Understanding the Motivations Influencing Ecological Boycott Participation: An Exploratory Study in Viet Nam

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Abstract: Over the past years, the world has witnessed the growth of ecological boycotts and its impact is increasing leading to the need to better understand this field. Following this movement, Viet Nam, located in Southeast Asia has also swiftly been paying attention to ecological concerns, which have resulted in a variety of ecological boycotts in recent years. While motivations for economic, religious, social, and political boycotts have previously been investigated, the motivations for participation in ecological boycotts have not yet been considered appropriately. This study highlights that a means-end chain (MEC) theory provides an influential method which helps reveal the motives that drive consumers to participate in the ecological boycott in Viet Nam. Processing several in-depth interviews of 60 Vietnamese boycotters and performing MEC analysis, results have shown five major motivations for participation in ecological boycotts, comprising environmentally sustainable consciousness, health consciousness, self-enhancement, meaning in life, and security. The findings are expected to contribute towards both academic aspects (additional understanding related to ecological boycott) and practical aspects (providing valid knowledge for organizers of boycotts and targeted companies to evaluate the ecological boycott and determine factors that can be modified).

Keywords: motivation; ecological boycott; means-end chain; laddering technique.

1. Introduction

It has been proven that the behaviors in the consumption process of individuals may have negative social and ecological consequences in significant long-term effects. This, therefore, would raise the responsibility amongst consumers to consume more cognitively and, in turn, they show more desire to engage in boycott campaigns that target companies that society indicates to be irresponsible. A consumer boycott is defined as an effort to reduce the purchase decision of consumers from a targeted provider in order to achieve certain objectives [1].

Previous studies related to boycotting [2–4] suggest that there are several types of boycotts, including the most widespread classification of Cruz’s [5], based on Friedman’s [4] boycott types. Boycotts are classified according to consumer motivations and can be classified in five types: economic, religious, minority, ecological, social, and relational boycott.

While several studies [3,6,7] explore motivations for economic, religious, social, and political boycotts, the motivations for ecological boycott participation requires further investigation. There is a lack of research on the motivation to participate in ecological boycotts in view of increasing consumers’ participation in the boycott by the increase of environmentally-sensitive consumers [8,9]. Other types of boycotts and their motives have been discussed in various ways, however, they have limitations in that...
they cannot adequately explain the tendency to participate in ecological boycotts. Each type of boycott occurs according to a specific motive and thus, the characteristics of boycotting are also different. For example, a consumers’ tendency to engage in boycotting on political and social issues is determined by three factors: customer perceptions, sensitivity to social norms, and cost of boycotting [3,10]. However, there is no explanation for the tendency of these motives to participate in ecological boycotts. Likewise, the motives of ethnocentrism (political boycotts) and religious (religious boycotts) are also less relevant in the context of ecological boycotts. In fact, each boycott type has different motivations, each with its own characteristics.

Moreover, when consumers participate in boycotts, they are driven by two types of motives: instrumental and non-instrumental [4]. An instrumental motivation aims to pressure the target to change a disputed policy [11,12]. In contrast, a non-instrumental motivation is a more generalized form of objection to communicate consumer dissatisfaction towards the actions of their target [4]. According to Friedman [4], consumers will be actuated by these two motivations when they take part in a boycott campaign.

However, going back to boycott motivation-related studies [3,13], the majority of these boycott motivations only concentrates on the instrumental dimension whereby consumers weigh the perceived costs and benefits of participating in a boycott. In reality, the range of motivations to participate in a consumer boycott seems to be more complex than this. The motivation to participate or not to participate in boycotting cannot merely be seen as an effort to gain collective benefits or avoid personal costs—instrumental motivation—but also being influenced by individual emotional elements—non-instrumental motivations [4,14].

Therefore, exploring the role of non-instrumental motivation in consumer boycotting motivation shows that boycotting is a way for consumers to emotionally express themselves [15], and this motivation is also a strong factor of customer engagement in boycott behaviors [10]. Consumers identify boycotting as moral self-actualization, or as a pursuit to express themselves emotionally [16]. In addition, when consumers decide to participate in boycotts with emotional motivations, the costs of boycotting are not affected [17].

The results of these studies showed the gaps in researching the boycott motivation as follows. Firstly, although the motivation for other types of boycott has been put under discussion by researchers, the research regarding motives for ecological boycotting participation seems to be ignored. Secondly, the study of boycott motivation was conducted by either the instrumental dimension [11,13,18] or non-instrumental dimension [16,17,19], rather than focusing on the multiple dimensions of motivation. In this study, therefore, we are proposing two major objectives: (1) to explain the psychological process of consumers in an ecological boycott; and (2) to indicate the multiple dimensions of the motivation of this process.

To achieve these objectives, the current study is required for the use of qualitative methods. Likewise, qualitative methods were selected in previous research to explore the customers’ motivations for engaging in boycotts. However, the majority of those were investigated in an online environment. For example, Kozinets and Handelman’s [16] netnographic study suggested that the act of boycotting was a complex emotional expression of individuality. Also, in the netnography study conducted by Braunsberger and Buckler [17], over half of the research participants stated that they were moved to join in the boycott in order to express their anger at the boycott target. In the study of Makarem and Jae [14], consumer boycotts are explored based on the instrumental and non-instrumental classification of boycott motivations by using content analysis of Twitter feeds. By analyzing a sample of 1422 tweets, the results show that even though consumer boycott engagement is particularly motivated by instrumental motives, higher emotional intensity was found in non-instrumental motivations.

In contrast, by using an in-depth interview method, the current study will focus on applying the Means–End theory and laddering technique that enables a hierarchical link between constructs to be explored and recorded inductively, thereby effectuating an understanding of ecological boycott behavior through an expression of valued outcomes that are personally meaningful. It can give
valuable insights by stimulating consumers to reflect on their participating motives in boycott behavior. This is not only concerning from an academic point of view but can also be considerable information for companies to explain consumer behavior and serve their market better. In addition, consumer boycott organizers can use this information to engage consumers better with their campaigns.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Boycott Motivation

Similar to the goals of consumer boycotts, platformed from the expectations of the boycotters, two types of boycott motivations were divided: instrumental and non-instrumental motivation [4]. Instrumental motivations represent tactics to impact and improve the disapproving behavior of companies and want to change their behaviors. Non-instrumental motivations, on the other hand, serve as expressions of emotions, such as anger or frustration at the actions of the companies without any prospects of improvement [20].

2.1.1. Instrumental Motivation

When individuals are stimulated to participate in boycotts, by instrumental motivation, their objectives are notably stated or clearly presented [11,12]. The boycott behavior is used as a tactic to make an impact on the change in the policies and actions of the target companies [4,18,19], e.g., by requiring the firm to reduce prices or to get involved in union contracts [4]. Instrumentally-motivated boycott messages can also be aimed at signaling, to other consumers, the need to boycott or informing them of appropriate behavior [11]. Instrumentally-motivated boycotters often have high cognitive efficacy [3]. They strongly believe that boycotts are forceful and that they can create a significant difference in the outcomes based on their actions, by influencing change in the actions of other consumers or the practices of the target company [18].

Numerous researchers [3,11] examined the effect of perceived participation of others on boycott participation and found that the perceived size of participation has a significant positive impact on participation in a boycott. Moreover, research [3,13,21] also found that a person’s motivation to join a boycott is influenced by his or her perceptions of the likelihood of success (such as pro-boycott message frames that demonstrate the likelihood of boycott success), perceived efficacy (the belief that one can contribute greatly to the accomplishment of the collective goal); and the costs associated with boycotting (such as the preference for the boycotted products and availability of substitute products).

Perceived egregiousness is another factor that influences participation in a boycott [18,21]. The greater the perceived egregiousness of the target firm’s misconduct, the greater the participation in a boycott. This may be related to the egregious act which causes the negative effect to individuals, either directly (damaging their health from a polluting firm) or indirectly (feeling anger with a firm abusing child labor) [18]. Klein et al. [11] found that perceived egregiousness significantly predicted the intention to participate in a boycott and negatively influenced the target firm’s brand image.

2.1.2. Non-Instrumental Motivation

While consumers who have instrumental motives have clearly stated practical goals concentrated on adjusting the policies or actions of the boycott goal, non-instrumentally motivated boycotters engage in boycott actions to express their dissatisfaction with the boycott target’s unjustified actions [12]. Vague statements of goals are characteristics of non-instrumental boycott campaigns, including expressive boycotts [4], where the consumers concentrate on generally opposing the boycott target’s action, venting their disappointment with these actions [4], and adopting boycotts as a tool for self-realization and self-expression [16,19]. Consumers were driven to participate in boycott behaviors by non-instrumental motivations based on psychological utility gains or losses. By venting their grievances, consumers can lower their negative psychological states which result in experiencing relief.
When driven by non-instrumental motivations, consumer decisions to boycott are independent of the will to call upon others to participate in the boycott campaigns [11].

To increase the psychological stimulation of participating in boycott movements, John and Klein [18] had conceptualized several non-instrumental motivations. One form is expressive motivations, where individuals participate in boycott behaviors to express or vent the anger, outrage or displeasure upon the acts of the boycott target [4,22]. Self-enhancement motivation [11,23] is considered as another form where individuals raise their self-esteem by participating in a boycott campaign in addition to a moral obligation or a moral superior mindset. Self-enhancement motivations can also direct consumers to participate in boycotts as this would avoid the feeling of discomfort or guilt resulting from being involved in marketing deals with companies deemed unethical [18]. They are based on internal rewards and the responses to social pressures when individuals intend to build a positive image [11]. Non-instrumental boycott motivations can further be displayed in a consumers’ desire to punish the target company by attending a boycott campaign against its products/services or by hoping for its downfall [2,17].

2.2. Ecological Boycott Motivations

The lack of ecological boycott motivation research is unfortunate by reason of the existing claims in the literature that a consumer’s participation in boycotting will increase in the future [4,10], partly due to the growth of ecologically-conscious consumers. The first emersion of ecologically-conscious consumers was witnessed around the late 1960s, as a reaction to the appearance of worrying signs raising concerns in the systematic mistreatment of the environment [24]. In the 21st century, the ecological sensitivity of consumers has skyrocketed and reflects increasing public concern to halt [25]. The stronger environmental preferences consumers have, the more easily they tend to participate in ecological boycotts [26].

Since ecological boycotts have swiftly grown in recent years, we came up with the following question: “Why do customers participate in the ecological boycott? Is the aim solely for environmental protection?” Several studies have examined the motivations for other types of boycott, however, the customers’ likelihood of participating in ecological boycotts cannot be easily explained. Thus, it is urgent to clarify the major reason that consumers engage in ecological boycotts [9,15] as the motivations have not yet been explored.

There are many definitions of motivation in different corresponding contexts, however, ecological boycott motivation has not yet been defined precisely. Several viewpoints will be discussed to have a comprehensive perspective on the concept of motivation. First of all, motivation in an organization is defined as the compound forces starting and assisting to keep a person on track [27]. In a different viewpoint, it is argued that motivation is no more than reasons people come up for initiating and functioning voluntary behavior [28]. Notably, the actual meaning of motivation has not had an apparent consensus. However, in general, motivation is a force that encourages the individual’s willingness to perform in a certain way and this desire dynamically changes over time.

Meanwhile, ecological boycott occur when consumers perceive that a company is acting in a harmful or abusive way towards the environment. Moreover, as previously stated, there are two types of boycott motivations, including instrumental motivation (i.e., to impact and improve the disapproving behavior of companies) and non-instrumental motivation (i.e., to express emotions at the actions of the companies without any prospects of improvement) [4]. Therefore, in the current study, ecological boycott motivation was conceptualized as a “force that moves the individual’s willingness to refuse to buy or consume products from a company that harms the ecological environment, aiming to express displeasure and improve the company’s behavior”.

2.3. Means-End Chain Theory

Reynolds and Gutman [29] proposed the major idea of means-end chain (MEC) theory that consumers would decide to purchase and consume a specific product based on the belief that product’
specific attributes (as the means) will lead them to obtain the desired values (as the end) that this product supposed to bring as a result. This theory allows the associations and the correlations between specific attributes and their different consequences through both consumption and personal values.

In the context of boycotts, various consequences would be suggested through participating in the boycott and consumers’ personal values; MEC analysis can, thus, be used to explore the cognitive correlations between boycott attributes, different consequences elicited through boycott participation, and a consumer’s personal values. The underlying assumption is that such a hierarchical frame is illustrative for the different goals and motives underlying consumers’ boycott decision-making [30,31]. This considers that consumer behavior is affected by the pursuit of different goals. An advantage of the MEC approach is, therefore, that it considers motives at different hierarchical levels, thereby differentiating between lower-order functional and psychosocial motives, and higher-order motives involving several of the former [32]. This would allow researchers to deeply understand the uncovered motives in the consumers’ boycott decision making.

The MEC analysis includes a four-step series as Figure 1: analyzing the interview content and encodes of identified factors; quantifying of existing linkages between elements, forming the implication matrix; development of a hierarchy value map; and, lastly, determining of dominant perceptual orientations [29,33].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1: Analyzing Content</th>
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The first step was proceeded by dividing rough data from the interviews into a representation of attribute concepts, consequences, and values. This was completed by scanning, identifying the sections of the interviews that best represented for the means-end theory.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 2: Constructing the Implication Matrix</th>
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</table>
In the second stage of the analysis, the implication matrix construction symbolizes the frequency of each element upon another, likewise, element precedes another on a ladder.

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<tr>
<th>Step 3: Generating Hierarchical Value Map</th>
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The results of laddering studies are usually presented through a hierarchical tree diagram called Hierarchical Value map (HVM). The HVM summarizes the most significant attribute-consequence-value chains derived from the laddering study. The nodes displayed on the map stand for the most crucial values (conceptual meanings)/attributes/consequences and lines, which represent the interconnections among the concepts.

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<tr>
<th>Step 4: Determining Dominant Perceptual Orientations</th>
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To determine which of these chains are dominant, regarding the relations of its base (A) → its top (V), to better understand of which contributed largely to the outcomes, the total number of relations available in each possible sequence of the map needs to be calculated.

Figure 1. Means-end chain analysis.
2.4. Laddering Technique

The most ordinarily used technique to evolve information within the MEC method is the laddering technique [29,34,35]. This method has been applied to operationalize MEC theory related to its ability to elicit hierarchical structures of Attribute-Consequence-Value (A-C-V) in the sequential form [29,34,35]. Phillips and Reynolds [34] have argued that some foundational assumptions are required to obtain hierarchy meanings from ladders created from respondents’ interviews. First of all, preferences and meaningful choices help generate the attributes. Next, respondents are required to think deeply prior to responding to the issue of “Providing the reasons made it important to you?” After that, entire ladders are obtained by collecting respondent responses including of attributes (A), values (V), and consequences (C). It is essential to assure that interviewers obtain A, V, Cs in a given ladder and that n levels of abstraction are omitted or out of sequence. The final assumption is that a concept code should be conducted that accurately reflect the level of meaning involved.

3. Methods

3.1. Sampling

Reynolds and Gutman [29] argue that a pool of 50–60 respondents would suggest the opportunity to address the research issues by evaluating a variety of different answers during the establishment of the hierarchical value map. Accordingly, we selected 60 Vietnamese consumers as the participants in this study. In fact, the snowball technique was chosen to select respondents for practical reasons. The respondents are selected and classified on two critical characteristics, namely (1) a boycotter in the ecological boycott, and (2) above 20 years old. These two characteristics are used with the aim of ensuring that the respondents are completely explained of the topic that the interviewers address during interview sections. The snowball sampling was executed as follows: two consumers, who the examiner already knew and corresponded to these two characteristics mentioned above, were selected to examine and interviews were conducted with them. These two respondents then suggested three other consumers who also participated in an ecological boycott, to be interviewed. With this information provided, the researcher contacted these individuals, conducted interviews with them and, finally, also asked for recommendations of other suitable candidates, and so forth. The demographic characteristics of the selected sample are described in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of ecological boycotts that boycotter participated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1–3</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Four or more</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td></td>
<td>Education level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Vocational high school diploma</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36–50</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2. Data Collection

Vietnam was selected as the research background for two major reasons. First of all, in recent years, Vietnam has witnessed many ecological boycott campaigns (i.e., Vedan company, Formosa company) occurred in a long period of time and attracted many participants. Secondly, Vietnamese consumers are increasingly raising awareness in ecological issues, for example, they are willing to spend more to purchase products from companies committed to environmental protection and, vice versa, they would boycott those companies that cause harm to the environment. Therefore, the results would be more practical and with a high level of accuracy when conducting the research in Vietnam, where many
consumers have already participated in several ecological boycotts and are highly conscious of the ecological issue.

The laddering interviews were performed over the last two months of 2017. In order to ensure comfortability for each respondent, the location of the interviews was decided accordingly to the individual's desire in Vietnam (at home, in the office, at a coffee shop, or in the mall).

Using a laddering technique, respondents attended interview sessions individually, around 30 min or one hour, approximately. Each respondent was interviewed by a trained researcher. After collecting all the demographical data, the researcher started to have an in-depth interview with each respondent, this section would collect the relevant motivations which they had in mind when participating in an ecological boycott. Next, follow-up questions are prepared with the aim to understand specific attributes and why they are considered to be important. Respondents were notified there are no wrong or right answers. The interviewer also notified that, for the purpose of the research, it is vital for the respondents to provide simplified ideas or feelings that can be utilized for result interpretation. The series of questions were given up to the point that the respondent could possibly reveal a practical value or could no longer give any further information [36]. By the end of the interview, a souvenir costing $10 USD was given for each respondent for her/his commitment to this study.

4. Results

4.1. Content Analysis

In analyzing the large number of feedbacks to the triadic assorting and laddering tasks, the first step was to develop a careful content analysis for all evoked concepts. Based on the results of the laddering interviews, a content analysis was performed in order to develop the set of attributes, consequences, and values; second, we have placed together with the words that are synonymous, like their meaning, or identical. Then, we have attained at a summative level, a list of attributes, consequences, and values. The coding of data was completed entirely by hand and was proceeded by three coders. The manual coding allowed the researcher to analyze the data in the language of the respondents. Each response was systematically examined. Responses collected from participants were identified as constructs (e.g., attribute, consequence, personal value) and coded. The frequency of constructs elicited by respondents was recorded and counted. The content analysis results comprised extraction of nine attributes (see Table 2), thirteen consequences (see Table 3), and five values (see Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A01</td>
<td>Environment Concern</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>An ecological boycott expresses concern for the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A02</td>
<td>Boycott Message</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>An ecological boycott communicates a profound message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A03</td>
<td>Attract a Large Number of Participants</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>An ecological boycott calls for many participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A04</td>
<td>Punish the Targeted Company</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>An ecological boycott against the company which harmful to the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A05</td>
<td>Ease of Participation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>An ecological boycott is easy to join.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A06</td>
<td>Benefit to Society</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>An ecological boycott provides benefits to society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A07</td>
<td>No negative consequence</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>An ecological boycott does not cause harmful consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A08</td>
<td>The Credibility of the Leader</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>An ecological boycott is held by a reputable leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A09</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>An ecological boycott provides a challenging experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C01</td>
<td>Diminish Feelings of Guilt</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Boycotters would feel guilty if they buy products from the targeted company, and want to avoid the feeling of guilt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C02</td>
<td>Moral Obligation</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Boycotters feel they have a responsibility and moral obligation to commit and 'do their bit'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C03</td>
<td>Feel good</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Boycotters seek personal and emotional wellbeing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C04</td>
<td>Express Emotion</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Boycotters feel frustrated and angry because the targeted company is the damaging environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C05</td>
<td>Protect Environment</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Boycotters strive for preserving the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C06</td>
<td>Social Pressure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Boycotters want to do what others expect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C07</td>
<td>Perceived Success</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Boycotters feel a sense of achievement by completing a desirable task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C08</td>
<td>The desire for Social Change</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Boycotters want to change society in a more positive way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C09</td>
<td>Make a Contribution</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Boycotters want to have a positive impact on society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10</td>
<td>Safety Surroundings</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Boycotters want to live in a safe environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C11</td>
<td>Make a Difference</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Boycotters act as an ambassador of ecological issues in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C12</td>
<td>Avoid Health Problem</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Boycotters want to prevent problems that affect their health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C13</td>
<td>Social Recognition</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Boycotters want respect from others and care about the image they address to them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. The values coding of ecological boycott motivation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V01</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Boycotters look for individual and their families' safety and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V02</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Boycotters ultimately seek to live a healthy live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V03</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Boycotters want to maintain a good environment for future generations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V04</td>
<td>Meaning in Life</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Boycotters want to make their life become more meaningful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V05</td>
<td>Self-enhancement</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Boycotters want to make their image better and obtain social approval.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. Implication Matrix

Following content analysis, an implication matrix was developed to demonstrate the total interconnections within each pair of discovered concepts. Input for the summary of implication matrix is all interview data collected from the laddering procedure. The rows and columns illustrated the links between attribute-consequence-value, and the table reveals the correlations between variables (as shown in Table 5).

Table 5. Implication matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C01</th>
<th>C02</th>
<th>C03</th>
<th>C04</th>
<th>C05</th>
<th>C06</th>
<th>C07</th>
<th>C08</th>
<th>C09</th>
<th>C10</th>
<th>C11</th>
<th>V01</th>
<th>V02</th>
<th>V03</th>
<th>V04</th>
<th>V05</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C01</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>A02</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>A03</td>
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4.3. Hierarchy Value Map of Ecological Boycott Motivations

The implication matrix, based on the selection a minimum number of relations to warranty a connection, was then used to conduct a directed graph that emphasized the basis for diagrammatically representing the cognitive structure called the hierarchical value map (HVM). The HVM is a tree-like...
network, a synthetic diagram of a cognitive structure that contains three hierarchical levels—values, attributes, consequences—and their linkages.

When examining the cut-off level, a typical cut-off value was selected as a sample to decide which kinds of relationships should be displayed on the map. Based on Grunert et al.’s [37] argument, a cut-off point should be between 3 and 5 corresponding to a sample of 50 to 60 participants. In the meantime, Reynolds et al. [38] suggested 5% of participants are frequently considered as a cut-off. Thus, in the HVM, any link referring to equal to or greater than three would be included (5% × 60 subjects = 3). The links which the total number of associations less than three times are not displayed in the HVM. Figure 2 presented the summary HVM which shows the most common concepts and linkages across subjects.

![Figure 2](image)

Figure 2. The HVM of ecological boycott motivation.

As shown in Figure 2, five important linkage paths of ecological boycott motivation and some other sub-paths are performed above. To demonstrate the strength of the relationship between factors, the thicker the line, the more times the relation was referred by the respondents. As a result, the key MECs was performed by these thicker lines. Additionally, five key MECs emerged from the data analysis and gave deep insights into the Vietnamese consumers’ motivation for the ecological boycott. The following section will explain these paths mentioned above.

4.4. Dominant Perceptual Orientations

4.4.1. Punish the Targeted Company (A04)–Express Emotion (C04)–Diminish Feelings of Guilt (C01)–Self-Enhancement (V05)

The first path, displayed in the figure, focuses on boycotters’ desire for justice to punish the target company. Participants take action against the targeted company to punish it by boycotting its products/services. Through this punishing, boycotters can express their emotions. The results
revealed that boycotters not only expressed a desire to participate in boycott activities as a means of reflecting their ethical beliefs and values, but they also described the emotive aspects. In some cases, the boycotters indicated the motivational role of negative emotions in influencing their boycott choices. Many participants stated that they tended to participate boycotts because of feelings of disgust. Others might participate in a boycott simply to express the feeling of anger towards the egregious behavior of the targeted company. Therefore, boycotters would feel guilty if they did not participate in the boycott and want to do that in order to avoid this feeling resulting from engaging in marketing transactions with the company. It leads to the intrinsic value that could be gained in self-enhancement. Self-enhancement motivations can also motivate boycotters to participate in boycotts to make their image better.

4.4.2. Environment Concern (A01)–Protect the Environment (C05)–Moral Obligation (C02)–Sustainability (V03)

Environmental concern appears to be a significant attribute for boycotters. These boycotters are individuals willing to use their time and money to make an effort to express their concern and responsibility for the environment. They have some self-cognition of the ecological significance associated with certain products or services, and a willingness to reduce those impacts through their purchasing decisions. They think that environmental concerning is very important because they are inhabitants of this planet and actively support the protection of the planet in different ways. Therefore, they usually organized boycott campaigns for the environmentally unfriendly company. They think it is their responsibility. Boycotters believe that they are taking moral responsibility to stay away from the boycotted products. Through the ecological boycotts, environmental sustainability is also formed when boycotters are more likely to resist brands due to their tremendous hazards on ecological sustainability. The ultimate core value that boycotter wants to achieve is environmental sustainability so that they can enjoy their lifestyle on the planet for as long as possible.

4.4.3. The benefit to Society (A06)–Make a Contribution (C09)–Meaning in Life (V04)

Some of the boycotters think that boycott is useful to society. They think that doing so leads to support for other companies for engaging in environmental protection. This motive currently gains higher importance, typically in situations where boycotters feel they contribute to society’s development. It is what boycotters do matters to society. Obviously, the major purpose of the ecological boycott is to improve the environment and to enhance the quality of life. Meanwhile, meaning plays a crucial role that formed one’s purpose, by its nature, individually meaningful, and the chase of one’s purpose is thought to lead to greater meaning. Thus, when boycotters achieve this goal, they will feel more meaning in life. It is also considered to be important for enhancing life’s meaning when consumers satisfy their need for the things they are interested in.

4.4.4. No Negative Consequences (A07)–Safety Surroundings (C10)–Security (V01)

One of the specific characteristics of boycott that respondents refer to is no adverse consequences. The boycotts usually occur in peace, and thus it avoids taking risks and has no tendency to violent behaviors. Thus, boycotters consider this as one of the reasons that motivate them to be a part of the ecological boycott as human desire to stay in a secured surrounding for themselves, for their family, and society. Furthermore, they would like to be ensured to avoid the risk that can be harmful to their family, reduce damages to the ecological environment and social stability. Boycotters always value safety, primarily, thus ecological boycotts comprising these interests may attract people to join in.

4.4.5. Environment Concern (A01)–Avoid Health Problem (C12)–Health (V02)

In addition to the associated consequence related to protecting the environment, environmental concerns are granted in the health-related context. Environmental pollutions do not only associate directly with human social life but also indirectly have certain impacts on their well-being in general.
In the meanwhile, people tend to get involved in the ecological boycotts since they believe their health would be secured from the external impact of the social environment. This tie to individual health is one of the most crucial values which humans always reach for. Health consciousness is recognized as one’s ecological and self-consciousness of lifestyles, such as health information consultation seeking, food consumption, concerns for the natural environment, and cognition of prescription drugs. They will try to prevent these issues from becoming severe and keep oneself healthy for a long life.

5. Discussion

5.1. Summary of Findings

The results of the current study indicated five domains comprising the ecological boycott motivation (see Figure 3). There are motives for expressing a clear goal when boycotters engage in ecological boycotts, such as they want to protect the environment (environmentally sustainable consciousness), to ensure their health (health consciousness), or their desire to live in a complete secured environment (security). These motivations are considered instrumental motivations as they are clearly stated and for the sake of altering the company’s behavior toward the environment [11,12]. In the meantime, the remaining two motives (self-enhancement and meaning in life) are considered as non-instrumental motivations since boycotters engage in acts of boycotting based on psychological utility benefit or loss. Self-enhancement motivation is formed where individuals increase self-esteem by participating in a boycott [11]. In addition, when participating in the ecological boycott, customers feel the sense of contribution to the society’s successful boycott, thus resulting in the feeling that his/her life will be more meaningful. In summary, the five motivations indicated from the current study constitute an ecological boycott motivation from a multi-dimensional perspective, including instrumental and non-instrumental motivations.

![Figure 3. Five domains comprising an ecological boycott motivation.](image-url)

5.1.1. Environmentally Sustainable Consciousness

Environmentally sustainable consciousness is defined as a maintenance of the practices and elements that contribute to the environment quality on a long-term basis [39]. The other studies defined it as intentional behaviors that aim to reduce the negative impacts of individual action on the natural [40] or actions that people engage in for seeking the conservation of the environment [41].

Consumers act directly against firms by boycotting, with the specific aim of protecting the environment because they believe that their behavior might contribute a certain benefit for the
environment [42,43]. For example, they refuse to purchase products considered to cause harms to the environment [44,45], deny using products provided by socially irresponsible businesses [46], stop purchasing products from brands that do not respond to protect the environment [47,48], and resist consumers boycott organizations that negatively impact the environment [49]. Hence, for considering a behavior as ecological boycott needs to be driven by environmentally sustainable consciousness motivation.

5.1.2. Health Consciousness

A concept reflecting the willingness of a person by taking action for his/her own health is defined as health consciousness [49]. Individuals with health conscious are aware of and concern of their health. By being self-conscious of their wellness and engaging in healthy behaviors, they can maintain the healthy life and improve at the same time their quality of life [50,51]. Relevant studies [49,52] have indicated the relationship between boycott and health consciousness. These studies suggest that if individuals have a high level of health consciousness, they are prone to boycott products or brands harming society’s health. In the case of an ecological boycott, the environmental pollution caused by companies may have certain effects on social health. Health consciousness, thus, is one of the main customers’ motivations to participate in this boycott campaign.

5.1.3. Self-Enhancement

Allport [53] argues that the central target of human existence is self-enhancement. Self-enhancement describes the type of motivation that functions to make individuals feel good about themselves, simultaneously to maintain their self-esteem [11]. Relevant studies [2,3,17] referring to self-enhancement motivations have indicated certain factors of this motivation, consisting of enhancing personal worth and obtaining social recognition. First, self-enhancement can possibly stimulate the participation of consumers in boycott campaigns to avoid the guilty or uncomfortable feeling caused from engaging in marketing deals with companies considered unethical; thus, these consumers will feel good about themselves and increase their value [18]. Second, by associating themselves with a boycott cause, the consumers may view themselves as morally-concerned or engaged and, therefore, socially boost their image. Moreover, once a boycott campaign succeeds, the consumer would feel a certain sense of achievement and enhance their personal image in the eyes of others.

In the current study, many participants identified the role of self-enhancement as a source of value experienced during their ecological boycott encounters. On the other hand, prior studies also ensured this motivation factor on the boycott in general. This strengthens the notion that self-enhancement has a crucial role to play in influencing and motivating ecological boycott choice.

5.1.4. Meaning in Life

Reker and Wong [54] suggest that meaning in life includes the sense of fulfillment, which may be acquired from the coherence and pursuing one’s most important goals. Although there is not any previous research clarifying the direct relationship between meaning in life and ecological boycott, there are pieces of evidence illustrated that meaning in life is one of key motivation which leads the consumers to engage in ecological actions. Mayer and Frantz [55] state that individuals who desire to experience a higher sense of meaning in life will participate in the protection of the ecological environment. In fact, an empirical study of Nisbet et al. [56] has stated that there is a relationship between preserving the environment and meaning in life. Individuals feel that their lives become more meaningful when they perform ecological behaviors [57].

For some participants, the meaning would be the central concept for their lives and they found this value when participating in the ecological boycott. Furthermore, in the interview, several respondents believe that if participating in the ecological boycott, they could possibly feel the sense of achievement by conducting to the social development, which results in the feeling of a meaningful life. Therefore,
meaning in life is considered as a customer motivation factor help stimulate participation in the ecological boycott.

5.1.5. Security

Schwartz [58] also support this perspective when he suggested security value include the safety, harmony, and social stability; and the stability of relationships and the self. Although security motivation in boycotting has not yet been discovered, the result of the prior studies demonstrated the existence of a relationship between security value and ecological behavior. Some studies concentrate on personal values acting as predictors of consumer ecological concern, such as security, enjoyment, and self-gratification [59,60]. Meanwhile, other studies have linked ecological behavior to personal values [61]. The results found that the security value has been linked to ecological consumption. Additionally, two crucial findings were obtained referring to the relationships between values and consumers’ willingness to spend more on green products. As expected, it was recorded that the crucial principles guiding social lives for ecologically are collectivism and security [62]. Since an ecological boycott is another form of ecological behavior, the security value was considered to be the important guiding principles when boycotting.

5.2. Contribution for Theory and Application

5.2.1. Theoretical Contribution

It is noted that previous studies addressing the topics relevant to the concept of an ecological boycott motivation have several theoretical limitations. Without a solid theoretical foundation, therefore, the discussion of findings and results related to the subject of an ecological motivation can be confusing. Taking these points into consideration, the current study is devoted to theory development for ecological boycott motivation in several significant ways.

First, the current study suggests the first specific concept of what is an ecological boycott motivation. A review of the literature and qualitative interview shows that the ecological boycott motivation construct was conceptualized as “force that moves the individual’ willingness to refuse to buy or consume products from a company that harms the ecological environment, aims to express displeasure, and improve the company’s behavior”. This conceptualization was considered through multi-dimensional perspective, containing both aspects of instrumental and non-instrumental dimensions, which bring an in-depth knowledge of ecological boycott motivation.

Second, along with the growth of advanced technology and global economic, the rising alarm of environmental issues draw concerns in a society which leads to the increasing number of ecological boycott campaign through years. However, there are no relevant studies regarding the reasons for the desire of the consumer to participate in the ecological boycott. Hence, the results of the current study would possibly fill this gap by examining motivations in the ecological boycott.

The fundamental contribution of this research is the explanation that associations within means-end levels of knowledge—values, consequences, and attributes—contribute to the demonstration of ecological boycott motivation. By concentrating on individual boycotters’ thoughts, the consequences, attributes, and values related to the boycott behavior were successfully identified. Additionally, despite the different levels of abstraction, the results have uncovered the motivations underlying consumer behavior relevant to ecological boycott. By analyzing data collected from several laddering interviews with boycotters, we identified five underlying motivational patterns. Along with the basic motives comprising health consciousness and environmentally sustainable consciousness; other factors including the security, meaning in life, self-enhancement motives also count for consumers’ acceptance and participation of the ecological boycott campaign.
5.2.2. Practical Contribution

Recognizing the motivations for ecological boycott participation will bring strategic benefits to ecological boycott campaign organizers. The number of participants is considered a crucial role in the boycott campaign’s success. The greater the figure is the better opportunity for a successful campaign. Therefore, calling for a large number of participants is one of the issues that most considered. To gain this objective, the boycott organizers first need to have an in-depth understanding of “Why would customers join the ecological boycott?” in other words, “What impact may affect their decision to be a part of a boycott campaign?” Identifying the right motives will help aim the right target and deliver highly persuasive messages that engage customers against targeted companies, attract a large number of attendees, and force the company to hold on appropriate behaviors toward the environment.

Additionally, the results of the current study would provide some guiding principles for handling boycott issues. Typically, when an ecological boycott occurs, companies often quickly deal with crises through various communication strategies. The most important issue, however, is that strategists must investigate the reasons why customers engage in boycotts. This is indeed crucial as it will assist the strategist with a better understanding of how customers want them to respond, and then devise an appropriate course to deal with the crisis.

5.3. Limitation and Future Research

Even though this study expands our knowledge of ecological boycotts, the limitations must also be considered as well as the implications for future research. Firstly, five domains for an ecological boycott motivation were identified based on the means–end chain theory method. Among the motivations proposed in the current study, the self-enhancement aspect is acknowledged to have several limitations since it has been investigated in previous research related to boycott. As a reason for this issue, self-enhancement was considered as one of the non-insumental motivations which had the greatest influence over the boycott in general and the ecological boycott in particular. However, the four remaining boycott motivations retain their novelty as these have not yet been identified in previous research related to ecological boycotts. While this qualitative research approach is deemed appropriate for gaining insights into areas, no empirical evidence exists. Therefore, future studies should implement quantitative research methods to further validate the motivations for ecological boycotts.

Secondly, the current study did not investigate the differences between the perceptions of respondents that represented differing demographic characteristics, such as age groups, gender, or educational level. However, it would be useful to examine the motivations of ecological boycotts using a more diverse sample of individuals representing a range in ages, gender, and education levels. It is highly likely that the motivations which one group finds valuable may differ from those of another, so it is recommended that future studies investigate further the differences between these groups for the motivations behind ecological boycotts.

Thirdly, the current study relies on data obtained from active boycotters, as this group of respondents is obviously well-suited for investigating usage motives. However, it is better to use a larger sample comprising people that boycott. Furthermore, the current study used only Vietnamese consumers. The results may be culture-specific and applications of the results to other cultures may, therefore, be limited. Finding other countries and cultures should be a crucial concentration for future research efforts in order to make comparisons and obtain a more holistic overview.


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