



*Full Length Research Paper*

# Ethnocentrism mediator as a hope among hispanics: the post analysis of the nothing gringo boycott of 2006

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This study aims to explore the determinants of consumers' willingness to participate in the nothing Gringo boycott, a one-day event organized in Mexico as an expression of solidarity to the Hispanic illegal immigrants in the United States. The data were collected in two of the largest cities in northeast Mexico during the boycott in 2006. The findings identified a key variable entitled "hope", which along with the level of ethnocentrism, is found to be an important moderator of attitude toward a boycott. In addition, this study validates the theory of Planned Behavior in the study of Hispanic consumers. That is, the results showed that Hispanics' pre-dispositions and attitudes are antecedents of the intention to protest.

**Key Words:** Hispanic Consumers, Boycott, Attitudes and Perceptions, Cultural Marketing.

## INTRODUCTION

Boycotts are increasingly becoming a significant hassle in marketing, with buyers more often refusing to buy a branded product or a class of products to achieve some social outcome (Gelb, 1995; Caudron, 1993; Sen, 1996; Ettenson et al., 2006; Hoffman and Muller, 2009; Chavis and Leslie, 2009). People express their dissatisfaction or satisfaction with specific issues by exercising their sovereignty as consumers to economically punish or reward the supporters and detractors of such issues (Caudron 1993; Putnam, 1993; John and Klein, 2003; Harrison and Scorse, 2006). For example, in the case of the "Nothing Gringo Boycott of 2006," Mexicans decided to join forces with the Mexicans and other Latinos living in the United States who were participating in a consumer boycott. Many Mexicans turned to the boycott as a form

of sympathy for the rights of illegal immigrants and as a way to pressure the American government to improve the conditions of these workers. The estimated 11.7 million illegal immigrant workers makeup over 25 percent of all farm workers, 17 percent of all maintenance workers, 9 percent of all employees in production occupations, and represent, along with all other legal Latinos, 13 percent of the total U.S. labor force (Pew Hispanic Center, 2013).

Previous research has been conducted with the intention of better understanding "boycotts" as a collective action. For example, several studies have focused on: boycott as normative – social action (Nasser, 2009; Sen, Gurhan-Canli and Morwitz, 2001; Basu and Zarghamee, 2009); boycott as a political action (Harrison and Scorse, 2006; Shaw et al., 2006; Rose and Rose,

2008); and more specifically, boycotts as a form to express consumer dissatisfaction (Gelb, 1995; Caudron, 1993; Hoffmann and Müller, 2009; Chavis and Leslie, 2009). Nevertheless, there is still a lack of empirical research with regard to the understanding of a boycott's motives (John and Klein, 2003). Particularly in the case of Latino consumers, the factors that motivate consumer boycott decisions remain largely unexplored.

In this research, we examined how consumers' willingness to participate in the "Nothing Gringo Boycott" may be influenced by their level of ethnocentrism, and consumer's hope. Specifically, our study addressed the following questions: (1) To what extent did the level of ethnocentrism affect the Mexicans' attitudes toward the boycott? (2) How did "hope" as the belief that the boycott could make things better for the immigrants affect the Mexican attitude toward the boycott? And (3) to what extent did a positive attitude toward the boycott predict an intention to protest against the American businesses? To answer these questions, a structural model was proposed to understand the effect of "ethnocentrism" and "hope" on attitudes toward a boycott, and in turn, on intention to disfavor the American businesses.

### **The Case of "Nothing Gringo Boycott"**

In 2006, the "Nothing Gringo" one-day boycott was organized by several groups of Mexican nationals who abstained from purchasing goods in American stores as an expression of solidarity to the Latin American immigrants in the U.S. The "Nothing Gringo" boycott was conducted to support the group of both legal and illegal immigrants who had announced boycotting all aspects of commerce, including school and work, along with a march as a means of coercion to the U.S. Congress regarding immigration law reform. The proposed date for the march was May 1<sup>st</sup>, specifically chosen to coincide with the International Workers Day or Labor Day in Mexico. Electronic and Social Media were used to disseminate messages such as, "Don't buy anything North American," and advising Mexicans to keep away from the Burger King, McDonald's, Wal-Mart, Pizza Hut, Domino's and Dunkin' Donut franchises in Mexico on Monday, May 1<sup>st</sup>. What started as an e-mail campaign eventually spread to TV, newspapers, and finally between individuals through word-of-mouth.

For the Mexicans living in the border cities of Mexico and the United States, the advice stated not to visit the United States. Typically, during this particular holiday (Labor Day), Mexican borderlanders (in Spanish called *fronterizos*) would spend their day shopping in American stores. But on May 1<sup>st</sup> of 2006, cars crossing the border bridges were rarely seen. This was most likely a result of the media activism in combination with the lobbyists who

protested and blocked several border crossings in some of the largest border cities. For example, in Tijuana about 400 protesters blocked the busiest border crossing into San Diego for nearly four hours, preventing people from entering the United States to shop (Enriquez, 2006). Thus, while the number of shoppers usually rises during May 1<sup>st</sup>, retail sales on this day actually declined in 2006. In McAllen, which has one of the strongest economies along the U.S. - Mexico border in Texas, the Chamber of Commerce revealed that overall store sales had unexpectedly dropped by 10 million dollars from April to May 2006; an uncommon phenomenon compared to previous sales records (McAllen Chamber of Commerce, 2006). Finally, although the exact economic outcomes of the boycott are unspecified, it has been assumed that retail sales slowed significantly in several other border cities (Enriquez, 2006, McAllen Chamber of Commerce, 2007).

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Consumer boycotts are defined as an act of abstaining from using, buying, or dealing with an expression of protest (Glickman, 2009). Some of the objectives of the consumer boycott identified in the literature are to send a message to the leaders, to serve as a symbolic act of solidarity by groups and persons around the country who support civil rights for all people, and to provoke discussion and conversation about specific issues (Hartman et al. 2013; Caudron, 1993; Sen, 1996). For instance, according to Putman (1993) most ongoing boycotts protest corporate practices involving: 1) the environment, 2) discrimination against women and gays, 3) cruelty to animals, 4) unfair labor practices, and 5) doing business in countries with a record of human rights abuse (1993). Smith (1989) states that consumer boycotts involve not buying from a firm in protest of the firm's lack of social responsibility. Harrison and Score (1996) stated that a boycott is the most common PR tactic to pressure multinational companies to improve the conditions of their workers. Finally, although consumer boycotts are caused by a corporate policy or action, they can also be provoked by broad geopolitical, religious or even historical tensions (Ettenson et al., 2006).

### **The Impact of Consumer Boycotts**

Prior studies measuring the impact of boycotts focus primarily on economic loss and damages. Pruitt and Friedman (1986), using a time-series methodology, studied the impact of 21 consumer boycott announcements. They claimed that there was not a significant relationship between boycotts and stock price

damage. Likewise, Koku et al. (1997) stated that the value of targeted firms increased by 0.76 percent on the day that news of the boycott became public. However, a controversy exists in terms of a firm's equity. Tyran and Engelmann (2005) stated that consumer boycotts are unsuccessful in holding down the market prices, yet Davidson et al. (1995) found that boycotts were associated with negative market reactions. Nevertheless, the literature agrees that boycotts reduce market efficiency significantly (Ettenson et al., 2006; Tyran and Engelmann, 2005; Davidson et al., 1995). Finally, Ettenson et al. (2006) claim that company-specific boycotts are short-lived, while societal boycotts have the potential for greater long-term harm. The effects of societal boycotts on sales may persist for much longer as a result of animosities.

Although the literature primarily embraces the financial impact of consumer boycotts, a recent study found that consumer product boycotts could have an adverse reaction. Basu and Zarghamee's (2009) study shows that consumer product boycotts could have an unfavorable consequence that cause child labor rates to rise rather than fall. Because of this, the authors suggest that consumers use caution when considering boycotts, and to obtain more detailed information about the context as to where child labor occurs (Basu and Zarghamee, 2009).

### **Motivational Factors for Boycott Participation**

Although the diverse impacts of consumer boycotts have been considerably addressed in the literature, very few studies have been conducted on exploring the motives for consumer boycott participation. Klein, Smith and John's (2004) framework on consumer motivation for boycott participation provides a significant insight for theory development and for better understanding the factors that predict boycott participation. The authors identified four factors; (1) the desire to make a difference, (2) the scope for self-enhancement, (3) counterarguments that inhibit boycotting, and (4) the cost to the boycotter of constrained consumption. Likewise, Sen, Gurhan-Canli and Morwitz (2001) claimed that consumers' likelihood to participate is influenced by their perceptions of the boycott's likelihood of success, their susceptibility to normative social influences, and the costs they incur by boycotting. In addition, the authors explained that consumers' success perceptions are determined by their expectations of overall participation and efficacy, that is, by their desire to believe that they can make a difference. Therefore, based on the above assumptions, we can conclude that a consumer's likelihood of participating in a boycott is determined by their "sense of hope" that the boycott can actually make a difference.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **Theory of Planned Behavior**

In the present research we developed a series of hypotheses based on multidisciplinary theories and premises in the literature of consumer boycotts. To better understand consumer boycotts participation, we employed the Theory of Planned Behavior (TpB), which demonstrates how attitudes impact behavior. Originally proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), it serves as an extension of the theory of reasoned action. The theory looks at the behavioral intentions as the main predictors of behavior. According to the TpB, the most important determinant of a person's behavior is behavior intent (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Ajzen, 1991). The individual's attitude toward the behavior includes behavioral beliefs, evaluations, subjective norms, normative beliefs, motivation, and control of behavioral outcomes.

The theory of planned behavior states that "attitude" is the first antecedent of behavioral intention. An individual will intend to display a certain behavior when he or she evaluates it positively. Consumers engage in a boycott act when their perceptions toward the boycotts are positive, for example, consumers' perception of the boycott's success (Sen, Gurhan-Canli and Morwitz, 2001). The "attitude" is an individual's positive or negative belief about displaying a specific behavior and it is linked to the consequences of his or her evaluation of the outcome. In other words, TpB states that a positive "attitude toward the boycott" is linked to the willingness to participate in the act. Therefore, we expected that the "attitude toward the boycott" would affect the Mexicans' intention to protest against the American businesses.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Attitude toward the boycott positively relates to the Mexicans' intention to protest against the American companies.

### **Social Identity Theory: Ethnocentrism**

Consumer Ethnocentrism has been defined as a universal condition of attitudes and behaviors toward in-group favoritism (Axelrod and Hammond, 2003). Based on this assumption and due to the fact the "Nothing Gringo boycott" involved two groups/nations, in this study, we explored the role of ethnocentrism on consumers' boycott participation. Ethnocentrism draws on social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982), describing relationships between in-groups and out-groups and identifying consumers' distinctions. Ethnocentrism refers to the bias that comes from believing in the superiority of

one's own cultural group and in the inferiority of others (Sumner, 1906). Ethnocentrism is the feeling that one's group has a mode of living, values, and patterns of adaptation that are superior to those of other groups (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Highly ethnocentric people are centered ethnically and, in rigid fashion, accept those who are culturally similar and reject or even dislike those who are different (Hogg and Turner, 1987; Ray and Lovejoy, 1986). Shimp and Sharma (1987) similarly identified ethnocentrism as a factor that explains why certain consumers are more likely to consider a product's country of origin (COO) over other factors. They argued that highly ethnocentric consumers cannot be expected to buy imported products because doing so would be unpatriotic, would hurt domestic jobs, or would go against some other nationalistic reasons. In the case of "Nothing Gringo Boycott," it might be considered an act of patriotism to demonstrate solidarity to their compatriots, particularly because of their cultural background. Consistently, the literature suggests that consumer ethnocentrism and patriotism are stronger determinants of domestic consumption (Vida and Reardon, 2008). In short, highly ethnocentric consumers express more negative attitudes toward buying imported products than consumers low in ethnocentrism. Based on the above assumptions and along with the TpB we expect that high levels of ethnocentrism will increase the odds of having a positive attitude toward the boycott, thus we hypothesized the following:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Ethnocentrism is positively related to positive attitudes toward the boycott.

### **Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory of Emotion**

To understand the role of "hope," we analyzed Richard Lazarus' (1982, 1984) cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotion (CMR) along with the TpB. The CMR theory provides a framework for understanding the influence of various individual variables on the emotional response to a specific situation. The variables associated with the viewer's beliefs, goals, personal commitments, and ideologies are expected to affect the level of consumers' sensitivity (Lazarus, 1982; 1984; 1991). As previously approached, Hofstede's cultural dimensions sustain that Mexicans are a collectivist-masculine society (1980). That is, they place emphasis on in-group goals over those of individuals, meaning the social norms of the in-group are favored over individual pleasure and shared group beliefs have priority over unique individual belief. On May 1<sup>st</sup> of 2006, Mexicans shared a sense of "hope" that their illegal compatriots' lives in the U.S. could be better after the boycott.

"Hope," as an independent variable, has been found to

have a significant impact on many areas of social life. For example, evidence suggests that interpersonal and institutional hopes are possible causes of civic participation (Putman, 1993). In addition, as previously discussed, the literature on consumer boycotts shows that consumer participation is, in turn, determined by their expectations of overall participation and efficacy, that is, their hope to believe that they can make a difference (Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Sen, Gurhan-Canli and Morwitz, 2001). Thus, based on previous premises, and along with the TpB, which proposes that normative beliefs influence people's attitudes, we expected "hope" will positively affect consumers' positive attitudes toward the boycott.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** There is a positive relationship between "hope" and positive attitudes toward the boycott.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Data Collection**

This research is not only systematic but also opportunistic in exploring consumer boycott participation in a particular condition. That is, the case of "Nothing Gringo Boycott" in Mexico, where, in addition to, a lack of research was found on consumer boycotts. For data collection, two conveniently border cities were selected: Reynosa and Matamoros - two of the largest cities in the northeast of Mexico. Both, Matamoros and Reynosa are frontier cities located on the border of Texas, U.S. – Tamaulipas, Mexico. They are the closest U.S.-Mexico border towns to Mexico City, and their important geographical location makes the Maquiladora industry the most important source of the economy in the area. The data were collected two days prior to the boycott by using a quota sample technique. A quota sample is a non-probabilistic technique in which sampling units were selected based on a geographical classification method; three different neighborhoods were selected in each city in quest of a more diverse socio-demographic sample population. Undergraduate and graduate students who were previously trained and supervised by one of the authors collected the sample. The procedure consisted of spending four hours in each location. A total of 129 residents agreed to participate, for an effective response rate of 97%. The sample was 51% female, 49% male with an age range of 18 to 60, and an age average range of 25-35.

### **Measures**

Two scales shaped our instrument: an existing developed

**Table1.** Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Results of Single-Constructs Measurement Models

Scale	X <sup>2</sup> /df	Sig.	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA	Extracted Variance
CETSCALE	.64	.841	.982	.957	.978	1	1	.09	.000	.50
Attitude Toward the Boycott	.471	.492	.998	.982	.998	1	1	.02	.000	.60

and validated scale to measure ethnocentrism and an adapted scale to assess Mexicans' attitude toward boycotts. The CETSCALE (Shimp and Sharma, 1987) - which measures consumer's ethnocentric tendencies related to purchasing foreign products - was assessed using their shortened version which produced similar reliability and validity evaluations. Consumers' attitudes toward the boycott were measured adapting a 4-item scale from Machleit and Wilson's (1988) construct of attitude toward brands. Participants were asked their opinion about the boycott in terms of effectiveness, usefulness, value, and benefits, using a 5-point Likert-type scale. In addition, the authors developed a single measure for "hope," ensuring it adequately represented the conceptual domain in a straightforward manner with the Mexican Culture (Van de Vijver and Leung 1997). Consumer boycott participation was measured by scoring the individuals' intention to participate in the boycott against American businesses. Finally, demographic questions were addressed at the end of the questionnaire.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### Assessment of the Measures

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed by using SEM to reach the construct validity of the two scales used in this study: CETSCALE and Attitudes toward the boycott.

#### I. CETSCALE

The 10-item construct used to measure ethnocentrism, produced a good fit. The chi-square values were not significant at .10 level, indicating a difference between the predicted and the actual matrices and demonstrating acceptable fits. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), which varies from 0 to 1, were .98 and 1. Consequently, the measures of errors, the Root Mean Squared Residual (RMR = .09) was below

the expected value of .12, while the Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA), showed zero error in the model. In addition, the results showed significant regression weights between the independent variables (items) and the latent variable at .000. The standardized estimates ranged between .41 and .80. The results are displayed in Table 1. Finally, the percent of variance extracted, which reflects the overall amount of variance in the indicators accounted by the latent construct, was calculated according to the formula given by Hair et al. (1998). The results showed an extracted variance of 50 percent.

#### II. Attitude toward the boycott

The four items used as indicators of "attitude toward the boycott" had significant paths from the construct, and residuals were low (RMSEA = .000 and RMR = .12). The chi-squared values were not significant at .10 level and as shown in Table 1, the fit indicators indicated good level of model fit (GFI = .965, NFI = .998, CFI = 1 and TLI=1). The estimated standardized regression weights ranged between .69 and .87, all significant at .000, and the variance extracted accounted for 60 percent.

In addition, we conducted a reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency among items within each identified factor. The results showed both scales had acceptable alphas (CETSCALE = .88; ATTITUDE = .85), above the suggested .70 by Nunnally (1967; 1978).

#### Model Testing

In order to test the proposed hypotheses, Structural Equation Modeling was performed. SEM technique is one of the most popular statistical tools to test the relationships proposed in a parsimonious model (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Chau, 1997; Hair et al., 1998.). Evidence suggests that SEM functions are better than other multivariate techniques, such as multiple regressions, path analysis, and factor analysis (Cheng,



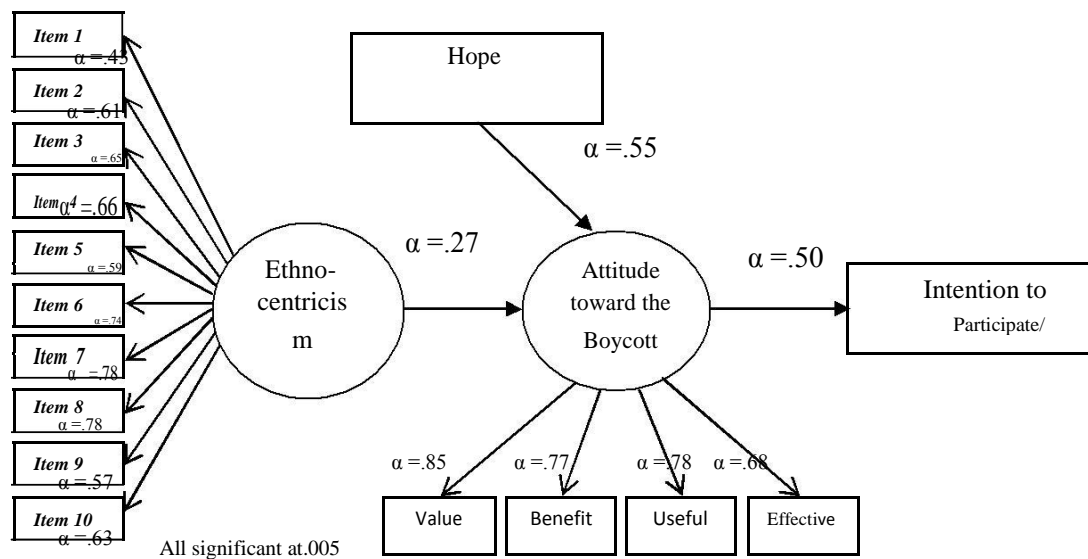


Figure 1

2001) because these techniques could not take into account the interaction effects among the posited variables (both dependent and independent). In this instance, SEM was considered because it has the utility to examine a series of dependence relationships simultaneously, expanding the explanatory ability and statistical efficiency for model testing (Hair et al., 1998). Thus, structural equation model (SEM) was used to provide the fit statistics required to test the proposed relationships. Figure 1 displays the tested model.

The overall results indicated that the Model had an acceptable fit. When the chi-square divided by degree of freedom has a ratio between 1 and 2, this indicates an excellent fit. The chi-square ratio for the model was 1.18. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI = .856), the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI = .810), and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = .911), the Normed of Fit Index (NFI = .824) and Tucker-Lewis Fit Index (TLI = .893) were all at an acceptable level. For instance, the NFI indicated that only 82% of the observed measure covariance was explained by the proposed model. Further, the Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA = .061) was above the recommended level of .08. Finally, the overall results indicated the model had a good fit, with a chi-square p-value not significant at .305.

### Hypothesis Testing

Figure 1 displays the tested model and the hypothesized

relationships between variables. That is, our model proposed that Mexicans “hope” that the boycott would make things better for the illegal immigrants in the U.S., and “ethnocentrism” would influence their attitude toward the boycott, which in turn would affect their intention to participate in the boycott against the American businesses.

### RESULTS

As Figure 1 shows, the regression weights indicated that the hypotheses were supported at a significant level ( $p < .005$ ). The path coefficients were .27 in the “ethnocentrism” and “attitude toward the boycott” correlation, and .55 in the “hope” and “attitude toward the boycott” relationship. The regression weight for the “attitude toward the boycott” and “intention to participate in boycott against the American business” relationship was .50. In sum, the strength of the evidence provided by the model testing supports and confirms that attitude toward the boycott influenced the Mexicans’ intention to participate, and that Mexican’s hope and level of ethnocentrism functions were antecedents of the Mexicans’ attitude toward the boycott. Thus, hypotheses  $H_1$ ,  $H_2$  and  $H_3$  were supported.

### DISCUSSION

Boycotts are a form of collective action and have been

studied from many different perspectives. One example is Sen, Gurhan-Canli and Morwitz's (2001) study conceptualizing boycotts as social dilemmas, which are jointly determined by participants' perceptions of the boycott's potential success, susceptibility to normative and social influences, and the cost incurred in boycotting. Interestingly, Sen, Gurhan-Canli and Morwitz's (2001) study found that consumers highly susceptible to the influence exerted by the reference group are also more influenced by expected overall participation rates. Our study addresses the behavior of a Hispanic group, which is traditionally considered to be susceptible to the influence of the reference group. Subsequently, Shaw, Newholm and Dickinson (2006) explored consumer empowerment from the ethical and political perspectives. By conducting a qualitative approach, a small-scale sample of consumers expressed empowerment as a metaphor of voting; which is another form of collective action. Although the "Nothing Gringo" boycott also had political implications, our study contributes to the literature by gathering quantitative data from a larger sample of participants.

Previous research has been dependent upon different methodologies in an effort to uncover consumer motivations that may ultimately lead to a boycott. John and Klein (2003) proposed a typology of motivations for consumer boycotts. According to John and Klein's (2003) study, boycotts can be triggered by both instrumental and non-instrumental motivations. These motivations can include an individual's need for control, their altruistic sentiments, and the desire to experience the thrill of victory. As per the latter, it was self-esteem and anger. Our study tested some of these motivations with data collected during an actual boycott. Klein, Smith and John (2004) explored the inner motivation of consumers for boycott participation. Results of a survey conducted during an ongoing boycott against a multinational company indicated four predictors for boycott participation: the desire to make a difference, the scope for self-enhancement, counterarguments that inhibit boycotting, and the cost of the boycotter of constrained consumption. Our quantitative study was also conducted during an ongoing boycott, but differs from that of Klein, Smith and John (2004) by providing empirical data of a boycott against not only a particular firm, but against all American companies. More recently, Tyran and Engelmann (2005) measured causes and effects of boycotts in a retailing market using an experimental approach. Among the causes mentioned are expressive motivations and fairness considerations. Tyran and Engelmann (2005) cited the effect of market efficiency reduction and pointed the difficulty of measuring such effects in the field. However, our study attempted to provide a field methodology in order to corroborate previous findings in the laboratory.

Mexicans became unified with their illegal compatriots living in the U.S. in May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006 in a non-cooperative demonstration against American businesses. Although our study corresponds to a specific event, the most robust finding contends that "hope" is an important indicator of attitude towards a boycott. The events post boycott occurred in 2007 support this contention. Such events were expected to have an impact in the American Congress, yet that was not the case. No changes or reforms were made to change the lives of the migrants in the U.S. Despite the fact their counterpart immigrants march for their rights in 2007, this time the compatriots in Mexico did not boycott the American businesses. Some post-interviews conducted by one of the authors revealed that it was due to the lack of "hope." The Mexicans no longer believed they could help the immigrants by boycotting the American businesses.

Furthermore, the study showed that ethnocentrism will affect an individual's attitude towards a boycott, and consistent with the TpB, the results confirm that attitudes are an antecedent of the intention to protest. That is, the study showed that "positive attitudes toward a boycott" positively affect the individual's intention to participate in it. The study was limited to only two cities on the U.S - Mexico border. Therefore, our results cannot be generalized to other areas. Future research could explore the use of our model to fit not only in a different Mexican sample, but also into a different ethnic group as well.

Foreign consumer spending is one of the most important sectors in the economy of the U.S. border. The growth in this sector was constant during 2005, whereas in 2006 was subjected to several stagnant periods.

Although not as expected, the "Nothing Gringo" boycott did have some impact on the economy of the U.S. border stores. Future work could explore the social effects of non-cooperation demonstrations held in other major cities in Mexico. Further research could also explore the determinants of expression of solidarity to this movement by Hispanic owned businesses.

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