Using the Expectancy Theory Framework to Explain the Motivation to Participate in a Consumer Boycott

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ABSTRACT

Previous research on consumer boycotts has focused extensively on a target firm’s misconduct and the fierce reaction from consumer boycott organizers (Klein, Smith, & John, 2004). Little research, however, has been directed toward explaining the factors influencing consumer boycott participation, boycott success, and the process or the mechanism by which consumers decide whether or not to participate in a boycott. The present paper sheds light on these ignored areas and explains the psychological process of the consumer motivation to participate in a boycott using the expectancy theory framework. We argue that participation in a boycott is a function of the consumer’s psychological/cognitive processes that involve the pre-assessment of their decision to participate in a boycott which depends on the consumer’s perceived expectancy that boycott participants’ collective effort will lead to the achievement of boycott objectives as well as the consumer’s perceived instrumentality that the achievement of boycott objectives will lead to valued outcomes.

Keywords: Motivation to participate in boycotts, Expectancy theory, Boycott success and the Process of boycott participation