

The Effectiveness of Consumer Boycotts - An Analysis of Persuasive Writing

PERSUASIVE WRITING is defined as presenting reasons and examples to influence action or thought. Effective persuasive writing requires a writer to state clearly an opinion and to supply reasons and specific examples that support the opinion.

A. Article 1:

Social Media Boycotts Succeed Only When They Reflect a Movement

By Americus Reed

Boy, oh boycotts! Do they work? If the aim is to hurt company sales, boycotts rarely succeed. To get a boycott off the ground, awareness and consideration of the issue must spread. *Intent* to boycott must be followed up by action. Finally, once a boycott is underway, the leaders of it must find ways to sustain the effort. That can be hard, considering the number of people involved in a boycott inevitably decreases over time.

Mostly, that's because people have busy lives and plenty of their own personal problems. News of a boycott has to cut through the personal. It has to withstand the constantly changing streams of information on the internet to truly gain traction. And memory fades fast. Social media can be very useful for spreading awareness of a boycott – but the hourly nature of the news cycle can bury it within the next day or week.

Even if a boycott stays in the news, strong opinions are not the same as action. It's always easier for someone to express outrage rather than inconvenience for him or herself. Outrage on social media that is not combined with action – becomes convenient and costless.

Outrage comes and goes, and so do boycotts. Companies may suffer short sales dips, but boycotts seldom hurt the business bottom line of organizations in the long run.

Article adapted from: <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2017/02/07/when-do-consumer-boycotts-work>

B. Article 2:

Boycotts Force Corporations to Confront Consumer Ideals

By Judith Samuelson

The democratization of free information and rise of social media means business practices can be discovered and scrutinized on a much wider scale. At a minimum, that means companies should start considering customers and employees beyond tomorrow's profit margin.

As people take to the streets to protest the actions of the new president for example, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of corporations are being challenged to take a stand – something many of them have been reluctant to do because of market pressures to focus on the numbers.

But for some businesses, taking a stand is good for the brand. Tech CEOs are speaking out forcefully against the visa ban because they depend on the best skills and talent of their employees, no matter the nationality. Other tech employees may believe it is morally wrong to turn away refugees and legal residents – or, at least they are confident that their customers feel that way. There's safety in numbers of course, and its best when corporations can articulate why an issue matters to their business bottom line.

Some companies see real market advantages in this consumer trend. Levi Strauss and Starbucks, for example, have gotten out ahead on issues like H.I.V./Aids and water scarcity to help cultivate positive brand identity. They didn't wait for a protest or boycott: They took a preemptive moral stance.

For mass market brands, like Pepsi and McDonalds, that road can be more treacherous. Still, to address consumer demands, companies typically tie their brand to big social issues, like human rights. These initiatives can require real changes for companies including a change in how they source their products.

The challenge today for all corporations is clear: Citizens are looking for leadership on issues of real consequence. These issues are no longer confined to the ballot box. And consumers are aligning their dollars with their ideals. The answer for businesses may require new forms of association in which courageous C.E.O.s can stand up and be counted.

There is a challenge for consumers, too. They must distinguish between the companies that truly push positive social change and those that just pay lip service to it.

Article adapted from: <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2017/02/07/when-do-consumer-boycotts-work>

C. Questions:

1. What is the author’s opinion about the effectiveness of consumer boycotts?

2. What are three reasons she gives to support her opinion?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

3. What do you believe the following statements mean?

a) ‘There’s safety in numbers of course, and its best when corporations can articulate why an issue matters to their business bottom line (para 3).’

b) ‘These issues are no longer confined to the ballot box. And consumers are aligning their dollars with their ideals (para 7).’

D. Vocabulary - Fill in the vocabulary expression in the sentences below:

social media	outrage	24-hour news cycle	speak out	moral stance
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1. The server was _____ when the couple left the restaurant without leaving her a tip.
2. Some people take a _____ against animal cruelty by not eating meat.
3. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are all examples of _____.
4. The _____ has totally changed how we process current events.
5. Marta’s mother always told her to _____ for what she believed in.

E. Discussion - With your group discuss the following questions.

1. In your opinion, which author did a better job of stating his/her opinion and providing reasons to support it? Why?
2. How did these two articles change your thinking about the effectiveness of consumer boycotts?
3. In the second article, the author states, “consumers are aligning their dollars with their ideals”. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

Notes:



Conversation Tips:

- Ensure each person in your group contributes their opinion to each question.
- Listen to each other. There is much you can learn from your group members.
- Communicate professionally with each other and be open-minded to different opinions.