

From Moral Outrage to Market Loss: The Economic Impact of Israeli State Violence through Consumer Boycotts

M T R Zubair

International Security Analyst, GRAL.

Abstract:

This study examines public perceptions of the effectiveness of consumer boycott strategies targeting Israeli products in Türkiye and situates these perceptions within a broader political–economic analysis of Israel’s accelerating market losses. Using face-to-face survey data collected from 1,830 residents of Sakarya Province, the study identifies a clear and overwhelming public preference for coordinated, multi-channel collective action over passive, symbolic, or purely individual responses, reflecting a sophisticated understanding of how economic pressure operates through scale, synchronization, and persistence. Grounded in theories of political consumerism, reputational economics, and conflict-related market risk, the analysis argues that sustained Israeli state violence against Palestinians—widely documented by international human rights organizations as systematic and severe—has generated material economic consequences that extend beyond geopolitics into everyday markets. These consequences include declining consumer trust, contraction of demand across both political and non-political product categories, withdrawal by retailers and distributors seeking to mitigate reputational risk, and increased uncertainty affecting investment, exports, and commercial planning. The Turkish case illustrates how moral outrage, when operationalized through organized consumer networks, is transformed into an informal yet potent system of economic sanctions, demonstrating that legitimacy erosion in a globalized economy increasingly functions as a direct market liability with measurable economic effects.

Keywords: Political Consumerism, Boycotts, Reputational Risk, Israel, Palestinians, Consumer Behavior, Moral Economy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Markets do not operate in moral isolation; they are embedded within social expectations, political narratives, and normative judgments that increasingly shape economic behavior in the contemporary global economy. Over the past two decades, the expansion of real-time media coverage, the diffusion of digital communication technologies, and the institutionalization of human rights discourse have fundamentally altered the relationship between political violence and market outcomes. Acts of state violence that were once geographically contained and politically mediated now circulate instantaneously across borders, producing reputational effects that reverberate through consumer markets, investment decisions, and supply chains. In this environment, the economic consequences of conflict are no longer confined to direct destruction or formal sanctions but increasingly emerge through decentralized, bottom-up processes of consumer withdrawal and collective economic pressure.

Israel’s sustained military operations against Palestinians—particularly in Gaza—constitute one of the most visible and persistent cases in which state violence has become entangled with global market dynamics. Extensive documentation by international organizations, journalists, and civil society actors has framed these operations as involving disproportionate force, collective punishment, and systemic violations of international humanitarian law. While legal and diplomatic responses to these allegations

have often been fragmented or stalled, public exposure to graphic imagery, civilian suffering, and prolonged siege conditions has generated widespread moral outrage. This outrage has not remained confined to discursive condemnation; rather, it has increasingly been translated into organized economic behavior, most notably through consumer boycotts targeting Israeli products, firms, and affiliated brands. The rise of boycott movements directed at Israeli goods reflects a broader transformation in how political responsibility is attributed within globalized markets. Consumers are no longer perceived merely as end-users of neutral commodities but as participants in transnational economic systems whose purchasing decisions can either sustain or disrupt contested political arrangements. In this sense, the boycott of Israeli products is not solely an expression of solidarity with Palestinians but a practical mechanism through which consumers seek to withdraw consent from economic relationships perceived to be implicated in violence. Such behavior aligns with a growing body of research on political consumerism, which emphasizes that market participation has become a central arena for political expression in contexts where formal avenues of accountability are limited or ineffective.

Crucially, contemporary boycott movements differ from earlier forms of consumer protest in both scale and sophistication. Digital platforms enable rapid identification of targeted products, dissemination of standardized narratives, and synchronization of action across dispersed populations. At the same time, offline practices—such as in-store warnings, demonstrations, and community organizing—anchor digital mobilization in physical spaces where transactions occur. The interaction between these modalities produces cumulative effects that extend beyond immediate sales losses, influencing retailer behavior, distributor strategies, and investor perceptions. As a result, the economic impact of boycotts is increasingly mediated through intermediaries who seek to minimize reputational and financial risk rather than through direct confrontation with producers alone.

Within this broader global context, Türkiye represents a particularly instructive case for examining the relationship between political violence, consumer activism, and market consequences. Public solidarity with Palestinians in Türkiye is historically deep, shaped by shared religious, cultural, and political narratives as well as by sustained engagement from civil society organizations. This solidarity has been reinforced in recent years by high levels of media consumption, extensive use of social networking platforms, and dense interpersonal communication networks that facilitate rapid mobilization. Together, these factors create fertile conditions for the emergence of coordinated consumer action capable of producing measurable economic effects.

Türkiye's economic structure further amplifies the relevance of consumer sentiment. As a large, diversified market with extensive retail networks and significant import activity, shifts in consumer behavior can quickly influence distributor decisions and shelf space allocation. Retailers operating in such an environment are acutely sensitive to reputational risk, particularly when products become associated with morally charged controversies. Consequently, even partial or localized boycotts may generate cascading effects as intermediaries adjust procurement strategies to avoid conflict with consumers. This sensitivity renders Türkiye an ideal setting for exploring how public perceptions of boycott effectiveness align with underlying economic mechanisms.

Despite the visibility of boycott movements targeting Israeli products, empirical research examining how ordinary consumers evaluate the effectiveness of different boycott strategies remains limited. Much of the existing literature focuses either on normative debates surrounding boycotts or on macro-level assessments of their economic impact. Less attention has been paid to the perceptions that guide participation itself—namely, how publics understand which forms of action are likely to produce meaningful economic pressure. These perceptions matter because they shape strategic choices, influence participation rates, and ultimately condition the durability and scope of boycott campaigns.

This study addresses that gap by empirically examining public perceptions in Türkiye regarding the effectiveness of various boycott strategies targeting Israeli products. Drawing on face-to-face survey data collected from 1,830 residents of Sakarya Province, the research identifies clear preferences for coordinated, multi-channel approaches over passive or individualized responses. By situating these perceptions within a political–economic framework, the study connects micro-level evaluations of effectiveness to macro-level patterns of market disruption and reputational decline experienced by Israeli products and businesses.

The choice of Sakarya Province as a research site is analytically significant. Sakarya combines urban and semi-urban characteristics, hosts a socio-economically diverse population, and reflects broader national trends in media consumption and political engagement. As such, it offers a microcosm through which to observe how global political narratives are localized and translated into everyday economic behavior. The use of face-to-face interviews further enhances the reliability of the data, capturing nuanced judgments that might be obscured in purely online surveys.

Beyond its empirical contribution, this paper advances a broader argument about the political economy of state violence in an era of heightened moral visibility. It contends that Israeli products and businesses are increasingly losing markets not solely because of formal policy decisions or isolated acts of protest, but because sustained violence has eroded the legitimacy upon which market participation depends. In contemporary consumer cultures, legitimacy functions as a form of economic capital: once depleted, it triggers demand contraction, distributor withdrawal, and investor caution. These processes unfold incrementally but cumulatively, producing structural market disadvantages that are difficult to reverse through conventional economic or diplomatic measures.

By examining how publics perceive and prioritize different boycott strategies, the study sheds light on the mechanisms through which moral condemnation is transformed into economic pressure. It demonstrates that consumers do not merely react emotionally to images of violence but actively assess how to maximize economic impact through coordination, persistence, and visibility. In doing so, they engage in a form of decentralized economic governance that operates alongside—and sometimes in opposition to—formal institutions.

The paper thus contributes to several interrelated bodies of scholarship, including political consumerism, moral economy, reputational risk, and conflict political economy. It offers empirical evidence that public perceptions of effectiveness align closely with strategies known to disrupt markets, thereby reinforcing the argument that consumer activism constitutes a meaningful source of economic constraint in contemporary conflicts. Moreover, by linking a localized Turkish case to global patterns of market decline faced by Israeli products, the study illustrates how collective consumer action transcends national boundaries, transforming political violence into transnational economic consequence.

In sum, this research situates consumer boycotts not as marginal or symbolic gestures, but as structurally significant processes through which markets register moral judgment. In an interconnected global economy, the economic costs of state violence increasingly materialize through the everyday decisions of consumers who, acting collectively, reshape demand, reconfigure supply chains, and impose informal sanctions. Understanding these dynamics is essential for comprehending why Israeli products and businesses are experiencing accelerating market losses across diverse regions and why such losses are likely to persist as long as the underlying sources of moral condemnation remain unresolved.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Political Consumerism and the Moral Economy

Political consumerism refers to the deliberate use of market choices to express political, ethical, or moral positions (Micheletti, 2003). Unlike traditional protest, political consumerism embeds dissent within everyday economic behavior, making it persistent and difficult to suppress. Within the moral economy framework, consumers act not merely as rational utility maximizers but as moral agents responding to perceived injustice (Thompson, 1971).

Reputational Risk and Economic Contagion

Reputational economics emphasizes that firms and national economies depend on legitimacy and trust (Fombrun, 1996). When a state is associated with systematic violence, reputational damage may spread across its corporate ecosystem, a phenomenon known as reputational contagion. In such cases, even firms with no direct involvement in military activities experience declining demand, retailer resistance, and investor caution.

Conflict, Sanctions, and Informal Economic Pressure

While formal sanctions are imposed by states or international bodies, consumer boycotts function as informal sanctions. Research shows that these bottom-up pressures can be economically significant, particularly when coordinated across borders and sustained over time (Pape, 1997; Barry & Kleinberg, 2015).

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Analytical Orientation

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive survey design to systematically examine public perceptions regarding the effectiveness of different boycott strategies targeting Israeli products. A descriptive design is particularly appropriate for the study's objectives because it enables the identification of dominant attitudes, preferences, and evaluative judgments within a defined population at a specific point in time. Rather than testing causal hypotheses or modeling behavioral outcomes directly, the research focuses on mapping how respondents conceptualize effectiveness itself—an interpretive dimension that shapes participation, coordination, and the strategic direction of collective action.

The analytical orientation of the study is grounded in political consumerism and reputational economics. From this perspective, perceptions of effectiveness are not treated as ancillary opinions but as constitutive elements of collective economic behavior. How publics judge the relative efficacy of boycott strategies influences which forms of action are normalized, sustained, and scaled. Accordingly, the methodology is designed to capture comparative evaluations across multiple strategic modalities—individual, informational, digital, physical, and fully coordinated—allowing for a nuanced assessment of how respondents prioritize mechanisms of economic pressure.

Study Site and Contextual Rationale

The research was conducted in Sakarya Province, Türkiye, a socio-economically and demographically heterogeneous region that offers a compelling microcosm of broader national dynamics. Sakarya includes urban centers, semi-urban districts, and peri-urban communities, enabling the inclusion of respondents with varied income levels, educational backgrounds, and occupational statuses. The province is also characterized by high levels of media penetration and digital connectivity, conditions that are particularly relevant for examining perceptions of digitally coordinated boycott strategies.

From a substantive standpoint, Sakarya is embedded within a national context marked by strong public engagement with the Palestinian issue and active civil society networks. These characteristics render the

province an analytically meaningful setting for observing how global political narratives concerning Israeli state violence are internalized and translated into everyday economic judgments. While the study does not claim statistical representativeness at the national level, the diversity of the sample enhances the external relevance of the findings and supports cautious analytical generalization.

Sample Design and Participant Selection

The study sample consists of 1,830 adult residents of Sakarya Province. Participants were selected using a quota-based sampling approach designed to capture variation across key demographic and socio-economic dimensions, including age, gender, educational attainment, and employment status. This approach was chosen to ensure broad coverage of social groups without relying on probabilistic sampling mechanisms that are often difficult to implement in face-to-face field settings.

Eligibility criteria required respondents to be at least 18 years of age and permanent residents of the province. No exclusion criteria were applied based on political affiliation, religious orientation, or prior boycott participation, as the study aimed to capture perceptions across the full spectrum of public opinion. The resulting sample reflects a heterogeneous population whose aggregated responses provide insight into prevailing evaluative trends rather than the attitudes of a narrowly defined activist subgroup.

The relatively large sample size enhances the robustness of descriptive inferences and reduces the likelihood that observed patterns are driven by idiosyncratic responses. Moreover, the size of the dataset allows for stable percentage estimates across multiple response categories, which is particularly important when comparing the perceived effectiveness of closely related strategies.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through face-to-face interviews conducted by trained surveyors over a defined fieldwork period. The decision to employ in-person data collection was driven by both methodological and substantive considerations. Methodologically, face-to-face interviews tend to yield higher response rates and lower item non-response than self-administered surveys, particularly on topics that may require clarification or contextual explanation. Substantively, in-person interaction allows respondents to engage more fully with complex evaluative questions, thereby improving the quality of the data.

Surveyors underwent standardized training prior to fieldwork to ensure consistency in questionnaire administration, neutral presentation of response options, and ethical engagement with participants. Training emphasized the importance of avoiding leading prompts, maintaining respondent anonymity, and providing clarification only when requested. Interviews were conducted in Turkish, the respondents' native language, to minimize comprehension barriers and enhance the accuracy of responses.

The face-to-face format also facilitated immediate clarification of boycott strategies presented in the questionnaire. Given that the strategies ranged from individual action to highly coordinated collective efforts, the opportunity to explain terminology and examples reduced the risk of misinterpretation. This is particularly important in perception-based research, where subtle differences in understanding can significantly influence responses.

Survey Instrument and Measures

The survey instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire developed to capture respondents' evaluations of boycott strategy effectiveness. The core measure presented participants with seven predefined boycott strategies, each reflecting a distinct mode of action commonly observed in contemporary boycott movements. These strategies ranged from purely individual participation to fully coordinated, multi-channel collective efforts.

Respondents were asked to indicate which single strategy they believed would produce the most effective results in terms of economic impact. This forced-choice format was intentionally employed to elicit prioritization rather than general approval. By requiring respondents to select the most effective option, the instrument captures relative judgments and reveals which mechanisms are perceived as decisive under conditions of strategic constraint.

The strategies were formulated to encompass key dimensions of boycott activity identified in the literature: moral individualism, information dissemination, digital synchronization, physical mobilization, and comprehensive coordination. Care was taken to describe each strategy in clear, non-technical language to ensure accessibility across educational levels. The wording avoided evaluative cues that might bias responses toward socially desirable options.

In addition to the core strategy question, the questionnaire included basic demographic items used to characterize the sample. However, the primary analytical focus of the study remains on aggregate perceptions of effectiveness rather than subgroup comparisons, in keeping with the descriptive aims of the research.

Data Quality and Reliability Considerations

Several measures were implemented to enhance data quality and reliability. The use of trained interviewers and standardized administration procedures reduced interviewer effects and variability in question delivery. The face-to-face format minimized missing data by allowing surveyors to ensure that all relevant items were addressed before concluding each interview.

To further ensure reliability, pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted prior to full-scale data collection. Feedback from the pilot informed minor adjustments to wording and sequencing, improving clarity without altering substantive content. These steps increased confidence that respondents interpreted the boycott strategies as intended and that their selections reflected genuine evaluative judgments.

While the study relies on self-reported perceptions rather than observed behavior, this is consistent with its conceptual focus. Perceptions of effectiveness are analytically significant in their own right, as they influence participation decisions and strategic alignment within collective action campaigns. The methodology is therefore well-suited to the research objectives.

Data Analysis Strategy

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to identify dominant perceptions and overall trends. Frequency distributions and percentage calculations were employed to compare the relative endorsement of each boycott strategy. Given the study's emphasis on mapping evaluative hierarchies rather than testing hypotheses, descriptive statistics provide an appropriate and transparent analytical approach.

All valid responses were included in the analysis. No weighting procedures were applied, as the objective was to present an unadjusted snapshot of perceptions within the sampled population. The clarity of the resulting distributions allows for straightforward interpretation and facilitates integration with the study's theoretical framework.

The descriptive findings serve as the empirical foundation for the subsequent discussion and analytical sections. By linking observed preference patterns to theories of political consumerism, reputational risk, and informal economic sanctions, the analysis moves beyond enumeration to interpret the broader economic significance of public perceptions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were integral to the research design and implementation. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and their right to decline or withdraw at any time. No personally identifiable information was collected, and responses were recorded anonymously. These procedures ensured compliance with ethical standards for social research and helped foster an environment in which respondents could express their views freely.

Methodological Scope and Limitations

As a descriptive, cross-sectional study, the methodology is designed to capture perceptions at a specific moment rather than to establish causal relationships or track changes over time. While this limits the ability to infer behavioral outcomes directly, it does not diminish the analytical value of the findings. Perceptions of effectiveness play a crucial role in shaping collective action trajectories and are therefore a legitimate and important object of study.

Future research could build on this methodological foundation by incorporating longitudinal designs, experimental manipulations, or behavioral data to further explore the relationship between perceived effectiveness and actual market outcomes. Nonetheless, the present methodology provides a rigorous and contextually grounded basis for understanding how publics evaluate boycott strategies in relation to political violence and economic pressure.

4. RESULTS

Survey on Most Effective Approaches

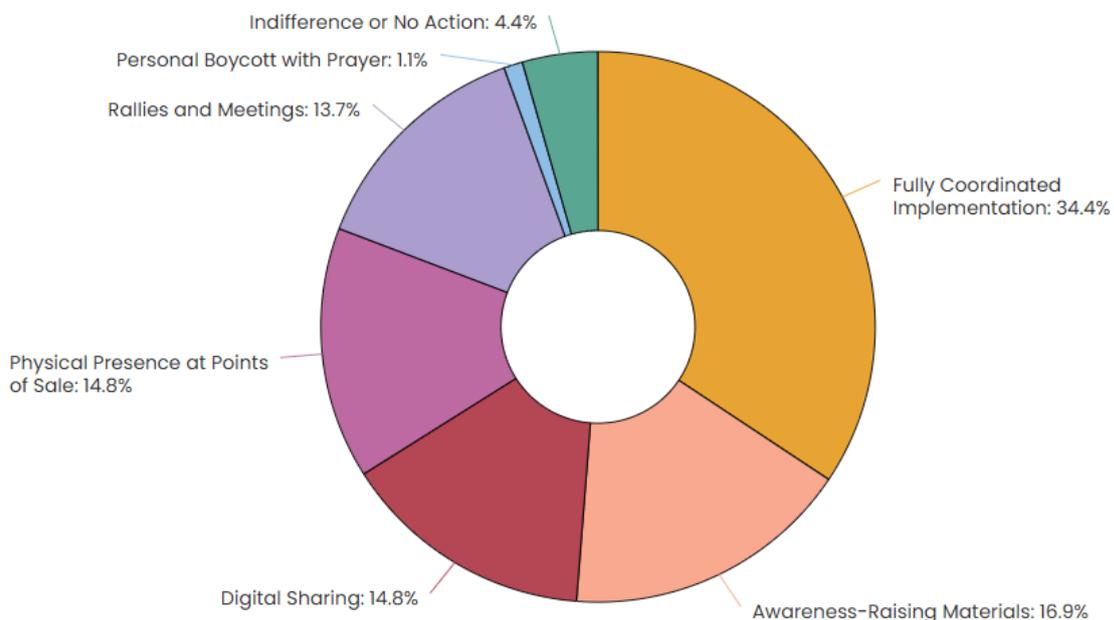


Figure (1): Pie chart representation of the results

Descriptive Findings

Out of 1,830 respondents:

- **34.4% (n = 630)** identified a fully coordinated and organized implementation of all strategies as the most effective approach.

- **16.9% (n = 310)** favored awareness-raising through printed materials and product information dissemination.
- **14.8% (n = 270)** supported coordinated daily digital sharing via WhatsApp.
- **14.8% (n = 270)** endorsed maintaining a physical presence at points of sale to warn consumers.
- **13.7% (n = 250)** viewed rallies, conferences, and community meetings as most effective.
- **1.1% (n = 20)** believed personal boycott participation combined solely with prayer was sufficient.
- **4.4% (n = 80)** reported indifference or preference for no action.

The distribution reveals a decisive preference for collective, visible, and coordinated strategies, and a strong rejection of passive responses.

5. DISCUSSION

Collective Coordination as Perceived Economic Leverage

The prominence of comprehensive coordination as the most effective boycott strategy reflects a sophisticated public understanding of how economic pressure is generated in contemporary markets. Respondents' preferences indicate an implicit grasp of three interdependent conditions for market impact: scale, synchronization, and persistence. Scale ensures that consumer withdrawal reaches a magnitude sufficient to be noticed by retailers, distributors, and producers. Synchronization ensures that this withdrawal is not temporally fragmented, thereby preventing firms from absorbing losses through short-term adjustments or promotional countermeasures. Persistence ensures that the pressure is sustained long enough to alter expectations among market actors, transforming boycott activity from a temporary disturbance into a structural risk.

From an economic perspective, isolated ethical consumers exert minimal influence on aggregate demand. Individual refusal to purchase a product rarely produces discernible effects on sales volumes or pricing structures. However, when consumers operate within coordinated networks—whether formal or informal—their actions generate nonlinear effects. Retailers begin to experience clustered demand shocks rather than random fluctuations. Distributors encounter rising inventory risks as products remain unsold for longer periods. Producers face uncertainty regarding future demand, which complicates planning, investment, and export strategies. The survey results suggest that respondents are acutely aware of these dynamics, even if they do not articulate them in technical terms.

Coordination also functions as a mechanism of social normalization. When boycott participation is organized and visible, abstention from Israeli products becomes a socially reinforced behavior rather than a purely individual moral choice. Organized campaigns disseminate standardized information about which products to avoid, why avoidance is justified, and how participation signals collective responsibility. Over time, this normalization transforms consumption of boycotted goods into a socially stigmatized act. In such contexts, consumers may avoid Israeli products not only out of personal conviction but also to avoid social disapproval. This amplifies economic pressure by extending participation beyond ideologically committed individuals to more passive or risk-averse consumers.



Figure (2): Massive Anti-Israel demonstration being held in Istanbul, Turkey, which was a part of boycott Israeli products

Importantly, coordinated action also reshapes expectations within the supply chain. Retailers and distributors do not require universal consumer participation to adjust behavior; they respond to perceived trends and risks. Once coordination signals that boycott activity is widespread, organized, and enduring, market intermediaries may preemptively reduce exposure to Israeli products to protect brand reputation and avoid controversy. Thus, coordination magnifies impact not merely by reducing demand but by altering the strategic calculations of non-consumer actors who play a decisive role in market access.

Digital Mobilization and Physical Enforcement

The near-equal valuation of digital coordination and physical presence reflects a nuanced public understanding of boycott mechanics in the digital age. Respondents recognize that effective economic pressure emerges from the interaction between information diffusion and behavioral enforcement. Digital platforms serve as the primary infrastructure for identification, coordination, and narrative framing. Physical engagement, in contrast, operationalizes this information at the point of purchase, where market transactions actually occur.

Digital mobilization enables rapid dissemination of product lists, brand affiliations, and corporate linkages that would otherwise remain opaque to consumers. Through messaging applications and social media platforms, information travels across social networks at high velocity and low cost. This process reduces information asymmetry, empowering consumers to align purchasing behavior with political and ethical judgments. The survey findings suggest that respondents view this informational function as indispensable: without shared knowledge, collective action cannot be synchronized, and boycott participation remains fragmented.

Beyond information, digital platforms also facilitate temporal coordination. Daily or recurring message sharing sustains attention and prevents issue fatigue. Repetition reinforces salience, ensuring that boycott considerations remain cognitively accessible during routine shopping decisions. Moreover, digital coordination enables real-time adaptation. As companies rebrand, repackage, or obscure origins, digital networks rapidly update consumers, closing avenues for evasion. This adaptability increases the perceived credibility and resilience of boycott campaigns, further discouraging retailers from maintaining contested products.

Physical presence at points of sale complements digital mobilization by converting abstract awareness into immediate behavioral outcomes. When activists maintain visibility near retail locations, they intervene at the precise moment when consumption decisions are made. Such engagement reduces the gap between moral intention and actual behavior, a gap that often undermines ethical consumption. The presence of boycott advocates can prompt consumers who were previously unaware—or ambivalent—to reconsider purchases in real time, producing instant demand effects.

Physical engagement also serves a signaling function directed at retailers rather than consumers alone. Visible in-store warnings or demonstrations communicate that the sale of Israeli products carries reputational costs. Retailers, particularly those operating in competitive or brand-sensitive environments, are acutely responsive to such signals. Even modest physical actions can therefore generate disproportionate effects by influencing stocking decisions, shelf placement, and promotional priorities. The interaction between digital and physical strategies produces a reinforcing feedback loop. Digital mobilization prepares consumers cognitively and morally, while physical engagement activates this preparation behaviorally. Together, these mechanisms accelerate sales decline by reducing both the willingness and the opportunity to purchase boycotted goods. The survey respondents' balanced valuation of these strategies indicates a collective awareness that neither domain alone is sufficient; effectiveness emerges from their integration.

Marginalization of Symbolic or Passive Action

The negligible support for prayer-only or inactive approaches reveals a significant shift in how moral solidarity is conceptualized. While symbolic expressions of concern may retain personal or spiritual significance, respondents overwhelmingly reject them as effective tools for economic pressure. This rejection reflects an understanding that markets respond to material behavior—specifically, purchasing patterns—rather than moral sentiment expressed without accompanying action.

Symbolic actions, by their nature, do not disrupt market processes. They do not reduce demand, alter inventory turnover, or influence pricing. As such, they fail to generate feedback signals that compel firms or intermediaries to adjust behavior. The survey results suggest that respondents are cognizant of this limitation and increasingly view purely symbolic solidarity as insufficient in the face of large-scale violence and entrenched economic systems.



Figure (3): Boycott banner portraying Israeli/Jewish businesses and products

The marginalization of passive responses also indicates an evolution in political consciousness. Respondents appear to distinguish between personal moral absolutism and collective responsibility. Prayer or private condemnation may alleviate individual moral discomfort, but it does not impose costs on perceived perpetrators or beneficiaries of violence. In contrast, organized boycott participation externalizes moral judgment into the economic domain, where it becomes consequential.

This shift has broader implications for understanding contemporary activism. It suggests a declining tolerance for performative or low-cost expressions of solidarity that do not challenge existing power structures. Instead, respondents favor strategies that require sustained effort, coordination, and social exposure. Such strategies redistribute the costs of protest from symbolic expression to economic disruption, thereby increasing their potential impact.

Furthermore, the rejection of inactivity due to comfort or indifference underscores the moral framing of consumption itself. Choosing not to act is implicitly recognized as a form of complicity that allows existing market relations to persist unchanged. By contrast, active boycott participation is framed as a means of withdrawing consent from an economic system perceived to be entangled with violence. This moralization of consumption transforms everyday purchasing decisions into sites of political agency.

Taken together, the marginalization of symbolic and passive approaches reinforces the central finding of this study: effectiveness, in the public imagination, is inseparable from material consequence. Respondents do not merely seek to express disapproval; they seek to alter economic realities. In doing so, they reveal a collective understanding that legitimacy in modern markets is behaviorally enforced and that sustained, coordinated consumer action constitutes a powerful instrument for translating moral outrage into economic constraint.

6. ISRAELI STATE VIOLENCE ON PALESTINIANS AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

Consumer Withdrawal and Demand Contraction

The economic consequences of Israeli state violence are most immediately visible at the level of consumer behavior, where moral evaluation increasingly translates into systematic demand contraction. In contemporary markets, consumption is no longer treated solely as a private act governed by price and utility; it is increasingly interpreted as a public signal of ethical alignment. As extensive visual documentation, investigative reporting, and human rights assessments circulate globally, Israeli-origin goods become symbolically entangled with state actions in the minds of consumers. This entanglement is not limited to military-linked industries or defense-related firms; rather, it diffuses across the entire

national brand ecosystem, encompassing food products, pharmaceuticals, consumer electronics, tourism services, software subscriptions, and cultural exports.

Demand contraction in this context operates through multiple overlapping mechanisms. First, ethical refusal emerges among politically attentive consumers who consciously avoid Israeli products as an expression of moral condemnation. This segment, while not numerically dominant, plays a catalytic role by initiating conversations, sharing information, and normalizing avoidance behavior within social networks. Second, a broader group of consumers engages in precautionary avoidance. These individuals may not possess strong ideological commitments but prefer to minimize social friction or reputational discomfort by steering clear of contested products. In environments where boycott participation becomes visible and socially reinforced, purchasing Israeli goods carries perceived social costs that outweigh marginal utility gains.



Figure (4): Widely circulated poster identifying products subject to international boycott

Third, habitual consumption patterns are disrupted through information shocks. Many consumers are initially unaware of product origins or corporate linkages. Once exposed to curated lists, mobile applications, or viral digital content identifying Israeli affiliations, previously neutral purchasing routines are reassessed. Behavioral economics research suggests that such moments of reassessment often lead to default avoidance, particularly when alternative products are readily available. The result is not a dramatic collapse in demand overnight, but a sustained erosion of market share over time.

Crucially, demand contraction is magnified by its uneven distribution across time and space. Rather than declining uniformly, sales volatility increases. Retailers experience unpredictable fluctuations, with certain days, weeks, or regions exhibiting sharp drops correlated with protest activity, viral media events, or escalations in violence. Volatility itself functions as a deterrent, as firms and intermediaries value predictability even more than high average demand. In this sense, consumer withdrawal generates economic harm not only through reduced volumes but also through increased uncertainty.

Over the medium to long term, repeated episodes of demand contraction reshape brand perceptions. Israeli-origin labeling, once a neutral or even positive marker in some sectors associated with technological sophistication, becomes a liability. Firms attempt rebranding, origin obfuscation, or corporate restructuring to escape association, but these strategies incur costs and rarely succeed fully once reputational narratives solidify. The cumulative effect is a structural downward shift in demand curves across multiple sectors, signaling that consumer withdrawal has moved beyond episodic protest into a semi-permanent market condition.

Distributor and Retailer Behavior

While consumers initiate demand-side pressure, distributors and retailers determine whether that pressure is transmitted upstream. These intermediaries operate at the intersection of profit optimization, reputational management, and risk avoidance. In contexts of sustained boycott activity, Israeli products increasingly fail to meet the risk-adjusted return thresholds required for shelf space allocation.

Retailers face several compounding incentives to disengage. Declining sales volumes directly reduce profitability, particularly for goods with limited margins or high inventory costs. Slow-moving products tie up capital, increase storage expenses, and elevate spoilage or obsolescence risks. When such products also attract controversy, the opportunity cost of shelf space becomes especially salient. Retailers must choose between allocating space to contested goods with uncertain turnover or substituting alternatives that offer comparable margins without reputational exposure.

Reputational considerations further intensify this calculus. Modern retail brands are acutely sensitive to public perception, amplified by social media and real-time review systems. Visible boycotts, in-store protests, or activist monitoring transform the sale of Israeli products into a reputational hazard. Even absent direct confrontation, the anticipation of controversy influences decision-making. Retail managers often act preemptively, quietly reducing orders or discontinuing products to avoid becoming targets of public campaigns.

Distributors, operating upstream, respond to aggregated signals from multiple retailers. As orders decline or become erratic, distributors face higher logistical inefficiencies. Economies of scale erode, transportation costs per unit rise, and contractual commitments become harder to fulfill. In response, distributors may renegotiate terms, reduce geographic coverage, or exit relationships altogether. Importantly, these decisions are typically framed in commercial rather than political language, emphasizing performance metrics and risk management rather than moral judgment. This framing allows economic disengagement to proceed without formal declarations, making it less vulnerable to political backlash.

The withdrawal of distributors has cascading effects. Smaller retailers that rely on centralized distribution networks lose access to Israeli products even if they do not actively seek disengagement. Import channels narrow, lead times increase, and prices become less competitive due to reduced scale. These structural frictions further depress consumer demand, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of decline.

Retailer behavior also affects market visibility. Products that remain in circulation are often repositioned to less prominent shelf locations, excluded from promotions, or omitted from advertising materials. Reduced visibility diminishes impulse purchases and reinforces perceptions of marginality. Over time, consumers internalize the absence of Israeli products as a new normal, further entrenching demand contraction.

Investment and Macroeconomic Signals

Beyond consumer and intermediary behavior, the economic consequences of Israeli state violence manifest at the macroeconomic level through investment flows, risk pricing, and sectoral volatility. Financial markets are forward-looking systems that incorporate expectations about future stability, legitimacy, and growth. When a state becomes persistently associated with large-scale violence and international condemnation, these expectations adjust accordingly.

Foreign direct investment is particularly sensitive to reputational and political risk. Investors evaluate not only current profitability but also long-term operating environments. Sustained boycott movements signal potential future constraints, including reduced market access, regulatory scrutiny, and social resistance. Even in the absence of formal sanctions, informal economic pressure raises questions about the durability of revenue streams tied to Israeli firms or partnerships.

Risk perception translates into concrete financial adjustments. Insurance premiums for operations linked to Israel may rise due to heightened political risk assessments. Credit conditions may tighten as lenders demand higher risk premiums or shorter maturities. Equity valuations can suffer as analysts incorporate boycott-related uncertainties into growth projections. These effects are often subtle and distributed, but cumulatively they exert downward pressure on capital formation.

Sectoral impacts vary but are interconnected. Tourism is highly sensitive to reputational narratives and security perceptions. Images of violence deter visitors, while boycott calls discourage participation even among those unconcerned about personal safety. Technology sectors, often cited as insulated due to intangible products and global markets, are not immune. Talent mobility, collaborative research partnerships, and corporate branding all depend on perceived legitimacy. Consumer-facing technology firms, in particular, encounter resistance when products are framed as contributing to or benefiting from state violence.

Export-oriented industries face additional challenges. As distributors and retailers in foreign markets disengage, export volumes decline and market diversification becomes more difficult. Firms may attempt to pivot to alternative markets, but such transitions involve significant costs and are constrained by global information flows that limit geographic insulation. Moreover, currency volatility may increase as trade balances are affected, introducing macroeconomic instability.

Importantly, these macroeconomic signals interact with domestic economic dynamics. As external pressures mount, internal resource allocation may shift toward security expenditures and risk mitigation rather than productive investment. Opportunity costs rise, and long-term growth prospects may weaken. Thus, the economic consequences of state violence extend beyond immediate boycott effects, influencing structural development trajectories.

From Moral Condemnation to Economic Pressure

The transformation of moral condemnation into economic pressure represents the central analytical mechanism linking Israeli state violence to market outcomes. Moral outrage alone does not alter economic systems; it must be operationalized through coordinated behavior that generates material consequences. The Turkish case illustrates how this operationalization occurs through a decentralized yet coherent process.

First, moral narratives establish legitimacy for economic action. Public discourse frames boycott participation not as arbitrary hostility but as a proportional response to perceived injustice. This framing lowers psychological barriers to participation and redefines consumption choices as acts of civic

responsibility. Second, organizational infrastructures—formal and informal—translate narratives into actionable guidance. Product lists, digital campaigns, and community networks reduce coordination costs and enable synchronized behavior.

Third, repeated engagement produces institutional learning among both activists and market actors. Consumers become more adept at identifying affiliations, while firms learn that association with Israeli origin carries persistent risk. Over time, expectations adjust. Retailers anticipate boycotts, investors anticipate volatility, and firms anticipate resistance. At this stage, economic pressure no longer depends on continuous mobilization; it becomes embedded in routine decision-making.

When replicated across regions, this process generates transnational effects. Boycotts in one market reinforce perceptions in others, creating a feedback loop that amplifies reputational damage. Decentralization enhances resilience, as the absence of a single coordinating authority makes suppression difficult. Economic pressure thus emerges as an emergent property of distributed moral action rather than a centrally imposed sanction.

From a political–economic perspective, this form of pressure occupies a space between formal sanctions and symbolic protest. It lacks the legal codification of state-imposed measures but exceeds the expressive limits of conventional activism. Its power derives from alignment with market logics: firms respond not to moral arguments per se but to altered incentives and risks. When moral condemnation consistently reshapes these incentives, economic consequences follow.

In sum, Israeli state violence generates economic effects through a multi-layered process linking ethical judgment, consumer behavior, intermediary decision-making, and macroeconomic risk assessment. The resulting demand contraction, distributional withdrawal, and investment caution constitute a diffuse yet substantial constraint on economic performance. The Turkish case demonstrates that when moral outrage is translated into coordinated market behavior, it functions as an informal but effective economic sanction, reshaping markets in ways that are difficult to reverse.

7. IMPLICATIONS

Academic Implications

The findings of this study advance the literature on political consumerism, moral economy, and conflict political economy by offering a granular account of how perceptions of effectiveness map onto mechanisms of market disruption. Existing scholarship has long emphasized that ethical consumption operates as a form of political participation embedded in everyday life. However, much of this literature has treated consumer action as either individualized choice or symbolic expression. The present study pushes the field forward by empirically demonstrating that publics themselves increasingly conceptualize effectiveness in structural terms—namely, in relation to scale, coordination, and durability of impact across supply chains.

First, the results contribute to political consumerism theory by clarifying the transition from atomized ethical choice to networked collective action. Respondents overwhelmingly favored coordinated strategies that integrate information dissemination, digital synchronization, and physical presence. This preference indicates a public understanding that market outcomes are shaped less by isolated acts of refusal than by patterned behavior capable of generating systemic signals. In theoretical terms, this supports a shift from micro-level models of ethical consumption toward meso- and macro-level frameworks that account for social networks, institutional intermediaries, and expectation formation among firms and investors. Political consumerism, as revealed here, functions not merely as expressive politics but as an emergent form of informal regulation.

Second, the findings enrich moral economy scholarship by illustrating how moral judgments are operationalized into enforceable economic consequences. Classical formulations of the moral economy emphasized popular reactions to perceived injustice, often focusing on subsistence crises or price shocks. In contrast, this study shows how moral outrage in a globalized economy is translated into targeted demand withdrawal and reputational sanctioning. The respondents' rejection of passive or purely symbolic action underscores that moral legitimacy today is increasingly measured by material effects rather than intent alone. This reframing suggests that contemporary moral economies are less about moral consensus per se and more about the capacity to mobilize collective enforcement mechanisms within markets.

Third, the study contributes to conflict political economy by mapping a bottom-up pathway through which state violence generates externalized economic costs. Much of the conflict literature focuses on formal sanctions, military expenditures, or post-conflict reconstruction. By contrast, this research highlights how reputational damage stemming from sustained violence can trigger decentralized economic responses that operate independently of state policy. Consumer boycotts, as perceived by respondents, function as informal sanctions that bypass diplomatic deadlock and institutional inertia. This insight is particularly significant for understanding conflicts characterized by prolonged asymmetry and limited formal accountability mechanisms.

Fourth, the Turkish case offers a theoretically valuable illustration of how local public opinion interfaces with global market structures. While the data are geographically bounded, the mechanisms identified—digital coordination, reputational contagion, and retailer risk management—are transnational in nature. This suggests that the analytical relevance of the findings extends beyond Türkiye and invites comparative research across regions with varying media ecologies, political cultures, and economic ties to Israel. Future studies could build on this framework to examine how differences in state–society relations or consumer activism infrastructures condition the economic impact of political violence.

Finally, the study challenges the assumption that effectiveness perceptions are secondary or epiphenomenal. Instead, perceptions themselves appear to shape strategic behavior, reinforcing certain forms of activism while marginalizing others. By documenting these perceptions empirically, the research provides a missing link between normative theories of ethical consumption and observable market outcomes. In doing so, it establishes a foundation for integrating perception analysis into broader models of economic pressure and political change.

Policy Implications

The policy implications of this study are substantial, particularly for governments, international institutions, and regulatory bodies accustomed to treating consumer activism as peripheral to formal economic governance. The findings suggest that coordinated consumer boycotts should be understood as de facto indicators of legitimacy deficits that carry real economic consequences. Ignoring these signals risks systematic misinterpretation of market dynamics and underestimation of conflict-related economic exposure.

For states engaged in or associated with sustained violence, the results underscore that economic consequences need not be imposed externally through sanctions to materialize. Market actors increasingly internalize ethical risk as part of routine decision-making. Declining demand, distributor withdrawal, and reputational contagion represent endogenous market responses to perceived illegitimacy. Policymakers who focus narrowly on trade balances or formal diplomatic relations may therefore overlook emerging vulnerabilities rooted in public sentiment and consumer behavior.

For importing states and trade partners, the findings highlight the importance of incorporating consumer-driven risk into trade and investment assessments. Boycott movements alter the risk profile of specific goods and sectors, increasing volatility and uncertainty. Public agencies responsible for trade promotion, export credit guarantees, or investment facilitation should account for the possibility that association with contested products may provoke backlash, reputational spillovers, or sudden demand contraction. Failure to do so can result in misallocation of public resources and exposure to avoidable losses.

International institutions and multilateral organizations may also draw lessons from the study. Consumer boycotts function as informal accountability mechanisms in contexts where formal enforcement is weak or blocked. While such movements operate outside institutional frameworks, they convey information about global public opinion that may be relevant for human rights monitoring, conflict prevention, and early-warning systems. Recognizing consumer activism as a source of data—rather than dismissing it as noise—could enhance institutional responsiveness to emerging crises.

The findings further suggest that attempts to counteract boycotts through public relations alone are unlikely to succeed in the absence of substantive behavioral change. Reputational damage linked to state violence is not easily offset by branding or messaging, particularly when digital networks rapidly disseminate counter-narratives. Policymakers seeking to stabilize economic relations must therefore grapple with the underlying sources of moral condemnation rather than treating consumer activism as an irrational disturbance.

Finally, the Turkish case illustrates how domestic public opinion can constrain foreign economic engagement even in the absence of formal policy shifts. This has implications for diplomatic strategy: governments cannot assume that maintaining official trade relations will insulate markets from popular backlash. In democratic and semi-democratic contexts alike, consumer behavior may act as an informal veto on economic cooperation perceived as morally illegitimate. Policymakers who fail to anticipate this dynamic risk reputational and economic fallout that is difficult to reverse once entrenched.

Movement Strategy Implications

For advocacy movements, the findings provide an evidence-based foundation for strategic design and resource allocation. The clear preference for integrated, coordinated approaches validates the emphasis on building durable infrastructures of action rather than relying on episodic mobilization. Effectiveness, as perceived by respondents, is inseparable from organization, repetition, and visibility.

One key implication concerns the centrality of information architecture. Movements that invest in accurate, up-to-date identification of products, brands, and corporate linkages enhance their credibility and reduce participation costs for consumers. Digital platforms are not merely channels for expression but critical tools for coordination and enforcement. The respondents' valuation of daily, synchronized messaging underscores the importance of consistency and frequency in maintaining salience and preventing disengagement.

Another implication relates to the strategic role of physical presence. While digital mobilization expands reach, physical engagement at points of sale translates awareness into immediate economic effect. Movements that neglect this dimension risk limiting their impact to discursive spaces. Conversely, even modest physical actions can generate outsized influence by signaling risk to retailers and distributors. The findings suggest that effective movements understand this asymmetry and deploy resources accordingly. The rejection of purely symbolic or passive action carries further strategic lessons. Movements that prioritize low-cost expressions of solidarity without mechanisms for material impact may retain moral appeal but fail to achieve economic leverage. The respondents' preferences indicate an expectation that

activism should impose costs commensurate with the severity of the injustice being opposed. This expectation raises the bar for movement legitimacy and effectiveness alike.

Importantly, the study also highlights the need for sustainability. Short-lived campaigns may produce temporary attention but rarely alter market expectations. By contrast, coordinated efforts that persist over time reshape the risk calculus of firms and intermediaries. Movements that plan for longevity—through decentralized participation, routine action, and adaptive communication—are better positioned to convert moral outrage into structural economic pressure.

Finally, the findings caution against treating public support as static. Perceptions of effectiveness evolve in response to observed outcomes. Movements that demonstrate tangible impact reinforce participation, while those that fail to translate effort into results risk attrition. Continuous evaluation, feedback, and adaptation are therefore essential. By aligning strategy with empirically grounded perceptions of what works, advocacy movements can enhance both their internal cohesion and their external impact.

8. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the public overwhelmingly perceives coordinated, collective boycott strategies as the most effective means of exerting economic pressure. Situated within the broader context of Israeli state violence against Palestinians, these perceptions help explain the accelerating loss of markets faced by Israeli products and businesses. In the contemporary global economy, legitimacy functions as economic capital; when a state is persistently associated with mass violence, consumer-driven economic sanctions emerge organically and endure. The Turkish case illustrates how moral judgment, once operationalized through coordinated action, becomes a powerful force reshaping markets.

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