



A Study of Indian Consumer's Participation in Boycott and Cancel Culture: A Media Literacy and Ethical Perspective

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Abstract

Boycott and Cancel culture have empowered a new wave of digital consumer activism in the modern social media-constructed public sphere. In the Indian context, these campaigns and movements arise out of normative ethics, cultural concerns, political storytelling, and rapidly producible and distributable content on social media platforms. This research analyzes the Indian consumer's involvement in boycott and cancel culture in the context of media literacy, focusing on the critical evaluation of digital information and outrage in the social media narrative. With a descriptive research model, the research study relies on primary research using a structured questionnaire submitted among 105 Indian consumers, supported by secondary research from existing literature. Chi-square and Spearman's rank correlation techniques were applied statistically in the analysis of the correlation of social media influence, the subsequent reaction of the consumer, and the impact on the communication and marketing activities of the brand. The research results suggest that social media constitutes a critical platform in the spread of the boycott and cancel culture campaigns and remains unaffected by the demography of the Indian consumer, namely, the age and gender divide. Indian consumers boycott a brand majorly due to practices of unethically moral business, misleading advertisement, and politico-cultural disputes, largely due to emotionally constructed and unascertained digital contents of the social media narrative. The study also suggests that consumers act responsibly when they critically understand and evaluate the content as compared to people who lack the ability to evaluate, they act impulsively by immediately boycotting the brand. The study also proposes a critical need for media literacy, educational outreaches and critical digital ethics in the management of critical awareness and responsibility in the consumption of digital activism.

Keywords: Boycott and Cancel culture, Ethical Consumerism, Media literacy, Digital activism, social media

Introduction

In recent years, the concept of boycotting and cancel culture have become an important global phenomenon in reshaping consumer behavior and relationships between brand and consumer. Boycotts, traditionally seen as "organized collective refusals to purchase a particular good or service", have a long history of being used as a tool for social and political change. Cancel culture is a more recent development amplified by social media which operates at a faster pace, where individuals or communities cancel and withdraw support from brands, products or public figures that conflict with their values or beliefs. (Klein et al., 2004; Saldanha et al., 2022)

Throughout the globe, consumers worldwide increasingly used boycotts as channels for ethical consumption, social movements and political activism. Whether climate protest campaigns for sustainable choices or boycotting companies for human or diversity issues, consumer power now merges with social changes. The online sphere also contributed to accelerating the process by allowing individuals to collectively make an effect on company behaviors and public proceedings within fewer hours due to this there is an increasing need for media literacy. (Narayanan et al., 2025)

In India, cancel culture and boycott culture are shaped by numerous sociocultural sensitivities, religious

sentiments and political opinions. When it comes to films, commercials or brands, consumers frequently organize protests against films or commercials and brands that they feel are inappropriate from a cultural perspective and politically controversial. It is also vital to understand Indian consumers' involvement with boycott and cancel culture because it reveals the active process of consumer decision making through which a nation such as India integrates values, identity and digital connectivity. (Sahu & Gupta, 2024)

The paper tries to delve into the motivators from moral and emotional drivers through socio-political indicators that lead to such participation. It also tries to examine the consequences of all such practices for the businesses that undertake them within the nation, where the reputation and trust of consumers are determined not just by the product but also by what the brand stands for.

Research Objectives

Primary: - 1. To investigate the influence of social media platforms in advocating boycott movements in India.

Secondary: - 2. To understand how consumers react to social media in the wake of controversy.

3. To analyze the effects of boycotts on changes in brand communication actions.

4. To understand the strategic responses of India brands in the face of boycott or cancel campaigns.

5. To understand if and how consumers' mindset in cancel culture movements affect brand decision-making in marketing in India.

Significance Of Study

Helps businesses understand consumer's psychology behind boycotts and cancel culture.

Provides insight into the role of social media in shaping in shaping activism in consumers.

Assists marketers in designing culturally sensitive and reputation-safe campaigns.

Highlights the need for media literacy.

Future Scope Of Study

Can be expanded to compare Indian consumers with global consumers on boycott/cancel culture participation.

Future studies may explore the long-term impact of boycotts on brand trust and loyalty

Opportunity to analyse sector specific effects (e.g. - Fashion, FMCG, Entertainment)

Limitations Of The Study

Findings are based on a limited sample size and may not represent all Indian consumers.

Responses may carry social desirability bias, as participants may not openly admit their real motives.

The fast-changing nature of digital trends concludes that insights may become outdated quickly.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The growing prevalence of consumer boycotts and cancelled culture in India is a dynamic shift in the consumption-values-socio-political identity nexus. This literature review searches for existing academic literature to make sense of consumers' drivers, triggers, and socio-cultural determinants of behavioral participation in these activities.

1.Mady, K., et al. (2025).

This paper examines the effects of social media in increasing consumer involvement in boycotts with a special consideration to the role played by animosity, perceived behavioral control and consumer efficacy as mediators. As the study is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, it concludes that the role of social media in enhancing the attendance to boycotts is great in terms of reinforcing the beliefs of consumers that personal actions will lead to collective results.

These results indicate that resentment or hatred of a brand or company which is frequently induced and promoted using social media distribution is a decisive element that transforms passive online clients into active boycott supporters. The consumers who consider themselves as having the power to change the brand behavior will be more willing to convert their outrage into actual buying behavior. The study proves to be very pertinent to the study of the Indian consumer environment where social media sites like

Twitter and Instagram instantly gather social awareness against a brand.

2.Saldanha, N., Mulye, R., & Rahman, K. (2022).

This paper can analyze cancel culture through the prism of strategic marketing, proposing it that the outcome of the once social phenomenon has progressed into an important marketing threat that requires strategic corporate responses. The authors study the impact of cancellations that are being initiated by consumers in the digital age on brand strategy, communications, and reputation management.

The paper concludes that brands that do not actively embrace consumer values especially concerning ethics, diversity, and social responsibility are becoming an easy target of organized campaigns of cancellation. It also states that cancel culture is no crisis management problem but rather a strategic problem in the long term. The insights are particularly critical in markets where social values and cultural sensitivities form part of consumer identity, as is the case with companies that conduct business in such markets as India.

3.Demsar, V., Ferraro, C., Nguyen, J., & Sands, S. (2023).

The paper uses the institutional theory perspective to examine the dynamics of calls to brand cancellation, which offers a broader understanding of how markets are-reconfigured to bring back in line with the current institutional logics concerning political ideology, race, gender, sexuality, abuse, and corporate greed. There are four consecutive phases that the authors identify the process through which the cancellation campaigns are formed, and they include transgression evaluation, consumer mobilization, brand response, and market realignment.

The study draws attention to the realization that someone is not an act of consumer outrage but an organized action by institutional entrepreneurs who are usually consumers and social media communities that question the authenticity of the established brands. There are three popular constructive elements of cancellation: the mass shaming of offensive or offensive statements or actions by organized activist groups on social media, and trying to fully withdraw attention and support of a target brand or a social figure. This model applies directly to the Indian boycotts, as coordinated consumer movements on Twitter and Instagram often take brands to task on the issue of cultural and ethically unacceptable actions.

4.Hill Cummings, K., et al. (2024).

This paper examines the phenomenon of cancel culture as a consumer behavior and comes to the conclusion that the emotions of anger, moral outrage, disgust, are the strongest emotion drivers that elicit cancellation behavior, with Gen Z as one of the most active users. The study shows that cancelled brands not only suffer immediate reputational harm but also perception problems in the long term despite correctional measures. The peer-influence factor and social media's

role as a booster of cancellation reactions are of special concern to the Indian context, where digital activism by young people often ensures that a brand scandal is far more notorious than the one that initiated it.

5.Sen, S. (2024).

The paper systematically examines the motivations of consumer boycotts finding that the best motivators of boycotts are ethics, social equity and corporate accountability. The paper concludes that Indian consumers have become more driven by value-based consumption as opposed to the quality of the product. This immediately confirms the presence result given in the current study that the main reasons why the Indian consumers would boycott a brand are unethical business conduct and advertising misconduct.

6.Klein, J. G., Smith, N. C., & John, A. (2004).

This paper suggests that there are four main motivators of participation in boycotts, these motivations being: a want to change something, self-enhancement, counterarguments that prevent boycotting, and personal cost of not utilizing a brand. Notably, moral outrage is not the most effective stimulus to achieve long-lasting boycotts, which, in turn, is discovered by the authors (most of the consumers who dislike a brand still avoid boycotts). That is why even in a situation when the Indian society has been warmed up about the indisputable impact of social media, the real long-lasting transformation in the purchasing patterns of a considerable number of consumers is minimal.

7.Sahu, M. K., & Gupta, T. C. (2024).

The present study examines the role of social media systems as dominant instruments of organizing and maintaining political and consumer activism in India. The results also indicate that campaigns on hashtags using Twitter and Instagram represent the most efficient forms of finding a large number of consumers within a short period of time, sometimes within hours reaching national levels. The research also notes that these movements are often spread faster through the influence networks of influencers and emotional amplification of the controversy which may at times override the facts themselves.

8.Narayanan, S., et al. (2025)

This is a systematic review of 404 studies exploring consumer activism and identifies factors like human rights abuses, environmental degradation, politics and corporate negligence as the main stimuli that prompts consumer activism. The researchers conclude that consumer activism remains a potent force able to bring changes to the society, making a brand re-adjust its strategies according to the changing values of consumers. These findings give a solid theoretical basis to the reason behind the growing use of boycotting and cancel culture as instruments of corporate responsibility by Indian consumers.

Gaps in Literature

While global studies on cancel culture are on the rise,

Indian-specific empirical studies are few. The primary gaps are:

Quantitative research on how long exactly customers do boycott.

Understanding of demographic variation (urban and rural, Gen Z compared to other generations).

How does social media and fake news impact public opinion.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

A. Type of Research-

Descriptive research, aimed at understanding consumer motives, attitudes and behaviors related to boycotting and cancel culture.

B. Population under Study -

Indian consumers who are active users of social media and online platforms, as they are more exposed to boycott and cancel culture campaigns.

C. Sample location-

The urban region is Mumbai, which has high digital engagement.

D. Sampling method-

Non-probability, convenience, sampling (easy accessibility to respondents through digital surveys and close neighborhood interviews)

E. Sample size-

Minimum hundred responses collected from diverse demographic groups (age, gender, and occupation)

F. Method of data collection-

Primary data – Questionnaire and Limited structure interviews

Secondary data – research articles, industry, reports, social media, and published case study of boycott/cancel culture in India.

G. Statistical tools used for hypothesis testing-

Chi Square Goodness of Fit Test: This test was used to check if observed frequency and the expected frequency are statically identical or different.

Chi Square Test of Independence: This test was used to identify statistical relations between two categorical variables (e.g. Age v/s Reactions).

Spearman Correlation Test: This test was conducted to understand and measure the strength between two ordinal variables (sentiments and brand marketing decisions).

Chapter 4: Hypothesis

1. To investigate the influence of social media platforms in advocating boycott movements in India.

H₀₁: Social media platforms do not have significant role in promoting boycott campaigns in India.

H₁₁: Social media platforms have a significant role in promoting boycott campaigns in India.

2. To understand how consumers react to social media in the wake of controversy.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between consumer demographics (age, gender, etc.) and their engagement with boycott-related content on social media.

H₁₂: There is a significant relationship between

consumer demographics and their engagement with boycott-related content on social media.

3. To analyze the effects of boycotts on changes in brand communication actions.

H₀₃: There is no association between consumer demographics (age/gender) and their perception that brand communication changed after the boycott.

H₁₃: There is an association between consumer demographics and their perception that brand communication changed after the boycott.

4. To understand the strategic responses of India brands in the face of boycott or cancel campaigns.

H₀₄: Indian brands do not use specific or consistent response mechanisms after a boycott or cancel campaign.

H₁₄: Indian brands use specific and consistent response mechanisms post-boycott or cancel

campaigns.

5. To understand if and how consumers' mindset in cancel culture movements affect brand decision-making in marketing in India.

H₀₅: Consumers sentiments around cancel culture movements do not have a substantial impact on brand marketing decisions.

H₁₅: Consumers sentiments around cancel culture movements do have a substantial impact on brand marketing decisions.

Chapter 5: Hypothesis Testing

1. To investigate the influence of social media platforms in advocating boycott movements in India.

H₀₁: Social media platforms do not have significant role in promoting boycott campaigns in India.

H₁₁: Social media platforms have a significant role in promoting boycott campaigns in India.

Consumer's response	Observed	Expected	Difference	Difference Sq.	Diff. Sq. / Exp Fr.
Very frequently	22	21	1	1	0.05
Frequently	27	21	6	36	1.71
Occasionally	24	21	3	9	0.43
Rarely	26	21	5	25	1.19
Never	6	21	-15	225	10.71
					14.095

The chi square is 14.096. The p value is 0.007. The result is significant at $p < .05$.

Test Applied:

A Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test was conducted to evaluate whether there is a statistically significant difference in the observed frequency of how often a

consumer comes across a boycott campaign and Expected frequency which is assumed to be equal.

Results:

Statistic	Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	14.095
p-value	0.007
Significance Level (α)	0.05

Since the p-value (0.007) is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H₀₁).

Interpretation:

The test results reveal a statistically significant difference between the observed and expected frequencies of how often people see boycott campaigns on social media platforms. This suggests that social media platforms play a vital role in the promotion of boycott movements in India.

The findings suggest that boycott related content is not distributed evenly across the frequency levels, as more respondents encountered boycott campaigns frequently or very frequently, thus indicating that

social media has become a primary medium for the spreading and amplification of boycott campaigns. (Mady et al., 2025)

Conclusion:

Based on analysis it is proved that social media plays a vital role in promoting boycott campaigns.

2. To understand how consumers react to social media in the wake of controversy.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between consumer demographics (age) and their engagement with boycott-related content on social media.

H₁₂: There is a significant relationship between consumer demographics and their engagement with boycott-related content on social media

Age	Like	Share	Comment	Spread Bad Word	Not reacted	Row Totals
Under 18	1 (1.07) [0.00]	1 (0.80) [0.05]	1 (1.27) [0.06]	1 (0.87) [0.02]	3 (3.00) [0.00]	7
18-24	10 (8.69) [0.20]	5 (6.51) [0.35]	10 (10.31) [0.01]	4 (7.06) [1.32]	28 (24.43) [0.52]	57
25-34	3 (2.29) [0.22]	2 (1.71) [0.05]	2 (2.71) [0.19]	3 (1.86) [0.70]	5 (6.43) [0.32]	15
35-44	1 (2.29) [0.72]	1 (1.71) [0.30]	4 (2.71) [0.61]	4 (1.86) [2.47]	5 (6.43) [0.32]	15
45+	1 (1.68) [0.27]	3 (1.26) [2.42]	2 (1.99) [0.00]	1 (1.36) [0.10]	4 (4.71) [0.11]	11
Column Totals	16	12	19	13	45	105 (Grand Total)

The chi-square statistics are 11.3306. The p-value is .788633. The result is not significant at $p < .05$.

Test Applied:

A Chi-Square Test of Independence was performed to assess if there was a statistically significant association between respondents' age groups and type of

engagement behaviour when encountering posts on social media that are related to boycotting.

Results:

Statistic	Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	11.3306
p-value	0.788633
Significance Level (α)	0.05

Since the p-value (0.788633) is much greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H₀₂).

Interpretation:

These findings show that there is no statistically significant association between the age of respondents and the way they interact with boycott related social media content. More specifically, the respondents are not statistically significantly different in how they react as consumers with various reactions (Likes, Shares, Comments, Bad Word of Mouth, or don't react), as their age group does not have a significant impact on how they react.

This suggests that there is not enough evidence to prove that age is a defining factor in how people respond to boycott campaigns on social media. Reactions based on consumer engagement behaviors may be defined by other elements (personal values, frequency of exposure about boycott content, and perceptions of activism and brand activism).

Conclusion: From the following analysis it is clearly shown that age group does not directly affect how a person reacts to boycott campaigns.

3. To analyze the effects of boycotts on changes in brand communication actions.

H₀₃: There is no association between consumer demographics (age) and their perception that brand.

H₁₃: There is an association between consumer demographics and their perception that brand communication changed after the boycott.

Age	Yes significantly	Yes slightly	No	Row Totals
Under 18	2 (1.38) [0.28]	2 (2.57) [0.13]	1 (1.05) [0.00]	5
18-24	15 (16.30) [0.10]	32 (30.34) [0.09]	12 (12.36) [0.01]	59
25-34	4 (4.14) [0.00]	10 (7.71) [0.68]	1 (3.14) [1.46]	15
35-44	5 (4.14) [0.18]	5 (7.71) [0.96]	5 (3.14) [1.10]	15
45+	3 (3.04) [0.00]	5 (5.66) [0.08]	3 (2.30) [0.21]	11
Column Totals	29	54	22	105 (Grand Total)

The chi-square statistic is 5.2702. The p-value is .728343. The result is not significant at $p < .05$.

Test Applied:

A Chi-Square Test of Independence was performed to assess if there was a statistically significant association between respondents' age groups and their perception

of a brand communication changed after the boycott. The question chosen for this included if consumers changed their buying preferences due to boycott.

Results:

Statistic	Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	5.2702
p-value	0.7283
Significance Level (α)	0.05

Since the p-value (0.7283) is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_{03}).

Interpretation:

The results suggest there is no statistically significant association between the respondents' age group and the level of being influenced by boycott campaigns, which indicates boycott campaigns affect people similarly across many age groups without substantive differences between age groups.

While younger groups (18–24) indicated greater absolute numbers of being influenced slightly or significantly, the differences were not large enough to result in a statistically significant association.

Conclusion:

There is no significant relation between age and perception of brand but GenZ are changing their preferences due to boycott campaigns in India.

4. To understand the strategic responses of India brands in the face of boycott or cancel campaigns.

H_{04} : Indian brands do not use specific or consistent response mechanisms after a boycott or cancel campaign.

H_{14} : Indian brands use specific and consistent response mechanisms post-boycott or cancel campaigns.

Gender	Issuing public apology	Deleting Controversial Content	Transparency and explanation	Rebuilding brand image by engaging in social activities	Corrective actions	Row Totals
Male	18 (15.47) [0.41]	11 (12.70) [0.23]	10 (12.15) [0.38]	12 (9.94) [0.43]	7 (7.73) [0.07]	58
Female	10 (12.53) [0.51]	12 (10.30) [0.28]	12 (9.85) [0.47]	6 (8.06) [0.53]	7 (6.27) [0.09]	47
Column Totals	28	23	22	18	14	105 (Grand Total)

The chi-square statistic is 3.3959. The p-value is .493882. The result is not significant at $p < .05$.

Test Applied:

A chi square test of independence was performed to

understand the relation between gender and their perception or reaction to the responses of brands on boycott.

Results:

Statistic	Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	3.3959
p-value	0.4939
Significance Level (α)	0.05

Since the p-value (0.4939) is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_{04}).

Interpretation:

The results suggest that there isn't a statistically significant relationship between gender and perceptions of the strategic responses that brands employ in boycott or cancel campaigns. This indicates that brand response strategies are perceived in similar ways by both male and female respondents.

In practical terms, this means that respondents generally agree that brands tend to mix a variety of strategies, such as apologies or social engagement, without any overall consistency between responses.

Conclusion:

From the above test we can conclude that there is no specific way for brands to respond to boycott campaigns

5.To understand if and how consumers' mindset in cancel culture movements affect brand decision-making in marketing in India.

H_{05} : Consumers sentiments around cancel culture

movements do not have a substantial impact on brand marketing decisions.

H_{15} : Consumers sentiments around cancel culture movements do have a substantial impact on brand marketing decisions.

Test Applied:

A Spearman's Rank Correlation was used to measure the strength and direction of the monotonic relationship between two ordinal variables:

X (Independent Variable): Consumer outrage sentiment, measured by the question: "Do you believe consumer outrage on social media should influence a brand's marketing strategy?"

Y (Dependent Variable): Long-term brand perception, measured by the question: "In your opinion, how much does public sentiment during cancel culture affect long-term brand perception?"

Results:

Statistic	Value
Spearman's Correlation Coefficient (ρ)	0.25
p-value	0.01002
Significance Level (α)	0.05

Since the p value (0.01002) is less than 0.05, we reject null hypothesis(H_{05})

Interpretation:

Since the p value (0.01002) is less than 0.05, we reject null hypothesis(H_{05}). This indicates that our relation is statistically significant and not due to random chances. The correlation coefficient $\rho = 0.25$ indicates a weak, positive relationship between the two variables.

This shows that even if there is an association it is not strong which means as consumers' perception of the effect of sentiment on the brands long term perception increases, their belief that social media outrage should influence their marketing strategy increases but to a small extent.

Conclusion:

The findings provide statistical evidence that consumer sentiments around cancel culture have a

statistically significant, but weak, positive influence on brand marketing decisions.

Chapter 6: Data Analysis & Interpretation

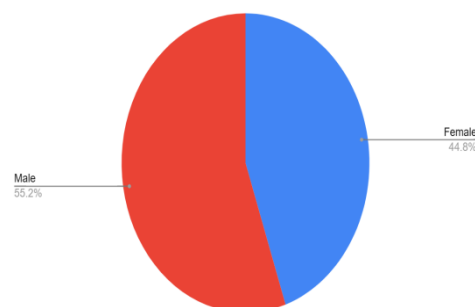
Data interpretation is the process of transforming raw numbers into meaningful insights. In this section, we present the demographics of our research sample, followed by a detailed analysis of the responses collected from participants. This approach allows us to clearly identify patterns, trends, and key takeaways that support the objectives of our study.

Gender:

This research aims to investigate the genesis of the cancel and boycott culture among Indians. The Analysis of the data revealed the proportionality of

participants divided in 55.2% male and 44.8% female. Since both men and women consumers play a major role in the cancel and boycott culture in India, the

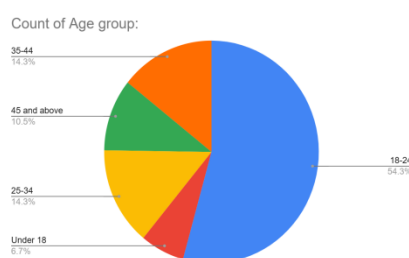
gender split will allow a broader perspective about the answers.



Age:

This suggests that the majority of the participants in boycott and cancel culture discussions were between 18-24 years old, representing 54.3%; hence, young adults are the significant drivers of such activism in India. The middle-aged groups participate to a lesser

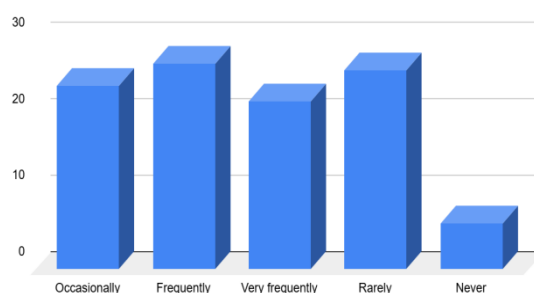
extent, while those under 18 and above 45 years show little interest. Overall, these findings suggest that in India, cancel culture is basically youth-driven, especially in online advocacy and socio-political engagement.



Q1. How often do you come across boycott or cancel culture campaigns on social media platforms?

Interpretation: Results show that a majority of the respondents encounter boycott and cancel culture campaigns regularly: 20% very frequently, 25.7% frequently, and 21.9% occasionally. Another 24.8% see

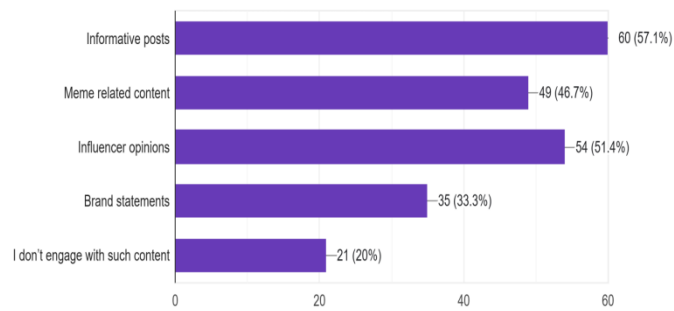
such content rarely, while only 7.6% never encounter it. This would, therefore, imply that exposure to such campaigns is highly universal within all social media platforms. Generally, this high level of visibility points out the very important function of online platforms in shaping public opinion and organizing consumer action.



Q2. What type of social media content related to brand controversies do you usually engage with? (Multiple choices were allowed)

Interpretation: The data reveals that informative posts are the most influential content type at 57.1%, closely followed by influencer opinions at 51.4% and meme-related content at 46.7%, demonstrating high levels of engagement with both hard facts and trending

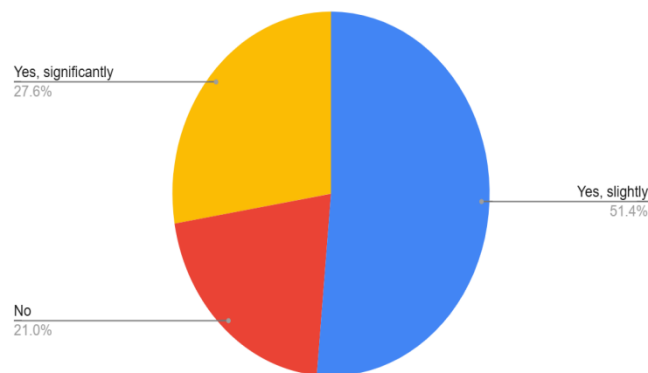
material. Only one-third of the interviewees tend to official brand statements, while 20% do not engage with such content at all. These trends go to show that influencers, humor, and viral formats significantly shape consumer perceptions in brand controversies. Altogether, boycott and cancel culture engagement is driven by diverse content forms rather than information alone.



Q3. Have you ever changed your purchase preferences (stopped buying a particular brand's goods or services) due to a boycott or negative publicity related to a brand's action or values?

Interpretation: The graph indicates that 51.4% of respondents experienced a slight change in purchasing behavior, while 27.6% reported a significant change

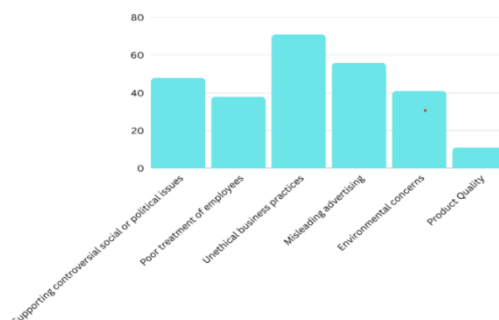
because of boycott or cancel culture campaigns. As many as 21% showed no change, meaning 79% are willing to change their consumption pattern based on social, political, or ethical reasons. This underlines a developing consumer consciousness in India, where the value sets of brands increasingly affect what people buy.



Q4. If you were to boycott a brand, what would be the primary reason for that?

Interpretation: The graph further shows that unethical business practices are the strongest trigger for boycotts, cited by 71 respondents; misleading advertising, 56; support for controversial social or political causes, 48; environmental concerns, 41; and

poor treatment of employees, 38. Product quality factors came out the lowest, with a paltry 10 respondents identifying it as a key factor. Overall, the findings indicate that Indian consumers put a greater emphasis on ethics, transparency, and corporate values than on product-related issues when deciding to boycott a brand. (Klein et al., 2004; Sen, 2024)

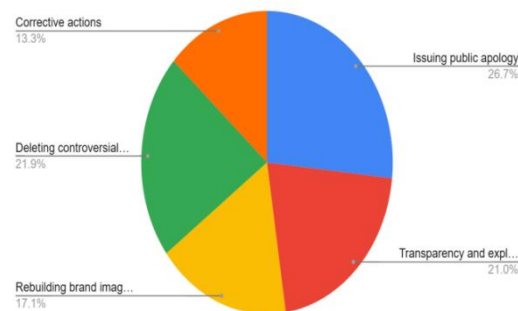


Q5) What are the most effective steps have you seen

brands take after facing a cultural backlash?

Interpretation: The pie chart shows that a public apology is considered to be the most efficient brand response, chosen by 26.7% of participants. Deleting controversial content comes second at 21.9%, very closely followed by providing transparency and explanation at 21.0%, which suggests a desire for accountability and openness. The rebuilding of brand image was selected by 17.1% of respondents, while

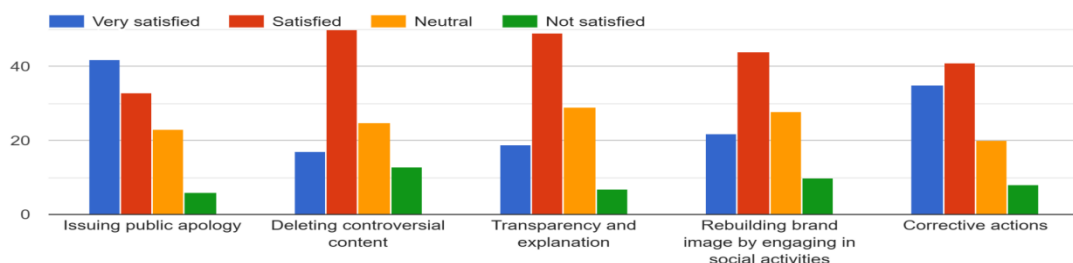
only 13.3% preferred corrective actions. What can be inferred from the findings on an overall basis is that Indian consumers respond most positively when brands admit to mistakes and take visible and immediate steps. This underlines the strong emotive and reputational factors influencing post-controversy consumer decisions. (Saldanha et al., 2022; Josiassen et al., 2024)



Q6. How satisfied are you with the way brands respond to consumer outrage online?

Interpretation: It is seen from the data that public apologies served as the most satisfying, with more than 40 respondents rating them as very satisfying. Deleting controversial content resulted in mixed responses since there were fewer very satisfied responses, with a slightly increased rate of dissatisfaction. The

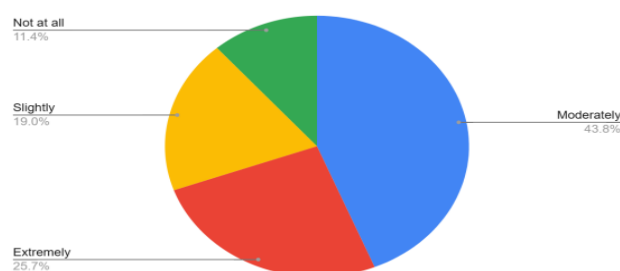
transparency and explanation options received many neutral ratings, indicating uncertainty about its effectiveness. Corrective actions were well-received, showing consumer preference for tangible, action-oriented measures. Overall, findings suggest that authenticity, responsibility, and culturally sensitive brand responses make consumers in India judge whether to support or boycott a brand.



Q7. How much does public sentiment during cancel culture affects long-term perception?

Interpretation: The pie chart shows that almost 70% of respondents feel that cancel culture has a moderate to extreme long-term impact on the perception of a brand. Only 19% feel this impact is slight, and 11.4%

feel there is no effect. This suggests a strong awareness by consumers of reputational consequences for brands in instances of cultural controversy. This, in general, provides evidence that brands should take consumer concerns seriously and be responsible in their responses to crises. (Demsar et al., 2023)



Chapter 7: Recommendations & Conclusion**1. Lead with Transparency and Accountability**

This point suggests that what audiences seek is not merely an apology, but rather accountability. A brand's first step should always be to own up to the error publicly rather than attempting to manipulate the story and obfuscate specifics. This is at the core of any rebuilding of trust.

2. Avoid Silence at All Costs

Silence is one of the worst plays to make in the midst of a crisis. It gives the community the opportunity to fill that gap with their own narrative; one that will always be more negative.

3. Sequence Your Response: Recognize, Justify and Take Action.

By looking at what consumers consider the best action to undertake, there is no one action that would win by a big margin. Rather, the most popular options, which are, issuing a public apology, Transparency and explanation, and Corrective actions are clustered. It means that the successful reply cannot be considered a single event but a three-step process.

4. Create a Customer Feedback Loop that Permanently Operates.

The responses provided by the form clearly indicate that consumers feel that their sentiment should be relevant in the brand strategy and that it does not go away easily. A proactive request to get opinions about campaigns before the launch or about socially sensitive issues can be used as an early warning system.

5. How to Humanize Your Brand, particularly in the Time of Crisis.

In all the open-ended questions, the fundamental theme is that the person desired authenticity, sincerity, and empathy. Customers can easily identify and dismiss a manufactured, robotic, or proven apology by the company. This is a strong appeal to brands to speak more in human terms. The best-recovered brands are the ones that shed the corporate veil and react with the true human feeling.

Conclusion

1) Social media is used extensively to publicize and amplify boycott campaigns in India.

2) Boycott campaigns operate on individuals regardless of their age.

3) There are no significant differences between how male and female respondents view brand response strategies.

4) The belief that sentiment has an impact on brands is weakly positively correlated with the belief that social media outrage should drive marketing strategy amongst consumers. (Mady et al., 2025)

Cancel culture is understood here as a public label and shaming of real or perceived offenses. It has become a

distinctive feature of contemporary discourse, documented by evidence in literature, testimonials, and survey data, as a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon: it serves as a tool of accountability and social justice, yet it carries the risk of mob behavior, censorship, and mental-health consequences. So even consumers should fact check their claims and make sure they are not spreading misinformation about a brand. A balanced critically informed dialogue will be required in order to navigate both its challenges and opportunities. (Demsar et al., 2023; Josiassen et al., 2024)

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