# DIGITAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION

# Adidas's Marketing Communication Strategy Amid the International Conflict

**Reza Praditya Yudha**[1*] A. Rahman Hakim[2]

[1]Universitas Gunadarma, rezapraditya@staff.gunadarma.ac.id, Indonesia
[2] Universitas Gunadarma, rahmanhakimmm@gmail.com, Indonesia

**Abstract**
The Israel-Palestine conflict represents a geopolitical issue with far-reaching implications for global business, including the brand image of international corporations such as Adidas. Amid growing consumer awareness of sociopolitical issues, corporate responses to the conflict have become a focal point that influences public perception and purchasing decisions. This journal aims to analyze Adidas's marketing communication strategy in responding to public pressure and boycott movements stemming from its associations with Israeli entities. The study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method. Data were collected through media analysis, official press releases from Adidas, and social media posts by activists and the public. Triangulation techniques were used to ensure data validity by cross-referencing multiple sources. The findings reveal that Adidas adopted a communication strategy characterized by neutrality, avoiding explicit affiliation with either side in the Israel-Palestine conflict. While the company terminated its sponsorship with the Israel Football Association following public pressure, it maintained business ties with Israeli manufacturers. Adidas's communication strategy emphasizes values of diversity, inclusivity, and social responsibility through digital campaigns and humanitarian programs. The discussion suggests that this approach may help minimize reputational damage in the global market, although it does not entirely eliminate boycott threats. In conclusion, Adidas's communication strategy reflects an effort to balance business continuity and social values amid geopolitical tensions. A neutral yet responsive digital communication approach emerges as key to maintaining brand image and consumer loyalty on a global scale.

**Keywords**:  Communication Strategy; International Conflict; Case Study; Adidas.

**Introduction**

        The Israel-Palestine conflict is a long-standing geopolitical issue that has persisted for decades, exerting broad and far-reaching impacts across multiple sectors—not only in politics and humanitarian affairs, but also in the realm of global economics and business. This enduring conflict has shaped international public opinion, fueled global protest movements and solidarity campaigns, and influenced the reputations of various entities, including multinational corporations with either direct or indirect associations with the parties involved.

        One of the critical challenges in the business world today lies in how corporations respond to public pressure and the evolving sociopolitical landscape triggered by such conflicts. In this context, international companies are increasingly required to formulate strategic and adaptive communication responses to sensitive political issues such as the Israel-Palestine dispute. A company that is perceived as supporting, or even passively affiliating with, one side of a polarizing issue may face substantial consequences in terms of public perception, brand image, and consumer loyalty (Meidini and Astuti 2024).

Public reaction to a company's engagement or disengagement with a political issue often shapes strong brand associations. Consumers today are more critical and socially aware, placing significant value on the ethical and moral stance of the companies they support. Beyond considerations of price, quality, and design, modern consumers evaluate corporate behavior within a global sociopolitical framework. As such, a brand's involvement—or deliberate disengagement—in humanitarian crises like the Israel-Palestine conflict can significantly impact consumer purchase decisions and long-term brand equity (Utama et al. 2023).

Contemporary marketing communication theory emphasizes that a company's brand image is no longer shaped solely by its advertising efforts or product excellence. Instead, it is heavily influenced by the values that the public associates with the brand. In the era of digital transparency and ubiquitous access to information, consumers are increasingly attentive to the sociopolitical affiliations of corporations. Therefore, companies that successfully project an image of inclusivity, ethical responsibility, and social commitment tend to gain greater favor with the public (Yogi, Hanathasia, and Lestari 2025).

The Israel-Palestine conflict exemplifies how ideological and cultural differences influence consumer perceptions of a company's political positioning. In a global society that is becoming more politically conscious, corporations can no longer afford to remain apathetic. Consumers from diverse backgrounds assess the alignment, statements, and responses of companies regarding such conflicts. Corporations perceived as failing to uphold humanitarian values may face widespread criticism and even organized boycotts (Ronquillo, Ellis, and Toney-Butler 2025). Boycotts, as a form of political consumer expression, not only have immediate implications on sales but also present long-term risks to corporate reputation.

In this regard, social media plays a pivotal role as a channel through which consumer activism is articulated and amplified. Digital platforms have become the primary space for consumers and activists to express opinions, build support networks, and launch boycott campaigns. The viral nature of negative sentiment spreads rapidly across platforms, demanding that corporations remain both responsive and agile (Annur 2024). Unlike traditional forms of protest, digital-era boycotts transcend geographical boundaries and can impact a brand's global standing within days -or even hours.

Nevertheless, public sentiment does not always manifest in negative forms. Companies can benefit from positive consumer perceptions, especially when they are seen as genuinely committed to social causes aligned with public values. Transparent communication strategies that demonstrate awareness and ethical responsibility in response to sociopolitical issues can strengthen consumer loyalty and enhance brand positioning in the global marketplace (Ifada, Ghozali, and Faisal 2021). In times of crisis, a well-calibrated communication strategy can simultaneously alleviate public pressure and reinforce trust in the brand.

One particularly compelling case in this context is the marketing communication strategy employed by Adidas. As a globally recognized brand with extensive market presence across Europe, the Middle East, and beyond, Adidas operates within a highly diverse consumer landscape marked by various cultural, religious, and ideological identities. This creates complex communication challenges, particularly when the brand becomes entangled in sensitive political controversies such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. Adidas's affiliations with certain entities have direct implications for its consumer relationships worldwide, including in countries with a strong historical and ideological alignment with the Palestinian cause (Bizarrias et al. 2023).

Several boycott movements against Adidas illustrate how global political issues can influence market dynamics. For example, in 2018, Adidas faced intense criticism from pro-Palestinian activists for its sponsorship of the Israel Football Association (IFA). The boycott campaign alleged that Adidas was complicit in supporting Israeli football clubs operating in occupied territories. Additionally, Adidas's business ties with Delta Galil, an Israeli clothing manufacturer, sparked further public backlash and renewed boycott efforts. These incidents reflect the increasingly active role that consumers play in monitoring and critiquing corporate behavior in response to political developments.

Despite such pressures, Adidas has made efforts to preserve its brand image as a socially responsible company that upholds values of inclusivity, diversity, and ethical engagement. The company's communication strategy has been reflected in a series of digital campaigns that promote universal humanitarian values. For instance, Adidas's decision to end its sponsorship of the IFA was widely interpreted as a positive move, even though the company refrained from making an explicit

political statement. This suggests that value-based communication strategies may prove more effective than overt political declarations, which risk intensifying public polarization.

Moreover, the Adidas case is particularly relevant to the study of marketing communication as it provides empirical insights into the relationship between public sentiment, social media discourse, and corporate decision-making. The polarized reactions to Adidas underscore the evolving role of marketing communication as a tool not only for product promotion but also for crisis management. Brands must now engage in continuous sentiment monitoring, social media analysis, and real-time communication strategy adjustments to avoid reputational damage.

From a public perception standpoint, the success of a communication strategy is measured by the brand's ability to maintain a positive image. In industries such as fashion and sportswear, brand image constitutes a vital asset. Given its presence in countries with diverse sociopolitical backgrounds, Adidas must skillfully balance business sustainability with social responsibility. In the face of geopolitical tensions, every communication decision has long-term implications for consumer trust and loyalty.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore how the Israel-Palestine conflict affects Adidas's brand image among global consumers. Furthermore, it aims to examine how Adidas manages its digital communication strategy to sustain brand equity and consumer loyalty amid complex political pressures. This research not only contributes to theoretical discourse in crisis and marketing communication but also serves as a practical guide for corporations navigating communication challenges in an era marked by heightened public awareness and identity-driven political discourse.

## Theoretical Framework

This study employs two principal theoretical frameworks to analyze Adidas's communication strategy in responding to the boycott movement related to the Israel-Palestine conflict: Social Identity Theory and Crisis Communication Theory. These theoretical perspectives provide a robust foundation for understanding both consumer behavior and organizational response within the context of political sensitivity, global brand management, and media-driven public discourse.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, initially formulated by Tajfel and Turner (1979), posits that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from their membership in social groups. People tend to classify themselves and others into in-groups (those who share the same identity) and out-groups (those who are different), leading to group-based preferences, loyalties, and intergroup comparisons. This categorization process influences attitudes, emotions, and behavior toward others, particularly in situations where social, political, or cultural identities are salient.

Within the context of this study, Social Identity Theory provides an important lens for analyzing how consumers respond to Adidas's perceived political positioning. In times of sociopolitical tension, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, individuals often heighten their affiliation with identity-based causes. Consumers who identify with the Palestinian cause, for instance, are likely to evaluate brands based on their alignment—or lack thereof—with pro-Palestinian values. As Sabiq and Yulianita (2024) note, public perception of corporate political affiliation is frequently shaped by symbolic acts, indirect associations, and selective visibility in social discourse. Thus, Adidas's actions, sponsorships, and collaborations become markers of social identity that influence consumer behavior.

Adidas's global campaigns, public statements, or lack thereof, are interpreted not just as commercial or branding moves, but also as socio-political signals. A company's silence, neutrality, or involvement in a particular issue can either reinforce or alienate consumer identities. In this sense, marketing messages function as identity statements—both for the brand and for its stakeholders. When Adidas was accused of supporting Israeli institutions through its partnerships, many consumers with strong social identification toward Palestine perceived this as a betrayal of humanitarian values. As a result, social identity processes triggered boycotts, protest movements, and calls for accountability on social media platforms.

Furthermore, consumers tend to project their own beliefs and affiliations onto the brands they support. If a brand aligns with a consumer's values, identity reinforcement occurs, fostering brand loyalty and emotional attachment. Conversely, when misalignment is perceived—especially on sensitive issues involving justice, rights, or national conflict—consumer alienation is likely. In such

instances, consumers often withdraw their support, initiate boycott campaigns, or publicly denounce the brand to affirm their own group identity and moral stance.

Social Identity Theory, therefore, elucidates the underlying psychological mechanisms behind consumer activism in politically charged contexts. It explains how collective identity influences purchasing decisions and how brands become sites of symbolic struggle. In Adidas's case, the pressure from pro-Palestinian consumers stems not merely from disagreement with specific corporate actions, but from the broader need to assert social group solidarity and moral alignment.

Crisis Communication Theory

While Social Identity Theory helps explain consumer behavior, Crisis Communication Theory offers insights into corporate response strategies. This study specifically draws upon the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) developed by Coombs (2007), which provides a framework for selecting appropriate communication responses based on the nature, origin, and severity of a crisis.

According to SCCT, organizations must assess the degree to which they are perceived to be responsible for a crisis before choosing a communication strategy. Crises are categorized into different types—such as victim crises, accidental crises, and preventable crises—each demanding different levels of response and stakeholder engagement. The goal of crisis communication is to protect organizational reputation, restore public trust, and demonstrate accountability through carefully crafted messages and actions.

In the Adidas boycott case, the brand finds itself in a reputational crisis generated not by internal misconduct or product failure, but by perceived sociopolitical alignment. Although Adidas did not make any overt political statements supporting Israel, its past sponsorship of the Israeli Football Association (IFA) and its collaboration with Delta Galil (an Israeli manufacturer) positioned it in a contentious political space. From the perspective of SCCT, such a crisis can be considered a preventable or intensifying crisis, especially if prior warnings or controversies were ignored.

Adidas's decision to terminate its sponsorship with the IFA following public pressure suggests an application of the rebuilding strategy in SCCT, which includes actions such as apology, compensation, or corrective measures. This strategy is used when an organization acknowledges responsibility and seeks to regain stakeholder trust. However, Adidas's reluctance to take a clear political stance or issue an explicit apology also reflects elements of the diminishment strategy, in which the company attempts to downplay the perceived harm and reframe the narrative.

Crisis Communication Theory also emphasizes the importance of consistency, empathy, and transparency in messaging. Organizations that appear evasive or contradictory in their responses are more likely to face sustained backlash. Adidas's selective engagement—responding to some controversies (e.g., IFA sponsorship) while ignoring others (e.g., Bella Hadid's activism)—may be interpreted as strategic neutrality, but can also be perceived as lack of commitment, depending on the stakeholder group.

Moreover, in the digital age, crisis communication must extend beyond traditional media channels to include real-time engagement on social media. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok are not only tools for disseminating information, but also arenas for public deliberation, outrage, and mobilization. Coombs (2007) notes that stakeholder perception is central to crisis outcome; thus, the rapid and interactive nature of digital discourse must be managed proactively.

In this light, Adidas's digital marketing and communication efforts—such as highlighting corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in Palestinian territories or promoting values like diversity and inclusion—can be seen as part of an image restoration strategy. These actions aim to shift the brand narrative away from political controversy toward a more humanitarian and globally appealing identity. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such strategies is contingent on credibility, perceived sincerity, and alignment with stakeholder expectations.

The combination of Social Identity Theory and Crisis Communication Theory allows for a comprehensive understanding of both sides of the communicative interaction: why consumers react the way they do, and how companies respond to mitigate reputational damage. Social Identity Theory situates consumer behavior within broader sociopolitical contexts and explains the emotional drivers of support or dissent. Meanwhile, Crisis Communication Theory provides strategic guidance for organizations to manage crises through appropriate messaging and stakeholder engagement.

Together, these theories illuminate the reciprocal relationship between corporate communication and consumer activism in a globalized and politically sensitive marketplace. In the case of Adidas, understanding these dynamics is essential to evaluating the effectiveness, limitations, and consequences of its communication strategies during the boycott crisis.

When facing public backlash, Adidas is compelled to develop a strategic crisis communication response. According to Crisis Communication Theory, as formulated by Coombs (2007), organizations must implement communication strategies that are appropriate to the nature and severity of the crisis they are experiencing. The chosen strategy should align with stakeholder perceptions of organizational responsibility and the potential reputational threat posed by the crisis. Crisis communication is not only a reactive measure but also a strategic tool for risk mitigation and the demonstration of corporate social responsibility. By tailoring messages that address stakeholder concerns and expectations, companies can minimize reputational harm while reinforcing their commitment to ethical and socially responsible conduct.

## Material and Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach using the case study method as its primary research design. The case study method is particularly appropriate for examining contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly defined (Creswell 2017). Through this approach, the study aims to achieve a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the social, political, and communicative dimensions that influence Adidas's digital campaigns in response to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The case study design allows for an exploratory investigation into the complexities of corporate communication strategies under socio-political pressure. It facilitates a multi-faceted analysis of how Adidas, as a global brand, negotiates its public image and consumer relationships amidst international controversies. Specifically, this method enables the researcher to identify recurring patterns, communication tactics, and strategic positioning used by Adidas to navigate consumer sentiment and mitigate reputational risk (Priya 2021).

The data for this study were collected from multiple sources to ensure richness and validity. Primary data sources include international news reports, official press releases by Adidas, and digital content such as social media posts, public statements, and online discourse generated by consumers, activists, and opinion leaders. These sources were selected based on their relevance to key events in the Adidas boycott, including controversies related to the company's sponsorship of the Israel Football Association (IFA), collaborations with Israeli manufacturers, and campaigns involving high-profile pro-Palestinian figures such as Bella Hadid.

The analytical process involved thematic content analysis, focusing on media narratives, public responses, and corporate messaging. This technique enabled the researcher to trace how Adidas's communication strategies evolved over time and how the brand positioned itself across different stakeholder groups. The analysis also aimed to uncover implicit meanings, ideological framing, and value associations embedded within Adidas's digital campaigns and official responses.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed triangulation as a methodological tool. Triangulation was achieved by cross-verifying information obtained from diverse data sources—news articles, official corporate communication, and user-generated content. This methodological rigor helped reduce the risk of bias and strengthened the internal validity of the research.

By integrating qualitative data from various platforms and stakeholders, the study provides a holistic perspective on Adidas's digital marketing and crisis communication in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The case of Adidas serves as a critical site for understanding how multinational corporations respond to global political tensions and consumer activism through strategic communication practices. Ultimately, the methodological framework adopted in this study supports a nuanced examination of the interplay between brand reputation, public pressure, and ethical positioning in the global marketplace.

## Result and Discussion

Adidas's digital marketing activities are characterized by a dynamic and adaptive approach, particularly in response to the evolving geopolitical context of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The

company's digital campaigns reflect a continuous effort to adjust messaging, branding, and strategic communication in accordance with the intensity and public perception of the conflict. The following section Table 1 presents a chronological overview and analysis of Adidas's key digital marketing initiatives and campaigns within this sociopolitical landscape.

**Table 1.** Adidas's Digital Marketing Communication

| Year | Event | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 2014 | Call for Boycott Against Adidas | Several pro-Palestinian groups called for a boycott of Adidas after the company became a sponsor of the Israel Football Association (IFA) and provided support to the Israeli national football team. (Source: The Jakarta Post, June 12, 2014 - https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/06/12/dismissed-workers-protest-against-adidas-ahead-world-cup.html) |
| 2018 | Termination of Sponsorship Agreement with IFA | Adidas ended its sponsorship relationship with the Israel Football Association (IFA) following pressure from pro-Palestinian groups. The boycott was partly driven by concerns that Israeli football clubs located in occupied territories (such as the West Bank) were being sponsored by Adidas. |
| 2020 | Controversy over Sponsorship with Israeli Manufacturer (Delta Galil) | Adidas faced criticism for its cooperation with Delta Galil, an Israel-based underwear manufacturer. Pro-Palestinian activists protested this relationship, viewing it as support for Israeli government policies. |
| 2021 | Support for the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) Movement | Activists supporting the BDS movement continued to urge Adidas to cut ties with companies affiliated with Israel. They demanded that Adidas cease operations in Israel or with any company maintaining business relations with Israel. |
| 2022 | Support for Palestinian Refugees through Humanitarian Projects | Adidas launched several humanitarian initiatives in Palestinian territories aimed at assisting refugees and marginalized communities. Although the company did not publicly comment on Israeli policy, its efforts to support Palestinian communities were seen as a gesture of solidarity. (Source: Adidas Official Press Release) |
| 2024 | Bella Hadid Controversy | A campaign featuring Bella Hadid, a well-known pro-Palestinian activist, sparked renewed boycott calls against Adidas due to Hadid's political stance in support of Palestine. The boycott included accusations that Adidas endorsed the BDS movement through its association with Hadid. (Source: The Guardian, July 19, 2024- https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/article/2024/jul/19/adidas-removes-bella-hadid-from-ad-campaign-after-criticism-from-israel) |

Source: Processed by the Researchers

Adidas has faced multiple controversies stemming from its involvement -both direct and perceived -in political issues related to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Public criticism has particularly centered around three key areas: the company's former sponsorship of the Israel Football Association (IFA), its business relationship with the Israeli manufacturer Delta Galil, and its collaboration with supermodel Bella Hadid, who is known for her vocal support of Palestinian rights.

Sponsorship of the Israel Football Association (IFA)
In 2018, Adidas terminated its sponsorship agreement with the Israel Football Association following significant pressure from multiple stakeholders, including over 130 Palestinian football clubs. These clubs formally appealed for Adidas to end its partnership due to the IFA's affiliation with football

teams based in illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Although Adidas publicly stated that the termination of the sponsorship was not politically motivated, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement regarded this action as a major success within their broader campaign to pressure corporations to sever ties with entities linked to the Israeli occupation. The incident positioned Adidas at the center of international scrutiny and illustrated how corporate affiliations can become politicized, even when the company seeks to maintain neutrality.

Business Relations with Delta Galil

In addition to the IFA controversy, Adidas drew further criticism for its commercial relationship with Delta Galil, an Israeli-based apparel manufacturer. Delta Galil was reportedly contracted to produce Adidas's underwear line. This partnership provoked backlash from pro-Palestinian activists, who argued that Adidas's continued association with an Israeli manufacturer implicated the company in indirectly supporting the occupation. Calls for boycotting Adidas products resurfaced, with activists and advocacy groups urging consumers to avoid brands that maintain business ties with Israeli entities perceived as complicit in human rights violations or the perpetuation of occupation policies.

These two cases—namely, the sponsorship of the IFA and the collaboration with Delta Galil—have served as primary catalysts for the ongoing boycott campaigns targeting Adidas. Numerous groups advocating for Palestinian rights have condemned these affiliations, asserting that Adidas's partnerships contradict the values of justice, human rights, and corporate responsibility. The company's lack of a firm stance or public clarification on these matters has further intensified criticism and complicated its brand positioning among socially conscious consumers.

It is worth noting that, while Adidas has promoted global campaigns centered on themes of inclusivity, diversity, and unity through sports, there is no verifiable record of the company initiating specific campaigns that involve collaborative narratives between Palestinian and Israeli athletes under the scope of reconciliation or peace-building. Any prior assumptions or claims about such campaigns appear to be unfounded.

Selection of a Palestinian-Descent Brand Ambassador

American supermodel Bella Hadid, of Palestinian descent through her father Mohamed Hadid, has been an outspoken advocate for Palestinian rights -as shown at Figure 1. She has frequently used her public platform to highlight human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories and to express solidarity with the Palestinian people. In recent years, Bella Hadid has actively participated in protests and global campaigns in support of Palestine, and she has consistently criticized Israeli government policies, particularly those related to military aggression and occupation.



**Figure 1.** Palestinian Model as Adidas's Model
Source: CNN-News18 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BsprqngoCo)

Hadid has leveraged social media to amplify messages condemning violence in Gaza and the broader occupation of Palestinian lands. Her posts often call for the end of Israeli occupation and support the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement—a global campaign that encourages the economic and cultural boycott of Israel in protest of its policies toward Palestinians. Due to her pro-Palestinian stance, Bella Hadid has become a polarizing figure, attracting significant criticism from pro-Israel groups and prompting backlash toward brands associated with her, including Adidas.

As a result of her public activism, Adidas faced renewed pressure from stakeholders demanding the brand distance itself from Hadid. This led to calls for boycotts by groups that perceived Adidas's association with Hadid as implicit support for the BDS movement and, by extension, for the Palestinian cause. These developments further intensified the brand's entanglement in the political dimensions of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Analysis of Adidas's Communication Strategy

In response to escalating public scrutiny, Adidas adopted several communication and strategic adjustments to navigate the politically sensitive environment. These efforts can be analyzed in three core areas. First, response to boycott and Pro-Palestinian Pressure. Adidas faced considerable pressure from pro-Palestinian groups demanding that the company sever all ties with Israeli institutions and businesses. This included criticism of its sponsorship of the Israel Football Association (IFA) and its partnership with Delta Galil. While Adidas has never issued explicit political statements supporting either side of the conflict, its corporate actions indicate a degree of responsiveness to boycott campaigns, particularly those that frame their demands around human rights and social justice.

In 2018, Adidas ended its sponsorship agreement with the IFA following pressure from the BDS movement. Although Adidas publicly framed the decision as apolitical, the move was widely interpreted as a concession to the growing pro-Palestinian advocacy. In contrast, when faced with similar criticism over its business relationship with Delta Galil in 2020, Adidas chose to maintain the partnership. This divergence illustrates the company's selective response to external pressures, suggesting a complex balancing act between market interests and reputational management.

Second, neutrality in business and sponsorship practices. Adidas appears to favor a neutral stance in politically contentious situations. The company has consistently avoided overt political alignment and refrained from expressing explicit support for either Israel or Palestine. Decisions such as ending sponsorships or supporting humanitarian initiatives have been framed around universal values like inclusivity and diversity, rather than ideological affiliations.

Although Adidas discontinued its partnership with the IFA, it did not extend this disengagement to all Israeli businesses, nor did it make financial commitments to Palestinian economic development. In 2022, Adidas initiated humanitarian projects aimed at supporting marginalized Palestinian communities. These initiatives—focused on education and community resilience—signal an attempt by Adidas to align its brand with global humanitarian values rather than specific political agendas. Such positioning is consistent with standard practices among multinational corporations seeking to avoid alienating segments of their diverse consumer base (Syarif and Herman 2024).

Third, challenges with celebrity endorsements and activism. Adidas's partnership with Bella Hadid presented both opportunities and risks. On one hand, Hadid's prominence as a fashion icon aligned with Adidas's brand image of inclusivity and empowerment. On the other hand, her political activism created reputational risk, especially among consumers who viewed her advocacy as controversial or divisive.

In 2024, renewed calls for a boycott emerged following Adidas's campaign featuring Hadid. Critics accused the brand of indirectly endorsing the BDS movement. Eventually, Adidas removed Hadid from the campaign—an action that reflects a more cautious approach to public figures associated with political activism. This episode demonstrates the brand's ongoing struggle to reconcile its social messaging with the geopolitical implications of its partnerships.

**Discussion**

Over the past several years, Adidas has consistently taken steps to avoid direct involvement in the political aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict. While the company has responded to public pressure on certain issues, such as its sponsorship of the IFA, it has generally maintained a position of strategic neutrality. Adidas's actions suggest a deliberate attempt to balance humanitarian engagement with business sustainability.

Rather than endorsing a particular political stance, Adidas emphasizes values such as diversity, equality, and social responsibility in its brand messaging. This approach appears intended to protect the brand from reputational damage while preserving its global market presence, especially in regions like the Middle East where consumer sentiment regarding the conflict is particularly sensitive (Sarjono et al. 2024). Thus, Adidas's strategy reflects a calculated effort to navigate the polarized landscape without alienating significant segments of its international consumer base.

The company exercises extreme caution in its public positioning, acknowledging the potential reputational risks of being perceived as politically biased. Given its wide consumer reach and multicultural audience, Adidas tends to make decisions that are consistent with business continuity and long-term brand equity.

While Adidas does not openly support either side of the conflict, it has demonstrated a commitment to promoting global humanitarian values. The brand's emphasis on equality, diversity, and inclusion—rather than on national or political identities—offers a strategic buffer in highly polarized debates. However, this strategy is not without limitations, as neutrality can be perceived by some stakeholders as complacency or insufficient moral leadership.

This study identifies several major findings concerning the impact of the Israel-Palestine conflict on Adidas's brand image and strategic communication:

1. Consumer Response Patterns. Pro-Palestinian consumers tend to pressure Adidas to adopt a firmer stance in support of Palestine, whereas neutral or pro-Israel consumers often argue that corporate brands should remain apolitical. On social media, boycott campaigns emerged using hashtags that encouraged consumers to stop purchasing Adidas products.
2. Adidas's Communication Strategy. The company adopted a neutrality-based communication strategy by issuing general statements about human rights without explicitly supporting either party. This approach aims to preserve equilibrium in the global market, considering the political and geographic diversity of its customer base.
3. Impact on Sales and Consumer Loyalty. While Adidas experienced a decline in loyalty in some regions—particularly in markets with strong pro-Palestinian sentiment—its global sales remained relatively stable. This suggests that the brand's efforts at damage control and reputation management have mitigated broader financial losses.
4. Corporate Social Responsibility Campaigns. In response to criticism, Adidas launched CSR initiatives focused on humanitarian aid and sustainability. Projects aimed at supporting education and vulnerable communities in Palestine were part of the company's broader image mitigation strategy.

From the lens of Social Identity Theory, the boycott of Adidas can be interpreted as a collective expression of identity from consumers who align themselves with a particular sociopolitical cause. Simultaneously, Crisis Communication Theory highlights how Adidas's neutral and socially responsible messaging serves as a form of risk mitigation during reputational crises.

However, these strategies are not always fully effective. The persistence of boycott movements indicates that a portion of the consumer base remains dissatisfied with Adidas's actions. In some cases, neutrality may not be sufficient to quell public outrage—especially in the age of social media, where backlash can rapidly escalate on a global scale.

**Conclusions**

The Israel-Palestine issue illustrates how political factors can significantly influence the marketing communication strategies of global corporations. The case of Adidas serves as a pertinent example of how a multinational company must navigate public pressure while simultaneously safeguarding its brand image. Furthermore, Adidas must ensure the sustainability of its business operations amid the growing polarization of public opinion across global markets. Through effective communication management, companies can maintain consumer loyalty while demonstrating a strategic commitment to social responsibility.

This study offers the following recommendations for companies experiencing crisis or boycott-related challenges:

1. Enhance Transparency in Communication. Companies should adopt greater transparency when communicating policies related to social and political issues. Clear and honest disclosure can help prevent misunderstandings among consumers and build long-term trust.

2. Adopt a Proactive Approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Rather than responding reactively to public pressure, companies should proactively implement CSR initiatives that address the needs of affected communities. These programs should emphasize humanitarian values without necessarily aligning with specific political ideologies.

3. Engage in Real-Time Sentiment Monitoring. By leveraging social media analytics, companies like Adidas can more effectively monitor shifts in public opinion and adjust their communication strategies accordingly. Real-time insights allow brands to be responsive, agile, and better equipped to mitigate reputational risks.

With more adaptive, data-driven strategies, companies confronted with crisis situations can be better prepared to address public backlash. Moreover, they can manage digital marketing challenges more effectively by employing communication strategies that are both sensitive to political contexts and aligned with broader social values.

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