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Young Consumers' Boycotting Profiles in the UK and Finland: A Comparative Analysis (11502) words excluding tables and figures)

This study uses latent profile analysis to identify boycotting subgroups within Finland and the UK and to explore their potential differences across countries. These subgroups are based on how young British and Finnish consumers assess that reference groups and their personal experiences have influenced their boycotting decisions. This study is based on comparative data obtained from the UK (n = 1,236) and Finland (n = 1,219). We identified four boycotting profiles: *unlikely to be influenced*, *influenced by personal things*, *likely to be influenced*, *and moderately likely to be influenced*. Our findings are especially relevant to consumer researchers, brands, and companies.

Keywords: boycotting, consumer behavior, comparative analysis, reference group influence, latent profile analysis

Introduction

Boycotts are becoming more prevalent. As a result of Russia's military attack on Ukraine in February 2022, not only have companies abandoned Russia, but consumers have also started to boycott companies who have continued doing business in Russia. Such sudden consumer boycotts are becoming a globally impactful financial burden for companies, and therefore, it is crucial to develop a better understanding of the antecedents of consumers' boycotting behavior. This study constructs boycotting profiles for young consumers in the UK and Finland. More specifically, we aim to identify boycotting subgroups based on how participants perceive their boycotting decisions to be influenced by their personal experiences and social reference groups. Furthermore, potential differences in such boycotting groups will be explored between

the two countries.

Consumer boycotts are defined as an effort by individuals or groups to persuade others not to buy certain products in the marketplace to achieve specific goals (Friedman 1985, 97). Researchers have distinguished between boycotts and buycotts: while buycotting refers to actions that aim to reward a company by favoring its products, boycotting, which is the focus of this study, refers to actions intended to punish a company, such as avoiding its products (Hoffmann and Hutter 2012).

The history of consumer boycotts dates at least as far back as the 18th century (Friedman 1999, 3–4), and boycotts became more common during the latter part of the 19th century (Glickman 2009, 116). Studies have revealed a growing boycotting trend, with a more than fourfold increase in consumers' participation in boycotts worldwide during 1975 and 1999 (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005). Likewise, Endres and Panagopoulos (2017) noted that the boycott participation rate among regular voters during the previous 12 months ranged from 39%–50% in the USA. The current *cancel culture* (Saldanha et al. 2022) has also shed more light on boycotts. In addition to growing boycott trends, researchers have indicated the significance of the topic through their recent scholarly interest (Ackermann and Gundelach 2022; Cheng, Zhang, Gil de Zúñiga 2022; Shim and Cho 2022; Zorell and Denk 2021).

Social media and other digital platforms have presumably increased consumers' awareness of boycotts, which is likely to affect the size of such actions (e.g., their participation rates) and, consequently, their effectiveness. As Albrecht et al. (2013) noted, using the Internet, a few people can quickly disseminate information about boycotts and persuade others to participate. Thus, the role of social media is also considered in this study, yet it is unnecessary to draw a strict line between online and offline boycotts, as such actions commonly have characteristics of both.

Previous research has explored different reasons and motives for boycotting (Ackermann and Gundelach 2022; Albrecht et al. 2013; Braunsberger and Buckler 2011; Ettenson and Klein 2005; Hoffmann et al. 2018; Kozinets and Handelman 1998; Lindenmeier, Schleer, and Pricl 2012; Palacios–Florencio et al. 2021; Shim and Cho 2022) and emphasized the role of social pressure and social influence in consumers' boycotting intentions and participation (Delistavrou, Krystallis, and Tilikidou 2020; Farah and Newman 2010; Garret 1987; Klein, Smith, and John 2004; Sen, Gürhan-Canli, and Morwitz 2001; Zorell and Denk 2021). Although it is widely accepted that different reference groups, such as peers, family members, and vloggers, can affect consumers' decisions to varying extents (Hoyer, MacInnis, and Pieters 2018), to our knowledge, no study has explored the role of different reference groups in consumers' boycotting decisions, especially in the same study. Furthermore, prior research has examined the connections between emotions, such as anger (Braunsberger and Buckler 2011; Makarem and Jae 2016), outrage (Lindenmeier, Schleer, and Pricl 2012), and animosity (Palacios–Florencio et al. 2021), and boycotting intentions, motives, and behavior. However, knowledge about the role of personal experiences, such as poor customer service, in consumers' boycotting decisions is scarce. Lasarov, Hoffmand, and Orth (2021) recently acknowledged that this topic has not been investigated before and showed that customer service and its quality can affect consumers' boycotting intentions. Moreover, while some research has investigated the role of a reference group's influence on consumers in different countries (Bolton, Keh, and Alba 2010; Yang, He, and Lee 2007), it remains unclear whether the influence of such reference groups on consumers' boycotting behavior varies across countries and cultures.

To address these research gaps, we will identify potential boycotting profiles among young people in the UK and Finland. The established boycotting profiles are

based on young consumers' perceptions of to what degree their personal experiences (poor customer service) and different reference groups (e.g., peers, idols, musicians, and vloggers) have influenced their boycotting decisions. The identification of such boycotting subgroups and their connections to sociodemographic factors will improve our scientific understanding of the boycotting phenomenon. Moreover, the identification of possible boycotting subgroups will clarify the role of different reference groups and consumers' personal experiences in their boycotting decisions in different countries.

Reference group theory is used as a framework to understand the role of a social group's influence in consumers' boycotting decisions. Previous research on reference groups has implied that certain social groups (e.g., peers) can have a normative or informational influence on individuals' decision making and consumer behavior (Deutsch and Gerard 1955; Hoyer, MacInnis, and Pieters 2018; Luo 2005; Mangleburg, Doney, and Bristol 2004; Mehta, Lalwani, and Ping 2001; Sen, Gürhan-Canli, and Morwitz 2001). While normative social influence refers to individuals' tendency to conform to others' expectations, informational influence refers to one's willingness to rely on others' knowledge about reality (Deutsch and Gerard 1955).

The definition of a reference group is somewhat ambiguous as it also refers to individuals. For instance, Solomon (2018, 417) noted that scholars commonly use the concept of reference group more loosely to refer to any external social influence exerted not only by actual groups but also by individuals (see also, Bearden and Etzel 1982; Park and Lessig 1977). Likewise, we use the term *reference group* in this article to refer to social influence from groups and individuals. Notably, as individuals spend ever–increasing time on social media (Pew Research Center 2021), we treat their potential reference groups in the context of such media.

Boycotts are part of political consumption. Political consumption refers to consumers' use of the marketplace for political purposes to affect perceived issues, such as ethical problems (Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 39). Political consumption activities (e.g., boycotts) emphasize individualized responsibility taking instead of traditional forms of political participation (Stolle and Micheletti 2013). In this study, we draw on political consumption literature and findings on the impact of reference groups. We suggest that political consumption actions are, to some extent, guided by the social influence of different reference groups. For instance, consumers might decide to boycott to acquire social rewards by complying with their friends (e.g., Price, Nir, and Cappella 2006).

Young people are an especially interesting group for the aim of this study. First, young people are especially active in political consumption activities (Kyroglou & Henn, 2021; Ziesemer et al. 2021), underlining the importance of young consumers as a target group of this study. Second, as we focus on the role of social media in consumers' boycotting decisions, it is noteworthy that young people are the most active group on social media (e.g., Pew, 2021). Thus, they are also more exposed to boycotting-related content such as boycotting campaigns or celebrity influence than older generations for instance. Third and relatedly, young people are more susceptible to social influence than others (Stok et al. 2016).

From a methodological perspective, we applied the person–centered approach of multi–group latent profile analysis (LPA) in this explorative study. This serves as a basis for identifying hidden boycotting subgroups in the data and comparing the differences in boycott profiles between Finland and the UK. Few studies on boycotts (Shim and Cho 2022) have taken the LPA approach, which highlights the novelty of using this methodological perspective in the current study.

Theoretical Background

Political Consumption and Boycotts

Boycotts are part of political consumption (Austgulen 2016; Cheng, Zhang, and Gil de Zúñiga 2022; Stolle and Micheletti 2013; Zorell and Denk 2021). While the term "political consumption" has been used interchangeably with ethical consumption and political consumerism (Micheletti 2011, 1097–99), we use the definition of political consumption throughout this article.

Stolle and Micheletti (2013) noted that in the current society, because conventional political agents have failed to take responsibility for human rights, for instance, individuals are determined to take on that responsibility, reflecting individualized forms of political participation. That is, traditional political forms and organizations have lost their attraction and have been replaced by more informal networks and new forms of action, which underline individualized responsibility taking (Hershkovitz 2017; Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 25, 32–33). Thus, political consumption underlines individualized responsibility taking, while political consumption forms, such as boycotts, are concrete examples of individualized responsibility taking (Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 27–42).

Digital media is also crucial for political consumption (Yuksel, Thai, and Lee 2020) because digital platforms not only provide better access to information but also allow consumers to interact with like–minded others (Copeland and Atkinson 2016). This is especially true for young people who are active users of social media. Interestingly, the novel perspective of political consumption is that it relates to the current and controversial topic of cancel culture, which is also prominent in social media. Cancel culture refers to people's use of social pressure to put someone or something into cultural isolation as a result of the latter's inappropriate statements or

actions (Norris 2021). Although cancel culture has more severe characteristics than traditional boycotting (e.g., social shaming) (Saldanha, Mulye, and Rahman 2022), boycotts and cancel culture also share similar features, such as their willingness to punish actors for their wrongdoings. Also, some scholars have closely linked boycotts to cancel culture (Lee and Abidin 2021; Mueller 2021). Therefore, it seems that both social media and cancel culture highlight the topicality of political consumption.

Although consumer boycotts call for individual responsibility, they do not eliminate the impact of external sources on individuals' decisions to participate in such actions. Studies have shown the role of social pressure and the influence of reference groups on consumers' boycott participation (Garret 1987; Sen, Gürhan-Canli, and Morwitz 2001). For example, de Zúñiga, Copeland, and Bimber (2014) found that social media use predicted political consumption as social media includes social influence, such as a friend's persuasion to avoid a certain product for environmental reasons. Likewise, Schlozman, Brady, and Verba (2018, 50) noted that some consumers are not politically active because no one has asked them to participate. Moreover, Baek (2010) found that political consumers discussed politics with friends and family more than those who did not participate in boycotts or buycotts. The aforementioned indicates the necessity of the framework of reference groups when considering the antecedents of political consumption.

Personal experiences and emotions are also crucial for political consumption. Research suggests that boycotts are stages for consumers to express their emotions (Kozinets and Handelman 1998) and that consumers' negative emotions, such as anger (Braunsberger and Buckler 2011; Ettenson and Klein 2005), outrage (Lindenmeier, Schleer, and Pricl 2012), and displeasure (Makarem and Jae 2016), are drivers of higher boycott participation. Similarly, consumers' negative experiences can affect their

boycotting intentions. For example, Bolfing (1989) suggested that poor customer service can generate huge losses for companies as a result of consumers' boycotting decisions. As negative experiences are often entangled with negative emotions, they both presumably contribute to consumers' boycotting decisions. However, to date, only a few studies have investigated how customer service relates to consumers' boycotting willingness (Lasarov, Hoffmann, and Orth 2021). Thus, the role of consumers' personal experiences (poor customer service) in their boycotting decisions is considered in this study.

The Influence of Reference Groups

Reference group theory enhances our understanding of the role of social influence in consumers' boycotting decisions and thus in political consumption. A reference group refers to an individual or group that exerts its social influence on, in this context, consumer behavior (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Schulz 2015). To illustrate reference group influence, Hoyer, MacInnis, and Pieters (2018) suggested that friends can affect consumers' brand choices: consumers tend to buy similar brands what their friends buy. Also, Mangleburg, Doney, and Bristol (2004) noted that reference groups have an impact on young consumers' shopping activities such as shopping enjoyment and frequency. Likewise, Luo (2005) found that the presence of peers had a positive effect on consumers' impulsive buying behavior, especially in regard to consumers who were more susceptible to social influence. In parallel, Sen, Gürhan-Canli, and Morwitz (2001) considered the role of reference group influence in individuals' boycott participation.

The premises of social influence can be understood through conformity. People tend to change their attitudes and behavior to align with a group's attitudes and behavior (Asch 1955; Baumeister and Vohs 2007). There is a large amount of empirical evidence

showing that a need to belong is a crucial motivation for humans (Baumeister and Leary 1995), and thus, people might conform to others' expectations and opinions for fear of social rejection.

Research has recognized three reference groups: membership (i.e., groups we belong to, such as peers and gender), aspirational (i.e., groups we would like to be part of and with which we identify), and dissociative (i.e., groups with which we do not want to be associated) (White and Dahl 2006).

A significant body of research has focused on the influence of reference groups on consumer behavior. Childers and Rao (1992) replicated Bearden and Etzlen's (1982) study and found that reference groups influenced consumers' product decisions. Moreover, consumers form a better self–brand connection with brands whose images they perceive as consistent with their understanding of their own in–groups (Escalas and Bettman 2005). Regarding boycotts, Sen, Gürhan-Canli, and Morwitz (2001) found that social groups affected peoples' boycotting willingness. They added that the effect of consumers' expected participation rates (how many will attend) on their boycott willingness was higher among those who were more susceptible to social pressure. Thus, those with a higher susceptibility to normative influence may participate in boycotts as a result of their reference group's expectations (see also Klein, Smith, and John 2004). More recent studies have also found that social pressure predicts consumers' boycotting intentions and political consumption (Delistavrou, Krystallis, and Tilikidou 2020; Farah and Newman 2010; Zorell and Denk 2021).

Research has also examined the connections between consumer behavior and certain types of reference groups, such as membership groups (Moschis 1976; White and Dahl 2006), aspirational groups (Hoyer, MacInnis, and Pieters 2018), and dissociative groups (White and Dahl 2006). Despite the previous research on social

influence, there is a lack of understanding of the role of different reference groups in consumers' boycotting decisions and, thus, what kind of boycotting subgroups can be identified based on how consumers see their boycotting decisions as being affected by the social influence exerted by different reference groups and consumers' personal experiences. As mentioned before, peers, family members, and idols can all play a different role in consumers' decisions; therefore, we contend that it is valuable to explore multiple reference groups in the current study.

Reference groups serve as a basis for understanding what affects consumers' decisions to boycott products or services; therefore, their role is underscored in this article. For instance, peers' climate change concerns and their willingness to avoid unecological products (e.g., cars) might affect their friends' boycotting decisions as a result of social pressure and normative expectations. Likewise, idols (e.g., musicians or vloggers) can share their negative experiences with certain brands on social media, which might lead consumers to accept this opinion as evidence of reality, causing them to boycott such products. Notably, while people have always been susceptible to reference groups' social influence, it might be that today's social media platforms, offering 24/7 unlimited contact with multiple agents, lead to greater exposure to social influence than ever before.

In this study, we include the following sources of social influence and personal experience factors: Friends constitute a typical membership reference group (White and Dahl 2006). Idols, bloggers, and vloggers are considered aspirational reference groups. Idols form a quite traditional aspirational reference group (Hoyer, MacInnis, and Pieters 2018, 299). Furthermore, given social media influencers' (such as bloggers') huge popularity and remarkable influence on young consumers' behavior, they constitute a group of admired influencers and thus are seen as an aspirational group. Stories from

random people form a reference group in the sense that stories are told by people (social influence), but these cannot be strictly categorized into the membership or aspirational group. Thus, stories from random people are defined as more loosely referring to a general social reference group with a low tie strength (Hoyer, MacInnis, and Pieters 2018, 301). On the other hand, such stories can also refer to those told by social media influencers, which form part of the aspirational reference group. Campaigns that an individual has been asked to join make up a similar reference group to stories from random people to the extent that invitations come from people (social influence). Accordingly, we define campaigns as a more general social reference group. Lastly, poor customer service by brands is considered as a personal experience.

Importantly, when participants are asked to assess who has influenced their boycotting decisions (on social media), they can presumably recognize the influence of bloggers and vloggers quite accurately because these individuals' influence is limited to social media. However, it is far more difficult to determine whether the influence of friends or campaigns they have been invited to join, is limited exclusively to social media. For instance, one might have been invited to join a campaign on social media, which friends may then have personally reminded them of. Thus, as it can be hard to indicate that a specific influence derives merely from social media or face–to–face situations, it is more convincing to take both of them into account.

Comparison Between Finnish and British Young Consumers
Although there is comparative research on boycotting (e.g., Hoffman 2014; Neilson 2010) and some studies have also examined differences in reference group influence across countries, there is a need for a better understanding of the role of different social influence sources on consumers' boycotting decisions in different countries and cultures. This article focuses on young consumers in

11

Finland and the UK. While the previous literature has not provided unambiguous evidence about factors that could thoroughly explain the potential differences between Finnish and British young consumers in their boycotting decisions, some differences may still be anticipated.

Finland and the UK differ in several respects, and therefore, make them interesting to compare to each other. Social classes have traditionally been quite visible in the UK (Biressi and Nunn 2013). While some scholars have noted the widened class divisions in Finland (Kantola and Kuusela 2019), Finns do not identify with social classes as strongly as Britons do (Erola 2010, 38), and social classes do not determine Finns' social positions in society as strongly as in Britain (France and Roberts 2017, 10). Also, although the UK and Finland are both European welfare states, Finland is much younger consumer society than the UK. Likewise, Finns have higher trust in public authorities than Britons (European Social Survey 2018). Consequently, as social classes are more prevalent in the UK, Britons are more likely to identify with them as reference groups than Finns, presumably making young Britons more susceptible to social influence. These differences might have an impact on how consumers react to social influence (i.e., those who identify more strongly with social classes might be more sensitive to others' opinions and social influence).

The full picture is however more ambiguous. Stolle and Micheletti (2013) noted that Finns reported relatively high buycott and boycott activism compared to UK consumers, while their actual behaviors, such as fair–trade coffee consumption, were relatively low compared to those of UK participants. Conversely, according to the European Social Survey (2008), 24% of UK consumers and 30% of Finnish consumers reported boycotting certain products during the last 12 months, indicating that Finns might be more active boycotters. Additionally, unlike in the UK, which has declining

numbers, there was an increasing boycotting trend in Finland between 2002 and 2010 (Stolle and Micheletti 2013, 50–51). Kjaernes, Harvey, and Warde (2007) found that Britons were more active in participating in food boycotts than Norwegians and proposed that Britons were more willing to take individual responsibility and more inclined to think that their voices as consumers mattered (107–110).

Some research has examined differences in reference group influence across countries. These results can be viewed in relation to potential differences between Finland and the UK, yet they are not unambiguous either. Yang, He, and Lee (2007) investigated how US and Chinese consumers differ in how reference groups affect their purchase behaviors. They hypothesized that reference groups would have a higher influence (informational, utilitarian, and value–expressive) on Chinese consumers, as China is typically associated with collectivism and conformity to social norms versus the individualistic leaning of Americans. In contrast to their expectations, reference groups had a higher informational and utilitarian influence on US consumers, while such reference groups had only a higher value–expressive influence on Chinese consumers. The authors speculated that their hypotheses were outdated because the influence of US culture has already affected young Chinese consumers, such as through Hollywood movies. Bolton, Keh, and Alba (2010) examined how Chinese and American consumers reacted to pricing discrimination (i.e., paying a higher price than their in–group [friends] vs out–groups [strangers]). While Americans perceived it generally unfair to pay more than others, Chinese consumers were especially sensitive to paying more than their in–group (friends), as Chinese culture is more collectivistic and in–group oriented.

Thus, it is difficult to make reliable hypotheses on cultural differences between Finland and the UK, especially because their cultures are not as distinct as the

differences between China and the USA. Moreover, social media might have blurred the cultural differences between these countries, given that social media platforms have penetrated young consumers' lives in both countries. Based on the discussion above, our specified research questions are as follows:

RQ1. What kinds of boycotting profiles can be identified according to how Finns and Britons assess that their personal experiences and social groups have influenced their boycotting decisions?

RQ2. How do Finnish and British young consumers differ in their boycotting profiles?

RQ3. What is the role of sociodemographic variables in predicting participants' belongingness to different boycotting profiles?

Methods

Participants

A research company was hired to conduct a survey using an online consumer research panel system (CINT). The data was collected between 25 February and 28 March 2019. The target groups from the UK and Finland were formed based on age groups (15–19, 20–24, and 25–29 years old) and gender. The system used random sampling to form a research population to whom survey invitations and reminders were emailed. The target groups were adjusted to ensure they were balanced and comparable. The overall panel ($N = 30,000$) included 126 panels from Finland and 258 panels from the UK. The individuals from these panels constituted the research population for each country. The total sample size was 2,455 (Finland: $n = 1,219$; UK: $n = 1,236$). The sample was representative of age, gender, and area of residence. The system ensured that survey invitations were not sent to the same person twice and that enough time had passed

since their latest response to another survey. Descriptive statistics of the participants (Table 1) and their boycott activation (Table 2) are presented below.

(Insert Table 1 here)

(Insert Table 2 here)

Analysis Strategy

Participants were asked to assess, in general, who on social media had influenced their boycotting decisions and to what degree on a scale of 1–5 (1 = not at all, 5 = very much) (Table 2) (see also Appendix B). Importantly, when participants are asked to assess who has influenced their boycotting decisions, we do not assume that participants would be fully aware of the reasons for their acts in a way that they would be explicitly understood reasons. Rather, their answers are treated as their personal estimates and attitudes about how important certain sources have been in their boycotting decisions. This approach serves as a good basis for latent profile analysis . LPA was used to detect the hidden boycotting subgroups in the data by estimating the respondents' likelihood of belonging to a certain group (Ferguson et al. 2020). As we were interested in the differences between Finnish and British consumers, a six–step multi–group approach was taken, as suggested by Morin et al. (2016), which provided information about possible differences between latent constructs in different groups (Millsap and Kwok 2004). This six–step procedure (Morin et al. 2016) comprises configural, structural, dispersion, distributional, predictive, and explanatory tests for similarities between groups. The last two steps are not mandatory. The predictive step provides information about whether groups differ in their relationship with predictors (covariates), while the explanatory step assesses the relationship between profile memberships and outcomes (distal outcomes).

We employed the first five steps sequentially (the earlier steps are preconditions for later steps; see Morin et al. 2016). In the first step (configural), the number of profiles in the groups (UK and Finland) was estimated separately. If the groups had a similar number of profiles, we proceeded to the second step (structural), which tested whether the means of the profiles across the groups were equal. If the means were equal (the profiles had the same shape and were interpreted as being the same for the two countries), we proceeded to the third step (dispersion), which tested whether the variances in profiles across groups were equal (when they were, we could say that participants' behavior within profiles was similar for the two countries). The fourth step (distributional) tested whether the profile sizes were equal between the groups. As we were also interested in the relationships between the boycotting profiles and sociodemographic variables, we performed the fifth step (predictive), which tested whether the groups differed in their relationships with the predictors (covariates) and profiles.

The analysis was performed with Mplus 8 (version 8.1). The maximum likelihood robust (MLR) estimator was used to handle possible problems in statistical testing caused by non–normality and missing data. The MLR estimator is a full information version of the maximum likelihood estimator and is applicable when missingness is random (MAR). The percentage of missing values within our models was, at most, 3.7% (2,364/2,455).

The LPA model was executed with fixed variances (variances of indicator variables are constrained to keep them equal between latent groups but not between countries) because of convergence problems in modeling. This is typical of LPA modeling, which is why the fixed variance procedure is frequently used (Morin et al. 2016).

Results

Test of Similarity

The similarities between the UK and Finnish profiles were assessed first. To test configural similarity, LPA was performed separately for both countries to determine the number of profiles for each country. Previous research has suggested various statistical tests for choosing the correct number of profiles for the model (McLachlan and Peel 2000). The Bayesian information criterion (BIC), sample–size adjusted BIC (SABIC), and consistent Akaike information criterion (CAIC) (Morin et al. 2016) were used as the main indicators when making our decision on the optimal number of profiles, while lower values indicated a better fitting model (Tolvanen 2007). The AIC was reported but not used due to its tendency for over–extraction (Morin et al. 2016; Tolvanen, 2007). In parallel with Morin et al. (2016), we used three information criteria (BIC, SABIC, and CAIC) to test the similarity with constraints, and the similarity was supported if the majority of the fit indices (2/3) supported it. The Vuong–Lo–Mendell–Rubin (VLMR) test was also used to support our decision. The bootstrap likelihood ratio test (BLRT) was reported but not used because it did not support any estimated model and proposed an excessive number of classes to be included. Theoretical and practical reasoning and statistical indicators were used to choose the best model (Ferguson, Moore, and Hull 2019; Masyn 2013, 587). Table 3 presents the details of the fit indices in terms of the enumeration process performed across the countries.

(Insert Table 3 here)

Table 3 shows that entropy was at a satisfying level (> .8) in both countries within all the profiles (Clark 2010, 31–32). Additionally, the values of the AIC, BIC,

17

SABIC, and CAIC decreased systematically in both countries when additional profiles were added. However, the decrease was rather minor after the four profiles were included. Morin et al. (2016) noted that these indicators tend to suggest additional classes (sometimes endlessly), especially with a large sample size, and they suggested using elbow plots as an indicator of the correct number of profiles. This shows the point where the fit indices do not decrease significantly if additional classes are included.

The elbow point of the fit indices (BIC, SABIC, CAIC) was at Profile 4, suggesting a model with four profiles for both countries (see Figs. 1 and 2 in the Appendix A). In addition, the VLMR test was consistent with the information criteria for the UK, supporting four profile solutions ($p = .169$) when comparing five profile solutions to four profile solutions. For Finland, the VLMR test supported the five–class solution ($p = .3$) when comparing five profiles to six profiles and did not agree with the results of the information criteria. However, the fifth class was quite small (4.6%) and hard to distinguish from the other classes, resulting in problematic interpretations. Thus, the more parsimonious four–class model was chosen, as it was theoretically more meaningful to interpret (Ferguson, Moore, and Hull 2019; Masyn 2013, 571, 587), and it was supported by the information criteria (see the elbow plot in Fig. 2 in the Appendix A). In summary, the requirement of configural similarity was met (Morin et al. 2016), and the specific results are presented in Table 3. The means of the profiles by country are presented in Figs. 3 and 4 (see the Appendix A), demonstrating the similarities between the profiles for Finland and the UK.

Table 4 shows the results of the sequentially performed similarity tests. As Table 4 reveals, all the tests showed similarities except for the distributional test, indicating that the profiles' shapes and the participants' behavior within all the profiles were similar across countries, while the sizes of the profiles varied between countries. The

18

details of the profiles and their shapes in the dispersion model are shown in Table 5 and Fig. 5.

(Insert Table 4 here)

(Insert Table 5 here)

(Insert Fig. 5 here)

Interpretation of the Profiles

The participants from Profile 1 scored relatively low on each item, suggesting that they do not perceive that their boycotting behavior is heavily influenced by any of these sources. Poor customer service, which can be seen as a personal experience, was the only source that had a slight impact on their behavior. Thus, this profile was named *unlikely to be influenced.*

The participants from Profile 2 reported that poor customer service and friends had a major impact on their boycotting behavior. Interestingly, they also reported that stories from random people affected their boycotting behavior to some extent, which contrasted with the personal aspect. However, as their boycotting decisions were merely dependent on more personal–related factors, namely friends and poor customer service, this profile was named *influenced by personal things*.

Participants from Profile 3 reported that their boycotting decisions were heavily influenced by all the sources. That is, in addition to their own experiences, these participants saw that reference groups, such as friends, idols, bloggers, and vloggers, significantly impacted their boycotting behavior. Thus, this profile was named *likely to be influenced.*

Participants from Profile 4 reported that all the named sources had at least a moderate impact on their boycotting decisions. Although the impact of the sources on participants' boycotting decisions did not vary greatly in this profile, personal experiences (friends and poor customer service) seemed to have the highest impact on boycotting behavior. Thus, this profile was named *moderately likely to be influenced.*

Moderation and Profile Sizes

Next, we examined how the different profiles were related to sociodemographic variables and tested whether the country had a moderation effect on the relationship between the covariates and profiles. We also investigated the effect of the country on profile sizes. The covariates were age, gender, education, employment, and residential area (see Tables 1 and 2).

The moderation test and the effects of the covariates were tested through Morin et al.'s (2016) fifth step. That is, the best model from the similarity comparison was chosen, and then the covariates were included in the model. In our case, a dispersion model was chosen; the means and variances were constrained to keep them equal between the countries, while the profile sizes could change. The predictive test was performed sequentially. Initially, the effects of the covariates on the profiles were allowed to vary with regard to the two countries, but they were later compared to the model in which the effects were constrained to keep them equal. The final decision on the moderation effect was based on the information criteria (see Table 6).

(Insert Table 6 here)

As shown in Table 6, the majority of the criteria (BIC, SABIC, and CAIC) supported the model with no moderations, as they showed lower values. This indicates that the effect of the covariates on the profiles was similar in both countries.[1]

As the profile sizes differed for the two countries, Table 8 illustrates these differences by showing the percentages of the membership of profiles by country (see Morin et al. 2016). Interestingly, the *unlikely to be influenced* profile was more prevalent in Finland (23.1%) than in the UK (12%), while the *likely to be influenced* profile was more prevalent in the UK (29.9%) than in Finland (18.1%). However, there were no notable differences between the UK and Finland in terms of the prevalence of the *influenced by personal things* profile (the UK: 19.6% and Finland: 23.5%) and the *moderately likely to be influenced* profile (the UK: 38.6% and Finland: 35.4%).

(Insert Table 8 here)

Table 9 contains the results of the effects of the covariates on the profiles (multinomial logistic model; see more about parametrization in Morin et al. 2016).

(Insert Table 9 here)

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[1] Due to the addition of the covariates, the observations were lower than in the models where they were not present. This was because values were missing from the covariates. The number of observations declined from 2,382 to 2,364. This small decline did not change the profiles' structures.

The impact of the covariates on the profiles was similar between countries. Notably, the *moderately likely to be influenced* profile was treated as a reference category in terms of the results in Table 9. In this case, the reference group described how covariates were related to the probability of being in a certain boycotting profile when compared to the *moderately likely to be influenced* profile (University of California, Los Angeles, 2016). As Table 9 shows, age ($b = 0.054$, $p = .004$) positively predicted membership in the *unlikely to be influenced* group. In turn, employed participants had a lower probability ($b = -0.667$, $p < .001$) than those who were not employed of belonging to *the unlikely to be influenced* profile. Likewise, those who lived in big cities had a lower probability ($b = -0.273$, $p = .040$) than those who lived in rural area or small cities of belonging to the *unlikely to be influenced* profile.

Age also positively predicted ($b = 0.039$, $p = .040$) membership in the *influenced by personal things* profile, indicating that the older participants were more likely to belong to this profile. However, employed participants had a lower probability ($b = -0.402$, $p = .005$) than those who were not employed of belonging to the *influenced by personal* things profile. Interestingly, females had a lower probability ($b = -0.337$, $p = .007$) than males of belonging to the *likely to be influenced* profile. Moreover, employed ($b = 0.402$, $p = .003$) participants were more likely to belong to the *likely to be influenced* profile than those who were not employed. Lastly, those who lived in big cities were more likely ($b = 0.246$, $p = .053$) to belong to the *likely to be influenced* group than those who lived in rural area or small cities.

Discussion

This study explored what kinds of boycotting profiles can be identified among young consumers in the UK and Finland. We identified four boycotting profiles in both countries*: unlikely to be influenced*, *influenced by personal things*, *likely to be*

influenced, and *moderately likely to be influenced*. Interestingly, these boycotting

profiles were similar in both countries in the sense that the participants' behavior was

consistent within all the profiles for the two countries. This means that their boycotting

decisions were similarly affected by their own experiences and reference group

influences. However, cultural differences were evident, as the results showed that

Finnish and British young consumers differed in the extent to which it was likely that

they belonged to a certain boycotting profile. For example, when comparing Britons

with Finns, more Britons belonged to the *likely to be influenced* boycotting profile,

while more Finns belonged to *the unlikely to be influenced* profile. In the moderation

analysis, we did not find a moderation effect between the countries regarding

sociodemographic variables.

As mentioned earlier, although the role of social influence in consumers'

boycotting intentions and participation has been studied (Delistavrou, Krystallis, and

Tilikidou 2020; Farah and Newman 2010; Klein, Smith, and John 2004; Sen, Gürhan-

Canli, and Morwitz 2001; Zorell and Denk 2021), there is a lack of a more specific

understanding of the role of different reference groups in consumers' boycotting

decisions. Also, the impact of consumers' personal experiences (e.g., poor customer

service) on their boycotting decisions has been understudied (Lasarov, Hoffmann, and

Orth 2021). The present study addressed these gaps by revealing boycotting subgroups

that were based on young consumers' own perceptions of to what extent their personal

experiences (poor customer service) and reference groups (e.g., peers, idols, musicians,

and vloggers) influence their boycotting decisions.

Also, although Shim and Cho (2022) used LPA to explore ethical consumer

profiles, including several boycotting aspects, to the best of the authors' knowledge,

there are no previous studies that focus solely on boycotting profiles. The identified

boycotting subgroups have improved our understanding of how young consumers differ in the extent to which they see their boycotting decisions as being affected by their personal experiences and different reference groups. For instance, we found a group whose members reported that all the reference groups, as well as personal experiences, had a large impact on their boycotting (*likely to be influenced*), as opposed to another group, whose decisions were only slightly influenced by reference groups (*unlikely to be influenced*). Importantly, we also identified a group whose decisions were only influenced by friends in terms of the specified reference groups, and which emphasized the role of poor customer experience in its boycotting decisions (*influenced by personal things*), in line with Lasarov, Hoffmann, and Orth (2021). The findings on the connections between boycotting subgroups and sociodemographic factors also provided a more detailed understanding of the participants' characteristics in a certain profile. Lastly, our findings enhanced our understanding of how such processes differ across countries, namely in the UK and Finland.

Our findings suggest that there are no cultural differences between Finnish and British consumers in terms of boycotting decisions. With regard to our findings on similar boycotting profiles, Shim and Cho (2022) examined ethical consumer profiles in culturally diverse countries (the USA and Malaysia) and found both similar and distinctive profiles between countries. Given that the UK and Finland both represent European consumer societies, when compared to the USA and Malaysia, which differ more from each other, our results appear to align with their results for different profiles. However, the similar profiles identified among culturally distinctive countries contradict our results. Nevertheless, it is notable that because the research topic of the present study differs from that of ethical consumers, our results are not directly comparable with the findings of Shim and Cho (2022).

We found similar profiles across countries that may suggest cultural similarities (e.g., between Western and European cultures), but we also found that more Britons belonged to the *likely to be influenced* profile and that more Finns belonged to the *unlikely to be influenced* profile. This raises a question about the cultural and national differences between these countries and implies that Britons' boycotting decisions are more susceptible to reference group influence and personal experiences compared to Finns.

Britons have a longer history of boycotts and consumer activism than Finns; thus, they might be more experienced in and sensitive to such matters. As stated earlier, the UK is typically associated with a clearer division of social classes compared to Finland. Therefore, Britons may have a stronger identification with such social classes and be more sensitive to social and group norms, which likely results in a higher sensitivity to reference group influence. It is well-established that social norms affect consumer behavior (e.g., food choices) (Pliner and Mann 2004) though not always in the desired way (Melnyk, Carrillat, and Melnyk 2022; Lasarov, Hoffman, and Mai 2022; Schultz et al. 2007). Nonetheless, Goldstein, Cialdini, and Griskevicius (2008) found that hotel guests were more likely to reuse the towels when they were exposed to a message including social norms (how others behave) than a more generic sign (please help the environment). Thus, it is possible that Britons are more sensitive to social norms and explain why the *likely to be influenced* boycott profile was prominent in the UK. Finland, however, is a relatively new and modern consumer society with less visible social divisions. Consequently, young Finnish consumers do not necessarily identify as strongly with social classes as young Britons and are therefore not as sensitive to the influence of their reference groups. This may explain why the *unlikely to be influenced* profile was important in Finland.

Alternative explanations for the cultural differences can also be derived from the free-riding literature (Klein, Smith, and John 2004; Sen, Gürhan-Canli, and Morwitz 2001). Thus, it is possible that more Finns belonged to the *"not likely to be influenced"*-profile because Finns are more inclined to free-riding (i.e., don't participate in boycotts but enjoy the consequences of others' participation) (Sen, Gürhan-Canli, and Morwitz 2001). For instance, when comparing Norwegians (close to Finland) to Britons, Kjaernes, Harvey, and Warde (2008) found that Britons were more inclined to think that their voices as consumers mattered. In turn, research suggest that consumers are more likely to free-ride if they believe that their contribution does not matter (Sen, Gürhan-Canli, and Morwitz 2001; see also Klein, Smith, and John 2004). Therefore, Finns might think that their voice and contribution do not matter, and tend to free-ride, and therefore, are not as sensitive to social influence as Britons. Finns may also think that institutions will take care of boycotting-related issues, because Finns have higher trust in public authorities than Britons (European Social Survey 2018), and therefore tend to free-ride and are not as heavily influenced by different social factors as Britons.

Social media provides one explanation for our finding of similar profiles across the UK and Finland. Yang, He, and Lee (2007) hypothesized that the normative influence exerted by reference groups will be higher on Chinese consumers compared to their US counterparts because China is typically perceived as having a collectivistic culture with high conformity to social norms. Although Yang, He, and Lee (2007) found differences in their study, these were not in line with their hypotheses. Therefore, the researchers proposed that Western culture has perhaps influenced Chinese culture. In parallel, it is possible that social media has blurred the cultural differences between the UK and Finland, which would explain why similar boycotting profiles were identified in the two countries. However, while young Finns and Britons differed in the

extent to which they belonged to a certain boycotting profile, one could perceive the previous argument to be inconsistent. Nevertheless, it is notable that even social media cannot blur all cultural differences by any means.

The finding that young men are more likely to belong to the *likely to be influenced* profile than young women contrasts with Stolle and Micheletti (2013) and Copeland (2014), who noted that women are more likely to be political consumers than men. However, our finding that employed respondents were more likely to belong to the *likely to be influenced* profile than the non–employed aligns with Stolle and Micheletti (2013), who found that employed people were more likely to be political consumers than non–employed people. The result that revealed that older participants were more likely to belong to the *unlikely to be influenced* profile compared to the reference group and that education did not have a statistically significant effect on the profiles aligns with Austgulen (2016). However, as non–employed people were mostly students and participants were relatively young (18–29) in this study, these results should be compared to those of other studies cautiously. Importantly, political consumption is a multifaceted phenomenon, and its measures and results vary between studies. Therefore, as we aimed to identify boycotting profiles, it is possible that our results are not directly comparable with those explicitly examining, for instance, gender differences in different political consumption actions.

Lastly, we also acknowledge that boycotts are typically launched and organized by nongovernmental organizations (e.g., Ali 2021; Klein, Smith, and John 2004), and social media contributes heavily to the spread of information about boycotts because social media enables never-ending access to information and other consumers' experiences: this is quite close to what Aral (2021) referred to as "hype machine". However, this study took an individual approach emphasizing the role of young

consumers' social groups and their personal experiences in their boycotting decisions, and thus, rather explored the boycotting decisions at a grassroots level.

Theoretical Contributions

The findings of our explorative research make several important theoretical contributions to the current knowledge. The present study has enhanced our understanding of how reference groups work together with political consumption. That is, our study, in general, suggests that social reference groups, such as friends, vloggers, and idols, play a significant role in young consumers' boycotting decisions. While political consumption actions typically call for individualized responsibility (Stolle and Micheletti 2013), we also highlighted the role of the different social groups in this process. The present study expands the theoretical concept of political consumption by revealing new perspectives on the precursors of boycotting. We found four distinct boycotting groups (*unlikely to be influenced*, *influenced by personal things*, *likely to be influenced*, *and moderately likely to be influenced*), which show how consumers differ in to what extent they perceive their boycotting decisions to be determined by their reference groups and personal experiences when making such decisions.

Our findings also make several smaller theoretical contributions to the current knowledge. The present study revealed the high potential of social media in young consumers' boycotting decisions. When we asked participants who affected their boycott decisions, the importance of online environments became clear. In addition to vloggers, who are clearly enmeshed within the Internet, other reference groups, such as friends, campaigns, and idols, as well as stories from random people, are easily available on social media. Thus, social media might serve as a basis for multiple agents and their effective information sharing and persuasive messages about boycotts (see also de Zúñiga, Copeland, and Bimber 2014). Therefore, our study underlines the

potential of social media in both theoretical concepts: political consumption and reference groups.

Additionally, while we emphasized the role of reference groups in young consumers' boycotting decisions, we also acknowledged the role of consumers' experiences, such as poor customer service. As experiences are commonly entangled with emotions, and scholars have noted the significance of negative feelings in boycott participation (Braunsberger and Buckler 2011; Ettenson and Klein 2005; Lindenmeier, Schleer, and Pricl 2012), our results not only align with these findings on emotions and political consumption, but also improve our understanding of how poor customer service can precede boycotts and thus political consumption.

Limitations and Future Directions

The findings of this study are subject to several limitations. As we studied young consumers, these results cannot be generalized to the whole population. Moreover, reference groups and their types of social influence are difficult to classify unequivocally. For instance, it is hard to determine whether the respondents' boycott decisions were affected by normative or informational influences because this was not measured. Also, although campaigns and stories from random people were considered as reference groups, it is hard to classify them into specific types of groups.

Additionally, as we focused on the participants' perceptions of the influence of social and personal factors on their boycotting decisions, a further study with more focus on the causality is therefore suggested. Also, as our dataset is limited to participants' perceptions of social influence and personal experiences on their boycotting decisions, we encourage future studies to include the actual behavioral indicators such as whether participants have boycotted or not to fill the potential gap between attitudes and behavior. Finally, we had to use fixed variances in our LPA

model (the variances were constrained to keep them equal), but freely estimated variances could have provided a more accurate and proper picture of the boycotting profiles (Mäkikangas et al. 2018).

Conclusion

We identified four similar boycotting profiles in the UK and Finland (*unlikely to be influenced, influenced by personal things*, *likely to be influenced, and moderately likely to be influenced*). However, while the *likely to be influenced* profile was prominent in the UK, the *unlikely to be influenced* profile was more prevalent in Finland. Our findings highlight the contribution of personal experiences and reference groups to consumers' boycotting decisions. Our study also illustrates how young consumers differ based on the influencers and motivators of their boycotting decisions in the sense that four distinctive boycotting profiles could be identified.

Our findings provide effective insights, especially in the field of consumer studies. Understanding how the thresholds for boycotting behavior differ is a starting point for further studies exploring culture– and nation state–specific boycott traits. Our results highlight differences in the triggers of boycotting. For instance, we have shown how some consumers need a personal experience to start boycotting (*influenced by personal things*), while others' boycotting decisions are sensitive to a larger spectrum of sources (*likely to be influenced*). This is something that future studies need to take into account: if researchers overlook consumers' need for personal experience to start boycotting, they can inadvertently treat these individuals as passive consumers. This is also something that activists should consider: if they want to affect consumers' boycotting decisions, they should consider such different triggers of boycotting. Also, to succeed, activists may want to contact especially employed men from big cities, use word-of-mouth to engender personal contact, utilize different social media channels and

collaborate with social media influencers. Thus, we have further established that young consumers' boycotting decisions and boycotting groups are multifaceted. These not previously identified boycotting profiles can assist in future boycotting and cancel culture studies to understand the antecedents of these phenomena: social influence and personal experiences.

These findings also provide a better understanding of how the complex dynamism of negative sentiments turns into actions in society among young consumers. In the future, these behaviors will become dominant as younger generations take over. A better understanding of boycotts will also contribute to social studies and communication research, branding, and marketing, as dissatisfied consumers must always be understood in their cultural and socio–temporal contexts. Furthermore, identifying the cultural specificities of boycotts will help us understand the dynamics of the differences in online public spheres of societies in the UK and Finland. As this study was an exploration of two western democracies, whose consumer societies yet differ in many respects, we call for future studies to test our findings in more diverse cultural settings such as in the largest global economies (e.g., China, the US, and Russia).

For brands and companies, understanding the nature of the diverse routes behind emerging boycotts may prove insightful for their public relations, customer relationship management, and issues management. Angry publics and negative sentiments easily spill over to a brand, even when anger is not directly related to the reasons for the boycott (Bowden et al. 2017), and strong reactions from a brand may even backfire. While every boycott is different, and no universal findings can be distinguished, understanding the different boycott behaviors serves as a beneficial starting point for organizations interested in planning and managing the rising negative sentiment around brands and companies. Moreover, Hoffman (2014) noted that companies should avoid

being boycotted because boycotts, in general, harm their business (e.g., stock price). Based on our findings, consumers' boycotting decisions are also influenced by personal experiences such as poor customer service. Thus, we suggest companies to pay increasing attention to their customer service to avoid boycotts. Relatedly, as our results indicate that social media actors such as vloggers, bloggers, and idols influence young consumers' boycotting decisions, companies need to be careful with their actions as these influential social media actors can reach a lot of different consumer groups.

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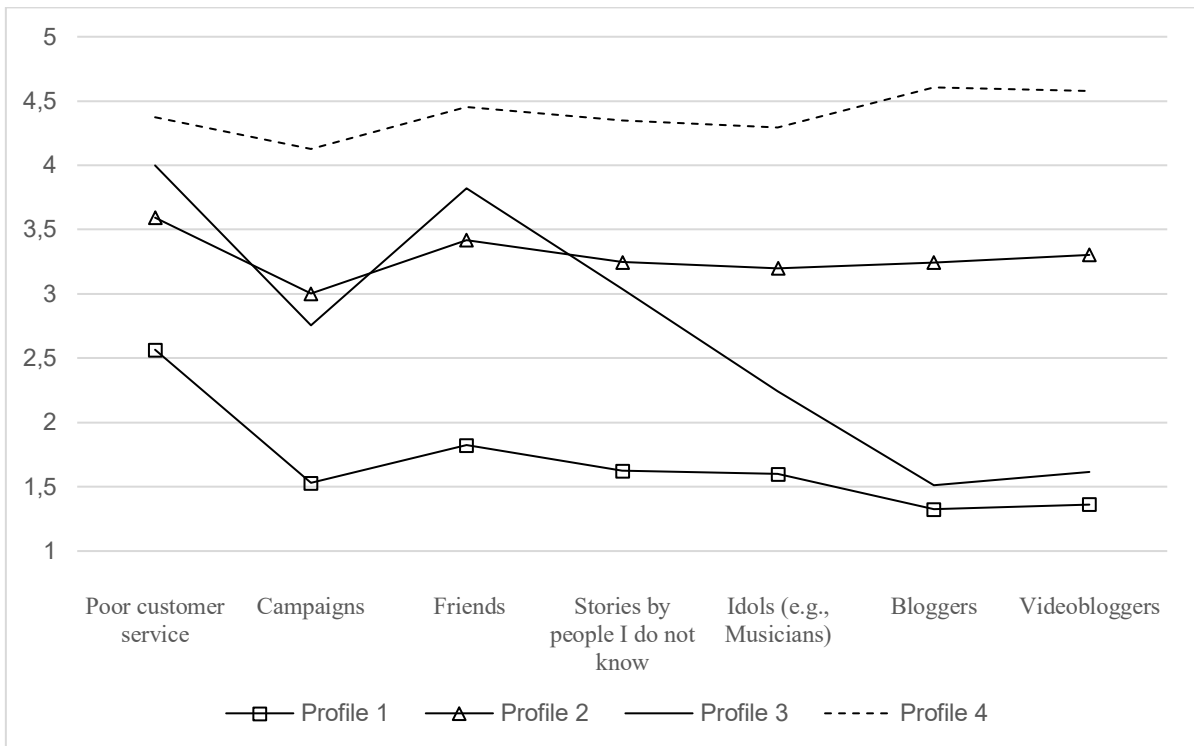
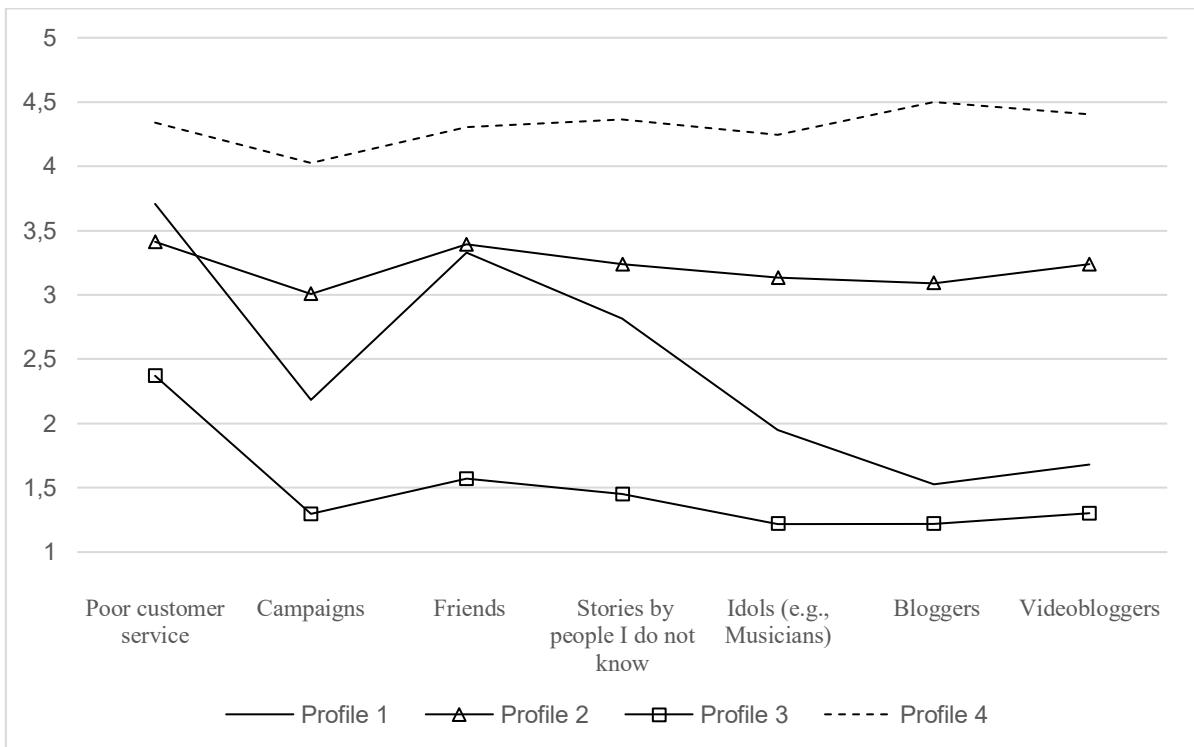**Appendix A.**

Fig. 1 Elbow plot of the United Kingdom
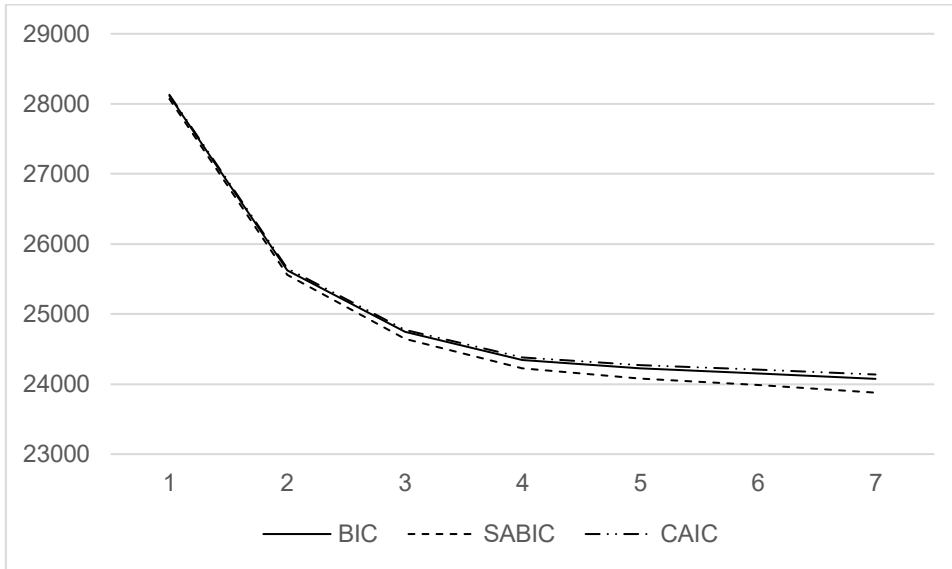
Fig. 2 Elbow plot of Finland
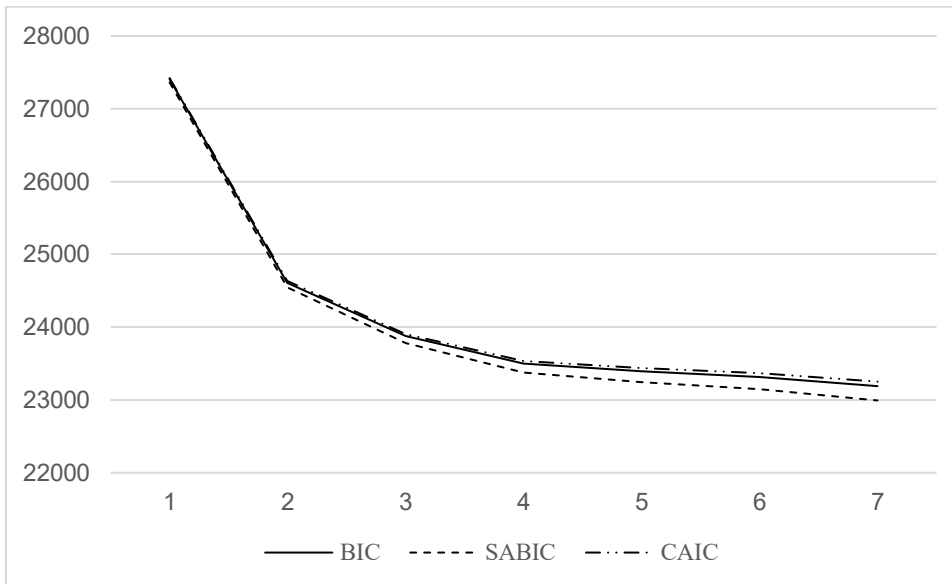
Fig. 3 Profiles for the United Kingdom

Fig. 4 Profiles for Finland

Appendix B.

Panel questions

On social media stories told by others can make us avoid some product or service. In general on social media: (1 = not at all, 5 = very much)

1. Poor customer service by brands has influenced my decisions to boycott some product or service

2. Campaigns that I have been invited to join (e.g. buy nothing day) have influenced my decisions to boycott some product or service

3. Friends have influenced my decisions to boycott some product or service

4. Stories by people I do not know personally have influenced my decisions to boycott some product or service

5. Idols (musicians, movie stars) have influenced my decisions to boycott some product or service

6. Bloggers have influenced my decisions to boycott some product or service

7. Videobloggers have influenced my decisions to boycott some product or service

Tables

Table 1 Demographic characteristics

	United Kingdom		Finland			
Variable	*N*	Percent %	*N*	Percent %	Total	Missing (*n*)
Country	1,236	50.3	1,219	49.7	2,455	0
Gender[a]	1,230	50.5	1,205	49.5	2,435	20
Male	597	48.5	587	48.7		n.a
Female	633	51.5	618	51.3		n.a
Level of education[b]	1,236	50.3	1,219	49.7	2,455	0
Lower	406	32.8	833	68.3		
Higher	830	67.2	386	31.7		
Current employment status[c]	1,236	50.3	1,219	49.7	2,455	0
Not working	479	38.8	633	51.9		
Working	757	61.2	586	48.1		
Place of residence[d]	1,236	50.3	1,219	49.7	2,455	0
Major or big city	672	54.4	715	58.7		
Small city or rural area	564	45.6	504	41.3		

Note: Those who reported that they did not use social media (n = 116) were excluded from the analysis.

[a]Those who reported their gender as "other" (n = 20) (Fin = 14), (UK = 6) were excluded from the analysis.

[b]Lower = elementary, middle school, high school, vocational school; higher = college or university.

[c]Not working = unemployed, homemaker, student, or other; working = full-time employment, part-time employment, or self-employed.

[d]Major or big city = major city environment or big city environment; small city or rural area = small city environment or rural area or village environment.

Table 2 Variables of boycott activation

Variable	N	M	SD	Missing (N)
Poor customer service by brands has influenced my decisions to boycott a product or service	2,333	3.6	1.27	122
Campaigns that I have been invited to join (e.g., buy nothing day) have influenced my decisions to boycott a product or service	2,286	2.86	1.36	159
Friends have influenced my decisions to boycott a product or service	2,333	3.37	1.25	122
Stories from people I do not know personally have influenced my decision to boycott a product or service	2,342	3.14	1.29	113
Idols (musicians, movie stars) have influenced my decision to boycott a product or service	2,325	2.89	1.38	130
Bloggers have influenced my decision to boycott a product or service	2,314	2.82	1.42	141
Videobloggers have influenced my decision to boycott a product or service	2,319	2.88	1.44	136
Age[a]	2,455	22.7	3.96	0

[a]Ages (minimum = 15, maximum = 29) were included in this table to avoid creating unnecessary columns in Table 1.

Table 3 Enumeration process

	k	LL	#fp	AIC	BIC	SABIC	CAIC	Entropy	VLMR	BLRT*
United Kingdom										
1 profile	1	-14,007.723	14	28,043.445	28,114.799	28,070.330	28,128.800	-	-	
2 profiles	2	-12,735.585	22	25,515.170	25,627.298	25,557.417	25,649.298	0.835	0.000	0.000
3 profiles	3	-12,264.096	30	24,588.191	24,741.093	24.645.801	24,771.094	0.864	0.000	0.000
4 profiles	4	-12,036.808	38	24,149.617	24,343.292	24,222.589	24,381.291	0.857	0.000	0.000
5 profiles	5	-11,949.156	46	23,990.311	24,224.760	24,078.646	24,270.761	0.863	0.169	0.000
6 profiles	6	-11,885.635	54	23,879.271	24,154.494	23,982.968	24,208.493	0.866	0.020	0.000
7 profiles	7	-11,817,242	62	23,758.484	24,074.481	23,877.544	24,136.481	0.820	0.022	0.000
Finland										
1 profile	1	-13,654.781	14	27,337.561	27,408.516	27,364.047	27,422.516	-	-	
2 profiles	2	-12,228.604	22	24,501.208	24,612.708	24,542.828	24,634.708	0.888	0.000	0.000
3 profiles	3	-11,831.047	30	23,722.094	23,874.139	23,778.848	23,904.139	0.854	0.000	0.000
4 profiles	4	-11,615.000	38	23,305.999	23,498.590	23,377.888	23,536.591	0.830	0.001	0.000
5 profiles	5	-11,535.185	46	23,162.371	23,395.507	23,249.394	23,441.506	0.853	0.042	0.000
6 profiles	6	-11,467.937	54	23,043.873	23,317.555	23,146.032	23,371.555	0.852	0.300	0.000
7 profiles	7	-11,375.948	62	22,875.896	23,190.122	22,993.189	23,252.123	0.879	0.119	0.000

There were computational problems in some bootstrapped tests.

Note: K = class, LL = Log-Likelihood, #fp = free parameters, AIC = Akaike information criterion, BIC = Bayesian information criterion, SABIC = sample-size adjusted BIC, CAIC = Consistent AIC, VLMR = Vuong–Lo–Mendell–Rubin test, BLRT = Bootstrap likelihood ratio test.

Note: Classification probability was > p = 0.70 for all groups in all models.

Table 4 Results of the similarity tests

Similarity	*k*	*LL*	*#fp*	*AIC*	*BIC*	*SABIC*	*CAIC*
Configural	4	-25,302.642	77	50,759.284	51,204.012	50,959.367	51281.0
Structural (mean)	4	-25,336.330	49	50,770.661	51,053.670	50,897.986	51,102.7
Dispersion (mean, variance)	4	-25,362.115	42	50,808.230	51,050.809	50,917.366	51,092.8
Distributional (mean, variance, Probabilities)	4	-25,400.048	39	50,878.096	51,103.348	50,979.437	51,142.3

Table 5 Four profile details

Variable	Unlikely to be influenced		Influenced by personal things		Likely to be influenced		Moderately likely to be influenced	
	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance
Poor customer service by brands has influenced my decisions to boycott a product or service	2.435	1.216	3.849	1.216	4.370	1.216	3.508	1.216
Campaigns that I have been invited to join (e.g. buy nothing day) have influenced my decision to boycott a product or service	1.375	1.031	2.436	1.031	4.104	1.031	3.002	1.031
Friends have influenced my decision to boycott a product or service	1.666	0.787	3.557	0.787	4.409	0.787	3.400	0.787
Stories from people I do not know personally have influenced my decision to boycott a product or service	1.531	0.830	2.901	0.830	4.368	0.830	3.246	0.830
Idols (musicians, movie stars) have influenced my decision to boycott a product or service	1.372	0.845	2.086	0.845	4.284	0.845	3.169	0.845
Bloggers have influenced my decision to boycott a product or service	1.267	0.435	1.517	0.435	4.566	0.435	3.183	0.435
Vloggers have influenced my decision to boycott a product or service	1.332	0.597	1.638	0.597	4.513	0.597	3.289	0.597

Note: All p-values were significant $p < 0.01$.

Table 6 Moderation analysis

	k	*LL*	*#fp*	*AIC*	*BIC*	*SABIC*	*CAIC*
Moderation	4	-25,092.845	72	50,329.691	50,744.994	50,516.236	50,816.994
No moderation	4	-25,111.171	57	50,336.342	50,665.125	50,484.024	50,722.124

Table 8 Percentages for each profile

	Unlikely to be influenced	Influenced by personal things	Likely to be influenced	Moderately likely to be influenced
UK	12%	19.6%	29.9%	38.6%
Finland	23.1%	23.5%	18.1%	35.4%

Table 9 Effects of the covariates on profiles

	Coef.	*p*
Unlikely to be influenced		
Gender (male/female)	-0.041	0.769
Age (years)	0.054	0.004
Education (no college/college)	-0.265	0.074
Employment (other/employed)	-0.667	0.000
Place of residence (rural area/small city or big city)	-0.273	0.040
Influenced by personal things		
Gender (male/female)	0.247	0.062
Age (years)	0.039	0.040
Education (no college/college)	0.184	0.199
Employment (other/employed)	-0.402	0.005
Place of residence (rural area/small city or big city)	0.024	0.854
Likely to be influenced		
Gender (male/female)	-0.337	0.007
Age (years)	0.024	0.171
Education (no college/college)	0.034	0.805
Employment (other/employed)	0.420	0.003
Place of residence (rural area/small city or big city)	0.246	0.053

Note: The reference profile/group is 4 (Moderately likely to be influenced).

Figures

Fig. 5 The chosen model has four classes
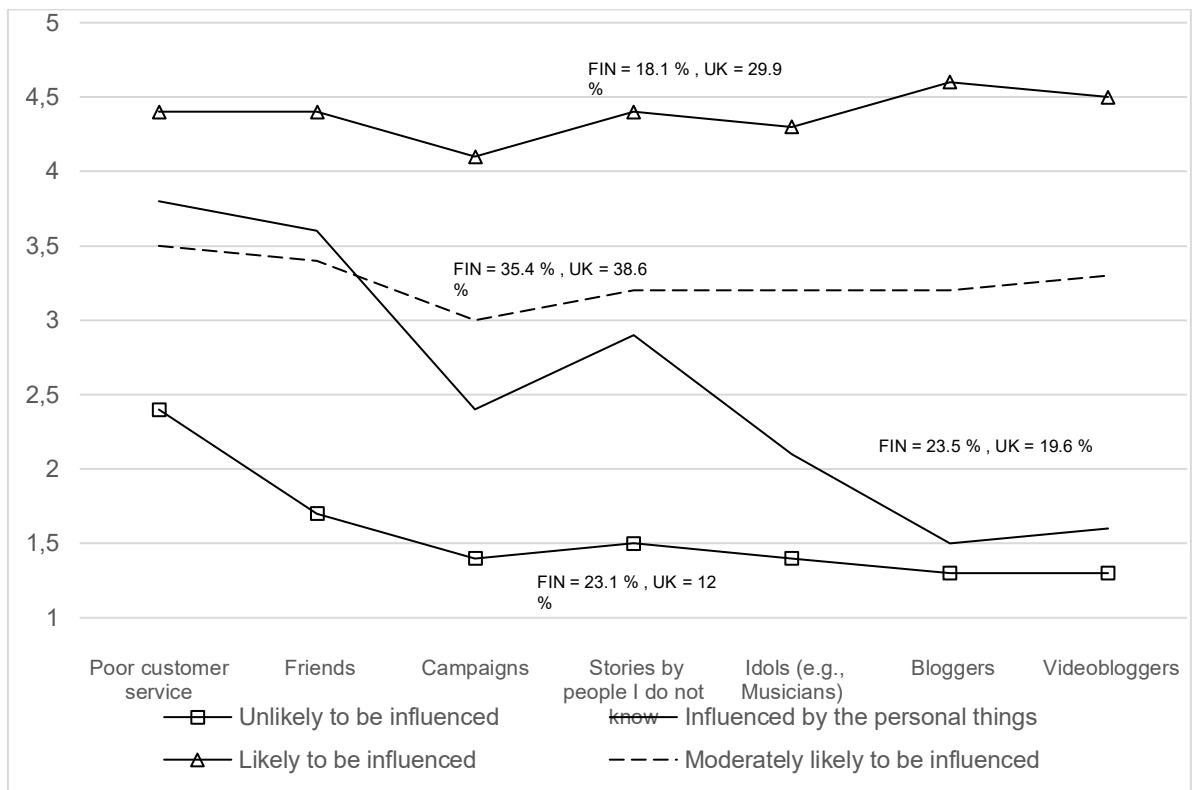
Note: Means from Table 4 were rounded to one decimal.

52