Original Article

The Influence of Social Media Platforms on Public Opinion: A Case Study of the Gaza-Israel Conflict

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Abstract: Social media serves as both a channel for information and a breeding ground for deception, the conflict between Israel and Gaza has emerged as a key topic of discussion from the perspective of the contemporary world. (Finkelstein, 2018, 2023; LSE Blogs, 2023.). Moreover, the solidary of agenda-setting and propaganda around the war between Gaza and Israel has an effect on the customer behavior in the Pakistani market and it places an emphasis on the need of adopting a more ethical approach to the media in the context of war and conflicts in order to forestall the dissemination of more false information towards the general population (Khalidi, 2020; Filiu, 2014; Amnesty International, 2023; Vox, 2023; Palestine Studies; Gallup Pakistan, 2023; BDS Movement). This research explores the impact of social media narratives, often biased against Israel, on public opinion and consumer behavior in Pakistan, particularly focusing on the rise of boycott movements against Israeli products - using Agenda Setting and Propaganda Theory, the study analyzes how these narratives shape public perception and drive collective action. It contributes to expansion the theoretical and empirical literature on the relationship between mediated representations and the behaviors of consumers in contemporary conflicts and it offers guidelines to both media professionals and consumers regarding how to interact with information through social media in a manner that is both safe and responsible.

Keywords: Social Media, Deception, Israel-Gaza Conflict, Public Opinion, Consumer Behavior, Agenda-Setting, Propaganda Theory, Boycott Movements.

Introduction:

The armed conflict between Israel and Gaza is undoubtedly one of the most contentious challenging and protracted political conflicts in modern history. This long-running conflict has affected a number of social and political aspects such as international relations economic security and human rights conditions. It is characterized by historical disagreements territorial conflicts and national aspirations. Millions of Palestinians have been impacted by the conflict which has caused human beings to experience a wide range of emotions from anger and sadness to feelings of hope and unity. In addition to making it more difficult for governments and international organizations to find solutions to issues unrelenting violence has an impact on world politics by making it more difficult to bring about peace in the Middle East. All of these things have been brought to light as a result of the war: long-standing historical narratives, diverse national identities, and a variety of security concerns. As a result, it has become a touchy and difficult issue that affects people all over the world. In the past few years, the war has gotten more attention than ever before on digital platforms, which is because it includes a complicated mix of old grudges, political goals, and social problems. People often think of social media as a way to help make society more democratic; however, it has become a double-edged sword that can share both true stories and false information (Zehra, 2023). People are fighting over what to say on social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The battle for public opinion is just as fierce as the fighting going on in the real world. Since the digital change, people have become more aware of how powerful it is to set dates. Media sites have a lot of power over which topics get attention and how they are shown to people all over the world (Chouliaraki, 2014; Al Jazeera, 2023; Levy, 2010; Roy, 2021; Dawn News, 2023; Anadolu Agency, 2023).

Another strong part of conflict stories is propaganda, which has taken advantage of the speed and reach of digital media to keep people on different points of view. In response to the crisis in Gaza, Pakistan, a nation that has strong historical and emotional links to the Palestinian cause, has taken collective action because it is very unhappy about the situation there. The Palestinian struggle is heavily influenced by Pakistan in many ways. People have begun using advertisements on social media platforms to push for a boycott of businesses that they believe are backing Israel. These boycotts have been brought about by incorrect information that is based on feelings as well as genuine support for one another. The reason why people are refusing to purchase these items is because they demonstrate how powerful community movements can be and how much influence media stories have in influencing the behavior of consumers (Khalidi, 2020; Filiu, 2014; Klein, 2019; Chomsky & Pappé, 2013; Finkelstein, 2018; Roy, 2016; Chouliaraki, 2014; Al Jazeera, 2023; Levy, 2010; Roy, 2021; Dawn News, 2023; Anadolu Agency, 2023; LSE Blogs, 2023; Amnesty International, 2023; Vox, 2023; Palestine Studies, n.d.; Gallup Pakistan, 2023; BDS Movement, 2024.). This research paper aims to study about the complicated dynamics between propaganda, misinformation, as well as social media in the coverage of the Gaza-Israel conflict – the most focus is on their impact in Pakistan. Drawing upon Agenda Setting Theory and Propaganda Theory, the study examines how these narratives shape public opinion, inspire activism, and drive consumer choices and so by studying the dual role of media as both a bridge and barrier to truth, the goal of this study is to shed light on the ethical, social, as well as the economic implications of media-driven activism in contemporary conflicts.

Research Context

The power of social media to influence public opinion has significantly expanded in the current digital era. This influence is more apparent during emergencies when conflicting narratives compete for public acceptance. Assessing the significance of agenda-setting and propaganda is crucial for assessing the spread of information to influence opinions especially when it comes to domestic and international conflicts. The

purpose of this study is to investigate these mechanisms in order to shed light on how they influence public opinion and the wider ramifications for democratic discourse and well-informed decision-making. The way the Israel-Gaza conflict has been covered on social media has had a big impact on Pakistani peoples beliefs and actions. Because social media platforms like Facebook Instagram Twitter and others typically highlight specific conflict elements that support particular narratives or points of view they have been crucial for the dissemination of information. The practice of the media highlighting particular subjects in an attempt to sway public opinion is known as agenda-setting. The use of social media in Pakistan to denounce Israel and encourage peace with the Palestinians has led to widespread support for boycotts of Israeli products and companies. Many campaigns have been fueled by propaganda techniques that involve selectively disseminating information to evoke strong emotional reactions and motivate people to take action. For example, it implies that Palestine started the conflict altogether which is untrue. The fact that so many Pakistanis have joined the cause of protesting the conflict and calling for changes in the way their government is handling the situation shows how powerful social media is at swaying public opinion and sparking social movements.

Objective of the Study

The impact of agenda-setting and propaganda on public opinion has been a major topic of interest in political communication and media studies. This study looks at the connection between propaganda and agenda-setting focusing on how these elements affect the formation of public opinion and democratic decision-making. This study attempts to clarify how media dynamics impact public opinions and potential hazards to informed citizens in the contemporary era by assessing their responsibilities. Below is a list of this study primary goals.

Research Questions

This research aims to explore the interplay between social media portrayals, agenda setting, propaganda, and their broader societal impacts, offering insights into the dynamics of digital influence in contemporary conflicts and activism. Following are the research questions for the given study:

1. How did social media platforms portray the Gaza-Israel conflict?
2. What role did agenda setting and propaganda play in shaping public opinion during the conflict/genocide?
3. How did these portrayals contribute to boycott campaigns in Pakistani society?
4. What are the implications of social media-driven activism on global and local consumer behavior?

Research Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to investigate how, in the digital era, social media portrayals affect boycotts, change consumer behavior, and form perceptions. The following research hypotheses were established for this purpose:

Research Hypothesis 1: Social media platforms portrayed the Gaza-Israel conflict with significant differences in narrative framing (e.g., supportive, neutral, or critical stances toward either side).

Research Hypothesis 2: Agenda setting and propaganda on social media significantly influenced public opinion by emphasizing specific themes (e.g., victimhood, aggression, calls to action).

Research Hypothesis 3: Negative portrayals of brands in social media significantly increase the likelihood of initiating boycott campaigns in Pakistani society.

Research Hypothesis 4: Social media driven activism significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions at both global and local levels.

Literature Review

Social Media Portrayal of the Gaza-Israel Conflict

Social media sites like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook were very important during the war between Israel and Gaza. The main ways that information, personal stories, and reports from the front lines of the fight got to people were through these sites. There were real-time stories, pictures, and news on these platforms that brought attention to people's pain, violations of human rights, and military operations. This gave activists and normal users a way to share their experiences. People all over the world were directly exposed to the truth of the war through moving photos and personal stories shared on social media and this gave people who were directly affected by the violence a chance to speak out. Hashtags like #FreePalestine and #BoycottIsrael have become popular, leading to the growth of large support groups and the gathering of public opinion all over the world (Elmasry, 2024; Baidoun, 2014; Zeitzoff, 2018; Jhaa & Chumbow, 2024; Mtchedlidze, 2019; Alashqar, 2024). This ability to make opinions heard and bring attention to issues was a testament to the new power of social media. It gave underserved groups and everyday events a way to reach people around the world without relying only on mainstream news outlets. Still, the fact that social media is unregulated, fast-paced, and goes viral caused a lot of problems. The biggest one was the spread of false information and twisted stories. A lot of fake information and biased stories were shared on these platforms, which made people's views on the war even more divided. People saw highly charged posts, which were often sparked by graphic pictures or hashtags, and they had strong emotional responses. But these posts made it hard to tell the difference between facts, opinions, and lies. However, Amnesty International (2023) and Al Jazeera (2023) have said that these changes in social media have made it so that biased news and emotional pleas have more of an impact on public opinion than objective facts. Because these stories spread so quickly and because internet users and activists are biased by nature, they sometimes focused on pain and moral outrage instead of careful global analysis. The Hundred Years' War on Palestine by Rashid Khalidi (2020) and Gaza in Crisis by Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé (2013) are two books that show how stories on social media have focused on people's mental pain. Many people around the world are more sympathetic and critical because of this, but the complicated sociopolitical facts the surface are being ignored. As an example of how social media can make it easier for anyone to share information and get involved, it can also make it harder for people to understand what's going on by telling one-sided, highly charged stories about events instead of encouraging a deeper, more balanced knowledge of the problem. This shows how social media can change how people think about things (Baidoun, 2014; Zeitzoff, 2018; Jhaa & Chumbow, 2024; Mtchedlidze, 2019).

The Role of Agenda Setting and Propaganda

Agenda-setting theories say that media outlets push certain events and tell certain stories on purpose to change how people think about them and this is very important information about how media sites affect how people think about things (Grzywińska & Batorski, 2016; Carazo-Barrantes, 2021). Several news sites did a great job of using these tactics during the war between Israel and Gaza. They used both traditional news sources and social media to sway public opinion and back ideological positions. Using emotional pleas,

which were made possible by the spread of violent photos of deaths and suffering, was one of the most important strategies that were used (Carazo-Barrantes, 2021; Salman, Mustaffa, & Mohd Salleh, 2016; Galloway, 2004). These pictures were shared on a number of news outlets and social media sites. Chouliaraki (2014), who talks about these powerful visual images in The Spectatorship of Suffering, says that they stirred up strong feelings like anger, pity, and unity, which sparked public opinion and pushed people to work together. Because these pictures made people feel something, they helped tell the story in certain ways, focusing on the hurt and unfair things that happened on one side of the fight and ignoring other sides or the bigger picture. The ability of the media to construct a selective and highly charged framework for understanding events was revised by this approach, which had an impact on how the public understood and responded to the events. People around the world had different ideas about what was going on because of the crisis because some parts of the violence were reported on while others were ignored. There was a lot of coverage in the news about the damage done by bombings in Gaza, but not as much about the actions of the Israeli military or other parts of the war. For example, UK media outlets reported false and unverified claims, such as the alleged "beheaded babies" during the conflict, as fact without proper investigation, leading to widespread misinformation (Yusuf, 2024). Britain's national press, through selective reporting and reliance on emotional stories, positioned themselves as ideological allies of Israel, often framing their stories in ways that reinforced Israel's narrative while ignoring Palestinian suffering (Yusuf, 2024). For this reason, the view of what happened was skewed and slanted. Both Norman Finkelstein's 2018 book Gaza: An Inquest into Its Martyrdom and Gideon Levy's book The Punishment of Gaza criticize how the media frequently adopts a one-sided approach, giving some viewpoints more weight than others and, as a result, influencing public sentiment in ways that reflect selective ideological biases rather than fostering thorough and balanced analysis (2010). This smart use of selective reporting and emotional pleas shows how marketing and having agendas affect how people think about things, as well as how the media changes stories. By focusing on certain stories and leaving out others, these media methods changed how people around the world understood the war between Israel and Gaza. This is a great example of how the media can change people's ideas about geopolitics and get people all over the world to act together.

Boycott Campaigns in Pakistani Society

Social media played a bigger role in the war between Israel and Gaza than just spreading information. It became a major way for people to work together to solve the problem. This became very clear when a lot of people in Pakistan started to boycott the goods. Most of the planning for these events was done on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. People were stirring up protests by telling emotionally charged stories and choosing pictures that strongly connected with people's sadness and anger over the killings in Gaza (Shah, Raza, Rajar, & Baig, 2024; Roslan & Ku Yusof, 2024). Campaigns with a lot of attention went after big companies like Starbucks and Coca-Cola because they were thought to back Israel because of their ties to the country or the financial problems of their parent companies. People attacked these names because they were thought to back Israel. A lot of people in Pakistan supported these plans, even though there isn't a lot of evidence that directly connects these companies to Israeli military operations. Both Dawn News (2023) and Anadolu Agency (2023) have written articles that show how social media posts, along with support from the government and people at the ground level, made these boycotts stronger. These movements are similar to the worldwide Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which stresses that everyone feels sorry for the Palestinian people who are suffering. This shows that both social media is useful for planning things and that these groups are in line with that trend. Pakistani customers' answers showed that they were becoming more aware of how their choices affect global problems, which was clear from what they did. However, these boycott efforts made people aware of the moral problems that come up when fake information and unchecked stories are shared on social media. Gallup Pakistan (2023) found that the use of

certain pictures, emotional pleas, and the spreading of false information were all important factors in the boycott efforts getting stronger. These kinds of false information not only made people take more action, but they also raised important moral questions about the media's duties. These unproven claims were accepted without question, which led to a kind of group action that was based on incomplete or wrong information. This shows how the emotional pull of social media can make arguments worse through users' actions. Even though these actions are based on unity and moral outrage, they also show a risk: activity that starts out with good goals could go in the wrong direction or be harmful if false information is allowed to change people's minds. The movement to ban Pakistan shows how much more media knowledge, openness, and responsibility are needed on social media sites. Things like these are getting more and more important. Although these efforts show ethical buying and unity, they also show how delicate the balance is in a society that is more connected through technology between action, spreading false information, and telling stories without any checks and balances (Shah, Raza, Rajar, & Baig, 2024; Roslan & Ku Yusof, 2024; Buheji & Hasan, 2024a; Buheji, BenAmer, & Hasan, 2024b).

Implications of Social Media Driven Activism on Consumer Behavior

Because of recent events in Gaza and Israel, people are more aware of how powerful social media sites are as tools for online action. This, in turn, has a huge effect on how people behave both locally and globally. Social media sites, which are known for how quickly they spread information, have made it possible for fast and widespread consumer protests. Posts that stirred up strong feelings and attempts to work together have sparked these movements. These groups often affected people's decisions because they went after big companies like Starbucks and Coca-Cola because they were seen as having political or international ties. During the war between Israel and Gaza, this was seen. The fact that many people are trying to use the things they buy as a way to protest and show support shows that there is a trend toward ethical consumerism. These customer answers, on the other hand, show that there are major ethics issues. For this reason, social media sites can spread false information, which could lead people to base their decisions on stories that haven't been proven rather than facts. Al Jazeera (2023) says that consumer movements that go popular like these show how difficult it is to tell the difference between serious ethical campaigns and emotional reactions that are based on incomplete or wrong information. Because so many people get their news and voice their opinions on social media, there are more ethical issues to think about. In her 2016 book "The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-Development," Sara Roy talks about how social media-driven market trends could hurt the economy in the long run, especially in places where tensions in the world are already high. The outlets of social media help consumer pushback and unity groups grow, but they also make people more reliant on news that isn't checked or is skewed. People's views may be skewed by this dependence, and it may be harder for them to think critically about complicated political events. Media literacy is a skill that is getting more and more important. Lilie Chouliaraki came up with the idea of "The Spectatorship of Pain" (2014), which is especially relevant in this case because social media sites show users a selective and sometimes emotionally charged picture of pain, focusing on spectacle over nuanced analysis. There are, however, important books like "Gaza in Crisis" (2013) by Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé and "The Punishment of Gaza" (2010) by Gideon Levy that show how media bias and global war are linked. When false information is used to make stories instead of real, accurate news, those stories suggest that social media, even though it can help people come together and work together, can also oversimplify conflicts and lead to ethical problems. Because of this, social media is both a powerful tool for global action and a place where people can be confused about what is right and wrong. Because of this, both customers and organizers need to think critically about the information they see and the effects it has.

Methods and Materials

Since it provides a clear and structured overview of the study methodology the Methods and Materials section is crucial to any quantitative research article. This element ensures that the research procedure is transparent repeatable and trustworthy so that readers can evaluate the validity and dependability of the findings. In quantitative studies which focus on quantifying patterns and effects using numerical data, the methods and materials outline the framework for data collection sampling strategies and analytical tools. By detailing their methodology researchers ensure that their approach aligns with the study's objectives and meets rigorous scientific standards. Additionally, other researchers can replicate the study or apply the methodology in different contexts thanks to a well-structured methods section expanding the research's field contribution and application.

Research Methodology

With a particular focus on the Gaza-Israel conflict, the research methodology focuses on a thorough literature review to examine previous studies on the role of social media in influencing public opinion during geopolitical conflicts. This review looks at academic books reports and articles to find dominant narratives the way social media platforms set agendas and how propaganda is spread. It also investigates the impact of digital activism, including boycott movements, and the ethical considerations in conflict reporting. The literature review provides a theoretical foundation for understanding media dynamics and public perception, highlighting gaps to be addressed in future research. The methodology includes the quantitative analysis, which is based on a questionnaire-based survey related to the Gaza-Israel conflict, and includes the statistical data analysis of the data collected from the 50 Pakistani social media users to determine patterns of agenda setting and propaganda.

Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions and objectives, a methodical review of the gathered data is provided in the data analysis section. Quantitative approach is used in this study to find underlying patterns and testing of research hypotheses. The study intends to investigate how the Gaza-Israel conflict is portrayed, the function of agenda-setting and propaganda, and their subsequent effects on public attitude and consumer behavior by examining data from boycott campaigns, public opinion polls, and social media content. Insights into the impact of social media-driven activism on local and global dynamics are provided by contextualizing the data within this framework.

Demographics

Table 1: Demographics of the respondents

Demographics		
	Under 18	20%
	18-25	28%
What is your age?	26-35	16%
	36-45	20%
	45 and above	16%
What is your gender?	Male	48%
	Female	36%
	Rather not to say	16%
	Student	30%
	Employed	32%

What is your occupation?	Self-Employed	24%
	Unemployed	14%
What is your highest level of education?	High School	30%
	Bachelor's Degree	28%
	Master's Degree	34%
	Ph.D. or higher	8%
How often do you use social media?	Rarely	12%
	Occasionally	14%
	Frequently	32%
	Daily	42%

Comprehending the demographic makeup of survey respondents is crucial for placing the results in perspective and ensuring their applicability to the target population. Demographics give a thorough picture of respondents' experiences and characteristics by revealing information about their age, gender, occupation, level of education, and social media usage habits. In order to have a better understanding of the sample composition and its implications for the study's findings, this section attempts to interpret the demographic data.

Although the survey respondents were from a variety of age categories, the vast majority were younger. The sample was primarily male, but there were also a sizable number of female participants and those who chose not to reveal their gender, indicating variety. Participants' occupations ranged from self-employed to students to employed, with a lower percentage being jobless. The majority of responders had advanced degrees, indicating that the sample group was highly educated. The majority of participants were active on social media either daily or frequently, which was in line with the study's emphasis on digital platforms.

Responses (in percentage) of Topic Oriented Questions

Table 2: Responses of questions regarding social media portrayal of the Gaza-Israel conflict

Social Media Portrayal of the Gaza-Israel Conflict		
At what extent do you agree that the portrayal of the Gaza-Israel conflict supported towards Gaza on social media?	Strongly Disagree	10%
	Disagree	12%
	Neutral	14%
	Agree	42%
	Strongly Agree	22%
In your opinion social media content is credible regarding the Gaza-Israel conflict?	Strongly Disagree	14%
	Disagree	12%
	Neutral	18%
	Agree	30%
	Strongly Agree	26%
In your opinion there is no bias or selective framing in how the Gaza-Israel conflict is presented on social media?	Strongly Disagree	18%
	Disagree	8%
	Neutral	16%
	Agree	38%
	Strongly Agree	20%

The data in Table 2 reflects public opinions on three aspects of the Gaza-Israel conflict as portrayed on social media. A sizable percentage of respondents strongly agree that social media portrayals are in favor of Gaza. Different viewpoints are indicated by the smaller but still present percentage of those who disagree or are neutral. With agreement outweighing doubt, a significant number of participants believe social media content on this subject to be reliable. There are also a lot of neutral viewpoints, indicating that although most people believe the information, others are not sure or are not persuaded. There are differing views on whether social media portrays the crisis objectively. Although a sizable portion of respondents think the news is objective, a notable percentage strongly disagree, suggesting that many people perceive the media to be biased or selectively framed. Despite ongoing worries about bias and framing, the results generally show a widespread conviction in the legitimacy and acceptance of social media information regarding Gaza.

Table 3: Responses of questions regarding Role of Agenda Setting and Propaganda

Role of Agenda Setting and Propaganda		
Do you think social media platforms influence public opinion through agenda setting?	Strongly Disagree	18%
	Disagree	8%
	Neutral	16%
	Agree	38%
	Strongly Agree	20%
Do you think propaganda on social media influence public opinion related to the Gaza-Israel conflict?	Strongly Disagree	16%
	Disagree	14%
	Neutral	12%
	Agree	44%
	Strongly Agree	14%
Social media posts about the Gaza-Israel conflict frequently emphasized themes of victimhood to shape public opinion.	Strongly Disagree	14%
	Disagree	8%
	Neutral	16%
	Agree	40%
	Strongly Agree	22%

The information in Table 3 provides insight into how the general public views the influence of social media propaganda and agenda-setting on opinions around the Israel-Gaza conflict:

There was a greater number of respondents who agreed than disagreed that social media platforms shape public opinion by establishing agendas. A sizable minority, on the other hand, either strongly disagrees or stays neutral, suggesting some doubt or hesitancy regarding its influence. Many participants agree that social media propaganda has a significant impact on how the public views the war. The general sentiment indicates that the impact of propaganda is widely acknowledged, even though some individuals disagree or are neutral. Numerous participants concur that in order to influence public opinion, social media posts regarding the conflict usually highlight victimization themes. While a lesser percentage disagrees or is indifferent, indicating some differences in perceptions, strong agreement on this issue is noteworthy. All things considered, the answers demonstrate a widely held notion that social media significantly influences how the public views the Israel-Gaza conflict, whether through propaganda, agenda-setting, or the selective highlighting of particular themes like victimhood.

Table 4: Responses of questions regarding impact on Boycott Campaigns in Pakistani Society

Impact on Boycott Campaigns in Pakistani Society		
I supported boycott campaigns due to social media portrayals of the Gaza-Israel conflict?	Strongly Disagree	14%
	Disagree	12%
	Neutral	12%
	Agree	38%
	Strongly Agree	24%
Negative social media posts about specific brands motivated me to participate in or support boycott campaigns.	Strongly Disagree	12%
	Disagree	8%
	Neutral	4%
	Agree	48%
	Strongly Agree	28%
I believe social media is an effective platform for initiating and organizing brand boycott campaigns.	Strongly Disagree	14%
	Disagree	10%
	Neutral	12%
	Agree	34%
	Strongly Agree	30%

The information in Table 4 investigates how social media affects boycott efforts related to the Israel-Gaza conflict in Pakistani society. A significant number of participants report that their support for boycott campaigns was impacted by how the issue was portrayed on social media. Although the majority responds in agreement, a minor percentage disagrees or stays neutral. A sizable majority concur that their involvement in or support of boycott movements was prompted by unfavorable social media posts about certain firms. The remarkably high level of strong agreement highlights the posts' persuasive power. On this issue, only a small minority disagrees or is indifferent. Social media, according to several respondents, is a useful tool for starting and planning campaigns to boycott brands. Although there is broad consensus regarding its efficacy, a smaller percentage expresses skepticism or indifference, indicating varying opinions regarding its overall significance. Overall, research shows that social media, especially unfavorable tweets about businesses and depictions of the Gaza-Israel conflict, has a significant influence on how people think and behave in relation to boycott efforts. In such endeavors, the platform is seen as a vital instrument for organization and mobilization.

Table 5: Responses of questions regarding influence of social media-Driven Activism on Consumer Behavior

Influence of social media-Driven Activism on Consumer Behavior		
Social media-driven activism influenced your purchasing decisions?	Strongly Disagree	16%
	Disagree	8%
	Neutral	16%
	Agree	36%
	Strongly Agree	24%
Ethical or moral reasons influenced my decision to purchase or avoid a product?	Strongly Disagree	16%
	Disagree	12%
	Neutral	12%
	Agree	48%
	Strongly Agree	12%
	Strongly Disagree	12%
	Disagree	18%

I believe social media activism has a lasting impact on consumer behavior?	Neutral	18%
	Agree	34%
	Strongly Agree	18%

Key insights are shown by the data in Table 5, which looks at how activism on social media affects consumer behavior. A sizable majority of respondents concur that activism on social media has affected their shopping choices. Although the majority of respondents agree, some are neutral or disagree, indicating that the level of effect experienced varies. Many participants admit that moral or ethical considerations, which are frequently emphasized on social media, have affected their choice to buy or stay away from particular products. Only a smaller percentage of respondents expressed indifference or disagreement, indicating the significant support for this viewpoint. Whether social media activism has a long-term impact on consumer behavior is a topic of some disagreement. Although many people support this idea, a sizable portion disagree or are neutral, suggesting that opinions on the long-term effects vary. All things considered, the results show how social media-driven activism shapes consumer choices and encourages ethical consumption, with a particular focus on its immediate impact. There are differing opinions, nevertheless, regarding its long-term effects on consumer behavior.

Research Hypotheses

Any scientific investigation is built around research hypotheses, which give the study a distinct focus and direction. They provide testable hypotheses that enable researchers to look at connections, variations, or impacts in the data. Through the formulation of precise hypotheses, researchers are able to methodically assess their presumptions and arrive at significant findings. Additionally, hypotheses help close the gap between theory and actual data by directing the choice of suitable techniques and statistical analyses. The hypotheses in this study tackle important facets of social media's function in influencing activism, public opinion, and consumer behavior. Interpreting the findings of these hypotheses offers practical insights into the phenomena under study in addition to validating the goals of the study.

The responses gathered from a self-made questionnaire were used for the data analysis. There were three questions in each of the questionnaire's four sections, each of which addressed a distinct topic. The answers to the three questions in every component were combined to create a composite score for that section in order to examine the data. Since a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree," was used to collect the data, the Chi-Square Goodness of Fit test was used to evaluate to the aggregate scores. The significance of the response patterns across the measured variables was determined by using this statistical technique to evaluate how well observed responses matched expected distributions. This method guaranteed a thorough and succinct analysis of the data that was in line with the goals of the study.

Research Hypothesis 1: Social media platforms portrayed the Gaza-Israel conflict with significant differences in narrative framing (e.g., supportive, neutral, or critical stances toward either side).

Table 6: Chi-square goodness of fit test for hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1	
Chi-Square	35.400[a]
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

The results of the chi-square test indicate a chi-square value of 35.400 and a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the standard significance level (e.g., 0.05), we reject the null hypothesis (H₀). This suggests that the distribution of narrative framing categories (supportive, neutral, critical) on social media platforms is not uniform.

In other words, there are significant differences in the frequency of each narrative framing category. This finding supports the research hypothesis that social media platforms portrayed the Gaza-Israel conflict with varying narrative framing. These differences could indicate biases or distinct agendas in the way social media platforms presented the conflict. Further analysis could identify which specific categories were overrepresented or underrepresented.

Research Hypothesis 2: Agenda setting and propaganda on social media significantly influenced public opinion by emphasizing specific themes (e.g., victimhood, aggression, calls to action).

Table 7: Chi-square goodness of fit test for hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2	
Chi-Square	43.000[a]
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

The chi-square test for this hypothesis yielded a chi-square value of 43.000 and a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the standard significance level (e.g., 0.05), we reject the null hypothesis (H₀). This means the distribution of themes emphasized by agenda setting and propaganda on social media is not uniform.

This result supports the research hypothesis that agenda setting and propaganda on social media significantly influenced public opinion by emphasizing specific themes such as victimhood, aggression, or calls to action. The significant differences in the frequency of these themes suggest that certain narratives were highlighted more prominently, potentially shaping how audiences perceived the Gaza-Israel conflict. These findings underline the role of social media as a powerful tool in directing public focus and shaping opinions through selective emphasis on specific themes.

Research Hypothesis 3: Negative portrayals of brands in social media significantly increase the likelihood of initiating boycott campaigns in Pakistani society.

Table 8: Chi-square goodness of fit test for hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3	
Chi-Square	21.400[a]
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

The chi-square value of 21. 400 and a p-value of 0. 000 were obtained from the chi-square test for this hypothesis. Because the p-value is below the conventional significance level (e. g. 3. Our null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected (0. 05). This suggests that how brands are portrayed on social media has a big impact on how boycott campaign participation is distributed.

Put another way unfavorable social media representations of brands indeed raise the possibility of boycott campaigns being started in Pakistani society. The noteworthy outcome emphasizes how social media narratives have a strong influence on public action and consumer behavior. Since boycott campaigns are more often associated with negative brand representations this suggests that social media can act as a catalyst for public opinion mobilization and consumer behavior toward particular brands.

Research Hypothesis 4: Social media-driven activism significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions at both global and local levels.

Table 9: Chi-square goodness of fit test for hypothesis 4

	Hypothesis 4
Chi-Square	35.000[a]
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000

The results of the chi-square test for this hypothesis were a p-value of 0. 000 and a chi-square value of 35. 000. The significance threshold (e) is exceeded by the p-value. A. Our null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected (0. 05). This suggests that the distribution of consumer purchases impacted by activism on social media at the local and global levels differs significantly.

The study hypothesis that activism on social media has a major impact on local and international consumer purchasing decisions is supported by this finding. The notable distinction indicates that social media activism is influencing consumer decisions in different ways at these two levels emphasizing the disparities in impact and the difference between local and global issues in influencing consumer behavior. The results highlight how crucial it is to comprehend how social media activism can impact local markets as well as international brands when it comes to purchasing decisions.

Discussion

Public opinion and consumer behavior have been significantly impacted by the way the conflict between Israel and Gaza has been portrayed on social media in Pakistan where the war has had a significant emotional and intellectual resonance. This is especially true in Pakistan where social media platforms were found to be important battlefields for the dissemination of narratives that influenced people's perceptions of the conflict. As a result, hashtags like Free Palestine and Boycott Israel have become very popular helping to elevate Palestinian voices while simultaneously presenting Israel as the aggressor. This trend aligns with the Agenda Setting Theory which explains how media outlets frame certain issues and prioritize certain topics in ways that influence public opinion (Chouliaraki 2014).

However, Khalidi (2020) and Finkelstein (2018) claim that these depictions occasionally lacked a thorough understanding of the conflict's geopolitical complexities. Rather than that, they concentrated on narratives and graphics that were emotionally engaging and even the ultimate consequence was a public that was split along ideological lines, with the overwhelming majority of people supporting Palestinian solidarity groups and demanding boycotts of firms with links to Israel - this resulted when the public was divided along ideological lines. These emotional appeals, which may be selective or misleading at times, prompted people

to take collective action, such as boycotting global corporations that were seen to be backing Israel. The Propaganda Theory is key to understanding how these emotional appeals led to such collective action.

Conclusion

Not only are the repercussions of activism that is driven by social media that pertain to consumer behavior profound, but they are also upsetting. While on the one hand, these boycott initiatives were a proof of the great potential that social media has in terms of influencing the choices that consumers make and in terms of inspiring collective action (de Jong, Gawande, & Lee, 2024). Social media is a powerful tool that may be used to motivate the people to take attitudes that are based on perceived ethical responsibilities to support the Palestinian cause and it is because social media is becoming more widespread and so this was shown by the magnitude of the campaigns that were carried out against corporations like Starbucks and Coca-Cola. The flip side of the coin is that this social activity was not free of any ethical risks, which means, misinformation, which was often fueled by selective reporting and emotional appeals, had a significant role in influencing the behavior of customers, sometimes without taking into full account the availability of the facts. This was a crucial influence that had a significant impact on the behavior of consumers and this fact is made abundantly evident by the findings of the Gallup Pakistan (2023) research, which, among other things, highlighted the number of respondents who admitted to being swayed by the emotional and unsubstantiated stories that are circulating on social media. Although the international boycott campaign raised awareness of Palestinian solidarity it also raised serious moral questions regarding media accountability and consumer involvement in the spread of false information. In their separate publications, Chomsky and Pappé (2013) discuss how this selective media representation of the war frequently results in a simplistic and one-sided picture of the conflict and can potentially obstruct the development of a well-informed and balanced global viewpoint. In summary, the results of this study suggest that transparency information literacy and ethical reporting need to be given more attention. They also emphasize that social media should be used more carefully to prevent spreading false information and further alienating people even though it may promote cooperation and action.

Overall, in this study, we can see the positive and negative aspects of social media platforms as instruments for communication and action by the war between Gaza and Israel (Genocide of Palestinians) and how it has been portrayed on the different social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. Irrespective of the fact that social media functioned as an excellent tool for raising awareness about the humanitarian situation, it also helped to perpetuate disinformation that increased antagonism and swayed consumer movements. The boycott campaigns of Pakistan are a good example of how the selective use of propaganda and agenda-setting methods helped greatly to the formation of public opinion and behavior. In spite of the fact that they are seen from the point of view of certain storylines and emotional appeals, these advertisements show us as how the collective activity on social media may have an effect on the choices that consumers make. When everything is said and done, these findings shed light on the need of enhanced media literacy, ethical reporting, and transparency in order to ensure that social media platforms serve as a tool for informed action rather than a weapon for separating people and propagating misinformation. It is more than important that activism on social media be employed in a responsible way in order to foster ethical conduct and the transmission of accurate information, as the study reveals, which is despite the fact that social media activism has a vast potential for doing good.

Implications of the study

The implications of this research underscore the important influence of social media when it comes to shaping public opinion and consumer behavior, particularly in conflict scenarios like the Gaza-Israel war - this is in relation to ethical media reporting, and information literacy to overcome fake news and one-sided stories. By demonstrating how social media-driven activism can spur both positive and negative consumer movements, the study calls for greater responsibility in media practices and consumer engagement. It is so much important to avoid skepticism and raise media literacy, encouraging responsible coverage of conflicts, so the part of the spread of deception can be minimized, making ethic activism in internationally important topics more suitable.

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