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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial Board.....	iii
1. UNMASKING TOXIC LEADERSHIP FROM A HUMAN RESOURCE PERSPECTIVE <i>Nurul Hayani Abd Rahman, Shaira Ismail & Nani Ilyana Shafie</i>	1
2. UNEMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS <i>Azfahanee Zakaria & Sarah Sabir Ahmad</i>	4
3. FACTORS THAT TRIGGER IMPULSE BUYING IN SOCIAL MEDIA COMMERCE <i>Fatihah Norazami Abdullah</i>	7
4. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE'S IMPACT ON GENERATION ALPHA'S HIGHER EDUCATION EXPECTATIONS <i>Nurliyana Abas, Hanani Hussin & Azira Rahim</i>	11
5. SOCIAL MEDIA: GENERATIONAL TRENDS AND STRATEGIES <i>Norhidayah Ali, Azni Syafena Andin Salamat & Suhaida Abu Bakar</i>	17
6. STRONGER FINANCES, STRONGER LIVES: BUILDING HEALTH THROUGH ECONOMIC RESILIENCE <i>Nor Razuana Amram, Muhammad Asyraf Hashim & Nuraina Nadia Rosli</i>	19
7. RESEARCH TREND IN CUSTOMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY (CBBE) AND ITS CONTRIBUTING FACTORS <i>Musdiana Mohamad Salleh & Etty Harniza Harun</i>	22
8. UNDERSTANDING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET AMONG STUDENTS: A REVIEW <i>Nur Diana Hassan & Siti Fairuza Hassam</i>	26
9. BANK-BASED SHORT-TERM FUNDS: SUPPORTING WORKING CAPITAL AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY <i>Anita Abu Hassan, Mohd Syazrul Hafizi Husin & Rosliza Md Zani</i>	30
10. THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF BOYCOTTS: ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS FOR MALAYSIAN BUSINESS <i>Shakirah Mohd Saad</i>	33
11. CLICK TO EAT: UNDERSTANDING USERS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS <i>Mohd Najmie Osman, Norhidayah Ali & Azyyati Anuar</i>	36
12. WHEN BANKS LOSE THEIR HUMAN TOUCH <i>Anita Abu Hassan & Mohd Syazrul Hafizi Husin</i>	38
13. AT THE EDGE OF CODE AND CONSCIENCE: LEADERSHIP IN THE AGE OF AI <i>Hafizah Besar Sa'aid & Kardina Kamaruddin</i>	40

14.	BLOCKCHAIN USAGE IN MANAGEMENT: MALAYSIAN PERSPECTIVES AND APPLICATIONS	44
	<i>Mohd Fazil Jamaludin, Mohd Shafiz Saharan & Khairul Azfar Adzahar</i>	
15.	WATCHING THE WATCHERS: PRIVACY CONCERNS AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN SURVEILLANCE AND TRUST	49
	<i>Hanani Hussin, Nurliyana Abas & Norafiza Mohd Hardi</i>	
16.	KPIs VS. PEOPLE: STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN TARGETS AND TALENT	55
	<i>Rosliza Md Zani, Shakirah Mohd Saad & Abd Rasyid Ramli</i>	
17.	EARLY RETIREMENT: A BLESSING OR A BURDEN?	57
	<i>Wan Shahrul Aziah Wan Mahamad & Ramli Saad</i>	
18.	THE GIG ECONOMY AND LABOR RIGHTS IN MALAYSIA: BALANCING FLEXIBILITY WITH SECURITY	61
	<i>Jamilah Laidin, Nor Azira Ismail & Shahiszan Ismail</i>	
19.	DIGITALIZATION OF FINANCIAL ADVISORY THROUGH ROBO-ADVISORS	64
	<i>Chaleeda Som Sak</i>	
20.	FINANCIAL LITERACY IN A CHANGING ECONOMY: A MALAYSIAN PERSPECTIVE (2020–2024) LITERATURE REVIEW	67
	<i>Fauziah Mohamad Yunus & Azlin Azman</i>	
21.	ASSESSING THE ROLE OF CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMS IN ADDRESSING MALAYSIA'S COST-OF-LIVING CHALLENGES	71
	<i>Nor Azira Ismail, Jamilah Laidin & Shahiszan Ismail</i>	
22.	THE IMPACT OF FOMO ON THE PERFORMANCE OF GENERATION Z	73
	<i>Nurul Izzati Idrus & Nurfaznim Shuib</i>	
23.	BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN OFFICE RECORDS MANAGEMENT: A POST-PANDEMIC IMPERATIVE	76
	<i>Nurfaznim Shuib & Nurul Izzati Idrus</i>	

THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF BOYCOTTS: ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS FOR MALAYSIAN BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

Boycotts often harm businesses in several ways, including financial losses and damage to their reputation. Recent events in Malaysia and other countries, on the other hand, demonstrate that boycotts can also yield positive corporate and social outcomes. This article examines how boycotts can be beneficial to Malaysian businesses, particularly when consumers are more engaged due to religious, moral, or humanitarian reasons. The study examines both international research and trends in the US to identify five positive effects: increased sales of US-made goods, enhanced Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices, improved regulatory oversight, heightened public awareness of social and political issues, and stronger brand loyalty among socially conscious consumers. These results provide Malaysian businesses with valuable insights into how to address consumer boycotts and demonstrate how to modify their operations to be more ethical in response to public opinion.

Keywords: Boycotts, Malaysian businesses, consumer activism, corporate social responsibility, brand loyalty, market regulation.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer activism has become a significant force in today's business world, capable of transforming how markets operate and influencing how companies conduct their business. Boycotts in Malaysia based on humanitarian, religious, or moral reasons have been more common in recent years. This indicates that an increasing number of people expect businesses to act responsibly and align with their values. People often think that boycotts harm firms' finances and brand reputation, yet research from around the world shows that these campaigns can also benefit businesses, industries, and society as a whole.

The situation in Malaysia presents a compelling case for examining the positive aspects of boycotts. Local campaigns against global businesses, focusing on issues such as alleged human rights abuses and a lack of social awareness, have changed the way people shop nationwide. This article discusses the potential benefits that these movements can bring about, including increased sales in the US, improved Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), stricter regulations, heightened public awareness, and increased brand loyalty.

This study aims to help Malaysian firms and governments better understand how to respond strategically and ethically to consumer boycotts by combining global research findings with local insights. It suggests that businesses should not just view boycotts as threats. They should see them as important opportunities to gather input that can help them grow and improve.

POSITIVE IMPACTS OF BOYCOTTS ON MALAYSIAN BUSINESS.

1. Boost in Domestic Sales

When people reject foreign companies, they typically opt for local products instead. For example, a study in South Korea found that when people stopped buying Japanese beer, sales of Korean beer increased (Kim & Kim, 2022). In Malaysia, too, recent boycott movements have led to increased support for local firms in areas such as food and drink, clothing, and household goods. This substitution impact boosts the economy at home and helps local brands develop.

2. Improved Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Many corporations review and refine their CSR initiatives after boycotts to regain the public's trust. Following consumer reactions, businesses worldwide have endeavored to make their processes more transparent, ethical, and community-oriented (Mulyono & Rolando, 2025; Bendoraitienė & Darškuvienė, 2019). Brands in Malaysia that are being closely watched have started to clarify their policies on workers' rights, environmental protection, and community engagement in order to win back customers' trust, especially as younger Malaysians become increasingly socially aware.

3. Strengthened Regulatory Compliance and Market Standards

Boycotts can put pressure on firms and authorities to raise the bar on how they do business and the standards in the industry. Activist campaigns in the US have led to stronger regulations regarding nuclear energy (Fremeth et al., 2022). In Malaysia, too, boycotts and public protests have led to stricter regulations in areas such as halal certification, sustainable sourcing, and workplace safety, making market conditions more fair and transparent.

4. Increased Social and Political Awareness

Boycotts are a crucial way to prompt people to consider moral, religious, and humanitarian issues. The "Stop Hate for Profit" campaign against Facebook demonstrated how consumer action can influence corporate business practices (Villagra et al., 2021). Boycott efforts in Malaysia have drawn attention to issues such as supporting Palestine, worker exploitation, and consumer rights. This has led to increased civic involvement and ethical purchasing choices.

5. Stronger Brand Loyalty for Value-driven Businesses

Companies that genuinely listen to their customers' concerns during boycotts often gain more loyal customers. Brands that align with their customers' beliefs and social causes can establish trust and credibility over time. Studies demonstrate that handling emotional responses from customers effectively can enhance brand loyalty and reputation (Ibrahim & Dankwah, 2024). Malaysian companies that take proactive initiatives in this direction have observed better client retention and brand sentiment.

CONCLUSION

Although boycotts may initially pose financial and reputational challenges, they can also serve as catalysts for positive business transformation. In Malaysia, these movements have demonstrated the ability to drive local industry growth, enhance CSR practices, reinforce regulatory standards, raise public awareness, and foster long-term brand loyalty. As consumer awareness continues to evolve, businesses that respond ethically and strategically will be better positioned to thrive in a socially responsible market environment.

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