

## **Seeking Influencers on a Corporate Boycott Through Twitter: A Social Media Analysis of #BoycottNRA and Corporate Reaction**

YOUNG JOON LIM  
University of Texas Rio Grande

LYNSE LARANCE GUERRA  
Skaggs & Guerra Law Firm

**ABSTRACT:** A social media movement initiated through the Twitter platform is the embodiment of a social media campaign since it is organized by a group of people working together to advance their social and political beliefs. The campaign operates in an organized course of action that falls under the definition of the social media community. In other words, a campaign organized with use of social media is one of the pivotal strategies in achieving the goal of any contemporary movement. Many advocates strategize to disseminate their core messages through social media, especially Twitter, to reach those individuals who can become allies in the quest of supporting their causes. A most recent case is the campaign against the National Rifle Association (NRA) in the aftermath of the deadly school shooting in Florida in February 2018. In the wake of the incident and its aftermath, this article outlines who sparks a campaign and what makes advocates and advocacy groups through Twitter advance ideas that lead to a social movement.

**Keywords:** Social media; campaign; NRA; Twitter

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### **1. Introduction**

Advocacy groups of all types use social media to reach out to their target audience, aiming to directly share their messages (Ewbank, 2015). Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat are among the popular options for advocates to spearhead their agenda on social media platforms. Social media allows advocacy groups to create and exchange user-generated content, and it is now the de facto communication method for influencing and initiating a movement for social causes (Udanor *et al.*, 2016). Such a movement in the social media community is usually originated from an abundance of unstructured and voluminous information-sharing processes that promptly exchange words and visual, digital content in a short period of time as a form of expressing individual insights. The expressed and recorded insights in the community are

regarded as a digital foot-print, which is a trail of social media data. The data tend to have characteristics of “high volume, high velocity and high variety” (Udanor *et al.*, 2017, p. 482). Acknowledging the impact of social media, advocates for social causes see it as a powerful tool for promoting their viewpoints and fostering interests. Among the popular social media platforms is Twitter that generated 500 million Tweets a day and 100 million active daily users, in which advocates saw it as the most effective medium to launch a social media grassroots movement (Aslam, 2017).

A social media movement initiated through the Twitter platform is the embodiment of a social media campaign since it is organized by a group of people working together to advance their social and political beliefs. The campaign operates in an organized course of action that falls under the definition of the social media community. In other words, a campaign

**Young Joon Lim** is a Professor of Communication at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Please address all communication to the author Dr. Young Joon Lim, Professor of Communication, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, 1201 West University Dr. Arhu 165. Edinburg, Tx. 78539. Email: [young.lim@utrgv.edu](mailto:young.lim@utrgv.edu). **Lynse Larance Guerra (J.D.)** is an Attorney at Law. Please address all communication to the author Lynse Larance Guerra (J.D.), Attorney at Law, Skaggs & Guerra Law Firm, 710 Laurel, McAllen, Tx. 78501. Email: [sglp@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sglp@sbcglobal.net).

organized with use of social media is one of the pivotal strategies in achieving the goal of any contemporary movement. Many advocates strategize to disseminate their core messages through social media, especially Twitter, to reach those individuals who can become allies in the quest of supporting their causes (Ewbank, 2015). In the end, they expect such individuals to act on the messages. One popular strategy of social media campaign that is boycotts. Boycott campaigns across Twitter are designed and aimed to pressure targeted organizations to change business practices or organizational behaviors. A most recent case is the campaign against the National Rifle Association (NRA) in the aftermath of the deadly school shooting in Florida in February 2018.

In the wake of the incident and its aftermath, this article outlines who sparks a campaign and what makes advocates and advocacy groups through Twitter advance ideas that lead to a social movement. From a public relations perspective, this article searches for explanations of the effects of a boycott campaign in relation to Twitter influencers who act as advocates. NodeXL software was used to analyze and explain the boycott movement through Twitter as it allows for visual analysis of networks and relationships to determine the spread of messages from influencers and their call for action in hopes of influencing behavior of target audiences. This article also examines the strategies for powerful dissemination of messages customized by the influencers in the boycott movement against the NRA. This examination occurs by investigating the network structure on Twitter, including the flow of information.

## 2. Literature review

Twitter is used to create and advocate for certain types of social movement, and has introduced a new way of organizing campaigns in the areas of public health, sales, the environment, and politics (Yun, *et al.*, 2015; Jones, 2015; Choi, Sang, & Park, 2014). Twitter as a social media tool for advocacy has been used to fulfill social, individual, and corporate interests. Previous research across multiple disciplines suggested that Twitter with the brevity of messages has been the most effective and efficient social media outlet for influencers orchestrating campaigns to push customized messages into the minds of target audiences (Wagner, Gainous, & Holman, 2017; Kamin, 2013; Fulton, 2012). The effects of such messages were analyzed in the form of social network analysis (SNA) as one of the popular branches of Big Data analytics techniques. Therefore, it is worth noting that SNA, influencers on

campaigns, and Twitter advocacy need to be examined and conceptualized in detail.

### 2.1. Social Network Analysis (SNA) and Influencers

Udanor *et al.* (2016) defined SNA as “a method for measurement, representation and analysis of a social structure which seeks to predict the structure of relationships among social entities, as well as the impact of the said structure on other social phenomena” (p. 483). Researchers apply SNA to study patterns between relations of a variety of social structures, mainly including the data gathered from social media. Ewbank (2015) argued that SNA can be approached in two ways: (1) “a whole network,” which offers a bird’s-eye view of a set of relations among nodes; and (2) “an egocentric network,” which focuses on the network that surrounds one node (p. 27). As the focus of this article stays with a whole network from Twitter, it is important to explore the following two factors to provide insights about how the network structure affects the attitudes and behavioral intentions of individuals and groups residing on the Twitter networks: (1) degrees between nodes and (2) centrality. Degrees are the extent to which a particular node is a bridge to other nodes, and centrality is the extent to which one node dominates the social network by having more connections. Identifying centrality on the Twitter network about a specific advocacy highlights the revelation of underlying communication patterns and structures of networks, including influencers for advocacy (Yun *et al.*, 2016).

Data from Twitter can be measured through Twitter’s Application Programming Interface (API) as well as SNA. The Twitter API, which can be downloaded into NodeXL software, is used to identify out-degree centrality and in-degree centrality. The former is measured as the number of outgoing connections, meaning that particular Twitter handles following certain group of users are counted. The latter reveals the number of incoming connections of a node, meaning that a certain user has dozens or millions of followers (Hansen, Shneiderman, & Smith, 2010). In other words, a high-level of in-degree centrality represents the user’s popularity, importance, reputation, prominence and power on Twitter. The user can be referred to as influencer for advocacy, and each Twitter hashtag (#) that carries a certain social topic for discussion or that implements a campaign calling for an action has been likely to grab the attention of social media researchers. Such researchers calculated eigenvector centrality scores to determine the

effects of a specific Twitter topic or campaign (e.g. Hansen, 2011; Choi, Sang, & Park, 2014). The scores represent a particular user's or node's status as an authority figure by analyzing the number of followers plus those followers' followers, retweets, and mentions of tweets (Yun *et al.*, 2016). As a result, an influencer on Twitter can be identified by SNA and API. In this regard, this article was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. Who were the influencers on Twitter, who spearheaded the boycott campaign against the NRA after the school shooting in Florida?

RQ2. Who were the followers to support or oppose the influencers?

## ***2.2 Florida school massacre and theoretical framework for the NRA boycott hashtag***

A 19-year-old gunman opened fire inside Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Valentine's Day, killing 14 students and three teachers in 2018. It was one of the 10 deadliest mass shootings in modern U.S. history (Chavez & Almasy, 2018). As noted in *Time* magazine, the gunman Nikolas Cruz used an AR-15 rifle, a semi-automatic weapon made for military use and seen in other mass shootings, including the 2016 Pulse nightclub massacre in Orlando (2018). After the shooting, a movement for stricter gun-control laws was called for by hundreds of the Florida high school survivors and thousands of teenagers nationwide. They used social media in hopes of changing gun laws to prevent other mass shootings, and main stream media heavily covered the development. For example, on February 22, from Arizona to Washington, students walked out of schools in support of demanding a ban on weapons like AR-15 rifles, and President Trump met with groups of survivors of the Florida shooting and parents of victims at the White House. Trump suggested stronger background checks and gun possession by teachers in schools (McLaughlin & Yan, 2018).

In early March, 2018, the Florida Legislature passed a bill titled "The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act," which required an increase in the minimum age for buying rifles from 18 to 21, and a ban on bump stocks purchased by convicted criminals and certain mentally ill individuals (Yan, 2018). Florida Gov. Rick Scott signed the bill into law. In response to the law, the NRA immediately filed

a federal lawsuit against Florida, arguing "the age-minimum section of the law violates the second and 14<sup>th</sup> amendments of the US Constitution" (Yan, 2018, para. 6).

While national discussion and debate to prevent the next school massacre unfolded, a salient voice against the NRA gun lobby began to gain momentum on Twitter: #BoycottNRA. A popular method on Twitter for drawing public and media attention is the use of hashtags - keywords accompanied by the symbol of # (Thorson *et al.*, 2016). However, most hashtags failed to get into a public sphere of popularity as very few were able to muster substantial public attention to their causes on Twitter (Thrall, Stecular, & Sweet, 2014). Thorson et al. (2016) suggested that a hashtag could go viral and emerge overnight as a popular discussion topic after a grassroots beginning is sponsored by influential organizations or "other elites as part of a broader campaign" (p. 4787). Hashtags that are sponsored and used by "influencers" who have large numbers of followers or central network positions tend to prominently frame the issue (p. 4788). A movement hashtag seeking public attention and support such as #BoycottNRA can be conceptualized as a structure that can spontaneously aggregate popularity on Twitter (Thorson *et al.*, 2016). In other words, such a hashtag is a co-creation of both influencers of advocacy groups as well as the Twitter followers who participate through the act of using the hashtag with meaningfully interconnected clusters of widely visible public campaigns (Bonilla & Rosa 2015).

Advocates for the #BoycottNRA campaign turned to social media with calls to end corporate partnerships with the NRA, America's most powerful gun lobby entity. The advocacy for business action against the NRA succeeded in attracting heavy attention from the media and corporate sponsors. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the hashtag "#BoycottNRA" was the top trend on Twitter nationally on February 23, ten days after the shooting (Fuhmans, 2018). *The Washington Post* characterized #BoycottNRA as the movement for the first stronghold of resistance against the NRA (Selk, 2018). The hashtag of "BoycottNRA" was first created and shared after the Sandy Hook Elementary school shooting in Connecticut, where 20 children and six adults were gunned down in 2012 (Selk, 2018). However, no visible outcomes were produced then. After Sandy Hook, there was nothing like the string of corporate boycotts that occurred after the Florida shooting through the most active political social media platform - Twitter (Selk, 2018).

Rosendaal and Reitsma (2017) explained that the term “boycott” was originated from Charles Boycott who evicted poor tenants from his lands in Ireland. His last name is defined as “the action where, out of protest, people voluntarily abstain from dealing with an organization or country” (p. 595). In the United States, political and public calls to boycott corporations, in response to corporate political activity, are on the rise (Endres & Panagopoulos, 2017). For example, President Trump called for a boycott of the National Football League (NFL) if it would not crack down on players who refused to stand for the national anthem in 2017. Another example is a boycott against the retail company L.L. Bean by Democrats as the company had donated large sums to a pro-Trump political action committee (PAC). In response, President Trump asked his supporters to shop at the stores of the company more often.

Endres and Panagopoulos argued that when American consumers learn about political activities of corporations and brands, “they may be motivated to reward or punish them by either purchasing or declining to purchase their goods or services” (2017, p. 2). Antagonism toward corporate sponsorship for a particular cause has grown in the social media world as Americans have arguably become more polarized than at any time since the Civil War (Gardner, 2018). As a result, more than half of consumers (65 %) said they would boycott a corporation based on its stance on a social or political issue, according to the 2017 Edelman Earned Brand report. In particular, consumers in the social media world tend to put “their personal convictions front and center, [so] brands of all kinds and sizes are now navigating this new reality” (Edelman, 2017, para. 4). As noted in the *New York Times*, Twitter and Facebook became the preferred vehicle for the rise of consumer activism, “turning the everyday purchase of dresses or shoes or, now, renting a car or buying insurance, into a form of protest or demonstration of ideology” (Creswell & HSU, 2018, para. 5). Such a trendy phenomenon can be explained by the theory of social judgment, which posits that attitude change (persuasion) is altered by judgmental processes and effects (O’Keefe, 1990). The theory proposes four basic principles as follows (Sherif, M., Sherif, K., & Nebergall, 1965):

- (1) People have categories of judgment with which they evaluate persuasive positions.
- (2) People determine the category of judgment, or latitude, to which it belongs.
- (3) The size of the latitudes is determined by the level of personal ego-involvement.

(4) People manipulate incoming information to satisfy their judgment.

(5) People can change their attitudes, depending on moderate discrepancies of advocacy.

As the theory suggests with the principles, the success of the #BoycottNRA movement on Twitter could be evaluated by the acceptance latitude of individual ego-involvement, as opposed to the latitudes of non-commitment and rejection. If an individual attitude toward the NRA is positive, his latitude about the boycott movement would fall into the category of rejection regardless of the movement advocates’ efforts. By contrast, individuals with high ego-involvement would place a high value on how important the issue is to their self-identity. For them, the ego-involving movement of #BoycottNRA is one that would define who they are and would address critical aspects of their beliefs. Departing from the movement of #BoycottNRA and the theory, the following research questions were addressed:

RQ3. What outcomes for the corporate sponsors resulted from the #BoycottNRA movement?

RQ4. How did the outcomes affect the images and reputations of the corporate sponsors?

### 3. Method

Social network analysis (SNA) enables researchers to evaluate social actors’ influence on a network and relationships by quantifying and visualizing social ties. As part of the SNA methodology, data on Twitter can be visualized and analyzed using a taxonomy and data mining algorithms such as Harel-Koren Fast Multiscale and Clauset-Newman-Moore cluster (Smith, *et al.*, 2014). The techniques from NodeXL help researchers acknowledge actions of key influencers in perpetuating or limiting Twitter conversations (Ewbank, 2015). This article used Twitter public data streams to collect data from midnight to 01:00 A.M., on February 22. The specific time frame was chosen because mainstream media such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* recognized the movement as going viral while teenage shooting survivors and advocate influencers had turned the #BoycottNRA hashtag into a full-blown pressure campaign (see Selk, 2018; Creswell & Hsu, 2018).

Yeo, Knox and Jung argued that using Twitter data streams in investigating communication phenomena is advantageous since the system supports the unlimited amount of users’ information sharing about ongoing issues or campaigns at any moment

(2017). Another advantage of using data on Twitter is the clarification and confirmation of users' actions and opinions about immediate social issues. For this article, Twitter's API, embedded in NodeXL, was used to download data for #BoycottNRA, and the maximum number of data was set for 2,000 users per the hashtag due to several technical limitations in collecting data from the API. After the data collection was completed, user data from Twitter were analyzed, including the elements of "following," "mention," and "retweet" to identify the influencers and followers of #BoycottNRA. The # symbol was included since it coordinates public discussion on the news, and it establishes emerging issues. In addition, the hashtag symbol is influencers' and advocacy groups' favorite device to spread messages. #blacklivesmatter after the Ferguson protest in Missouri of 2014 is a representative example of the power of the # symbol.

This article also used a cluster analysis, using the Clauset-Newman-Moore cluster algorithm to identify sub-group structures. The algorithm was designed to visualize more connections with one another than expected in a random model (Yeo, Knox & Jung, 2017). The pattern of cluster connections provides insightful information into understanding a structure for the #BoycottNRA movement. The algorithm also identified each sub-group influencers who happened to be followers of the influencers of the movement. Hence, similarities and differences of influencers were identified within and across clusters of sub-groups, in which this article aimed to examine the network structure of movement discussions from an information flow perspective. Influencers and sub-group influencers with regard to the #BoycottNRA movement could be regarded as a vehicle for accelerating the diffusion of information (Yuksel, 2013). As a result, this article provides an empirical analysis of the effects of influencers and network information flows on the #BoycottNRA movement.

**4. Results**

This article chose Twitter over other social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, because Twitter specializes in breaking news, and political and corporate issues, compared to other social media sites which are used more for friend and family interaction. To identify influencers on the issue of the NRA boycott, the indegree centrality of all users in the network was measured out of 2,000 tweets. Among the tweets, a total of 811 individual Twitter accounts were identified, which means that some of the users tweeted more than once about the hashtag. Table 1 shows the TOP 30 highest indegree accounts with the

incoming connections (follower scores over five).

Table 1. Influencers Discussing #BoycottNRA

No.	Twitter ID	The number of times the user had the highest indegree score	Occupation
1	nra	33	Association
2	benshapiro	29	Commentator
3	krassenstein	27	Entrepreneur
4	joncoopertweets	26	Politician
5	funder	23	Political Affiliation
6	amazon	17	Business
7	hertz	16	Business
8	realjack	15	Commentator
9	jackposobiec	14	Writer
10	kaivanshroff	13	Politician
11	metlife	12	Business
12	thebradfordfile	11	Political Affiliation
13	leahmcelrath	11	Writer
14	truecar	11	Business
15	therickydavila	11	Singer
16	cnn	10	News Agency

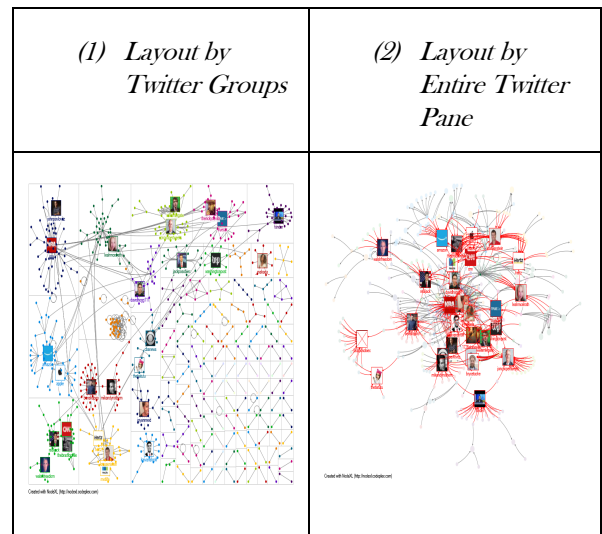
17	joyannreid	10	Commentator
18	mikandynothem	9	Singer
19	washingtonpost	8	News Agency
20	davidhogg111	8	Commentator
21	_makada_	7	Writer
22	williamlegate	7	Entrepreneur
23	walshfreedom	6	Politician
24	johnpavlovitz	6	Writer
25	apple	6	Business
26	thetiatutu	5	Advocate
27	cbsnews	5	News Agency
28	1776stonewall	5	Advocate
29	says	5	Unknown
30	brycetache	5	Advocate

As the indegree score identifies the user who gets prominent attention by interacting with his, her, or its audience one-on-one, the NRA account got interacted most with regard to Twitter discussion of #BoycottNRA, followed by Ben Shapiro who is a conservative commentator. Third, fourth, and fifth were taken by liberal figures and an association. The five corporations listed in Table 1 were corporate sponsors of the NRA by offering its members a certain amount of discounts. Not surprisingly, main stream media such as CNN, CBS News, and the *Washington Post* were listed as influencers, although individual commentators, advocates, singers, and writers had better indegree scores. Based on this influencer results, the RQ1 was answered.

In order for this article to answer the RQ2, the Harel-Koren Fast Multiscale algorithm was performed, and it provided two layout options: (1) Each of the graph's groups in its own box and (2) The entire graph in the

entire graph pane (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The visualization of Twitter networks by layouts



The Top 30 influencers on the #BoycottNRA movement were visualized with the two graphs. The NRA on Twitter as the most powerful influencer was connected with conservative Twitter users and organizations, whereas liberal users and organizations were more connected with CNN and liberal advocates in the group layout. The targeted sponsors being asked to sever ties with the NRA, such as rental car companies, established their own Twitter connections with other advocates in the group layout.

When the entire pane was investigated, this article found that more left-leaning influencers with more followers played an active role in participating in the #BoycottNRA movement. The conservative Twitter influencers such as Ben Shapiro (Twitter I.D. benshapiro), Jack Murphy (Twitter I.D. realjack), and Joe Walsh (Twitter I.D. walshfreedom) were distantly connected with the NRA. Their separate followers had fewer interactions regarding their opposition to the #BoycottNRA movement. By contrast, proponents of the movement were seen as tightly and heavily

connected with liberal Twitter influencers, including advocates and the media such as CNN and the *Washington Post*. With the hashtag-generated interactions, they also communicated with the NRA sponsor corporations to pressure them to drop the sponsorship. In a nut shell, the two layout graphs visually demonstrated that there were pro- and anti-sides of Twitter influencers and their followers when it came to the #BoycottNRA movement.

The NRA offers a range of 5-star benefits to its million members who paid a \$40 annual fee (Lerner & Israel, 2018). The benefits include “savings on insurance, identity theft protection, hearing aids, car rentals, moving vans, shipping, and even wine,” through in-house subsidiaries and corporate sponsors (para. 3). There had been two dozen corporate sponsors for the NRA before #BoycottNRA exploded and became a leading campaign on Twitter (Chubb and Wyndham Hotel Group ended the sponsorship prior to the school shooting). As the hashtag grew as a campaign, and then a movement against the sponsors, the pressure from the Twitter movement led some corporate sponsors to sever ties with the gun-rights group. The RQ3 was answered with the following list of corporate sponsors that officially announced the end of sponsorship:

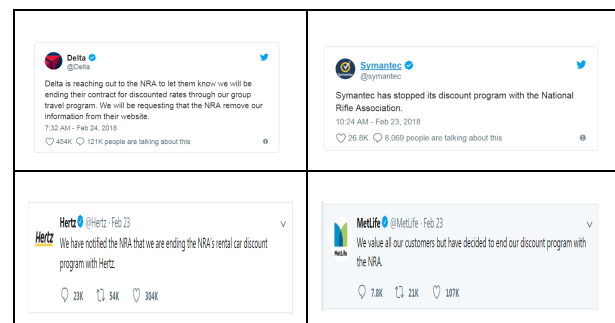
Table 2. Corporate sponsors cutting ties with the NRA

Name	Description of the sponsorship
Delta Airlines	Ended discounted rates for NRA members
United Airlines	Ended discounted flights for NRA members traveling to their annual meeting
Enterprise Holdings	Ended rental car discount deals with the NRA, including the brands of Enterprise, Alamo and National
Hertz	Ended discounts of rental cars to NRA members
Avis and Budget	Ended rental car discounts for NRA

	members
Symantec	Ended the cybersecurity company’s LifeLock identity theft protection service discounts to NRA members.
TrueCar	Ended its online car searching deal for NRA members, an average of nearly \$3,400 off the retail price
MetLife	Ended auto and home insurance discounts to NRA members
SimpliSafe	Ended the home security system discounts to NRA members
First National Bank of Omaha	Ended issuing an NRA-branded Visa credit card

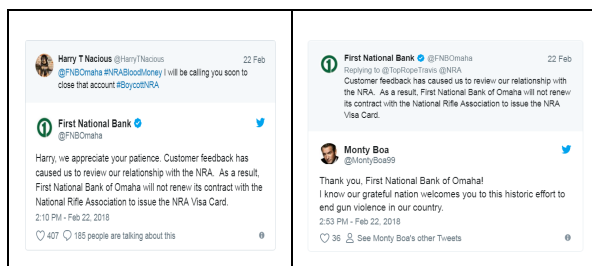
The #BoycottNRA movement resulted in significant impacts on the NRA corporate sponsorship through the Twitter campaign. All of the corporate sponsors announced their severance from the NRA on Twitter as well. Below are some examples:

Figure 2. Twitter Announcement to cut ties with the NRA



While the NRA’s most high-profile sponsors quickly ended participation in the NRA’s member-benefits program, FedEx did not join the group of corporations ending its NRA partnership. The influencers transferred their energy to boycott the giant delivery corporation with the creation of the hashtag #boycottfedex which was a rallying cry on February 24. RQ4 asked if there were any impact on the reputations of the corporate sponsors. This question was hard to address since a quantification issue was involved. However, there were an overwhelming number of tweets praising those corporations which severed their NRA ties. For instance, the first corporate sponsor announcing to drop the NRA was First National Bank of Omaha, the largest privately owned bank in the United States. It received an army of positive tweets about its decision. Figure 3 shows the Twitter communication between the bank and its customers.

Figure 3. First National Bank of Omaha’s Twitter communication on the #BoycottNRA movement



A public relations specialist said in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, “Many companies worry about the threat of boycotts from the NRA, which claims some 5 million members,” but the NRA corporate sponsors felt “confident enough to terminate these relationships” because two-thirds of American voters support stricter gun control, the highest level of support measured ever in the survey, conducted on February 20, 2018 by Quinnipiac University National Poll (Fuhrmans, 2018, para. 9-13). It is safe to say the corporate sponsors went along with the majority of Americans to maintain or boost their reputations in the public relations crisis, with the exception of FedEx.

**5. Discussion**

Marketing and public relations experts agree that it is uncertain whether calls for boycotts can truly have an impact on a corporate business (Creswell & Hsu, 2018; Becker, 2016). Even though a boycott can

function as a tool for advocates to promote a cause against corporations, boycotting big corporations may not have the impact advocates are hoping for because there exist pro- and anti- parties. This is exemplified in the boycott on Chick-fil-A in 2012 surrounding same-sex marriage. However, Becker pointed out that it would be a mistake to simply label a consumer boycott as a lost cause or complete waste of time (2016). In fact, a boycott gains new currency in the age of social media (Arkansas Business, 2012). Some boycotted corporations under the pressure from social media conversations and campaigns changed their policies and business practices, including the NRA corporate sponsors.

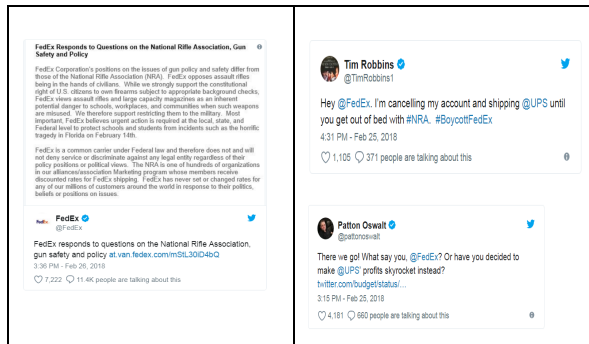
FedEx had to choose options to deal with the #boycottfedex movement whether it would maintain the sponsorship with the NRA. The corporation was in the mode of crisis communication, in which Mansor and Ali defined as “the dialog between the organization and its public prior to, during, and after the negative occurrence to minimize damage to the image of the organization” (2017, p. 63). Forbes Agency Council, comprised of public relations scholars and experts, advised several solutions for public relations crisis management (2017). They are: (1) Seeking first to understand the situation; (2) Taking responsibility; (3) Getting ahead of the story; (4) Being ready for social media backlash; (5) Developing strong organizational brand culture; and (6) Avoiding knee-jerk reactions. FedEx was an A student to follow the public relations advice to respond to the crisis discreetly and efficiently, using Twitter. One day after the hashtag #boycottfedex went viral, FedEx issued a Twitter statement:

FedEx is a common carrier under Federal law and therefore does not and will not deny service or discriminate against any legal entity regardless of their policy positions or political views. The NRA is one of hundreds of organizations in our alliances/association Marketing program whose members receive discounted rates for FedEx shipping (see Figure 4).

The statement was not a knee-jerk reaction and focused on highlighting the corporation’s brand culture. Not surprisingly a great deal of social media backlash on FedEx occurred after the statement, especially from celebrities such as Patton Oswalt, Julianne Moore, Adam McKay and Tim Robbins, promising to use UPS services (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. FedEx statement and Twitter backlash





Over the past couple of years, Twitter has become the preferred vehicle for the rise of social and political activism. A boycott on Twitter is one of the promising calls for action to influence behavior on targeted organizations or political figures. This article highlights the tension among multiple players of the #BoycottNRA movement by looking at how advocates, influencers, corporations, and interested Twitter user groups interacted to share a space of attention and action for the boycott issue against the NRA. As the hashtag #BoycottNRA was generating a great volume of public and media attention from the Florida high school shooting, the movement calling on the corporate sponsors to cut ties with the NRA achieved successful and visible outcomes. This article captured 2,000 tweet data during the peak of #BoycottNRA Twitter conversation on February 23, 2018, in the hope that influencers, followers, and information flows could be identified and evaluated. The sudden emergence of public and media attention on Twitter with the hashtag #BoycottNRA was a co-creation of the shooting victims, the high school students, the media, advocates, commentators, political associations, and the NRA. They were all influencers of the conversation and actions.

The result of the successful movement leading to the high-profile sponsors' severance from the NRA also triggered resistance from the powerful organization, which has survived over similar incidents from the Columbine High School massacre in 1999 to the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012. The NRA fought back at the dropped corporations: "Some corporations have decided to punish NRA membership in a shameful display of political and civic cowardice" (Fearnow, 2018, para. 6). Conservative commentators sided with the NRA, calling for their listeners to "boycott companies or products cutting ties with the NRA, framing it as a repression of free speech" (Fearnow, 2018, para. 5). Many boycotts have

not worked well on several occasions since memories and feelings that people have on the subject fade away in a month. However, this article argues that the #BoycottNRA was a different story in the boycott history. Because of social media, people are informed and motivated by advocates, commentators, and influencers in the digital world. A movement on Twitter will have a higher chance to bear fruit if a hashtag is spread among interested users, and then the hashtag is recognized as a campaign for a cause that attracts public and media attention.

Research to analyze the effects of boycotts has advanced with new computer-assisted techniques and quantification measures. In a similar way, evaluating success or failure of boycotts in social media still leaves room to develop. This article has limitations. It is hard for the specific movement to make a generalization of boycott outcomes. Also, social network analysis with tremendous data sets can hardly collect and analyze all tweets. If the data for this article were collected in a different time frame, the influencers and their followers could be different. Moreover, focusing on only one hashtag might have been misleading in terms of the issues of gun control, background check, and corporate sponsorship. Future research should provide broader empirical understanding and generalization through diverse software analyses like Python (available for download via Github).

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