



## NAVIGATION OF IMAGE IN THE MIDST OF BOYCOTT: MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF COMPANIES IN RESPONDING TO ISRAELI PRODUCT ISSUES

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### Abstract

This research aims to analyze in depth the marketing communication strategies implemented by KFC, Starbucks, Unilever, and Pizza Hut in facing the boycott of Israeli products. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers and marketing staff from company branches in North Sumatra. The data collected was analyzed using Nvivo software, which identified key themes related to determining marketing objectives, segmentation and targeting, as well as differentiation and positioning. The research results show that these companies are able to reduce the negative impact of boycotts by implementing strategies that focus on local adaptation, image strengthening and product innovation. This strategy has proven effective in maintaining consumer loyalty, maintaining market share, and strengthening their position in the global market. These findings emphasize the importance of flexibility, innovation and responsiveness in responding to sensitive global issues.

**Keywords:** Boycott; Innovation; Marketing Communications; Strategy.

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## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis secara mendalam strategi komunikasi pemasaran yang diterapkan oleh KFC, Starbucks, Unilever, dan Pizza Hut dalam menghadapi boikot produk Israel. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, wawancara semi-terstruktur dilakukan dengan manajer dan staf pemasaran dari cabang-cabang perusahaan di Sumatera Utara. Data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis menggunakan perangkat lunak Nvivo, yang mengidentifikasi tema-tema kunci terkait penentuan tujuan pemasaran, segmentasi dan targeting, serta diferensiasi dan positioning. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perusahaan-perusahaan tersebut mampu mengurangi dampak negatif boikot dengan menerapkan strategi yang berfokus pada adaptasi lokal, penguatan citra, dan inovasi produk. Strategi ini terbukti efektif dalam mempertahankan loyalitas konsumen, menjaga pangsa pasar, serta memperkuat posisi mereka di pasar global. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya fleksibilitas, inovasi, dan responsifitas dalam merespons isu-isu global yang sensitif.

**Kata Kunci: Boikot; Inovasi; Komunikasi Pemasaran; Strategi.**

## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, political and social issues often pose significant challenges for multinational companies. One of the most prominent issues in recent decades has been the boycott of Israeli products.<sup>1</sup> This boycott is often triggered by political conflicts involving Israel and has a significant impact on the image of companies that have relationships or affiliations with the country.<sup>2</sup> In response, these companies need to develop effective marketing communication strategies to navigate their image amidst this controversy.<sup>3</sup> In this context, appropriate communication tactics can be a crucial tool for maintaining the company's reputation while also managing relationships with various stakeholders.

The issue of boycotting Israeli products is not a new phenomenon. In recent decades, movements such as Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) have led global campaigns to boycott Israeli products as a form of protest against the Israeli government's policies toward Palestine. This movement has gained support from a wide range of parties, from individuals to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in various countries.<sup>4</sup> The boycott of Israeli

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<sup>1</sup>S. H. Afriani, D. Darussalam, and others, "Examining the Israeli Product Boycott in Indonesia: Exploring the Intersection of Religious Tensions and Digital Information to Assess Its Influence on Global Discourse," *Kitabina: Jurnal Bahasa & ...*, 2024; A. Fitri and others, "Muslim Consumer Intentions Towards Boycotted Products Affiliated with Israel in Indonesia," *Innovative: Journal of ...*, 2024; H. Hino, "The Influence of Economic Antisemitism on Boycotting Israeli Products: The Case of French Consumers," *Israel Affairs*, 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2024.2367880>; F. Ahsyam and others, "The Impact of the Pro-Israel Product Boycott on Stock Prices of Companies Registered on BEI," *International ...*, 2024.

<sup>2</sup>M. G. Haque, M. Andriani, and others, "Among Muslim Consumers in the World and Indonesia: Boycotting Israel-Affiliated Products' Spirit," *Return: Study of ...*, 2023.

<sup>3</sup>A. M. Yunus and others, "The Concept of Boycott: A General Introduction," in *Business and ...* ([pdfs.semanticscholar.org](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org), 2020).

<sup>4</sup>BDS Movement, "Annual Report," 2023.

products has placed multinational companies in a difficult position, especially those with investments or business ties to Israel.

According to data released by the Global Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement, this movement has succeeded in gaining support from more than 100 organizations and institutions worldwide. In fact, several European and Latin American countries have implemented rules banning or restricting the import of products from Israeli settlements in occupied territories.<sup>5</sup> This demonstrates the significant impact of the boycott movement on global business, particularly for companies operating in the region or with affiliations to Israeli entities.

In this context, marketing communication becomes a crucial tool for companies involved in this issue. A report from the Edelman Trust Barometer in 2023 revealed that 78% of consumers worldwide believe that a company's stance on social and political issues influences their purchasing decisions. Furthermore, 64% of consumers stated that they would stop buying products from companies they perceive as not aligned with their ethical values.<sup>6</sup> This data shows that companies cannot ignore the importance of effective and strategic communication in navigating sensitive issues such as the boycott of Israeli products.

Companies often employ various communication tactics, ranging from defensive to proactive strategies.<sup>7</sup> Defensive strategies involve efforts to minimize negative impacts by refraining from directly engaging in political or social debates.<sup>8</sup> For example, some companies choose to remain neutral by issuing statements affirming that they focus on business and do not engage in political issues. However, this approach does not always succeed, especially as public pressure intensifies and demands for action become stronger.

On the other hand, some companies opt for a more proactive approach by responding to the boycott openly.<sup>9</sup> For instance, some companies decide to reassess their policies regarding suppliers or operations in Israel and communicate these changes publicly. This proactive approach can help companies rebuild consumer trust and reduce the negative impact of the boycott.<sup>10</sup> A study by Public Relations Review in 2022 showed that companies that proactively respond to social issues tend to experience a 12% increase in positive image compared to companies that choose to remain silent or neutral.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Edelman, *Edelman Trust Barometer 2023*, 2023.

<sup>6</sup>B. A. Meidini and S. W. Astuti, "Rosé All Day Brand Communication Strategy in Facing the Boycott Issue," *Wasilatuna: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan ...*, 2024; U. Suhud, "Marketing Communication and Its Impact on Purchase Willingness and Unwillingness: A Case of a Boycotted Bread Brand," *3rd Global Conference on Business, Management ...*, 2020; A. Ramadhani, P. Utari, and others, "Cancel Culture, Commodification Message, and Middle East War: Impact on Multinational Corporations in Indonesia," *Journal of Social ...*, 2024.

<sup>7</sup>D. Zimand, S. Sheiner, and T. Lahav, "Managing Marketing Communications: Customer-Initiated Contact on Israeli Facebook Brand Pages," *Qualitative Market Research: An ...*, 2020 <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-12-2017-0177>.

<sup>8</sup>M. F. Eldin, "Power, Politics, and Community: Resistance Dynamics in the Occupied Golan," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 2019.

<sup>9</sup>J. C. Danilewitz, "Amnesty International's Campaign to Destroy Israel: I Was an Eyewitness to Apartheid. Israel Is No Apartheid State," *Commentary*, 2022.

<sup>10</sup>Harvard Business Review, "Managing Public Stances on Controversial Issues," 2023.

<sup>11</sup>I. Feldman, "Reframing Palestine: BDS Against Fragmentation and Exceptionalism," *Radical History Review*, 2019; M. Shenkar and J. Staples-Butler, "Does BDS Produce Antisemitic Disruption to Student

Although proactive tactics can reduce the negative impact of the boycott, they can also pose other risks. For example, by openly taking a stance on a particular issue, companies may face the risk of losing markets in regions that support Israel or inciting anger from groups with differing political views.<sup>12</sup> In such situations, companies must be cautious in designing their communication messages to avoid unintended negative consequences. A report by the Harvard Business Review in 2023 emphasized the importance of companies conducting a thorough risk analysis before taking a public stance on controversial issues.<sup>13</sup>

The role of social media in managing a company's marketing communication cannot be overlooked. Social media has become the primary platform for consumers to express their views and influence public opinion. According to a 2023 study by the Pew Research Center, 69% of adults in the United States use social media to follow developments in social and political issues.<sup>14</sup> In this context, companies need to be more savvy in managing their social media presence to ensure that the messages they convey align with consumer expectations and values.

Effective marketing communication tactics in the face of the boycott issue also involve efforts to build a strong narrative.<sup>15</sup> This narrative must reflect the company's commitment to certain values such as social justice, sustainability, and social responsibility. A strong narrative can help companies overcome image crises and rebuild consumer trust.<sup>16</sup> For example, a narrative that emphasizes the company's efforts to support local communities and contribute to peace can help mitigate the negative impact of the boycott of Israeli products.

In addition to the narrative, it is essential for companies to engage various stakeholders in their communication strategy. Stakeholders such as employees, business partners, and local communities can play an important role in reinforcing the company's message and building broader support.<sup>17</sup> According to a report by McKinsey & Company in 2022, companies that successfully engage stakeholders in their communication strategy tend to be more successful in managing image crises and increasing consumer loyalty.<sup>18</sup>

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Government and Jewish Student Life? An Analysis of Pro-BDS Resolutions at Ohio State University and the ...," *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism*, 2021 <https://doi.org/10.26613/jca.4.2.88>; F. M. Kiyak and S. O. Dora, "The Influence of Social Control and Feelings of Guilt in a Religious Context on Consumer Boycotts," *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1080/08961530.2024.2355224>.

<sup>12</sup>Pew Research Center, "Social Media Use in 2023," 2023.

<sup>13</sup>H. Dabbagh, "Boycott HP Products to Show Solidarity with Palestinians," *Green Left Weekly*, 2019 <https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.557932763200869>.

<sup>14</sup>A. K. Baig, "Ummatic Macro-Boycott Motives: A Socio-Cultural Perspective," *Researchbank.Swinburne.Edu.Au*; J. M. Thouvenin, "History of Implementation of Sanctions," *Economic Sanctions in International Law and ...*, 2019 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429052989-7>; P. Boyle and L. Khaled, "Leila Khaled: 'Free Palestine' Has Become a Slogan of the Peoples of the World," *Green Left Weekly*, 2024 <https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.T2024031400014991261136954>.

<sup>15</sup>M. Gleeson and F. Fuentes, "Adani's Silent Sinister Accomplice," *Green Left Weekly*, 2019 <https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.557876864287094>.

<sup>16</sup>McKinsey & Company, "Effective Stakeholder Engagement in Corporate Communication Strategies," 2022.

<sup>17</sup>O. Sandikci, A. Jafari, and E. Fischer, "Claiming Market Ownership: Territorial Activism in Stigmatized Markets," *Journal of Business Research* (Elsevier, 2024).

<sup>18</sup>A. Margareth and others, "Boikot Barang Israel: Strategi Perlawanan dan Solidaritas Global Dalam Mendukung Perjuangan Palestina," ... , *Bahasa, Sastra, Seni ...*, 2024.

The ongoing boycott of Israeli products has had a significant impact on the revenues of several major companies. Companies like KFC, Unilever, Pizza Hut, and Starbucks have experienced a drastic decline in profits within the span of one year. This phenomenon reflects the powerful influence of social and political movements on global business, especially for companies associated with entities targeted by the boycott.



Source: @sahamtalk

Figure 1. Decline in Profits of Companies During the Israel Boycott.

KFC, managed by PT Fast Food Indonesia (FAST), recorded a profit decline of IDR 343 billion from the first half of 2023 to the first half of 2024. During this period, KFC, which previously only experienced a decline of IDR 6 billion, now faces a larger loss of IDR 349 billion.<sup>19</sup> This shows that the impact of the boycott on this company is worsening, presenting significant challenges in maintaining market share and consumer loyalty amid a sensitive issue.

Unilever, one of the giants in the consumer goods industry, also felt the effects of this boycott. Their profits dropped by IDR 292 billion in the same period. In the first half of 2023, Unilever recorded a profit of IDR 2,759 billion, but this number dropped to IDR 2,467 billion in the first half of 2024.<sup>20</sup> This decline shows that consumers are increasingly paying attention to the origin of products and the company's policies in responding to global issues, influencing their purchasing decisions.

Pizza Hut, managed by PT Sarimelati Kencana Tbk (PZZA), was not spared from the impact of the boycott. The company's profit fell by IDR 120 billion, from IDR 45 billion

<sup>19</sup>N. T. Basya, "Reading MUI Fatwa No. 83 of 2023 on The Ruling of Supporting Palestine: Maslahat Perspective," *Jurnal Mediasas: Media Ilmu Syari'ah dan Ahwal Al ...*, 2024.

<sup>20</sup>D. S. Sentosa and N. I. Sitepu, "Descriptive Analysis of Israeli Product Boycott Action: Between Fatwas and the Urgency of Compliance," *International Journal of Kita Kreatif*, 2024.

in the first half of 2023 to a loss of IDR 75 billion in the first half of 2024.<sup>21</sup> This significant decline indicates that the boycott movement has successfully mobilized a large number of consumers to switch away from brands associated with Israel, causing real financial impacts for the company.

Starbucks, operated by PT MAP Boga Adiperkasa Tbk (MAPB), also experienced a similar fate. Their profits dropped by IDR 108 billion, from IDR 58 billion in the first half of 2023 to a loss of IDR 50 billion in the first half of 2024.<sup>22</sup> This impact underscores that the boycott movement has the power to pressure the revenues of global companies, particularly those operating in markets sensitive to political and social issues.

The urgency of researching *Navigation of Image in the Midst of Boycott: Marketing Communication Tactics of Companies in Responding to Israeli Product Issues* is significant given the increasing impact of the boycott movement on multinational companies. As seen in the significant decline in profits of large companies like KFC, Unilever, Pizza Hut, and Starbucks, political and social issues such as the boycott of Israeli products can threaten the financial stability and reputation of companies in global markets. In this increasingly complex situation, companies need to develop and implement effective marketing communication strategies to navigate these challenges. This research will provide in-depth insights into how companies can strategically respond to sensitive issues and manage public perception to maintain or even enhance their image amid crises.

Furthermore, this research is imperative due to the changing behavior of consumers who are increasingly concerned about social and political issues. Data from the Edelman Trust Barometer indicates that the majority of consumers now consider a company's position on social and political issues before making a purchase decision.<sup>23</sup> Thus, marketing communication tactics that are not only responsive but also proactive, become key for companies to survive in a market that increasingly demands transparency and commitment to ethical values. This research will explore how companies can build a strong narrative and engage various stakeholders to strengthen their position amidst the boycott pressure.

The urgency of this research is further evident in the need to understand the risks and opportunities arising from responses to the Israeli product boycott. Mistakes in marketing communication approaches can exacerbate the situation, causing negative reactions from various consumer groups with differing views. On the other hand, a strategic and appropriate approach can turn this challenge into an opportunity to strengthen consumer loyalty, improve the company's image, and even attract a new consumer base.

This research is highly relevant not only for companies directly affected by the boycott issue but also for all sectors of business operating in a global environment filled with political and social complexities. By understanding how to manage marketing communication that is sensitive to this context, companies can mitigate risks and maximize available opportunities, while also demonstrating social responsibility in line with consumer expectations.

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<sup>21</sup>C. de Villiers, M. B. Farooq, and M. Molinari, "Qualitative Research Interviews Using Online Video Technology-Challenges and Opportunities," *Meditari Accountancy Research*, 2022 <https://doi.org/10.1108/MEDAR-03-2021-1252>.

<sup>22</sup>S. Moriarty, N. Mitchell, and W. Wells, "Advertising Seri Kedelapan," Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media Group, 2009.

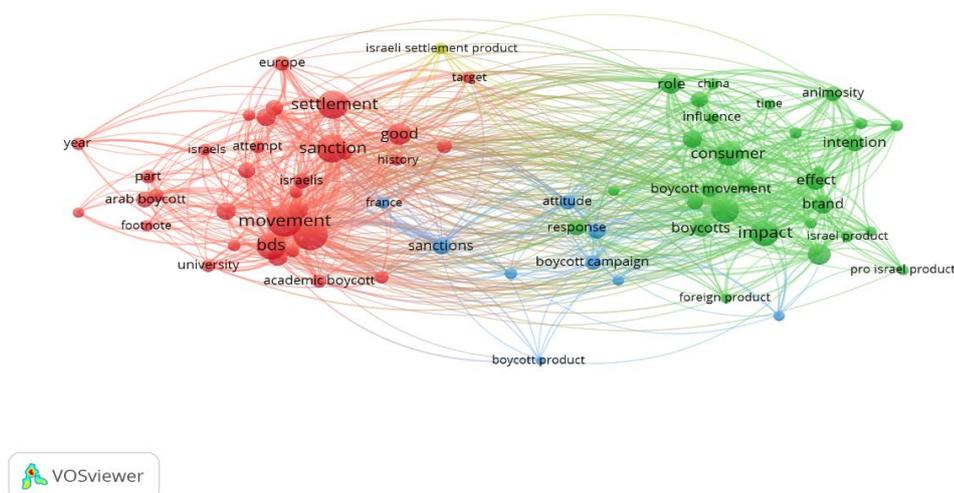
<sup>23</sup>Y. Darlington and D. Scott, *Qualitative Research in Practice: Stories from the Field* (taylorfrancis.com, 2020) <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003117025>.

## METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach to explore a deep understanding of how the branches of KFC, Pizza Hut, Unilever, and Starbucks in North Sumatra respond to the issue of the Israeli product boycott. The primary method used is semi-structured interviews with managers and marketing staff from each branch.<sup>24</sup>

This study adopts a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies and responses of KFC, Pizza Hut, Unilever, and Starbucks branches in North Sumatra to the issue of the Israeli product boycott. This approach was chosen for its ability to capture nuances, perspectives, and the subjective experiences of business practitioners within a particular social and cultural context.<sup>25</sup> The main method used is semi-structured interviews with managers and marketing staff from each branch, designed to facilitate a deep yet directed exploration of the research topic. These interviews will include questions about the marketing communication strategies applied, the challenges faced in responding to the boycott, and their perceptions of the impact of the boycott on the company's image and sales. With this approach, it is expected that the research will uncover the internal dynamics of companies in facing external pressures, as well as how they navigate the complexities of political issues in their daily business operations.

In relation to the novelty, a visualization of 1,000 metadata points related to previous research on the Israeli product boycott displayed through VOSviewer shows the complex relationships between various key themes, such as the boycott movement (BDS), consumer impact, and international sanctions. The main clusters include topics such as settlements, sanctions, consumer impact, and boycott campaigns, reflecting the focus of previous research on the legal, economic, and social aspects of this boycott. The novelty found in this metadata is the increased attention to the impact of the boycott on consumer attitudes and global brand image, indicating a shift in research focus from merely exploring the political and legal consequences to a deeper understanding of the psychological impact and consumer behavior in the context of globalization and the digital economy.



Source: VOSviewer Analysis

Figure 2. Metadata Related to the Israeli Product Boycott.

<sup>24</sup>S. Moriarty and others, *Advertising: Principles and Practice* (books.google.com, 2014).

<sup>25</sup>S. E. Moriarty, N. D. Mitchell, and W. D. Wells, *Advertising & IMC* (pearson.com, 2012).

The interviews aim to understand the implementation of marketing communication strategies in the context of the boycott, as well as how companies define marketing objectives, conduct segmentation and targeting, and determine differentiation and positioning according to the marketing communication theory proposed by Moriarty et. al.<sup>26</sup> In data analysis, Nvivo software is used to organize and manage qualitative data obtained from the interviews.<sup>27</sup> Using Nvivo, the researcher can conduct systematic coding processes to identify key themes related to the three stages of marketing strategies described by Moriarty.<sup>28</sup> In the initial phase, the researcher will perform open coding to uncover basic concepts related to the determination of marketing objectives, segmentation, and positioning applied by the company branches.

After the open coding phase, the researcher will continue with axial coding to identify the relationships between the marketing communication strategies applied and the results obtained in the context of the Israeli product boycott. Special emphasis will be placed on how companies set their marketing objectives in the midst of a crisis, and how they adjust segmentation and targeting to maintain consumer loyalty and sustain their position in the market. Additionally, this analysis will explore how differentiation and positioning affect consumer perceptions of the brand in the midst of a controversial issue.

The results of this analysis will provide deep insights into the effectiveness of the marketing communication strategies implemented by the company branches in North Sumatra. These findings will not only enrich the academic literature on crisis management and marketing communication but will also provide practical guidance for other companies navigating similar challenges. This research will highlight the importance of setting appropriate marketing objectives, implementing effective segmentation and targeting strategies, and maintaining strong differentiation and positioning in maintaining company image amidst social and political pressures.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Marketing Objectives in the Boycott Context

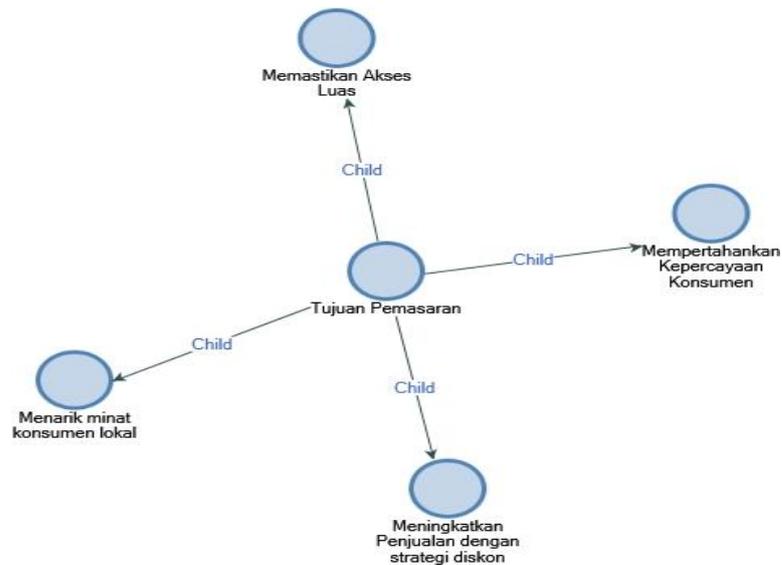
Marketing objectives during a boycott are a crucial aspect that determines how companies respond to external pressures and navigate complex market dynamics. In the context of the boycott of Israeli products, companies like KFC, Starbucks, Unilever, and Pizza Hut have adopted various strategies to ensure operational continuity and maintain market share. This analysis examines the approaches taken by each company to adjust their marketing objectives in the face of this challenging situation.

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<sup>26</sup>S. E. Moriarty and K. Kenney, "Taxonomy of Visual Communication and a Bibliography," *International Visual Literacy Association*, 2015.

<sup>27</sup>T. Duncan and S. Moriarty, "How Integrated Marketing Communication's 'Touchpoints' Can Operationalize the Service-Dominant Logic," *The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing*, 2014 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315699035-22>.

<sup>28</sup>S. Moriarty and others, *Advertising: Principles and Practice* (books.google.com, 2014).



Source: Nvivo 12 analysis

Figure 3. Marketing Objectives Analysis.

KFC focuses its objective on improving product accessibility by bringing direct sales services closer to consumers in remote areas through mobile sales units. This step reflects a responsive adaptation to the decline in visits to traditional outlets due to the boycott. This strategy helps KFC maintain sales volume by reaching consumers affected by the boycott, while also preserving customer loyalty by providing easy access to their products.

Starbucks, on the other hand, adopted a price-oriented approach as a response to the boycott. By offering discounts and attractive promotions, Starbucks aims to increase sales and retain the loyalty of consumers affected by social pressures. This aggressive promotional strategy reflects Starbucks' effort to remain relevant in the eyes of consumers sensitive to price, while maintaining its image as a premium café experience provider.

Unilever emphasized the importance of maintaining consumer trust by highlighting the locality and halal certification of their products. Through *the Strategy of Publicity*, Unilever campaigned that its products are locally produced in Indonesia and certified halal. This strategy is designed to maintain consumer loyalty, particularly among communities highly concerned with religious values. Additionally, Unilever implemented *the Strategy of Image* to promote positive activities, such as CSR initiatives that emphasize social and environmental care, in order to maintain the company's reputation amid the boycott.

Pizza Hut, on the other hand, chose to innovate by introducing a new restaurant concept called *Ristorante Ristorante*, which emphasizes local identity and offers exclusive menus only available in Indonesia. This approach demonstrates how Pizza Hut seeks to turn challenges into opportunities by creating strong product differentiation through local innovation. This strategy aims to attract Indonesian consumers with a more personal approach, relevant to local preferences.

In adjusting marketing objectives amid the boycott pressure, KFC adapted its strategy by expanding distribution through mobile sales units. This step is an adaptive response to the decline in foot traffic at outlets, focusing on local market penetration. Starbucks, through intensive promotional strategies, shifted its marketing objective towards increasing consumer visit frequency via price incentives.

Unilever, with a focus on strengthening its local and religious image, demonstrated an adaptation that reflects the need to align with local consumer values, particularly those highly concerned with religion. This strategy was accompanied by CSR campaigns emphasizing social and environmental care, aimed at maintaining and increasing consumer trust during the crisis. Meanwhile, Pizza Hut strengthened its local identity through the introduction of a new restaurant concept showcasing culinary innovations exclusive to the Indonesian market.

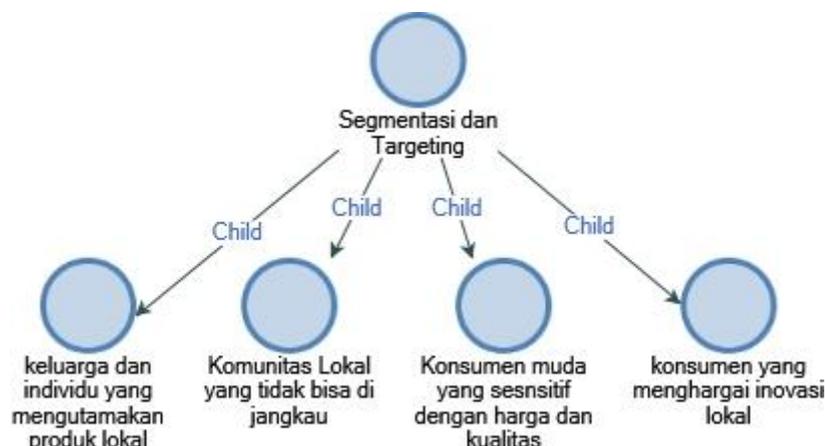
The changes in marketing objectives made by each company reflect their flexibility in responding to market dynamics influenced by the boycott. KFC shifted its focus from traditional outlets to direct distribution via mobile units, showing a rapid adaptation to changing market conditions. Starbucks, with its focus on price promotions, sought to maintain competitiveness through attractive offers to consumers sensitive to global issues.

Unilever, by strengthening its local image and commitment to religious values, showed a more strategic response to changing consumer needs. This strategy was accompanied by CSR activities aimed at strengthening relationships with consumers and the broader community. Pizza Hut, with innovation in restaurant concepts, sought to position itself as a relevant and adaptive brand to local preferences, despite the boycott pressures.

Overall, this analysis reveals that marketing objectives during a boycott are highly dependent on a company's ability to adapt and respond quickly to changes in the external environment. Each company has demonstrated different approaches in navigating this complex situation, ranging from expanded distribution, aggressive promotions, local image reinforcement, to product innovation. The success of these strategies will be determined by the company's ability to maintain relevance and consumer trust in an ever-changing market.

## B. Market Segmentation and Targeting

The analysis of market segmentation and targeting in the context of the boycott of Israeli products reveals how large companies like KFC, Starbucks, Unilever, and Pizza Hut adjust their marketing strategies to remain relevant and competitive. Each company carefully identifies their key market segments and adjusts their targeting strategies to address the impact of the boycott on consumer behavior. This analysis examines the approaches taken by each company regarding their market segmentation and targeting strategies.



Source: Nvivo 12 analysis

Figure 4. Segmentation and Targeting Analysis.

KFC identified its key market segment as local communities in hard-to-reach areas, particularly in rural and suburban regions. This segment choice reflects KFC's understanding of the needs of consumers in areas less served by traditional outlets. In the face of the boycott, KFC recognized that these communities have limited access to information about the boycott, so they remain an important potential market. KFC expanded its market reach through mobile sales units, a strategic move to reach consumers in remote areas while maintaining or even increasing their market share during the crisis.

Starbucks focused its market segment on young, price-sensitive professionals who still seek quality and premium café experiences. These consumers tend to be more aware of global issues, including the boycott of Israeli products, which can affect their purchasing decisions. Therefore, Starbucks targets this segment with aggressive pricing strategies, such as discounts and "buy one get one free" offers, aimed at retaining their loyalty. Starbucks understands that although this segment is affected by the boycott, they can be re-engaged through more attractive value propositions without sacrificing the quality they seek.

Unilever identified its key market segment as families and individuals who prioritize local products and halal certification, with particular attention to the Muslim community in Indonesia. This segment is highly relevant in the context of the boycott, as consumers who are deeply concerned with religious values and business ethics are more responsive to social and political issues. Unilever targets this segment with messages emphasizing that their products are locally produced in Indonesia and halal-certified, through structured campaigns and CSR activities that highlight social and environmental care. This strategy shows how Unilever strives to maintain consumer trust and loyalty in a market highly sensitive to ethical issues.

Pizza Hut targets Indonesian consumers who value local innovation and seek unique and exclusive dining experiences. In response to the boycott, Pizza Hut recognized that the most affected consumers are those who value local identity and innovation, as well as those seeking distinctive dining experiences. Therefore, Pizza Hut introduced a new restaurant concept, *Ristorante Ristorante*, which emphasizes local identity and offers exclusive menus only available in Indonesia. This strategy highlights the importance of adjusting products and services to local preferences, while offering something unique to attract consumers amid the boycott issue.

During the boycott, each company demonstrated its ability to adapt by making changes to their targeting strategies. KFC expanded its market reach by bringing direct services to underserved communities through mobile sales units. This move helps KFC reach market segments that are isolated from the boycott's impact, while ensuring they can still access KFC products despite the decline in visits to traditional outlets.

Starbucks also adjusted its targeting strategy by focusing more on consumers seeking added value in pricing offers. This strategy was driven by the understanding that this segment is highly influenced by aggressive price promotions, especially in a situation where consumers may reduce their visit frequency due to the boycott issue. By maintaining the premium café experience and quality, Starbucks strives to ensure that consumers still feel they are getting value despite the crisis.

Unilever targeted the Muslim community more directly with messages emphasizing halal products and local production. The emphasis on religious values and business ethics in their campaigns represents a smart response to the market's high sensitivity to social and political issues. Through relevant CSR activities, Unilever strengthens its positioning as a

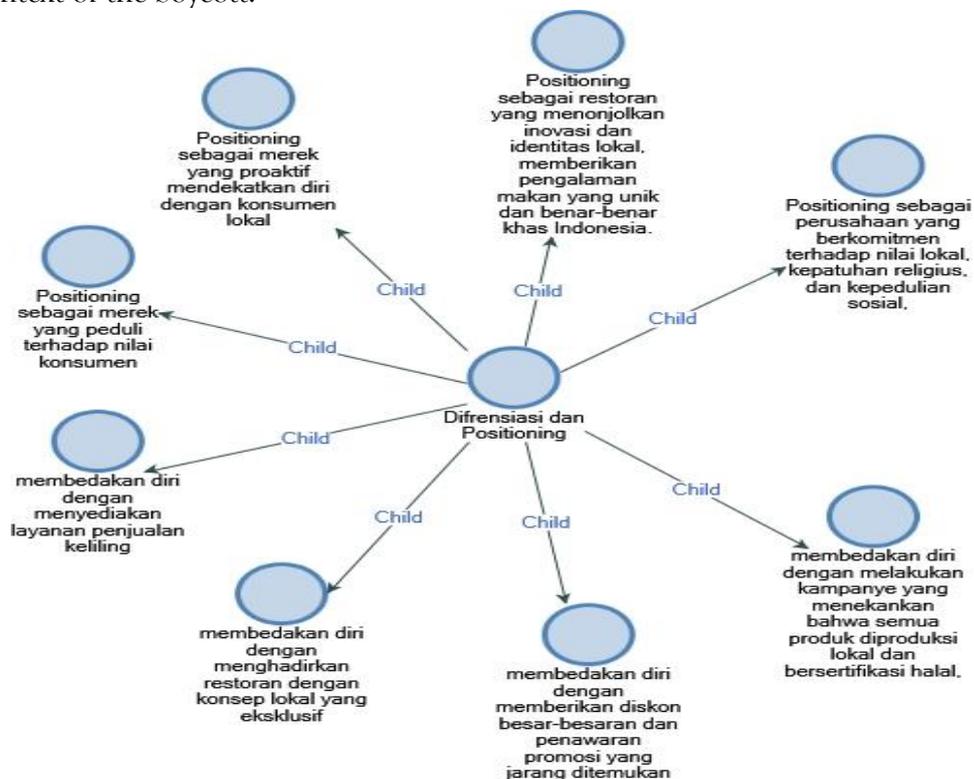
company that cares about the community and the environment, which is expected to deepen relationships with Muslim consumers in Indonesia.

Pizza Hut took an innovative approach by targeting consumers who desire unique and innovative dining experiences. By introducing a new restaurant concept that focuses on local identity, Pizza Hut strives to attract consumers looking for something different and distinctive, while seizing the opportunity to strengthen its connection with Indonesian consumers who value local innovation. This strategy highlights the importance of product differentiation in a situation where local identity and preferences are becoming increasingly significant.

Overall, this analysis shows that proper segmentation and targeting are crucial for companies navigating the impact of the boycott of Israeli products. Each company adjusts their strategies based on a deep understanding of their key market segments and how these segments are influenced by the boycott issue. Flexibility and adaptation in targeting strategies help these companies remain competitive and relevant in the face of challenging situations while ensuring they continue to meet the needs and preferences of their consumers.

### C. Differentiation and Positioning of Companies

Differentiation and positioning are two essential elements in marketing strategy that determine how companies position their products or services in the market, especially in challenging contexts such as the boycott of Israeli products. Large companies like KFC, Starbucks, Unilever, and Pizza Hut have developed different approaches to distinguish themselves from competitors and position their brands in the eyes of consumers. The following analysis explores how each company applies differentiation and positioning in the context of the boycott.



Source: Nvivo 12 Analysis

Figure 5: Differentiation and Positioning Analysis.

KFC chooses to differentiate itself through an innovative distribution approach by providing mobile sales services. This strategy helps KFC bring its products directly to consumers in areas that do not have easy access to KFC outlets. With mobile sales units operating in various regions, KFC ensures that its products remain accessible to consumers, even amidst the challenges of the boycott. This differentiation provides KFC with an advantage in reaching markets that are overlooked by competitors, demonstrating their commitment to staying relevant and close to local consumers.

In terms of positioning, KFC positions itself as a proactive brand in bringing services closer to local consumers. By positioning itself as a company that not only provides quality products but also cares about consumer accessibility, KFC successfully retains customer loyalty in more difficult-to-reach areas. This positioning is crucial in a boycott situation, where product accessibility becomes a key factor in maintaining market share.

Starbucks applies differentiation through an aggressive promotional strategy, offering significant discounts and promotions that are rarely found in competitors. Despite operating in a highly competitive industry, Starbucks manages to maintain its premium image while still offering a high-quality café experience, even when providing attractive price offers. This differentiation helps Starbucks remain appealing to price-sensitive consumers without compromising the quality expected from the brand.

The position Starbucks adopts is that of a brand that cares about consumer values. By maintaining quality and a premium experience while offering attractive promotions, Starbucks demonstrates that it listens to consumer needs, especially in the face of global issues such as the boycott of Israeli products. This positions Starbucks as the top choice for consumers looking for a balance between value and quality, a strong positioning in a highly dynamic market.

Unilever takes a different approach by emphasizing locality and halal certification as part of its differentiation efforts. Through campaigns highlighting that all Unilever products are locally produced and halal certified, the company has created differentiation that is relevant to Indonesian consumers, particularly the Muslim community. Furthermore, Unilever also publicizes positive CSR activities, highlighting their social and environmental concerns. This differentiation strengthens Unilever's position as a company that not only sells products but also commits to social values important to consumers.

In terms of positioning, Unilever positions itself as a company committed to local values and religious compliance. By emphasizing halal products, local production, and CSR activities that stress social care, Unilever successfully builds a strong image in the minds of consumers as a company that is caring and responsible. This positioning is vital for maintaining consumer trust in a situation that affects public perception of the brand.

Pizza Hut adopts a differentiation approach that focuses on local innovation by introducing a new restaurant concept, *Ristorante Ristorante*. This restaurant offers a menu not found in other Pizza Hut outlets and focuses on local culinary innovation exclusive to the Indonesian market. This strategy helps Pizza Hut differentiate itself from competitors by offering something unique and distinctly Indonesian, which is highly relevant in the context of the Israeli product boycott. This differentiation gives Pizza Hut a competitive advantage in attracting consumers who value local identity and innovation.

In terms of positioning, Pizza Hut positions itself as a restaurant that highlights innovation and local identity, providing a unique dining experience that is truly Indonesian. This positioning not only appeals to consumers seeking a different culinary

experience but also strengthens Pizza Hut's relationship with the Indonesian market. By emphasizing that the restaurant is "from Indonesia for Indonesia," Pizza Hut successfully builds an image as a brand that understands and values local values, a positioning that is highly effective in a market sensitive to global issues.

In terms of communication of differentiation and positioning, KFC uses local advertising campaigns and direct promotions in communities through mobile sales units. This strategy effectively ensures that consumers understand and appreciate KFC's efforts to bring its products to underserved areas. In this way, KFC communicates not only the superiority of its products but also its commitment to accessibility and customer service.

Starbucks communicates its differentiation and positioning through intensive promotional campaigns, social media, and continuous emphasis on the café experience. With a focus on attractive promotions and maintaining quality consumer experiences, Starbucks successfully retains its premium image while demonstrating that it cares about consumer needs. Social media plays an important role in ensuring that this message spreads widely and effectively reaches the target market.

Unilever uses *the Strategy of Publicity and Strategy of Image* to communicate its differentiation. The Strategy of Publicity focuses on spreading the message that Unilever products are locally produced and halal certified, while *the Strategy of Image* is used to publicize positive CSR activities. In this way, Unilever ensures that consumers are aware of its commitment to local and social values, which is crucial for building and maintaining consumer trust during the boycott.

Pizza Hut communicates its local innovation through digital campaigns and media, as well as promotions emphasizing the exclusive dining experience at Ristorante Ristorante. This campaign is designed to attract consumers looking for something different and unique, while also strengthening Pizza Hut's position as an innovative and relevant brand in the Indonesian market. By emphasizing exclusivity and innovation, Pizza Hut successfully positions itself as the top choice for consumers who value local identity.

Overall, the differentiation and positioning strategies implemented by KFC, Starbucks, Unilever, and Pizza Hut demonstrate how each company adapts to the challenges of the Israeli product boycott. With the right strategies, each company has successfully built and maintained its competitive edge in a dynamic and challenging market. Strong differentiation and clear positioning help them remain relevant and competitive while ensuring they continue to meet the needs and expectations of their consumers.

#### **D. Navigating Image Amidst a Boycott**

Amid growing global pressures resulting from political and social issues, multinational companies face significant challenges in maintaining their image and reputation. One of the most prominent issues is the boycott of Israeli products, which has impacted various companies worldwide, including those in Indonesia. This boycott forces companies not only to sustain their operations but also to navigate their image in the eyes of increasingly critical consumers who are concerned with ethical issues. In such situations, effective marketing communication strategies become crucial to ensure that companies can continue to operate and even strengthen their position in the market.

Companies such as KFC, Starbucks, Unilever, and Pizza Hut face this challenge with different approaches in an effort to navigate their image. For example, KFC opts to get closer to local consumers through mobile sales services that help keep their products easily accessible in remote areas. Starbucks, on the other hand, focuses on maintaining their



The word "consumer" also stands out, indicating that the companies' strategies are heavily focused on meeting the needs and preferences of consumers in challenging situations. For instance, Starbucks targets younger consumers sensitive to price but still seeking quality, while Pizza Hut targets consumers who value local innovation and seek unique dining experiences. This focus on the consumer highlights how companies understand the importance of directly responding to market needs to maintain and expand their market share.

The presence of the words "product" and "experience" suggests that companies are not only relying on price and distribution but also prioritizing product quality and consumer experience as part of their differentiation strategy. This is reflected in Starbucks' efforts to maintain a premium café experience while offering significant discounts, as well as Pizza Hut's innovation in presenting a restaurant with an exclusive local concept. This combination emphasizes the importance of a holistic marketing approach, where elements of local identity, consumer focus, product quality, and experience all work together to create effective strategies amidst the challenges of a boycott.

In facing the boycott of Israeli products, the strategies applied by companies like KFC, Starbucks, Unilever, and Pizza Hut can be analyzed through the lens of the marketing communication theory proposed by Moriarty.<sup>29</sup> This theory emphasizes three key stages that must be considered in a marketing strategy: determining marketing objectives, segmenting and targeting, and determining differentiation and positioning. The application of these three elements is evident in how these companies respond to the challenges they face during the boycott.

The establishment of marketing objectives is a crucial first step in formulating an effective strategy.<sup>30</sup> Moriarty emphasizes that marketing objectives should be designed to achieve specific and measurable results relevant to the challenges faced by the company. In the context of the boycott, KFC set the goal of maintaining product accessibility in remote areas through mobile sales services. This goal reflects KFC's effort to stay relevant and maintain consumer loyalty, even as foot traffic to traditional outlets declines. Conversely, Starbucks focuses on maintaining their premium image while attracting back consumers through pricing promotion strategies. This approach shows that Starbucks understands the importance of maintaining product quality and consumer experience, even when facing external pressure.

This principle aligns with the teachings of the Qur'an in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 143:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَيَّ عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ١٤٣

Meaning: "And thus We have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. And We did not make the direction of prayer which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the

<sup>29</sup> S. Moriarty, Mitchell, and Wells.

<sup>30</sup> S. E. Moriarty, N. D. Mitchell, and W. D. Wells, *Advertising & IMC* (pearson.com, 2012).

*Messenger and who would turn back on his heels. And indeed, it is difficult except for those whom Allah has guided. And never would Allah make your faith of no effect. Indeed, Allah is, to the people, Kind and Merciful." (Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 143).*

This verse emphasizes the importance of justice and wisdom in facing challenging situations, as well as being a good example for others. In the context of the dilemma faced by companies during the boycott, this verse reminds us of the importance of integrity and fairness in every decision and action taken. Companies must act by considering the balance of various interests, maintaining their image while showing commitment to ethical values expected by consumers.

In facing the boycott of Israeli products, the strategies applied by companies such as KFC, Starbucks, Unilever, and Pizza Hut can be analyzed through the lens of the marketing communication theory proposed by Moriarty. This theory emphasizes three main stages to consider in marketing strategies: determining marketing objectives, segmentation and targeting, and determining differentiation and positioning. The application of these three elements is clearly visible in how these companies responded to the challenges faced during the boycott.

Unilever, focusing on strengthening its local image and consumer trust, set the goal of highlighting local production and halal certification of its products. This is consistent with the principle that marketing objectives must support the core values of the company and respond to specific market needs.<sup>31</sup> Pizza Hut, on the other hand, set the goal of introducing local innovation through a new restaurant concept, Ristorante Ristorante, designed to attract Indonesian consumers with a unique and exclusive dining experience.

Segmentation and targeting are the next steps emphasized in [author]'s marketing communication theory.<sup>32</sup> In the context of the boycott, proper segmentation helps companies adjust their strategies to the specific needs of the market. KFC, for example, targets local communities in remote areas that are underserved by traditional outlets. This approach helps KFC remain relevant in local markets while reaching segments that are isolated from the impact of the boycott. Starbucks, focusing on young consumers and professionals sensitive to price but still seeking quality, demonstrates clear targeting strategy. By adjusting pricing promotions and maintaining a premium café experience, Starbucks successfully attracted back consumers affected by the boycott.

Unilever targets families and individuals who prioritize local products and halal certification, with special attention to the Muslim community in Indonesia. This targeting aligns with segmentation that takes into account religious values and business ethics, which are highly relevant in the context of a boycott. By emphasizing relevance in market targeting, Unilever has been able to maintain consumer loyalty amidst a challenging situation. Pizza Hut, with the Ristorante Ristorante concept, targets consumers who value local innovation and seek unique dining experiences. This segmentation demonstrates Pizza Hut's understanding of the importance of aligning offerings with local preferences, which is consistent with Moriarty et al.'s approach to market targeting.

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<sup>31</sup>Moriarty and others.

<sup>32</sup>S. E. Moriarty and K. Kenney, "Taxonomy of Visual Communication and a Bibliography," *International Visual Literacy Association*, 2015.

Differentiation and positioning are key elements in Moriarty's marketing communication theory,<sup>33</sup> which stresses that companies must offer something unique to distinguish themselves from competitors. KFC, for example, differentiates itself by providing mobile sales services that bring products directly to consumers in remote areas. This strategy helps KFC position itself as a proactive brand close to local consumers, demonstrating its commitment to remaining relevant and responsive to market needs. Starbucks, on the other hand, differentiates through aggressive promotions while maintaining premium quality standards. By positioning itself as a brand that cares about consumer values, Starbucks has succeeded in maintaining its image as a premium choice, even amidst the challenges of the boycott.

Unilever applies differentiation by emphasizing local identity and halal certification, supported by positive CSR activities. Unilever's positioning as a company committed to local and social values reflects a strategy consistent with Moriarty et al.'s principles, where positioning must reflect the company's core values and be relevant to consumer expectations. Meanwhile, Pizza Hut adopts differentiation through innovation in the local restaurant concept, highlighting exclusive menus not found at other Pizza Hut outlets. Pizza Hut's positioning as a restaurant emphasizing innovation and local identity demonstrates its efforts to meet the needs of Indonesian consumers who seek unique dining experiences.

Overall, this analysis shows that the application of marketing communication theory is clearly reflected in how KFC, Starbucks, Unilever, and Pizza Hut determine marketing objectives, segment and target markets, and establish differentiation and positioning.<sup>34</sup> The strategies employed by each company reflect the importance of integrating these elements when facing complex market challenges like the boycott of Israeli products. A company's success in navigating this situation depends on its ability to apply focused, adaptive, and relevant marketing principles in response to the evolving market dynamics.

## CONCLUSION

Navigating a company's image amidst the boycott of Israeli products is a challenge that requires a careful marketing communication strategy. Companies such as KFC, Starbucks, Unilever, and Pizza Hut have successfully maintained their reputation and market share by setting clear marketing objectives, conducting effective segmentation and targeting, and applying appropriate differentiation and positioning. This strategy not only helped them survive amidst external pressures but also enabled them to strengthen their position in the market through adaptive responses.

Each company demonstrates expertise in adjusting their strategies to market dynamics. KFC leveraged mobile services to enhance accessibility, Starbucks focused on price promotions, Unilever prioritized local products and halal certification, while Pizza Hut highlighted local identity through innovative restaurant concepts. This approach reflects the importance of flexibility in market segmentation and differentiation, which not only preserves brand relevance but also builds consumer loyalty amidst a challenging situation.

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<sup>33</sup>T. Duncan and S. Moriarty, "How Integrated Marketing Communication's 'Touchpoints' Can Operationalize the Service-Dominant Logic," *The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing*, 2014 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315699035-22>.

<sup>34</sup>Moriarty and others.

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