

Digital Activism and International Relations: The Intersection of the Israel-Palestine Conflict and the McDonald's and Starbucks Boycott in Europe

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Abstrak

Aktivisme Digital telah muncul sebagai alat yang ampuh dalam lanskap global saat ini, memberdayakan individu dan kelompok untuk mengekspresikan pendapat mereka dengan cepat dan efektif. Aktivisme digital telah mengambil peran penting dalam hubungan internasional, khususnya dalam mengatasi konflik internasional yang kontroversial. Artikel ini menyelidiki hubungan antara aktivisme digital dan hubungan internasional, khususnya berfokus pada konflik Israel-Palestina yang berkepanjangan. Studi ini mengkaji bagaimana aktivisme digital membentuk dinamika konflik Israel-Palestina dan menjelaskan munculnya gerakan boikot yang menargetkan merek global seperti McDonald's dan Starbucks sebagai ekspresi penting dari aktivisme ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk menganalisis data yang dikumpulkan dari berbagai sumber berita, termasuk Euronews, BBC, CNBC, inews.uk, Washington Post, The Guardian, dan BDS Movement. Analisisnya menggunakan teknik analisis naratif dan sentimen yang difasilitasi oleh Analisis Data Kualitatif (Q-DAS), khususnya NVivo 12 Plus. Temuan mengungkapkan: Pertama, sebagian besar konten berita didominasi oleh berbagi informasi dan menyuarakan pendapat. Kedua, hampir semua berita yang beredar terhubung melalui narasi pengunjung rasa dan warga Palestina. Ketiga, narasinya didominasi tema hak asasi manusia dan penolakan terhadap dukungan perusahaan makanan cepat saji. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih dalam mengenai persinggungan antara aktivisme digital dan hubungan internasional, serta menjelaskan implikasinya terhadap dinamika global kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *Aktivisme Digital, Eropa, Konflik Israel-Palestine, Boikot, MNC*

Abstract

Digital Activism has emerged as a powerful tool in today's global landscape, empowering individuals and groups to express their opinions swiftly and effectively. Digital activism has assumed a prominent role in international relations, particularly in addressing contentious international conflicts. This article delves into the nexus between digital activism and international relations, specifically focusing on the enduring Israel-Palestine conflict. This

study examines how digital activism shapes the dynamics of the Israel-Palestine conflict and elucidates the emergence of the boycott movement targeting global brands like McDonald's and Starbucks as a notable expression of this activism. The research uses qualitative methods to analyze data gathered from diverse news sources, including Euronews, BBC, CNBC, inews.uk, the Washington Post, The Guardian, and the BDS Movement. The analysis employs narrative and sentiment analysis techniques facilitated by Qualitative Data Analysis (Q-DAS), specifically NVivo 12 Plus. Findings reveal: First, most news content is dominated by sharing information and raising the voice. Second, almost all news circulating is connected through the narrative of protesters and Palestinians. Third, the narration is dominated by human rights themes and rejection of the support of fast-food companies. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between digital activism and international relations, shedding light on its implications for contemporary global dynamics.

Keywords: Digital Activism, Europe, Israel-Palestine Conflict, Boycott, MNC

1. Introduction

'They do not need peace because they only search for the winner' is a suitable phrase to show what global society is experiencing after more than a decade conflict between Israel-Palestine occurred in the world (Hugo Bacheaga, 2024). This never-ending Middle East geopolitical problem has attracted millions of pairs of eyes from generation to generation to see and act on the situation. Almost everything was done to resolve the conflict so that peace can be achieved between the two, from the David Camp 2000 to the Abbas Peace Plan 2014 to the latest Abraham Peace Accord signed on September 15, 2020, all of these efforts have still not been able to realize the goal: Peace (Ezugwu, 2023, p. 110).

The planned peaceful efforts expected to make a positive contribution seemed to disappear when, on October 7, 2023, Hamas attacked Israel in the morning at that time when Israelis were celebrating Yom Kippur, or the day of redemption in the Jewish religion (Nabila et al., 2024, pp. 33-34). This attack began by launching a massive invasion in the form of firing 5,000 rockets into Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip, followed by the entry of vehicles into Israeli territory. Israel responded to Hamas' heroic action by carrying out an iron sword operation in the Gaza Strip. Thousands of artillery pieces were launched, destroying Palestinian public facilities in the form of residential buildings and hospitals. It only took forty-nine days for the conflict to force 15,000 Gaza residents to lose their lives. This attack created embers that had previously faded and forced the spark to be felt even after the cease-fire agreed upon by both parties (Nugroho, 2023).

'...We could get there if you cared enough for the living...' a hit song called "Heal the World" launched in 1991 by Michael Jackson. This song, which began to echo in the early 2000s, can always be heard on everyone's cell phone. As a song, Heal the World emphasizes universal themes of love, empathy, and collective responsibility, it seems to breathe life into the struggle for peace in the conflict between these two countries. Present as an effort to digitize the world music industry as well as being an example for future digitalization efforts, such as the virality of the song Atouna El Toufoule released in 2013, which is now can be heard again after ten years of silent fell, immediately in 2023 after the Israeli attack, to the 21st-century digital activism by using hashtags on almost all social media in the world (Sakhiseni et al., 2024).

The Israel-Palestine conflict, which has been going on for a long time, has forced various multidisciplinary sciences to pay attention to providing correct and targeted knowledge contributions. International relations are one of the many scientific groups that study this issue (Fadhila et al., 2022, pp. 169-170). As a study that has been present for a long time in the context of social science knowledge, international relations play a vital role in discussing war. This study reflects the history of its birth as a scientific discipline, which began with the creation of the Westphalian Treaty in 1648, marking the hegemony, power, and sovereignty of a territory later called a Nation-state (Alfred Marleku, 2016, p. 67).

International relations have experienced rapid growth along with the times, one of which is social media. The presence of media today can be a tool that can quickly enter into a state in a subtle and sometimes unaware way of bringing interests that could threaten the existence of a country or other actor (Prakoso, 2023, pp. 144-145). Therefore, the revolution in communication and Information has changed media coverage and intervention in international relations. These changes have created a global phenomenon of broadcasting often live in almost significant development in the world, created as long as it is provided on the Internet when websites and weblogs provide an opportunity for state, non-state actors, or even individuals to exchange and debate the events and its process (Gilboa, 2007, pp. 5-7).

Filiz Coban argues that the importance of media can be seen in various ways. First, global media has created a 'global village' that we can point to change in the way citizens of states view themselves and others. It is related to the function of media or social media itself, which is to supply Information and, at the same time, shape people's learning process about the world, which indicates that media have a correspondingly significant influence on individuals' picture of the world. In this context, the media becomes an essential tool for defining an 'in-group' identity against an 'out-group' based on representing a series of contrasts and oppositions. Second, the political importance of media can be identified by the shifts in the state's power configuration. Third, global media has integrated its audiences into wars, peace, and diplomacy processes because it is trying to attract public attention (Coban, 2016, pp. 46-48).

The Israeli-Palestinian war has directly created what Coban mentioned in his writing. First, a 'global village' according to him, is a virtual community; this virtual community is not only understood as a gathering of several online identities on social media without any purpose, but on the contrary, Filiz believes that the presence of these virtual communities also fosters a certain sense of solidarity. This phenomenon is visible and is seen almost two months into the war between Hamas and Israel. It has created what it calls 'Solidarity with Palestine,' which is not only an invitation to attract the attention of the global community to pay attention to the situation of Palestine, but from this symbol of solidarity, other solidarity movements emerged on social media such as #cease-fire, #boycottstarbucks, and #boycottmcdonalds (Tenbarge, 2023).

The current development of information technology has also given rise to the human tendency to carry out activities without having to make physical contact or what is often called a borderless world through various methods, one of which is social media. Based on the April 2024 data released by Statista, the total number of internet users worldwide will be 5.44 billion, or the equivalent of 67.1 percent of the global population (Petrosyan, 2024), in which Europe contributes 87.26% of internet users from the total 45 countries which Iceland, Norway also

Denmark lead the number of internet user in this continent (The Global Economy, 2024). Tools such as social media undoubtedly alter how activists carry out their activism. These tools facilitate networking and much easier ways of mobilizing people for social or political causes, especially in raising awareness of some political issues (Ronald Kakungulu-Mayambala, 2019, pp. 168-169).

The use of social media in responding to international political issues can be seen in the cases of the Arab Spring, the Russia-Ukraine War, and, most recently, the use of social media to boycott multinational brands that are considered affiliated with Israel.

Figure 1 Social Media is used to raise voices (



Source: Instagram @gamalmakatitaa

Figure 1 shows that social media has evolved from initially being a platform for sending messages to the family via short messages like WhatsApp to becoming a medium for voicing opinions and garnering global attention; as seen in the figure, boycott activities through Instagram have aimed almost most of the biggest companies with their specific categorization as McDonald's, Starbucks, KFC also Pizza's brand were categorized in food chains, followed by Pepsi, Dove, Coca Cola, and most shocking is Vaseline which usually use to protect the human face from ultraviolet radiation in the different category which indicates a different meaning in order to condemn their involvement (Rawal, 2022, p. 241). Tracing history, we can see that boycotts are not new in this borderless world. The term 'boycott' is often articulated as collective action by consumers who withhold support or patronage from a particular company

or product to express their dissatisfaction and push for change (Mohamed Buheji, 2023, p. 206).

Celina Proffen, in her writing “Do Political Conflicts Influence Daily Consumption Choices? Evidence from US-China Relations,” explains that the political conflict between the US and China during the Trump administration affected American consumers’ restaurant choices. More specifically, the revealed preferences approach measures how the heightened tensions between both countries influence visits to Chinese, American, and other ethnic cuisines, relying on daily smartphone location data from around 7% of US smartphone users (Celina Proffen, 2024, p. 68).

Following Proffen, Mohamed Buheji, in the article "Keeping the Boycott Momentum-From 'War on Gaza' Till 'Free Palestine' reveals that a boycott is a nonviolent means to hold Israel accountable for its regime of violence and to support Palestinian freedom, justice, and return. This boycott aligns with the strategies of the first Palestinian intifada, prioritizing economic independence and highlighting the devastating effects of the Israeli occupation on everyday Palestinian life. This digital activism targets some giant companies such as Starbucks, McDonald's, KFC, and Puma. The company faced backlash after it sued its workers' union over a post on the Israel-Gaza conflict, leading to declining customer visits and sales in some areas (Mohamed Buheji, 2023, pp. 214-215).

A boycott is often only interpreted as an action carried out online and does not specifically impact the target. A piece of literature written by Aydın Huseynov, "Probing the European Union's Ties with Russia: An In-Depth Study of Economic Sanctions," underlines the withdrawal of economic support in the form of sanctions against Russia because the invasion violated international humanitarian law. The injection resulted in several giant American companies such as KFC, Starbucks, and McDonald's leaving the country of the red bear. This large withdrawal of support has notably impacted Russia's economy, contributing to a decline in GDP growth rates as well as restrictions on access to international financial markets and technological transfer limitations have hindered various sectors, affecting growth prospects (MSc. Aydın Huseynov, 2023, pp. 2-5).

The latest to newest example of boycotting online or offline has proven one thing: most of the reasons behind this activism are humanitarian issues. Therefore, this paper aims to see the boycott widespread in social media such as Instagram and Twitter towards certain regions such as Europe. It started by deepening the issue to the digital activism of Europeans regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict and the effect of the boycott itself, understanding that debate clashes between academicians about the boycott's impact are ongoing. Moreover, this article will inherently provide the impact on giant companies like McDonald's and Starbucks in the period of the Hamas-Israel conflict as a result of online activism globally.

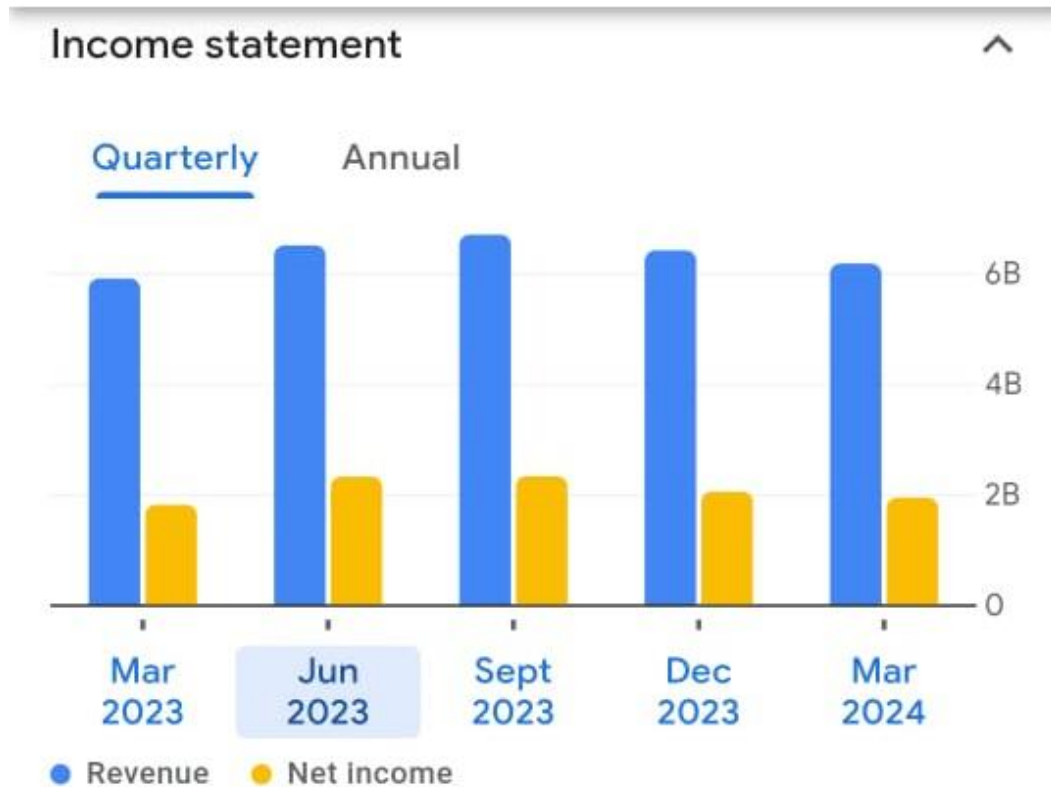
2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Digital Activism Theory

Recently, social media such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have been filled with posts about the genocide that occurred in Palestine. The issue of the Palestine-Israel conflict,

which has spread to social media platforms, is believed to have an impact on two major American companies, namely McDonald's and Starbucks. Looking at the timeline, McDonald's reported a significant increase in revenue in the second quarter of 2023 before the boycott event on October 7, 2023.

Figure 2 McDonald's Revenue in Quarter 2, 2023



Source: (Google Finance, 2023)

McDonald's gained revenue of around 6.05B in June 2023, more than the previous year's period. Unfortunately, this trend did not last long until the wave of boycotts targeting McDonald's in the following quarter, marked by an online activity on Twitter by a Palestinian activist known as Abier Khatib. Therefore, his research (Joyce, 2010) defines *digital activism* as a deep and exclusive activity or practice. Deep means encompassing all social and political campaign practices that use digital network infrastructure, and exclusive is defined as the absence of practice.

Of the many forms of digital activism in the global community, Abier Khatib's post highlighting Israeli soldiers eating food from one of the fast-food giants from America is busy on social media (see Figure 3). The post, which has been watched by 21.7M and reposted by 16.2K netizens, has also invited various responses from society. Various responses emerged after the viral video, one of which was from an Arab country; it commended the company after videos showing uniformed Israeli defense force troops enjoying McDonald's branded burgers and fries with milkshakes, which was in stark contrast with the hunger and thirst-ravaged Gazan civilians just across the border (Radwan, 2023).

Figure 3 Abier Khatib Digital Activism in Twitter



Source: X account @abierkhatib accessed on 21st of July 2024

The presence of the Internet has helped many social movement organizations and even individuals become transnational or change their organization's form from national to transnational. In its application, digital activism is still contextual and only revolves around politics, economics, and social issues. Digital Activism uses various methods, such as online petitions, email bombings, hacktivism, virtual sit-ins, etcetera. Van Laer and Aeist describe two digital activism categories: internet-based and internet-supported (Jeroen Van Laer, 2010, pp. 1148-1149).

Table 1 New Digital Action Repertoire (CDS UGM)

High Start	Internet Support	Internet Based
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	<p>Hard Action/Vandalism</p> <p>Sit-In/Occupancy</p> <p>Transnational Demonstration Meeting</p>	<p>Hacktivism</p> <p>Culture error</p> <p>Protest Sites/ Alternatives Media</p>
<p>Low Start</p>	<p>Legal Demonstration</p> <p>Consumer Behavior</p> <p>Fund Donation</p>	<p>Email Bomb/ Virtual Sit-in</p> <p>Online Petition</p>

Source: (CDS UGM)

Table 1 categorizes various forms of digital activism based on their intensity and methods, with high-intensity actions including hard action/vandalism, sit-ins/occupancy, transnational demonstrations, and hacktivism, which often involve direct, sometimes confrontational actions aimed at creating significant impact, and low-intensity actions encompassing legal demonstrations, changes in consumer behaviour, fund donations, email bombings, virtual sit-ins, and online petitions, which are generally less confrontational but still effective in raising awareness and mobilizing support, highlighting the wide range of strategies digital activists use to advance their causes and illustrating the adaptability and scope of modern digital activism; whatever method is used, three aspects of digital activism will significantly impact society: integration, a listen-before-participating approach, and the transformation from online to offline interactions, as online and offline actions complement each other, with social movement organizations almost always utilizing both types of action, leveraging offline presence to show their members are real individuals, and the Internet aiding

in disseminating information on safe and effective demonstrations, though practical challenges remain, making it essential to use various social media features to increase success rates, rather than relying on a single platform like Twitter.

Along with Laer, Mahmood Monshipouri highlights that modern activism involves direct, sometimes confrontational actions like demonstrations, strikes, or boycotts to challenge governmental policies or advocate for specific causes. However, new technological tools enable reciprocal exchanges, enhancing collective online communication across borders and facilitating content sharing and collaboration. However, online activism and citizen journalism, facilitated by social media, shape perceptions of uprisings and violence, while virtual communities and digital networks provide avenues for expression. Online activism alone may only evolve into a visionary platform if it generates momentum in the streets, as it requires building trust and coalitions to effectively combat authoritarianism (Mahmood Monshipouri, 2018, pp. 38-39).

As times go by, the complexity of the Israeli-Palestine war problem has almost covered all levels, from street demonstrations to online activism. An interesting opinion in Mahmood's article is that digital activism is meaningless without street demonstrations or physical involvement. Realizing the importance of physical activity in digital activism is very important. In her writing, Nurbani Yusuf (Nurbani Yusuf, 2021, pp. 286-287) emphasizes that digital and physical activism is a form of political awareness, civic engagement, and political movement. This case study of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict represents the global community's political awareness of rights and obligations. Second, civic engagement encompasses actions where individuals participate in activities of personal and public concerns that are both individually life-enriching and socially beneficial to the community. Third, Political movements are social movements usually mobilized against the state and its governmental system. They do not always use violence and armed rebellion and generally express themselves with democratic values. All efforts have been made in this war but have not yet found a bright spot. Targeting large companies that are reported to be affiliated with the Israeli military has become the highest point of global community digital activism. Some of the literature above has explained the importance of digital activism in conflict situations to represent community attention and social concern.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative methodology, specifically characterized as a case study. According to Sturman, a case study is a general term for exploring an individual, group, or phenomenon. Hence, a case study is a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis, such as the characterization of the case and the events, as well as a description of the discovery process of these features that is the process research itself (Starman, 2013, pp. 5-6). This research delves into data from various news outlets, including BBC, Euronews, CNBC, inews.uk, the Washington Post, The Guardian, and BDS Movement.

The selection of sources such as *BBC*, *Euronews*, *CNBC*, *inews.uk*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, and *BDS Movement* was guided by their credibility, relevance, and diversity of perspectives. Renowned outlets like *BBC*, *The Guardian*, and *The Washington Post* are recognized for their high journalistic standards, ensuring the reliability of the data used. Regional outlets like *Euronews* and *inews.uk* were included to provide localized insights into

the impact of boycotts in Europe. Additionally, *BDS Movement* was selected for its direct involvement in boycott campaigns, offering primary data on motivations and strategies. This combination of global, regional, and issue-specific sources ensures a balanced and comprehensive analysis in the context of International Relations. The investigation was conducted from April to June in 2024, focusing on the wave of boycotts against these companies in Europe during this period.

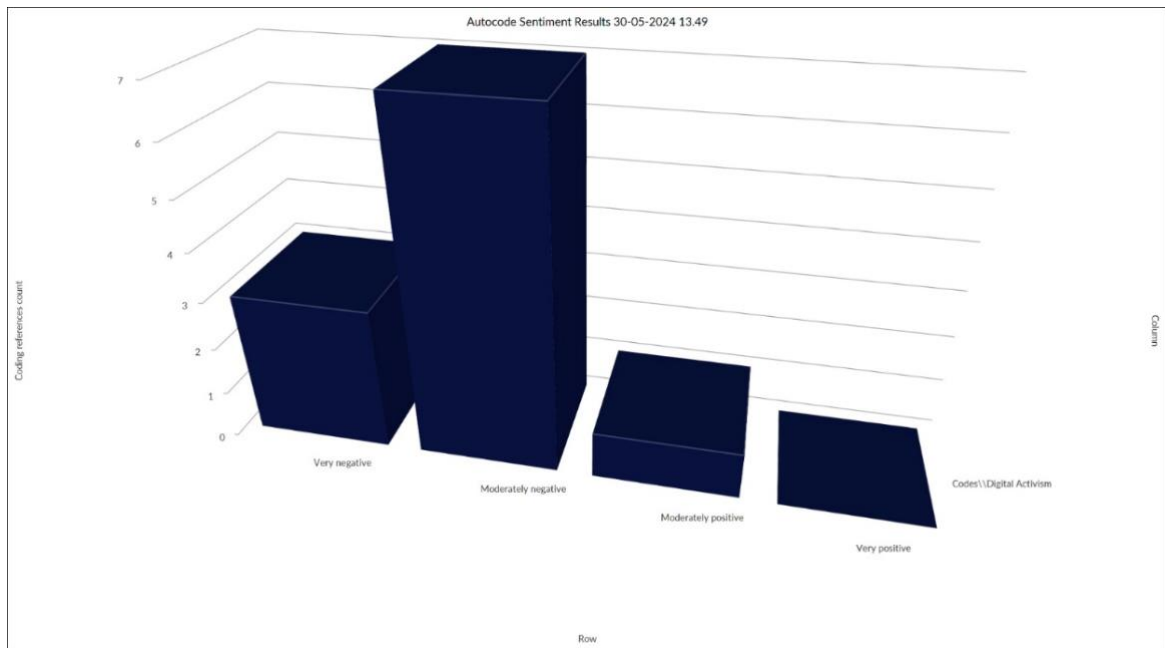
In order to analyze the data, Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Q-DAS) is utilized, employing NVivo 12 Plus as the primary analytical tool. The analytical process consists of four distinct phases: data collection, data filtering, data coding, and data presentation. Information is gathered from the specified news sources in the data collection phase. In the data filtering phase, efforts are made to identify and select relevant data for further analysis. Subsequently, the collected data undergoes analysis using Crosstab Analysis and Word Cloud Analysis in the data coding phase. Finally, in the data presentation phase, findings are interpreted regarding the benefits and challenges of acquiring, disseminating, and processing information. Additionally, this phase involves examining the interconnectedness of these elements and how they influence one another.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Analyzing the sentiment of Europeans towards the presence of McDonald's and Starbucks in the Israel-Palestine conflict reveals diverse viewpoints.

This analysis explores the content of several news resources related to digital activism in the context of the 2024 McDonald's and Starbucks boycotts. This analysis employs two types of indicators for data classification. First, Information refers to the fact that Information spreading through social media such as Twitter and Instagram have caused news companies to write exclusively and use it for information sharing. Second, Digital Activism demonstrates the use of social media to mobilize the masses in opposition to the conflict. Moreover, Starbucks and McDonald's were selected for this research due to their significant global presence and influence, making them prominent targets for boycotts in Europe. Both companies are often associated with geopolitical issues, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, which aligns with the focus of this study on International Relations. Additionally, their consistent presence in boycott campaigns provides a robust dataset for analysis. By examining two companies from distinct sectors—fast food and lifestyle—this research aims to offer a broader perspective on the impact of consumer activism in Europe.

Figure 4 Diagram depicting European digital activist sentiment toward McDonald's and Starbucks



Source: (Authors, 2024)

The two largest American franchise companies in the world may claim that they are victims of misperception in social media reports regarding their involvement in helping the Israeli military in the form of providing food during the attack on Gaza, and the data above can be a reference and proof that this could be true with the presentation. Digital Activism in Europe shows a negative trend toward Israel and the presence of McDonald's and Starbucks in the conflict.

Additionally, in the Results section, we have analyzed how the words 'boycott,' 'McDonald's,' 'Starbucks,' 'boycotts,' and 'Israel' were used in the selected news sources during the research period (April–June). Each media outlet presented these terms with varying frequency and in distinct contexts, reflecting their editorial priorities and audience focus. For instance, *BBC* and *Euronews* often used 'boycott' and 'Israel' in the context of geopolitical tensions, particularly in stories related to protests or consumer activism tied to the Israel-Palestine conflict. These terms were typically framed to highlight the broader political and economic ramifications. *CNBC*, on the other hand, emphasized the corporate and financial aspects, discussing 'McDonald's' and 'Starbucks' primarily in relation to market performance and shareholder concerns, rather than social or political activism.

The Guardian and *The Washington Post* provided a more nuanced discussion, incorporating both consumer-driven boycotts and the role of multinational corporations in controversial geopolitical matters. While *The Guardian* often approached these issues from a critical perspective, focusing on the ethical dimensions, *The Washington Post* leaned toward a narrative that contextualized these events within global business and diplomacy. Additionally, *BDS Movement* articles explicitly focused on campaigns against 'McDonald's' and 'Starbucks,' framing them as symbolic targets due to perceived affiliations with Israel. This source contributed a direct activist perspective, contrasting with the broader journalistic approaches of other outlets. This comparative analysis reveals the diversity in media framing, providing

valuable insights into how different narratives about boycotts and multinational corporations shape public discourse. These findings underscore the role of media in influencing perceptions of geopolitical issues and corporate responsibility during the specified research period.

Related to this case, several reasons might be used to explain why digital activism in Europe shows negative sentiment towards the Israel-Palestine issue. First, company policy must be understood, as most European countries uphold human rights in every social activity. Hence, issues that touch on human rights tend to get a special place in Europe, ultimately forcing action as a reaction (European Union, 2024). Second, the influence of social media cannot be denied that the presence of social media with speedy and massive dissemination of Information influences perception, as data published by TikTok shows that the use of hashtag #boycottstarbucks has been used in 7,000 TikTok videos with 51 million views as well, and #boycottmcdonalds has reached 3,000 TikTok videos and 10 million views in the same period (Tenbarga, 2023). Third, internet exposure in Europe has strongly and significantly influenced European participation in online activism, digital activities, and E-activism.

Table 2 Heavy Users of Media in Europe

	Percent heavy users of TV > 2 hour per day %	Percent heavy users of newspapers > 0.5 hours per day %	Percent heavy users of the Internet > Everyday %
<i>Western/Northern Europe</i>			
Austria	33	48	22
Belgium	44	35	18
Switzerland	26	51	25
Denmark	48	42	35
Finland	36	55	19
France	47	32	18
United Kingdom	61	48	18
Ireland	53	57	13
Luxembourg	47	38	21
Netherlands	51	52	22
Norway	37	68	25
Sweden	34	55	28
<i>Average</i>	43	48	22
<i>Southern Europe</i>			
Spain	51	30	9
Greece	58	20	4
Italy	48	34	10
Portugal	41	24	15
<i>Average</i>	49	27	9

<i>Eastern Europe</i>			
Czech Republic	52	45	8
Hungary	43	42	6
Poland	42	28	6
Slovenia	28	40	11
<i>Average</i>	41	39	8

Source: (European Social Survey, 2006)

The study by Oscar Garcia Luengo with the title "E-Activism New Media and Political Participation in Europe," published in 2006, revealed exciting points on the presence of media and how it influences political activism in Europe (Luengo, 2006, pp. 65-66). Oscar asserted that the Internet is generally the most influential media outlet for people's political activism across Europe, as shown in Table 2 above. It is particularly evident when considering new media in every European country except Luxembourg and Portugal, where there is a notable correlation between internet usage and levels of political activism. This correlation is positive in all cases: the more citizens engage with the Internet, the more inclined they are to participate in political processes through non-electoral actions or physical involvement. Nevertheless, the data presented strengthens the argument for a negative percentage of digital activism in Europe based on the analysis provided in Figure 4 as a result of the massive Information spreading in most social media platforms circulating on the issue of the Israel-Palestine conflict within its concern.

4.2 Analyzing the narrative response of digital activism through online news sources towards the boycotting issue reveals significant trends.

This second analysis investigates the dominant news narratives regarding the boycotts of the two multinational companies (MNC): McDonald’s and Starbucks. These sections utilized World Cloud Analysis to investigate the news narrative. In this regard, the top words that appear in news sources in response to the boycotting issue are the most common in the analysis figure.

Figure 5 Narrative Analysis of News Sources in the Case of McDonald’s and Starbucks Boycott



Source: (Authors, 2024)

Table 3 Top 10 Narrative Analysis of news response in the case of McDonald's and Starbucks Boycott

Word	Count
Protesters	30
Palestinian	22
Restaurant	22
Solidarity	20
Participated	12
Business	10
Condemning	10
Meaningful	10
Politician	10
Supporting	10

Source: (Authors, 2024)

The data presented in Figure 5 and Table 3 illustrate the response to the McDonald's and Starbucks boycotts on some news from Western media especially News media such as Eruonews, BBC, CNBC, inews.uk, Washington Post and The Guardian. The narration with the highest score is protesters, with a total of 30. Additionally, words like Palestinian and solidarity appear in the top 10 scores for 22 and 20. The prevalent narration on this side employs struggle, unity, and solidarity for human rights. It demonstrates that the news media's narrative is affected by the circling news worldwide, which is content related to the narrative of both Palestine and McDonald's and Starbucks boycotts.

From this analysis, several points become apparent. First, the dominant narration reflected the news company's narration in response to various social phenomena. Second, the news circulation on the Internet focuses on the topic of human rights in the world regarding the issue of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Thirdly, digital activism, such as video sharing, forwarding pictures, and hashtags, can mark content or posts and connect to other posts with the same hashtag (Ilham et al., 2024, pp. 7-8).

5. Boycott Implication towards McDonald's and Starbucks during Israel-Palestine Conflict

Figure 6 McDonald's sales report for the Fourth Quarter in 2023

COMPARABLE SALES

	Increase/(Decrease)	
	Quarters Ended December 31,	
	2023	2022
U.S.	4.3 %	10.3 %
International Operated Markets	4.4	12.6
International Developmental Licensed Markets & Corporate	0.7	16.5
Total	3.4 %	12.6 %

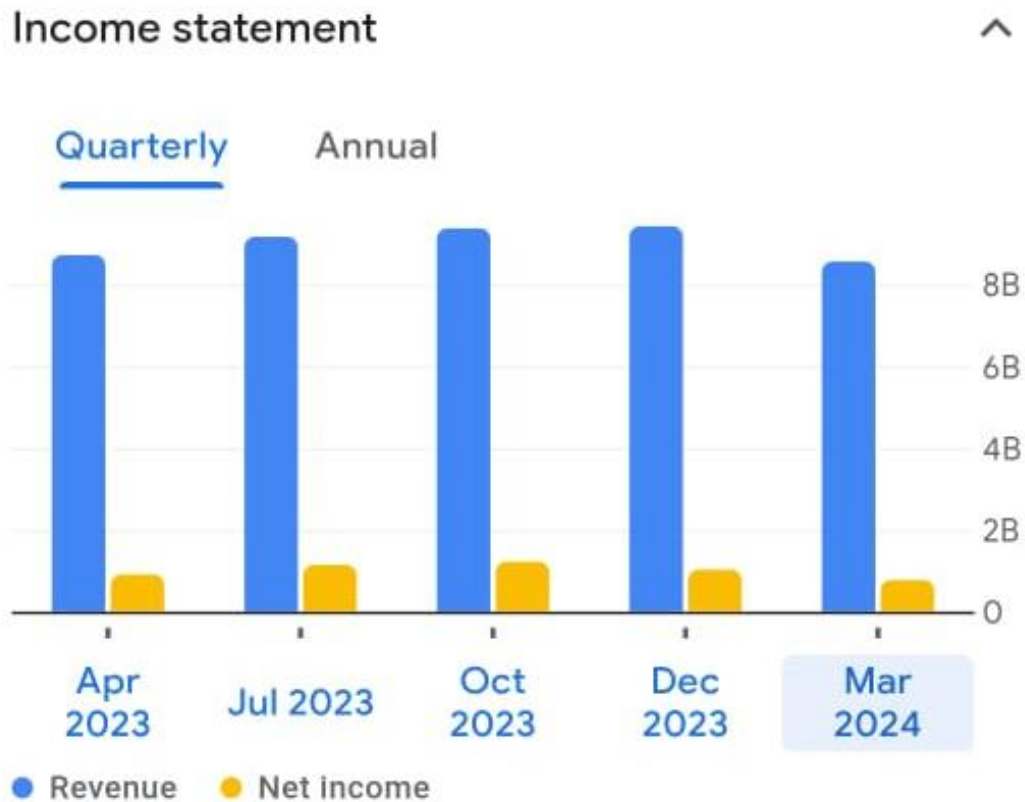
Source: (McDonalds, 2023)

The data indicates that following Alonyal's announcement after the October 7 attack by Hamas, a Palestinian group, of donating free meals to the Israeli military, the US fast-food chain faced boycotts and protests. CEO Chris Kempczinski previously mentioned a significant business impact across multiple Middle Eastern and some international markets due to the Israel-Hamas conflict. Sales declined notably in the internationally operated markets, international development licensed markets, and corporate segments. Specifically, the US market saw a 58.25% decrease. International Operated Markets declined by 65.08% from 2022 to 2023 despite strong sales in markets like the UK, Germany, and Canada, offset by France's decline. International Development Licensed and Corporate segments decreased by 95.76%, although the company reported positive sales in all regions except the Middle East as affected by regional conflict. These declines contributed to a 73.02% decrease in the company's total sales revenue in the same period (McDonald's, 2023).

A. Starbucks Company Report

McDonald's is not the only company targeted by this boycott activist. Starbucks also experienced adverse effects even though circulating news is still debated on the impact on Starbucks because the company's report shows a positive rise in its business performance (Sherman, 2024).

Figure 7 Starbucks Company Revenue Q-t-Q



Source: (Google Finance, 2024)

The data above shows the decline of the income of Starbucks itself Quarterly (Q-t-Q) from 2023 to 2024. The boycotting incident that occurred in October had a significant impact on the company's income. In October 2023, the company's revenue was reported at \$9.37B. This positive trend was also seen in December 2023, which recorded an increase of 0.64% to \$9.43B. Still, Starbucks also experienced a significant decline, where the closing of Q1 2024 showed a decrease in revenue of 9.23% to \$8.56B. Even though the data above shows a decline in company revenue, Starbucks claims that this decline has resulted from sluggish markets in the United States, China, and Europe. The American market is experiencing a decline because customers are starting to feel expensive product prices and the Pro-Palestinian group boycott in America, while the Chinese market is due to the emergence of new competitors who offer lower prices than Starbucks, for example, 1 cup of coffee from Luckin Coffee, a Chinese coffee company and coffee house chain is priced at ¥10 or \$1.40. In comparison, 1 cup of coffee from Starbucks is priced at ¥30 or \$ 4.10, which can be more based on the type (Chiang, 2023).

Although the recent boycott wave has succeeded in reducing the income of the two American franchise companies quite significantly, several efforts to mitigate the boycott effect continue to be carried out by companies, such as stock liquefaction, which means an attempt to sell food or drink stocks that are not selling due to the boycott, by providing bundling promotions as happened in the United States (Fang, 2022). Moreover, the company has carried out this mitigation effort. However, this effort has also been responded to negatively by

customers because it is considered a pessimistic form of the company from the perspective of its customers.

6. Conclusion

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has reshaped international relations, highlighting how global issues can affect multinational corporations such as McDonald's and Starbucks. Digital Activism utilizes various online platforms to raise awareness, mobilize supporters, and advocate for social or political change through actions using social media campaigns, petitions, and digital protests. This activism leverages digital technologies to engage global audiences and amplify voices, influencing societal perceptions and actions. Recent events demonstrate the impact of digital activism, including online boycotts, on company revenues, showcasing the power of global digital communities to enact change. During this period, the boycotts against McDonald's and Starbucks exemplified how digital activism can swiftly mobilize global communities to express dissent and influence corporate behavior. Through coordinated online campaigns, netizens worldwide leverage social media platforms to voice their concerns, shape public discourse, and hold corporations accountable for their actions.

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