

CANCEL CULTURE AND BOYCOTTING - WHY CONSUMERS PARTICIPATE IN BOYCOTTING COMMERCIAL ENTITIES IN FINLAND, GERMANY, AND THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract <p>This thesis aims to describe how cancel culture and related boycotting tendencies might affect commercial entities, such as brands and businesses. First, earlier research and the descriptive level of cancel culture and boycotting are described. The possible consequences of cancel culture on brands and businesses are explored, and how commercial entities have adapted to the era of cancel culture. The research data is analyzed to determine why survey respondents have previously boycotted someone, as well as whom they have boycotted. The data gathered from university students in Finland (n=225), Germany (n=221), and the United States (n=173) is analyzed using exploratory factor analysis, two-way analysis of variance, and multiple linear regression to find similarities, differences, and boycotting tendencies by comparing the countries' results. Four boycotting factors describes the reasons for boycotting: ethical boycotting, quality boycotting, value boycotting, and nationality boycotting, while brands, social media influencers and organizations are the most boycotted entities. The analysis supports earlier research; young women are the most prominent boycotters, although men were the most active boycotters due to nationality in each of the three countries. Country of residence, gender and age were not the strongest predictors of the respondents' boycott practices indicating that some other reasons would better explain participating in consumer boycotts.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Cancel culture as a phenomenon has been surfacing online, been talked about by the media and generating public conversation for and against, especially in the Western countries. The punitive measure of deplatforming, calling out, ostracizing, and defaming an individual after doing or saying something deemed wrong or outrageous by the social surroundings is not a new concept, but the social media has played important part in creating larger movements of canceling someone or something, such as a company or a brand. The focus of this thesis is on how cancel culture affects commercial entities; thus, boycotting as an action is closely intertwined with customers and political consumers canceling a brand or a company.

The definition of cancel culture has been dividing both social media users and academic scholars for some time. Regardless of the different points of view, it is undeniable that cancel culture appears to have impacted individuals' lives as well as creating online activist troops actively trying to cancel public figures. It is important to look at the etymology of cancel culture as a term. Meredith D. Clark (2020) tracks the term and the act of 'canceling' and therefore 'cancel culture' back to the disempowered people of color and the queer community. Canceling an entity is an intentional act of not giving the cancellee any time, money, or presence due to their actions, inactions, or offensive speech. This was a socially aimed act to have a shared voice for those who lacked the power and presence in the majority dominated society. The term was hijacked by reporters, politicians and Internet users to describe the phenomenon commonly referred as canceling or cancel culture today. (Clark, 2020.)

The current cancel culture atmosphere is defined differently depending on who you ask. Cancel culture has been described as destructive form of critique and means to conduct an ideological purge (Velasco, 2020), as a mean to silence unpopular or contrary opinions and arguments, but also as a way to hold people and companies responsible for their actions or inactions (Mueller, 2021). Today, the difficult-to-define 'cancel culture' is embedded in social media, online activism, public shaming and is a recognizable social phenomenon.

Even though individuals are often the target of canceling, multiple scholars have suggested that a brand or a company can be targeted by canceling as well (Saldanha

et al., 2022). This thesis focuses on consumers' reasons to cancel and boycott commercial entities, such as brands and companies. To understand cancel culture and how the term is being used in this study, we first examine the elements shaping and affecting the phenomenon.

In many Western countries people, groups and societies can demand for public figures, individuals, companies, and brands to be morally, socially, and ecologically responsible for their behavior, products, goods, and services. This affects the relationship and power structure between companies and their customers, as well as the reasons why consumers decide to turn against certain companies. However, for the sake of clarity there will be some relevant examples of how different agents, such as individuals, public figures, companies, and others have been canceled and the responses to cancelling, boycotting, and other social sensitivity issues.

The customers have a say in how goods are marketed, produced, and distributed to the consumers. The companies are viewed as agents who can be and are responsible for what they bring to the market, but also into the society. Archie B. Carroll (1998) described this as corporate citizenship, which requires companies to behave as another agent, or citizen, of the society. Corporate citizens should be profitable, obey the law, engage in ethical behavior and give back to the community, for example through philanthropy (Carroll, 1998).

The expectations of social (and moral) sensitivity are high in today's social climate when the Internet has enabled individuals to access and share information quickly around the globe. The Internet with its different social media and social networking platforms has made it easier for consumers to voice their opinions, approval and disapproval towards companies and brands alongside with spreading global trends and changes of attitudes, cultural norms, and social expectations. At best, the companies can follow up on what the customers' demands are and tweak their business strategies accordingly. The companies also have a chance to communicate with the consumers in a new way, be it within social media platforms, via online advertising, or interactive campaigns such as polls. The call for social sensitivity and being considerate towards the public has garnered popularity online and has embedded these values into many Western societies.

An example of a widespread social phenomena via the Internet is the idea of cultural appropriation. It has become more and more unacceptable for individuals and companies to (mis)represent cultural symbolic attributes which differs from the individual's own culture (Lenard & Balint, 2020). This requires social sensitivity and awareness from companies; they should not exploit or misrepresent cultures or groups of people in their business or marketing.

Arya (2021) underlines the viewpoint of power structures in cultural appropriation; those in power takes or borrows cultural aspects of cultures who does not hold power, such as indigenous people or marginalized groups (Arya, 2021).

A recent example of this – and how the attitudes are changing – was when Finnish singer Chisu posted an apology letter on Instagram for wearing braids hairstyle while filming a popular television show. The hairstyle is considered to have its roots in the afro cultures and Chisu had realized she was wearing similar hairstyle without considering its cultural and historical significance. (Åkman, 2021.) What created an extensive discussion about cultural appropriation was that the singer herself had posted the apology online before anyone had seen the previously filmed episode, thus, expressing her remorse about her actions before anyone could even call her out for her actions. This apparently showed social sensitivity and awareness in the social and political sense, regardless of if her apology was based on avoiding public shaming for wearing the hairstyle considered inappropriate for a white woman to wear, or on her truly believing she had made a mistake and wanting to not support cultural appropriation.

The aspiration of trying not to be offensive towards different cultures, ethnic groups or minorities has become more and more important and contemporary with the rise of the so called woke culture or “wokeism”. Talking about wokeism, we must look at the definition of the term ‘woke.’ The term ‘woke’, according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2017), originates from African American slang describing a person who is aware, questioning current social paradigms and with aspirations of betterment. Woke people recognizes the injustices of the society, especially towards marginalized racial groups. The term gained popularity in 2014 after Mr. Michael Brown was shot in Missouri, USA, and later relating to the Black Lives Matter protests. As many other terms in the past, this term’s definition has fluctuated in public discourse over time. (Merriam-Webster, 2017.)

Today, a woke person is a socially aware individual, who considers social injustices and social power structures in their day-to-day life, noticing behavior such as cultural appropriation or inconsiderate language. Woke thinking has been embedded in corporate and capitalist endeavors as well, which will be explored further in Chapter 2.2. Wokeness has been linked with braveness to openly challenge injustices and those misusing their power (Sobande, 2019). Still, many agree that ‘woke’ and ‘wokeism’ carries negative connotations due to the terms’ fluctuating meaning. Foss and Klein (2022) describe how wokeism is based on Marxist ideas and social constructionism, how it emphasizes the dynamic of victims and oppressors. Individual experience, behavior and responsibilities are overshadowed by group characteristics and current social structures, which oppresses certain groups and are to be deconstructed. They also mention how wokeism is often present in left-wing activism and is “radically egalitarian and moralizing.” (Foss & Klein, 2022.)

There have been discussions about how wokeism is spreading to other parts of society, such as culture. Some products of historical or cultural value, which were

earlier deemed acceptable, have been changed by woke ideals and changing values. This change is visible in campaigns banning old movies, cartoons, books, and such for their inappropriateness in modern Western society. In the United States many historical statues were taken down in 2010's since the men the statues represented were known to have been violating human rights (or even being white supremacists) in their lifetime. Likewise, Confederate statues have been toppled in order to remove oppressive symbols. (Burch-Brown, 2022.) This trend of critically reviewing older literature, cultural work, and demand to ban, cancel or remove them by larger scale seems to have originated from the United States, spreading to other countries over time.

Taking down historical statues, banning movies considered insensitive in today's standards and renaming streets and buildings in order not to commemorate men who did both great and awful things show how society will not accept injustices towards different groups of people. Oppression, exploitation, and abuse will be strongly opposed and judged by the public, whether it is conducted by a politician or a global company. However, it is worth considering how widely we can evaluate historical statements or cultural creations in today's social standards. Human right violations and oppression of minorities are still reprehensible conduct which should be denounced, even if the societies in history have been more accepting or turned a blind eye to this kind of behavior.

If an individual (for example a politician) or a brand behaves in a way deemed socially inappropriate or culturally offensive, they can be called out, boycotted, or even canceled in online platforms, further affecting their reputation and business ventures. This creates a force which may lead to said agents to modify their behavior and adapt it to satisfy the public's demand, although it is reasonable to question whether the discussion online represents the behavior and the attitudes of the wider public. Regardless, there are recent and almost instantaneous responses online to public figures' problematic behavior or online presence, sometimes leading to cancellation of those public figures (Velasco, 2020).

Considering that canceling can heavily affect an individual or a company and their reputation, it is regarded as something to avoid. However, it becomes problematic when different actors choose to censor themselves and others, and quite often the concept of freedom of speech is juxtaposed with cancel culture, for example in academia. It usually requires a large public backlash to make canceling effective, which then might encourage mob mentality. In the United States the juridical system expects the persecuted to be innocent until proven guilty. What will follow if someone is considered guilty until proven innocent? In canceling campaigns, the burden of proof for innocence is often handed to the cancellee, which sometimes is a justified action, but sometimes is not.

Furthermore, if the focus of wokeism and activist campaigns goes from demanding equality at workplace or requiring fair treatment of different individuals into canceling campaigns banning movies and toppling statues, it could result in shifting the focus into certain semantics, rallying mobs of people to get angry at one individual without researching the potential offence in depth. For example, American college swimmer Riley Gaines was invited to speak about her experiences in professional women's swimming at San Francisco State University in 2023. She gave a speech about her individual experiences regarding competing in the sport before and after a transgender swimmer started competing in women's swimming, and how it impacted her career and placements on the podiums. Regardless of her being invited to speak, a protest rally was held during the speech, after which the protestors rallied the room. According to Ms. Gaines, the protestors claimed that she was being transphobic and threatening her with violence until the campus security escorted her into a separate room. They had to wait for hours until police officers came to escort Ms. Gaines out of the campus. (Lyerly, 2023.)

This example demonstrates how quickly the question of free speech becomes topical, since in this case, Ms. Gaines had a right to share her experiences, while the demonstrators had the right to protest the event. However, threats of aggression or trying to heckle any speaker into silence does not promote discussion or debate, but further creates a power dynamic where only some topics, opinions, or themes are deemed acceptable to discuss in public, while other topics or viewpoints are encouraged to be suppressed.

Further in this thesis, the relationship between businesses and customers is investigated in Chapter 2; how companies and brands evolve and react in the era of cancel culture and how individuals operate in canceling and boycotting their targets. In Chapter 3, a case example of Russia boycotts in Finland is reviewed to demonstrate how far and wide the public backlash and punitive demands can spread from the consumers. Chapter 4 focuses on the methodology and describing the survey data analyzed in this study. The data was gathered from university students in Finland, Germany and the United States regarding respondents' canceling and boycotting tendencies. The survey data was analyzed using factor analysis, two-way analysis of variance, and linear regression analysis in order to answer three research questions:

1. *Why respondents boycott commercial entities?*
2. *What effects do respondents' country of residence, age and gender have on participating in boycotting?*
3. *What kind of differences or similarities there are in between the three research countries?*

Chapter 5 consists of analysis and results, while Chapter 6 is reserved for the final conclusions and discussion.

2 CONSUMERS INTERACTING ONLINE AND OFFLINE WITH COMPANIES IN THE AGE OF CANCEL CULTURE

Canceling a public figure or a company is often linked to online environments and collective action. In order to create a public backlash and online movement, there is a requirement for the individuals to have a common cause and means to express their opinion – some shared agency. Shared agency consists of individuals willing to cooperate to do or achieve something together while sharing similar beliefs or goals. The shared, collective agency somewhat surpasses the individual agency. (Gilbert, 2006.)

Shared agency can be something as small as singing together with a friend, or something bigger such as protesting together in front of a city hall, but it can also manifest in large online hashtag campaigns such as #MeToo, or Black Lives Matter type of online activism (regardless of if these online activists organize demonstrations on the streets as well). One of the most known examples of a widespread social justice phenomenon is the #MeToo movement, which begun in 2017 on Twitter. On Twitter (now called X), actress Alyssa Milano asked for other victims of sexual assault or harassment to reply “Me too” to her tweet, and the #MeToo hashtag started trending on Twitter as others, indeed, started sharing their experiences and demonstrating support for the actress and other victims of sexual misconduct (Lee & Murdie, 2021). The hashtag was used around social media platforms millions of times as people shared their experiences.

The online activism campaign brought awareness on the topic of sexual harassment in the workplace and eventually, about sexual harassment in general. There were widespread public discussions regarding why and how people (mostly women) must face sexual harassment in their lives, and what should be done about it. In their study, Lee and Murdie (2021) studied the global dissemination of the #MeToo movement and found that regardless of countries with Internet accessibility and other tools, there were other more important factors explaining why #MeToo movement spread

heavily to some countries and not so much to others. They concluded that political openness provided space for a feminist online movement. If domestic political environment oppresses freedom of speech and lacks protection of minority groups, online activism is not encouraged. (Lee & Murdie, 2021.)

In the United States the #MeToo movement impacted some celebrities who were accused of sexual harassment, such as movie producer Harvey Weinstein, singer R. Kelly, and comedian Louis C.K. They, alongside others of being accused of sexual harassment or even worse actions, were subjected to getting cancelled by the public (Ng, 2020). The men accused and convicted of misconduct were powerful and wealthy, but this did not protect them from being prosecuted by their victims and the public. The social environment made it possible for the victims of sexual harassment and abuse to have shared agency, to speak out against those who wronged them, showing that those in power cannot run from the consequences of their actions. It also sparked important conversations about how people should be treated at workplace environments, including how those in higher positions should treat their employees.

Cancel culture and the act of canceling someone has been linked to the presence and the platforms of social media in multiple studies. On the one hand, social media enables social movements and digital participation. On the other hand, it is easy to participate in online activism while these cancelers might not consider the real-life consequences of their actions. (Velasco, 2020.) Originating from social networking sites, the social media has enabled people from around the world and of different socio-economic statuses to participate in discussions and social engagement online. Cancel culture is embedded in social media and demonstrates the changing and relatively loose norms of social acceptability and social rules. Through public shaming and calling out the wrongdoers, the conversations online are opened to the views and opinions of everyone participating, not only for those in power. (Velasco, 2020.)

The participation in online discussions and public shaming does not require a lot of effort from an individual, but it is important to keep in mind that social media and online activism provides a way for minorities and marginalized groups to get together and speak out.

Online activism, as the term suggests, refers to social activism in an online environment. It requires social networks and a digital platform for the activists to use and share their message. In the context of cancel culture, social online activism and online discussions are therefore heavily linked to the phenomena. Pippa Norris (2023) suggests that social media in itself is not a driving force of cancel culture, but it reinforces and enables the canceling itself (Norris, 2023).

Online activism can be as benign as sharing a hashtag and thus showing support for a cause or joining an activist group online, or sharing posts, videos or pictures relating to the subject at hand. It is a relatively trouble-free way to participate in social

activism, yet it might not be very effective. Online activism can be more expedient, too, with active online discussions, forming campaigns and spreading the word in different platforms. This idea is enforced in a case study focusing on Taiwanese social media users, who participated in online conversation about a canceled Chinese actor. They were asked about what accounts for cancel culture, and most of the interviewees considered actions done through social media as a factor. Similarly, they noted the relative easiness of participating in canceling through sharing posts online. (Tandoc et al., 2022.)

Heavy online presence and actively following cancel culture and related online trends may lead to the formation of echo chambers. Depending on the users' behavior on social media platforms, the algorithm suggests similar posts in users' feed. Additionally, a 2019 study found that social media users with strongly polarized belief systems create social networks mainly with like-minded people, supporting the shared beliefs and creating confirmation bias, while simultaneously actively avoiding any challenging opinions within the group (Brugnoli et al., 2019). In the same study, the researchers concluded that the social media users themselves might have stronger impact in creating echo chambers than the algorithms alone. This could lead to biases and skewed perceptions about what people are talking about, only showing certain viewpoints of the topic in the user feed. In an echo chamber, there could be unfounded presumptions about how other people are feeling regarding a topic or what kind of narratives are dominating regarding different issues.

Therefore, as information spreads quickly and far, individual social media users might not have the resources or willingness to fact check the information, especially if their social network is supporting or spreading said information. In the context of cancel culture or calls for boycotts, the peer pressure to participate might become more important factor, overlooking an in-depth analysis of why someone or something is being canceled or boycotted. Peer pressure aside, it could be that at some level cancel culture and active political consumerism might be connected to feelings of doing the right thing or being on the right side of things.

In another example, a study shows that many individuals who joined and supported Causes.com's Facebook campaign in raising funds for helping people in Darfur, did not recruit or donate for the cause regardless of supporting it online (Lewis et al., 2014). This brings about the question whether online activists are truly aiming to support a certain cause or oppose another, or if they merely act so in order to seem socially aware for their social environment, or without any in-depth analysis regarding their actions.

Tandoc et al. (2022) found in their study that the action of canceling could be passive or active. Passive actions are not public and will not show on a persons' social media usage. Active actions refers to public means to cancel someone, including

sharing or liking posts, signing petitions and commenting the situation online. (Tandoc et al., 2022.) With this line of thought, passive canceling actions include things such as boycotting a company, where active cancelling actions can include boycotting, but also requires participation in public bashing and discussion about the canceled individual or company.

2.1 Boycotting

Boycotting can be seen as political consumerism, critical consumption, and consumer activism. Those boycotting a company choose not to purchase their goods or services, but also urges other consumers to do the same (Friedman, 1985, p. 97). The decision to boycott a company is considered as a punishment or a way to force them to change their business practices and to give a negative connotation to the company. On the other hand, buycotting is a form of rewarding a company for having positive business practices. Boycotting and buycotting are linked to consumers' political or ethical values and demonstrating them actively through consuming choices (Copeland, 2014). In this thesis, the focus is on boycotting.

Research about political consumers' boycotting profile found that European boycotters were most often female, young and with higher education. They also were avid mobile communication and internet users, indicating that they followed current topics and discussions disseminating online. (Mata et al., 2023.) In addition, in the same study it was found that more time spent engaged in following political and current affairs lowered the consumers' probability of participating in boycotting, thus suggesting that some people might boycott different entities due to peer pressure instead of finding proper information themselves (Mata et al., 2023). As described in the previous chapter, social media usage provides information in a quick phase, but also connects like-minded people together. The pressure and willingness to be a part of and to be accepted by certain social groups can build online, but also in face-to-face contact with peers.

The influence of social groups for young consumers and their participation in boycotting has been studied recently, finding four profiles for young consumer boycotters in Finland and the UK. The four profiles consisted of unlikely to be influenced, influenced by personal things, likely to be influenced, and moderately likely to be influenced. (Tuominen et al., 2023.) This shows that there are different motivations and influences on individual boycotting decisions, whether they are motivated by peers, social media personalities, or individual experiences with e.g. poor customer service.

In addition, research shows that members of marginalized and underrepresented groups tend to support boycotts and social movements, describing the power relations as a possible motive for boycotts (Gardberg & Newburry, 2013).

As argued earlier, the effects of cancel culture and the act of canceling targets individuals more often than businesses, or even global companies. Still, the latter have historically experienced consumer boycotts (Hawkins, 2010). The basic idea is that if more consumers are boycotting a company, the more impact it will have on the company's finances, thus boycotting can be used as a tool to influence a company's business practices. Boycotts can also bring attention to environmental problems or injustices towards people who are being directly or indirectly negatively affected by a company's practices, for example breaking workers' rights or unfair treatment of employees in developing countries (Copeland, 2014). Often a boycott is fueled by outrage from the consumers, thus, boycotting can be a highly emotional response (Lindenmeier et al., 2012).

A company might find itself under a boycott by affiliating with a disliked or denounced public figure. For example, in 2023 an American Anheuser-Busch brewing company faced widespread boycotts from anti-trans and right-wing consumers after collaborating with transgender social media influencer Dylan Mulvaney. The company's product Bud Light was the highest-selling beer in the United States, but the sales temporarily plummeted after Ms. Mulvaney posted a promotional video of her drinking a Bud Light beer on her Instagram page. This led to calls for boycott online, which manifested soon in the products' sales figures. Later, two of the Anheuser-Busch's marketing executives took a leave of absence, and the company announced that they will shift their marketing focus to music and sports. (Holpuch, 2023.)

After the public backlash and plummeting sales, the brewing company changed their strategies indicating that the consumers' dissatisfaction of their actions and the following boycott had an actual effect on the company, regardless that the sales were impacted for only a short time. Moreover, it seems that the willingness to collaborate with a transgender influencer was a way for the company to connect with a new consumer base instead of a true act of brand activism; Anheuser-Busch decided to turn their marketing strategies to a more traditional approach instead of doubling down in their stance to affiliate (and promote) transgender rights and imagery.

There are many different aspects related to cancel culture and the ways how the public and the consumers act, react and retaliate against socially insensitive behavior of individuals, companies, and brands. In this study, the definition of cancel culture is lent from Saldanha, Mulye and Rahman, since their definition is applicable to the listed aspects of cancel culture. Cancel culture is *"collective desire by consumers to withdraw support of those individuals and brands in power, perceived to be involved in objectionable behavior or activities through the use of social media"* (Saldanha et al., 2022, p. 1072).

Saldanha, Mulye and Rahman (2022) agreed that canceling a brand or a company reaches beyond traditional boycotting, since the act of canceling aims to reduce power from the offender, but also to publicly shaming the offender online (Saldanha et al., 2022). Boycotting a brand or a company is part of canceling it, but for it to be canceled, the company must be shamed and called out by the consumers.

The concepts of the Bandwagon effect, woke washing and brand activism are examined more in the next chapters, bringing us to the matter of companies' and brands' response to social sensitivity in public conversations, against the backdrop of cancel culture. It is safe to assume that some brands and companies are more inclined to get involved in social issues and underline their values supporting social responsibilities, than others. The changing societal values are conveyed towards companies by consumers, but also by other companies choosing to participate and take a stand on social issues. These strategies could be implemented due to the commercial entities and enterprises wanting to make a societal change, or due to wanting to stay relevant and on top of current topics, or perhaps to reach certain new demographics as potential customers.

2.2 The Bandwagon effect, Corporate wokeism and Woke washing

The classic theory of the Bandwagon effect by H. Leibenstein proposes that many consumers' motivation to buy and consume certain products is affected not only by individuals' own preferences, but by what others around them are buying and consuming (Leibenstein, 1950, p. 184). The basic idea is that when certain people or large number of people are consuming specific products, those products become desirable to other consumers as well. This theory could also be used to analyze social human behavior as well since there are many aspects in life being shaped by our social surroundings and by the human need to belong in a social group.

Not only attitudes and values are being reconstructed and re-shaped in societies, but also individuals' narratives, thoughts and policies are affected by the opinions of others. It is understandable that as social creatures, people are inclined to fit in with their social groups or try to resemble one social group and distinguish themselves from others (for example through fashion or consumption choices).

In her study, Norris (2023) perceived how the experienced rise of cancel culture and silencing opposing views and thoughts could be predicted by the prevalent cultural norms of a country. It appeared that in highly traditional cultures, with strict rules regarding sex, religion and other norms considered conservative, the liberal academic professionals felt as though they were being canceled or silenced. Similarly,

academic professionals holding conservative values in liberal Western countries felt as though they were not being able to voice their opinions and thoughts freely. (Norris, 2023.) In today's online platforms it is relatively easy to find others who share one's values, ideas, and political opinions, but also to find new ideas and ideologies that one may not have heard of before.

It is obvious that the people one has daily interactions with affects individuals' decision making and world view. With all these differing social environments it could be easy to agree with the dominating attitudes and opinions within each social environment - whether they are true or perceived, especially in an online environment or a closed group.

It could be argued that for example, a consumer could have never seen an item desirable until someone they look up to gets a similar item, and therefore the individual wants to get the item as well. Likewise, people might listen to the thoughts and ideas of someone they are looking up to and adopt their thoughts and ideas, implementing them into their own life. Yet especially in an online environment it is easy for someone to merely *say* they are supporting something (e.g., political agenda or a world view) instead of *acting* in a way that agrees with what they are saying or claiming to support. For some, the want or need to fit in with a group might motivate them to support certain agendas, regardless of what they personally are thinking about them, thus jumping on the bandwagon.

For organizations and companies, the bandwagon effect might mean getting aboard with the mainstream opinions without taking real action. Some companies can communicate that they agree with one value, world view, or agenda, and disagree with another. Thus far it has been relatively easy to support different ideologies and causes via social media using symbols: one can show the colors of the Pride flag to show support for LGBTQ+ community or put a Black Lives Matter (BLM) tag on their web page to show support for the movement. In general, it has been easier for companies to show their opinions and values to the public via social media, but this is not a guarantee that the companies' practices are in line with their public values.

Foss and Klein (2023) suggest that despite the negative connotations of wokeism it could paradoxically represent youthful hope and optimism; therefore, companies can jump on the woke bandwagon in order to maintain positive brand image and acceptability from the younger consumers (Foss & Klein, 2023). Since younger generations tend to be savvier with social media platforms, certain companies might want to avoid possible public backlashes, boycotts or getting canceled by promoting woke ideas and representation, assuming that the younger consumers support them too.

There are some earlier studies conducted about this phenomenon, namely studies on virtue signaling and the so called woke washing. Evan Westra (2021) defines virtue signaling as

“[...] The act of engaging in public moral discourse in order to enhance or preserve one's moral reputation. Typical examples of virtue signaling might include an individual making a social media post vehemently condemning some offensive action taken by a public figure, or a brand launching a marketing campaign that invokes themes of social justice. [...] One engages in virtue signaling in the hopes of seeing one's moral reputation improve in the eyes of one's peers (or potential customers); the desire to make a constructive, sincere contribution to public moral discourse is at best a secondary motivation” (Westra, 2021).

It appears that as companies are using Corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies to clarify their actions and the consequences of said actions, they also use CSR to sharpen their image in the eyes of the consumers (Gray et al., 2020). This seems to be useful: a survey study showed that if a company was to face a challenge with their CSR – specifically with their sustainability tactics – and they would indirectly assess the problem (e.g., focusing on improving other part of sustainability of their business, but not the one facing the challenge), it would still improve the company's reputation and social license to operate (SLO)¹. (Gray et al., 2020.) CSR is discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter.

The abovementioned study suggests that if a company would be challenged for any of the CSR themes (environmental, ethical, or human rights etc.), it could be beneficial for the company to virtue signal and redirect the focus by doing something similar without truly changing their policies or business tactics in order to address the challenge or an issue. For example, if a manufacturing company is being accused of human rights violations in their factory, they could promise to better the work environment and donate money to support a human rights cause, showing that they truly care about the issue. But if the company's practices are not being monitored, there is a chance the company will not change their bad practices.

During the era of cancel culture and targeting actors who are deemed inappropriate, many companies have been forced to re-review their values, approaches, methods of operations, and what kind of message they are disseminating to their consumer base. The problem lies in that – like greenwashing – there has been observations about companies trying to appear more socially sensitive and responsible, without showing anything robust to prove that they are actually doing so. This is called *woke washing*. (Vredenburg et al., 2020.)

Foss and Klein (2022) conducted a comprehensive review on how and why companies “go woke,” adopting woke ideologies into their practices or public image today. Foss and Klein observed that woke capitalism and woke companies have emerged rapidly in a relatively short time, yet this has not been studied much. They drew connections between implementing CSR and companies adopting woke ideals, even though these are separate tactics and strategies (Foss & Klein, 2022). They suggested

¹ For further information about SLO, see Joel Gehman, Lianne M. Lefsrud & Stewart Fast (2017): Social License to Operate: Legitimacy by another name? <https://doi.org/10.1111/capa.12218>

that companies' middle-management (including HR personnel and PR) have power to push companies to go woke by implementing Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies in their hiring, training, and operating culture, e.g. hiring people from marginalized groups. DEI strategies are encouraged by governments (especially in the United States) and sometimes by stakeholders and shareholders, however, the owners and upper management of the company might not care or internalize these woke or DEI values. It was also noted that companies going woke are not guaranteed to increase their profits, but many of them still decide to go woke either for normative or instrumental reasons. (Foss & Klein, 2022.) It has been observed that many companies have decided to implement woke ideologies in their operations, but there have been notions on how some companies might virtue signal by promoting their DEI strategies to appear 'woke'.

Some companies have been called out for woke washing, which could be seen as a form of virtue signaling explained above. As an industry, fast fashion clothing is considered a prime example of woke washing. The many female workers in developing countries making fast fashion items are rarely paid fair wages and the working conditions are often in dire need of improvement. Vacations and sick leaves are a rarity. When the brands notorious for their fast fashion business model posted on social media to celebrate International Women's Day, the backlash was rather quick from online activists and consumers alike. The hypocrisy of these companies prompts call-out campaigns and boycotts targeting fast fashion brands, especially online. (Paterek, 2021.)

In 2017, soft drink brand Pepsi found itself in the eye of the storm after publishing an advertisement trivializing BLM imagery, leading Pepsi to face criticism and allegations of committing woke washing (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Every so often consumers consider companies' and brands' efforts as woke washing, virtue signaling or trying to remain relevant by seemingly taking a stand on social, political, or other current issues. Problem is, if the brands do this just for the show, the consumers might not buy into their schemes - it even seems as though social issues have become a buzzword and a trend for companies to go with for appearances.

It is important to point out that some companies take part in brand activism, actively joining and taking a stand in moral, ethical, and political discussions. As Vredenburg et al. (2020) suggest, real brand activism requires the company to intentionally incorporate their stands into values by which the company operates. The researchers also differentiate genuine brand activism from CSR strategies. Even though CSR should and could help the company be transparent in their operations, genuine brand activism truly is transparent, in which case the actions are in accordance with the declared values and promises. Some brands choose to participate in brand activism even if their stand could alienate some consumers who dislikes the brand's chosen

stance (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Brand activism is about taking concrete actions regarding an issue or a cause, while woke washing is merely appearing as though a brand is doing something, true goal being increasing sales or betterment of the brand image.

2.3 CSR and how it is measured

The importance of CSR has been acknowledged over the years in the business world. Social responsibility is an umbrella term which includes themes such as employers' safety, equality, human rights, and the organization's role in a society (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010). This underlines that the ethics and values of a company are brought into light not only for the customers, but also for the stakeholders and for everyone to see, seemingly creating transparency on how the companies functions and on what basis.

Keith Davis (1960) described social responsibility of a businessman as two-faced; the businessman has an obligation towards the community as an employer, providing jobs and creating welfare in the area, but also as an entity to "nurture human values" (Davis, 1960). Davis also thought at the time, that social responsibility was rarely a driving force behind business decisions, but that the more weighing reason behind decision making is economical.

Since CSR is a broad term involving different aspects, there are also plenty of definitions for it. The European Commission defines CSR as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society ... integrating social, environmental, ethical, consumer, and human rights concerns into their business strategy and operations" (European Commission, 2022). The definition is found under Sustainability subtopic on the European Commission's web page and is hence seen to be intertwined with the value of sustainability.

There are multiple institutions and different agents who accumulates data regarding CSR in different countries. For example, a corporate sustainability network Finnish Business & Society (FIBS) has conducted sustainability research and provided information and guidance of matters regarding to sustainability for Finnish companies since the early 2000's. The social responsibility of companies is often measured and reviewed via companies' own accounting of their aims, strategies, and outcomes. Sustainability accounting includes the company's methods to achieve their own sustainability goals, while sustainability report rounds up the company's sustainability performance and perhaps even the outcome. Together both sustainability accounting and report can provide a clear picture on why, how and if the company executes their sustainability goals. (Kaur & Lodhia, 2018.)

FIBS has been conducting research on sustainability and responsibility of Finnish companies yearly since 2013. Their survey results from 2021 shows that 76% of the participating companies has a corporate responsibility manager or director. Interestingly, 97% of the companies believes they have a positive impact on the environment and/or society. Most companies thought that focusing on sustainability has business benefits that outweigh the resources used to ensure it, however this covers all aspects of sustainability – not necessarily just the social aspect of responsibility. (Finnish Business & Society, 2021.) It seems that the companies are considering being sustainable and responsible as something that increases their reputation and value. This suggests why the companies might put efforts on their CSR strategies, yet they might focus on environmental or economical aspects of it more than the social aspect.

It has also been questioned whether active CSR actions and strategies are beneficial for the shareholders and owners of the company, or whether they are truly motivated by altruistic intentions (Jha & Cox, 2015).

2.4 Business marketing

When it comes to organizations and businesses operating and, generally, existing as a part of a socio-cultural realm, they in part shape the cultural and social realities, but in turn are being shaped and affected by them (Giddens & Sutton, 2017, p. 8).

As described earlier, the canceling campaign often targets an individual, a public figure. This individual might have commercial collaborations with a company, and this company could then in turn be called out, boycotted, or canceled for their relations with this canceled individual. For example, if a company hires a celebrity to promote their products in a large advertisement campaign, but the person in question is being called out by the public for doing or saying something unacceptable, the company might find itself in a situation where they must remove the face of the said person from the advertisement campaign, and perhaps even distance themselves from the celebrity altogether. This could also apply when a company or a brand is sponsoring a canceled public figure, leading to the public demanding that the sponsorship is terminated. This is the objective of the cancel culture: to ostracize and publicly shame the targeted individual to apologize for or to change their behavior. And if this is not enough, the aim might change to deplatform the individual, whether it is by trying to get them to lose their jobs or to be stripped of their achievements and fame. (Saint-Louis, 2021.)

As demonstrated earlier, it might be fair to claim that companies have been boycotted more in the past, rather than being at the risk of getting canceled completely:

surely companies and businesses have more financial resources and other coping mechanisms when they are faced with public outrage, at least compared to one individual. However, the greater concept of social sensitivity and call out culture must create some pressure towards the companies and businesses, should they not keep an eye on how sociocultural norms and values are changing. Costa and Azevedo (2023) found in their study that canceling a company often does not aim to get rid of certain companies completely, but instead, make them change their practices or to apologize and explain their actions (Costa & Azevedo, 2024).

As Saldanha, Mulye and Rahman (2022) describes, brands have been canceled due to business decisions which seems to go against the company ethical values (Saldanha et al., 2022). They connected the act of canceling into power dynamics between consumers and celebrities as well as between consumers and companies. In their study, the researchers tries to find a way for companies not to get canceled in this time where, according to surveys, increasing number of consumers wants brands to support different causes through donations and even to facilitate (social) change (Saldanha et al., 2022). Through canceling and boycotting, the consumers can take away some power from the brands, showing effective consequences for unwanted actions.

Companies have been effective in harnessing different social media platforms to their advance, although much of the canceling and call out conversations happens in the same social media platforms, too. According to Heller Baird and Parasnis (2011), businesses have been adapting to the realm of social media by creating strategies of social customer relationship management instead of just managing the customers, with the objective of being able to discuss with the customers and create dialogues (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

In their study Heller Baird and Parasnis surveyed and interviewed both customers and company executives about what they do in the social media platforms, as well as what their expectations are regarding to how customers or companies are using them. The results were interesting considering the realization that there were misperceptions as to why companies believed the consumers were engaging with them on a social media platform: the companies believed that the social media interaction will increase loyalty towards the company, when only one third of the consumers thought that this was the case. (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011.)

This could signal that the companies should focus on finding out what the customers truly are looking for and what they value in order to match the customers' needs. This, if something, is potentially easy to do in an online environment, where big data is gathered and companies' representatives can follow the trends, but also be mindful about the conversations and the changing cultural values and norms.

In today's online environment multiple companies utilize online influencers to promote their brand, such as YouTubers, streamers, or fashion influencers on

Instagram. These individuals usually have a follower base on their chosen platform, granting visibility to the company and their product when marketed and promoted by the online personality. Utilizing influencers is not a new phenomenon since companies have used celebrities as the faces of their brands and goods in marketing for many decades (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). However, a small 2019 study shows that Instagram influencers were considered more relatable and trustworthy when promoting a product or a service, than a celebrity promoting the same product or service (Atiq et al., 2022), making them a lucrative marketing opportunity for small and big businesses alike.

2.5 Parasocial capital

Social media influencers hold parasocial or influential capital. This has its roots in parasocial relationships. Parasocial relationships are, in simple terms, experienced when a viewer watches a TV show or a YouTube personality's videos regularly, and over time finds the character relatable, as though the viewer knows them. Parasocial relationship is one-sided, since the actor playing a TV show character, or the YouTube personality himself does not actually interact personally with the viewer. (Reinikainen, 2019, pp. 103–104.) This barrier has been blurred in the past few years after social media platforms have made it possible for viewers, fans and followers to comment and react to distant influencers' or celebrities' posts and videos, and they in turn can react to the viewers' comments or messages. Nevertheless, parasocial relationships are rather one-sided, distant, and built through consuming content created by someone, whom the viewer or consumer does not know or personally interact with as in traditional personal relationships.

A social media influencer has parasocial capital when their followers have a strong sense of parasocial relationship with the influencer. It is connected to the sense of trustworthiness and credibility of the influencer, and the sense of parasocial relationship can increase when the influencer chats with their followers or shares personal information with them. (Reinikainen, 2019, p. 107.) The same applies for brands and companies – the stronger parasocial relationship with the consumers, the more trustworthy the brand seems.

Instead of building parasocial relations with their consumers - which can be time consuming - a company can cooperate with an influencer and thus use his or her parasocial capital. If the influencer's follower base finds them trustworthy and reliable, they might be interested in the products or services which the influencer is marketing. (Reinikainen, 2019, p. 107.) To hold or build parasocial capital is a question of

balancing; if the influencer is constantly promoting brands and businesses, the followers might lose their interest and the parasocial relationship weakens, making parasocial capital fluid and into something that requires upholding. Also, if the influencer's reputation is tainted, the brand or company might lose some of their reputation in the eyes of followers or consumers, at least if they continue their liaisons with that influencer. At times, influencers and social media personalities have been canceled by the public, resulting in influencers losing multiple commercial cooperations with different brands.

Notably, an influencer with strong parasocial capital can also call out companies that he or she finds worth canceling or boycotting, whether it is due to personal displeasure regarding the company, or due to knowledge about e.g. bad practices of the company. The followers might turn against the companies and create public backlash online, which could lead to larger canceling campaign. This is important because if the influencer has merely a personal vendetta against a company and they rally their followers against it, it could damage the company's reputation. Therefore, influencers or online personalities with strong parasocial capital holds some power in the online platforms.

The companies and influencers operating in online environments with their own goals and reasons must be careful and thoughtful about what they are releasing to the public, how they present themselves and to which audiences they are targeting their content. It is also noteworthy to remember that once something is put on the Internet for the world to see, it usually stays there. This is how old comments and posts can be found, and should the posts contain questionable content, they might resurface to the public scrutiny, affecting the companies and individuals later.

2.6 The consequences of canceling

So far, the theoretical background has examined social concepts, examples of how individuals or companies have been canceled, and how companies could adapt their marketing aiming to counter the possibility of getting canceled.

What motivates people to participate in canceling? So far, cancel culture has been linked to holding others accountable, calling out wrongdoers and demonstrating social values. It is also a way of coming together as a group and reclaiming power. In their case study, Tandoc et al. found that seeing others canceling someone affected some individuals' decision to participate in the same activity. Some interviewees also mentioned that canceling a powerful individual is a way of taking back some of his or her power. (Tandoc et al., 2022.) It seems like participating in canceling and

supporting cancel culture is thought as a concrete mean to hold people, companies, and brands responsible.

In the same study, some canceling participants saw cancel culture as a tool to educate others, as well as punishing those who deserved it (Tandoc et al., 2022). Thus, the negative implications of uncalled for or too hasty canceling should not be overlooked. One can be threatened with getting canceled, or canceling campaign can be started before there is actual proof of the cancel target's misbehavior or wrongdoing.

Through different examples described in this thesis, it is clear that canceling has a true impact on those getting canceled, whether it is companies getting boycotted and losing revenue or individuals losing their jobs, sponsorships, and being defamed altogether. It can be difficult to associate publicly with a canceled individual or brand after they have been ostracized, and there is no promise of getting one's public image repaired or being forgiven by the public.

Some suggest that cancel culture leads to destroyed reputations and mental health problems and plays a part in creating negative online environment. It seems that some people participate in cancel culture for virtue signaling and, like demonstrated earlier, it is quite easy to participate in online activism through clicks and sharing posts. The real consequences to those getting canceled, whether they deserve it or not, are not very well researched, but it can lead to loss of jobs, reputation and worsening mental health. Some critics of cancel culture mention that those who are getting canceled are people, too, and prone to make mistakes. Cancel culture participants should consider if the punishment fits the crime. (Wychunas, 2021.)

3 CANCELING A NATION?

After Russian armed forces started a full-scale military operation aimed at Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022, the Russian state and businesses found themselves under heavy scrutiny from the Western countries.

The reasons for these aggressions were explained when Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed that the Russians and Russian speaking citizens in Ukraine have been subjected to abuse and even genocide, which requires “peace-keeping operation” and “demilitarization” of Ukraine (Center for Preventive Action, 2024). The leaders in Kremlin have also voiced their displeasure with Ukraine’s strive for joining the political and military alliance NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the European Union, while openly disliking the current leadership and the President of Ukraine. According to Mr. Putin, the goal is not to invade Ukraine, but rather to demilitarize Ukraine and former Soviet countries all while ordering troops to attack the country from land, air, and sea. Surely, the underlying issues behind the conflict between Russia and Ukraine dates back to the annexation of Crimea and the Crimean crisis in 2014, and the relations between the neighboring countries have remained tense since then.

Regardless of President Putin’s reasoning behind starting the invasion, the West has condemned it considering Mr. Putin’s actions unjust. The European Union and the United States were quick to impose a range of sanctions against Russia. The EU and the US both imposed sanctions on Russia already in 2014 during the Crimean crisis, but these sanctions have been expanded since Russia recognized the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk, as well as after the invasion of Ukraine started in 2022 (European Commission, 2024; U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2024).

The restrictive sanctions have included but are not limited to banning Russia to access the EU’s capital and financial markets and services, prohibiting trading energy refinery goods and technologies to and from Russia, freezing the assets of some Russian individuals and entities (such as President Putin and the Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov), and banning the overflight of EU airspace and access to EU airports of

Russian carriers of all kinds (Liboreiro, 2022). Against this backdrop it is not surprising that multiple large and smaller companies decided to either leave Russian marketplaces or cease cooperation with the country altogether in order to stop money flooding into Russia's war efforts, to condemn the actions of Russia and to show loyalty towards Ukraine. After the first companies started reporting their leave from Russia, the public demand grew for the remaining companies trading in and with Russia to follow the others' lead and show their support for Ukraine (Sonnenfeld et al., 2023).

This shows the relevance of these events considering this study – a human rights violation, unfair treatment and military aggression has led to many other countries and businesses to turn their backs on Russia, ostracizing and publicly shaming the Russian government. Many other countries have decided not to affiliate with Russia altogether, which was clearly demonstrated when Russian competitors were banned for participating in Eurovision song contest (The European Broadcasting Union, 2022), the Olympic games (IOC Executive Board, 2023), and many other sports tournaments, such as Ice Hockey World Championship (IIHF, 2022) and FIFA and UEFA football tournaments (FIFA/UEFA, 2022).

From here on, the focus will be on the Finnish companies and their actions regarding the situation.

3.1 Boycotting Russian products, brands, and businesses

Considering cancel culture and its relationship with company policies introduced in the earlier chapters of this thesis, we can compartmentalize some of the reactions from many Western nations and repercussions of Russia attacking Ukraine.

Surely, the sanctions imposed by the EU and the US have influenced companies as to how to manage their business with Russia. For Finland, as a member state of EU, the decisions made by EU matters the most. Russia (and formerly the Soviet Union) has been an important trading partner with Finland over the years, and the decision to cease some or all trading and operations with Russia most likely will have a financial impact on many of the companies. These companies include names like technology giant Nokia, forestry companies Stora Enso, Metsä Group, and UPM, and retail business SOK which has sixteen large grocery stores and three hotels in Russia. Trading field company Kesko has stopped buying and selling products of Russian origin, and the state-owned alcohol distributor Alko has stopped selling Russian alcoholic beverages (Mauno, 2023). The list continues, but there are some companies which have not been able to completely leave Russia, such as power company Fortum, which has twelve power plants in Russia. Fortum has a long history cooperating and trading

with Russia, and to be able to produce energy and inherently continue their business, they cannot leave the country. However, they have decided to stop new investments and buying coal, pellets, and biofuels from Russia (Fortum, 2022).

The public demand for companies to end business in Russia has been quite strong in Finland. For example, Finnish company Fazer, which manufactures confectionary and bakery products, was scrutinized online and about to be boycotted by the customers after the company declared their decision to continue their bakery operations in Russia a week after the war had begun. Heavy online criticism from customers influenced Fazer's decision to sell their bakery businesses in Moscow and St. Petersburg and withdrawing from Russia shortly after the boycott threats surfaced (Hyytinen, 2022).

Another boycott garnered wide media attention, when customers, cities and companies started boycotting oil company Teboil and its products. The company is known for its gas station chain and oil products in Finland, and it is owned by Russian parent company Lukoil. The Teboil gas stations around the country are operated by franchise entrepreneurs, while the oil products and services are sold and marketed to other companies by Teboil. Shortly after the war had begun, the Teboil gas stations faced large-scale boycotts by customers. Call to boycott was being spread on online platforms, such as Facebook, and some Teboil gas station entrepreneurs faced harassment and threats. The backlash was accelerated when Teboil's marketing and communications director asked a local newspaper reporter to call the situation between Russia and Ukraine a "conflict" instead of "war" on her news report (Karhu, 2022).

Later in 2022 the Finnish state procurement company Hansel ceased cooperation with Teboil. Among others, Finnish police cars had been refueled at Teboil gas stations which had upset citizens (Rimpiläinen, 2022). Some cities have stopped buying fuel from Teboil and some have decided not to renew Teboil gas stations' leases (Kossila, 2022; Suomi, 2022). The public demand to stop buying and using products and services provided by Russian parent company was extremely wide and evoked strong emotions, even though the boycotts negatively affected local entrepreneurs and businesses (Hjelt, 2022). However, in 2023 some gas station entrepreneurs saw that the boycotts were starting to cease, and customers were returning to do business with Teboil (Solja & Räisänen, 2023).

For many, war of aggression is a clear and very impactful reason to condemn the aggressor and its supporters - emotions run high and the need to declare allegiance through, among other things, consuming choices are easily spread. The social environment and public opinion can affect an individual's decision making: do you want to support, in this case, Russia or Ukraine? It is also likely that the media played a crucial part in bringing attention to Teboil's connection to Russian Lukoil resulting in consumers' heightened sense of agency. Taking their business elsewhere is hoped to

have an impact, since they would not want to support Russia's war efforts. This taint on the Teboil brand was enough for customers to turn their backs on local entrepreneurs simply for their affiliation with the brand but it is not clear how much Finnish boycotts and public discussion about Teboil truly impacted Lukoil's business ventures and revenues. However, this was a demonstration of public and consumer opinion about cooperating with Russian businesses, resulting in boycotting and shaming the Teboil brand.

4 DATA AND METHODS

From here on, the focus is brought to the research questions and the analysis of the data. After examining the backdrop of cancel culture and boycotting, the aim is to find out among Finnish, German and American survey respondents

1. *Why the respondents boycott commercial entities,*
2. *What effects do respondents' country of residence, age and gender have on participating in boycotting,*
3. *What kind of differences and similarities there are in between the three research countries?*

To find answers to these research questions, first, the data collection, the research data and analysis methods are described. Chapter 5 focuses on the statistical analysis and results.

Quantitative analysis software IBM SPSS Statistics was used to analyze the survey data. Factor analysis was chosen to find hidden factors from the dataset, and the results were then compared to the respondents' background variables using univariate analysis (two-way ANOVA). These results were further explored with linear regression analysis to find which variables, if any, influenced the boycotting tendencies.

The data was collected by research project #Agents in December 2022 using convenience sampling. A link to the survey was disseminated to university students at universities in Finland, Germany, and the United States by the researchers. The survey consisted of several 'yes' or 'no' questions about cancel culture and respondents' boycott practices, with one open ended question about why the respondent would choose to boycott or cancel someone. The survey language was English, and it took approximately 5 to 7 minutes to fill out the questionnaire.

4.1 Data collection

The participants' age range was between the ages of 18 and 62. The total sample consisted of 667 University students from Finland, Germany, and the United States, including adult students. There were 18 respondents from other countries, which were removed from the analysis due to the focus being in the above-mentioned three countries.

The data collecting method, convenience sampling, is a sampling method where research subjects are relatively easily accessible to the researcher, willing to participate in the study and are not expected to represent larger populations (Etikan et al., 2016). It is cost effective and easy way to find respondents for a research survey, but there have been voices for and against this sampling method. Peterson and Merunka (2014) described the problems arising from using convenience samples of college students; the use of student sample should be justified and explained, instead of merely trying to represent the results or findings as representative of, for example, larger population (Peterson & Merunka, 2014).

In this study, the sample is not expected to represent larger populations or even the respondents' age groups. However, the respondents are from three different Western countries, consumers, and with higher education, so the results can give some insight into the reasoning behind consumers' decision to boycott or cancel someone, as well as to compare the possible differences between the countries' respondent profiles. It is fair to assume that those who chose to participate in the survey were doing so voluntarily (i.e., not during a class as part of course work), so the respondents might have some interest or knowledge regarding the topics covered in the survey.

4.1.1 Survey questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of multiple questions relating to respondents' attitudes about boycotting or canceling someone. First, respondents were asked about their country of residence, gender, and age, after which the questions consisted of dichotomous 'yes' or 'no' -type questions. The respondents were asked about who they have boycotted in the past, who or what influences their decision to participate in boycotts, and what actions they took to boycott something or someone.

In this thesis, the focus will be on two questions, first being question number six:
I have boycotted...
With answer options

- *Brand*

- *Organization*
- *Social media influencer*
- *Musician*
- *Actor/Actress*
- *Political person*
- *Athlete*
- *Event*
- *Country*
- *Other, specify*

The respondents chose whom they had boycotted, giving the response a value of 1 (yes) or 0 (no). If the respondent chose the final option, *other*, they could specify their object of boycott in an open-ended question. The research question focuses on consumers' reasons for boycotting commercial entities; therefore, the options *political person* and *other* were removed from the analysis. All the other options in the list have commercial interests and they produce something that can be consumed by the public.

The second question chosen for the analysis was number nine:

Reasons for my previous boycotting:

With answer options

- *War or geopolitical crisis*
- *Environmentally harmful actions*
- *Ethical reasons (for instance animal or human rights)*
- *Racism*
- *Inappropriate behavior (for instance harassment)*
- *Bad managing of company or organization*
- *Bad customer service*
- *Bad product quality*
- *Political opinions*
- *Religious opinions*
- *Nationality*
- *Other, specify*

Brand was the most boycotted entity in the survey. Out of all the respondents, 69 % (n=446) had boycotted a brand. Next, 54 % (n=347) of the respondents had boycotted a *social media influencer*. Third most boycotted entity was *organization*, with only 43 % (n=278) of the respondents reporting they had boycotted an organization. The respondents reported that the rest of the options had been boycotted by 30 % or less, with the vast majority reported not having boycotted those entities.

The reasons for boycotting varied. *Ethical reasons* were the biggest reason for boycotting with 64 % (n=417). Next, 59 % (n=380) considered *environmentally harmful actions* and 56 % (n=361) considered *war or geopolitical crisis* as their reason for boycotting. Half (n=330) of the respondents had boycotted someone or something because of *racism*, and somewhat more (n=332) respondents had reported that *sexual harassment* was their reason for boycotting. The rest of the options were less common reasons for boycotting, with more than half of the respondents reporting that they had not boycotted due to those reasons.

Approximately five percent (n=31) of the respondent chose the last option, *other, specify*. They then answered the open-ended question, but these responses have been discarded from the quantitative analyses. The boycotting tendencies are further described next according to respondents' country of residence.

4.2 Descriptive level

The gathered data was coded into IBM SPSS Statistics software and analyzed using descriptive methods to map out the respondents' profiles. First, the sample was narrowed to include only respondents from Finland, Germany, and the United States, since these three countries were in the focus of interest (N=649). Only 18 respondents identified their home country as 'other,' and thus were removed from the dataset.

Next, four age groups were established: first group consisted of 18- to 29-year-olds, the second group had 30- to 39-year-olds, third group had 40- to 49-year-olds and the fourth group had 50-62-year-old respondents. The largest of these groups were 18- to 29-year-olds with 82 % (n=534) representation of the data sample.

The gender variable was made dichotomous to consist of women and men due to the third answer option regarding respondents' gender, "*Other or I don't want to define*," being relatively vague definition, and only 3 % (n=21) of the respondents chose this answer in the survey.

4.2.1 Finland

The majority (39 %) of the respondents were from Finland (n=255), of whom 40 % were men (n=100) and 60 % were women (n=149). Majority (93 %) of the Finnish participants were in the first age group, second largest group being 30- to 39-year-olds (6 %). Two of the respondents were between the ages 40 to 49, and only one respondent was 50 to 62 years old. Mean age of the Finnish respondents was 22,7.

With 72 %, the Finns had boycotted *brands* the most. *Social media influencer* was boycotted by 64 % of the respondents. *Organization* was boycotted by 49 % of the respondents, and *country* was boycotted by 43 % of the respondents. The rest of the answer options were boycotted by 30 % or less of the respondents.

The Finnish respondents reported that *war or geopolitical crisis* (66 %) and *ethical reasons* (65 %) were the most common reasons for boycotting. *Inappropriate behavior* was a reason to boycott for 58 % of the respondents, while *bad product quality* was a reason for previous boycotting for 57 % of the respondents. Similarly, 57 % of the respondents chose *environmentally harmful actions* as their reason for boycotting, while 54 % mentioned *racism* as a reason for boycotting. Half of the respondents reported *bad customer service* as a reason when the rest of the options were less popular amongst Finnish boycotters.

4.2.2 Germany

Of the German respondents (n=221), 43 % were men (n=88) and 56 % were women (n=119). The age differences resembled that of the Finnish respondents; 93 % (n=205) were in the first age group, between the ages of 18-29, five percent (n=12) were in the second age group, and there were two respondents in the fourth and fifth age groups respectively. Mean age of the German respondents was 23,9.

For the German respondents, *brand* was the most boycotted entity with 78 %. For the other options, less than half of the respondents reported that they had boycotted them. *Social media influencer* had been boycotted by 46 % of the respondents and *organization* had been boycotted by only 39 % of the respondents.

The main reasons for boycotting for Germans were reported as follows: *ethical reasons* with 81 %, *environmentally harmful actions* with 71 %, and *war or geopolitical crisis* with 59 % of the respondents. A little over half (56 %) of the respondents mentioned *racism* and *inappropriate behavior* as their reasons for boycotting. Interestingly, 51 % mentioned *political opinions* as their reason for boycotting. Rest of the options were not as important reasons for boycotting a commercial entity.

4.2.3 United States

In the United States (n=173) the respondents' gender variation was rather even with 51 % being men (n=87) and 49 % being women (n=85). The age scale of the respondents varied more compared to the German and the Finnish ones, too. In the first age group were 53 % (n=91) of the respondents, 24 % (n=42) were in the second age group, 15 %

(n=26) were in the third age group and eight percent (n=14) were in the fourth age group. Mean age of the American respondents was 31,9 years.

The targets of boycott varied more in the United States compared to the ones in Finland and Germany. Still, 52 % of the American respondents had boycotted a *brand*. Next, *social media influencer* had been boycotted by 47 % of the respondents. The rest of the options had less than a half of the respondents having boycotted them.

In the same vein, none of the reasons for boycotting stood out. 46 % of the respondents reported *environmentally harmful actions* as the reason for their boycotting, while *ethical reasons* were chosen as a reason by 42 % of the respondents. For the rest of the options, less than 40 % of the American respondents had chosen them as their reason for boycotting.

4.3 Exploratory factor analysis

In this thesis, exploratory factor analysis was used to find underlying variables in the dataset regarding respondents' reasons for boycotting a commercial entity. The exploratory approach was chosen due to not knowing which aspects affects a consumers' reason to boycott different entities. Factor analysis finds linear correlation between different variables, creating a cluster, or a new factor. This factor is then made into a new variable, which demonstrates the different aspects of the phenomenon being measured, which in this thesis is reasons for boycotting a commercial entity. The aspects must have linear correlations between each other and measure the same phenomenon. (Field, 2017, pp. 991-994.)

The factor analysis technique used is principal factors analysis to analyze the dataset sample as a whole, considering the sample as the population, and not to expand the results into the general population. Thus, the conclusions regard the collected dataset. For the factor rotation technique Varimax will be applied, since it is orthogonal method, keeping the factors independent during the rotation. With Varimax, the factor loadings' dispersion is attempted to be maximized, resulting in clusters of factors. These clusters are easier to interpret, since the Varimax rotation tries to load fewer variables highly onto all the factors. (Field, 2017, pp. 1034-1035.)

Factor analysis output presents a factor matrix describing factor loadings, the size of which shows the formed factor's explainability of the observed variable. The loadings get values between -1...+1, and the closer to +1 the value is, the better it explains the variation of the variable (Jokivuori & Hietala, 2007, p. 89). Since the sample size is around 600, it is large enough to be analyzed with factor analysis. When looking

for factors, the factor loading for variables should be 0,5 or more to determine whether it is part of the factor or not. After the factors are determined, they will be interpreted as to what they measure and describe. (Field, 2017, p. 1029.)

The factors found in the factor matrix are made into new variables for further analysis, and their reliability is measured with Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha value higher than 0,6 can be considered as a good result indicating high inner consistency of the chosen variables making them more reliable (Jokivuori & Hietala, 2007, p. 135).

4.4 Two-way analysis of variance (two-way ANOVA), p-value and *F*-test

Two-way analysis of variance or two-way ANOVA is a tool to find a possible interaction between two independent variables on a dependent variable. The mean differences in groups are compared to find possible significant interactions, which would show whether both independent variables have an effect on the dependent variable, or if only one independent variable has an effect. (Mattila, 2024.) Two-way ANOVA shows if either of the independent variables or their interaction have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable with p-value and *F*-test. The *F*-test is used to compare the model to the error in the model, thus determining with which probability the null hypothesis of equality of group means can be rejected. The p-value is derived from *F*-test, which describes the statistical significance of the difference between groups. (Field, 2017, pp. 506–507.)

The statistically highly significant difference in mean is indicated with p-value of <.001, while p-value of <.01 shows statistically significant difference. P-value of <.05 shows statistically almost significant difference in the mean values.

The independent variables are on classification scale, while dependent variables are on ordinal scale. To answer the research questions, the factors found in the dataset were set as dependent variables, while three sets of independent variables were compared to the dependent variable at a time: country of residence and gender, country of residence and age, and gender and age.

4.5 Linear regression analysis

Linear regression analysis is a multivariate method, which is used to discover which dependent variables explains the independent variable. In this case, the factors discovered in factor analysis are used as dependent variables, and the previously mentioned independent variables are country of residence, age and gender. This method was chosen to find cause-and-effect relationships and further deepen the results from two-way ANOVA analysis. The assumption is that there are differences in boycotting tendencies between the respondents from different countries, but the effect of gender and age should be added to the analysis to find meaningful effects, or lack thereof.

For this thesis, multiple regression analysis was chosen to see the effect of the three independent variables; the aim was to discover which variables explains the tendency of boycotting the most and their relative contribution to explaining the variance, as well as whether some of the independent variables shows seeming connection due to a third variable.

Linear regression analysis can be used either as exploratory or confirmatory model analysis, depending on the data and earlier theoretical knowledge about the research phenomenon. Using exploratory approach, different independent variables are added to the model in order to find causal connections to the dependent variable, creating an overview on the most important independent variables. Confirmatory approach leads to the theory-driven thought, where findings from earlier studies are applied, using independent variables known to affect the phenomenon in the model (Jokivuori & Hietala, 2007, p. 43). Here, earlier research (see Chapter 2.1) suggests that especially young women are more prone to cancel or boycott commercial entities than others, but in the survey questionnaire, the only sociodemographic questions were about the respondents' country of residence, age, and gender. Due to the limited amount of background variables, *age* and *gender* were added to the linear regression model with an exploratory approach. Individual linear regression models were created for each country (Finland, Germany, the United States), using these two independent variables.

After choosing the independent variables, they can be added to the linear regression model using hierarchical (stepwise) or forced entry (enter) method. Hierarchical method is often connected to the confirmatory approach, where earlier research suggests certain variables as the most important to the predicted outcome. Afterwards, the assumed next most important variable is added to the model and so forth. Comparatively, forced entry method forces all the independent variables into the model at once. (Field, 2017, pp. 529–530.) For this thesis, forced entry method was chosen, since all independent variables have some effect on the dependent variable, with no

prediction as to which one of them or which ones' combined effect would predict the outcome best.

Linear regression analysis produces a regression line, which describes the direction between the dependent and the independent variables. The direction shows whether the connection is positive or negative, or in other words, whether the tendency to boycott is more prominent depending on respondents' gender (men-women) or age (younger-older) (Kaakinen & Ellonen, 2023). Regression coefficient gets a positive or negative value, which describes the direction; negative value indicates negative connection between the variables, where positive value describes a positive connection.

F-test and *p*-value, as described in the previous paragraph (4.4) are indicators of statistical significance of the linear regression model. It explains whether the set of variables in the regression model can explain the variation of dependent variable. Another notable result of the summary table of the model are R^2 and *Adjusted R^2* values. R^2 value describes the percentage of which the variation of dependent variable is explained by independent variable. The value is between 0 and 1, and a higher value indicates that the independent variables explain the dependent variable's variation more. (Jokivuori & Hietala, 2007, p. 37.) *Adjusted R^2* is used when new variables are inserted into the regression model or when comparing two regression models. In one model, adding new independent variables the R^2 value is always higher, even though they would not improve the explanatory power. (Kaakinen & Ellonen, 2023.)

5 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

To answer the research questions and since the approach is heavily exploratory, the first step is to find boycotting factors out of the data (Chapter 5.1). Next, analysis of variance (two-way ANOVA) is used to determine combined effects of respondents' gender and age regarding their boycotting tendencies (Chapter 5.2). Finally, how much these independent variables explain and predict the boycotting tendencies are determined using multiple linear regression analysis (Chapter 5.3).

5.1 Factor analysis and the four boycotting factors

Using factor analysis, the next step was to find hidden or underlying variables behind respondents' reasons for and targets of boycotting. The following variables were chosen for this analysis: *I have boycotted a brand*, *I have boycotted a social media influencer* and *I have boycotted an organization*, since these were the most boycotted commercial entities by the respondents. All options for *Reasons for my previous boycotting* were inserted into the analysis, discarding the option *other* – only 4,8 % (n=31) of the respondents had chosen this answer. Interestingly, *I have boycotted a social media influencer* and *I have boycotted an organization* did not fit into any of the factors, suggesting that there was no linear correlation between these variables and the factors.

Four factors were found with all the factor components having a factor loading of 0,5 or higher (Table 1). The first factor, Ethical boycotting (N=649), included multiple variables: *I have boycotted a brand*, and *reasons for my previous boycotting: war or geopolitical crisis, environmentally harmful actions, ethical reasons, racism, and inappropriate behavior*, with all variables measuring ethical reasons for boycotting. This factor had Cronbach's alpha of .76, indicating high inner consistency of the Ethical boycotting variable.

The second factor was labelled Quality boycotting (N=649), which included variables of *reasons for my previous boycotting: bad management of company or organization, bad customer service and bad product quality*. All these variables measure a customer experience, quality of company's products and how customers view a company's operations and management. The factor had Cronbach's alpha of .59, making the inner consistency of the variable lower than that of Ethical boycotting.

The third factor was labelled Value boycotting (N=649), which included two variables: *reasons for my previous boycotting: political opinions and religious opinions*. These had factor loadings of ,741 and ,726, respectively. For Value boycotting, the Cronbach's alpha turned to be .49, indicating low inner consistency.

These three factors were recoded into new variables in SPSS and were named EthicalBoycott, ProductQuality and PoliticalReligious respectively for further analysis. The final factor had only one variable, *reasons for my previous boycotting: nationality* (N=649), with factor loading of ,895. Since there was only one variable, the reliability analysis was not run similarly to the other factors. However, it was possible to extract some information about this factor when they were tried out in the two-way ANOVA and linear regression model analysis methods.

Table 1. Factor matrix and the factor loadings for all variables.

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
I have boycotted...: Brand	,658	,227	-,034	-,143
I have boycotted...: Organization	,387	,271	,319	-,238
I have boycotted...: Social media influencer	,272	,205	,362	-,304
Reasons for my previous boycotting: War or geopolitical crisis	,516	,020	,183	,234
Reasons for my previous boycotting: Environmentally harmful actions	,745	-,004	-,084	-,012
Reasons for my previous boycotting: Ethical reasons (for instance animal or human rights)	,755	-,005	,053	-,072
Reasons for my previous boycotting: Racism	,637	-,131	,322	,056
Reasons for my previous boycotting: Inappropriate behavior (for instance sexual harassment)	,618	,043	,328	,026
Reasons for my previous boycotting: Bad management of company or organization	-,049	,572	,226	,005
Reasons for my previous boycotting: Bad customer service	,007	,812	,007	,062
Reasons for my previous boycotting: Bad product quality	,124	,770	-,055	,022
Reasons for my previous boycotting: Political opinions	,119	,071	,741	-,057
Reasons for my previous boycotting: Religious opinions	,058	,021	,726	,192
Reasons for my previous boycotting: Nationality	,052	,138	,090	,895

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. ^a

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

5.2 Two-way analysis of variance and the differences between the countries

The next step was to find out more about the four factors found in the factor analysis. In the questionnaire survey, there were three questions about respondents' basic information: country of residence, gender, and age. These variables were used to analyze the four factors with two-way ANOVA to determine differences and similarities with the respondents' reasons for boycotting.

5.2.1 Ethical boycotting

First, Ethical boycotting was analyzed using two-way ANOVA, or in SPSS, generating general linear model with Univariate analysis. EthicalBoycott was the dependent variable while country of residence and gender were set as the independent variables. The hypothesis was that gender predicts the consumer's willingness to boycott a commercial entity: women tend to participate in boycotts or canceling more often than men. The descriptive level of the data suggested that the American respondents boycotted less than the Finns and the Germans. The aim was to search for combined effect of different background variables behind the boycotting fueled by ethical reasons, and even identify which background variables had the strongest effect.

Table 2. Statistical significance of respondents' gender, country of residence and their combined effect on Ethical boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: EthicalBoycott

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	13,283 ^a	5	2,657	29,742	<,001
Intercept	183,629	1	183,629	2055,865	<,001
Countrykapea	5,145	2	2,573	28,802	<,001
GenderBinary	5,335	1	5,335	59,724	<,001
Countrykapea * GenderBinary	1,022	2	,511	5,722	,003
Error	55,557	622	,089		
Total	278,278	628			
Corrected Total	68,840	627			

a. R Squared = ,193 (Adjusted R Squared = ,186)

Gender and country of residence were individually statistically highly significant ($p < .001$). This suggests that, in this dataset, consumers' reason to boycott based

on ethical reasons depended on their gender and country of residence. These variables' combined effect was statistically significant with p-value of .003 (Table 2).

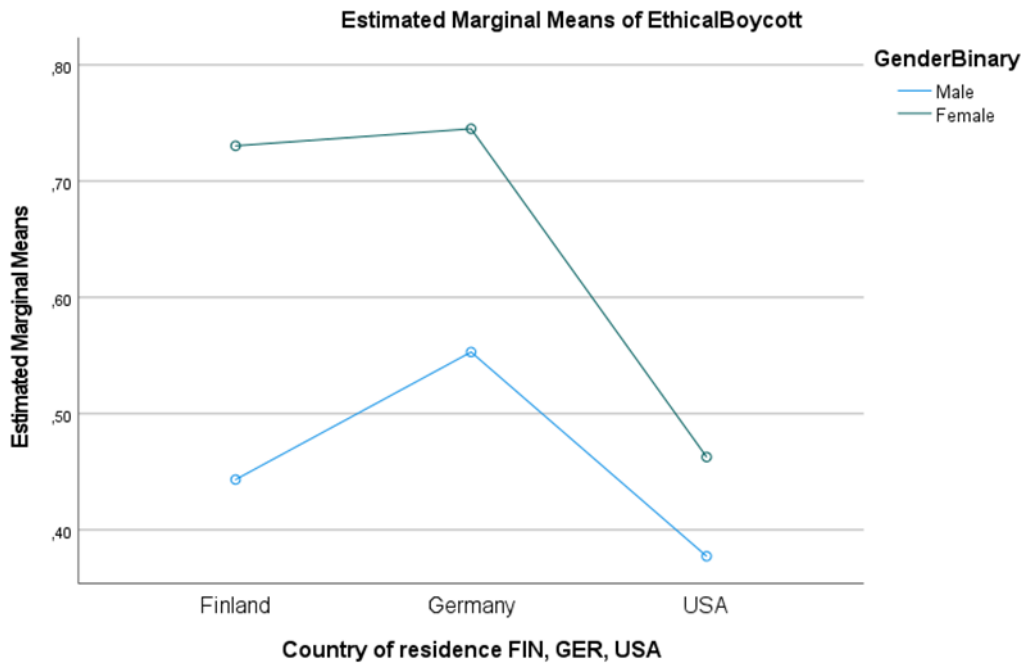


Figure 1. Estimated means of Ethical boycotting depending on respondents' country of residence and gender.

The estimated marginal means depicted in Figure 1 shows that Finnish and German women were boycotting commercial entities more based on ethical reasons than Finnish and German men. Interestingly, in the United States, the differences between women and men were smaller: the women boycotted a bit more than men, but the initial difference was low. German men boycotted more than the Finnish and the American men. The difference between German men and women was smaller, yet noticeable in the chart.

Next, the combined effect of age and country of residence were analyzed. As explained earlier, respondents' ages were recoded into a new variable consisting of four age groups, which was used as the independent variable.

At this point the results were quite unreliable due to the age groups being very imbalanced in size. This led to creating yet another binary variable, AgeBinarity, consisting of two age groups: young consumers (n=534) of respondents between 18 and 29 years of age, and middle-aged consumers (n=115), or respondents between the ages of 30 and 62 (Table 3).

Table 3. Young consumers and middle-aged consumers in Finland, Germany, and the United States according to the dataset (N=649).

AgeBinarity * Country of residence FIN, GER, USA Crosstabulation

		Country of residence FIN, GER, USA				
		Finland	Germany	USA	Total	
AgeBinarity	Young consumers	Count	238	205	91	534
		% within Country of residence FIN, GER, USA	93,3%	92,8%	52,6 %	82,3%
	Middle-aged consumers	Count	17	16	82	115
		% within Country of residence FIN, GER, USA	6,7%	7,2%	47,4%	17,7%
Total		Count	255	221	173	649
		% within Country of residence FIN, GER, USA	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

These two age groups are still very different in sizes, but this division makes it easier to analyze the data and avoid strange and statistically insignificant results. However, binary age comparison is not reliable due to the different sizes of the age groups. When the country of residence and the age groups were analyzed again, the results were somewhat clearer.

Table 4. Statistical significance of respondents' country of residence, age group and their combined effect on Ethical boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: EthicalBoycott

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	7,284 ^a	5	1,457	14,830	<,001
Intercept	68,425	1	68,425	696,530	<,001
Countrykapea	2,474	2	1,237	12,591	<,001
AgeBinarity	,460	1	,460	4,687	,031
Countrykapea * AgeBinarity	,230	2	,115	1,171	,311
Error	63,166	643	,098		
Total	290,222	649			
Corrected Total	70,450	648			

a. R Squared = ,103 (Adjusted R Squared = ,096)

Table 4 shows that respondents' country of residence had statistically significant effect on Ethical boycotting (p=<.001). Age group had p-value of .031 making this

variable almost statistically significant. Combined effect of country of residence and age group explained poorly why a customer would choose to boycott a commercial entity due to ethical reasons ($p=.311$), making it statistically insignificant.

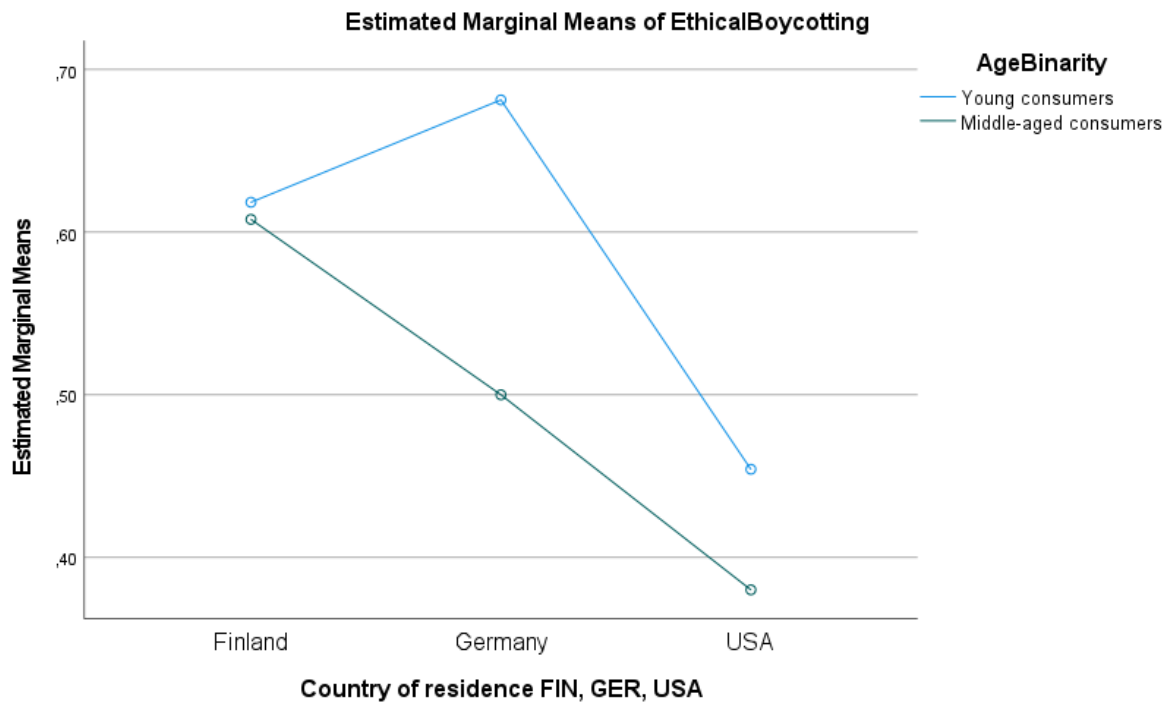


Figure 2. Estimated means of Ethical boycotting in Finland, Germany, and the United States depending on respondents' age groups.

Figure 2 confirms that young consumers participate in boycotting for ethical reasons more than the middle-aged consumers. However, it is important to remember that in this dataset the young consumers age group is significantly larger compared to the middle-aged group. Interestingly, for the Finnish respondents, there was very little variation between young and middle-aged consumers' ethical boycotting tendencies. The Germans had notable difference between the age groups, with the young consumers participating in ethical boycotting most out of all the respondents. For the Americans, the differences were small; middle-aged consumers boycotted the least, while young Americans boycotted less than their Finnish and German counterparts. As described earlier in Table 3, the two binary age groups for the American respondents were the most even with 53 % of the respondents representing young consumers and 47 % representing middle-aged consumers.

Using the same analysis method, the binary age groups and gender were set as independent variables with Ethical boycotting being the dependent variable.

Table 5. Statistical significance of respondents' gender, age group and their combined effect on Ethical boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: EthicalBoycott

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	10,245 ^a	3	3,415	36,370	<,001
Intercept	96,222	1	96,222	1024,718	<,001
GenderBinary	2,402	1	2,402	25,576	<,001
AgeBinarity	2,436	1	2,436	25,946	<,001
GenderBinary * AgeBinarity	,542	1	,542	5,774	,017
Error	58,594	624	,094		
Total	278,278	628			
Corrected Total	68,840	627			

a. R Squared = ,149 (Adjusted R Squared = ,145)

This showed some significance, with both independent variables being statistically significant ($p < .001$), thus having a strong effect on predicting boycotting due to ethical reasons. Furthermore, the p-value of the combined effect was measured at .017, making it statistically almost significant (Table 5).

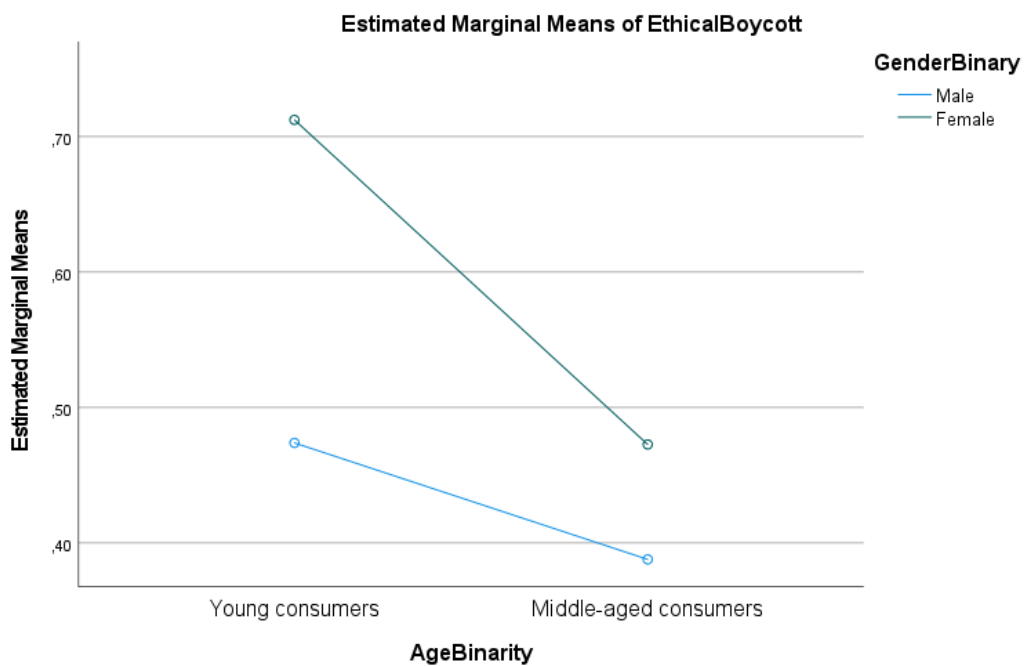


Figure 3. Estimated means of Ethical boycotting depending on respondents' gender and binary age groups.

Figure 3 demonstrates how young women were more active in participating in boycotting commercial entities due to ethical reasons than young men. Middle-aged women tended to boycott almost as much as young men, while middle-aged men participated in Ethical boycotting the least.

5.2.2 Quality boycotting

Quality boycotting refers to boycotting due to bad product quality, company's bad management and bad customer service. There were little presumptions as to which variables would affect this, thus, first respondents' gender and country of residence were analyzed using two-way ANOVA.

Table 6. Statistical significance of gender, country of residence and their combined effect on Quality boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: ProductQuality					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	6,499 ^a	5	1,300	11,708	<,001
Intercept	62,732	1	62,732	565,040	<,001
GenderBinary	,189	1	,189	1,704	,192
Countrykapea	5,329	2	2,664	23,998	<,001
GenderBinary * Countrykapea	,503	2	,251	2,265	,105
Error	69,056	622	,111		
Total	144,889	628			
Corrected Total	75,555	627			

a. R Squared = ,086 (Adjusted R Squared = ,079)

Country of residence was statistically highly significant ($p < .001$), whereas gender and the combined effect of gender and country of residence had no statistical significance according to the analysis (Table 6).

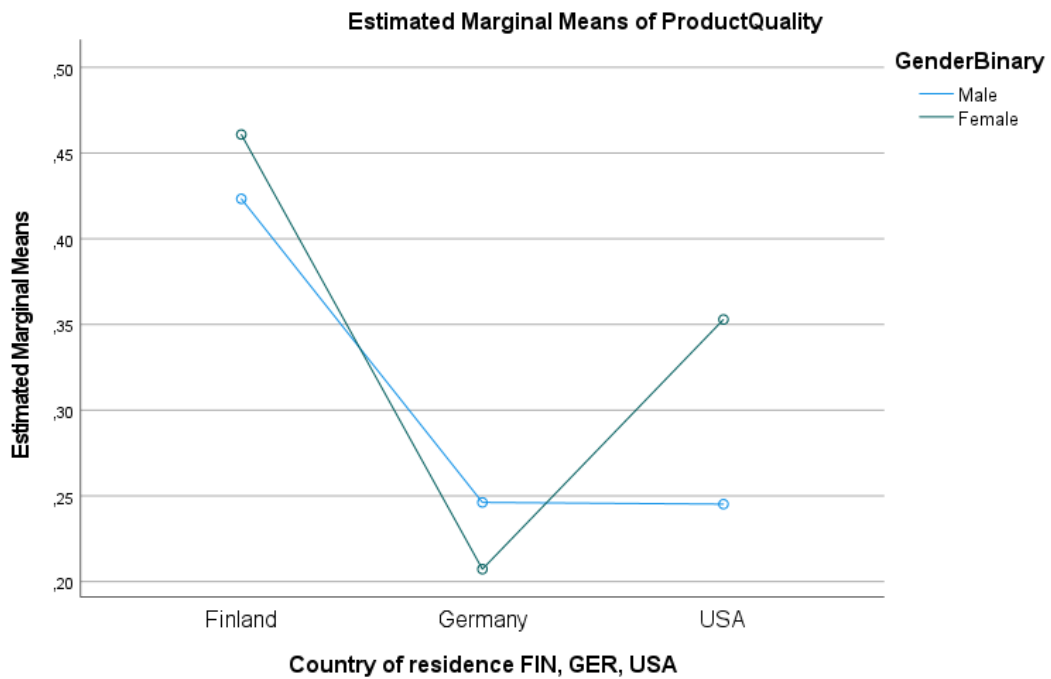


Figure 4. Estimated means of Quality boycotting depending on respondents' country of residence and gender.

Figure 4 visualizes how Finnish men and women participated in Quality boycotting the most out of all respondents, while German women did so the least. German and American men participated in quality boycotting slightly more than German women, but American women boycotted more than American men.

Next analysis was the combined effect of country of residence and respondents' age groups to Quality boycotting.

Table 7. Statistical significance of age group, country of residence and their combined effect on Quality boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: ProductQuality

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	7,095 ^a	5	1,419	12,991	<,001
Intercept	27,274	1	27,274	249,704	<,001
Countrykapea	3,501	2	1,750	16,026	<,001
AgeBinarity	,072	1	,072	,657	,418
Countrykapea * AgeBinarity	,504	2	,252	2,305	,101
Error	70,233	643	,109		
Total	148,111	649			
Corrected Total	77,327	648			

a. R Squared = ,092 (Adjusted R Squared = ,085)

Country of residence remained as statistically highly significant ($p < .001$), but age group and the two variables' combined effect had no statistical significance (Table 7).

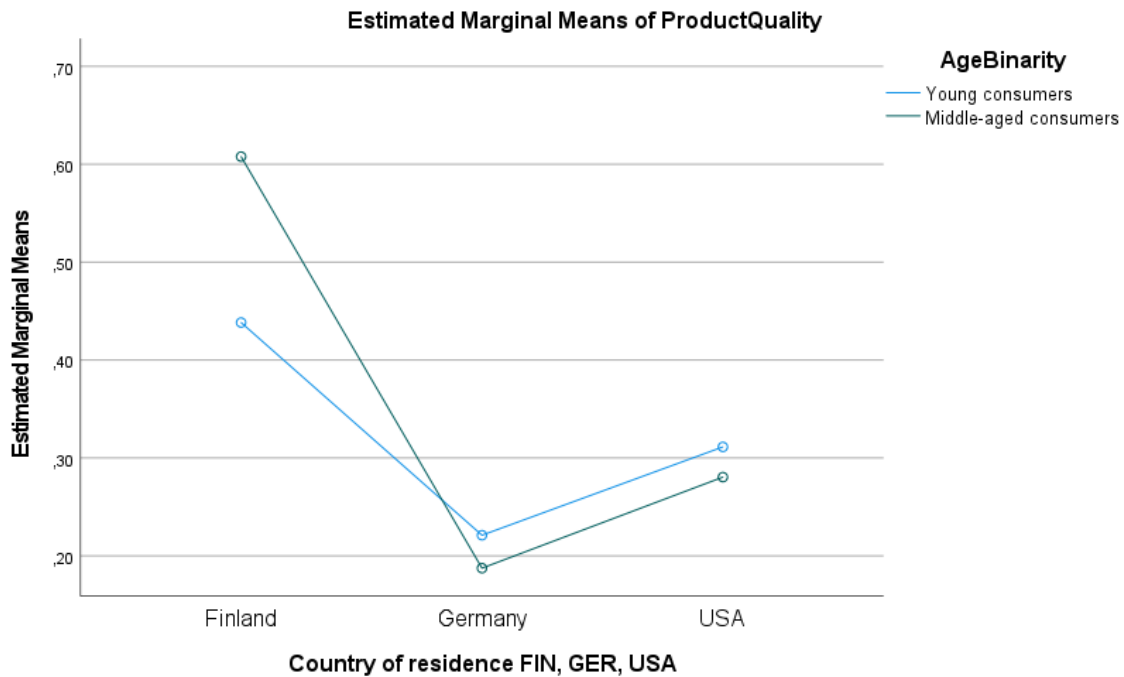


Figure 5. Estimated means of Quality boycotting depending on respondents' country of residence and age groups.

In this sample, it was found that Finnish middle-aged respondents participate most in Quality boycotting, although young Finnish consumers participated in it noticeably, too. German respondents remained rather uninterested in Quality boycotting regardless of the age group, while American young and middle-aged respondents had a bit more interest in Quality boycotting than Germans. Still, the participation remained lower than their Finnish counterparts (Figure 5).

Finally, age groups and gender were analyzed in the two-way ANOVA analysis.

Table 8. Statistical significance of age groups, gender, and their combined effect on Quality boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: ProductQuality

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	,820 ^a	3	,273	2,281	,078
Intercept	37,872	1	37,872	316,208	<,001
AgeBinarity	,081	1	,081	,675	,412
GenderBinary	,700	1	,700	5,847	,016
AgeBinarity * GenderBinary	,535	1	,535	4,469	,035
Error	74,735	624	,120		
Total	144,889	628			
Corrected Total	75,555	627			

a. R Squared = ,011 (Adjusted R Squared = ,006)

Age groups showed no statistical significance on Quality boycotting, but gender was statistically almost significant variable ($p < .05$). The combined effect of gender and age group was also statistically almost significant ($p < .05$), as shown in Table 8.

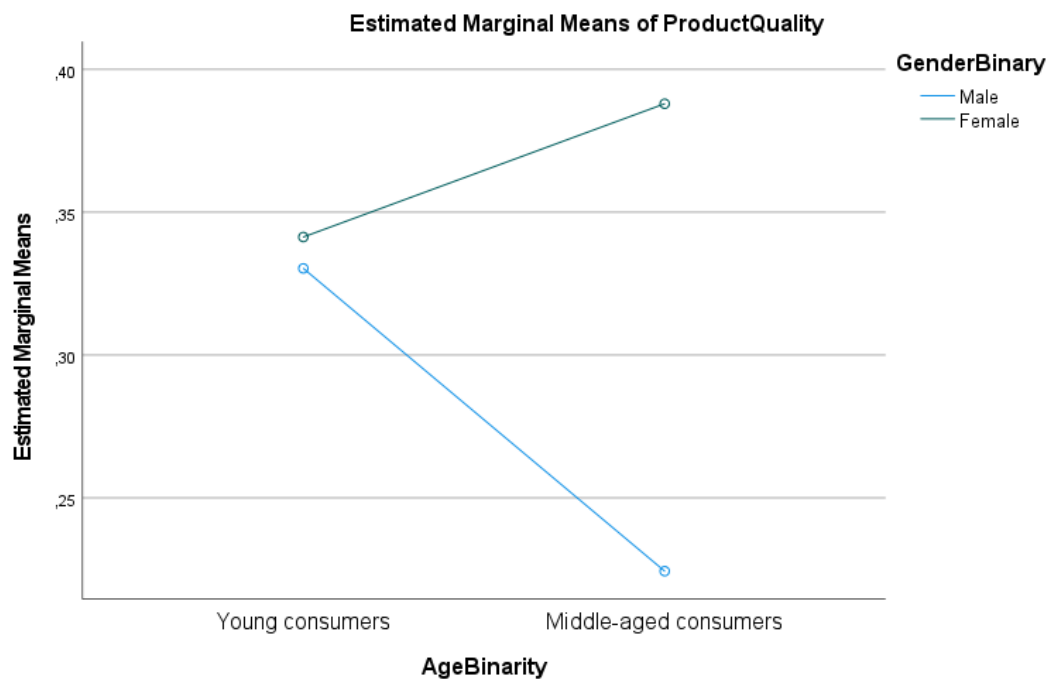


Figure 6. Estimated means of Quality boycotting depending on respondents' age groups and gender.

In this sample, middle-aged women were the most prominent Quality boycotters. Comparatively, middle-aged men were least interested in Quality boycotting. For young consumers the differences in Quality boycotting were low, with young women being slightly more interested in it than young men (Figure 6).

According to these findings, country of residence explained the participation in Quality boycotting, having the most statistical significance. The differences in sample sizes from different countries may influence the results, although it was interesting that German and American respondents rarely found quality related topics as a reason for boycotting. Respondents' gender and age groups were found statistically almost significant, and in this sample, Finnish respondents – especially middle-aged women – were most interested in quality related boycotting of commercial entities.

5.2.3 Value boycotting

Value boycotting relates to political and religious reasons for boycotting. Regardless of this factor's low inner consistency, two-way ANOVA analysis was conducted to find out which background variables explained the Value boycotting.

Table 9. Statistical significance of respondents' gender, country of residence and their combined effect on Value boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PoliticalReligious

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2,147 ^a	5	,429	3,577	,003
Intercept	49,524	1	49,524	412,659	<,001
GenderBinary	,045	1	,045	,379	,539
Countrykapea	1,873	2	,937	7,804	<,001
GenderBinary * Countrykapea	,397	2	,199	1,656	,192
Error	74,647	622	,120		
Total	129,250	628			
Corrected Total	76,794	627			

a. R Squared = ,028 (Adjusted R Squared = ,020)

Gender had no statistical significance regarding Value boycotting, while country of residence was statistically highly significant ($p < .001$). These variables' combined effect had no statistical significance on value boycotting (Table 9).

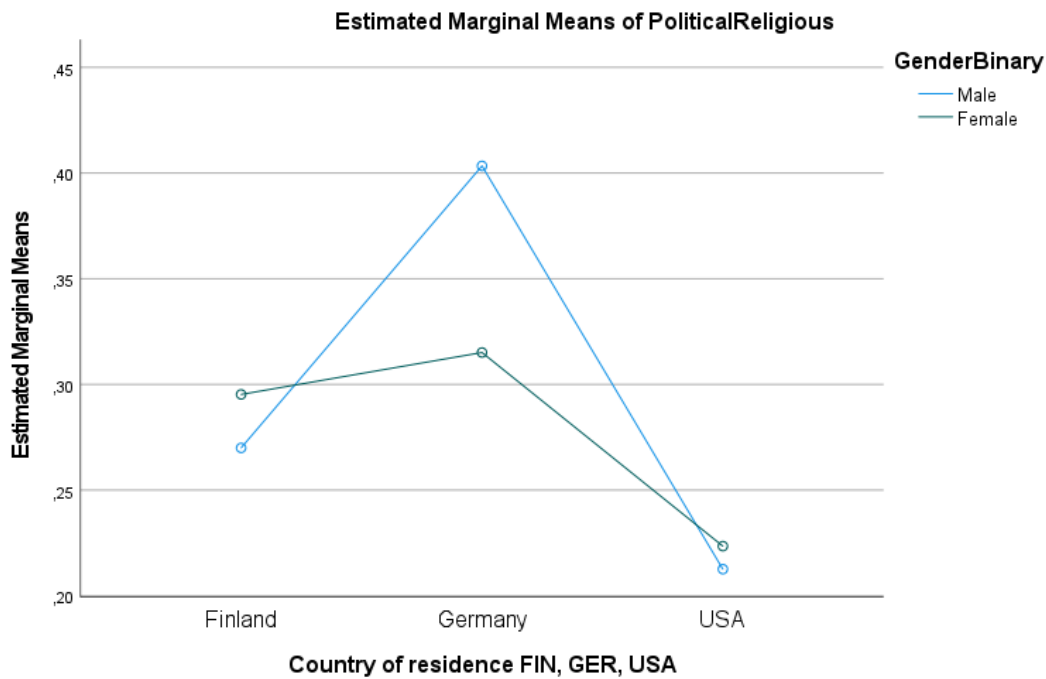


Figure 7. Estimated means of Value boycotting depending on respondents' country of residence and gender.

The graph in Figure 7 shows that German men and women are strongly represented in participating in Value boycotting compared to other respondents, yet German men supports Value boycotting notably more than the German women. Finnish men and women have small difference in supporting Value boycotting, while it is overall lower compared to the German male respondents. American men and women support Value boycotting very little.

Respondents' country of residence and age groups were analyzed next.

Table 10. Statistical significance of respondents' country of residence, age groups and their combined effect on Value boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PoliticalReligious

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1,822 ^a	5	,364	3,035	,010
Intercept	17,081	1	17,081	142,230	<,001
Countrykapea	,471	2	,235	1,961	,142
AgeBinarity	,108	1	,108	,902	,343
Countrykapea * AgeBinarity	,095	2	,048	,397	,673
Error	77,219	643	,120		
Total	133,500	649			
Corrected Total	79,041	648			

a. R Squared = ,023 (Adjusted R Squared = ,015)

As shown in Table 10, neither respondents' country of residence nor age group had statistical significance to Value boycotting, including the variables' combined effect.

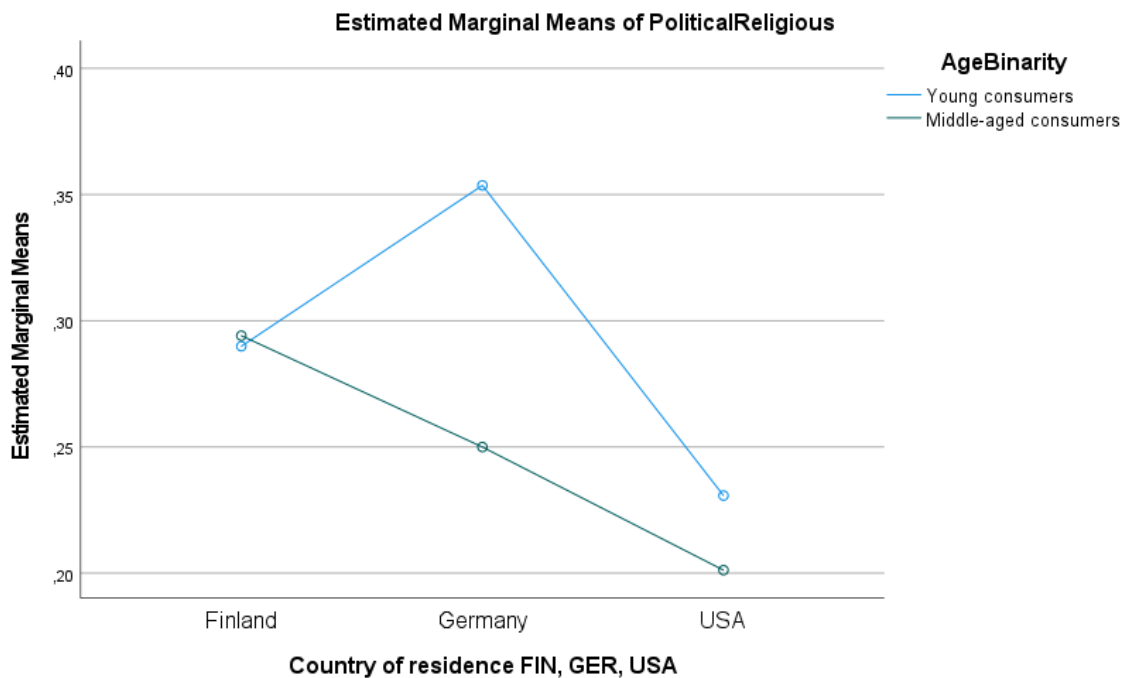


Figure 8. Estimated means of Value boycotting depending on respondents' country of residence and age groups.

Figure 8 demonstrates that young German respondents were prominent Value boycotters. Finnish young and middle-aged respondents supported Value boycotting equally, yet less than young German respondents. German middle-aged respondents supported Value boycotting less than the Finnish respondents, while American middle-aged respondents supported it the least. Young American respondents supported Value boycotting slightly more than their middle-aged countrymen.

Finally, the respondents' age groups and gender were analyzed regarding Value boycotting.

Table 11. Statistical significance of respondents' age group, gender and their combined effect on Value boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: PoliticalReligious

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	,657 ^a	3	,219	1,794	,147
Intercept	25,425	1	25,425	208,379	<,001
AgeBinarity	,642	1	,642	5,259	,022
GenderBinarity	,004	1	,004	,035	,853
AgeBinarity * GenderBinarity	,004	1	,004	,036	,849
Error	76,137	624	,122		
Total	129,250	628			
Corrected Total	76,794	627			

a. R Squared = ,009 (Adjusted R Squared = ,004)

Age group was found statistically almost significant ($p=.022$) (Table 11). Both gender and the combined effect of age group and gender had no statistical significance.

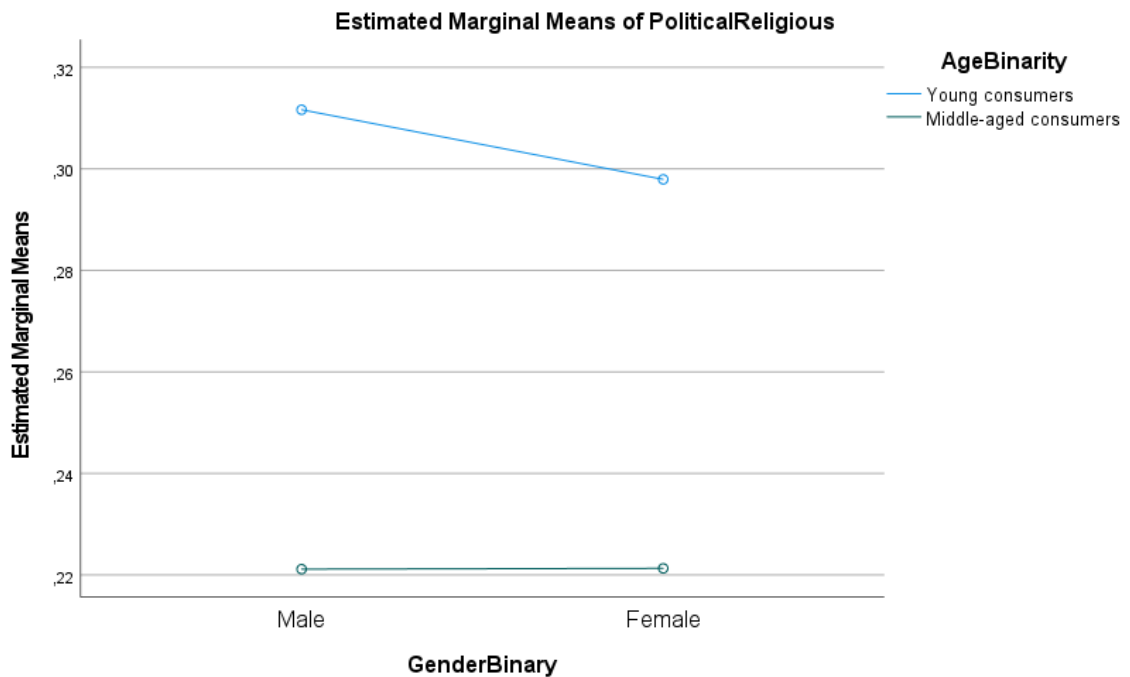


Figure 9. Estimated means of Value boycotting depending on respondents' age group and gender.

As shown in Figure 9, middle-aged respondents had low interest in Value boycotting, while young men supported Value boycotting the most. Young women supported Value boycotting slightly less than their male counterparts.

This analysis depicts that young German men were most prominent boycotters due to political or religious reasons, compared to the other respondents. American respondents were the least interested in Value boycotting. These results would probably differ if the sample was gathered from different parts of each of the researched countries, since country of residence and age group were the only variables that had any statistical significance in Value boycotting.

5.2.4 Nationality boycotting

The final factor was Nationality boycotting, which consisted of only one variable (*Reasons for my previous boycotting: nationality*).

Table 12. Statistical significance of respondents' gender, country of residence and their combined effect on Nationality boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Reasons for my previous boycotting: Nationality

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	,695 ^a	5	,139	3,207	,007
Intercept	1,349	1	1,349	31,108	<,001
GenderBinary	,238	1	,238	5,495	,019
Countrykapea	,416	2	,208	4,797	,009
GenderBinary * Countrykapea	,046	2	,023	,536	,585
Error	26,966	622	,043		
Total	29,000	628			
Corrected Total	27,661	627			

a. R Squared = ,025 (Adjusted R Squared = ,017)

The analysis showed that gender was statistically almost significant ($p < .05$), while country of residence was statistically significant ($p < .01$) regarding Nationality boycotting (Table 12). However, their combined effect was found to be statistically insignificant.

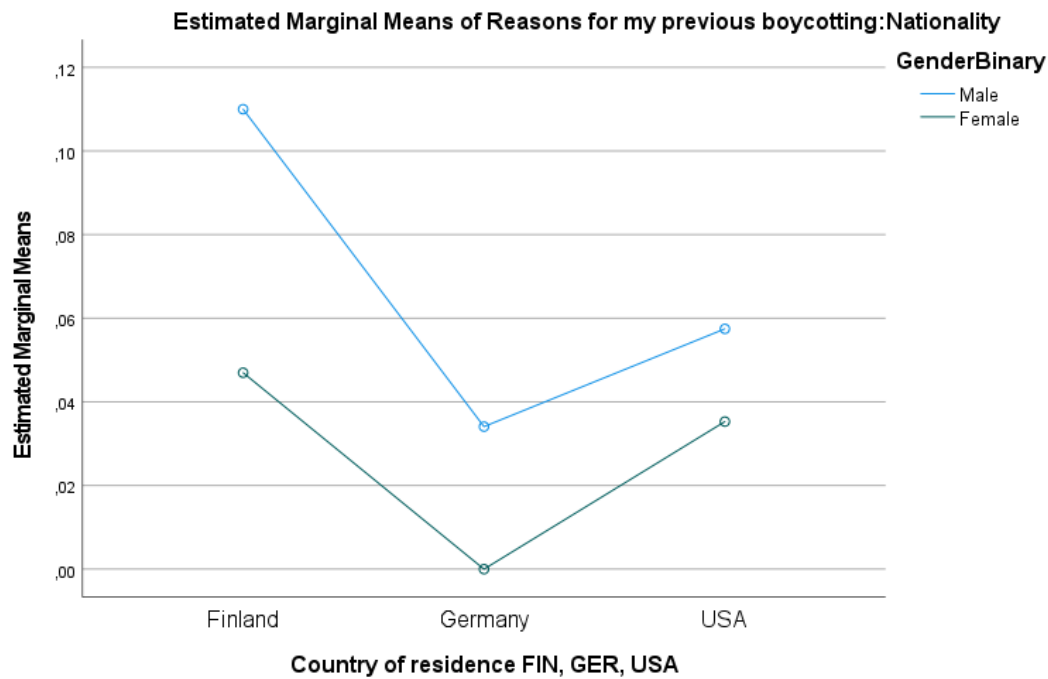


Figure 10. Estimated means of Nationality boycotting depending on respondents' gender and country of residence.

As shown in Figure 10, men were more prone to boycott commercial entities due to nationality. Finnish men were the most prominent in supporting Nationality boycotting, while Finnish women were most active in Nationality boycotting compared to German and American women. German women did not support Nationality boycotting, while German men supported it slightly. In the United States, women supported Nationality boycotting a bit less than American men, but American men partook in Nationality boycotting more than Finnish women.

Next, the effect of age and country of residence were analyzed.

Table 13. Statistical significance of respondents' country of residence, age groups and their combined effect on Nationality boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Reasons for my previous boycotting: Nationality

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	,580 ^a	5	,116	2,750	,018
Intercept	,808	1	,808	19,155	<,001
Countrykapea	,120	2	,060	1,418	,243
AgeBinarity	,155	1	,155	3,677	,056
Countrykapea * AgeBinarity	4,361E-5	2	2,181E-5	,001	,999
Error	27,124	643	,042		
Total	29,000	649			
Corrected Total	27,704	648			

a. R Squared = ,021 (Adjusted R Squared = ,013)

Country of residence, age group, or their combined effect on Nationality boycotting had no statistical significance (Table 13). Thus, these findings represent only the study sample.

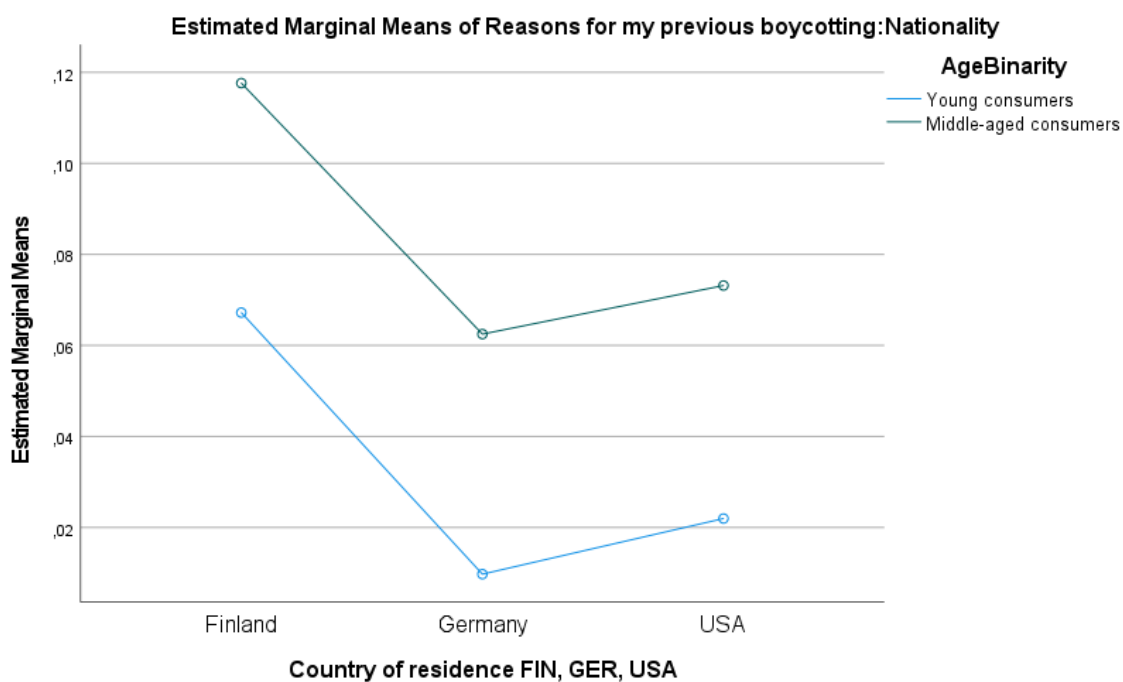


Figure 11. Estimated means of Nationality boycotting depending on respondents' country of residence and age group.

Figure 11 depicts that middle-aged respondents were more likely to participate in Nationality boycotting than young respondents. Here, middle-aged Finns supported Nationality boycotting the most, while young Germans supported it the least. In all three countries, middle-aged respondents were more prone to supporting Nationality boycotting than the young respondents, yet young Finn's participation stood out compared to young Germans and Americans.

The final variance analysis was regarding the effect of respondents' age group and gender on Nationality boycotting.

Table 14. Statistical significance of respondents' age group, gender, and their combined effect on Nationality boycotting.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Reasons for my previous boycotting: Nationality

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	,426 ^a	3	,142	3,256	,021
Intercept	1,400	1	1,400	32,067	<,001
AgeBinarity	,156	1	,156	3,565	,059
GenderBinarity	,232	1	,232	5,319	,021
AgeBinarity * GenderBinarity	,023	1	,023	,535	,465
Error	27,234	624	,044		
Total	29,000	628			
Corrected Total	27,661	627			

a. R Squared = ,015 (Adjusted R Squared = ,011)

In this analysis, age group was statistically insignificant regarding Nationality boycotting. Gender, however, was statistically almost significant ($p < .05$) (Table 14). The combined effect of age group and gender was statistically insignificant.

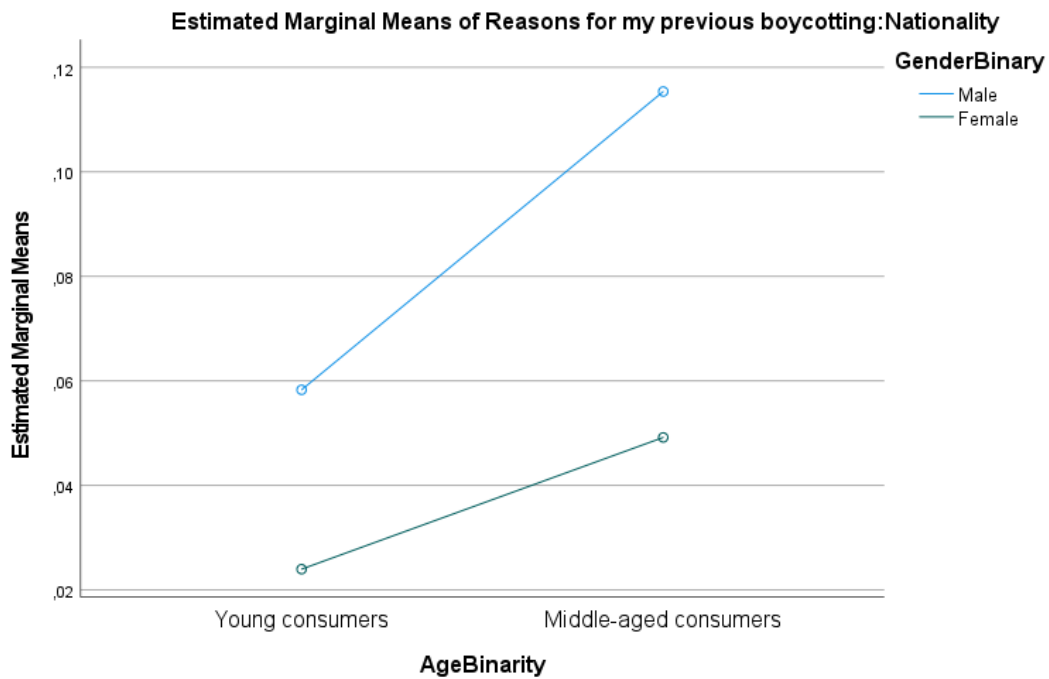


Figure 12. Estimated means of Nationality boycotting depending on respondents' age group and gender.

Figure 12 demonstrates how middle-aged male respondents participated most in Nationality boycotting. Comparatively, young women were supporting it the least. Generally, women tended to support Nationality boycotting less than men, even though middle-aged women boycotted slightly more than young women, while young men supported Nationality boycotting noticeably less than middle-aged men.

Middle-aged Finnish men were highly represented in Nationality boycotting, and even though many of these results were statistically insignificant, in this sample, the Finns generally supported Nationality boycotting more than the German and American respondents.

5.3 Linear regression analysis and causal effects

With only three sociodemographic background variables, multiple linear regression analysis was utilized to find whether there was dependance between the background variables and the four factors. Split file -method was used to divide all results between respondents' country of residence. The two remaining independent variables (*age* and

gender) were added to the models using the Enter-method as described in Chapter 4.5. In the survey questionnaire, the respondents were asked to report their age as a number, thus, the original *age* variable was used. The *age* variable gave more specific results compared to the four age groups or the binary age variables. The aim was to discover which background variables explains respondents' participation in Ethical boycotting, Quality boycotting, Value boycotting and Nationality boycotting, and how strong or weak this connection was.

5.3.1 Ethical boycotting models

As summarized in Table 15, the *F*-test shows that Finnish regression model was statistically highly significant ($p < .001$). Together, the independent variables explained only 18 % of variation regarding Ethical boycotting ($R^2 = .180$). In this model, the *gender* variable was statistically significant ($p < .001$) having strong explanatory power for Ethical boycotting, while *age* did not hold statistical significance ($p = .860$). The analysis shows that the Finnish women boycotted due to ethical reasons more than the Finnish men ($\beta = .424$), corroborating the earlier two-way ANOVA analysis.

For German model, the *F*-test confirms that it is statistically highly significant ($p < .001$). R^2 value shows that these variables explain only 11 % of variation, thus, other reasons than gender and age are more likely to explain the Germans' participation in Ethical boycotting. Similarly to the Finnish results, *gender* had high statistical significance ($p < .001$), whereas *age* was not a statistically significant variable. The German women were more willing to participate in Ethical boycotting than the German men ($\beta = .309$), while the negative direction of *age* ($-.090$) suggests that the older the respondent is, the less they participate in Ethical boycotting.

The third model regarding American respondents was statistically significant ($p < .010$). This model had explanatory power of merely seven percent according to the R^2 value. For the Americans, *age* was statistically significant with *p*-value of .004, while *gender* was statistically insignificant. Older Americans were less likely to participate in boycotting for ethical reasons ($\beta = -.220$).

Table 15. Summary table of linear regression models with dependent variable *Ethical boycotting* in Finland, Germany, and the United States.

Linear regression model			
Dependent variable: Ethical Boycotting	Finland	Germany	United States
Method: Enter			
Independent variable	Standardized Coefficients Beta (Sig.)		
Age (18-62):	.010 (.860)	-.090 (.180)	-.220 (.004**)
Gender (men-women):	.424 (<.001***)	.309 (<.001***)	.137 (.068)
ANOVA F-test Sig.:	<.001***	<.001***	.003**
Model summary:	R ² =.180 Adjusted R ² =.173	R ² =.112 Adjusted R ² =.103	R ² =.066 Adjusted R ² =.055
Standard Error of the Estimate:	.30234	.27948	.30917
* = p<.05 Statistically almost significant ** = p<.01 Statistically significant *** = p<.001 Statistically highly significant			

5.3.2 Quality boycotting models

The next linear regression analysis was regarding the Quality boycotting factor. As depicted in Table 16, neither one of the three countries' regression models were statistically significant according to the *F*-tests. The models' explanatory power was quite low, too: in the Finnish model, the variables explained only two percent of participating in Quality boycotting, the German model's percentage was less than one percent, while in the American model the variables explained almost three percent of participation in Quality boycotting, according to each models' R^2 value respectively.

For the Finnish respondents, *age* was statistically almost significant factor ($p < .05$). Slightly positive standardized coefficient Beta (.137) shows that older consumers were more likely to participate in Quality boycotting, while *gender* variable showed that women participated slightly more in Quality boycotting than men ($\beta = .439$).

Neither *age* nor *gender* predicted participating in Quality boycotting for the German respondents. However, there were negative directions for both *age* ($\beta = -.002$) and *gender* ($\beta = -.062$), suggesting that women and older respondents were slightly less likely to participate in Quality boycotting.

Gender variable had *p*-value of $< .05$ in the American model, thus it somewhat predicted participating in Quality boycotting. *Age* was not statistically significant. Positive standardized coefficients Beta (.168) for *gender* suggests that women were more likely to boycott than men, while *age* ($\beta = -.020$) shows that older Americans were less likely to boycott for quality reasons.

Table 16. Summary table of linear regression models with dependent variable *Quality boycotting* in Finland, Germany, and the United States.

Linear regression model			
Dependent variable: Quality Boycotting	Finland	Germany	United States
Method: Enter			
Independent variable	Standardized Coefficients Beta (Sig.)		
Age (18-62):	.137 (.031*)	-.002 (.973)	-.020 (.789)
Gender (men-women):	.049 (.439)	-.062 (.381)	.168 (.028*)
ANOVA F-test Sig.:	.070	.678	.087
Model summary:	R ² =.021 Adjusted R ² =.013	R ² =.004 Adjusted R ² =-.006	R ² =.028 Adjusted R ² =.017
Standard Error of the Estimate:	.35534	.31396	.31980
* = p<.05 Statistically almost significant ** = p<.01 Statistically significant *** = p<.001 Statistically highly significant			

5.3.3 Value boycotting models

The linear regression models for Value boycotting, or boycotting due to political or religious reasons, were not statistically significant according to the *F*-tests (Table 17). The explanatory power of each model was very low; the Finnish model's R^2 value showed that the variables explained almost one percent of participating in Value boycotting. The German model explained a little over one percent and the American model explained a little less than one percent of the variation. The models' weak explanatory power and statistical insignificance makes it a curiosity to analyze.

According to the p-values, neither of the variables were statistically significant in the Finnish model. There was a positive direction in both *age* ($\beta=.249$) and *gender* ($\beta=.591$) variables. Thus, the older the participant, the likelihood of participating in Value boycotting was slightly higher compared to the younger respondents, and women were more likely to participate than men.

In the German model, the variables were also statistically insignificant according to the *F*-test values. However, both *age* and *gender* produced a negative direction in the linear model, describing that the younger respondents participated slightly more in Value boycotting ($\beta=-.011$). Considering gender, German men were more involved in boycotting due to political or religious reasons ($\beta=-.118$).

The American model followed suit; neither variable was statistically significant in explaining the participating in Value boycotting. *Age* had a slight negative direction with standardized coefficients Beta value of $-.061$, showing that the older respondents were less likely to participate in Value boycotting. *Gender*, on the other hand, had a positive direction ($\beta=.019$), suggesting that women were mildly more active in Value boycotting.

Table 17. Summary table of linear regression models with dependent variable *Value boycotting* in Finland, Germany, and the United States.

Linear regression model			
Dependent variable: Value Boycotting	Finland	Germany	United States
Method: Enter			
Independent variable	Standardized Coefficients Beta (Sig.)		
Age (18-62):	.073 (.249)	-.011 (.879)	-.061 (.429)
Gender (men-women):	.034 (.591)	-.118 (.096)	.019 (.809)
ANOVA F-test Sig.:	.440	.248	.711
Model summary:	R ² =.007 Adjusted R ² =-.001	R ² =.014 Adjusted R ² =.004	R ² =.004 Adjusted R ² =-.008
Standard Error of the Estimate:	.34953	.37612	.30296
* = p<.05 Statistically almost significant ** = p<.01 Statistically significant *** = p<.001 Statistically highly significant			

5.3.4 Nationality boycotting models

The final models (Table 18) were built on Nationality boycotting factor. According to the *F*-test, the Finnish model was statistically almost significant ($p < .05$). This model showed that *age* and *gender* variables explained almost three percent of participating in Nationality boycotting ($R^2 = .027$). *Gender* was close to being statistically almost significant with *p*-value of .055, and with a negative direction ($\beta = -.121$). Thus, men were more active in participating in Nationality boycotting than the Finnish women. *Age* was statistically insignificant but had a slight positive direction ($\beta = .115$), suggesting that older respondents were more likely to participate in Nationality boycotting.

The German model was also statistically almost significant according to the *F*-test ($p < 0.5$). The R^2 value shows that the model explains three percent of variance in participating in Nationality boycotting. Neither *age* nor *gender* were statistically significant. Older Germans were more prominent Nationality boycotters with *age* having positive direction ($\beta = .111$). However, *gender's* direction was negative ($\beta = -.125$), depicting that men were more active in boycotting due to nationality reasons.

The American model was statistically insignificant ($p = .752$), and so were the two variables. These variables explained less than a percent of the variance in Nationality boycotting ($R^2 = .003$). *Age* had a slight positive direction ($\beta = .024$), suggesting that older Americans were mildly more prominent Nationality boycotters than the younger Americans in this sample. Men were also more prominent Nationality boycotters than women ($\beta = -.053$).

Table 18. Summary table of linear regression models with dependent variable *Nationality boycotting* in Finland, Germany, and the United States.

Linear regression model	Finland	Germany	United States
Dependent variable: Nationality Boycotting			
Method: Enter			
Independent variable	Standardized Coefficients Beta (Sig.)		
Age (18-62):	.115 (.069)	.111 (.113)	.024 (.751)
Gender (men-women):	-.121 (.055)	-.125 (.075)	-.053 (.492)
ANOVA F-test Sig.:	.033*	.037*	.752
Model summary:	R ² =.027 Adjusted R ² =.020	R ² =.032 Adjusted R ² =.022	R ² =.003 Adjusted R ² =-.008
Standard Error of the Estimate:	.25694	.11845	.21209
* = p<.05 Statistically almost significant ** = p<.01 Statistically significant *** = p<.001 Statistically highly significant			

6 CONCLUSIONS

The factor analysis provided four factors, clarifying why respondents boycotted commercial entities. The first factor, Ethical boycotting, includes brand as a target for boycotting, as well as five ethical reasons for boycotting (such as environmental violations, sexual harassment, racism, and war or geopolitical reasons). The second factor, Quality boycotting, comprises three reasons for boycotting related to quality of products and company management, and customer service experiences. The third factor was Value boycotting, including political and religious reasons for boycotting. Finally, Nationality boycotting stands simply for boycotting a commercial entity due to nationality. Ethical boycotting was the most robust and statistically significant model according to both two-way ANOVA and linear regression model analyses. Noticeably, social media influencer and organization as boycotting target did not fit into any of the boycotting factors, thus showing that there were no linear correlations found between the reasons for boycotting and these two targets of boycotting, even though the respondents reported having boycotted them before (see Chapter 4.2).

The effects of respondents' country of residence, age and gender on their boycotting choices were analyzed. For Ethical boycotting, young consumers were more likely to participate. When analyzing gender and age, they were both individually explaining participation in Ethical boycotting, and their combined effect was statistically almost significant; young women were the most prominent ethical boycotters. Gender and country of residence were similarly statistically significant both individually and combined; compared to American consumers of any age, young Finnish and German women were more likely to participate in Ethical boycotting. Furthermore, Finnish, and American men participated the least. As earlier research suggest (see Chapter 2), young women are conscious about ethical issues and more willing to join in consumer activism by boycotting commercial actors.

Two-way ANOVA analyses of Quality boycotting showed that age was not a statistically significant variable. However, the combined effect of age and gender influenced participating in Quality boycotting. Middle-aged women were the most prominent in Quality boycotting, while younger women and men participated in it quite equally. Country of residence proved to be statistically significant individually: Finnish respondents, specifically middle-aged women were strongly represented, while German respondents were not very interested in this reason for boycotting. American respondents were slightly more concerned about the quality themes than the Germans.

Value boycotting was not a very telling two-way ANOVA model since none of the variable combinations' combined effects were statistically significant. However, country of residence had strong influence, German men and women showing support for boycotting due to political or religious reasons the most. Surprisingly, American respondents were the least interested in this, even though the United States has strong religious representation, and the conservative-liberal political scape is spread around (and perhaps sometimes dividing) the different states.

Age was statistically almost significant, thus somewhat predicting participating in Value boycotting. Young respondents, especially men, were the most active boycotters due to political or religious reasons, while middle-aged men were so the least.

Two-way ANOVA results for Nationality boycotting showed that none of the variable combinations had a combined effect on the dependent variable, but country of residence was statistically highly significant, and gender was statistically almost significant independently. Finnish men and women were most represented in Nationality boycotting, followed by American men and women. The German respondents were not as interested in this reason for boycotting. Middle-aged men were also highly represented in this model.

Considering the differences between each of the research countries' results, according to the linear regression models, American respondents' age was the stronger explanatory variable, while Finnish and German respondents' gender was the stronger predictor of Ethical boycotting. Presumably, tech-savvy young people are more likely to hear about calls for boycotts or commercial actors' unethical behavior online or on social media, while women are more likely to participate in boycotting (Mata et al., 2023). These findings are corroborated in the regression models, yet the explanatory power of the models was quite low. Therefore, there are other reasons than gender and age which better predict the participating in boycotting for ethical reasons.

For the second factor, Quality boycotting, the linear regression models showed that these models were statistically insignificant and had low explanatory power. Gender was the only predictor for American respondents' participating in Quality

boycotting, while age had similar effect in the Finnish model. Younger people, like students, usually have less financial capital to consume products and services. However, in the United States and Germany, younger customers were still willing to boycott more than the older respondents in the respective countries, while middle-aged Finns were more interested in Quality boycotting than the young Finns.

Linear regression models for Value boycotting had low explanatory power and were not statistically significant in any of the models. Thus, it is likely that when the data was gathered, there had been a political or religious event or scandal in Germany, which might explain the stark difference with the results compared to the Finnish and American respondents' results. Young German men were the most active participants in Value boycotting, and German women were participating more than the Finnish and the American women, too. In these regression models, the older Finns were more active in Value boycotting than their younger counterparts. American and Finnish women were slightly more active boycotters for political and religious reasons than their countrymen. However, the differences between respondents were quite mild in the Finnish and the American models.

In the linear regression analysis, the Finnish and the German Nationality boycotting models were statistically almost significant. This was the only factor in which men, specifically older rather than younger men, were more active participants than women. The regression models of Nationality boycotting had different reliabilities compared to each other and again, the predictors behind boycotting due to nationality lie elsewhere than in gender or age.

Finnish men were the most active boycotters due to nationality, which is probably due to the war between Russia and Ukraine. In December 2022, when the data was gathered, the Russia boycotts were ramping up and talked about in the Finnish media, including campaigns such as the Teboil boycotts described in Chapter 3.1. It would be interesting if another survey was conducted today, considering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which escalated again in October 2023, and whether the boycotting due to nationality would have had different responses especially by the American respondents. After all, in the open-ended question about *Reasons for my previous boycotting: other, specify?* one respondent stated that "brands th[a]t boycott Israel get boycotted by me."

The linear regression analyses showed that the models including the respondents' country of residence, age and gender as independent variables explained poorly the participation in boycotting altogether. This confirms that some other reasons explain boycotting tendencies, as earlier research has suggested (see Chapter 2). Thus, it would have been useful for the questionnaire form to include questions about the participants' political views, financial situation, educational level, self-assessments about time spent online or on social media and whether they were following political and

current issues. These types of questions could have given more explanation as to why people are willing to boycott, and if the American respondents would have had similar boycotting profiles as the Finnish and the German respondents.

6.1 Discussion

From the companies' and brands' perspective, it seems that boycotting and further canceling of a brand has become a harmful consequence. Canceling a brand requires badmouthing it online and active acts of boycotting, therefore companies must predict the possible consequences of their public and private operations. In this thesis, the results show that especially brands were held to high standards regarding ethical themes. Earlier research (Costa & Azevedo, 2024) corroborates that brand hate and canceling are linked to ideological incompatibilities (e.g. when companies partake in greenwashing or woke washing, or when a brand's stance on a social issue does not match the customer's views), which this thesis' analysis results confirm. In the same study, the researchers propose strategies for companies to mitigate the repercussions and ways to navigate through a canceling campaign, showing that brands and companies must adapt to the presence of cancel culture.

As a tool, canceling (including boycotting) has become useful in demanding and facilitating change, although sometimes it is considered to be a too harsh or misused tool. Nevertheless, now companies are adapting to counter the consequences of canceling. Costa and Azevedo (2024) found that if a brand is faced with getting canceled or with public backlash, an apology mitigates the brand hate. However, if brands are expected to change their practices, a simple apology might not suffice; perhaps changes in operations are required, someone must be fired, or a donation to charity could be useful in regenerating customers' trust (Costa & Azevedo, 2024).

The three countries in this study represent developed, democratic, Western consumer societies with cultural differences, but with a lot in common. In the earlier chapters of this thesis the presumption formed is that cancel culture has developed and spread abroad from the United States. Therefore, the results showing that the Finnish and the German respondents were more often active boycotters compared to the American respondents was rather intriguing. However, the sample is not representative. Due to the setting of this research, further research with a representative sample is needed to determine why consumers choose to boycott or cancel commercial entities, and what differences and similarities can be found between these Western societies.

When studying and generating knowledge about cancel culture and boycotting, it is easy to notice political consumerism and intense public scrutiny of different actors

and brands all over social and traditional media. However, some people have very little interest in these topics altogether. In the open-ended question about reasons for respondents' previous boycotting, one respondent promptly stated, "propagating cancel culture/leftist ideology." This suggests that they frowned upon cancel culture and boycotting, yet still participated in boycotting due to opposing cancel culture. In addition, another respondent stated their reason for boycotting as "none. I don't take part in that boycotting silliness."

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