

Effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign on Turkish Products and its Influence on Demand of Kurdish Consumers 2020

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Abstract

Boycotting is one of the most effective anti-consumption tactics used against practices deemed unethical or unjustifiable, and calling to boycott products through social media platforms has become a trend recently among young people. This paper studies the motives and causes of boycotting Turkish products among Iraqi Kurds and highlights the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign on Turkish products and Kurdish consumer demand. The research data has been collected through an online survey posted and published on several Facebook pages and groups in Iraqi Kurdistan. The findings from 1378 Facebook users who participated in the Facebook Boycott Campaign of Turkish products in Iraqi Kurdistan show that indirect support for Turkish policies to exterminate and invade Kurdish communities constitutes the leading cause of the Boycott Campaign. In addition, participation in the Facebook Boycott Campaign against Turkish products is considered a national duty more than an ethnic, ethical, religious, or other duty to humanity. The majority of participants believe that continuing to participate in the Facebook Boycott Campaign against Turkish products will have a huge impact on the Turkish economy and it is a warning to the Turkish government regarding its foreign policy towards Kurds.

Keywords: Facebook, Boycott Campaign; Turkish products; Consumer demand, Iraqi Kurdistan.

1. Introduction

There are different reasons that clients choose local products rather than good from overseas. They include (Hinch, 2005): 1) the basis of the overseas products, 2) patriotism, 3) ethnocentrism and fanaticism, 4) hostility, and 5) loyalty. It is clear that the values of bias also affect preferences for external things (O'Cass & Lim, 2002). A diversity of researchers have discovered the negative or positive preferences of clients regarding overseas products (Knight, 1999; Watson, 2000; Kaynak & Kara, 2002). Recently in 2020, Kurdish consumers started boycotting Turkish products as a response to the Turkish invasion of a part of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (also known as Rojava or Syrian Kurdistan). Boycotts among nations are quite normal and there is frequent boycotting of products of

particular countries around the world (Sandıkcı & Ekici, 2009; Sutikno & Cheng, 2011). Everyone has wants and needs, which makes them consume something to fulfil their wants and/or needs but sometimes consumer demands may change (Fisher, 2020). Consumers are individuals who use goods or services available in the community, both for personal needs or for many people, but not to be traded (Rossanty Ario & Nasution, 2018; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000).

Buyer behavior is the progression an individual goes through in finding, purchasing, using, assessing and acting after the consumption of goods, facilities and notions that are predictable to encounter their desires (Chao & Schor, 1998). This behavior is the basis for someone to consume something to meet his/her needs. Chao and Schor (1998) defines status included with consuming a product as a form of purchasing activity carried out by an individual who craves the social status they want. Consequently, consumers buy a product not only because it meets their daily needs, but there is an additional reason that may be defined as patriotism in the act of boycotting products from other countries. The culture of boycotting Turkish products among Kurdish communities can influence consumption behavior (Cukur & Carlo, 2004; Sandıkcı & Ekici, 2009; Schneider et al., 2011). People may have dissimilar motives to participate in boycott campaigns (Ettenson et al., 2006). Consumer culture itself is a determinant of one's desires and behaviors, especially in decision making behavior and purchasing behavior (Rossanty, Ario & Nasution, 2018). Thus, the patriotic ban on boycotting products can complement the identity and behavior that can be accepted by the wider community. This might include clothing, appearance, communication, language, food, relationships, beliefs, and others that are unconsciously consumed because of the curative values that are integrated into their daily habits. As Klein (2002) emphasized, a boycott can happen as it is a consumers way to use power to not buy products or to disagree (Klein, 2002).

In consumption behavior, products have functions, forms, and meanings. Consumers will think about whether the product chosen is able to meet their needs or not, both physical fulfilment and the prestige that they have. Likewise, with the consumption behavior of 'millennials' in Kurdish communities, this generation is considered to have a hedonic purchasing behavior that is supported by certain motives that influence purchasing decisions. Some clients may join in boycotts because of group pressures and their influences (Delistavrou, Krystallis, & Tilikidou, 2020). A similar example among Muslim communities can be seen with the boycotts of Danish brands in their home country (Al Hyari et al., 2012). Furthermore, Hoffmann and Muller (2009) claim that the buyer boycotts for various reasons, which include 1) regularity, reasons and aims of boycotts; 2) outcomes of goods; 3) personal incentives (see Figure 1). Therefore, among these three reasons for boycotting, an individual's motivations get the minimum attention (Klein, 2002). The present research highlights the main aspects of boycotting Turkish products among Kurdish consumers, and how the act of boycotting influences them.

2. Social Media and Political Consumerism

The usage of social media and political consumerism can be seen as an alternative to political engagement, mainly among the new generation, with the use of new forms of political consumerism such as online boycotting on internet sites and social networking websites, becoming the center for the action by consumers. Thus, the boycott campaign on Turkish products by young Kurdish consumers in Iraqi Kurdistan can be seen as a reaction to the Turkish invasion of towns in northern Syria (Rojava), and can be considered a political campaign among young consumers in Iraqi Kurdistan. Political consumerism consists of three forms including boycotts, boycotts and discursive actions (Micheletti et al, 2007). This study has focused on the boycott. Political consumerism is a structure whose driving forces are self-expression, mutual respect and warning, and it has its basis in the action system (Follesdal, 2004). According to Odabaı (2008), political consumerism is a way of doing politics via the market. It is assumed that political consumerism contains both individual behavior (critical buying) and organized collective action (participation in groups and associations). However, it cannot be ignored that the effects of individual actions depend on collective results (Pellizzoni, 2007). Furthermore, boycotts are a negative form of political consumerism and can be defined as one or more groups' attempts to motivate individual buyers about avoidance of buying products to reach a set of goals (Torlak, 2007). Boycotts encourage consumers to break with institutional actors by refusing to buy their products. The boycotts aim is to force businesses to change their institutional policies by motivating consumers against products or producers (Micheletti, 2004).

Political consumption is a subcategory of "resistance" identity (Cherrier, 2009) and, thus, when consumers boycott foreign goods for political reasons. Whistle and Micheletti (2002) describe political consumerism as an individualized collective action. Political consumerism uses market actions and consumer choice as a political tool (Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti, Follesdal, 2004). Moreover, Strömsnes (2004) states that political consumption is a form of participation that appeals to an urban, radical, well-educated and politically interested elite, but do not support the impression of political consumption as an income or dependent kind of political participation. The main aim of this study is to highlight the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign on Turkish products and its influence on Kurdish Consumer demand in 2020. This indicates that there is a relation between the demand on Turkish products and the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign. In addition to addressing the possible correlation among the effects of the Facebook Boycott

Campaign on Turkish products in Iraqi Kurdistan. Thus, the present study investigates utilizing social media ‘Facebook’ to analyze the opinion of Kurdish communities, and how they have boycotted the Turkish products in online spheres.

3. Methodology

The present study is quantitative in nature. Data was collected through an online survey, and analyzed through the content analysis method. A prepared online survey was disseminated on Facebook to approach the majority of the Kurdish respondents. It was quite difficult for the researchers to approach the respondents as the eligibility to fill in the questionnaire form was to be Iraqi Kurdish. A total number of 1378 respondents were sampled from October 2019 to January 15, 2020. Alongside the online campaign data was collected for three months. The data is presented in tabulation, figure and analysis through SPSS software. The research relied on quantitative methodology to obtain data from Facebook users. First, the questionnaire was prepared in the Kurdish language, and 1378 Facebook users were sampled to collect the data. In addition, the study relied on a descriptive content analysis approach to examine the data, where SPSS V25 was used to categorize and test the results. The Facebook users participated in an online questionnaire for ‘The Facebook Boycott Campaign against Turkish Products’.

4. Analysis and Findings

All the statistical computations of this paper were performed by using SPSS 25. First, the data was encoded, organized, and presented in a form. Then, the other numerical methods were used to regulate the outcomes of the research. Also, the reliability of the questionnaire was tested through Alpha Cronbach, and statistical measures like frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variance, and relative importance were used to conduct descriptive statistical analysis of the demography, effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign, and Turkish product data. Inferential data analysis was conducted using the following: Pearson bivariate association was used to find the relationship among the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign and demand on Turkish products. The simple regression model has been used to determine the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign on Turkish products and its influence on young Kurdish Consumers' demand in 2020.

4.1. Questionnaire Reliability

Questionnaire reliability determines the correctness, reliability, stability, and stability of the study. The data has been collected from more than 200 respondents for research, which is considered a good sample size for conducting such type of research according to Plano and Creswell (2015).

4.2. Resolution Test

The reliability and validity of the participants’ response to the questionnaire was determined by using Alpha Cronbach. Table 1 shows the reliability of the test results. First, the Ronbach alpha coefficient was used for measuring the stability of the questionnaire to determine the accuracy of the data collected from the sample of this research online. As can be seen in Table 1 the total result of the Alpha Cronbach coefficient of the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign and Turkish products with the effects on young Kurdish consumer demand in 2020 is 0.893 with a validity of 0.797 which, both together, indicate the high reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Reliability and validity test results.

Validity	Alpha Cronbach coefficient	N. of class	Variable	No
Independent variable				
83	0.911	5	The Effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign	1
Dependent variable				
75	0.866	4	Turkish Products	2
0.797	0.893	9	Total	

Section 1: Demographic variables

Table 2 presents the demographic variables based on the gender and location of the respondents and data analysis. From the results shown in Table 2, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents recorded were male (70.8%) and (29.2%) were female. Moreover, the number of participants inside Iraqi Kurdistan was much higher than those abroad with 84% of participants inside Iraqi Kurdistan and only 16% outside of the country.

Table 2. Demographic data analysis.

Variables	Frequency	Percent %
Gender		
Male	975	70.8%
Female	403	29.2%

Location		
Inside Iraqi Kurdistan	1158	84%
Outside Iraqi Kurdistan	220	16%
Total	1378	100.0

Section 2: The study's main variables

The study's main variables include the questions that were forwarded to the participants. Table 3 presents the main variables of the study. From the results shown in Table 3, it can be concluded that 61.95% of the boycott campaign participation against Turkish products was conducted through Facebook, while 16.94% mentioned it was through friends and 10.77% was through websites. Furthermore, 36.62% of the campaign was supported by the liking of posts, and the second most common response was the sharing of posts on boycott groups with 20.74%. The lowest reported responses was from those who supported the campaign by sharing posts at only 10.37%. As time went by, marketing rules had to change, and we had an important role to show and increase these changes. Today even though television still has a non-negligible impact on the communication process, social media has played an important role in driving buying aims along with bringing product engagement in the numerically interacted society (Meadows-Klue, 2008). In addition, 25.3 % of the participants of this study believe that participating in the boycott is a national responsibility. Also, Altintas and his colleagues (2013) state that clients are pushed to the extreme level by nationwide motivations when they boycott external products. Hinck (2005) believes that nationalism is one of the reasons that motivates clients to elect for local rather than overseas goods along with other factors including the origin of foreign goods, ethnocentrism, animosity, and patriotism.

According to Table 3, 20.88% of participants believe that boycotting Turkish products is an ethnic duty; 20.68% believe it is an ethical duty, and 20.57% believe it is a humanistic duty. Moreover, 28.69% believe that continuing the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products on Facebook will bring a huge impact on the Turkish economy. 26.61% of the participants consider it as a warning to Turkey regarding foreign policy towards Kurds, adding purchaser boycotts establish significant instances of this sort of response. Vociferous perspectives, because of their rationale of social personality or aggregate activity, may show themselves in the hypothesis or practice of boycotts. Despite the fact that there has been expanded interest in purchaser blacklists (Cromie & Ewing, 2009; Lee, Motion & Conroy, 2009), and 23.99% believe it will shift the business direction of Kurdish business owners from Turkey to other countries. This will have the effect of shoppers' decisions to buy unfamiliar items, which may be influenced by the spot of birthplace of such items, additionally assumes a significant function in impacting customer buying conduct (LeClerc & Schmitt, 1994). Under the impact of this campaign, 24.67% of respondents understood that the buying of Turkish products by Kurdish customers is a form of indirect support for Turkish military actions including the fight against Kurdish forces and the invasion of Kurdish lands. Whereas 21.16% understood that it has a negative impact on Kurdish economic development, and 15.9% of respondents understood that the purchase of Turkish products by Kurdish customers increases the national consciousness among Kurds. In some countries, animosity has played a key role in consumer behavior for foreign goods because of historical ethnic conflicts; according to Nakos and Hajidimitriou (2007), enmity alludes to a buyer's negative emotions towards the results of a specific nation. Figure 1 represents the percent of each answer collected for each question.

Table 3. Descriptions of some questions.

Question	Frequency	Percent %
Which of the following mean/s have you used to get involved in the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products (more than one option is applicable)		
Facebook	1306	61.95
Radio	32	1.52
Local TV channels	66	3.13
International TV channels	120	5.69
Websites	227	10.77
Friends	357	16.94
Total	2108	100.0
How did you support the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products		
By sharing posts in boycott groups	644	20.74
By liking posts	1137	36.62
By writing comments on posts	607	19.55

By sharing posts	322	10.37
By tagging and mentioning others to boycott groups	395	12.72
Total	3105	100.0
As a Kurdish customer, I believe participating in the Boycott Campaign against the Turkish products is: (more than one option is applicable)		
A National Duty	1140	25.30
An Ethnic Duty	941	20.88
An Ethical Duty	932	20.68
A Religious Duty	526	11.67
Humanity Duty	927	20.57
None of the Above	40	0.89
Total	4506	100.0
As a Kurdish customer, I believe continuing the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products on Facebook will bring these outcomes: (more than one option is applicable)		
Huge impacts on the Turkish economy	1032	28.69
Warning Turkey's foreign policy towards Kurds	957	26.61
Warning Turkish people about their view on Kurds	755	20.99
Will shift the business direction of Kurdish business owners from Turkey to other countries	853	23.71
Total	3597	100.0
Under the impact of this campaign, I understand that buying Turkish products by Kurdish costumers is:		
Indirect support for Turkey exterminating and invading Kurds	948	24.67
In cases of purchasing Turkish products, local products will be affected negatively	701	18.25
It has negative impacts on Kurdish economic development	769	20.02
It has negative side effects on health as exported goods are not always safe	813	21.16
It will increase national consciousness among Kurds	611	15.90
Total	3842	100.0

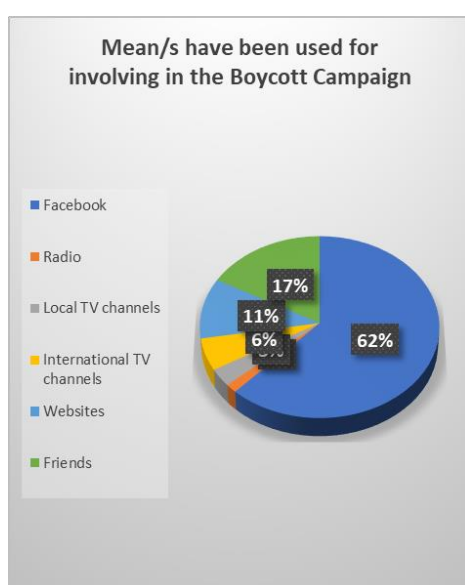


Figure 2(a). Question 1.

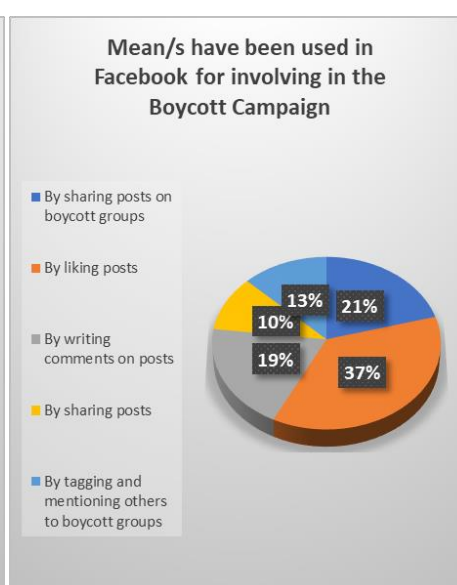


Figure 1(b). Question 2.

Figure 5(c). Question 3.

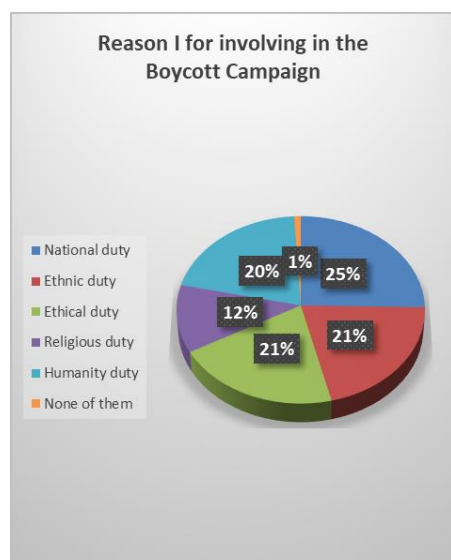


Figure 4(d). Question 4.

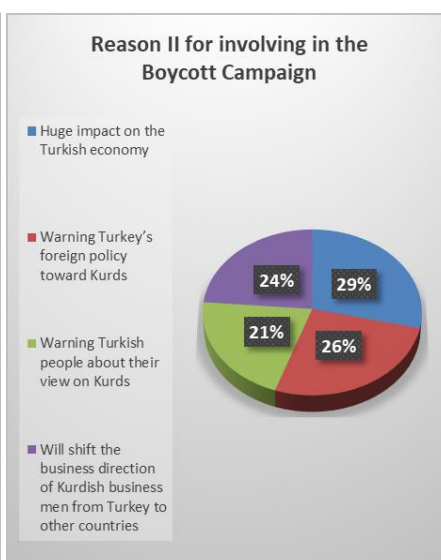


Figure 3(e). Question 5.

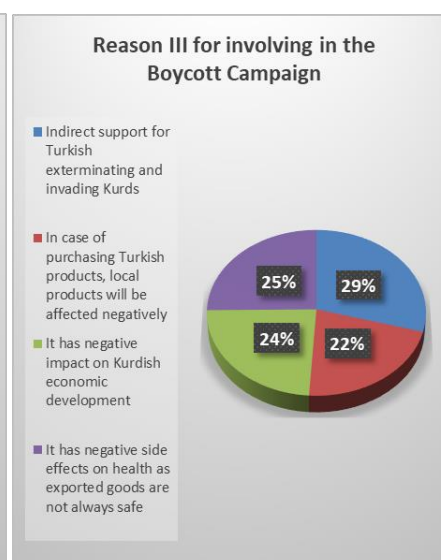


Table 4. Description of variables.

Variable	Questions
X1	As a Kurdish customer, the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products attracted my attention.
X2	As a Kurdish customer, the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products has affected me.
X3	As a Kurdish customer, the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products has influenced my buying decision for Turkish goods.
X4	As a Kurdish customer, the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products was a convenient reaction against Turkey.
X5	From the moment I have seen the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products on Facebook, I participated and was actively involved in this campaign.
Y1	From the moment I was aware of the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products on Facebook, I did not buy any Turkish Products and goods.
Y2	From the moment I knew about the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products on Facebook, I only purchased obligatory items that I had no alternative to buy except from Turkey.
Y3	From the moment I saw the Boycott Campaign against Turkish products on Facebook, I encouraged other people to participate.
Y4	The Boycott Campaign against Turkish products on Facebook continues due to the Turkish political and military involvement in Rojava–Syria.

Table 5. Description of variables for the Effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign.

Variables		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Do not Know	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std	C.V	Relative Importance	Result
X1	No	28	16	20	221	1093	4.69	0.75	15.99	93.8	Strongly Agree
	%	2	1.2	1.5	16	79.3					
X2	No	38	25	27	355	933	4.54	0.85	18.72	90.8	Strongly Agree
	%	2.8	1.8	2	25.8	67.7					
X3	No	53	34	44	369	878	4.44	0.96	15.54	88.8	Strongly Agree
	%	3.8	2.5	3.2	26.8	63.7					
X4	No	28	23	29	196	1102	4.68	0.78	16.67	93.6	Strongly Agree
	%	2	1.7	2.1	14.2	80					
X5	No	39	37	46	398	858	4.45	0.9	20.22	89	

	%	2.8	2.7	3.3	28.9	62.3					Strongly Agree
Sum		186	135	166	1539	4864	4.56	0.79	17.43	91.2	Strongly Agree
%		2.70	1.96	2.40	22.34	70.60					

**Clarifying the (Likert five-way scale): (From 1.00 – 1.79 strongly disagree), (From 1.80 – 2.59 disagree), (From 2.60 – 3.39 I do not know), (From 3.40 – 4.19 agree), (From 4.20 – 5.00 strongly agree)*

Table 5 shows mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variance, and the relative importance in the first five questions in Table 4 with a focus on the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign. The results show that for all the questions, the participants strongly agree. The total mean value is 4.56, the standard deviation is 0.79, the coefficient of variance is 17.43, and the relative importance is 91.2. Boyd & Ellison (2007) state that as a platform, which creates opportunities to meet new people and make friends like social networking sites have become a new mass communication tool (Onat & Alikılıç, 2008). As we have seen, Facebook is one of the best examples of online social networking used among people nowadays.

Table 6. Respondents opinions on Turkish products and their influences on young Kurdish consumers.

Variables		Strongly disagree	Disagree	I don't know	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std	C.V	Relative importance	Result
Y1	No	46	66	104	452	710	4.24	1.01	23.82	84.8	Strongly Agree
	%	3.3	4.8	7.5	32.8	51.5					
Y2	No	161	144	99	369	605	3.81	1.39	36.48	76.2	Agree
	%	11.7	10.4	7.2	26.8	43.9					
Y3	No	31	37	34	333	943	4.54	0.85	19.10	89	Strongly Agree
	%	2.2	2.7	2.5	24.2	68.4					
Y4	No	29	39	131	294	885	4.43	0.93	20.99	88.6	Strongly Agree
	%	2.1	2.8	9.5	21.3	64.2					
Sum		267	286	368	1448	3143	4.23	1.05	25.10	84.65	Strongly Agree
%		4.84	5.19	6.68	26.27	57.02					

**Clarifying the (Likert five-way scale): (From 1.00 – 1.79 strongly disagree), (From 1.80 – 2.59 disagree), (From 2.60 – 3.39 I do not know), (From 3.40 – 4.19 agree), (From 4.20 – 5.00 strongly agree)*

Table 6 shows mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variance, and relative importance of the last four questions in Table 4 with a focus on Turkish products and their influence on young Kurdish consumer demand in 2020. The total mean value is 4.23, the standard deviation is 1.05, the coefficient of variance is 25.10, relative importance is 84.65, and the participants strongly agree. As Friedman (2004) states, there are three sorts of buyer boycotts: 1) activity arranged, 2) media-oriented and 3) commercial center situated. This exploration centers around media-oriented purchaser boycott. E (Sen et al., 2001; Hoffmann & Müller, 2009).

Table 7. Relationship between the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign and Turkish products and their influence on Young Kurdish Consumers' demand in 2020.

Variables	Turkish products		
	Correlation	Sig.	Sample
Effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign	0.782	0.00	1378

**The level of significance at level 0.05*
**There is an association among the statistical function between the demand on Turkish products and the Facebook Boycott Campaign*

H0: There is no relation between the demand on Turkish products and the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign.

H1: There is a relation between the demand on Turkish products and the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign.

The results shown in Table 7 indicate that there is an important optimistic numerical association among the demand on Turkish products and the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign with a value of 0.782 and with a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates the acceptance of the second hypothesis (H1) because of a positive correlation between the demand on Turkish products and the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign.

Table 8. Regression analysis of a dependent variable (life status) of the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign on Turkish products and their influence on Kurdish consumer demand in 2020.

Model	Coefficients				Model Summary			ANOVA Table	
	Unstandardized Coefficients		T Test	Sig.	R	R ²	Adj.(R ²)	F Test	Sig.
	B	Std.Error							
Constant	0.626	0.079	7.93	0.00	0.782	0.611	0.601	2165.51	0.00
Facebook Boycott Campaign effects	0.795	0.017	46.535	0.00					

H0: There is a relationship between the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign on Turkish products.

H1: There is no relationship between the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign on Turkish products.

Table 8 shows that the regression model predicts the reliant variable essentially well. This shows the statistical significance of the regression model that was run. Here, the (p-value) was (0.000), which is under 0.05, and it shows the regression model factually predicts the result variable for example it is a solid match with the data. This implies, the technique is conceivable to be utilized to dissect this data, and this demonstrates acknowledgment of the alternative hypothesis. The R² value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable (Turkish products) can be explained by the independent variable (effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign) with a value of 0.611. In this case, 61.1% can be considered very large. In other words, 61.1% of the variance of the demand on Turkish products has been explored in the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign. This shows that other variables (38.9%) that effect Turkish products are due to random error. It is obvious from the study results that new media forms, particularly social networking sites and predominantly Facebook, have played a crucial role in running the online boycott campaign against Turkish products and its influence on Kurdish consumer demand in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2019 – 2020. According to the study results shown in Table 3, it can be concluded that 61.95% of the campaign was conducted through Facebook; 16.94% was through friends, and 10.77% was through websites. The study has found a significant positive statistical correlation between the demand on Turkish products and the effects of the boycott with a value of 0.782 with a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Correspondingly, the study highlights that more than 61.95% of the participants used Facebook to participate in the campaign. The results shown in Table 7 indicate that there is a significant positive statistical correlation between the Turkish products and the effects of the Facebook Boycott Campaign with a value of 0.782 and with a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. According to the study results, the Kurdish Facebook Boycott Campaign was a nationalist movement among Kurdish youth in Iraqi Kurdistan, due to the Turkish attack on Northern Syria (Rojava), hence, this boycott campaign is a form of political engagement like other social movements in the frame of political consumerism.

5. Conclusion

Consumer boycotts “often reflect a concern for the general good” (Yuksel, 2013). They can influence public welfare and have detrimental effects on financial performance. Hence, they provide an important tool for consumer empowerment in their fight against practices deemed unethical or unjust. The objective of this study was to highlight the motivations behind boycotting Turkish products in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2019 and 2020. The study determined that the main cause of the Boycott Campaign of Turkish products in Iraqi Kurdistan was due to the national and political movements of Turkey against Syrian Kurds in northern Syria. The study also showed that Facebook has been the main means used for empowering the Iraqi Kurds to fight against practices believed to be unethical or unjust.

Limitations of the study

The primary limitation of this research was the sample size of the study. The research community was young Kurdish consumers who used Facebook to participate in the boycott campaign against Turkish products, as a result the researchers relied on random sampling. Likewise, existing literature regarding this topic is still lacking therefore, the literature review for this study was one of the challenges the researchers encountered.

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