), 248-259.
- Thompson, C. J. & Arsel, Z. (2004). The Starbucks Brandscape and Consumers' (anticorporate) Experiences of Glocalization. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(3), 631-642.
- Trump, R. K. (2014). Connected consumers' responses to negative brand actions: The roles of transgression self-relevance and domain. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(9), 1824-1830.
- Veroff, J. B. & Goldberger, N.R. (1995). What's in a Name? The Case of Intercultural. in N.R. Goldberger and J.B. Veroff ed. *The culture and psychology reader* (pp. 3-24), New York: New York University Press.
- Yoo, B.; Donthu, N. & Lee, S. (2000). An Examination of Selected Marketing Mix Elements and Brand Equity. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 28, 195-211.
- Zack, J. (1991). The Hullabaloo over Boycott Ballyhoo. *Business and Society Review*, 78, 9-15.