

Grzegorz Zasuwa  
Alicja Węgierak\*

*How Do Personal Values  
Affect Boycott Participation?  
The Moderating Role  
of National Culture*

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to examine the relationship between personal values and participation in consumer boycotts across countries, taking into account the role of national culture. The study is based on data from the 11th round of the European Social Survey (2023–2024), covering 27 European countries and Israel ( $N = 46,162$ ). Personal values were measured using Schwartz's Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-21), while national culture was described by Hofstede's six cultural dimensions. The results confirm that self-transcendence and openness to change values along with lower levels of conservation values are associated with greater involvement in boycotts. Moreover, the cultural dimension of indulgence was found to strengthen the positive influence of universalism, benevolence and self-direction values on boycott participation, suggesting that a higher tolerance for emotional expression in more indulgent countries may lead to greater boycott participation. These findings extend previous research

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\* Correspondence regarding this paper should be sent to Grzegorz Zasuwa (ORCID: 0000-0003-4131-5079), Institute of Journalism and Management, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, e-mail: grzegorz.zasuwa@kul.pl; or Alicja Węgierak (ORCID: 0009-0000-4567-4701), Institute of Journalism and Management, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, e-mail: alicja.wegierak@kul.pl.

by demonstrating that the relationship between personal values and consumer boycotts is shaped by the cultural context.

*KEYWORDS: ethical consumption; basic values; cultural context; boycotting; European Social Survey*

## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary consumers are increasingly guided in their choices not only by economic considerations, but also by ethical and social values (Przytuła, 2023). In the context of the European Union, which is characterized by significant cultural diversity, the question of how value systems influence consumer behavior becomes particularly relevant. Analyzing these relationships helps to better understand the role of cultural context in the development of ethical consumption in Europe.

Consumer boycott (or product boycott) is an important form of ethical consumption (Smith, 1996). This is 'an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace' (Friedman, 1985, p. 97). Several studies demonstrate that withholding consumption may be an effective tactic that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can use against firms that act irresponsibly (Smith, 2001). However, these protests do not always receive consumer support. Although consumers increasingly declare their commitment to ethical values, actual purchasing decisions do not always reflect these declarations (Witek, 2019). Even within the European Union there is large variability in consumer participation in this form of ethical consumption (Zasuwa, 2019).

An individual's value system significantly influences consumer choices, especially when moral or social issues are involved. Thus, several studies addressed the role of personal values in different

forms of ethical consumption (Doran, 2009; Ladhari & Tchetgna, 2015). Research findings indicate that certain categories of values can motivate people to engage in prosocial behaviors, such as boycotts, which serve as a form of opposition to corporate actions that contradict their beliefs (Shaw et al., 2005; Smith, 1989). However, we know relatively little about the role of value preferences in consumer boycotts. This study attempts to better understand this phenomenon. Specifically, it has a twofold objective: (1) to explore the association between personal value preferences and boycott participation; (2) to examine how the cultural context of a country moderate this relationship.

To meet these objectives, this study offers a theoretical framework drawing on Shalom Schwartz's model of human values, which has been empirically validated in numerous cross-cultural studies (Schwartz, 1992). Given that Schwartz's model is sensitive to cultural context (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003), the theoretical framework builds also on the Hofstede model of country culture (Hofstede, 2011). A large set of data consisting of 27 national samples from the European Social Survey was used to test hypotheses. The results revealed significant variability in the strength of associations between value priorities and boycott participation across countries. National culture, particularly the indulgence dimension, helps to better understand reasons for this variability. The discussion involving research implications, suggestions for practitioners, and directions for further research ends this paper.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Consumer boycott**

A consumer boycott is a strategy that involves deliberately refraining from purchasing products or services from a specific company in response to its actions deemed unethical or controversial. This type of behavior aims to exert both social and economic pres-

sure to encourage the company to change its practices (Smith, 1989). It represents a significant form of value-based consumption, enabling consumers to express their opposition to irresponsible market behavior and influence corporate conduct through their purchasing decisions (Zasuwa, 2022). Consumer boycotts can be motivated by various factors, such as opposition to human rights violations, harmful environmental practices, social injustices, or unethical treatment of employees (Klein et al., 2004). Although the effectiveness of boycotts is sometimes limited, their primary social role lies in communicating the norms and values represented by consumers and in reinforcing corporate responsibility. In the context of growing social awareness, boycotts serve as a tool that enables consumers to influence corporate strategies and shape the market in line with their beliefs (John & Klein, 2003).

### **Schwartz's model of personal values**

According to Schwartz, values are relatively stable beliefs that guide choices and evaluations (Schwartz, 1992). The universality of Schwartz's model, along with its adaptability to different cultural settings, makes it a valuable tool for examining the influence of values on consumer behavior across countries (Schwartz, 2012). Every individual makes decisions based on a personal value system that is shaped and evolves throughout life. These values influence how people perceive and evaluate various situations and form the basis for their choices.

The model of basic human values developed by Schwartz is one of the key theories used in research on both cultural and individual values. This theory identifies ten basic values, arranged in a circular structure that illustrates their interrelationships and underlying motivations (Schwartz, 1992). Each category reflects distinct motivations and life goals that shape people's attitudes and behaviors in various social and cultural contexts. These values include (Schwartz, 2012):

1. Self-Direction – relates to independent thought and action. Individuals guided by this value strive for autonomy, creativity, and self-defined goals.
2. Stimulation – associated with the need for novelty, excitement, and challenges, maintaining an optimal level of mental arousal.
3. Hedonism – focused on the pursuit of pleasure and sensory gratification, rooted in natural human needs.
4. Achievement – refers to personal success attained through demonstrating competence according to social standards; linked to social recognition.
5. Power – concerns the pursuit of status, prestige, and control over people and resources, reflecting hierarchical social order.
6. Security – expresses the need for stability, social order, and protection of individual and group well-being.
7. Conformity – involves adherence to social norms and self-restraint to avoid disrupting social relationships.
8. Tradition – relates to respect for and acceptance of cultural and religious customs passed down through generations, reflecting continuity with the past.
9. Benevolence – centers on concern for the welfare of close others and supporting them; promotes cohesion within small social groups.
10. Universalism – reflects concern for the welfare of all people and the environment, connected to understanding, tolerance, and global responsibility.

These values can be grouped into four higher-order categories: self-transcendence, self-enhancement, openness-to-change, and conservation.

#### *The basic values and boycott participation*

In the context of ethical consumption, values play an important role as motivators for actions such as boycotts, socially responsible purchasing, or choosing fair-trade products (Shaw et al., 2005).

Schwartz points out that values classified under the category of self-transcendence such as universalism and benevolence, are strongly associated with a willingness to engage in prosocial actions, as they reflect concern for the well-being of others and the protection of the environment (Schwartz, 2012).

To explain the link between self-transcendence values and boycott participation, this paper follows Smith (1989), and notes that a consumer boycott is a tool for achieving the social control of business. Boycotts typically involve withholding consumption to induce a firm to abstain from a practice or operation that is perceived as unacceptable due to its negative impact on society or the environment. Thus, participation in a consumer boycott falls into the realm of self-transcendence values, because abstaining from the purchase in this case expresses care for social justice or protecting the environment. Thus, this paper predicts positive associations between participation in consumer boycotts and self-transcendence values (i.e. universalism, benevolence).

H1. Self-transcendence values positively correlate with boycott participation.

In contrast, values categorized under self-enhancement, such as the pursuit of power or achievement, reflect a focus on personal goals, social status, and individual success. Additionally, this value dimension partially relates to hedonism values, since they entail pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself (Schwartz, 1992). People who prioritize such values are less likely to engage in consumer behaviors that lack immediate, tangible benefits (Schwartz, 2012). Individuals who attach this value orientation tend to have negative attitudes toward prosocial activities, including ethical consumption. For example, previous research showed that preference for power and achievement values is negatively associated with purchasing fair trade products (Doran, 2009; Ladhari & Tchetgna, 2015).

Taking into account that consumer boycott is a form of ethical consumption, and there are negative associations between self-enhancement values and ethical purchasing, the present paper expects negative association between power, achievement, and hedonism values and boycott participation.

H2. Self-enhancement values negatively correlate with boycott participation.

Values falling under the category of openness-to-change can be defined as an individual's propensity to rely on their own judgment and to be receptive to diversity in the world (Schwartz, 2012). They involve basic values of self-direction and stimulation. The former places significant emphasis on the motivation to select one's own objectives autonomously, whereas the latter involves the pursuit of novelty and challenges in life (Schwartz, 1994).

Considering their motivational underpinning, they may encourage individuals to make unconventional or innovative consumer choices – for example, by favoring alternative products, supporting social initiatives, or engaging in consumer movement activities such as boycotts. Accordingly, there is evidence that individuals join boycotts not only because they have been persuaded to do so by NGOs, but also as a means of expressing their individuality (Kozinets & Handelman, 1998). Similarly, previous studies suggest that consumers highly involved in civic engagement attach more importance on stimulation values than other consumers (de Barcellos et al., 2014). Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

H3. Openness-to-change values positively correlates with boycott participation.

Conservation values – such as attachment to tradition, a tendency toward conformity, or a need for security – may foster a more

cautious approach to purchasing decisions. Individuals guided by these values are generally less willing to engage in new forms of consumer activity, especially when these are perceived as too radical or potentially disruptive to social order (Schwartz, 2012).

The necessity for the preservation of the status quo, which is ingrained in conservative values, stands in opposition to the fundamental nature of a protest, which is predicated on the expression of disagreement with the prevailing circumstances. In the context of a consumer boycott, the primary motivation for protest is typically a strong disagreement with an egregious act or behavior by a company (John & Klein, 2003). Accordingly, previous research reported negative effects of security, conformity, and tradition values (Vecchione et al., 2015). Consequently, this study hypothesizes that individuals with conservative value orientation are less interested in taking part in this form of ethical consumption.

H4. Conservation values negatively correlate with boycott participation.

#### *The moderating role of national culture*

Geert Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions is one of the most widely used tools for analyzing cross-cultural differences. It includes six dimensions that describe the dominant values and norms within a given society: individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs. femininity, long-term vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint (Hofstede et al., 2010). Existing literature demonstrates that national culture may have an important impact on ethical consumption, including boycott participation (Hoffmann, 2014). However, the literature does not explain how national culture affects the relationship between individuals' value preferences and boycotting.

In the context of consumer boycotts, it is worth explaining in particular the role of the individualism–collectivism dimension, since current evidence shows its important role in ethical decision-making (Rausch et al., 2014) and ethical consumption (Duong et al., 2023; Xiao et al., 2024). In countries characterized by a high level of individualism – such as the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United Kingdom – individual independence, autonomous decision-making, and acting according to one's personal beliefs are highly valued. In such cultures, consumer decisions are more likely to stem from personal values rather than social pressure. In societies with predominantly collectivist characteristics – such as Poland, Greece, and Portugal – individual decisions are often made with consideration for the interests of the group and social expectations. Thus, personal values may have a greater impact on consumer decisions in more individualistic countries.

Additionally, there is evidence that individuals in individualistic societies tend to apply the same standards to all individuals whereas in countries with a high level of collectivism ethical standards may be lower for in-group members than for out-group members (Robertson & Fadil, 1999). Thus, people in more individualistic countries might be more sensitive to irresponsible corporate acts that typically harm out-group members (Husted & Allen, 2008). Therefore, despite the positive effects of cultural collectivism on ethical consumption (Duong et al., 2023; Hoffmann, 2014; Xiao et al., 2024), this study expects that individualistic orientation of a national culture may strengthen the links between value priorities and boycott participation.

H5. Country-level individualism increases the correlations between value preferences and boycott participation.

Another dimension of national culture that appears to be relevant in explaining cross-country variability in boycotting is indulgence versus restraint. This dimension describes the extent to which

societies allow the gratification of needs and the expression of emotions. In indulgent cultures, there is a strong emphasis on freedom, optimism, and enjoyment – people feel greater control over their lives, readily engage in leisure activities, and openly express emotions. In contrast, restrained cultures are governed by stricter social norms that limit emotional expression and impulses. These cultures are characterized by greater self-discipline, formality, and a lower level of experienced happiness. This dimension influences lifestyles, interpersonal relationships, and attitudes toward work, leisure, and consumption (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The importance of indulgence-restraint dimension stems from its relation to the acceptance of value expression within a given culture. Several studies revealed that consumer responses to corporate wrongdoing, particularly boycotting, are significantly influenced by consumer emotions (Hino, 2023; Lim & Shim, 2019; Lindenmeier et al., 2012). Moral emotions such as anger, contempt, and disgust towards firms are triggered by the immediate appraisal of egregious corporate acts. Personal values act like assessment criteria in this process (Schwartz, 1992). In societies where indulgence is greater preference for values related to boycotting can result in higher boycott participation due to stronger emotional reactions. Thus, the present research hypothesis is as follows.

H6. Country-level indulgence increases the correlations between value preferences and boycott participation.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Sample**

To test hypotheses that describe links between human values and participation in product boycotts, this study uses data from the eleventh edition of the European Social Survey (ESS) carried out in the years 2023–2024. This survey is based on large samples

representative of national populations aged 15 and older. The samples, drawn from 27 European countries and Israel, included 46,162 respondents in total. Females constituted 53.3% of all respondents. The mean age was 51.64 years ( $SD = 18.72$ ). Table 1 provides information about national samples including their sizes, female percentage and age of respondents.

Table 1. Sample basic characteristics.

| Country        | Sample size | Female percent | Boycotted percent | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|
| Austria        | 2354        | 57.8           | 24.3              | 55.6     | 18.3      |
| Belgium        | 1594        | 49.2           | 18.6              | 49.4     | 19.4      |
| Bulgaria       | 2239        | 52.5           | 6                 | 52.4     | 18.9      |
| Switzerland    | 1384        | 49.6           | 30.4              | 50.1     | 18.9      |
| Cyprus         | 685         | 54.9           | 10.8              | 55.5     | 18.2      |
| Germany        | 2420        | 49.8           | 38.4              | 50.4     | 19.0      |
| Spain          | 1844        | 52.5           | 20.7              | 50.0     | 18.9      |
| Finland        | 1563        | 50.7           | 53.8              | 52.9     | 19.3      |
| France         | 1771        | 50.6           | 38.5              | 50.2     | 19.2      |
| United Kingdom | 1684        | 51.1           | 24                | 53.6     | 19.0      |
| Greece         | 2757        | 55.1           | 17.2              | 51.0     | 17.4      |
| Croatia        | 1563        | 54.5           | 7.9               | 51.6     | 19.7      |
| Hungary        | 2118        | 60.6           | 4.7               | 50.6     | 18.5      |
| Ireland        | 2017        | 55.1           | 11.8              | 53.7     | 17.9      |
| Israel         | 906         | 51.4           | 19.8              | 43.3     | 18.6      |
| Iceland        | 842         | 50.4           | 41.7              | 50.3     | 18.5      |
| Italy          | 2865        | 53.3           | 6.4               | 52.5     | 19.5      |
| Lithuania      | 1365        | 61.5           | 13.6              | 50.3     | 17.8      |
| Latvia         | 1252        | 65.2           | 12.1              | 56.6     | 18.9      |
| Montenegro     | 1609        | 46.1           | 11.8              | 50.1     | 16.2      |
| Netherlands    | 1695        | 50.3           | 16.4              | 50.5     | 18.8      |
| Norway         | 1337        | 49.7           | 27.2              | 48.5     | 18.7      |

| Country     | Sample size | Female percent | Boycotted percent | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|
| Poland      | 1442        | 53.2           | 13.7              | 48.7     | 18.5      |
| Portugal    | 1373        | 57.9           | 4                 | 54.3     | 18.3      |
| Serbia      | 1563        | 53.2           | 9.2               | 52.5     | 18.1      |
| Sweden      | 1230        | 47.8           | 52.4              | 54.1     | 19.1      |
| Slovenia    | 1248        | 51.3           | 8.7               | 49.8     | 19.6      |
| Slovakia    | 1442        | 53.5           | 7.1               | 54.7     | 16.2      |
| Sum/average | 46162       | 53             | 19.7              | 51.64    | 18.719    |

*Note.* Own research based on ESS data.

## Measures

In the ESS, human values are measured using the *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ-21) by Schwartz (2003). This instrument includes 21 items. Apart from universalism, each value is measured by a pair of items. Each item in the PVQ21 consists of two statements, where one addresses the beliefs and the other the aspirations of a hypothetical person. The task of the respondents is to specify the extent to which such a hypothetical person is similar to them, where 6 = *very much like me* and 1 = *not like me at all*.

To assess the internal consistency of the items representing the ten basic values, this study employed Cronbach's alpha coefficients (see Table 2). The coefficients ranged from 0.154 for tradition (Belgium) to 0.861 for hedonism (Bulgaria), indicating substantial variability in reliability across countries. Generally, hedonism, achievement, universalism, and stimulation demonstrated acceptable reliability in most national samples. However, for the conformity, power, and self-direction scales, serious reliability concerns were observed in countries such as Cyprus (conformity, power), Austria (power), and Finland (self-direction). The single correlations with these values were therefore removed from the analysis. In the case of the tradition scale, internal consistency issues were more widespread, occurring in 13 countries

(Spain, Greece, Latvia, France, Finland, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Belgium). Therefore, when testing hypotheses involving tradition, analyses based on the tradition index were supplemented with results derived from individual items.

Table 2. Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of PVQ-21 Scales Across Countries.

| Value (Scale)  | Highest $\alpha$ | Country (highest) | Lowest $\alpha$ | Country (lowest) |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Hedonism       | 0.861            | Bulgaria          | 0.480           | Netherlands      |
| Achievement    | 0.797            | Iceland           | 0.604           | Montenegro       |
| Power          | 0.595            | Bulgaria          | 0.240           | Austria          |
| Universalism   | 0.725            | Portugal          | 0.437           | Slovenia         |
| Benevolence    | 0.757            | Portugal          | 0.444           | Norway           |
| Conformity     | 0.807            | Bulgaria          | 0.285           | Cyprus           |
| Tradition      | 0.538            | Montenegro        | 0.154           | Belgium          |
| Stimulation    | 0.760            | Norway            | 0.500           | Italy            |
| Self-Direction | 0.663            | Portugal          | 0.248           | Finland          |
| Security       | 0.713            | Montenegro        | 0.405           | Iceland          |

The ESS measures product boycotting as part of its indicators of political activity. Specifically, respondents indicated whether they "boycotted certain products" in the last 12 months on a *yes* (1) – *no* (0) scale.

The study operationalized national culture following Hofstede's (2011) six dimensional model, consisting of individualism, power distance, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and Indulgence. In this model, each dimension is measured by an index that runs from 0 to 100 points. All the data for national cultures were downloaded from data matrix available at <https://geerthofstede.com/research-and-vsm/dimension-data-matrix>.

### **Research process**

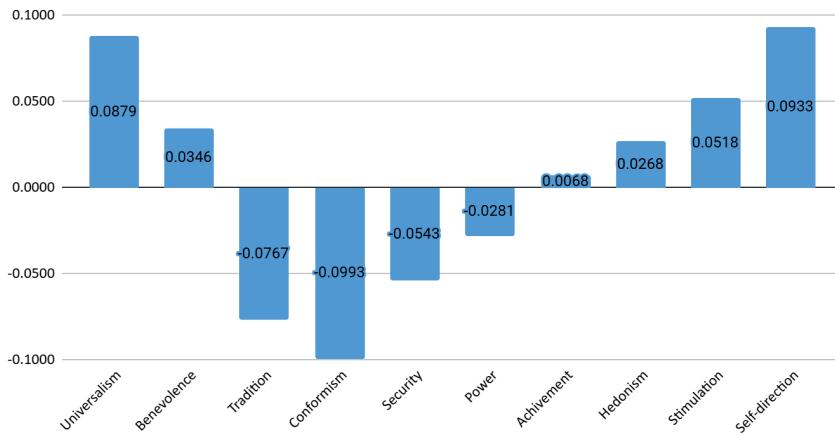
This study uses correlation analysis to test hypotheses that address links between human values and participation in product boycotts (H1–H4). This method is typically applied in research on human values because the multicollinearity between basic value types may distort results of other methods such as regression analysis (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). Given that boycotting was operationalized as a binary variable, point-biserial correlation coefficients were calculated. These calculations were carried out separately for each national sample. Then, correlation coefficients were weighted by sample size following the meta-analysis procedure by Cooper with the Fisher's Z transformation (Cooper, 2010). Finally, Q statistics were calculated to check the stability of findings across countries. At the last stage, correlation coefficients were regressed against indexes for six dimensions of national culture to examine hypotheses H5 and H6.

## **RESULTS**

### **The basic values and boycott participation**

In general, the research findings support the sinusoid model (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). This model assumes that if one value correlates positively with the variable under consideration, the value expressing the opposite motivation, correlates negatively. Accordingly, Figure 1 shows that values expressing self-transcendence correlate positively with boycott participation, whereas self-enhancement values tend to correlate negatively. Likewise, the direction of association between values reflecting openness-to-change and boycotting is opposite to the direction of correlation between values expressing conservation with boycotting.

Figure 1. Weighted correlation coefficients between personal values and boycotting.



Note. Own research based on ESS data.

In line with hypothesis H1, this study revealed that self-transcendence values tend to positively influence consumer participation in product boycotts in most countries (Table 3). Specifically, the results showed that the weighted correlation coefficient between universalism and boycott participation was positive and statistically significant ( $r_w = 0.088, p < 0.001$ ). Considering national samples, this coefficient ranged from 0.215 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in Iceland to -0.176 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in Bulgaria. In case of benevolence the weighted correlation coefficient was also significant in a statistical sense but its strength was much lower ( $r_w = 0.035, p < 0.001$ ). This correlation was highest in Austria ( $r = 0.165, p < 0.01$ ) and lowest in Bulgaria ( $r = -0.147, p < 0.01$ ).

Table 3. Summary of effect size analysis of basic values and boycott participation.

| Value type | $r_w$  | SE    | Z       | p     | 95% CI+ | 95% CI- | Q     | p     | Min. r | Max. r |
|------------|--------|-------|---------|-------|---------|---------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| UN         | 0.088  | 0.005 | 18.868  | 0.000 | 0.097   | 0.079   | 457.7 | 0.000 | -0.176 | 0.215  |
| BE         | 0.035  | 0.005 | 7.418   | 0.000 | 0.044   | 0.025   | 196.6 | 0.000 | -0.147 | 0.165  |
| SD         | 0.093  | 0.005 | 20.022  | 0.000 | 0.102   | 0.084   | 159.1 | 0.000 | -0.002 | 0.252  |
| ST         | 0.052  | 0.005 | 11.115  | 0.000 | 0.061   | 0.043   | 45.0  | 0.004 | -0.030 | 0.137  |
| TR         | -0.077 | 0.005 | -16.468 | 0.000 | -0.068  | -0.086  | 169.3 | 0.000 | -0.179 | 0.066  |
| TR1        | -0.059 | 0.005 | -12.617 | 1.000 | -0.050  | -0.068  | 149.0 | 0.000 | -0.158 | 0.083  |
| TR2        | -0.107 | 0.005 | -22.967 | 1.000 | -0.098  | -0.116  | 24.1  | 0.038 | -0.173 | 0.034  |
| CO         | -0.099 | 0.005 | -21.325 | 0.000 | -0.090  | -0.108  | 142.0 | 0.000 | -0.189 | 0.044  |
| SE         | -0.054 | 0.005 | -11.646 | 0.000 | -0.045  | -0.063  | 183.8 | 0.000 | -0.163 | 0.117  |
| PO         | -0.028 | 0.005 | -6.037  | 0.000 | -0.019  | -0.037  | 160.5 | 0.000 | -0.122 | 0.114  |
| AC         | 0.007  | 0.005 | 1.450   | 0.074 | 0.016   | -0.002  | 102.9 | 0.000 | -0.091 | 0.130  |
| HE         | 0.027  | 0.005 | 5.744   | 0.000 | 0.036   | 0.018   | 85.5  | 0.000 | -0.058 | 0.092  |

Note. Own research based on ESS data. UN = Universalism; BE = Benevolence; SD = Self-direction; ST = Stimulation; TR = Tradition; TR1 = Important to be humble and modest not draw attention; TR2 = Important to follow traditions and customs; CO = Conformity; SE = Security; PO = Power; AC = Achievement; HE = Hedonism.  $r$  = effect size correlation; SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval; Q = heterogeneity statistic.

With regard to hypothesis H2, the predictions were partially supported. Power values tended to negatively correlate with boycotting ( $r_w = -0.028$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), whereas achievement values appeared to be unrelated to participation in product boycotts ( $r_w = 0.007$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). A cross-country comparison revealed significant differences in effect sizes for both of these values ( $Q_{\text{Power}} = 1660.5$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $Q_{\text{Achievement}} = 102.7$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In case of power values, correlations ranged from 0.114 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in Slovakia to -0.122 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in Iceland. Considering achievement values, correlations run from 0.130 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in Slovakia to -0.091 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in France.

In line with hypothesis H3, this study found a positive association between openness-to-change values and boycotting. Specifically, the weighted correlation coefficient between self-direction and boycotting was statistically significant ( $r_w = 0.093$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This coefficient was highest in Austria ( $r_w = 0.252$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and lowest in Bulgaria ( $r_w = -0.002$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Considering stimulation values, the average correlation was also positive ( $r_w = 0.052$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and ranged from 0.137 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in Slovakia to -0.030 ( $p > 0.05$ ) in Israel.

Hypothesis H4 stated that conservation values negatively correlate with boycotting. Accordingly, this study found negative weighted correlation coefficients for conformity ( $r_w = -0.099$ ,  $p < .001$ ), tradition ( $r_w = -0.077$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and security ( $r_w = -0.054$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similarly to earlier results, this study also reported significant differences across countries in the strength of correlations ( $Q_{\text{Conformism}} = 142$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $Q_{\text{Tradition}} = 169.3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $Q_{\text{Security}} = 183.8$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Correlations for conformity ranged from -0.189 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in Germany to 0.044 ( $p > 0.05$ ) in Slovakia. For tradition, correlations run from -0.179 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in Bulgaria to 0.066 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in Greece. Finally, correlation coefficients for security ranged from -0.163 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in Germany to 0.117 ( $p < 0.01$ ) in Israel.

Given concerns about the internal consistency of the scale measuring tradition, this study conducted a supplementary analysis. Specifically, each of the two items used to assess tradition was separately regressed on boycotting, followed by a meta-analytic procedure. The results revealed two negative weighted correlation coefficients. The correlation for the item "Important to follow traditions and customs" ( $r_w = -0.107$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) was slightly stronger than for the item "Important to be humble and modest, not to draw attention" ( $r_w = -0.059$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

### **The moderating role of national culture**

Given significant differences in the strength of correlations between personal values and boycotting, further analyses examined the moderating role of Individualism (H5) and Indulgence (H6). Specifically, effect sizes for each of the basic values were separately regressed on indices reflecting dimensions of national culture. The independent variables besides individualism and indulgence included also the four remaining dimensions of national culture as control variables.

Table 4 reports a summary of regression analyses. However, this data provide no support for hypothesis H5 stating that country-level individualism increases the correlations between value preferences and boycott participation. None of the regression models showed a significant effect of this variable on the relationship between preferred basic values and participation in boycotts.

Considering hypothesis H6 stating that country-level indulgence increases the correlations between value preferences and boycott participation the research provides partial support. Considering self-transcendence values, the strongest model was found for universalism ( $R^2 = 0.70$ ,  $Adj. R^2 = 0.61$ ), suggesting that in more indulgent cultures, universalism is more strongly related to boycott participation ( $\beta = 0.95$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Similarly, the effect sizes for benevolence were also significantly predicted by indulgence ( $\beta = 0.63$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), but with a moderate model fit ( $R^2 = 0.47$ ). This implies that in indulgent societies, personal concern for others may also more strongly drive boycott involvement.

The research findings failed to provide support for hypothesis H6 predicting positive effects of indulgence on the association between openness-to-change values and boycotting. Although the effect sizes for self-direction values are significantly predicted by indulgence ( $\beta = 0.56$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), with a moderate explanatory power ( $R^2 = 0.43$ ), the estimated model was statistically not significant ( $F[6, 18] = 2.29$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Likewise, the analysis failed to find any effects of national culture on effect sizes for Stimulation values ( $F[6, 18] = 0.66$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 4. Summary of regression analyses.

| Dependent variable | F                  | p      | R <sup>2</sup> | Adj. R <sup>2</sup> | Significant predictors ( $\beta$ , p)     |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------|----------------|---------------------|---|
| Universalism       | $F(6, 18) = 7.13$  | < .001 | 0.7            | 0.61                | IND (0.95, < 0.001)                       |
| Benevolence        | $F(6, 18) = 2.70$  | 0.048  | 0.47           | 0.3                 | IND (0.63, 0.013)                         |
| Tradition          | $F(6, 18) = 1.03$  | 0.438  | 0.26           | 0.01                | —   |
| TR1                | $F(6, 18) = 1.303$ | 0.305  | 0.30           | 0.07                | —   |
| TR2                | $F(6, 18) = 0.653$ | 0.688  | 0.179          | -0.095              | —   |
| Conformism         | $F(6, 18) = 1.93$  | 0.131  | 0.39           | 0.19                | PDI (0.56, 0.046)                         |
| Security           | $F(6, 18) = 1.62$  | 0.199  | 0.35           | 0.13                | —   |
| Power              | $F(6, 18) = 3.66$  | 0.015  | 0.55           | 0.4                 | UAI (-0.49, 0.038),<br>IND (-0.70, 0.004) |
| Achievement        | $F(6, 18) = 1.95$  | 0.128  | 0.39           | 0.19                | IND (-0.70, 0.010)                        |
| Hedonism           | $F(6, 18) = 3.96$  | 0.011  | 0.57           | 0.43                | MAS (0.49, 0.009)                         |
| Stimulation        | $F(6, 18) = 0.66$  | 0.684  | 0.18           | -0.09               | —   |
| Self-direction     | $F(6, 18) = 2.29$  | 0.081  | 0.43           | 0.24                | IND (0.56, 0.028)                         |

Note.  $R^2$  = coefficient of determination;  $Adj. R^2$  = adjusted  $R^2$ ;  $F(df)$  = F-statistic with degrees of freedom;  $\beta$  = standardized beta coefficient;  $p$  = significance level; TR1 = Important to be humble and modest not draw attention; TR2 = Important to follow traditions and customs; IND = Indulgence, PDI = Power Distance, UAI = Uncertainty Avoidance, MAS = Masculinity, LTO = Long-Term Orientation.

\*  $p < .05$ , \* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

With regard to the effects of national culture on the negative effects of personal values on participation in product boycotts, the research findings revealed that indulgence inhibits the negative effects of self-transcendence values on boycott participation. Specifically, the regression results showed that indulgence weakens the negative association between power and boycotting ( $\beta = -0.70$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Additionally, this study suggested that uncertainty avoidance is also a negative moderator of power values effects ( $\beta = -0.49$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, this study indicates that in cultures with high tolerance for indulgence and high uncertainty avoidance, power values are less effective in inhibiting boycott participation.

Together, these two cultural dimensions explained 55% of variance in effect sizes of power values.

Further analyses addressed effect sizes for conservation values. However, the study failed to find any significant effects of national culture. The estimated regression models were statistically not significant for any of the conservation values: tradition ( $F[6, 18] = 1.03, p > 0.05$ ), conformism ( $F[6, 18] = 1.93, p > 0.05$ ), and security ( $F[6, 18] = 1.62, p > 0.05$ ). Separate results for the items measuring traditional values were also not significant (TR1:  $F[6, 18] = 1.30, p > 0.05$ ; TR2:  $F[6, 18] = 0.65, p > 0.05$ ).

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study joins the literature on ethical consumption (Byłok, 2016; Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2022; Dojwa-Turczyńska, 2015; Jastrzębska, 2018; Szwed, 2020; Wachowiak et al., 2023; Zralek, 2022), particularly on micro- and cultural foundations of consumer boycotting behavior across different national contexts (Le & Kieu, 2019).

First, the results supported the hypothesis that self-transcendence values, particularly universalism and benevolence, positively correlate with boycotting. This finding extends previous studies on boycotting that drew on Schwartz's model of basic values (Zasuwa, 2015) and research that examined the role of fairness and care within Moral Foundations Theory (Lim & Shim, 2019). Additionally, this study extends previous research on the role of values drawing on the concept of values in the model of moral foundation theory. In a wider context, this research aligns with previous studies indicating that individuals who prioritize social justice, equality, and environmental protection are more inclined to engage in ethical consumption (Shaw et al., 2005). It is also worth noting that benevolence values showed a weaker correlation with boycotting than universalism. This distinction

supports the idea that wider moral concerns (universalism) are more relevant for collective actions than focus at a close circle of a person (benevolence).

Second, the results also highlight the relevance of openness-to-change values in ethical consumption. In line with the predictions, this study found a positive association between independence and stimulation values and boycott participation since participation in a boycott may enhance freedom and excitement of consumers (Schwartz, 2010). This finding supports the results of previous exploratory research suggesting that ethical consumers who attach importance to freedom and self-direction tend to protest against unethical products and egregious acts of firms (Shaw et al., 2005). Similarly, this study joins literature showing a positive effect of openness-to-change values on ethical consumption, particularly in environmental contexts (Tewari et al., 2022).

Third, in line with the sinusoid hypothesis this study found a negative association between conservation values of conformism, tradition, and security and boycotting. This result extends prior works suggesting that individuals who highly value tradition and security are less likely to engage in activism because such actions may challenge social order and norms (Schwartz, 2010). These results mirror most of the literature about personal values and ethical consumption, particularly green consumption which tends to reveal negative effects of traditional values (Halder et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the identified negative association does not mean that conservation values always negatively affect ethical consumption. For example, Shaw and colleagues (2005) noted that consumption of ethical grocery products is strongly motivated by security values related to maintaining good health.

Fourth, interestingly, this study found only a weak negative weighted correlation between power values and boycotting though a stronger effect was expected. Additionally, the correlation for achievement values were not statistically significant. This suggests that desire for personal wealth and success does not

inherently contradict protest behaviour. Accordingly, recent research offers mixed results on the role of these values in consumer boycotts. On the one hand, there is evidence that self-enhancement (investigated from the impression management perspective) may even enhance willingness to participate in a boycott (Özer et al., 2022). On the other hand the same study suggested that consumer materialism reduces boycott intentions (Özer et al., 2022). This mix picture aligns with literature on ethical consumption offering also mixed results. For instance, self-enhancement values have been found to negatively affect willingness to pay more for ethical products (Quach et al., 2025) and the intention to engage in ethical consumption (Manchiraju & Sadachar, 2014). However, when ethical products are framed as self-beneficial, materialistic consumers tend to respond more positively to such messages and report stronger purchase intentions (Ryoo et al., 2020). Similarly, materialistic individuals may view green products more favorably when they serve as indicators of prestige or social status (Klabi, 2025).

Finally, this study helps to better understand the variation across countries in the effects of basic values on boycott participation. Previous research showed that national culture significantly affects protest behaviour suggesting that in cultures with strong in-group collectivism consumers are more likely to protest against perceived injustice in corporate actions (Hoffmann, 2014). The present study extends this research field by showing that in more indulgent cultures, values such as universalism and benevolence are more strongly associated with the decision to engage in boycotts. Conversely, indulgence negatively predicted correlations between power values and boycotting, suggesting that in such contexts, the negative effects of self-enhancement value orientations can be inhibited by a national culture. This evidence joins existing literature about the key role of negative emotions in consumer responses to corporate social irresponsibility (Antonetti & Maklan, 2017; Lim & Shim, 2019). Thus, the higher tolerance for

expressing negative emotions – such as anger, contempt, or disgust – in more indulgent countries may result in greater boycott participation in response to egregious corporate acts.

### **Limitations**

The research conducted is not without limitations. These limitations stem from the theoretical assumptions adopted, the research context, and the method of its conduct. First, since this study uses a cross-sectional design, it cannot determine whether personal values actually cause people to participate in boycotts. Thus, future research could use longitudinal or experimental methods to better understand how these values and boycott behaviors influence each other over time.

Second, the data are based on respondents' self-reports, which may involve inaccuracies in recalling past behaviors (e.g., participation in a boycott within the last 12 months). Some people may declare more ethical attitudes than they actually demonstrate, which may lead to inflated results. In the future, it would be valuable to supplement the research with behavioral data or apply experimental approaches to verify the declared attitudes of ethical consumers.

Third, although Schwartz's theory provides a solid framework for analyzing personal values, the PVQ-21 used in this study is a shortened instrument, which may limit the depth of analysis of complex motivational structures. Future studies may benefit from employing more comprehensive value measures, such as the revised Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ-RR), which measures 19 values and demonstrates greater measurement invariance than PVQ-21 (Schwartz & Cieciuch, 2022).

Fourth, the cultural context in this study was operationalized using Hofstede's static national-level indicators, which may not fully capture the internal cultural diversity within individual countries or reflect current socio-political changes. For this reason, it is worth considering more dynamic cultural approaches

or local-level analyses in future research, which would better capture the diversity and contextual nature of consumer attitudes.

Finally, the empirical analysis lacked broader controls for key sociodemographic variables such as education or socioeconomic status, which may significantly affect consumer behavior. Incorporating these factors in future research would enhance the robustness of the findings and clarify the interplay between values, cultural context, and individual characteristics.

### **Practical implications**

Apart from research implications this study offers also some suggestions that can be useful for practitioners in nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and in firms. For example, the moderating role of indulgence in the value – boycott participation link suggests that managers in NGOs who want to mobilize consumers to take part in a boycott by referring to self-transcendence values can be more effective in indulgence cultures (e.g., Denmark, Finland, Sweden) than in restrained cultures (e.g., Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia). On the other hand, managers responsible for crisis communication may refer to conservation values, such as security (e.g., protecting jobs in firms) or power values (e.g., protecting profits) to deter consumers from taking part in a protest against their firm.

The findings indicate that individuals with high self-transcendence and openness-to-change values are more likely to participate in boycotts. Non-governmental organizations and companies can design their educational and marketing campaigns to appeal to these values – for example, by emphasizing social justice, environmental protection, or the opportunity to express personal choices. In countries with high levels of indulgence, emotionally engaging storytelling may be more effective, whereas in more restrained cultures, informative and practical messages highlighting the consequences of corporate actions are likely to resonate better.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides new empirical evidence on the role of personal values in shaping boycott participation across different cultural contexts. The findings confirm that self-transcendence values, especially universalism, are the strongest predictors of boycotting, highlighting the role of moral concern for the welfare of others in motivating collective consumer action. Openness-to-change values also encourage boycott participation by appealing to individual autonomy and self-expression. Overall, the study demonstrates that individual value orientations function as psychological antecedents of boycott behavior, and that these interact with culturally shaped behavioral norms, particularly those related to the expression of emotions.

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