

When conflict meets consumption: The role of eWOM, animosity, and publicity on McDonald's purchase decisions amid the Israeli-Palestinian crisis (2023–2025)

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Abstract

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has generated various social responses, one of which is a boycott movement against companies allegedly associated with the conflict, including McDonald's. The boycott spread rapidly due to extensive interactions that fostered feelings of animosity. However, the company did not remain passive; instead, it sought to employ publicity strategies to influence purchasing decisions. This study aims to examine the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth, Animosity, and Publicity on Purchase Decisions at McDonald's restaurants during the Israel-Palestine conflict, using a sample of 175 respondents taken from the Instagram followers of @mcdonaldsid. The research employs a quantitative descriptive-verify method with Structural Equation Modelling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) analysis using SmartPLS software. The findings indicate that all the variables examined significantly affect Purchase Decisions, with Electronic Word of Mouth contributing 33.9%, Animosity 27.6%, and Publicity 34%.

Keywords

Electronic word of mouth, Animosity, Publicity, Purchase decision

Introduction

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is one of the longest-standing conflicts in modern world history, originating from territorial disputes between the two parties. This conflict has deeply unsettled the international community as it creates political tensions that generate various impacts on several aspects, including religion, culture, economy, and other social responses (Gusthia W, 2024). One of the social responses that emerged was a call for a boycott against several companies suspected of being linked, affiliated, or having business relations with the country involved in the conflict (Rony Setyo et al., 2024).

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The companies most affected by the boycott actions are international-scale food and beverage companies. McDonald's recorded a boycott percentage of 52.4% based on a survey conducted by Inventure in March 2024. This significant percentage is expected to spread rapidly, and its impact will be directly felt by McDonald's (Consumeri.id, 2024).

In 2023, McDonald's experienced an increase in revenue from the second quarter through the third quarter, but subsequently faced a decline in the fourth quarter of 2023. A similar pattern occurred in 2024, where revenue increased from the second quarter through the third quarter, followed by another decline in the subsequent quarter through the first quarter of 2025. The most significant decline in McDonald's net profit was observed in Middle Eastern countries and several Southeast Asian nations with large Muslim populations, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, where boycott movements influenced many consumers' purchase decisions (MarketBeat, 2025).

McDonald's purchase decisions during the conflict were influenced by several factors, one of which is Electronic Word of Mouth, which became the main driver of the widespread boycott against McDonald's products (Frima Agustian et al., 2024). The boycott quickly spread due to the high level of public interaction on social media regarding this phenomenon, ranging from posts to comments that encouraged and called for a boycott of McDonald's.

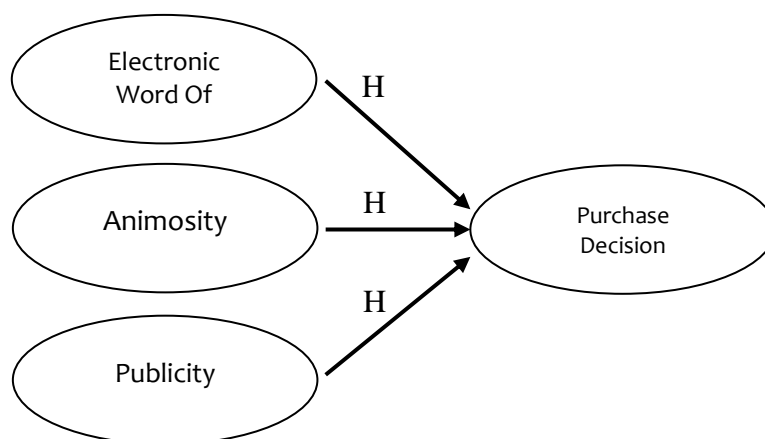
According to a survey conducted from October 22 to 31, 2023, regarding interactions with the boycott movement on social media, the results showed that during this period there were 28.4 thousand mentions and 166.8 thousand social media interactions related to "McDonald's Boycott," with the potential to reach 9.9 million social media users. Based on this survey, it can be concluded that the call for a boycott spread rapidly in influencing the public. The influence of boycott movements through social media has inevitably shaped negative perceptions of McDonald's among the public, including feelings of hostility and animosity toward the brand. This phenomenon is referred to as *Consumer Animosity*, in which consumers are reluctant to make purchases and tend to oppose a brand due to its perceived association with a conflict (Alma Heydiana, 2024). McDonald's has attracted public animosity as it is suspected of having ties to the ongoing conflict.

Another factor influencing purchase decisions is the publicity carried out by a company (Nency et al., 2023). With the rise of social media interactions that fostered hostility toward McDonald's, the company was directly affected and needed to take steps to restore its corporate image. One of the measures taken by McDonald's was the use of publicity to respond to the circulating issues. Several publicity efforts were made through the Instagram account @mcdonaldsid, aiming to address and reshape public perceptions regarding the boycott and the company's alleged ties to the conflict. Such publicity by McDonald's Indonesia is expected to serve as a consideration for consumers in making purchase decisions on McDonald's products.

Method

Based on its approach, this study employs a quantitative method. The purpose of using this method is to examine the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (X₁), Animosity (X₂), and Publicity (X₃) on Purchase Decisions (Y) in McDonald's restaurants. To operationalize the Electronic Word of Mouth variable, the dimensions proposed by [Elvira Ismagilova \(2017\)](#) are adopted. The Animosity variable will be operationalized using the dimensions from [Annisa Fitriana \(2024\)](#), while the Publicity variable will follow the dimensions from [Novia & Parlagutan \(2019\)](#). Finally, the Purchase Decision variable will be operationalized using the dimensions from [Meithiana \(2019\)](#). In this study, the total population cannot be precisely determined, as not all Instagram followers of @mcdonaldsid are necessarily McDonald's consumers or aware of the Israel–Palestine conflict. Therefore, the sample size was determined using [Hair et al.'s \(2019\)](#) sampling formula, resulting in 175 respondents. The criteria for participation in this study include awareness of the conflict, having purchased McDonald's products at least twice, being an Instagram follower of @mcdonaldsid, being at least 17 years old, and residing in Indonesia. The data in this research were analyzed using the Structural Equation Model–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method with the assistance of SmartPLS software version 4.0.

[Figure 1](#) show the structural design model to be used in this study is as follows:



[Figure 1](#). Design structural model

Hypothesis:

H₁ = Electronic Word of Mouth has an effect on McDonald's Purchase Decision.

H₂ = Animosity has an effect on McDonald's Purchase Decision.

H₃ = Publicity has an effect on McDonald's Purchase Decision.

Results

Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

The outer model testing focuses on measuring the validity of the obtained data. Instrument validity is highly important in research. By definition, validity refers to the accuracy of data containing actual information after it has been collected and subsequently analyzed (Dedi Rianto, 2023). This study employs tests of convergent validity, variance extracted, discriminant validity, and construct reliability (Table 1).

Table 1. Convergent validity, variance extracted, and construct reliability

Var	Item	Convergent Validity		Variance Extracted		Construct Reliability		
		Loading Factor	Desc	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Desc	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Desc
X1	X1.1	0.748	Valid	0.535	Valid	0.913	0.927	Reliable
	X1.2	0.727	Valid					
	X1.3	0.739	Valid					
	X1.4	0.738	Valid					
	X1.5	0.717	Valid					
	X1.6	0.719	Valid					
	X1.7	0.707	Valid					
	X1.8	0.778	Valid					
	X1.9	0.717	Valid					
	X1.10	0.716	Valid					
	X1.11	0.734	Valid					
X2	X2.1	0.810	Valid	0.612	Valid	0.873	0.905	Reliable
	X2.2	0.792	Valid					
	X2.3	0.771	Valid					
	X2.4	0.780	Valid					
	X2.5	0.774	Valid					
	X2.6	0.767	Valid					
X3	X3.1	0.783	Valid	0.589	Valid	0.900	0.920	Reliable
	X3.2	0.778	Valid					
	X3.3	0.741	Valid					
	X3.4	0.749	Valid					
	X3.5	0.745	Valid					
	X3.6	0.789	Valid					
	X3.7	0.772	Valid					
	X3.8	0.783	Valid					
Y	Y.1	0.797	Valid	0.623	Valid	0.933	0.943	Reliable
	Y.2	0.789	Valid					
	Y.3	0.768	Valid					
	Y.4	0.772	Valid					
	Y.5	0.799	Valid					
	Y.6	0.796	Valid					
	Y.7	0.796	Valid					
	Y.8	0.760	Valid					
	Y.9	0.834	Valid					
	Y.10	0.782	Valid					

Source: Data processed by researchers

The analysis results show that all indicators of each variable have a loading factor value greater than 0.700, indicating validity since each indicator is able to represent its respective variable. In addition, the findings reveal that all variables in this study have

an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value greater than 0.5, which confirms that the variables meet the criteria for good convergent validity. Furthermore, all variables demonstrated composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.700, indicating that the variables possess good reliability.

Table 2. Cross loadings

Variable	X1	X2	X3	Y	Description
Electronic Word Of Mouth (X1)	0.748	0.553	0.537	0.604	Valid
	0.727	0.576	0.497	0.583	Valid
	0.739	0.554	0.447	0.497	Valid
	0.738	0.537	0.529	0.648	Valid
	0.717	0.532	0.521	0.533	Valid
	0.719	0.515	0.503	0.502	Valid
	0.707	0.497	0.496	0.520	Valid
	0.778	0.593	0.517	0.651	Valid
	0.717	0.574	0.527	0.574	Valid
	0.716	0.525	0.494	0.575	Valid
	0.734	0.502	0.522	0.543	Valid
Animosity (X2)	0.636	0.810	0.591	0.654	Valid
	0.575	0.792	0.521	0.565	Valid
	0.622	0.771	0.618	0.633	Valid
	0.574	0.780	0.545	0.579	Valid
	0.550	0.774	0.509	0.615	Valid
	0.515	0.767	0.525	0.543	Valid
	0.609	0.555	0.783	0.628	Valid
Publicity (X3)	0.590	0.585	0.778	0.581	Valid
	0.502	0.481	0.741	0.572	Valid
	0.503	0.520	0.749	0.639	Valid
	0.533	0.599	0.745	0.607	Valid
	0.542	0.552	0.789	0.579	Valid
	0.526	0.535	0.772	0.572	Valid
	0.455	0.507	0.783	0.538	Valid
	0.611	0.530	0.601	0.797	Valid
	0.580	0.579	0.577	0.789	Valid
	0.626	0.645	0.624	0.768	Valid
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.589	0.586	0.560	0.772	Valid
	0.604	0.631	0.616	0.799	Valid
	0.603	0.595	0.643	0.796	Valid
	0.657	0.635	0.642	0.796	Valid
	0.576	0.574	0.559	0.760	Valid
	0.697	0.665	0.660	0.834	Valid
	0.599	0.645	0.588	0.782	Valid

Source: Data processed by researchers

Based on Table 2, all constructs have met the required criteria, as the cross-loading values of all indicators for each variable are higher than the loading values of other variables. This indicates that each indicator of its respective variable is able to measure effectively and successfully meets the criteria for discriminant validity.

Structural model analysis (inner model)

The inner model testing in SEM analysis is used to describe the presence or absence of relationships between latent variables, which is examined by observing the R-Square value (Dedi Rianto, 2023).

Table 3. R-Square

Variable	R-Square	Description
Purchase Decision (Y)	0.737	Strong

Source: Data processed by researchers

Based on Table 3, the R-square value of the Purchase Decision variable is 0.737 or 73.7%, which falls into the strong category. This indicates that 73.7% of Purchase Decision can be explained by Electronic Word of Mouth, Animosity, and Publicity, while the remaining 26.3% is explained by other factors outside the research model.

Table 4. F-Square

Variable	F-Square	Description
X1 >> Y	0.171	Moderate
X2 >> Y	0.110	Weak
X3 >> Y	0.191	Moderate

Source: Data processed by researchers

Based on Table 4, the F-square value of the Electronic Word of Mouth variable (X1) is 0.171, indicating that X1 falls into the moderate category. Furthermore, the value of the Animosity variable (X2) is 0.110, which places it in the weak category. Lastly, the value of the Publicity variable (X3) is 0.191, indicating that X3 falls into the moderate category.

Table 5. Path coefisien test

Hypotesis	Original Sample	T-Statistic	P-Values	Description
H1 X1 >> Y	0.339	2.270	0.023	Accepted
H2 X2 >> Y	0.276	2.355	0.019	Accepted
H3 X3 >> Y	0.340	2.413	0.016	Accepted

Source: Data processed by researchers

Based on Table 5 and Figure 2, H1 shows that the effect of Electronic Word of Mouth (X1) on Purchase Decision (Y) has a P-value of 0.023 (< 0.05) and a T-statistic of 2.270 (> 1.96). Thus, hypothesis H1 is accepted and H0 is rejected, indicating that Electronic Word of Mouth (X1) has a significant effect on Purchase Decision (Y) with a coefficient of 0.339. H2 shows that the effect of Animosity (X2) on Purchase Decision (Y) has a P-value of 0.019 (< 0.05) and a T-statistic of 2.355 (> 1.96). Thus, hypothesis H2 is accepted and H0 is rejected, indicating that Animosity (X2) has a significant effect on Purchase Decision (Y) with a coefficient of 0.276. H3 shows that the effect of Publicity (X3) on Purchase Decision (Y) has a P-value of 0.016 (< 0.05) and a T-statistic of 2.413 (> 1.96). Thus, hypothesis H3 is accepted and H0 is rejected, indicating that Publicity (X3) has a significant effect on Purchase Decision (Y) with a coefficient of 0.340.

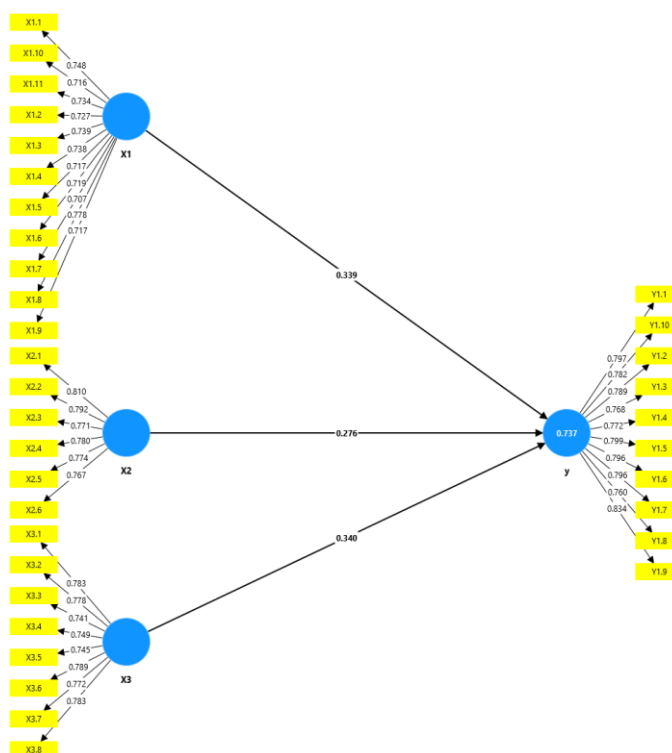


Figure 2. Output model
Source: Data processed by researchers

Discussion

Based on the research findings, the Electronic Word of Mouth variable can be considered highly influential, as the majority of respondents residing in Java and identified as students represent a group with high access to the internet and social media. Therefore, online word-of-mouth communication about McDonald's during the conflict was easily accessible and rapidly disseminated, resulting in a high level of exposure to Electronic Word of Mouth. The Animosity variable can also be considered influential, as most respondents living in Java and categorized as students are generally critical and socially active. Consequently, issues linking McDonald's to the ongoing conflict created negative sentiments or feelings of dislike among respondents. This effect was further reinforced by the ease of access to information in Java, which intensified these sentiments and influenced respondents' perceptions.

The Publicity variable can be considered highly effective, as the majority of respondents in this study live in Java and are students with relatively high internet usage, particularly in accessing news and digital media information. The publicity carried out by McDonald's was therefore easily accessible to respondents, making the company's publicity efforts highly effective. The Purchase Decision variable can be considered significant and influential, as most respondents in this study reside in Java and are students, who tend to be more selective in making product choices, especially during times of conflict when various issues circulate online. Nevertheless, respondents also compared alternative product options based on factors such as preference, price, and quality, with McDonald's ultimately remaining their chosen brand.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that both partially and simultaneously, Electronic Word of Mouth, Animosity, and Publicity have an influence on Purchase Decisions at McDonald's restaurants during the Israel–Palestine conflict in the 2023–2025 period. The recommendations for the company are as follows: first, to maintain appropriate online content and information, particularly during the Israel–Palestine conflict, as this has been proven to increase Electronic Word of Mouth activity among internet users. In addition, the company should consistently enhance the values of social awareness, concern, and humanitarian engagement regarding the ongoing conflict, and disseminate these more widely across online platforms, since the majority of internet users perceive that their views of McDonald's are influenced by the conflict. The company should also remain consistent in generating positive media coverage that fosters trust among internet users, particularly concerning issues related to the conflict, as most respondents stated that media reports affect their perceptions and opinions. Finally, McDonald's needs to strengthen its sales and promotional strategies to be more engaging and capable of creating a positive impression, especially during the current conflict, as these factors greatly affect purchasing intensity experiments.

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