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From Clicktivism to Commitment? Explaining the Rapid Decline
of the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement

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Abstract

This thesis examines the rapid rise and decline of the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement, a digitally coordinated political consumerism campaign that emerged after the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu. The movement initially created a strong alignment between online mobilisation and offline boycott behaviour, but this alignment weakened quickly as offline participation declined first and online participation faded later. To explain this trajectory, the study uses a qualitative single-case study design based on sixteen semi-structured interviews and is guided by the Social Media Political Participation Model (SMPPM). The findings show that the decline cannot be explained by weak initial motivation. Participants were activated by anger, injustice, hope, civic duty, economic awareness, institutional responsibility, and diaspora attachment. However, offline boycott behaviour became difficult to sustain as it collided with everyday routines, convenience, habits, limited alternatives, class differences, institutional contracts, and diaspora distance. Online participation lasted longer, but it was not simply cost-free; in the Turkish context, it was shaped by both state repression and peer expectations. The findings suggest that the eventual dissolution of both routes was shaped by declining belief in the movement's effectiveness, weak coordination, information chaos, lack of visible political change, peer disengagement, and counter-mobilisation. By analysing the movement through the phases of synergy, decoupling, and dissolution, this thesis contributes to research on digital activism, political consumerism, and the SMPPM. It argues that digitally mobilised participation should be understood as a changing process shaped by emotion, everyday life, repression, organisation, and perceived effectiveness.

Keywords: Social Media Political Participation Model; digital activism; political consumerism; consumer boycott; online–offline decoupling; slacktivism; competitive authoritarianism; Turkey.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Masterarbeit untersucht den schnellen Aufstieg und Rückgang der türkischen Boykottbewegung von 2025, einer digital koordinierten Form des politischen Konsums, die nach der Verhaftung des Istanbuler Bürgermeisters Ekrem İmamoğlu entstand. Zu Beginn stellte die Bewegung eine starke Verbindung zwischen Online-Mobilisierung und offline stattfindendem Boykottverhalten her. Diese Verbindung schwächte sich jedoch schnell ab: Zunächst ging die Offline-Beteiligung zurück, später nahm auch die Online-Beteiligung ab. Um diese Entwicklung zu erklären, verwendet die Studie ein qualitatives Einzelfallstudiendesign auf der Grundlage von sechzehn halbstrukturierten Interviews und orientiert sich am Social Media Political Participation Model (SMPPM). Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass der Rückgang der Bewegung nicht durch eine schwache anfängliche Motivation erklärt werden kann. Die Teilnehmenden wurden durch Wut, Ungerechtigkeit, Hoffnung, bürgerschaftliche Pflicht, wirtschaftliches Bewusstsein, institutionelle Verantwortung und Diaspora-Verbundenheit aktiviert. Mit der Zeit wurde es jedoch schwieriger, das offline stattfindende Boykottverhalten aufrechtzuerhalten, da es mit Alltagsroutinen, Bequemlichkeit, Gewohnheiten, begrenzten Alternativen, Klassenunterschieden, institutionellen Verträgen und räumlicher Distanz in der Diaspora in Konflikt geriet. Die Online-Beteiligung hielt länger an, war jedoch nicht einfach kostenfrei; im türkischen Kontext wurde sie sowohl durch staatliche Repression als auch durch Erwartungen innerhalb des sozialen Umfelds geprägt. Die letztendliche Auflösung beider Beteiligungsformen wurde durch ein sinkendes Vertrauen in die Wirksamkeit der Bewegung, schwache Koordination, Informationschaos, fehlende sichtbare politische Veränderung, den Rückzug anderer Teilnehmender und Gegenmobilisierung vorangetrieben. Durch die Analyse der Bewegung entlang der Phasen Synergie, Entkopplung und Auflösung leistet diese Arbeit einen Beitrag zur Forschung über digitalen Aktivismus, politischen Konsum und das SMPPM. Sie

argumentiert, dass digital mobilisierte Beteiligung als ein sich verändernder Prozess verstanden werden sollte, der durch Emotionen, Alltag, Repression, Organisation und wahrgenommene Wirksamkeit geprägt ist.

Schlüsselwörter: Social Media Political Participation Model; digitaler Aktivismus; politischer Konsum; Konsumentenboykott; Online–Offline-Entkopplung; Slacktivism; kompetitiver Autoritarismus; Türkei.

Introduction

The Paradox of Digital Mobilisation

On 2 April 2025, many people in Turkey refrained from shopping as part of a digitally coordinated economic boycott. While social media hashtags helped circulate the boycott call and frame it as a form of political resistance, offline consumption also declined significantly on the boycott day. Retail sales dropped by over 26% compared to the previous day, suggesting a temporary alignment between digital mobilisation and collective consumer behaviour (Uzunırmak et al., 2025). Nevertheless, within a few days, shopping centres returned to normal levels of activity, while hashtag visibility declined.

This thesis explores a key paradox: a political movement can demonstrate the strong mobilising power of digital platforms but also their limits in sustaining a movement. The 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement is not just another failed effort. Instead, it highlights the complex relationship between online expression and offline commitment. There is a clear tension between how easy it is to act online and how hard it is to create lasting change. To understand why this movement grew so quickly, faded so fast, and ended so completely, we need to look at both how people joined and why they stopped, a topic that is still not well studied in digital activism research.

The Networked Public Sphere and the Transformation of Political Communication

Social media platforms have become key spaces for political expression, enabling people to share opinions, engage in debate, and contribute to the formation of collective discourses. Beyond facilitating communication, these platforms have changed the conditions under which political conversations take place. This transformation reflects the emergence of a new form of networked public sphere in which the process of communication is no longer dominated by media gatekeepers but is influenced by user-centred involvement (Benkler, 2006). In the past, public communication was mostly controlled by central institutions like TV, newspapers, and radio. Editors decided which voices were heard and which were left out (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Such systems helped filter communications and thus set an agenda

for the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), limiting how much citizens could directly shape public debates (Habermas, 1990). The rise of Internet platforms has enabled people to gain some level of influence and communicate through non-traditional channels.

By lowering barriers to entry and enabling decentralized communication structures, digital platforms expand opportunities for political engagement beyond traditional institutional actors, enabling individuals to participate in agenda-setting, mobilisation, and collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Yet this structural openness comes with an important caveat: lowering the barriers to participation does not automatically translate into sustained or meaningful political engagement (Loader & Mercea, 2011).

The Gap Between Accessibility and Commitment: Low-Effort and High-Effort Political Participation

Digital platforms have opened up new ways for people to talk about politics, but not all participation takes the same amount of effort. Posting messages or sharing opinions online usually takes little effort (Christensen, 2011; Morozov, 2011). On the other hand, offline actions like joining a boycott often require greater commitment and personal sacrifice and can have social consequences (Klandermans, 2004).

This distinction between low-effort and high-effort participation is especially relevant to understanding digitally coordinated boycott movements (Knoll et al., 2018). While low-cost forms of participation can be easily integrated into everyday practices and require minimal effort, higher-cost forms of participation are more difficult to sustain and are more likely to drop out over time (Margetts et al., 2015). Thus, the move from online activism to offline activism does not follow automatically. Instead, it depends on individuals' ability and willingness to incorporate political action into their daily lives, where it must compete with other priorities such as convenience, time constraints, and social obligations (Kruglanski et al., 2002; Klandermans, 2004).

The 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement

This transformation is especially significant in competitive authoritarian contexts such as Turkey, where institutional channels for opposition have become more limited in recent

years. In an atmosphere of increasing political division, pressure on independent media, and legal interventions targeting opposition actors, traditional opposition mechanisms have been weakened (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016). When conventional political and media institutions are constrained, digital platforms may function as alternative spaces for opposition and mobilisation (Tufekci, 2017). In this environment, online spaces not only support offline politics but also serve as platforms for people to make their voices heard and build a sense of collective identity.

Turkey represents a particularly illustrative case in this regard because institutional channels for opposition have become more limited while digital platforms have become increasingly central to political communication. In recent years, the country has faced increased political polarisation and rising tensions between government and opposition actors (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016). Over the past decade, digital platforms have reshaped the structure of political participation, changing how political actors, institutions, and citizens interact. By lowering participation costs and enabling networked, user-generated political expression, social media platforms have weakened traditional top-down communication structures and increased the public visibility of diverse political perspectives (Theocharis et al., 2022).

Within this context, the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement functions as a central case of digitally coordinated political participation. A major turning point occurred in early 2025 when Istanbul University revoked the diploma of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, successfully blocking his potential presidential candidacy (Girit et al., 2025, 2025; Al Jazeera, 2025). Shortly thereafter, İmamoğlu and numerous opposition figures were arrested on charges widely interpreted by critics as politically motivated (Girit et al., 2025). These developments heightened political tensions and sparked strong public responses, especially among students and professionals in large cities.

Initially driven by university students, calls for collective action quickly spread via social media platforms, where users began sharing boycott messages, lists of targeted brands, and calls for economic resistance (Turkey News, 2025; Michaelson, 2025). This digital coordination translated into offline action on April 2. Influenced by social media, these actions quickly spread nationwide and evolved into a nationwide call to refrain from buying and selling. In response to this boycott, some local markets and shops announced that they

would not open or conduct any sales on that day. Meanwhile, CHP leader Özgür Özel publicly expressed his support for the April 2 boycott on his X account (Utucu, 2025).

Empirical indicators suggest that this early phase was characterized by strong alignment between online mobilisation and offline behaviour, as both digital attention and consumption peaked simultaneously on April 2 (Uzunırmak et al., 2025), highlighting social media's capability to spark rapid mobilisation.

However, despite this strong initial synchronization, participation declined quickly in the following weeks. Offline consumption habits returned to pre-boycott levels within days, while online activity lasted slightly longer before fading. This shift from intense mobilisation to decoupling, together with the gap between online expression and offline commitment, forms the main empirical puzzle of this thesis.

The Three-Phase Trajectory: From Synergy to Dissolution

The movement's trajectory shows a more complex process. To capture this process, this thesis conceptualizes the boycott's decline as a three-phase trajectory. The first phase, called “synergy,” is a period in which online and offline participation are strongly aligned, and digital mobilisation is successfully translated into offline actions. The second phase, “decoupling,” indicates that this alignment weakens, as offline boycott behaviour declines while low-effort online participation continues. Finally, the third phase, “dissolution,” describes the complete decoupling from both forms of participation, as digital attention fades and everyday practices return to normal.

By framing the movement in terms of these phases, the study shifts the focus from whether participation occurred to how and why it changed over time. In particular, it points out the importance of understanding the conditions under which digitally coordinated action can be sustained, as well as the factors that lead individuals to reduce or stop their participation.

Research Gap and Contribution

While current research has examined in detail how digital platforms facilitate political mobilisation, far fewer studies have explored how and why participation declines over time. The literature on digital activism has mainly focused on whether online engagement may lead to offline political action, frequently emphasizing either its mobilising potential (Vaccari et al., 2015) or its limitations as slacktivism (Morozov, 2011). However, these perspectives tend to focus on the early stages of participation, leaving the dynamics of decoupling over time underexplored.

Similarly, research on political consumerism has demonstrated that market-based actions, such as boycotts, can serve as effective forms of political expression, particularly when traditional participation channels are constrained (Kam & Deichert, 2019; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). However, these studies have not sufficiently examined the sustainability of such actions in daily life, where participation demands continuous effort and commitment. By focusing on the rapid rise and decline of the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement, this thesis addresses this gap by examining not only how participation began but also how it changed, weakened, and eventually faded. In doing so, it contributes to a more dynamic understanding of political participation by highlighting the roles of everyday constraints, shifting motivations, and changing perceptions in shaping the trajectory of digitally coordinated collective action.

Theoretical Approach and Research Questions

To examine these questions, this study merges insights from three complementary theoretical perspectives: political consumerism, digital activism, and the Social Media Political Participation Model (SMPPM). Political consumerism helps conceptualize the boycott as a form of market-based political participation, while digital activism literature explains the role of social media in enabling rapid mobilisation and shaping the tension between online engagement and sustained offline action (Friedman, 1999; Kam & Deichert, 2019; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013; Vaccari et al., 2015; Morozov, 2011; Kaun & Uldam, 2017).

Building on these perspectives, this thesis adopts the Social Media Political Participation Model (SMPPM) developed by Knoll, Matthes, and Heiss (2018). Grounded in Goal Systems Theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002), the model conceptualizes political participation as a goal-driven process shaped by relevance appraisals, goal competition, and perceptions of attainability. While the SMPPM has primarily been used to measure participation levels through quantitative designs, this study adapts the framework for qualitative analysis.

By combining these theoretical approaches, the study offers a process-oriented perspective on political participation that moves beyond the question of whether digital mobilisation occurs, and instead focuses on how participation evolves, decouples, and ultimately dissolves over time. This approach is particularly suitable for examining the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement, because the study is concerned not only with why participants initially joined the movement, but also with why their online and offline participation weakened over time.

The main research question guiding this study is:

1. Why did the high initial motivation and synchronized participation in the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement decline over time, leading to the abandonment of both high-effort offline and low-effort online actions?

To understand the different dimensions of this decline, the following sub-questions guide the empirical analysis:

2. What emotions and political expectations motivated participants to engage in both online and offline boycott actions during the initial phase of the movement?
3. What everyday constraints and competing priorities led participants to abandon the offline economic boycott despite continuing their online participation?
4. How did state repression, including detentions, platform restrictions, and internet throttling, affect participants' willingness to continue their participation?

5. How did the lack of organisational coordination, including conflicting boycott lists and inconsistent messaging, make it harder for participants to sustain their boycott behaviour?
6. How did the perceived lack of political change affect participants' belief in the effectiveness of their actions and contribute to the end of both online and offline participation?

By focusing on the processes of synergy, decoupling, and dissolution, this thesis adds to a more subtle understanding of the sustainability of digitally mobilised political consumerism in polarised political contexts.

Literature Review

The following literature review discusses academic literature relevant to the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement and is divided into three parts. The first part, The Turkish Context, provides information about the historical, political, and social context that is necessary for understanding the emergence, dissemination, and eventual decline of the Boycott Movement. The second part, Political Consumerism, analyses how consumer behaviours, such as boycotts, serve as forms of political participation and discusses their efficacy and sustainability. Finally, the third part, Digital Activism, reviews the debate over mobilisation versus slacktivism and places the Turkish Boycott of 2025 in this context.

The Turkish Context

A History of Digital Resistance From Gezi Park to the 2025 Boycott Movement

Understanding the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement requires situating it within the wider historical context of political opposition in Turkey's digital sphere. The 2013 Gezi Park protests represent a major turning point in this history. Tufekci (2017), through extensive firsthand observation, documents that Gezi marked the consolidation of social media as a critical infrastructure for civic mobilisation in Turkey, enabling a scale and speed of protest unachievable through traditional organisational channels. Although Gezi began as a protest against an urban planning project, it quickly developed into a broader anti-government

mobilisation around media freedom, freedom of expression, and secularism (Vatikiotis & Yörük, 2016). Research on collective action in Turkey also shows that Gezi had a lasting influence on political engagement and that social media shaped identity-related mobilisation processes (Acar & Uluğ, 2023).

Nevertheless, the Gezi experience also revealed a structural weakness that would become important for understanding the 2025 Boycott Movement. According to Tufekci (2017), digital networked movements are structurally predisposed to overlook the slower process of developing organisational capabilities, which is typical of past protest movements. While conventional movements often developed organisational structures, decision-making abilities, and methods of ensuring commitment over time, digital networked movements frequently begin with rapid mass mobilisation.

This history of digital resistance was later joined by politically motivated forms of consumer activism. Another significant consumer boycott involving the dairy company Pınar emerged in 2017 in response to the positive remarks made by the head of the company's holding, Yaşar Holding, regarding the constitutional referendum results and the governing party, AKP (Ateş, 2025). Ateş (2025) calls this boycott a politically motivated consumer boycott (PMCB), since it happened because of the political views of the company and not due to any issues with its products. This suggests that before the 2025 movement, Turkish social media users had already become familiar with using market-based action as a form of political protest.

The Decline of Democracy and the Shrinking Space for the Opposition

Turkey represents a particularly significant case for understanding the dynamics of digitally coordinated political participation. The country has seen its democracy eroded significantly during the last ten years, owing to the increased concentration of power within the country, pressure on the independent press, and the shrinking opportunities for opposition inside political institutions (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; Bermeo, 2016). In this environment, the space for traditional political opposition has been shrinking, leading opposition actors to turn to digital platforms as alternative spaces for expression and action. The political crisis that triggered the 2025 Boycott Movement must therefore be understood within this broader

context of competitive authoritarianism (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016). As claimed by Iğsız (2025), the decision to revoke the diploma of Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, as well as the arrest of over 100 opposition members, was more than a judicial measure. According to Iğsız (2025), these measures can be understood as an attempt to counter the momentum the opposition had gained after the 2024 local elections. In doing so, the state takes advantage of the law and media control to discredit the opposition.

This is where the role of traditional media becomes especially crucial. By 2025, the vast majority of Turkey's national media outlets were aligned with or controlled by the government, significantly limiting access for opposition actors to mainstream communication channels (Reporters Without Borders, 2025). This marginalization of opposition voices increased the importance of digital platforms as spaces for political communication. In this environment, mainstream media not only failed to serve as a reliable source of news but also contributed to information inequalities. The major TV channels aligned with the government mostly turned a blind eye towards the massive demonstrations triggered by the detention of Ekrem İmamoğlu, concentrating instead on the government's storylines and programming alternatives (Michaelson, 2025).

In response to this media silence, opposition actors increasingly politicized media consumption. The leader of the Republican People's Party, Özgür Özel, called for a boycott of media outlets and related businesses that did not cover the protests, presenting media behaviour as supporting government dominance (Hayatsever & Spicer, 2025). As Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain (2013), as well as Zeynep Tufekci (2017), have shown, when traditional media are captured by political interests, digital platforms can become central arenas for political mobilisation. This moment captures the core dynamics of the 2025 movement: the shift from traditional media to digital platforms as the main infrastructure of opposition communication.

Sociological and Cultural Dimension: Polarisation, Identity, and Collective Action

Beyond the structural political dynamics described above, the 2025 Boycott Movement should also be understood within the broader sociological context of Turkish society, which is shaped by deep and lasting social divisions that influence political

participation. Turkey has long been characterized by a secular–religious divide; however, this divide has not remained static but has been politicized and intensified over time, especially during the AKP period, contributing to stronger polarisation (Somer, 2018). Moreover, recent research also suggests that polarisation has been deepened through populist strategies of “otherization,” which present groups such as secularists, non-Muslims, and dissenting voices as threats to the dominant order (Yilmaz et al., 2023). As a result, polarisation is not only political but also sociological, influencing where people shop, what media they consume, where they live, and how they respond to collective action.

The geographic distribution of the boycott's impact reflects this sociological reality directly. Districts with a strong CHP voter base, such as Çankaya in Ankara and Beşiktaş and Şişli in Istanbul, showed a sharper drop in shopping mall density on April 2, while districts with a strong AKP voter base showed only limited change (Uzunırmak et al., 2025). This suggests that the boycott was more effective in areas where participants already shared oppositional political and cultural identities. These findings align with existing research suggesting that political attitudes and behaviours in Turkey are increasingly shaped by opposing social and political blocs, rooted in longstanding societal cleavages (Somer, 2018).

Youth and political identity form another important dimension of the movement. Studies suggest that both sociocultural identities, such as being religious or secular, and partisan identities contribute to strong polarisation among young people (Uzun & Lüküslü, 2023). This matters for the 2025 Boycott Movement because participation was shaped not only by political disagreement, but also by identity-based divisions and a sense of belonging to a political group.

The Emergence, Spread and Digital Architecture of the 2025 Boycott Movement

The opposition-led boycott began on March 19, when İmamoğlu was detained, as CHP leader Özgür Özel called for a boycott of pro-government media outlets and companies during his speech in Sarıyer (Turkey News, 2025; Michaelson, 2025). He named several brands and media-related companies, framing the boycott as a direct use of consumer power against actors who ignored the protests (Gökırmaklı, 2025). The government quickly

condemned the boycott, with officials describing it as an attempt to harm the economy (Reuters, 2025; Wilks, 2025).

Hashtags such as #boykot, #ekonomikboykot, and #2Nisan began trending on X and Instagram, highlighting the central role of social media in amplifying the boycott and facilitating its expansion into a wider public mobilisation (Gökırmaklı, 2025). What started as a party-led call quickly turned into a grassroots movement. University students first boycotted classes and then extended the call to a nationwide day of non-consumption on April 2. Some local shops and markets also closed in support, while independent publishers joined the boycott using hashtags such as #BoykottaBizDeVarız and #SatışYok, presenting it as a form of value-driven resistance (Utucu, 2025; Gediz, 2025).

The decentralized nature of the movement's digital coordination is further illustrated by Şengül's (2025) media ethnography of the protests. Protesters used encrypted platforms such as Telegram and WhatsApp to create local groups for coordination. On X, the community "Direniş Info," with over 25,000 members, became an informal hub for sharing protest information. Participants were aware of state surveillance, and some groups only accepted members through personal referrals to prevent infiltration by undercover police (Şengül, 2025). This pushed coordination towards semi-private digital spaces rather than fully public platforms.

At the same time, a decentralized digital infrastructure developed independently of formal political organisations. Many unofficial accounts on Instagram and X shared boycott lists and attracted large audiences. The scale of Turkey's digital penetration made this kind of decentralized coordination particularly effective: with 58.5 million Instagram users and 19.7 million X users in 2025, reaching large audiences through social media required no institutional infrastructure (Kemp, 2025). The CHP also launched a dedicated website, boykotyap.com, listing approximately 35 targeted brands. The site was blocked by court order shortly after its launch (Medyascope, 2025).

Despite these restrictions, boycott information had already spread widely through social media and messaging platforms, meaning that attempts to block access often led to further diffusion across decentralized networks (Şengül, 2025). However, this decentralized

structure also created problems related to information quality. As the boycott grew, contradictory brand lists circulated across platforms, with different accounts sharing conflicting information about which companies should be targeted. Without a central coordinating body or a reliable source of guidance, participants faced increasing confusion about what to boycott and what alternatives to use. This situation increased the cognitive and practical costs of sustained participation, which may have contributed to a more rapid decline in participation.

Empirical Evidence of the Movement's Trajectory

The empirical trajectory of the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement provides clear quantitative evidence of the three-phase dynamic examined in this thesis. Utilizing payment systems data from the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT), Google Trends data based on the search term “boykot,” and Google Maps measures of the density of shopping malls, Uzunırmak et al. (2025) provide an empirical analysis of the movement's economic effects. The first major boycott day, 2 April 2025, produced a 26.20% drop in consumer spending compared with the last working day before the Ramadan Bayram Holiday, without taking salary payments into consideration (Uzunırmak et al., 2025). A survey of 384 shopkeepers and employees in Ankara conducted on April 3 showed that 48% reported a decrease in sales on the boycott day (Uzunırmak et al., 2025). Interestingly enough, the spatial pattern of boycott followed the existing political division between those regions with significant representation of CHP supporters where there was a more noticeable decrease in shopping mall concentration, and AKP regions, which witnessed little change.

Digital engagement data shows a similar pattern. Google Trends data for the keyword “boykot” reached its peak (index = 100) on April 2, directly aligning with the nationwide boycott call (Google, 2025). This synchronization represents the synergy phase, where digital mobilisation and offline behaviours were strongly aligned. KONDA survey data further indicates that participation was politically segmented, with CHP voters participating at much higher rates than AKP and MHP voters (KONDA Research and Consultancy, 2025). Together, these findings suggest that the movement's initial phase was amplified by digital platforms, but also shaped by political divisions.

However, this alignment was short-lived. Digital interest declined gradually, with the Google Trends index falling from 100 on April 2 to 47 on April 6 and 36 on April 13, while consumption habits returned to normal much faster (Google, 2025). This gap between slower online decline and faster offline normalization reflects the decoupling phase. Payment data from the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye (CBRT, 2025) provides clear evidence of normalization. Spending in the “Markets and Shopping Centre” category increased from 64.9 million TL on April 4 to approximately 79.1 million TL on April 11, indicating a return to pre-boycott levels within one week (CBRT, 2025). Despite additional boycott calls later in April, spending remained consistently high. By April 27, the Google Trends index had fallen to around 14, indicating a near-complete decline in digital interest (Google, 2025). Later survey evidence also suggests that the intense emotions following İmamoğlu’s arrest weakened over time, with concern, anger, and hopelessness declining while indifference increased (Veri Pusulası, 2026). These indicators form the empirical basis for the thesis’s three-phase trajectory: an initial alignment between online and offline participation, followed by their gradual separation, and finally the decline of both digital attention and sustained boycott behaviour.

State Censorship, Platform Suppression, and Structural Demobilisation

At the same time, the government responded quickly by targeting the movement’s digital infrastructure through sanctions, bandwidth restrictions, account suspensions, and legal measures. Calls for a nationwide “no-shopping day” on April 2 circulated through a wide range of digital actors, from CHP leader Özgür Özel’s official X account to anonymous public accounts (Utucu, 2025). For cultural figures, supporting the boycott also carried risks. TRT removed several actors who had expressed support for the boycott, including Aybuke Pusat, who was taken out of a TRT series (Ünveren, 2025). Cem Yiğit Üzümoğlu was also detained with others over social media posts about the boycott, after prosecutors accused them of inciting hatred and discrimination (Utucu, 2025). In this sense, posting about the boycott was not only a symbolic act; it could affect people’s work and even bring legal consequences.

In the first stage of restriction, the internet connection was targeted. On March 19, the day of İmamoğlu's detention, the Information and Communications Technologies Authority (BTK) introduced bandwidth restrictions on various platforms within Istanbul, such as X, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, Signal, and Telegram. An analysis by an independent research firm known as the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) revealed that these restrictions lasted for about 42 hours, with some platforms either completely or partially blocked (Gulati et al., 2025). The second layer of repression targeted individual accounts and voices. According to İFÖD, at least 471 X accounts were blocked between March 19 and April 12, affecting a total of 17.2 million followers (Freedom of Expression Association, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2025). These accounts included journalists, students, and women's associations. By May 8, even Ekrem İmamoğlu's own X account, followed by millions, had reportedly been restricted (Human Rights Watch, 2025).

Digital censorship on this scale was quite significant. Furthermore, the Istanbul Chief Prosecutor's Office launched investigations into boycott supporters on charges of inciting hatred and discrimination, despite the fact that consumer boycotts are a constitutionally protected form of protest under Articles 25, 26, and 34 of the Turkish Constitution (Gökırmaklı, 2025). These developments are important for two reasons. First, they increased the perceived risks and costs of participation, helping explain why even low-effort digital engagement declined over time. Second, they challenge the slacktivism argument because online participation was not merely symbolic or risk-free in this context. Thus, the reduction in participation can neither be due to lack of motivation alone nor can it be due to pressure.

On a broader level, the case supports Kaun & Uldam's (2017) argument that digital activism should be examined in its specific socio-political environment. The failure of the Boycott Movement 2025 is not simply due to individual factors but rather because it happened in an environment where digital technology was restricted, the participants faced legal threats, and the structure of the movement was decentralized. The decline of the 2025 Boycott Movement cannot be explained only by people losing interest. It also took place in a setting where digital platforms were restricted, participants faced legal risks, and the movement's decentralized structure made coordination harder. When considering the context of Turkey, it is the combination of factors studied above, such as the history of digital

resistance within Turkey from Gezi to 2025, the phenomenon of democratic erosion, polarisation and identity aspects on a sociological level, the decentralized nature of the boycott campaign, proof of its growth and subsequent decline, the role of celebrities, and the repression of digital technologies, present a complex picture that cannot be explained by individual-level motivational theories alone.

Political Consumerism

Defining Boycotts and Buycotts

Political consumerism refers to the use of market-based choices to express political or ethical preferences in daily consumption practices (Kam & Deichert, 2019). The literature distinguishes two main forms of political consumerism: boycotting, defined as the deliberate avoidance of specific products, brands, or companies for political or ethical reasons, and buycotting, which involves actively supporting businesses that align with one's values (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013; Kam & Deichert, 2019).

From a classical perspective, consumer boycotts are understood as a mechanism through which individual actions can be transformed into collective economic and symbolic pressure targeting companies, brands, or institutions (Friedman, 1999). In this sense, the boycott is not only an economic tool but also a communicative act, a public expression of political alignment that creates pressure on economic actors and signals collective identity. The Turkish Boycott Movement in 2025 incorporated both types of boycotts by boycotting government-linked brands and those media outlets that did not cover the protests.

Although Friedman's (1999) typology still stands as a basic benchmark, it falls short in explaining boycotts initiated because of the political stance associated with a brand instead of corporate misbehaviours. To remedy this gap, Ateş (2025) incorporates the politically motivated consumer boycotts (PMCBs) that arise when brands associate themselves with controversial political ideologies, personalities, or happenings. This brings us to an interesting point that this study must consider: if political identity and affective polarisation can sustain a single-brand boycott for years, what conditions explain why a large-scale, multi-brand movement like the 2025 boycott dissolved within weeks?

States also tend to view digitally organised boycotts as a form of threat, given that such acts make everyday consumption a visibly political activity. At this point, a boycott becomes something more than just an act of consumption, becoming a wider challenge to authority and power (Başaran, 2025). This concept explains why authoritarian states tend to criminalize market-related acts of protest.

Political Consumerism as Everyday Politics

Beyond its function as a protest tool, political consumerism may be viewed as an aspect of everyday politics, wherein consumers communicate their political views through their purchasing decisions (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). What products to buy, which stores to shop at, and which brands to boycott become declarations of one's political affiliation and civic engagement based on values. This was illustrated by the Turkish Boycott Movement 2025, which involved more than just avoiding the use of products for a certain period; rather, it encouraged individuals to refrain from consuming specific brands altogether (Gediz, 2025; Büyüktunca, 2025).

Embedding political consumerism in people's everyday existence results in both advantages and disadvantages for this phenomenon. On the one hand, it allows individuals to engage politically without joining organisations, attending rallies, or taking visible public positions. This is particularly important in politically restrictive environments such as Turkey, where visible forms of opposition carry higher personal risks. On the other hand, the everyday character of political consumerism also makes it difficult to sustain, because political motivations must continuously compete with habitual consumption patterns, convenience, economic constraints, and social obligations (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013; Klandermans, 2004).

This tension is further complicated by what the literature describes as moral licensing, a psychological mechanism through which engaging in one form of political action can reduce the motivation to engage further (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). In the context of the 2025 boycott, participants who shared boycott content on social media or avoided purchases on April 2 may have felt that they had already contributed sufficiently, reducing their willingness to sustain changes in their consumption behaviour in the following weeks.

Market Structure and the Effectiveness of Boycotts

The effectiveness of boycotts by consumers is not the same in all scenarios and is largely dependent on the nature of the market structure within which such boycotts take place. According to Egorov and Harstad (2017), the success of a boycott largely depends on the market structure. In competitive markets, consumers can easily switch between products, which increases pressure on firms and encourages faster responses. In concentrated markets, however, firms can absorb losses more easily, activists face higher coordination costs, and government intervention becomes more likely.

Beyond market structure, Kam and Deichert (2019) conceptualize boycotting as an act of avoidance and argue that negative information plays a key role in motivating such behaviour. This helps explain why İmamoğlu's arrest triggered a rapid and widespread reaction. This situation can also be understood as a moment of perceived injustice, in which continuing to consume certain brands becomes inconsistent with individuals' political values. At the same time, this framework may also help explain why such motivation is difficult to sustain over time. As the initial trigger loses salience and everyday routines return, the avoidance motivation underlying boycott behaviour gradually weakens.

Political Consumerism in Digitally Mediated Contexts

The rise of social media has changed political consumption by making coordination and mobilisation much easier. In the pre-digital era, organising a boycott required significant resources such as printed materials, organisational networks, and media coverage. In the digital era, a single post from a well-known account can quickly trigger a boycott that spreads to large audiences (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). This has made political consumerism more accessible and visible, but also more unstable and easier to fade out quickly.

Gediz (2025) suggests that the 2025 Turkish boycott was particularly strong among young people and students, who described it as a "peaceful way to protest" against political developments. This suggests that the boycott functioned not only as an economic tool but also as a form of civil resistance, offering a way to participate when traditional political channels were perceived as limited or ineffective.

The digital nature of the 2025 boycott also led to new forms of political consumerism that go beyond traditional brand boycotts. Participants were encouraged to unfollow and block the social media accounts of celebrities and influencers who remained silent during the protests, treating online engagement itself as a form of economic pressure (Büyüktunca, 2025). This shift of boycott practices into digital spaces, where visibility and engagement have value, represents an important development in the literature on political consumerism and was central to the dynamics of the 2025 movement.

The Sustainability Problem in Digitally Mobilised Political Consumerism

While political consumerism has been widely studied as a form of political expression, the literature has paid less attention to the conditions under which it can be sustained over time. Friedman (1999) argues that boycotts tend to lose momentum quickly unless they are supported by sustained organisational structures and continuous media attention. Stolle and Micheletti (2013) similarly note that the embeddedness of political consumerism in everyday life, while increasing its accessibility, also makes it difficult to sustain, as everyday routines, social obligations, and habitual consumption patterns compete with political motivations.

This sustainability problem is made worse in the case of digitally coordinated boycotts, since organisational power is usually low, and the emotions associated with the early stages of organising tend to fade quickly. As discussed above, the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement illustrates this pattern through its rapid mobilisation on April 2 and its quick decline in the following weeks. This pattern of rapid mobilisation followed by rapid decline reflects what Margetts et al. (2015) describe as the instability of digitally coordinated collective action.

Building on findings that political consumerism is often triggered by negative information (Kam & Deichert, 2019), the 2025 Boycott Movement provides an opportunity to examine why initially successful mobilisation could not be sustained and how participation shifted from synchronized online and offline action to gradual decoupling. The theoretical framework used in this thesis, the SMPPM (Knoll et al., 2018), is particularly suitable for analysing this process, as it views participation not as a simple “yes–no” decision but as a

goal-driven process that is continuously reassessed in response to competing priorities, perceived attainability, and changing conditions. This allows the study to move beyond the question of whether people participate and focus instead on why participation declines.

The sustainability problem is also influenced by how movements are organised. Tufekci (2017) argues that digitally networked movements often bypass the slower capacity-building processes of earlier movements, such as developing decision-making structures and leadership networks. Without these mechanisms, it becomes difficult to maintain coordination once the initial emotional intensity decreases. By contrast, the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement demonstrated the absence of such organisational mechanisms. The boycott was organised in a fragmented way, messages were inconsistent, and there was no clear coordination after the initial peak. This suggests that the movement's rapid decline was shaped not only by individual motivation but also by weak organisational infrastructure.

Digital Activism

The Mobilisation Perspective: Digital Platforms as Participatory Infrastructure

Digital platforms are often discussed in communication research because they have changed the conditions of political participation. From the mobilisation perspective, social media can lower the effort needed to access information, share calls for action, and coordinate with others. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) develop this point by arguing that digital communication does not only transmit political messages, but can also help organise collective action. Boulianne's (2015) meta-analysis offers a more cautious view, showing that the relationship between social media use and political participation is positive, but modest. In other words, social media can support participation without necessarily transforming it in a lasting way.

This distinction is useful for understanding the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement. Digital platforms helped the boycott spread quickly and made initial participation easier, but they did not create the same level of long-term commitment. They lowered the cost of joining, but withdrawal also remained easy. This tension between the low cost of participation and the low cost of withdrawal lies at the core of the movement's rapid decline.

The Slacktivism Critique: Low-Effort Participation and the Illusion of Engagement

Not everyone sees digital participation as a purely positive development. Critics argue that social media can lower the threshold for activism to the point where participation becomes easier to start but harder to sustain. This is usually discussed through the idea of slacktivism, meaning low-effort actions such as liking, sharing, or posting symbolic content (Christensen, 2011). For Morozov (2011), these actions can make people feel politically active without necessarily creating real change. They may even replace harder forms of participation, such as long-term boycotts, protests, or organisational work. Gladwell (2010) makes a similar argument, suggesting that online activism often depends on weak ties and therefore struggles to create the discipline and solidarity that movements need over time.

This criticism is more complicated in restrictive political contexts. When street protest is risky, online expression may seem like a safer option. In Turkey, however, even online support for the boycott could carry legal or professional risks. Lim's (2012) study of Egyptian opposition movements is useful here because it shows that social media can help movements become visible, but cannot sustain them on its own. Visibility, therefore, needs to be supported by offline organisational structures and a shared narrative if mobilisation is to last. This is also relevant for the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement, where strong online attention was not matched by stable organisational capacity.

Beyond the Binary: Understanding Context, Continuity, and What Happens After the Hype

The debate between mobilisation and slacktivism has been criticized for being too deterministic, because it often treats digital platforms as directly producing either mobilisation or demobilisation, without paying enough attention to the contexts in which they are used. Kaun and Uldam (2017) argue that digital activism should instead be understood in relation to its socio-political context. From this view, platforms do not automatically mobilise or demobilise people; their effects depend on the political, cultural, and institutional setting in which participation takes place.

This is useful for interpreting the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement. Rather than asking whether the movement proves the mobilisation or slacktivism argument, it is more

useful to ask how online and offline participation initially came together, and why this connection later weakened. The movement's rapid rise and decline, therefore, require a process-oriented explanation that considers structural, organisational, and psychological factors together.

Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) concept of connective action helps explain this pattern. The boycott spread quickly because participation was personalised, digital, and decentralized. However, this same feature can also make movements fragile, as personalised and decentralized participation may lack the mechanisms needed to sustain commitment over time. The 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement illustrates this logic clearly: it was rapidly mobilised, decentralized, and ultimately difficult to sustain for the same reasons that enabled its initial spread.

Digital Activism Under Authoritarian Conditions

Digital activism has mostly been studied either in Western liberal democracies or in authoritarian contexts, with a focus on how mobilisation begins. Less is known about what happens in competitive authoritarian settings, where political channels are limited but not completely closed, repression is selective, and online participation can be both useful and risky.

Tufekci (2017) is helpful here because she shows that digitally organised movements can grow very quickly, but often do so without building the organisational capacity needed to last. This fits the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement, which spread rapidly online but had difficulty maintaining coordination after the initial peak. Howard and Hussain (2013) also show that digital platforms can open space for opposition while making participants more visible to surveillance and repression.

The Turkish case reflects this problem clearly. Social media helped the boycott circulate, but it also made participants more exposed to monitoring, legal pressure, and account restrictions. For this reason, the decline of the movement should not be read only as weak motivation or slacktivism. It was also shaped by a political context in which digital participation was necessary, but never fully safe.

Framework

The Social Media Political Participation Model (SMPPM)

This study adopts the Social Media Political Participation Model (SMPPM) developed by Knoll, Matthes, and Heiss (2018) as its main theoretical framework. The SMPPM is grounded in Goal Systems Theory (Kruglanski et al., 2002) and conceptualises political participation as a goal-driven process rather than a one-time decision. According to this model, individuals engage in political action when they perceive a political issue as personally relevant, when they believe their actions can make a difference, and when political goals are not overridden by competing everyday priorities. This makes the SMPPM particularly suitable for analysing not only why people participate but also why they stop.

The model identifies several key mechanisms that shape political behaviour. First, relevance and discrepancy appraisals determine whether a political issue activates a participation goal. When individuals perceive a gap between their desired political reality and the current situation, this discrepancy creates motivation to act (Knoll et al., 2018). Second, dominant goal appraisal captures the competition between political goals and other everyday priorities such as convenience, social obligations, and time constraints. Even when a political goal is active, it must compete with other goals in specific behavioural situations, and the goal that is perceived as most pressing in a given moment tends to guide behaviour (Knoll et al., 2018). Third, attainability appraisal refers to individuals' beliefs about whether their actions can actually contribute to the desired outcome. When participation is perceived as unlikely to produce results, motivation declines (Knoll et al., 2018).

Applying the SMPPM to the Three-Phase Trajectory

This thesis applies these mechanisms to explain the three-phase trajectory of the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement: synergy, decoupling, and dissolution.

In the synergy phase, İmamoğlu's arrest created a strong discrepancy between participants' desired political reality and the situation they were facing. This discrepancy activated the participation goal and made the boycott feel personally relevant, emotionally

urgent, and politically meaningful. At this stage, online mobilisation and offline boycott behaviour were closely aligned.

In the decoupling phase, the dominant goal appraisal becomes the central explanatory mechanism. Sustaining an economic boycott requires high effort in daily life, as it involves changing shopping habits, avoiding specific brands, and finding alternatives. In everyday situations, competing goals such as convenience, saving time, or social pressure to join friends at a specific place often become dominant, overriding the political goal (Knoll et al., 2018). In contrast, online participation such as sharing a hashtag or posting boycott content requires low effort and does not conflict with other daily routines. This explains the decoupling phenomenon: participants continued their online activity because it was consistent with their everyday digital habits, while they gradually abandoned the offline boycott because it competed with their daily needs and routines.

In the dissolution phase, the attainability appraisal becomes key. As time passed and the political situation did not change, participants increasingly felt that their actions were not producing results. The mayor remained in detention, no visible political concessions were made, and the emotional intensity of the initial phase faded. When the goal of changing the political situation no longer seemed achievable, the motivation to participate disappeared entirely, leading to the end of both online and offline engagement.

Qualitative Adaptation of the SMPPM

While the SMPPM has primarily been used in quantitative research to measure participation levels, this study adapts the model for qualitative analysis. Rather than measuring variables through surveys, this thesis uses semi-structured interviews to explore how participants themselves describe the cognitive and emotional processes behind their participation and decoupling. The goal is not to test the model statistically but to use its categories as an analytical lens for understanding how individuals experienced and rationalised the shift from active participation to withdrawal. Specifically, the interview data will be analysed through the SMPPM's core constructs: goal activation (relevance and discrepancy), goal competition (dominant goal appraisal), consistency appraisal (online vs. offline effort), and attainability appraisal (perceived efficacy). This deductive approach

follows the structuring content analysis procedure proposed by Mayring (2014), while also allowing for inductive refinement if new themes emerge from the data.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative single-case study design to examine the rapid rise and decline of the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement. A single-case approach is appropriate because the movement represents a bounded, theoretically informative case in which the three-phase trajectory of synergy, decoupling, and dissolution can be examined in depth within a specific political and temporal context (Yin, 2018). Rather than seeking statistical generalisation, this design aims for analytical generalisation, using the case to develop a deeper understanding of how digitally coordinated political consumerism evolves over time under competitive authoritarian conditions.

The study uses semi-structured interviews as its primary method of data collection. This method is particularly suitable for the research aim, as it allows participants to describe their own motivations, emotions, and everyday considerations in their own words, while also ensuring that the core theoretical categories of the SMPPM are addressed across interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2018).

The interview guide is structured around the core constructs of the SMPPM framework, including goal activation, goal competition, consistency appraisal, and attainability appraisal, while also allowing space for participants to describe their experiences in a narrative form. Data analysis follows Mayring's (2014) structuring of content analysis, using a deductive coding frame derived from the SMPPM constructs. The main coding categories were therefore guided by the SMPPM, including goal activation, goal competition, consistency appraisal, and attainability appraisal. Within these categories, more specific themes were identified from the participants' accounts, such as emotional triggers, everyday constraints, information chaos, and perceived lack of political outcome. This approach allows the researcher to systematically analyse how each participant describes the processes of participation and decoupling, while also leaving room for inductive refinement if new themes emerge from the data.

Interviews are conducted in Turkish, as this is the native language of all participants and allows them to express themselves with greater nuance when discussing political experiences, emotions, and everyday considerations. The researcher, who is a native Turkish speaker, transcribes and analyses the interviews in the original language to preserve cultural and linguistic nuances that may be lost in translation (Van Nes et al., 2010). Only the quotations selected for inclusion in the thesis have been translated into English, with care taken to preserve the original meaning and style. In cases where a Turkish term or expression carries cultural contexts that cannot be fully translated into English, the original term has been kept alongside the translation and briefly explained.

Coding was conducted manually in Microsoft Word, using a deductive coding frame based on the SMPPM constructs: goal activation, goal competition, consistency appraisal, and attainability appraisal. Field notes supported the coding process by recording initial impressions. Because of the politically sensitive topic and the confidentiality promised to participants, only the researcher accessed the transcripts, so intercoder reliability procedures were not feasible. To improve consistency, the dataset was read several times, code definitions were clarified, and categories were checked against the theoretical logic of the SMPPM (Mayring, 2014). Inductive refinement was used when participants introduced themes not fully covered by the original frame, such as institutional duty, diaspora-specific patterns, and the inversion of online–offline cost structures under state repression.

Table 1. Coding Framework Based on the SMPPM

Phase	Main mechanism	Participation pattern
Synergy	Goal activation	Online and offline participation initially reinforced each other
Decoupling	Goal competition, supported by consistency appraisal	Offline participation declined first, while online participation continued for longer
Dissolution	Attainability appraisal	Both online and offline participation eventually declined

Recruiting and Sampling

Participants are recruited through purposive sampling, a non-probability strategy commonly used in qualitative research to select individuals who can provide relevant and information-rich perspectives on the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2015). The sampling strategy is designed to capture variation in how different groups experienced the boycott, rather than to achieve statistical representativeness.

The final sample consists of sixteen participants aged between 25 and 45. While the majority of participants live or work in Istanbul, the sample also includes two participants based in Antalya and three Turkish citizens living abroad in Vienna, Stockholm, and Basel. This variation allows the study to capture how the boycott was experienced both in the main urban context of the movement and from more distant locations where participation was mainly followed through digital platforms. Istanbul is the primary focus of the study because it was the political and symbolic centre of the movement, as well as the location of the events that triggered it, including the arrest of Mayor İmamoğlu and the Sarayhane rallies. However, including participants from outside Istanbul allows the study to examine whether the everyday rhythms, consumption routines, and political atmosphere differed in contexts where the protests were less visible. Similarly, the inclusion of participants living abroad allows the study to explore the gap between how the movement appeared through digital platforms and how it was experienced in daily life on the ground.

This age range was chosen for both methodological and ethical reasons. Although the boycott was initially organised and spread by university students, including current students in the sample would not allow for a fair examination of the everyday tensions that this study seeks to understand. University students in Turkey, particularly in the current economic context, generally lack financial independence and stable consumption routines, meaning that the tension between political motivation and daily purchasing decisions operates under very different conditions for them. Examining how boycott behaviour competes with everyday consumption requires participants who have the financial capacity to make independent consumption choices in the first place. For this reason, the study focuses on young professionals who have established employment, independent income, and routine consumption patterns, making the everyday tensions between political motivation and daily convenience particularly visible. The age range is also shaped by the generational experience of participants. Those in their late twenties and older were old enough to experience or

remember the 2013 Gezi Park protests, which represented a formative moment for political engagement through digital platforms in Turkey. This generational background is particularly relevant for understanding how participants interpret and navigate digitally coordinated political action in 2025, as many of them have already lived through an earlier cycle of rapid digital mobilisation followed by structural decline.

Within this main sample, specific participant profiles are included to capture distinct experiences of the movement that cannot be fully understood through a single perspective. The first profile is a deputy mayor working in a local municipality, providing insight into how the boycott was navigated at an institutional and administrative level. The second profile consists of Turkish citizens living abroad, including some who specifically travelled to Turkey to participate in or observe the movement firsthand. This perspective allows the study to examine the gap between how the movement appeared online and how it unfolded in daily life on the ground, which is directly relevant to the decoupling phase of the three-phase trajectory examined in this thesis.

Participants are recruited through a combination of personal networks and snowball sampling, in which initial participants are asked to refer additional individuals who meet these specific sampling criteria. This approach is especially suitable for politically sensitive nature of the topic, as people are more willing to engage openly when introduced through someone they trust. Recruitment continued until the sample included a wide range of experiences and new interviews no longer produced meaningfully new themes related to the core SMPPM constructs (Saunders et al., 2017).

The researcher's positionality should also be acknowledged. As a Turkish researcher conducting the interviews in Turkish, I was able to understand many cultural and political references in the data, including Gezi memory and idiomatic expressions around everyday consumption. However, this familiarity may also have made some meanings feel self-evident and may have reduced the need for follow-up questions. Since some participants were reached through personal and extended networks, the sample may also reflect politically aware and opposition-oriented circles more strongly. To reduce this risk, I returned to the transcripts several times and checked my interpretations against the SMPPM framework.

Ethical Considerations

Given the politically sensitive nature of the topic and the restricted political environment in Turkey, strict ethical protocols are followed to ensure participant safety and the integrity of the research. Informed consent is obtained from each participant prior to the interview, affirming their voluntary participation, their understanding of the study's aims, and their right to withdraw at any stage without repercussions. Participants are informed that their responses will be used solely for research purposes and that all identifying information will be removed from transcripts. Pseudonyms are used in reporting the findings to ensure strict confidentiality. Participants may decline to answer any question they find uncomfortable, and the interview can be paused or terminated at their request. Interview data is securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. The study adheres to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines of the University of Vienna and has been reviewed by the university's Ethics Committee.

Results

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative analysis of sixteen semi-structured interviews conducted with participants of the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement. Following the deductive structuring content analysis procedure outlined in the methodology, the data is organised around the four core constructs of the Social Media Political Participation Model (Knoll et al., 2018): goal activation, goal competition, consistency appraisal, and attainability appraisal. Each construct is examined through the participants' own articulations, and where the data extends or qualifies the original model, this is noted in the analysis. Table 2 provides an overview of the main empirical themes identified under each SMPPM construct. These themes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Demographic Profile of Participants

The sample consists of sixteen participants who engaged with or followed the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement in different ways. Eleven participants were based in Istanbul, two in Antalya, and three were Turkish citizens living abroad in Vienna, Stockholm, and Basel. Participants were between 25 and 45 years old and represented a range of professional

backgrounds, including advertising, finance, project management, illustration, freelance writing, journalism, and public-sector management.

One participant was a deputy mayor working in a local municipality (I14), which provided insight into how the boycott was perceived and navigated from an institutional perspective. Another participant was a former journalist based in Vienna (I16), whose account was useful for understanding participation that took place entirely through digital channels. In addition, two other diaspora participants (I10, I11) offered variation in how the movement was followed, interpreted, and emotionally experienced from outside Turkey. All participants reported using social media actively in their daily lives, with Instagram and X being the most frequently mentioned platforms for following and engaging with the movement.

Goal Activation

Goal activation in the SMPPM model refers to the process through which a political issue becomes personally relevant enough to trigger a participation goal (Knoll et al., 2018). It combines relevance appraisal, which asks whether the issue concerns the individual, and discrepancy appraisal, which asks whether there is a perceived gap between the desired political reality and the current situation. In the dataset, this construct operates through discrepancy frames, patterns of initial efficacy belief, emotional triggers, and contextual conditions involving safety and the multi-channel media environment.

Discrepancy Appraisal: How the Gap Is Framed

Participants described the discrepancy between the desired political reality and the current situation through ten distinct frames, often combining several at the same time.

Justice frame

I9 sees the discrepancy through the lens of injustice, viewing the arrest of İmamoğlu as a sign of systemic imbalance rather than a singular judicial case. The frame relies on the metaphorical Turkish expression of the sword of justice, which describes the selective or disproportionate application of legal consequences.

TR: “Adalet kılıcı herkese eşit şekilde yargılansa belki de hani seninle siyasi konjonktür olarak aynı çerçevede veya aynı tarafta gördüğün insanların da yargılanması bu denli seni rahatsız etmeyecek. Buradaki asıl rahatsız edici konu bence İmamoğlu’nun suçlu veya suçsuz olmasından ziyade suçlu olsa bile sadece ona doğru bu soruşturmaların yöneltilmesiyle sadece onun yargılanmasıydı. (I9)”

EN: “If the sword of justice were applied equally to everyone, then maybe even seeing people you consider on the same side politically being prosecuted would not bother you as much. The really uncomfortable thing here, in my opinion, is not whether İmamoğlu is guilty or innocent, but that even if he were guilty, only he was being targeted by these investigations and only he was being prosecuted. (I9)”

Economic-lifestyle frame

I2 and I3 frame the discrepancy in economic and lifestyle terms, highlighting the tension between consumption practices and political values. It should be noted that I2 describes the structural pattern, while I3 extends it to the labor-extraction dimension by recognizing that those using divisive language against her are also earning their money from her consumption.

TR: “Birçok alışveriş yaptığımız marka kurum aslında iktidarın ele geçirdiği kurumlar ve biz onlardan alışveriş yapıyoruz. Bizim yaşam tarzımızdaki insanlar onlardan alışveriş yapıyor. Ama onlar tam tersi bir zihniyeti destekliyor. Tam tersi insanların özgürlüklerini kısıtlayıcı politikalara destek veriyor. (I2)”

EN: “Many of the brands and institutions we shop from are actually institutions captured by the government, and we shop from them. People with our lifestyle shop from them. But they support the exact opposite mentality. They support policies that restrict people’s freedoms. (I2)”

TR: “Bana bu ayrıştırıcı dili uygulayan kişiler ben ve benim gibi insanlardan para kazanıyor. Bu öfke ve boykot hareketine dedike olmamı sağlayan şey bu oldu. (I3)”

EN: “The people applying this divisive language to me are earning money from me and people like me. This anger made me commit to the boycott movement. (I3)”

Consciousness frame

I1 expresses the discrepancy at a different level, locating it not between personal value and political reality but between the previously low level of class and economic consciousness in Turkey and the unexpected emergence of such consciousness through the boycott.

TR: “Türkiye’de açıkçası sosyal yani sınıf bilincinin ve ekonomik bilincin biraz düşük olduğunu düşünüyordum hep. Yani açıkçası insanlar markalara marka ya da bir his olarak yaklaştığı için bence Türkiye’de çok aslında paraların kimlere gittiğinden ya da kimlerin bir şeyleri fonladığından çok haberleri olduğunu düşünmüyordum. (I1)”

EN: “I always thought that in Turkey, frankly, social, that is, class consciousness and economic consciousness was a bit low. Because people approach brands as a brand or as a feeling, I did not think that in Turkey people were very aware of where the money goes, who funds what. (I1)”

Anger frame

I7 explains the discrepancy by emphasizing anger in a structural analysis of the political situation. The boycott is described as the only feasible choice after street demonstrations were suppressed via repression.

TR: “Benim motivasyonum aslında duyduğum öfkeydi. Yapabileceğimiz bir şey yoktu. Elimizde olan tek güç buydu. Sokağa çıkmak işe yaramadıktan sonra yapabileceğimiz tek elimizdeki güç bu olduğu için. (I7)”

EN: “My motivation was actually the anger I felt. There was nothing else we could do. This was the only power we had. After going out into the streets did not work, this was the only power left in our hands. (I7)”

Powerlessness and injustice frame

I13 and I15 describe the discrepancy through a sense of structural powerlessness. In this frame, the issue was expressed not through anger demanding action or through justice as

a corrective principle, but through the experience of belonging to a political group that is already systematically weaker.

TR: “Yani bu insanların ister istemez tedirgin olup, yani karşı taraftan da bunu önleyici bir şey olmadığı için bir koruma, doğru düzgün bir tepki olmadığı için insanların da yavaş yavaş vazgeçtiğini ve tedirgin olduğunu düşünüyorum. (I13)”

EN: “I think people, with no protective response from the other side either, no proper response, gradually gave up and became uneasy. (I13)”

TR: “Türkiye’deki muhalifler veya iktidar yanlısı olmayanlar diyeyim. Zaten aşırı güçsüz hissediyor kendini. Yapabilecekleri bir şey yok hissindeler hepsi. (I15)”

EN: “Opposition supporters in Turkey, or people who are not pro-government, already feel extremely powerless. They all feel like there is nothing they can do. (I15)”

Generational protest-cycle frame

I12 frames the discrepancy through generational memory. Having participated in the 2013 Gezi Park protests, he interprets the 2025 boycott as the return of large-scale mobilisation after a long period without a comparable protest movement. His account connects anger, civic duty, and the memory of Gezi.

TR: “Motivasyonum şöyle zaten bahsettiğim gibi ilk Gezi Parkı ruhuyla beraber büyüyen bir jenerasyondanım, 1996 doğumluyum. 17 yaşında oradaydım. Aynı heyecan olduğunu düşündüm ve çok uzun zamandır yani 2013’ten 2025’e eylem 2025’te oldu. 12 yıldır hakikaten bu büyüklükte bir eylem gerçekleşmemiştii Türkiye’de. (I12)”

EN: “My motivation, as I mentioned, is that I am from a generation that grew up with the spirit of Gezi Park; I was born in 1996. I was 17 years old and I was there. I thought there was the same excitement, and for a long time, from 2013 to 2025, the protest happened in 2025. For 12 years a protest of this size had truly not taken place in Turkey. (I12)”

Minimum-duty frame

I4 expresses the discrepancy through a minimal-duty frame, where the boycott is not seen as a choice but as the smallest possible action one can take in response to injustice. The minimal duty frame combines the idea of moral responsibility with political oppression, viewing political participation as something minimal as opposed to maximal.

TR: “Tüm bu adaletsizlik içinde herkesin yapabileceği kadar basit bir şeyin bir tercih değil, yapılması gereken minimum şey olduğunu düşünmemdi. (I4)”

EN: “It was my belief that, within all this injustice, doing something as simple as what everyone is capable of was not a choice but the minimum that had to be done. (I4)”

Institutional duty frame

A distinct frame appears in I14's interview. As a senior manager in a municipality in Istanbul, she does not describe mobilisation as a separate individual choice but as something closely tied to her institutional role. She understands the discrepancy both as a citizen and as a public-sector employee who is personally affected by the wider investigative and political pressure.

TR: “Belediyede üst düzey yönetici olarak görev yapıyorum. Dolayısıyla hem görevim hem de hayata bakış açım itibarıyla zaten bu konularla ilgili yaklaşımım, net bir duruşum ve tavrım var. Aynı zamanda da görüşüm var ama aynı zamanda da birinci derecede bazı zamanlarda, bazılarında bazı zamanlarda da ikincil olarak etkilenen durumundaydım zaten. (I14)”

EN: “I work as a senior manager in the municipality. So both because of my job and because of my outlook on life, I already have a clear stance and attitude on these issues. I also have an opinion, but at the same time I was someone who was sometimes affected in the first degree, and sometimes secondarily. (I14)”

Collective hope and solidarity frame

Whereas I5 and I8 view the discrepancy mainly in terms of the collective hope instead of anger or duty, both of them experience a moment of activation as being included within a wider collective project and driven to be involved in acting together based on collective power.

TR: “Boykot hareketinin ilk zamanlarını düşündüğümde aklıma ilk olarak bir heyecan ve umut duygusu geliyor. Bu kez gerçekten etkili olabileceğine inanmıştım. İnsanların birlik olup ortak bir güç oluşturduğunu, bu sayede sesimizi duyurabileceğimizi ve varlığımızı hissettirebileceğimizi düşünmüştüm. (I5)”

EN: “When I think about the early days of the boycott movement, the first feelings that come to mind are excitement and hope. This time, I really believed it could be effective. I thought that people had united and formed a collective force, and that through this we could make our voices heard and make our presence felt. (I5)”

TR: “Aslında birazcık toplu hareketten gelen bir ümitlenmeyle o hareketin bir parçası olma isteği. Tabii ki arkasındaki idealist fikirlerin de yanında olup ama o toplu hep beraber biz bir şey başarıyoruz hissi çok motivasyon oldu bana. (I8)”

EN: “It was a bit of hope coming from collective movement, the desire to be part of that movement. Of course, also being on the side of the idealist ideas behind it, but that collective feeling of all of us together achieving something was a big motivation for me. (I8)”

Diaspora frames

The diaspora frame appears in two forms. In I16 and I10, physical distance creates both obligation and guilt, so activation is redirected into online visibility work or local solidarity events rather than direct boycott behaviour. In I11, activation appears more as a continuation of an existing political position, especially because she travelled to Istanbul and joined the Saraçhane protests for three days.

TR: “İlk zamanlarda ne kadar umutlu olduğumu hatırlıyorum. Videolar, mitingler, yürüyüşler beni heyecanlandırmış ve bir şeyler olacağına dair umutlandırmıştı.

Orada olamadığım, harekete katılamadığım için üzüldüm ve suçlu da hissettim açıkçası. (I16)”

EN: “I remember how hopeful I was in the early days. The videos, the rallies, the marches had excited me and given me hope that something would happen. I was sad, and honestly I felt guilty too, that I could not be there and could not join the movement. (I16)”

TR: “Bunun yanında bir şeyler yapmak istemek ama imkânların sınırlı olması nedeniyle hissedilen çaresizlik hissi de çok baskındı. (I10)”

EN: “Alongside these, there was a strong sense of helplessness, the feeling of wanting to do something but having very limited means to act. (I10)”

TR: “Valla zaten ilk andan itibaren Özgül Özel’in açıklamalarını takip ediyordum. Saraçhane’de bahsetmişti sanırım ikinci gündü. Direkt olarak kendim de uyguladım zaten, özellikle o markalardan alışveriş yapmadım, hala daha yapmamaya çalışıyorum, özellikle espresso lab’e gitmiyorum. Yurtdışında yaşamama rağmen İstanbul’a seyahat planlayıp 3 gün Saraçhane’de vatandaşlık hakkım olan protesto hakkımı kullandım. (I11)”

EN: “Honestly, from the very first moment I was already following Özgür Özel’s statements. I think it was the second day at Saraçhane when he mentioned it. I directly applied it myself, especially I did not shop from those brands, I am still trying not to, especially I do not go to Espresso Lab. Even though I live abroad, I planned a trip to Istanbul and for three days at Saraçhane I exercised my constitutional right to protest. (I11)”

Initial efficacy belief

The SMPPM framework combines relevance, discrepancy, and attainability appraisals at the point of activation, with attainability functioning as an early form of efficacy belief that influences whether participation is initiated (Knoll et al., 2018). In the dataset, several patterns of initial efficacy belief were identified. Most participants linked their early participation to some belief that the boycott could create pressure or visibility. However, some participants joined despite explicit doubts about whether the boycott would be effective.

Strong cognitive efficacy belief

I9 and I13 express strong beliefs in the boycott's effectiveness, based on its expected economic impact. For both, reducing consumption is seen as a long-term form of pressure that can cause real harm to the targeted actors.

TR: “Markaları boykot ettiğinde aslında şey fikri oluşmuştu bende. Gerçekten ekonomikle bir darbe vurabilirsin burada insanları ve hani para çok büyük bir çark, çarkta çok büyük bir yer sahibi. Hani böylelikle daha ciddi alınabilirsin çünkü bir hasar bırakabilirsin karşı taraftakilere yaptıkları apolitik duruştan veya taraflı duruştan ötürü. Başta beni heyecanlandırmıştı açıkçası. (I9)”

EN: “When you boycott brands, the idea forming in me was that you can really land an economic blow here. Money is a huge wheel, with a huge place in the wheel. So you can be taken more seriously this way because you can leave damage on the other side because of their apolitical or partisan stance. It got me excited at first, honestly. (I9)”

TR: “Hatta eylemlerden falan çok daha etkili olabileceğini düşünüyordum. Çünkü alttan alta uzun vadeli bir yaptırım bu ve ciddi anlamda karşı tarafı yıldıracak. (I13)”

EN: “I thought it could be much more effective than protests. Because it is a long-term sanction underneath, and it would seriously intimidate the other side. (I13)”

Collective efficacy belief

I2 and I8 express efficacy in collective rather than individual terms. It is assumed that cumulative individual choices organised through digital networks produce a systemic effect. I2 expresses the structural form of the argument, while I8 expresses a closely related but more emotionally framed version in which the collective movement itself is the source of efficacy belief.

TR: “Kümülatif hareket etmek lazım diye düşünüyorum böyle olaylarda. Hani hep birlikte hareket edersek sonuçta bu markaları da biz var ettik toplum olarak. Yine yok edecek olan da bizleriz. (I2)”

EN: “I think we need to act cumulatively in such events. If we act together, after all, we created these brands as a society. The ones who will undo them are also us. (I2)”

TR: “Aslında birazcık toplu hareketten gelen bir ümitlenmeyle o hareketin bir parçası olma isteği. Tabii ki arkasındaki idealist fikirlerin de yanında olup ama o toplu hep beraber biz bir şey başarıyoruz hissi çok motivasyon oldu bana. (I8)”

EN: “Actually, it was a bit of hope coming from collective movement, the desire to be a part of that movement. Of course, also being on the side of the idealist ideas behind it, but that collective feeling of all of us together achieving something was a big motivation for me. (I8)”

Low efficacy belief

A third pattern appears in I1 and I6. In both cases, participants were not fully convinced that the boycott would be effective, but they still joined. Their motivation came less from expected impact and more from conscience, ethical responsibility, and the need to resist.

TR: “Yani ben daha çok vicdani bir katılım yapmış gibi hissediyorum... Çünkü bir yere varmasını istediğim için ve uymamak bana etik olarak yanlış hissettirir. (I1)”

EN: “I feel like I made a more conscientious participation. Because I wanted it to go somewhere and not complying would feel ethically wrong to me. (I1)”

TR: “Aslında içten içe hiçbir işe yaramayacağını biliyordum bu hareketlerin... Ama yine de hani o insanın içindeki o savaşma içgüdüğü mü bir şeylere başkaldırma, tepki gösterme içgüdüğü mü bilmiyorum. O devam ettirdi. (I6)”

EN: “I actually inwardly knew none of these movements would work... But still, I do not know if it is that fighting instinct inside a person, or the instinct to push back, to react to something, but it kept it going. (I6)”

Symbolic-belonging efficacy belief

I14 presents a symbolic-belonging form of efficacy belief. Although she was uncertain about the economic effectiveness of the boycott, she still described participation as important because it meant “being part of it” even in a symbolic sense. The reference to the Turkish proverb of the ant carrying a single drop suggests a symbolic-belonging efficacy belief, in which doing one’s small share is the point regardless of aggregate outcome. In this

pattern, the meaning of participation is linked more to belonging and visibility within the group than to moral duty alone.

TR: “Boykota devam ederken aslında ne kadar bazı verilerin sağlıklı olduğunu düşünmesem de yine de bir parçası olmak. Hani karınca misali bir söz vardır ya tarafım belli olsun diye. O beni iyi hissettiriyordu kendi adıma ve geleceğimiz adına. (I14)”

EN: “Even while continuing the boycott, even if I did not think some of the data was reliable, still being part of it. There is that saying about the ant, you know, so that my side is clear. That made me feel good for myself and for our future. (I14)”

Emotional Triggers

All interviews reference an emotional moment at activation. Three modal emotions operate across the dataset: anger (I3, I7, I8, I10, I11, I13), excitement and hope (I4, I5, I6, I8, I9, I13, I15, I16), and surprise at the unexpected emergence of collective awareness (I1). Two further emotional patterns appear in interviews: in-group dignity (I14) and remote guilt or sadness (I10, I11, I16). The emotional cluster is not uniform across participants but appears in different combinations shaped by how individuals experienced the activation moment from their particular social and political positions. I3 expresses anger most directly, linking it to the labor-extraction dimension already identified in the discrepancy frame.

TR: “Öfke. Kesinlikle öfke ve bunu net bir şekilde ben uygulayacağım, hayatıma yerleştireceğim. Ve uzun vadeli bir şekilde. (I3)”

EN: “Anger. Definitely anger, and the thought that I will clearly apply this, that I will place it into my life. And in a long-term way. (I3)”

I11 expresses a diaspora version of this emotional cluster through feelings of grief and anxiety about the country, capturing the emotional texture of remote participation more clearly than the interviews with participants based in Turkey.

TR: “Bu konunun genel bende bıraktığı his üzünlük ve çaresizlik temelde. Ellerimden kayıp giden güzel ülkemizin geleceğine duyduğum yas, elinden bir şey gelmeme hissinin hüznü, gelecek yıllar için endişe. (I11)”

EN: *“The general feeling this whole issue left me with is sadness and helplessness, fundamentally. Grief for the future of my beautiful country slipping through my fingers, the sorrow of feeling that there is nothing you can do, anxiety about the years to come. (I11)”*

Safety and untraceable mobilisation

Another contextual condition was the perceived safety of the boycott compared with street protest. For some participants, boycotting felt like a form of mobilisation that was less directly traceable to the individual. This added a risk-management dimension to the activation moment. I15 identifies the boycott as a form of political expression that puts the activist out of reach of the physical observation of the state authorities.

TR: *“Sonunda belki bir şekilde kendimi hapse girmeyecek bir şekilde ifade edebilirim. Ve bana trace’lenmeyecek bir hareket bu. Sokağa çıktığınızda bedeniniz orada. Bir şey almadığınızda kimse size kıyamaz. (I15)”*

EN: *“Finally, maybe I can express myself in a way that will not land me in prison. And it is a movement that cannot be traced to me. When you go out into the street, your body is there. When you do not buy something, no one can get angry at you. (I15)”*

I14 presents the opposite dynamic from the perspective of a public-sector worker. For her, the risk environment surrounding activation is heightened rather than reduced, because working in a municipality during the wider investigation period meant that even avoiding participation did not guarantee safety. Together, I15 and I14 show that safety was not experienced in the same way by all participants. For some, the boycott felt less risky than street protest because it was harder to trace individually. For others, especially those connected to public institutions, the broader political environment still made participation feel risky.

TR: *“Tabii ki kaygı, yapmaya çalıştıkları korku, güvenlik endişesi. Uzunca süre bizler de her sabah 6’da uyanıp acaba bize de mi gelecekler diye. Çünkü konu anlaşılabilir*

bir konu değil. Neyi yaptığınız için cezalandırılacağınızı bilmiyorsunuz ya da neyi yapmadığınız için . (I14) ”

EN: “Of course there was anxiety, the fear they were trying to create, the security concern. For a long time we too would wake up at 6 a.m., wondering if they would come for us. Because it is not a comprehensible situation. You do not know what you will be punished for, or what you will be punished for not doing. (I14) ”

Activation channels: digital, television, and rally routes

The final contextual condition concerns the media route through which participants encountered the boycott. In most cases, it emerges that digital forms of activation occur via the use of Twitter and Instagram, which supports the idea of connective action. However, the dataset also shows that multiple media channels emerge, whereby television and the use of physical rallies also serve as other ways of mobilising participants. One participant, I6, mentions activation from watching television live coverage of Özgür Özel on Halk TV.

TR: “Ben direkt canlı olarak Halk TV üzerinden görmüştüm. Özgür Özel’in konuşmasında direkt bizzat denk gelmişim televizyon aracılığıyla. (I6) ”

EN: “I saw it directly live on Halk TV. I came across it directly during Özgür Özel’s speech, through the television. (I6) ”

I2 complicates the activation-channel pattern because his mobilisation was not purely digital. Although he saw social media as a freer and more accessible source of political information, his first encounter with the boycott came from watching the rally live on television. Only afterwards did he turn to X and Instagram to follow the discussion and check the boycott lists.

TR: “Aslında ilk televizyonda karşılaştım. Yani dediğim gibi mitingi canlı olarak izliyordum. O miting ilk zaten bu şekilde açıklandığında hatırlıyorum. Mitingde bir kâğıda boykot edilecek markaların listesini yazmıştı Özgür Özel. (I2) ”

EN: “I actually first encountered it on television. As I said, I was watching the rally live. I remember when this was first announced at the rally. Özgür Özel had written the list of brands to be boycotted on a piece of paper. (I2) ”

I14 expands this picture by adding rallies as a co-equal channel of activation alongside social media. For her, in-person presence at rallies in front of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality building inside the building itself during the Saraçhane protests serves as a way of verifying what she sees on Instagram and Twitter. She approaches social media with active skepticism, which she links directly to her professional experience in press and public relations, where she has dealt with information manipulation. This skeptical stance is clearly reflected in how she describes her general view of social media as an information environment.

TR: “Sosyal medya aslında harekete geçirici bir unsur. Türkiye özelinde de öyle. Ama ben sosyal medyanın aynı zamanda yanıltıcı bilgilerin de yer aldığı bir yer olduğunu düşünüyorum. Çünkü bazı şeyler olduğu gibi aktarılmamaktadır. Adı üstünde troll hesaplar çokça yer alıyor. Dolayısıyla algının yanlış kişiler tarafından bilinçli ve kasıtlı olarak yanlış yönetilebileceğiyle ilgili kaygı duyduğum bir alan. (I14)”

EN: “Social media is actually a mobilising element. That is also the case in Turkey specifically. But I also think social media is a place where misleading information takes place. Because some things are not transmitted as they are. As the name suggests, troll accounts are very much present. It is therefore a domain where I worry about perception being deliberately and intentionally misdirected by the wrong people. (I14)”

Summary on goal activation

This section identified ten discrepancy frames and four patterns of initial efficacy belief, alongside emotional triggers and two contextual conditions, namely the safety dimension and the multi-channel media environment. Three findings will be developed in the Discussion chapter: the institutional duty frame (I14) and the diaspora frame (I10, I11, I16) extend the activation construct beyond its standard individual-level formulation; I1, I4, I5, and I6 cases show that intrinsic goal value can sustain activation even when efficacy belief is low; and the multi-channel pattern qualifies the assumption that digital activation is the primary route in contemporary protest movements.

Goal Competition

Goal competition is the central mechanism explaining the decoupling phase in the SMPPM framework. Dominant goal appraisal is the process by which the political goal, even when activated, must compete with everyday goals such as convenience, habit, social obligation, time constraints, and, in some cases, institutional or economic constraints (Knoll et al., 2018). The interviews reveal several mechanisms through which political commitments were overridden, reconfigured, or redirected within participants' daily routines. These mechanisms range from the immediate and practical, such as work demands or convenience, to the more structural, including the absence of alternative products, the lack of an everyday consumption environment in the diaspora context, and long-term institutional contracts.

Conditional adaptation: work and routine override

Conditional adaptation involves a scenario whereby the political goal is not eliminated but is rescheduled around competing routines. Individuals tend to refrain from engaging in activities on non-boycott days but focus on boycott days only. I1 and I7 show how work, weather, fatigue, and distance affected compliance. I1 describes weakening the boycott because of work commitments while still complying on boycott days, while I7 refers to the difficulty of avoiding a nearby store when tired after work or during winter conditions.

TR: “Normal boykotu hafifletmem gereken anlar oldu. Mesela iş gereği vesaire ama mesela o günlerde mutlaka yaptım ben yine. (I1)”

EN: “There were times I had to lighten the normal boycott. For example, due to work, but on those days I definitely did it again. (I1)”

TR: “Evimin yakınında olduğu için girip alışveriş yaptığım bir yeri girmeyip de uzağa yürümek, kış şartlarında ya da iş çıkışı bana zor geldiği zaman uymadığım oldu. (I7)”

EN: “Because there is a place near my house, not going there and walking far instead, in winter conditions or when I was tired after work, there were times I did not comply. (I7)”

I14 describes a similar pattern linked to the boycott call itself, where Wednesdays were defined as the boycott day. However, I14 also explains that seeing other people around

her not care about the boycott eventually affected her own behaviour, showing that this type of participation was still vulnerable to social influence.

TR: “*Ne bileyim sadece çarşamba günleri olarak yapıldı. Daha kolaylaştırıcı olması açısından öyle planlanmıştı. Etrafıma baktım, daha sonrasında daha duyarsızlık oldu. Ben de aslında o şeye kapıldım. Günlük hayatın rutin alışkanlıklarından kaynaklı olarak. (I14)*”

EN: “*I do not know, it was done just on Wednesdays. It was planned that way to make it easier. I looked around me, and afterwards there was more indifference. I also got caught up in that. Because of the routine habits of daily life. (I14)*”

Convenience and social-context override

I9 describes a pattern in which following the boycott becomes flexible in everyday situations, as practical reasons make some places seem more convenient or preferred. Conversations with friends about whether anything would really happen if they went also supported this flexibility. The boycott itself did not disappear, but was shaped by competing everyday routines. I3 adds a moral dimension, describing the guilt she felt when accepting social invitations to places she was boycotting.

TR: “*Buluştuğum semtte Espressolablar mesela oranın aslında en iyi mekanydı. Ya gitsek ne olur ki ne olmaz ki falan gibi muhabbetler olmuştu. (I9)*”

EN: “*The Espressolab in the neighbourhood where we were meeting was actually the best venue around. There were conversations like, what would happen if we just went, what would not happen. (I9)*”

TR: “*Davet edildim. Yani gittiğim de oldu burada. Yani gittiğimde gerçekten kendimle çok vicdan azabım. Sosyal ortamda etkisi belli bir yerde oldu. (I3)*”

EN: “*I was invited. There were times I went here. When I went, I really had a lot of guilty conscience with myself. The social setting had its effect at a certain point. (I3)*”

Threshold reasoning and priority weighting

A third mechanism involves a “threshold” way of thinking, where the political goal is weighed against other everyday goals depending on how important the issue feels. I15

explains that when an issue is more central, people are more likely to follow the boycott, but when it is less central, it does not strongly change daily routines. This pattern is also linked to moral licensing, as both involve balancing the perceived importance of the action with the level of political commitment.

TR: “Çok ön plana çıkan şeyler için yok ben buna gelmem derim ama birazcık daha arka planında kalan şeyler için hayatımı değiştirecek kadar önem verdiğimi düşünmüyorum. (I15)”

EN: “For things that are very front and centre I would say no, I am not going to that. But for things in the background, I do not think I value them enough to change my life around them. (I15)”

Moral licensing: the smallness defence

In the interviews, moral licensing appears when participants continue to see themselves as committed while allowing small exceptions. The exception is justified by the small size of the item or by the idea that a one-time purchase does not seriously violate the larger commitment. I9 explains this mechanism most clearly by comparing a chocolate bar to a car: the smaller the item, the more acceptable the exception feels.

TR: “Ülker Çikolatalı Gofret'i yerine bir araç markasından bahsediyorsa gidip o arabayı almazsın belki. Ama ufak bir şey olduğu için o sana çok makul geliyor. Bu bozmaz gibi bir durum oluyor. (I9)”

EN: “If instead of Ülker chocolate bar we were talking about a car brand, you might not buy that car. But because it is a small thing it feels very reasonable to you. Like, this will not break anything. (I9)”

Habit and sensory persistence

The Turkish phrase “damağımıza işlemiş lezzet” (“a flavour that has settled into our palate”), used by I9, describes a competing goal that works through habit, taste, and familiarity rather than explicit political disagreement. 5 reports a parallel pattern: she could easily give up products that were not central to her daily routine, but not those to which she had formed an emotional and habitual attachment, specifically mentioning her favorite

chocolate bar. I8 describes the same pattern more directly, explaining that brand loyalty pulled her back to a wet-wipe brand after she had temporarily switched to another one.

TR: “Örneğin en sevdiğim gofreti bir süre tamamen bırakmıştım, ancak zamanla tekrar tüketmeye başladım. (I5)”

EN: “For example, I had completely given up my favourite chocolate bar for a while, but over time I started consuming it again. (I5)”

TR: “Alışkın olduğum ya da duygusal bağ kurduğum ürünlerde her zaman aynı tutarlılığı koruyamadım. (I5)”

EN: “I could not always maintain the same consistency with products I had grown habituated to or had formed an emotional bond with. (I5)”

TR: “Bir yandan da ıslak havlu markası gibi bir şeydi. Bir süre başka marka almaya başladım ama yine markası sadakati ona geri döndüm işin sonunda. (I8)”

EN: “On the other hand, it was something like a wet wipe brand. I started buying another brand for a while, but in the end, brand loyalty brought me back to it. (I8)”

Cognitive cost and decision fatigue

Cognitive cost serves as an additional barrier. The verification burden of checking whether each product is on the boycott list becomes a participation cost in and of itself. During the synergy phase, such a cost is not easily noticeable because the verification activity is itself part of a shared collective experience. Eventually, the same routine becomes exhausting instead of motivating, resulting in participants restricting their focus to fewer brands or ceasing to verify products entirely. I9 describes a gradual decline in this attention practice over time, identifying wet wipes as the everyday product where this practice eventually broke down.

TR: “Sipariş listesi oluştururken ya bu boykot mu değil mi sürekli bir check etme durumu oluyordu. (I9)”

EN: “While building the order list, we were constantly checking, is this on the boycott or not. (I9)”

Peer disengagement: collective decoupling pressure

This mechanism operates through social relations: when others stop, the dominant goal is redefined in the group. The same peer influence that initially supported participation in the early phase of the movement later works in the direction of disengagement once a critical number of people perceive the boycott as weakening. I1 describes this pattern in straightforward self-reflective terms, while I15 connects it to a generational memory of post-Gezi demobilisation, referring to the fear of being the last person still complying.

TR: “Çevremdeki insanlar da yapmayı bıraktı, bu bir yere varmıyor dendi. Ben de bıraktım. (I1)”

EN: “People around me also stopped doing it, it was said this is not going anywhere. And I gave up too. (I1)”

TR: “Gezi olaylarından sonra olan şey gibi. Bütün arkadaşlarım bırakıyor. Herkes bırakıyor. Bir tek ben almamaya devam ediyorum. Bundan korkuyordum. (I15)”

EN: “It was like what happened after the Gezi protests. All my friends drop it. Everyone drops it. I am the only one still not buying. That was what I was afraid of. (I15)”

I3 expresses the mechanism through the Don Quixote metaphor, which captures the experience of feeling absurd for continuing alone, while I8 describes the same self-talk in everyday form.

TR: “Kendimi Don Kişot gibi hissettiğim zamanlar oldu. Ve benim de motivasyonum yavaş yavaş gitti. (I3)”

EN: “There were times I felt like Don Quixote. And my motivation also slowly went away. (I3)”

TR: “Bir noktadan sonra hani kimse önemsemiyor, bir tek ben mi yapıyorum diyerek o boykot hareketlerine uzaklaşmama sebebi oldu. (I8)”

EN: “After a point, I was thinking like no one cares anymore, am I the only one doing this that became the reason I drifted away from the boycott actions. (I8)”

Structural absence of alternatives

This is one of the strongest mechanisms in the dataset, present in multiple interviews. Participants wanted to follow the boycott, but they could not always find suitable alternatives for the products they used regularly. I3 specifically mentions Sleepy as a brand for which no acceptable alternatives could be found. I8 describes the same pattern for products where trust in and service quality of the original brand outweigh available substitutes. I15 frames this as a broader organisational failure of the movement, arguing that if even a digitally skilled professional cannot find alternatives, it is unlikely that the average consumer can do so.

TR: “Sleepy gibi markalarda yani günlük hayatımda çok kullandığım markalarda bunu uygulamakta zorlandım. Ve bunun da bir etkisi maddiyat. (I3)”

EN: “For brands like Sleepy, the brands I use a lot in my daily life, I had a hard time applying it. And one of the effects of this is the financial side. (I3)”

TR: “Üründe bir şekilde alternatifi olmadığı zaman o ürünün hani o markanın bana verdiği güven ve hizmet daha iyi olduğu için ona geri döndüm ama mekanlarda hani alternatif çok daha fazla olduğu için böyle bir marka sadakati ya da bir bağlılık olmadığı için. Onlar da hani bir gitmediğime bir daha gitmedim. (I8)”

EN: “When there was no alternative for a product, I went back to it because the trust and service that brand gave me was better. But for places, since there are many more alternatives, there was no such brand loyalty or attachment, so the ones I stopped going to, I did not go back to. (I8)”

TR: “Bize listesi verildi. Ben kendi günlük ihtiyaçlarımı buna adapt etmeye çalışırken birçoğunun karşılığını bulmakla çok zorlandım. Ben gündelik olarak teknolojiye, dijital platformları, sipariş uygulamalarını kullanan bir insanım. Ve buna rağmen bunların alternatifini bulamıyorsam herhangi bir ortalama zaten bulamayacaklar. (I15)”

EN: “A list of don’t-use-these was given. While I was trying to adapt my daily needs to it, I struggled to find substitutes for many of them. I am someone who uses technology daily. And if even I cannot find alternatives, the average person definitely will not. (I15)”

I6 presents a case that shifts the alternatives mechanism from product substitution to essential services. A hospital on the boycott list, where she had been receiving long-term treatment, was explicitly excluded from her boycott because health was prioritized over all other considerations. I13 reports the same logic for a wet wipe she was about to add to an online order: the lack of an alternative brand, combined with her perception that the movement's organisational structure had weakened, led to a moment of frustrated consumption that she recalls in detail.

TR: "Hastanelerden biri de boykottu. Ama ben kendimi bildiğim bileli, uzun zamandır daha doğrusu o hastaneye gittiğim için, o hastaneyi boykot etmek istemedim. Sonuçta sağlık her şeyin başında gelir yani. Bunu da boykot edemeyeceğim artık dedim. (I6)"

EN: "One of the hospitals was on the boycott list. But since I had been going to that hospital for as long as I can remember, for a long time really, I did not want to boycott it. After all, health comes before everything. I said I cannot boycott this anymore. (I6)"

TR: "Markete gittiğimde veya pardon online sipariş verecek olduğumda bir ıslak mendil alacaktım. Boykotta olduğunu biliyordum. Ama herhangi bir alternatif bir marka bulamadığım için ve artık etkisini yitirmeye başladığı için, organizasyonel bir yapı kalmadığını düşündüğüm için, doğru düzgün çağrı yapılmadığını, insanların yeterince bu konuda rolü almadığını düşündüğüm için aldım. (I13)"

EN: "When I was about to place an online order, I was going to buy a pack of wet wipes. I knew it was on the boycott. But because I could not find any alternative brand, and because it was starting to lose its effect, and because I thought there was no organisational structure left, that no proper call was being made, that people were not taking enough of a role on this matter, I bought it. (I13)"

I16 reframes this mechanism in terms of economic class, a point that is only indirectly mentioned in the other interviews but not clearly expressed. She argues that participants who can switch from cheaper chains such as BİM or A101 to more expensive alternatives are able to treat the boycott as a matter of choice. In contrast, those depending on minimum-wage incomes do not have the same ability to substitute products.

TR: “Boykotun BİM ya da A101 gibi ucuz, hesaplı markaları bırakıp daha pahalı marketlerden alışveriş yapma seçeneği olan insanları daha az etkilediğini düşünüyorum. Türkiye’nin alım gücünü, asgari ücretle hayatını devam ettirmeye çalışan kesimin büyüklüğünü düşündüğümüzde, insanları markaları ya da bu büyük marketleri boykot etmedikleri için suçlayamıyorum. (I16)”

EN: “I think the boycott affects people who have the option of leaving cheaper, budget brands like BİM or A101 and shopping from more expensive markets less. When we think about Turkey’s purchasing power and the size of the segment trying to live on minimum wage, I cannot blame people for not boycotting brands or these big supermarkets. (I16)”

Intra-movement polarisation: the “stricter than you” dynamic

I6 describes a form of internal tension within the boycott. Even among those participating in the boycott, internal polarisation emerged about who was applying the boycott more strictly. This situation complicates the general belief about group harmony: in this case, competition within the group has led to conflict and likely increased fatigue.

TR: “Boykotu daha esnek devam ettirenler ya da daha katı devam ettirenler arasında bile, bir ters düşme durumu oluyordu. Boykot edenler arasında bile bölünüp, ben daha çok boykot ediyorum, hayır ben daha çok boykot ediyorum gibi bir hava da vardı. (I6)”

EN: “Even between those continuing the boycott more flexibly and those continuing it more strictly, there was a kind of conflict. Even among those boycotting there was division, with a kind of “I am boycotting more, no I am boycotting more” atmosphere. (I6)”

Institutional Barriers to Alternatives

I14, a senior manager in an opposition-led Istanbul municipality, describes a form of goal competition that appears at the institutional level. While individuals face habits, sensory attachments, and missing retail alternatives, public institutions face procurement contracts, legal service obligations, and statutory penalty clauses. Her example of vehicle tenders linked

to large corporate groups shows this clearly: a one-to-three-year tender cannot be changed in line with a boycott call without disrupting essential municipal services such as waste collection, animal control, and funeral services.

TR: “Yerel yönetimlerde kamu hizmetinin sürdürülmesi için araç ihaleleri olur. Araçlar kiralanır ve hizmetler bu yöntemde, temel belediyeçilik faaliyetleri bu yöntemde sunulur. Bu ihaleler de yıl sonlarında yapılır. Bazıları bir yıla, bazıları üç yılı kapsayan ihalelerle sonuçlanır. Dolayısıyla ben senin arabanın doğuş grubusun almıyorum diyebileceğimiz bir durum yok. Çünkü o ihalelerin ciddi karşılıklı olarak cezai yatırımları var. (I14)”

EN: “In local government, there are vehicle tenders for the continuation of public services. Vehicles are rented and services are provided through this method. These tenders are also conducted at year-end. Some result in one-year tenders, others in three-year tenders. So we cannot just say I am not buying your vehicle because you are Doğuş Group. Because those tenders carry serious mutual penalty commitments. (I14)”

Within these constraints, I14 claims that the institution applied the boycott where it was possible: relations with media outlets on the boycott list were frozen.

TR: “Yayın kuruluşlarıyla ilgili uygulamalar gerçekleşebildi. İşbirliği yaptığımız kuruluşlar oluyordu. Boykot listesinde olan kuruluşlarla ilgili çalışmalarımızı dondurduk. Bizi böyle etkiledi kurumsal olarak yapabileceğimiz tek şey bu olabildi. (I14)”

EN: “Implementations regarding media organisations could be carried out. There were institutions we were collaborating with. We froze our work with institutions on the boycott list. That is how it affected us; institutionally, this was the only thing we could do. (I14)”

Distance and absence: the lack of an everyday context overrides participation

The diaspora interviewees together describe a form of goal competition where the political goal is not interrupted by habits, social pressure, or convenience. Instead, boycott

behaviour cannot take place because the everyday consumption setting is not physically present. The competing factor here is not a preference, but the lack of opportunity.

TR: *“Boykota katılamadım, o sebeple günlük hayatımda büyük değişiklikler yaşamadım. (I16)”*

EN: *“I could not participate in the boycott, so I did not experience big changes in my daily life. (I16)”*

TR: *“Yurt dışında yaşadığım ve söz konusu markalara zaten erişimim olmadığı için günlük tüketim alışkanlıklarımda büyük bir değişim olmadı. (I10)”*

EN: *“Since I live abroad and did not have access to those brands anyway, my daily consumption habits did not change much. (I10)”*

TR: *“Ben yurtdışında yaşadığımdan her gün o markalara maruz kalmıyordum, bu yüzden daha az eforluydu. Ama ne zaman Türkiye’ye gitsem dikkat etmeye devam ediyordum, hala daha ediyorum. (I11)”*

EN: *“Since I live abroad I was not exposed to those brands every day, so it took less effort. But whenever I went to Turkey I continued to be careful, and I still am. (I11)”*

Within this shared structural pattern, the three diaspora interviewees show variation. I16 shifts participation mainly into online visibility work and mentions a short visit to Turkey during which she tried to avoid boycotted brands. I10 replaces in-country boycott behaviour with Stockholm-based marches and petition/signature campaigns. I11, in contrast, makes a planned three-day return trip to Saraçhane and applies the boycott consistently while in Turkey.

Proactive compliance and social withdrawal

I12 describes a final form of goal competition that works in the opposite way to the others. Here, instead of reducing boycott compliance, the political goal reshapes other goals like consumption, leisure, and social plans so that they align with the boycott. This is visible in two practices. First, he reports buying cigarettes and alcohol two days before boycott days, which is a form of advance compliance: the need for consumption is met before the boycott period, so it does not interfere with it.

TR: “Haftanın bir günü özelinde bunu bir şekilde bu şekilde uyguladım. Yani daha iki gün önceden sigaramı stokladığım, alkolü stokladığım günler oldu. (I12)”

EN: “Specifically for one day of the week, I applied this in this way. There were days when I stocked up on cigarettes and alcohol two days in advance. (I12)”

Second, I12 reports a one-month period of social withdrawal, during which he and his circle stayed mostly at home, in a pattern he describes as pandemic-like. This is a collective rather than individual solution to goal competition: instead of each person managing the tension between the political goal and social life separately, the whole social network changed its behaviour together. As a result, social plans were temporarily removed, which reduced a major source of conflict seen in earlier sections.

TR: “Bir aylık süreçte hakikaten inanılmaz bir düşüş oldu. Bunu gözlemleyebildik. Direkt gözlemledik. Herkes böyle bir dışarıda içmeyelim, evimizde evimize çekilelim bakalım ne oluyora dönmüştü. Genel olarak böyle politik bilinci sahip insanlar o bir ay boyunca hakikaten evlerinde sosyalleştiler. Hatta çoğu insan kapattı kendini neredeyse. Pandemi sekansı yaşandı. (I12)”

EN: “In that one-month period there was an incredible drop. We could observe this. We directly observed it. Everyone had turned to: let us not drink outside, let us withdraw to our homes and see what happens. Generally the politically conscious people really socialised at home for that month. In fact most people almost shut themselves in. A pandemic-like sequence happened. (I12)”

Summary on goal competition

This section identified eleven mechanisms through which the political goal competed with everyday priorities: work and routine override, convenience and social-context override, threshold reasoning, moral licensing, habit and sensory persistence, cognitive cost, peer disengagement, structural absence of alternatives, institutional barriers, diaspora distance, and proactive compliance. Three findings will be developed in the Discussion chapter. First, the institutional case of I14 extends goal competition from an individual to an organisational construct. Second, the diaspora cases of I10, I11, and I16 show that goal competition assumes a shared everyday setting in which political and everyday goals can meet. Third, the case of

I12 inverts the standard logic by showing that strong commitment can reshape competing goals in advance rather than being weakened by them.

Consistency Appraisal

Consistency appraisal in the SMPPM model concerns how individuals evaluate the alignment between online and offline forms of political participation (Knoll et al., 2018). The construct is shaped by the slacktivism critique (Morozov, 2011), which argues that low-effort online expression can weaken commitment to high-effort offline action. The analysis identified six sub-dimensions in the data: recognition of unequal effort, the illusion critique, doubting sincerity, follower count and audience cost, online expression as risk-bearing political act, and the inclusive view that any participation counts.

Recognition of unequal effort

A clear majority of participants explicitly recognise that posting on social media requires less effort than changing offline consumption behaviour. I2 explains this difference in temporal terms, comparing five seconds spent posting a story with a full day of avoiding shopping, while I15 describes the contrast as performative versus demanding. I7 adds an emotional dimension, describing online posting as a form of therapy that provides emotional relief.

TR: “Sosyal medyada bir story paylaşmak 5 saniyesini alıyor. Ama gün boyunca alışveriş yapmamak onun daha güçlü bir iradeye sahip olmasını gerektiriyor. (I2)”

EN: “Sharing a story on social media takes 5 seconds. But not shopping all day requires having a stronger will. (I2)”

TR: “Aralarında bir fark var tabii ki birisi çok daha performatif bir şey birisi çok daha zorlayıcı bir şey. (I15)”

EN: “There is a difference between them, of course. One is much more performative, the other is much more demanding. (I15)”

TR: “Sosyal medyada paylaşma yapmak yani bir tuşla bir repostla story ile çok kolay yapabildiğin bir şey. Ve gerçekten bir terapi gibi bir şey içindeki rahatladığın. (I7)”

EN: *"Posting on social media is something you can do very easily with one button, a repost, or a story. And it is really like therapy, something that makes you feel relieved inside. (I7)"*

I5 describes the same asymmetry in particularly clear terms, presenting online participation as visible but temporary, while offline behavioural change is seen as both more real and more demanding to sustain. I10 adds a temporal dimension to this distinction, arguing that social media is powerful for short-term agenda-setting, while consumption changes operate at the medium and long term. I12 provides the strongest expression of this view in the dataset, using the Turkish phrase *görüntü yapmak* (keeping up appearances) to describe online posting without offline action, highlighting the gap between performed and lived political commitment.

TR: *"Sosyal medya daha çok düşünceyi ifade etme ve bir duruş gösterme alanı gibi hissettiriyordu. Bu yönüyle daha görünür ama aynı zamanda daha anlık bir etki yaratıyordu. Gündelik alışverişteki değişim ise daha gerçek ve süreklilik gerektiren bir katılım biçimiydi. (I5)"*

EN: *"Social media felt more like a space for expressing thoughts and showing a stance. In this sense it created a more visible but also more momentary impact. The change in daily shopping, on the other hand, was a form of participation that was more real and required continuity. (I5)"*

TR: *"Günlük tüketim alışkanlıklarını değiştirmek daha somut ve etkisi ölçülebilir bir tepki. Sosyal medya ise farkındalık yaratma, gündem oluşturma ve yaygınlaştırma açısından çok güçlü; ancak etkisi daha kısa vadeli kalabiliyor. Buna karşılık tüketim tercihleri orta ve uzun vadede daha kalıcı sonuçlar doğurabilir. (I10)"*

EN: *"Changing daily consumption habits is a more concrete reaction whose effect can actually be measured. Social media, on the other hand, is very powerful for raising awareness, setting the agenda, and amplifying messages, but its impact tends to be shorter term. Consumption choices, by contrast, can produce more lasting results in the medium and long term. (I10)"*

TR: *"Diğeri tamamen kaba tabiriyle görüntü yapmak gibi oluyor. (I12)"*

EN: *"The other is, to put it bluntly, it becomes like keeping up appearances. (I12)"*

The illusion critique

I1 expresses this view most directly, referring to the illusion of involvement created through reading, writing, and liking political content on social media. I3 extends the same critique with a stronger formulation of the conscience-relief function of online posting, distinguishing it sharply from daily life.

TR: “Oradaki okuduğumuz şeyler, yazdığımız, beğendiğimiz şeyler zaten biz dahilmişiz illüzyonuna sebep oluyor. Ama aslında tabii ki öyle değil. O yüzden de o gerçek bir şey olmadığı için teknik olarak gerçek hayatta da bir etkisi olmadığını düşünüyorum. Aynı görselin 1500 kişi tarafından paylaşmasının hiçbir anlamı yok. O bilgiyi zaten herkes biliyor oluyor. (I1)”

EN: “The things we read, write, and like there cause the illusion that we are already involved. But of course it is not really like that. Because it is not real, I think it has no effect in real life technically. The same image being shared by 1500 people means nothing. Everyone already knows that information. (I1)”

TR: “Sosyal medya birazcık sanki vicdan rahatlatma ve ben burada paylaşıyorum. Görevimi yerine getirdim algısına geçtiğini düşünüyorum. Günlük hayatla arasında dağlar kadar fark var. (I3)”

EN: “Social media has slightly turned into conscience-relieving, like, I am sharing here. I think it has turned into the perception that I have done my duty. There is a mountain of difference between this and daily life. (I3)”

I12 reports a related pattern: some people who continued to socialise outside still avoided posting about it, fearing judgement from their close circle.

TR: “Dışarı çıkıp paylaşmaya çekinen insanlar da oldu. Mesela bunun çekinen tepki göreceği için yakın çevresinden bu kadar duyarsız olmayın tepkisi görmemek adına dışarı çıkıp eğlenirken herhangi bir şey paylaşmayan gündelik hayatlarında çok fazla şey paylaşan ama o süreçte korkudan paylaşım yapmayan insanlar da oldu (I12)”

EN: “There were people who refrained from sharing posts when they went out. People who, fearing reactions, in order not to face the “do not be so insensitive” reaction from their close circle, did not share anything when they went out and had fun. People

who normally share a lot in their everyday lives but did not share anything during that period out of fear. (I12) ”

Doubting sincerity

I2 captures this with a concrete example where the person makes a tribute to those who died during the earthquake in the morning and arranges social activities later in the evening.

TR: “Deprem günü paylaşım yapıyor ama aynı gece arkadaşlarıyla eğlenmeye de çıkıyor. Gösterdiği ve yaşadığı birbiriyle paralel olmuyor. (I2) ”

EN: “Posting on the day of an earthquake but going out with friends the same evening. What they show and what they live are not parallel. (I2) ”

TR: “Eğer sosyal medyada bir şeyler paylaşıp yine de bunun tam tersi gönülsüz bir şekilde hareket ediliyorsa kesinlikle aynı şey değil benim için. (I6) ”

EN: “If someone is sharing things on social media but acting in the exact opposite way, half-heartedly, then it is definitely not the same thing for me. (I6) ”

I3 offers a sharper version of the doubting-sincerity logic, describing social media participation as a form of conscience-clearing that allows participants to feel they have done their duty without actually shifting their everyday behaviour.

TR: “Sosyal medya birazcık sanki vicdan rahatlatma ve ben burada paylaşıyorum. Görevimi yerine getirdim algısına geçtiğini düşünüyorum. Günlük hayatla arasında dağlar kadar fark var. (I3) ”

EN: “Social media has slightly turned into conscience-relieving, like, I am sharing here, I have done my duty. There is a mountain of difference between this and daily life. (I3) ”

I13 expresses the same contradiction in direct and prescriptive terms, identifying personal habit rather than online visibility as the main criterion of sincerity. Her view extends the arguments of I2 and I6 by connecting the sincerity gap to the leadership critique discussed in the attainability section: she suggests that if the boycott calls had been more continuous and organised, personal habits would also have changed accordingly.

TR: “Kişisel alışkanlık aslında önemli olan. Onun da yapılabilmesini, yani. Ben kendi adıma şöyle diyeyim eğer daha hani atıyorum Özgür Özel’den daha büyük çağrılar alsaydım, bu düzenli bir durum haline gelseydi, bu sönüp gitmeseydi eğer bu durum, daha iyi bir kişisel alışkanlık geliştirebileceğimi düşünüyorum. Sosyal medyada paylaşım yapmak kolay bir şey. Yani sosyal medyada paylaşım yapıp sonra gidip boykotu devam ettirmeyen birçok insan vardır bence. (I13)”

EN: “Personal habit is actually what matters. That it can also be done. Speaking for myself, if I had received bigger calls, let’s say from Özgür Özel, if this had become a regular situation, if this situation had not faded away, I think I could have developed a better personal habit. Posting on social media is an easy thing. There are many people, I think, who post on social media and then do not continue the boycott. (I13)”

I14 presents a related but more cautious view. She values both online and offline participation, but describes online posting as having a “mış gibi yapmak” quality, meaning acting as if one is fully committed. At the same time, she immediately adds that people may have different personal conditions and therefore should not be judged, which creates a softer version of the sincerity critique than the ones expressed by I2 and I6.

TR: “Mutlaka ikisi de kıymetli ama birisi mış gibi yapmak gibi geliyor. Ya da gerçi o kişilerin koşulları belki öyledir. O yüzden yargılamak da çok doğru değil. (I14)”

EN: “Both are definitely valuable, but one feels like going through the motions. Although, the conditions of those people might be like that. So judging is not really right either. (I14)”

I14 takes the doubting-sincerity logic further through a deliberate refusal of online performance. She says that she posted pictures from the rallies during the synergy phase, but would join future calls without posting. This is not because of fear or risk. Rather, she criticises social media as a space where political participation can turn into self-presentation.

TR: “Katılırım. Sosyal medyada paylaşmam. Benim kendimi biliyor olması benim için yeterli olur. Çünkü birilerine bir şey ispatlama yeri gibi de geliyor bana sosyal medya. O yüzden katılırım ama bunu sosyal medyada paylaşmam. (I14)”

EN: “I would join. I would not post on social media. It being known to myself would be enough for me. Because social media also feels like a place to prove something to others. So I would join, but I would not share it on social media. (I14)”

Follower count and audience cost

A fourth sub-dimension highlights that the value of online participation depends on audience reach and audience-related factors, although this can be articulated by means of two different logics. I6 describes the first logic: when participants do not reach large audiences, posting is seen as well-intentioned but not very effective. I16 describes the second: when there is no risk of losing followers, posting is perceived as low-cost and therefore as not producing real personal change.

TR: “Sosyal medyada çok fazla kitlelere hitap eden bir takipçiye sahip değilsen yaptığın paylaşım iyi niyetli ama efektif olmayan bir paylaşım. (I6)”

EN: “On social media, if you do not have a follower base that addresses the masses, the post you make is well-intentioned but ineffective. (I6)”

TR: “Sosyal medya üzerinden paylaşım yapmak, eğer takipçi kaybedeceğim derdiniz yoksa, hayatınızda bir şey değiştirmiyor. (I16)”

EN: “Posting on social media, if you do not have the worry of losing followers, does not change anything in your life. (I16)”

Online expression as risk-bearing political act

I4 describes the government-related risk most clearly, referring to the possibility of a dawn detention after a single social media post.

TR: “Türkiye’de basit bir sosyal medya paylaşımı bile gecesinde şafak operasyonu ile gözaltına alınma riskini beraberinde getirdiği için, sosyal medya paylaşımlarının birçok ülkede değerlendirileceği şekilde pasif ya da önemsiz bir katılım olarak değerlendirilemeyeceğini düşünüyorum. (I4)”

EN: “Since in Turkey even a simple social media post can bring with it the risk of being taken into custody in a dawn raid the same night, I do not think social media

posts can be evaluated as a passive or insignificant form of participation, the way they would be evaluated in many other countries. (I4) ”

I7 describes the peer-side cost from the opposite direction. During the peak of mobilisation, not posting had social consequences, as non-posters were criticized for showing indifference.

TR: “Sosyal medya paylaşımları yapmayan insanlar da linçleniyordu. Aslında yapılması zorunlu gibi bir şeydi paylaşmak. O dönem işte normal hayatımızdan bir şeyler paylaştığımızda da hani linçleniyorduk hani hiçbir haberin yok mu olan biten şeylerden falan gibi. (I7) ”

EN: “People who did not make social media posts were even being attacked. It was almost like posting was mandatory. During that period, when we posted things from our normal lives we would also get attacked, like, are you not aware of what is going on. (I7) ”

The inclusive view: any participation counts

The final sub-dimension presents a different view. Instead of strictly comparing online and offline participation. A counter-position to the strict effort-asymmetry view appears in two interviews. I8 and I11 see both as valid ways of reacting, where expressing a stance itself is what matters rather than comparing it to an offline standard.

TR: “Ya bence kişinin kendini ne kadar katılmaya rahat hissettiğiyle bağlı bir şey. O yüzden bir şekilde kendi halinde de olsa, kendi yapamıyor gibi hissetsem en azından farkındalık yaratmaya çalışıyorsa bile bu harekette bir katılımdır. Büyüğü küçüğü yok gibi ne kadar yayılabilirse o kadar iyi bir hareketti çünkü. (I8) ”

EN: “I think it depends on how comfortable a person feels about participating. So in whatever way, even quietly, even if someone feels they cannot do much, if they are at least trying to create awareness, that is still participation in this movement. There is no big or small. The more it could spread, the better, because it was that kind of movement. (I8) ”

TR: “Aynı sebepten kaynaklanıyor ve aynı amacı güdüyor bence, tepki. Bunun dediğim gibi yerinde bir tepki yöntemi olduğunu düşünüyorum, ayrıca her insanın kendi özgür iradesi, bir markadan alışveriş yapmamak gayet doğal bir tercih. (I11)”

EN: “They come from the same reason and serve the same purpose in my view, which is reaction. As I said, I think this is a justified method of reaction, and besides, every person has their own free will. Not shopping from a brand is a perfectly natural choice. (I11)”

Summary on consistency appraisal

This section identified six sub-dimensions of consistency appraisal, ranging from recognition of unequal effort and the illusion critique to the inclusive view that any participation counts. Two findings are particularly relevant for the Discussion chapter. The risk-bearing political act sub-dimension articulated by I4 and I7 inverts the standard slacktivism cost structure and extends the SMPPM construct to include context-based costs of online expression. The convergence on the slacktivism critique across participants also raises a methodological question about how widely this discourse has circulated, which is addressed in the Limitations chapter.

Attainability Appraisal

Attainability appraisal in the SMPPM model refers to participants' belief that their actions can contribute to the desired outcome (Knoll et al., 2018). When this belief declines, motivation decreases and decoupling follows. In this thesis, this construct was identified as the central driver of the dissolution phase, where both online and offline participation declined together as the political situation remained unchanged. The interviews show that the decline in attainability did not follow a single path but emerged through ten distinct pathways involving cognitive, organisational, informational, and emotional dimensions.

Lack of visible political outcome

Across the dataset, the decline in attainability begins with the perception that nothing had changed. İmamoğlu is still imprisoned, no compromise from any political figure is made,

and participants began to question whether the boycott or protests had any effect on the situation. I13 summarises this process clearly.

TR: “Hani durum değişmedi. Hani politik atmosfer değişmedi, yapılması gerekenler değişmedi, durum değişmedi. (I13)”

EN: “The situation did not change. The political atmosphere did not change, what needed to be done did not change, the situation did not change.. (I13)”

I5 describes a similar pattern, framed more in terms of perception than actual outcomes. The attitude of I5 about the possibility of making changes through a boycott didn't really change very much throughout the entire period. However, what I5 realised was that there was an underlying perception that it had limited effects. Seeing something small and practical, such as seeing a café, which is boycott-related, having fewer people visit it, led her to realise that this was because of another factor.

TR: “Boykotun gerçekten bir şeyleri değiştirebileceğine dair düşüncem zaman içinde çok belirgin bir şekilde değişmedi; daha çok etkisinin sınırlı olduğu yönünde bir algı oluştu. (I5)”

EN: “My thoughts about whether the boycott could actually change anything did not shift very significantly over time; rather, a perception developed that its impact was limited. (I5)”

TR: “Bazı anlarda küçük gözlemlerim oldu; örneğin boykot edilen bir kafenin daha boş olduğunu görmek dikkatimi çekmişti ve bu durum kısa süreli bir etki hissi yaratmıştı. Ancak bunu değerlendirdiğimde, bulunduğu semtin zaten daha çok muhalif bir kesime ait olduğunu fark ettim. Bu nedenle gördüğüm etkinin genel bir değişimi yansıtmadığını düşündüm. (I5)”

EN: “There were certain moments when I made small observations; for example, seeing that a boycotted café was emptier caught my attention, and this created a brief sense of impact. However, when I evaluated this, I realised that the neighbourhood it was in already belonged largely to a more opposition-leaning group. For this reason, I thought that the impact I saw did not reflect a general change. (I5)”

I8 describes the same pattern in more material terms, distinguishing between the moral function of the boycott, which she believes was successful, and its material outcomes, which she believes were not achieved. I10 reaches a similar conclusion at the political level, while I16 expresses a related view in more general terms, arguing that the movement ended because it was not sustainable in the long term.

TR: “Maddi olarak ya da uzun dönemli olarak, sürdürülebilir olarak bir şey başarmadı ama bence çok fazla da insanın belli şeylere bakışını değiştirdi. (I8)”

EN: “Materially or in the long term, sustainably, it did not achieve something. But I think it changed many people’s perspectives on certain things. (I8)”

TR: “Politik düzlemde ise kayda değer bir değişim olmadı. (I10)”

EN: “At the political level, no significant change took place. (I10)”

TR: “Türkiye için bu uzun vadeli bir değişikliğe sebep olmamış olsa da bu hareketin bir süreliğine devam ettirilmesi bile büyük bir başarıydı. (I16)”

EN: “Even though this did not lead to a long-term change for Turkey, even sustaining this movement for a while was a great success. (I16)”

Movement leadership critique

This pathway is the strongest finding in the attainability category and appears in most interviews. The dataset shows that this leadership critique appears in three different forms across the interviews: a strong blame-oriented form (I3, I13, I15), a more cautious interpretation that sees decline as part of a natural process (I14), and a leadership-ideal form where participants describe how the movement should have been organised (I3, I8, I10, I16).

I3, I4, and I15 express the strongest version of this critique. I15 identifies the repeated revision of boycott lists, especially the sequence in which Espressolab was removed and later added back to the list, as the point where he completely lost trust in the movement. I4 describes the same issue as a failure of movement organisation, where sources expected to be reliable continued to share inconsistent lists. I3 explains the temporal dimension of the critique most clearly, distinguishing between a successful beginning and a failed continuation of the movement.

TR: “Türkiye’deki boykot yapılanmasına inancım bitti. Sonrasındaki en büyük inanç kaybedişim bazı grupları affetmeler, listeden çıkarmalar, listeye geri almalar. Birazcık bu sanki muhalefetin pazarlık hamlesine döndü. (I15)”

EN: “My faith in the way boycotts are organised in Turkey ended. The biggest loss of faith was the forgiving of certain groups, removing them from the list, putting them back on the list. It started to feel like the opposition’s bargaining move. (I15)”

TR: “Güvenilir olması beklenen kişi ve kurumların da gelişigüzel, boykot nedeni ve kanıt belirtilmemiş marka isimleriyle dolu tutarsız listeleri yayınlaması her şeyi çok zorlaştırdı. Bu durum bence zaten insanların boykota olan inancını da azalttı. (I4)”

EN: “The fact that not only anonymous sources but also people and institutions that were expected to be reliable kept publishing inconsistent lists full of brand names without specifying the reason or evidence for the boycott made everything very difficult. In my opinion, this also reduced people’s belief in the boycott itself. (I4)”

TR: “Muhalefet çok güzel bir şekilde gaz verdi. Çok güzel bir şekilde başlattı. Ama bunu sürdüremedi. Bu noktada kesinlikle muhalefeti suçluyorum. (I3)”

EN: “The opposition revved things up very nicely. They started it very nicely. But they could not sustain it. At this point I definitely blame the opposition. (I3)”

In I13, the criticism of leadership in the dataset is expressed in the clearest way possible. She points out that poor management in the organisation is to blame for the failure of the boycott, specifically mentioning what was missing, such as communication and continuous agenda setting.

TR: “Bu süreç üzerinden hani bunun neden bir güzel bir harekete dönüşmediği, bir birlik hali sağlamadığı falan da muhalefet ve yani muhalefet liderinin, muhalefet partisinin suçu, organizasyonun iyi yönetememesinin suçu. Çünkü insanların hazır olduğunu ve yani katılacaklarını, destekleyeceklerini, güzel bir ortam oluşsaydı, insanların arkalarında iyi bir destek olduğunu düşünseydi, bunu yapabileceklerini düşünseydi çok daha etkili şeyler olabileceğini düşünüyorum. (I13)”

EN: “As for why this process did not turn into a beautiful movement, why it did not create a sense of unity, that is the fault of the opposition, of the opposition leader, of the opposition party, the fault of mismanaging the organisation. Because people were

ready, they would have joined, supported. If a good environment had been created, if people had thought there was good support behind them, if they had thought they could do this, much more effective things could have happened. (I13)”

TR: “Bence düzenli çağrılar yapılması, bunun sürekli gündemde tutulması gerekiyordu. Özellikle muhalefet tarafından işte insanlara destek sağlanması, koruma sağlanması gerekiyordu. (I13)”

EN: “I think regular calls should have been made, this should have been kept on the agenda continuously. Especially from the opposition, support should have been provided to people, protection should have been provided. (I13)”

I11 makes a similar point in more general terms, framing the absence of leadership as a structural feature of social movements rather than a failure specific to this case.

TR: “Sosyal hareketler çok uzun sürmüyor çünkü liderleri yok. Yani evet demokrasi çok sesli ve güzel bir şey ama bir yandan da toplulukların biraz kanaat önderine ihtiyacı var. Bence bu boykotu sırtlayıp devam ettirecek bir önder yoktu. (I11)”

TR: “Social movements do not last very long because they have no leaders. Yes, democracy is a vocal and beautiful thing but communities need a kind of opinion leader. I do not think there was a leader to shoulder this boycott and continue it. (I11)”

I14 provides a more detailed insider diagnosis based on her institutional position. She describes the movement in two phases. In the beginning, she believes the movement was managed effectively because the rally space brought together a broad coalition of participants with different motivations, including political beliefs, concern for the future, personal worries, and broader concerns about restrictions on freedoms. Later, divisions appeared, participation became more limited to opposition-party supporters and municipal employees, and youth participation especially declined. She also identifies the frequent changes to the boycott list and the ongoing rumors and uncertainty as factors that weakened motivation. At the same time, she does not describe the movement as a failure, but rather as following the natural trajectory of a long-term mobilisation. This interpretation contrasts with the stronger blame-oriented critiques expressed by I3, I13, and I15.

TR: “İlk başlarda doğru yönetildiğini düşünüyorum... Daha sonrasında bu ayrışmaların yaşandığını değerlendiriyorum. O grubun, ki ağırlıklı olarak gençler de o grup, yönetilemediğini düşünüyorum. O motivasyonların kaybolduğunu, dolayısıyla bu sürece inancın yitirilerek, organizasyonun da dolayısıyla sekteye uğradığını yavaş yavaş da mitinglerde de görüyoruz. (I14)”

EN: “At the beginning I think it was managed correctly. After that I observe that these divisions emerged. That group, which is largely young people, I think was not managed. We see that those motivations were lost, and that with the loss of belief in this process, the organisation was also disrupted, slowly visible in the rallies as well. (I14)”

TR: “Süreç hakikaten çok uzadı, hiçbir eylem, hiçbir başkaldırı, zaten kitlesel bir şey bu kadar uzun süre, bir yıl geçti, sürdürülebilir değildi. Gerçekçi de değil, sürdürülmesini beklemek. Dolayısıyla ben bunu bir başarısızlık olarak da adlandırmıyorum, sürecin olağan sonucu olarak değerlendiriyorum. (I14)”

EN: “The process really dragged on. No action, no resistance, especially something mass-scale, was sustainable for this long, a year passed. It is not realistic to expect it to be sustained. So I do not call this a failure either; I evaluate it as the ordinary outcome of the process. (I14)”

I6 presents a useful counter-position to the blame-oriented view. While she agrees that the boycott did not achieve its goals, she does not blame the opposition leadership. Instead, she shifts responsibility away from leadership and towards public attention, arguing that the opposition acted as much as it could, but the public did not engage enough.

TR: “Ellerinden geleni yaptıklarını düşünüyorum. Evet. Çünkü sonuçta her şey muhalif taraf ne yaparsa yapsın her şey iktidarın bir tek sözüne baktığı için. Ellerinden geleni yaptılar sadece kimse onları takmadı ya da biz halkı takmadı diye düşünüyorum ben. (I6)”

EN: “I think they did what they could. Yes. Because in the end, no matter what the opposition does, everything depends on a single word from the ruling party. They did what they could, only no one paid attention to them, or we the people did not pay attention, I think. (I6)”

I16 approaches the leadership question from a different perspective. Instead of criticizing the opposition for failure, she describes an ideal model of organisation: while an initial opposition-party-led response was acceptable, she argues that the movement should ultimately have been grounded in the consumer-citizen rather than a political party. I8 frames the issue from another angle, focusing on how the lack of clear and continuous guidance is perceived by the public. She argues that, without sustained direction from opposition leaders and civil society organisations, including leaders in Anatolia, the public appears fragmented and without direction. I10 develops this idea in a more strategic way, calling for organised, systematic, and repeatable actions instead of large and scattered events, and warning that disorganisation creates a perception of chaos. I3 argues that CHP's problem was not unwillingness, but the lack of bottom-up organisation, especially compared to AKP's strong neighbourhood-level presence.

TR: "CHP'nin hareketin başlarındaki tutumunu desteklemiştim, fakat örgütlenmenin vatandaşın, tüketicinin kendi kontrolüne geçmesi daha yerinde bir hareketti. (I16)"

EN: "I had supported the CHP's early stance in the movement, but it would have been more appropriate for the organisation to pass into the control of the citizen, the consumer. (I16)"

TR: "Bu hareketin başında olan, aslında halka yönlendirmesi gereken anadoludaki liderleri gibi ya da sivil toplum kuruluşları liderleri gibi insanların bu süreçleri daha yüksek sesle ve daha uzun süre götürmesi gerekiyor. Hani onların yönlendirmesi gerekiyor aslında. Çünkü öbür türlü kayıp bir koyun sürüsüne benziyor Türk halka. Birinin toplaması ve yönlendirmesi gerekiyor. (I8)"

EN: "The people who were at the forefront of this movement, such as leaders in Anatolia or leaders of civil society organisations who are supposed to guide the public, should have carried out these processes more loudly and for a longer period. In other words, they should have provided guidance throughout the process. (I8)"

TR: "Büyük ve dağınık toplanmalar yerine daha organize, sistematik ve tekrar edilebilir eylemler daha etkili olabilir. Anarşik bi algı yaratmaması önemli. (I10)"

EN: "Instead of large and scattered gatherings, more organised, systematic, and repeatable actions could be more effective. It is important not to create a perception of chaos. (I10)"

TR: “AK Parti'nin en alttan teşkilatlanması ve örgütlenmesi gerçekten iyi olabilecek ve birbirleriyle daha bağlı olabilecek şeyler. Ama CHP kendi içinde bile çok fazla ayrışıyor. AK Parti ne olursa olsun kol kırılır içinde yen kalır mantığıyla hareket edebiliyor. Ama CHP bu örgütlenmeyi armudun sapı, üzümün çöpü diye kendi içinde bile ayrışabildiği için bunu yapamıyor. (I3)”

EN: “AKP's organising from the bottom up is something that can really be solid, with units more connected to each other. But CHP is very divided even within itself. AKP can act with the logic that even if the arm breaks, the sleeve covers it. But CHP cannot do this organising because they split among themselves over the smallest things. (I3)”

I12 presents a leadership critique that adds a generational comparison not seen in the other accounts. Drawing on his participation in the 2013 Gezi Park protests, he directly compares the two movements and argues that the 2025 movement failed where Gezi succeeded because it lacked a unifying frame above any single party or group.

TR: “Tek bir çatı altında toplanılması gerekirdi. Ayrıştırıcı durumlar oldu eylemde. Gezi parkında boyun eğme altındaydı herhangi bir parti ya da herhangi bir grup altında ilerlememişti. Bu yüzden başarılıydı o. Ancak burada öyle bir kesim bir birleştirici duruş olmadığı için çok fazla ayrıştırıcı olduğu için başarısız oldu. (I12)”

EN: “People should have gathered under one roof. There were divisive situations in the protest. Gezi Park was not under any one party or any one group. That is why it was successful. But here, because there was no such unifying stance, because it was very divisive, it was unsuccessful. (I12)”

Information chaos and credibility collapse

Many interviewees identified information overload as a key factor in the decline of attainability. While the issue of inconsistent boycott lists was also raised in the Movement leadership critique section in relation to organisational failure, here the same problem is examined at the individual-cognitive level: how participants tried to manage credibility loss in their own information practices. Boycott lists were frequently updated, with brands being added and removed from week to week, making it difficult for participants to know which

calls were reliable. The dataset shows four main ways participants responded to this information problem. The first is verification fatigue, where the participant eventually stops checking information altogether, as in I15. The second is source consolidation, where participants reduce uncertainty by relying on one trusted source, as in I8 and I11. The third is case-by-case verification, where each claim is checked separately, as in I10. The fourth is offline anchoring, where credibility comes from trusted face-to-face conversations and direct rally attendance, as in I14.

TR: “Bir hafta önce boykot ettiğin şey bir hafta sonra tamam sizi affettik gibi bir şey bence olamaz. Bir haftada hiçbir sorun çözülmez. (I15)”

EN: “Something you boycotted a week ago, and a week later they are saying alright, we forgive you, that should not happen. No issue gets solved in a week. (I15)”

TR: “Bu hafta bunu boykot ediyoruz, sonra haftaya öyle değilmiş böyleymiş deyip kararlar değiştirilmesi de benim boykota olan inancımı ve motivasyonumu etkileyen şeylerden de aslında. Hem bilgisizliğim, hem boykotu koyanların söylemlerinin dönüşmesi de açıkçası bana boykotu sorgulattıran şeylerdendi. (I14)”

EN: “This week we are boycotting this, then next week saying it was not like that but like this, the changing of decisions was actually one of the things that affected my belief in and motivation for the boycott. Both my own lack of information and the shifting discourse of those issuing the boycott calls were among the things that made me question the boycott. (I14)”

TR: “Tamamen Muhalefet Partisi’nin resmi kanallarından liste yayınlamaya başladıktan sonra emin bir şekilde takip etmeye başladım. Çünkü sosyal medyada çok bilgi kirliliği dönüyor. O yüzden benim için ana bilgi kaynağı, doğru bilgi kaynağı Ana Muhalefet Partisi’nin kanallarıydı. Onların verdiği listelerdi. (I8)”

EN: “I started following it confidently only after the Opposition Party began publishing lists through their official channels. Because there is a lot of information pollution on social media. So for me, the main and accurate information source was the Main Opposition Party’s channels. The lists they provided. (I8)”

TR: “Valla çok bilgi kirliliği de vardı, bunları düzgünce filtreleyemezseniz çok dezenformasyona maruz kalıyordunuz. O yüzden size göre doğru bir kaynak belirlemek bence daha mantıklıydı. (I11)”

EN: “Honestly there was a lot of information pollution. If you could not filter it properly, you were exposed to a lot of disinformation. So I think it was more sensible to identify a source that you considered reliable. (I11)”

TR: “Doğrudan haberlere inanmak yerine kaynağını araştırmaya çalıştım. Bir marka hakkında iddia varsa, gerçekten o markadan böyle bir açıklama ya da eylem olup olmadığını doğrulamaya önem verdim. (I10)”

EN: “Instead of believing news directly, I tried to look into the source. If there was a claim about a brand, I made an effort to verify whether such a statement or action had really come from that brand. (I10)”

TR: “Bunu benim yapmamam gerekiyordu aslında. Bu kadar kafamı karışması, bilgi kirliliğinin bu şey yani bu, bunda bile bilgi kirliliğinin olması çok abartılı bir durum bence. Yani, çok basit bir şey bu çünkü. Ve iyi yönetilmedi, durumu iyi yönetmemekle, organizasyonel sürecin kötü olmasıyla ilgili bir şey. (I13)”

EN: “I should not have been the one doing this, actually. The fact that I was getting this confused, that there was even information pollution about something like this, is too exaggerated a situation in my opinion. Because this is a very simple thing. And it was not managed well, it has to do with not managing the situation well, with the organisational process being bad. (I13)”

The collective-action dilemma

A fourth pathway operates through a classic collective-action problem: when people do not see others comply, their own efforts seem pointless; but since this logic is common to everyone, overall participation declines and the boycott weakens. This is how I13 frames the problem structurally, while I3 puts it into more personal terms by focusing on her direct social network and feeling like she could not have any impact, even on them. I8 frames the same issue in more everyday, self-reflective language, complementing the more analytical accounts.

TR: “Kimse bunu uygulamayınca benim uygulamam hiçbir etki yaratmamış oluyor. Ama herkes böyle düşündüğü için boykot uygulanmamaya başlıyor. (I13)”

EN: “When no one applies this, my applying it has no effect. But because everyone thinks this way, the boycott starts not being applied. (I13)”

TR: “Ben bireysel olarak buna çok dikkat etmeye çalıştım. Ama edemedim. Çünkü ben tek başıma yapmam. Yani ben daha çevremi bile etkileyemiyorum. (I3)”

EN: “Individually I tried to pay a lot of attention to this. But I could not. Because I cannot do it alone. I cannot even influence my own circle. (I3)”

TR: “Bir noktadan sonra hani kimse önemsemiyor, bir tek ben mi yapıyorum diyerek o boykot hareketlerine uzaklaşmama sebebi oldu. (I8)”

EN: “After a point, thinking “no one cares anymore, am I the only one doing this,” that became the reason I drifted away from the boycott actions. (I8)”

Agenda displacement and forgetting

There is a fifth pathway through which this occurs, through the displacement of the boycott from the agenda by other events. According to I7, the quick pace of change in the Turkish political agenda is a structural problem for sustaining focus. However, I6 explains this phenomenon through her own lens, suggesting that the arrest of students at Saraçhane and the firing of public servants were conscious distractions to take focus away from the arrest itself.

TR: “Çünkü hani ülkemizde çok gündem çok hızlı değişiyor. Bir sürü olay oluyor. Biraz alıştık da biz. (I7)”

EN: “Because the agenda changes very quickly in our country. So many things happen. We have gotten a bit used to it, too. (I7)”

TR: “Saraçhane’de gözaltına alınan öğrencileri gördükçe gündem değiştirmeye çalışıyorlar diye düşündüm. Ekrem İmamoğlu’nun tutuklanması ki ana sebep o, bu gibi küçük şeylerle göz ardı etmemizi sağlamaya çalışıyorlar diye düşündüm. (I6)”

EN: “As I saw the students detained at Saraçhane, I thought they were trying to change the agenda. The main reason was Ekrem İmamoğlu’s arrest, I thought they were trying to make us overlook it with these kinds of small things. (I6)”

I14 extends this argument by referring to the recent Ataşehir municipality operation, which she sees as evidence that the state-related process never truly ended and that the same

risk environment is still ongoing. In her view, agenda displacement works in both directions: the boycott itself fades from public attention, but the broader repressive context that triggered it is continuously renewed through new operations against different targets. I10 reports the same agenda-shift mechanism from a diaspora perspective, describing it within a clear three-to-four-week cycle. I11 provides the most concise summary of the long-term effect of agenda displacement: people forget, and the task becomes resisting that forgetting.

TR: “Yakın zamanda Ataşehir belediyesinde bir operasyon oldu. Yani bu sürecin devam ettiğinin en büyük göstergesi. Çünkü Ataşehir belediyesi ve başkanı da güçlü bir belediye ve başkan. Dolayısıyla yine hala hepimiz için aynı riskin devam ettiğini hatırlatan bir süreç oldu Ataşehir’in operasyonu. (I14)”

EN: “Recently there was an operation against the Ataşehir municipality. That is the biggest indicator that this process is continuing. Because the Ataşehir municipality and its mayor are also a strong municipality and mayor. So the operation was a process that reminded us once again that the same risk continues for all of us. (I14)”

TR: “3–4 hafta sonra gündem değişip hayat bir şekilde normale dönmeye başladı, ancak asıl meselede hiçbir ilerleme olmaması benim için normal paylaşımlara dönmeyi zorlaştırdı. (I10)”

EN: “After 3 to 4 weeks, the agenda shifted and life began to return to normal in some way, but the lack of any real progress on the actual issue made it difficult for me to go back to regular posts. (I10)”

TR: “Ben unutmuyorum ama maalesef insanlar unutuyor, unutturmamak lazım. (I11)”

EN: “I do not forget, but unfortunately people do forget. We must not let it be forgotten. (I11)”

Counter-mobilisation by ruling-side supporters

According to I6, ruling-side supporters seemed to increase their consumption after the boycott call, especially by displaying purchases from boycotted brands on social media.

TR: “Biz ne kadar almıyorsak onların o kadar bir şeyler aldığını gördüm. Bizim açığımızı kapattılar yani zaten. Hatta sosyal medyada şey dönmüştü. Espresso Lab’e

gidip işte Ülker çikolataları alıp işte ETS Tur'dan tatil rezervasyonları yaptı. Adeta iki taraf arasında gösterişçi tüketim yarışına dönüştü. (I6)''

EN: "I saw that they were buying as much as we were not buying. They closed the gap we left. There was even something circulating on social media: going to Espresso Lab, buying Ülker chocolates, making holiday reservations through ETS Tour. It almost turned into a contest of conspicuous consumption between the two sides. (I6)''

I14 generalizes this insight into a broader observation about Turkish political polarisation: every boycott produces its anti-boycott. In her account, the two groups cancel out each other's effects through their different consumer behaviour, making the overall market effect closer to balance than to clear displacement. She also notes that targeted firms may gain sympathy from the counter-mobilising group, which complicates the perceived impact of the boycott.

TR: "Her tez antitezini doğurur gibi her boykotta boykot karşılarını da doğuruyor. O yüzden bu birbirini dengeliyor. Bizim gibi sıcak ülke iklimlerinde yaşayan yerlerdeki insanların böyle tutumları var. Bence böldüğü için dengeli bir şey oldu. (I14)''

EN: "Just as every thesis produces its antithesis, every boycott produces its counter-boycott. So they balance each other out. People living in countries like ours have these attitudes. I think because it divides, it became something balanced . (I14)''

I16 introduces a meta-level observation about attainability that is less visible in the in-country interviews. From abroad, her understanding of the movement was shaped mainly by her social media feed, which consisted of people similar to herself. She later re-evaluates this view after watching independent journalist Nevşin Mengü's YouTube reporting based on local shopkeepers, which showed that shopkeepers in opposition-leaning areas were experiencing real income losses during boycott days.

TR: "Sadece fotoğraflar, videolar, tweetler üzerinden bir hareketi takip ettiğinizde, çevreniz sadece sizin gibi düşünen insanlarla çevrili olduğundan çarpık ve yanlı bir gerçekliği yaşıyorsunuz. Fakat bu esnafın da bizim gibi insanların yaşadığı semtlerde iş yaptığını, müşterilerinin bu insanlar olduğunu kabul etmek gerek. Bu sebeple aslında gördüğümüz, duyduğumuz haberler bütün gerçeği yansıtmıyordu. (I16)''

EN: “When you follow a movement only through photographs, videos, tweets, since your environment is surrounded only by people who think like you, you live a distorted and biased reality. But it is necessary to accept that these shopkeepers also do business in the neighbourhoods where people like us live, and that their customers are these people. For this reason, what we saw and heard did not reflect the whole reality. (I16)”

Acknowledged minor and indirect outcomes

The dataset identifies five types of indirect outcomes. The first type is brand-level outcomes. I10, I11, and I15 show that some firms included on the list released a statement, changed their message, or showed signs of worry. Although these results are not considered political change, they are seen as proof of the corrective power of the boycott on the company’s behaviour.

TR: “Belki minor başarılarla ulaşmıştır. Bazı firmalar açıklama yapmıştır. Ama günün sonunda biz paramızı kontrol edip özgürlüğümüzü pazar konusu yapamadık. (I15)”

EN: “Maybe it achieved minor successes. Some companies made statements. But at the end of the day, we could not control our money or turn our freedom into a market issue. (I15)”

TR: “Boykotun kısa vadede ses getirdiğini ve görünürlük sağladığını düşünüyorum. Bazı markaların geri adım atması ya da iletişimlerini değiştirmesi de bunun bir göstergesi. (I10)”

EN: “I think the boycott made an impact and created visibility in the short term. The fact that some brands stepped back or changed their communication is also an indication of this. (I10)”

TR: “Finansal etkiler açıklanmaya başlandığında ve firmalar panik olup açıklamalar yapmaya başladığında bir işe yaradığını gördük bence. (I11)”

EN: “When the financial impacts started to be announced and companies began to panic and make statements, I think we saw that it was working. (I11)”

The second type is citizen-awareness outcomes. I4 and I16 emphasise that the boycott encouraged citizens to take a more active political stance and to learn that consumption itself carries a political weight.

TR: “Bence bu boykotun başardığı şey markalardan alınan sonuçtan ziyade, insanları biraz daha aktif bir duruşa teşvik etmesiydi. (I4)”

EN: “What this boycott achieved was not so much the outcome obtained from the brands themselves, but rather encouraging people to take a slightly more active stance. (I4)”

TR: “Yine de, boykot bir şeyi değiştirdiyse, bence bu, vatandaşın tüketimden gelen bir hakkı olduğunu öğrenmesiydi. (I16)”

EN: “Still, if the boycott changed anything, in my opinion, it was the citizen learning that there is a right that comes from consumption. (I16)”

The third type is the moral and symbolic function of the boycott. I8 separates the moral function of the boycott, such as collective unity and clearer political alignment, from its material outcomes, and treats this moral aspect as an outcome in itself.

TR: “Maddi bir değişiklikten çok, ya maddi bir işlevinden çok manevi bir işlevi oldu bence. Hani biraz daha o birlik hissi ve gerçekten hani kimin ne olduğunu görme hissi insanlara iyi geldi diye düşünüyorum manevi olarak. (I8)”

EN: “More than a material change, more than a material function, it had a moral function in my view. That sense of unity and really seeing who is who felt good for people, I think, on a moral level. (I8)”

The fourth type is generational protest experience. I12 frames the boycott's main achievement as the experience it gave Generation Z, who had heard about earlier movements like Gezi but had not previously participated in a protest themselves. For him, the moment of being together at the rally was its own outcome.

TR: “Tek düşündüğüm tek başarılı olan kısım umut veren kısım Z jenerasyonun bir araya gelinebileceğini görmeleri oldu, daha önceki eylemleri biliyorlardı ama

pratikte asla yaşamamışlardı. Eylem tecrübeleri yoktu ve eylem nasıl oluyor ve bir araya nasıl geliniyor. Beraber olma duygunu orada görüp yaşamamış oldular. (I12)”

EN: “The only thing I think was successful, the only hope-giving part, was the Z generation seeing that they can come together. They knew about earlier protests but had never experienced them in practice. They had no protest experience and how a protest happens and how people gather. They saw and experienced the feeling of being together there. (I12)”

The fifth type is post-protest legal coordination. I12 also reports that after the peak of the protest, lawyers from the older Y generation became actively involved through social media to help those still in custody. He sees this as a delayed outcome of the boycott's mobilising effect, in which social media's coordinating function continued beyond the protest period itself.

TR: “Çok fazla avukat Y jenerasyonundan diyeyim çok fazla avukat yardımcı oldular... O kısımda sosyal medyanın ben çok etkisi olduğunu düşünüyorum. İlk baştaki yorumum şu an değişmiş oluyor aslında bir noktada. Eylem içerisindeki değil de eylemden sonra artık bittikten sonra insanların artık toplanmaya başladıktan sonraki süreçte bakın hala burada insanlar içeride bu eylem sonrasındaki insanları içeride diyerek Twitter'daki, Instagram'daki aktivistler ve işte hukuk insanları bunları görüp yardımcı olmak için bu circle'a dahil oldular. (I12)”

EN: “Many lawyers, the Y generation I would say, many lawyers helped... I think social media had a great effect in that part. My initial comment is actually shifting at this point. Not during the protest itself but in the period after it ended, when people had begun to gather, by saying look, these people are still inside, the people from after this protest are still inside, the activists on Twitter and Instagram and the legal people saw these and joined this circle to help. (I12)”

Public-sector-specific risk and emotional aftermath

I14 introduces a sub-dimension that is unique in the dataset and sits between attainability and emotional aftermath. Her account of the period after the peak of mobilisation is less about whether the movement was effective and more about a continuing sense of

readiness for possible state action. She interprets this period as a kind of grief process, describing emotions such as anger, anxiety, and denial across three groups: those directly affected (Mayor İmamoğlu and his close circle), those indirectly affected (municipal employees), and those observing from a distance through media coverage.

TR: “Bu süreci ben aslında Ekrem başkanın ve alınmasını ve devamındaki süreci bir yas sürecine benzetiyorum. Tüm yasin evrelerinin yaşandığı bir süreç oldu. Öfke, kaygı işte inkar her şeyin olduğu ve aslında insanların bir yakını kaybettiğindeki duyguları yaşadığını tanık oldum. (I14)”

EN: “I actually liken this process, the arrest of Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and what followed, to a grieving process. It was a process in which all the stages of grief were experienced. Anger, anxiety, denial, everything, and I witnessed people experiencing the kinds of emotions one feels when losing someone close. (I14)”

I14 describes being inside the Saraçhane building when police pushed back young protesters, in a room where pepper gas entered, and the lights were turned off. She was there with the mayor’s nephews and the legal team. Looking back, she does not describe only negative emotions; she also recalls the sense of togetherness inside the building as meaningful in retrospect.

TR: “Boykot süreci değil Saraçhane'deki polislerin gençleri püskürttüğü sırada biz içeride olanlardık. İçeriye biber gazlarının geldiği ettiği ışıkları söndürdüğümüz bir odadaydık. Hatta ben Ekrem İmamoğlu'nun yeğenleriyle aynı odadaydım, avukatlar falan filan. Bu birliktelik bu arada şimdi dönüp baktığımda sadece olumsuz duygular hissetmedim yani o birliktelik kıymetliydi benim için. İyi ki o gün ordaymışım diye kendi kendime düşündüm. (I14)”

EN: “We were the ones inside Saraçhane during the moment the police pushed back the young people. We were in a room where pepper gas came inside, where we turned off the lights. In fact, I was in the same room as Mayor İmamoğlu's nephews, the lawyers and so on. By the way, looking back now, I did not only feel negative emotions about this togetherness. That togetherness was valuable to me. I thought to myself, ‘I am glad I was there that day.’ (I14)”

I14 also distinguishes her current emotional position from victimhood. She describes anger and distrust towards the country, but also emphasises that she has not lost hope.

TR: “Aksine hani yine akışa bırakmış ama öfke var mağduriyet değil ama bir öfke var. Korku değil duygumu öyle tanımlayabilirim. Öfke var güvensizlik var ülke ile ilgili ama yine de başında da söylediğim gibi ben umudumu yitirmiyorum. (I14)”

EN: “On the contrary, I have let things flow, but there is anger, not victimhood, not fear; I can describe my feeling that way. There is anger, there is distrust regarding the country, but still, as I said at the beginning, I do not lose my hope. (I14)”

Diaspora-specific prolonged aftermath

I10 describes a sub-dimension of the dissolution phase, which seems to be less noticeable when conducting interviews in the country. After the change of focus, she could not go back to her normal use of social media for around five to six months. In that period, she did not post any new material and felt that engaging in everyday content would be insincere.

TR: “Ben ise bu süreçten sonra yaklaşık 6 ay sosyal medyayı “normal” şekilde kullanamadım; hızlı normalleşmeyi de samimi bulmadım. (I10)”

EN: “As for me, for about 6 months after this period I was unable to use social media in a normal way. I also did not find the rapid return to normal life sincere. (I10)”

Summary on attainability appraisal

This section identified nine pathways through which attainability declined during the dissolution phase. Three findings are especially relevant for the Discussion chapter. First, the leadership critique shows how digitally coordinated movements can become vulnerable without clear organisation and decision-making structures. Second, the counter-mobilisation findings show that participants evaluated not only their own side’s participation, but also the visible reactions of the opposing side. Third, the minor and indirect outcomes, together with the public-sector and diaspora-specific aftermaths, complicate the decline narrative. They show that dissolution does not necessarily mean that the movement disappeared completely or that participants stopped caring. Together, these findings suggest that dissolution was not a

single moment of withdrawal, but a gradual process shaped by cognitive, organisational, informational, and emotional dimensions. Table 2 summarises the main empirical themes identified under each SMPPM construct, which are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Table 2. Overview of Empirical Themes by SMPPM Construct

Phase	Main empirical themes identified in the data
Goal activation	Justice frame; economic-lifestyle frame; consciousness frame; anger frame; powerlessness and injustice frame; generational protest-cycle frame; minimum duty frame; institutional duty frame; collective hope and solidarity frame; diaspora frames; initial efficacy belief; emotional triggers; safety and untraceable mobilisation; activation through digital, television, and rally routes
Goal competition	Conditional adaptation; convenience and social-context override; threshold reasoning and priority weighting; moral licensing; habit and sensory persistence; cognitive cost and decision fatigue; peer disengagement; structural absence of alternatives; intra-movement polarisation; institutional barriers; distance and absence in diaspora participation; proactive compliance and social withdrawal
Consistency appraisal	Recognition of unequal effort; illusion critique; doubting sincerity; follower count and audience cost; online expression as a risk-bearing political act; inclusive view that any participation counts
Dissolution	Lack of visible political outcome; movement leadership critique; information chaos and credibility collapse; collective-action dilemma; agenda displacement and forgetting; counter-mobilisation by ruling-side supporters; acknowledged minor and indirect outcomes; public-sector-specific risk and emotional aftermath; diaspora-specific prolonged aftermath

Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to explain why the high initial motivation and synchronized participation in the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement declined over time, leading to the abandonment of both high-effort offline and low-effort online actions within a few weeks of the movement's peak. On the basis of this aim, sixteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who took part in the movement in different ways, including residents in Istanbul, residents in Antalya, three diaspora participants based in Vienna, Stockholm, and Basel, and a deputy mayor in a local municipality. The interviews were analysed deductively against the four constructs of the Social Media Political Participation Model (Knoll et al., 2018) and inductively for context-specific themes that emerged from the dataset.

The findings suggest that the trajectory of the movement cannot be explained by one single mechanism. Instead, it was shaped by the interaction of three different processes within the SMPPM model. In the synergy phase, participation was mainly driven by goal activation. The arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu created a strong sense of discrepancy between participants' desired political reality and the current situation. Participants interpreted this discrepancy in different ways, which activated motivation to join the movement. This motivation was framed in ten distinct ways, supported by four patterns of initial efficacy beliefs, an emotional cluster of anger, hope, and surprise, and a multi-channel media environment where social media, television, and rallies worked together as different channels of mobilisation. The decoupling phase was driven by goal competition, in which eleven distinct mechanisms operated to weaken offline boycott behaviour while online participation continued for longer because of an inverted cost structure under conditions of state repression. The dissolution phase was driven by attainability decline operating through nine distinct pathways, including the leadership critique, information chaos, the collective-action dilemma, agenda displacement, counter-mobilisation by ruling-side consumers, and a counter-information visibility finding that introduces a self-reflexive layer into the construct.

Read together, these findings support the general logic of the SMPPM, but they also show that the model needs to be understood in relation to the specific political context. In this case, the movement took place under competitive authoritarian conditions, within institutional settings, and with the participation of diaspora actors. The findings also show that dissolution should not be understood only as failure. Although the movement lost momentum, some participants still identified indirect outcomes. These included changes in how brands communicated, increased citizen awareness, protest experience among younger generations, and legal coordination after the protests. Therefore, the end of participation does not necessarily mean that the movement had no effect. The following discussion addresses each sub-question in turn, then returns to the main research question. It also explains how the findings contribute to the SMPPM and to wider debates on digital activism, political consumerism, and digitally coordinated collective action.

What emotions and political expectations motivated participants to engage in both online and offline boycott actions during the initial phase of the movement?

The interviews show that participation in the synergy phase was shaped by cognitive, emotional, and contextual factors operating together. This is consistent with the SMPPM framework, which understands goal activation as a process shaped by relevance appraisal, discrepancy appraisal, and initial efficacy belief (Knoll et al., 2018). All sixteen participants described the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu as the main trigger for mobilisation. However, they did not interpret this event in one uniform way. Rather, they connected the political discrepancy it created to different concerns, including justice, democratic legitimacy, economic responsibility, collective hope, civic duty, institutional obligation, and diaspora guilt. This supports the SMPPM's view that political relevance is not automatic, but is shaped by how individuals connect an event to their political identity, expectations, and previous experiences.

In the synergy phase, the same motivational factors operated on both online and offline forms of participation. Participants did not describe separate reasons for posting on social media and for changing their consumption behaviour. Instead, the same emotional responses and political expectations pushed them towards both routes at once. The later

decoupling between online and offline participation was therefore not already present at the moment of activation, but emerged later through goal competition and consistency appraisal.

A clear example is the justice frame, most strongly expressed by I9. This frame connects the arrest to the competitive authoritarian context discussed in the literature review, where legal procedures may be used selectively against opposition actors (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016). The arrest was therefore not understood only as a legal case, but as part of a wider political pattern. The economic-lifestyle frame, expressed by I2 and I3, presents boycott participation as an extension of everyday shopping practices. In this frame, shopping is not only an economic activity but also a way of showing political position. This connects with Stolle and Micheletti's (2013) understanding of political consumerism as everyday politics, and with Ateş's (2025) concept of politically motivated consumer boycotts, where people reject a brand not because of the product itself, but because of the political meaning attached to it.

The interviews also show that political expectations were not limited to direct political change. For I1, the boycott was meaningful because it made visible a form of class and economic consciousness that he had previously thought was weak in Turkey. For I12, the movement activated memories of Gezi and created a sense that large-scale collective action had returned after a long period of political stagnation. This generational protest-cycle frame reflects the continuing importance of Gezi as a reference point for digital resistance and collective mobilisation in Turkey (Vatikiotis & Yörük, 2016; Tufekci, 2017). For I14, activation was shaped by institutional duty as well as personal political identity. As a public-sector worker in an opposition-led municipality, her participation was closely tied to professional responsibility and institutional belonging. Among diaspora participants, activation was shaped differently again: physical distance produced guilt, sadness, and a need to contribute through visibility work, local solidarity, or travel to Turkey. These cases show that goal activation was not only individual and emotional, but also shaped by social position, institutional role, and physical distance from the protest site.

Initial efficacy belief also appeared in different forms. Most participants followed the SMPPM expectation that people are more likely to participate when they believe an action can make a difference. However, some participants joined despite doubts about whether the

boycott would be effective. I1, I4, I5, and I6 show this pattern most clearly. Their motivation was not based only on expected success, but also on conscience, minimum civic duty, long-standing political identity, and what I6 described as a fighting instinct. This does not contradict the SMPPM, but it shows that efficacy belief is not always purely instrumental. Since the SMPPM is grounded in Goal Systems Theory, this can be understood through the distinction between external outcomes and the internal value of acting in line with one's goals and values (Kruglanski et al., 2002). For these participants, taking part in the boycott was not only a calculation about whether it would work; it was also a way of acting consistently with their ethical and political commitments.

Emotion was another central part of activation. The interviews show three especially visible emotional responses: anger towards the government, excitement and hope about the possibility of collective effect, and surprise at the sudden emergence of broad political awareness. I3 illustrates this particularly clearly. Her anger was not only directed at İmamoğlu's arrest, but also at the divisive political language of the government and the fact that actors associated with this language were still earning money from opposition-aligned citizens. In this sense, the emotional trigger was not a simple reaction to one event. It was connected to a wider interpretation of the political environment. Two additional emotional patterns also appeared in more specific parts of the sample. I14 expressed a sense of in-group dignity connected to her institutional position, while diaspora participants described guilt and sorrow as part of their activation. Their distance from Turkey was therefore not only a structural condition, but also an emotional one.

Finally, two contextual conditions shaped activation. The first was the perceived safety of the boycott compared with street protest. I15 described the boycott as a form of participation that was less directly traceable to the individual. This adds a risk-management dimension to the activation process: under authoritarian pressure, participants do not only ask whether an action is meaningful or effective, but also how visible, risky, or personally exposing it might be. This connects with Howard and Hussain's (2013) and Tufekci's (2017) arguments that political participation under authoritarian conditions is shaped by surveillance, repression, and strategic choices about safer forms of action. At the same time, the contrast between I15 and I14 shows that perceived safety was not uniform. For some participants, the

boycott felt safer than street protest; for others, especially those connected to public institutions, participation remained embedded in a high-risk political environment.

The second contextual condition was the multi-channel media environment around the movement. Although social media was central, it was not the only source of activation. Some participants first encountered the boycott through Özgür Özel's live television announcement, while I14 connected her activation to being physically present at Saraçhane. These accounts suggest that mobilisation moved across digital, broadcast, interpersonal, and physical rally channels at the same time. For this reason, the case cannot be explained only through digital media or personalised content sharing, even though these remain important in the connective action framework (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Şengül's (2025) media ethnography of the 2025 protests supports this point by showing how protesters combined social media, messaging apps, semi-private digital groups, and physical protest spaces under censorship. The movement is therefore better understood as a multi-channel process of activation rather than as a purely digital mobilisation.

Overall, the initial phase of the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement was not driven by a single emotion or expectation. Participants were activated through a combination of injustice, anger, hope, civic duty, economic consciousness, institutional responsibility, and diaspora attachment. These motivations initially brought online expression and offline boycott behaviour together. The synergy phase therefore emerged because participants experienced the boycott as emotionally urgent, politically meaningful, and collectively visible. Its later decline cannot be explained by weak initial motivation, but by the competing pressures and doubts that appeared after activation.

What everyday constraints and competing priorities led participants to abandon the offline economic boycott despite continuing their online participation?

The decoupling phase was mainly shaped by goal competition. The problem was not that participants suddenly stopped caring about the boycott. For many of them, the political aim still made sense, but it became difficult to follow consistently in daily life. This finding fits the SMPPM's dominant goal appraisal logic, which argues that an activated political goal must compete with other everyday goals in specific behavioural situations (Knoll et al.,

2018). In the case of the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement, the offline boycott required repeated practical adjustments: avoiding familiar brands, checking boycott lists, finding alternatives, changing routines, and sometimes negotiating social plans. Online participation, by contrast, remained easier to maintain because it required less disruption to everyday life. This explains why decoupling occurred and qualifies the debate between mobilisation and slacktivism. While Vaccari et al. (2015) show that lower-threshold political expression on social media can be associated with higher-threshold participation rather than replacing it, the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement shows that this relationship may weaken over time when offline participation becomes harder to sustain than low-effort online expression. Online participation lasted longer than offline boycott behaviour, not because it was meaningless or costless, but because it was shaped by a different cost structure under conditions of state repression and peer expectation. In this sense, the Turkish case complicates rather than confirms the slacktivism critique (Morozov, 2011; Christensen, 2011; Gladwell, 2010). This also aligns with the broader pattern discussed in the literature review. Spending in markets and shopping centres returned to pre-boycott levels within about a week, while Google Trends interest in “boykot” declined more slowly, from 100 on 2 April to 14 by 27 April (CBRT, 2025; Google, 2025; Uzunırmak et al., 2025).

This pattern also fits Goal Systems Theory, which the SMPPM builds on. Kruglanski et al. (2002) argue that different goals compete with one another, and that the goal that becomes most important in a specific situation is more likely to guide behaviour. The interviews show this in everyday terms. Participants mentioned obstacles such as work, weather, fatigue, time pressure, and the convenience of nearby places. In the cases of I1, I7, and I14, this did not mean that the boycott goal disappeared. Rather, it was adjusted around daily routines. Participants often tried to comply on specific boycott days instead of maintaining the boycott continuously. I3 and I9 show a similar pattern, where practical or social pressures weakened boycott behaviour at the moment of decision. In these cases, the boycott still had political meaning, but it became flexible in daily life.

Threshold reasoning also shaped participation. I15 shows that participants weighed the boycott against other priorities depending on how important the issue felt at that moment. When the issue felt urgent, the political goal could override daily routines; when it felt less

central, everyday needs became stronger. I9's comparison between buying a chocolate bar and buying a car captures this logic clearly. Small purchases were not experienced as the same kind of political failure as larger purchases, which made occasional exceptions easier to justify. This connects to Stolle and Micheletti's (2013) view of political consumerism as everyday politics: because political action is embedded in ordinary consumption, it remains vulnerable to convenience, habit, and compromise. It also relates to moral licensing, since earlier or partial participation can allow people to continue seeing themselves as politically committed even when they make small exceptions.

The interviews also show that consumption was not only a rational choice. I5's phrase "damağımıza işlemiş lezzet" points to the role of taste, memory, and habit, while I8 shows how brand loyalty could pull participants back into familiar routines. This supports Stolle and Micheletti's (2013) point that political consumerism is difficult to sustain because it is embedded in everyday life. The cognitive cost of participation added to this difficulty: constantly checking brands, verifying claims, and following changing lists became tiring, especially when participants felt that others were no longer complying.

Social dynamics also intensified decoupling. Participants began to feel that their own effort mattered less if others were not complying, which reflects Olson's (1965) collective-action problem. Yet the interviews also show a more ethical side to this dilemma. For I2, even a small purchase was politically meaningful because many small exceptions could weaken the boycott as a whole. Compliance was therefore not only about whether the boycott would work, but also about taking responsibility within a shared political act.

The social environment also shaped motivation within the movement. I6 shows that pressure did not only come from outside the boycott, but also from participants comparing how strictly others complied. This "stricter than you" dynamic made participation feel judgmental and tiring. At the same time, peer influence later worked in the opposite direction. Once people sensed that the boycott was weakening, others' disengagement made their own withdrawal easier to justify. I3's Don Quixote metaphor captures the feeling of continuing alone, while I8 describes the same process through everyday self-questioning. This fits Margetts et al.'s (2015) argument that digital collective action is shaped by visible social information about what others are doing.

Structural constraints also mattered. One of the clearest problems was the lack of suitable alternatives. I3's example of Sleepy wet wipes and I6's example of an essential hospital service show that non-compliance was often reluctant, not indifferent. Participants did not always stop because they disagreed with the boycott, but because alternatives were inadequate, unavailable, or too costly. This fits the political consumerism literature, which shows that boycotts depend on resources, convenience, and access to substitutes (Kam & Deichert, 2019). I16 adds a class dimension here, noting that the boycott was easier for people who could afford to switch from cheaper chains such as BİM or A101 to more expensive alternatives. In this sense, the ability to boycott also depended on economic flexibility.

The lack of alternatives also shows the limits of consumer-based political action under certain market conditions. Egorov and Harstad (2017) argue that boycott effectiveness depends partly on market structure and available substitutes. In the Turkish case, this was visible in everyday life: when alternatives were weak, expensive, or unavailable, the boycott became harder to maintain. Therefore, offline boycott behaviour was not only a matter of motivation or moral commitment; it was also shaped by the material structure of the market in which participants had to act.

I14 adds an institutional dimension to this problem. In her case, boycott compliance was limited by procurement contracts, legal service obligations, and vehicle tenders linked to large corporate groups. These were not barriers that could be solved through stronger personal motivation. They were built into institutional arrangements that continued beyond the movement itself. The institution still applied the boycott where possible, such as freezing relations with media outlets on the boycott list. This extends the individual focus of the SMPPM by showing that goal competition can also operate at the organisational level. For public-sector actors, the competing goal was not convenience or habit, but the need to maintain essential services under existing contracts.

The diaspora cases show another limit of the SMPPM's goal appraisal logic. For I10, I11, and I16, the problem was not simply that convenience or social pressure overrode the boycott. In many cases, everyday boycott behaviour was not possible because they were not living in Turkey. This did not mean they were disconnected from the movement. I16 focused

on online visibility, I10 joined marches and petition campaigns in Stockholm, and I11 travelled to Sarayane and followed the boycott while in Turkey. These cases show that goal competition depends on having a setting where political and everyday goals actually meet. When that setting is missing, participation is redirected rather than simply abandoned.

Finally, I12 complicates the overall pattern because his political commitment reshaped everyday life instead of being weakened by it. He did not decide at each moment of consumption; he planned ahead by buying cigarettes and alcohol before boycott days and withdrawing from social life for about a month. This was a preventive form of compliance, where possible conflicts were removed before they could disrupt participation. It also complicates the moral licensing logic discussed above. While moral licensing suggests that earlier ethical action can make later inconsistency easier to justify, I12 shows the opposite: strong commitment can reorganise daily routines in advance to avoid non-compliance.

Overall, abandoning the offline economic boycott did not necessarily mean political indifference. Many participants still supported the movement, but the boycott became harder to maintain because it had to be negotiated in everyday life. This supports the SMPPM's view of participation as a goal-driven process that is repeatedly reassessed against competing priorities (Knoll et al., 2018). Work, convenience, habits, social pressure, lack of alternatives, class differences, institutional contracts, diaspora distance, and cognitive fatigue all made offline participation more costly over time. Online participation lasted longer because it was easier to fit into daily routines and required fewer material adjustments. The decoupling phase, therefore, shows that decline was shaped less by a sudden loss of motivation than by the difficulty of sustaining high-effort political consumerism over time.

How did state repression, including detentions, platform restrictions, and internet throttling, affect participants' willingness to continue their participation?

State repression during the boycott period worked through three main channels: detentions over social media posts (Al Jazeera, 2025; Utucu, 2025), platform restrictions imposed by the Information and Communications Technologies Authority in the first days of the protests (Gulati et al., 2025), and broadcasting sanctions against television channels that covered the rallies (Euronews, 2025). The interviews suggest that these pressures did not only

reduce participation directly. They also changed how participants evaluated the costs of different forms of action. In this sense, repression reshaped the cost structure of participation in a way that the standard SMPPM does not fully anticipate. Offline protest, online posting, and boycott behaviour were not experienced as equally risky. Instead, participants adjusted their actions according to how visible, traceable, or personally risky each form of participation seemed.

A central finding here is the consistency appraisal construct, because the data complicate the usual logic of the slacktivism critique (Morozov, 2011; Christensen, 2011; Gladwell, 2010). In that critique, online participation is usually treated as a low-cost alternative to offline action. In the Turkish context, however, online expression was not necessarily low-cost. I4 describes the fear that even one social media post could lead to a dawn detention. I7 shows the opposite pressure: at the peak of mobilisation, staying silent online could also be noticed and judged as a lack of concern. Even posts unrelated to the boycott could be read as disengagement. Participants were therefore caught between two pressures: posting could carry political risk, while not posting could carry social cost. Online participation was shaped not only by convenience, but also by fear, expectation, and the need to be seen as politically present. This pattern changes the usual slacktivism logic. In Turkey, posting online was not simply an easy or low-cost action. Participants could face risk for being visible, but they could also face social pressure if they stayed silent. In this sense, online participation was shaped by the cost of both being seen and not being seen. The Turkish case therefore shows that, under competitive authoritarian conditions, online participation cannot automatically be treated as low-cost in the way it often appears in the slacktivism debate (Morozov, 2011; Christensen, 2011; Gladwell, 2010). Its cost depends not only on platform affordances, but also on political pressure and community expectations.

This finding fits with Howard and Hussain (2013), Tufekci (2017), and Kaun and Uldam (2017), who all show in different ways that digital political expression cannot be understood only through platform features. Its meaning changes depending on the political context in which it takes place. In restrictive settings, the same act of posting may become risky, visible, and open to state or platform-based control. Lim's (2012) study of Egyptian opposition movements makes a similar point: social media can help mobilisation grow, but it

cannot sustain it without offline organisation and a shared narrative. The 2025 Turkish case adds another layer to this argument. When offline organisation is weak and the state also targets online expression, posting or sharing is no longer only a low-effort action. It can become risky, and for that reason, more politically meaningful than the standard slacktivism critique assumes. Şengül's (2025) media-ethnographic study of the same protest period supports this point at the movement level. It shows that protesters were aware of censorship and account suspensions, and responded by using coded language, satire, cultural references, and even moving to alternative platforms. In this sense, the fragility of online expression was not only something described by individual participants in this study. It was also visible in the wider communication practices of the movement.

The safety dimension of activation also appears clearly in I15's account. For I15, the boycott offered a way to express a political position without becoming physically visible to the state. As she puts it, when you go out into the street, your body is there; when you do not buy something, no one can get angry at you. This fits with Howard and Hussain's (2013) broader argument that, under authoritarian conditions, people often evaluate participation through personal risk. I14, however, shows that this sense of safety was not the same for everyone. As a public-sector worker in a municipality that was itself under investigation, she experienced the risk environment differently. For her, even avoiding visible forms of participation did not fully remove the feeling of exposure, because her institutional position already placed her closer to state pressure. The contrast between I15 and I14 shows that the safety of boycott participation was not uniform. It depended not only on the form of action, but also on the participant's relationship to state institutions. This adds an individual-level nuance to Howard and Hussain's (2013) broader argument by showing that perceived safety can also be shaped by institutional position.

The repression context also shaped how participants made sense of their own behaviour over time. Detentions for social media posts, account blockings during the protest period, and bandwidth restrictions on major platforms (Gulati et al., 2025) all affected how they judged online expression. Broadcasting sanctions and TRT dismissals made this risk more concrete. When actors and presenters who supported the boycott faced consequences, it became clear that political expression could also affect people's jobs (Ünveren, 2025). In this

context, posting was not necessarily seen as a light or symbolic act, but as something that could carry real consequences. For this reason, the reversal of the slacktivism critique comes from the participants' own accounts, rather than being imposed on the data. I14 makes this even clearer: because of her professional role, she avoided public posts altogether. Her case shows that online expression could feel costly enough to make silence a deliberate strategy, especially for institutionally exposed participants.

How did the lack of organisational coordination, including conflicting boycott lists and inconsistent messaging, make it harder for participants to sustain their boycott behaviour?

The lack of organisational coordination was one of the clearest factors weakening participants' belief that the boycott could be sustained. The problem was not only that people lost motivation, but that the movement did not offer stable structures, clear guidance, or consistent information to help them continue. As a result, individual commitment became harder to maintain and more uncertain in practice. This fits Klandermans' (2004) supply-and-demand view of participation: mobilisation depends not only on people's willingness to act, but also on the organisational opportunities available to sustain action. In I3's account, the demand for action was strong during the synergy phase, but the opposition could not provide the same level of long-term organisational support. She contrasts this with the AKP's stronger local and neighbourhood networks (Yilmaz et al., 2023). This moves the critique beyond a simple leadership problem and points to a perceived organisational imbalance between the two political camps.

The third dimension concerns the absence of a unifying frame that could hold an ideologically diverse coalition together. I12 makes this point through his comparison between Gezi and the 2025 boycott. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) argue that digital networks can mobilise people through personalised action frames with limited formal organisation. This was visible in the synergy phase, when the boycott spread quickly through social media. However, rapid mobilisation was not enough to keep the movement coherent. I12's account does not contradict connective action; rather, it shows what happens when a shared frame is missing. Digital networks can still mobilise people quickly, but without a common language or shared identity, coordination becomes harder and the movement begins to fragment along existing ideological lines. This also connects with Tufekci's (2017) argument that networked

movements often struggle after the initial moment when they lack decision-making structures and shared direction.

The information-chaos pathway shows how these organisational problems were experienced in everyday information use. As boycott lists changed and different sources contradicted each other, participants had to decide who to trust. Some became tired of checking and eventually stopped trying to verify every update (I15). Others reduced uncertainty by following one trusted source, usually the official opposition channels or Özgür Özel (I8, I11). I10 checked claims separately before deciding whether to believe them. I14 relied more on offline sources, such as face-to-face conversations and direct rally attendance, and used her background in press and public relations to make sense of the information environment. I13 makes the strongest point here: participants should not have had to do this work themselves. For her, constant verification was not only a social media problem, but a sign that the boycott was poorly organised. This connects with Tufekci's (2017) discussion of verification and trust in the networked public sphere, and with Margetts et al.'s (2015) argument that social media mobilisation can be fast but unstable.

I14 offers a different reading of the movement's decline. From her institutional position, she saw the early phase as relatively well managed: the rally space brought together people with different motivations and created a temporary sense of unity. For her, the later decline did not mean that the movement simply failed. Rather, she saw it as a more expected outcome of a mobilisation that could not realistically continue with the same intensity for a whole year. This view complicates the more blame-oriented accounts in the dataset. It also fits with Margetts et al.'s (2015) argument that social-media mobilisations can grow quickly but are often unstable and difficult to sustain. I6 also shifts responsibility away from leadership and towards the public, arguing that the opposition leadership did what it could, but that people did not participate enough. Together, I14 and I6 show that participants did not explain the decline in one single way. Some blamed weak leadership, while others pointed to public disengagement or to the difficulty of sustaining mass mobilisation over time.

How did the perceived lack of political change affect participants' belief in the effectiveness of their actions and contribute to the end of both online and offline participation?

Unlike goal competition, which affected the offline route more strongly, attainability decline weakened both online and offline participation together. This is why it is the central mechanism of the dissolution phase. Participants gradually lost confidence that the boycott could produce meaningful political results, but this decline did not happen through one single mechanism. The leadership critique and information chaos discussed under the previous sub-question were one entry point into this attainability decline, since participants increasingly doubted whether a movement with shifting lists and weak coordination could deliver results. In addition to these organisational problems, four main mechanisms weakened belief in effectiveness: the absence of visible political outcomes, the collective-action dilemma, agenda displacement, and counter-mobilisation. Two further findings complicate this decline by showing that dissolution also involved indirect civic outcomes and an emotional aftermath.

The most direct mechanism was the absence of visible political outcomes. İmamoğlu remained in detention, no clear political concession was made, and participants gradually began to question whether their actions could change anything. I13 links the decline in participation directly to the unchanged political atmosphere. I5 describes a slower version of the same process: her belief in the boycott did not collapse suddenly, but over time she began to feel that its impact was limited. Even when she noticed a possible sign of effect, such as a boycotted café being emptier than usual, she did not treat this as clear evidence that the boycott was working. Instead, she explained it through the political profile of the neighbourhood. This shows that weak positive signs were not enough to rebuild confidence when the main political demand remained unmet.

A second mechanism was the collective-action dilemma. Participants began to question whether their own effort mattered if others were not also complying. This supports Olson's (1965) argument that individual participation becomes fragile when people believe that collective compliance is missing. It also fits Margetts et al.'s (2015) point that digitally mediated participation is shaped by visible cues about what others are doing. In this case,

however, these cues were not only digital but also observed in everyday life. I13 describes the problem structurally, I3 frames it through her inability to influence even her close circle, and I8 expresses it as the feeling of being the only person still trying. Together, these accounts show that perceived non-compliance weakened belief in the boycott's collective effect.

A third mechanism was agenda displacement. The boycott did not fade only because participants lost interest; it also lost its place in the public agenda as newer events became more visible. This reflects McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting logic, where the importance of an issue depends partly on how visible it remains in the communication environment. I7 describes this as part of Turkey's fast-changing political agenda, where one issue is quickly replaced by another. I6, I14, and I10 similarly show how later detentions, municipal operations, and fading online attention shifted focus away from the boycott. I11 captures the longer-term effect most clearly: people forget, and the task becomes resisting that forgetting. This pattern also fits Margetts et al.'s (2015) argument that social media-driven movements are often shaped by fast and unstable attention cycles.

The fourth mechanism was counter-mobilisation. Participants' belief in the boycott weakened when they perceived that ruling-side consumers were actively buying boycotted brands as a political response. This extends Egorov and Harstad's (2017) discussion of boycott effectiveness, while adding a counter-consumption dimension that is especially visible in the Turkish case. I6 notes that pro-government consumers appeared to increase consumption and display it on social media, while I14 describes this as a broader Turkish pattern in which every boycott produces a counter-boycott. I16 adds another layer from a diaspora perspective. Her social media feed initially made the boycott appear coherent and widely supported, but independent reporting on local shopkeepers revealed a more complicated offline reality. This made her recognise that her online information environment was biased. Taken together, these accounts show that the boycott took place within a deeply polarised political environment, where opposition-led consumption choices could be politically offset by the other side. This connects to Uzun and Lüküslü's (2023) and Somer's (2018) accounts of polarisation in Turkey, while adding a consumer-political dimension by showing how polarisation was enacted through everyday market behaviour.

At the same time, participants did not describe dissolution as complete failure. They recognised smaller and indirect outcomes: brand-level reactions such as statements or communication changes (I10, I11, I15), greater awareness of consumption as a political tool (I4, I16), increased class and economic awareness (I1), a moral sense of unity (I8), first protest experience for younger participants (I12), and later legal coordination through social media (I12). These outcomes did not reverse the broader decline in attainability, but they show that dissolution was not equivalent to total failure. The boycott still produced civic, symbolic, and identity-related effects beyond immediate political change. This supports Stolle and Micheletti's (2013) argument that political consumerism should not be evaluated only through direct policy outcomes, and connects to Ateş's (2025) view of politically motivated consumer boycotts as identity-driven and symbolic forms of political expression.

Finally, dissolution also had an emotional aftermath. I14 describes the period after mobilisation as a grief-like process marked by anger, anxiety, and denial, while I10 describes a diaspora-specific aftermath in which she could not return to normal social media use for five to six months. These accounts suggest that participation did not simply end when the boycott lost visibility. For some participants, the movement continued as anxiety, exhaustion, anger, or withdrawal. This suggests that qualitative applications of the SMPPM should take the emotional aftermath of participation more seriously, especially for institutionally exposed and geographically distant participants.

Why did the high initial motivation and synchronised participation in the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement decline over time, leading to the abandonment of both high-effort offline and low-effort online actions?

The answers to the five sub-questions show that this decline cannot be explained by one single mechanism. It was the result of three connected processes that affected different parts of the participation trajectory: goal competition, the changing cost structure of online expression, and declining attainability.

The first process is goal competition, which mainly affected the offline route. Offline boycott behaviour became harder to sustain because it had to be renegotiated in everyday life. Work routines, convenience, social plans, habits, cognitive fatigue, peer disengagement,

limited alternatives, institutional constraints, and diaspora distance all increased the perceived cost of continued compliance. The cumulative weight of these mechanisms produced the empirically observed gap between sustained online attention and rapidly declining offline behaviour that motivated the puzzle of this thesis (Uzunırmak et al., 2025; Google, 2025). In this sense, the decoupling phase supports the SMPPM's argument that political goals may remain active, but lose behavioural force when other everyday goals become more dominant (Knoll et al., 2018).

The second process is the changing cost structure of online expression in the Turkish context. Online participation did not decline as quickly as offline boycott behaviour because it was held in place by two pressures at once. On one side, government-related risk made posting politically consequential (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Kaun & Uldam, 2017). On the other, peer expectations made silence socially costly. This helps explain why online participation lasted longer than offline boycott behaviour, but also why it could not continue indefinitely. As the synergy phase ended and peer pressure weakened, the social obligation to post also became weaker, while state-related risk remained. As a result, online participation continued longer than offline behaviour but eventually declined as well. This finding complicates both optimistic and pessimistic readings of digital participation. It supports Vaccari et al.'s (2015) argument that lower-threshold online expression can initially connect to higher-threshold action, but it also partly resonates with Morozov's (2011) slacktivism critique once online support becomes easier to maintain than sustained offline commitment.

The third process identified in participants' accounts is attainability decline, which appears to have affected both online and offline routes. Participants gradually lost confidence that the boycott could produce meaningful political change. This was shaped by the absence of visible outcomes, unclear leadership, information chaos, perceived non-compliance by others, agenda displacement, counter-mobilisation, and the emotional exhaustion that followed the movement. These pathways did not only weaken motivation; they also changed how participants understood their own participation. Even those who continued to comply increasingly described it as a matter of personal commitment rather than part of a collectively effective movement. This is central to the dissolution phase: participation did not end only

because people became tired, but because they increasingly doubted whether continued action could still make a difference.

A final point concerns the legacy of this incomplete mobilisation. I3 and I7 suggest that starting strongly but not achieving results made them less willing to join future calls, while I2 notes that detentions during this period may make fewer people post in the next political moment. This legacy effect is not a separate dissolution pathway, but a consequence of cumulative attainability decline. It suggests that incomplete mobilisation can affect future civic capacity by making later calls for participation feel less attainable, more risky, or less worth the effort.

Taken together, both forms of participation declined because they were sustained by different but overlapping mechanisms that weakened across the decoupling and dissolution phases. Offline participation declined faster because goal competition operated mainly against it: everyday routines, habits, social pressures, alternatives, and institutional constraints made sustained boycott behaviour harder over time. Online participation lasted longer because its lower effort, social visibility, and political symbolism kept it meaningful for a while. Yet both routes eventually weakened as attainability declined and participants began to doubt whether any form of participation could still produce change.

The trajectory of the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement should therefore not be read simply as a failure narrative. It shows how a movement can be emotionally powerful, digitally visible, and initially effective, while still lacking the conditions needed for sustained pressure. The case brings together three broader dynamics: connective action without sufficient organisational depth (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Tufekci, 2017), political consumerism constrained by everyday routines and market structures (Egorov & Harstad, 2017; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013), and digital expression under authoritarian pressure (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Kaun & Uldam, 2017). However, not all participants experienced this decline as complete hopelessness. Some still saw the movement as meaningful because it created awareness, strengthened a sense of collective dignity, or showed that people could still act together under pressure. In these accounts, hope did not disappear entirely. It became weaker, more cautious, and less connected to the expectation of immediate political change. Under these conditions, the movement could mobilise rapidly, but it could not maintain the

organisational clarity, practical feasibility, and belief in effectiveness needed to sustain participation over time.

The SMPPM under Competitive Authoritarian Conditions

The SMPPM was developed and validated in West European democratic contexts (Knoll et al., 2018), where political participation is usually analysed through competing individual goals, perceived efficacy, and platform affordances. The 2025 Turkish case suggests that some of these assumptions operate differently under competitive authoritarian conditions (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; Schedler, 2006). This is especially visible in the consistency appraisal construct. The SMPPM treats consistency appraisal as a comparison between relatively low-effort online expression and high-effort offline action. In the Turkish case, however, this distinction became less clear. State surveillance, account restrictions, and detentions over social media posts made online expression politically consequential, while peer expectations also made silence socially costly. The cost of online participation was therefore shaped not only by the platform itself, but by the wider political environment. This supports Kaun and Uldam's (2017) argument that digital activism should be understood in relation to its socio-political context.

Second, the SMPPM mainly foregrounds goal competition at the individual level, through priorities such as convenience, social obligation, or habit. I14's account shows that, under conditions where the state targets opposition-aligned municipalities, goal competition can also operate at the organisational level. In this case, boycott compliance was shaped by procurement contracts, service obligations, and the need to maintain public functions under political pressure. These were not simply competing individual goals, but structural constraints produced by the political and institutional environment.

Third, the activation construct in the SMPPM is mainly built around situations where participants have access to a behavioural setting in which political and everyday goals can meet. For diaspora participants (I10, I11, I16), this setting was partly absent. Since they were not regularly exposed to the targeted brands and places in Turkey, everyday boycott behaviour was limited. However, this did not mean that activation was weaker. Instead,

participation was redirected into online visibility work, local marches, petition campaigns, or planned travel back to Turkey. This suggests that diaspora participation should be understood not as a reduced version of in-country participation, but as a structurally different form of activation shaped by distance, guilt, emotional attachment, and partial protection from the authoritarian context.

Taken together, these points suggest that the SMPPM can be usefully applied to authoritarian contexts, especially in its broader understanding of participation as a goal-driven process that is repeatedly reassessed against competing pressures. At the same time, the Turkish case shows that its specific mechanisms need to be read through context, especially when state surveillance, institutional embeddedness, and transnational positioning shape what participation actually means for different actors.

Implications and Avenues for Further Research

The findings contribute to debates on digital activism, political consumerism, and the Social Media Political Participation Model. The 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement complicates the usual mobilisation–slacktivism debate. At first, online expression and offline boycott behaviour supported each other, which shows that low-threshold online participation can connect to higher-threshold action (Vaccari et al., 2015). Over time, however, this connection weakened. Online support was easier to keep in daily life, while offline boycott behaviour required repeated practical adjustments. This shows that the relationship between online and offline participation is not fixed, but changes across the phases of a movement.

The case also shows that online participation cannot simply be labelled as “real” or “symbolic.” In Turkey, posting about the boycott could carry legal, professional, and social risks, but it could still become easier to maintain than changing everyday consumption habits. The same online act could therefore work as mobilisation, peer obligation, risk-bearing expression, or low-effort support, depending on the moment and the political context.

The thesis also has implications for the SMPPM. Applied qualitatively, the model helps explain how participation begins, weakens, decouples, and dissolves over time. At the same time, the findings show that its mechanisms operate differently under restrictive and polarised conditions. Activation did not always require strong initial efficacy belief; for some participants, conscience, civic duty, political identity, or resistance were enough to motivate participation. Goal competition was also shaped not only by individual priorities, but by market structure, lack of alternatives, class position, institutional contracts, and diaspora distance. Perceived safety also varied by participant position: the same boycott could feel relatively untraceable for one person and politically risky for another.

The study also suggests that digitally coordinated movements should be treated as multi-channel processes. Social media mattered, but some participants were activated through television, rallies, or direct presence at Saraçhane. This refines connective action by showing that visibility can start a movement quickly, but it cannot sustain high-effort participation on its own. Reliable information, practical alternatives, consistent guidance, and shared direction become crucial after the first emotional peak.

Finally, dissolution should not be read as total failure. Even when participants lost confidence in immediate political change, they still identified indirect outcomes such as brand reactions, citizen awareness, collective unity, youth protest experience, and legal coordination after the protests. Future research should therefore look not only at why participation begins or ends, but also at what remains after a movement loses visibility.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it is based on a qualitative single-case study design and sixteen semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the aim is not statistical generalisation, but an in-depth understanding of how participants interpreted the rise and decline of the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement. The findings should not be read as representative of all boycott participants or of Turkish society more broadly. Second, the study relies on retrospective self-reports. Participants described their motivations, online

expression, offline boycott behaviour, and later disengagement after the movement had already declined. Their accounts may therefore be shaped by memory, later interpretation, emotional distance, or the knowledge that the boycott did not produce the expected political change. The study also does not directly measure actual posting behaviour or purchasing practices. A further limitation concerns self-presentation. Because the boycott was morally and politically charged, participants may have felt pressure to present themselves as sincere, committed, or politically responsible. This is especially relevant to the strong criticism of low-effort online participation. The convergence around the slacktivism critique may partly reflect a broader public discourse about “real” and “fake” participation, rather than only participants’ independent evaluations. Finally, since the interviews were conducted in Turkish and written up in English, some cultural and emotional nuances may have been difficult to translate fully. Overall, these limitations do not undermine the study’s contribution, but they clarify how the findings should be read. The thesis provides a qualitative account of how a specific group of participants understood the movement’s synergy, decoupling, and dissolution, rather than a representative measurement of the whole Boycott Movement.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this thesis was to explain why the high initial motivation and synchronised participation in the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement declined over time, leading to the abandonment of both offline boycott behaviour and online participation. By following the movement through the phases of synergy, decoupling, and dissolution, the thesis examined not only why people joined the movement, but also why participation became difficult to sustain after the initial peak.

To answer this question, the study used a qualitative single-case study design based on sixteen semi-structured interviews with participants who engaged with the boycott in different ways. The analysis was guided by the Social Media Political Participation Model, focusing on goal activation, goal competition, consistency appraisal, and attainability appraisal. This framework made it possible to understand participation as a changing process rather than as a fixed decision to participate or not. The findings show that the movement’s decline cannot be explained by weak motivation. In the synergy phase, participants were

strongly activated by the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu, which they interpreted through frames of injustice, anger, civic duty, hope, economic awareness, institutional responsibility, and diaspora attachment. These motivations initially connected online expression with offline boycott behaviour and created a temporary alignment between digital visibility and economic action.

This alignment, however, became harder to maintain over time. Offline boycott behaviour declined first because it had to be negotiated in everyday life. Work routines, convenience, social obligations, habits, limited alternatives, class differences, institutional contracts, and diaspora distance all made sustained boycott participation more costly. Online participation lasted longer because it required fewer material adjustments, but it was not entirely effortless or risk-free. In the Turkish context, posting could carry legal, professional, and social risks, while silence could also be read as disengagement within opposition circles.

The dissolution of both routes was mainly shaped by declining attainability. As participants saw no clear political change, encountered inconsistent boycott lists, observed weak coordination, noticed others disengaging, and became aware of counter-mobilisation, they increasingly doubted whether continued action could still matter. The boycott, therefore weakened not because participants immediately stopped caring, but because motivation became harder to sustain under everyday, organisational, political, and emotional pressures.

At the same time, the movement should not be understood only as a failure. Participants identified several indirect outcomes, including brand-level reactions, greater awareness of consumption as a political tool, collective unity, youth protest experience, and post-protest legal coordination through social media. Some also continued to describe hope, dignity, or emotional attachment after visible participation declined. This shows that dissolution does not necessarily mean that political meaning disappears. A movement may fail to sustain pressure while still producing civic, symbolic, and emotional effects.

The thesis contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it shows how digitally coordinated participation can move from online–offline synergy to decoupling and dissolution. Second, it applies the SMPPM qualitatively, showing that participation can begin even under low efficacy belief when it carries moral or identity-based value, and that goal

competition is shaped by structural conditions as well as individual priorities. Third, it contributes to debates on digital activism and political consumerism by showing that online participation is not always symbolic or low-risk, while offline boycott behaviour depends not only on political will but also on practical feasibility, alternatives, and coordination.

Overall, the 2025 Turkish Boycott Movement demonstrates both the power and fragility of digitally coordinated political consumerism. Digital platforms helped generate rapid mobilisation, emotional intensity, and collective visibility. Yet sustaining participation required more than visibility. It also required organisational clarity, practical feasibility, perceived safety, reliable information, and continued belief in the effectiveness of collective action. The central contribution of this thesis is therefore to show that digitally mobilised political participation should be understood as a process: one that can begin with strong emotional and political energy, weaken through everyday and structural constraints, and still leave civic and emotional traces after visible participation declines.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Demographic Questions

1. What is your age, educational background, and occupation?
2. Which city do you currently live in?
3. How actively do you use social media in your daily life, and which platforms do you use most?

Main Interview Guide

1. Could you briefly describe your relationship with political or social issues in your everyday life? What role does social media play for you in this regard?
2. When you think about the early days of the Boycott Movement, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?
3. Could you tell me about the moment when you decided to become involved in the movement? *What motivated you to participate?*
4. What did you do when you became involved in the movement, and how did this appear in your everyday life at the time? *What was the atmosphere like among the people around you, or among the people you saw and talked to?*
5. As the days went by, how did sustaining the boycott begin to feel in your everyday life? *Can you describe a specific day or moment from that period?*
6. Did your form of participation change during the process? *Were there things you continued to do while starting to stop doing others? For example, were there situations where you wanted to boycott a brand or a place but could not?*
7. During the boycott, people both shared content on social media and tried to change their everyday consumption choices. *For you, were these two forms of participation the same kind of action, or was there a difference between them? What comes to your mind when you think about this?*
8. How did you decide which brands to avoid? What was it like to determine which information was reliable and which was not?

9. How did your thoughts about what the boycott could actually achieve change over time?
Was there a point when you felt that something was beginning to change?
10. During that period, many things happened around the boycott and social media posts, including detentions, account restrictions, internet slowdowns, and dismissals from public positions. How did these affect you? *Did they shape what you felt or what you did?*
11. How did the organisation of the movement appear from your perspective? *After the first calls, did it feel like there was clear guidance, or did the movement continue on its own?*
12. Looking back now, what does this period mean to you? *Do you think the boycott achieved anything?*
13. If a similar call were made tomorrow, what would you do? *In your opinion, what would need to be different for such a movement to become sustainable?*

Additional Questions for Diaspora Participants

14. How did you follow what was happening from where you were living at the time? *If you felt involved in the movement, what exactly did that involvement consist of?*
15. What kind of impression did the content you followed on social media from abroad give you about the situation in Turkey? When you later came to Turkey, or when you spoke with people who were there, did this impression change in any way?
16. Did experiencing this process from abroad change the way you think about social media or about following political events from a distance?

Additional Questions for the Public-Sector Participant

17. How do you think these boycott calls affected the everyday functioning of the organisation you work for?
18. Were there any discussions within the institution, or among colleagues, about how to approach the boycott either institutionally or individually?
19. As a public-sector worker in an opposition-led institution, how did this period affect you personally?

Appendix B: Aid Disclosure

According to the University of Vienna's guidelines on citing and disclosing AI use, the following tools were used in the preparation of this Master's thesis. These tools were used only for supportive language-related purposes, such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation checks, rephrasing, tone adjustment, and assistance with translating selected interview quotations. Responsibility for the final text, translation choices, and all academic content remains entirely with the author. All AI- or translation-assisted text was reviewed, checked against the original material where applicable, and edited by the author before inclusion in the thesis.

Appendix C: Participant Information and Consent Form

This appendix refers to the blank participant information sheet and consent form used in this study. The form was provided in both English and Turkish before the interviews. Signed consent forms, participant names, contact details, audio recordings, and interview transcripts are not included in the thesis in order to protect participant confidentiality. The blank consent form can be provided to the supervisor or examination committee upon request.

Aid	Function
ChatGPT	Assistance with grammar, spelling, punctuation, rephrasing, tone adjustment, and translating selected interview quotations from Turkish into English
DeepL	Assistance with translating selected interview quotations from Turkish into English and translating the abstract into German
Grammarly	Grammar and spelling checks
Scribbr	Citation and reference-formatting support
Master's Seminar Final Proposal	The thesis builds on the research proposal submitted in the Master's Seminar course