FULL TIME WITH INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION

"Brand Activism a Systematic Literature Review"

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the master's degree in marketing & communication

BY

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CERTIFICATE OF DISSERTATION PREPARATION

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I hereby also declare that the present thesis is a result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other undergraduate or postgraduate qualification in Greece or abroad. This thesis reflects my personal opinions on the subject. All sources have been cited properly, including online material.

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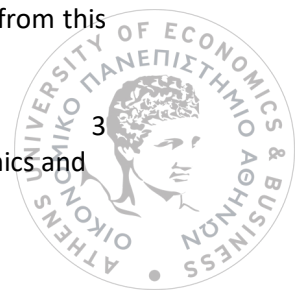
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Executive Summary

Brand activism is a term that has been around for a while and, since important sociopolitical issues have come to the surface these past five years, researchers started studying it in depth. The existing studies on Brand Activism delve into several aspects of the topic and are characterized by great heterogeneity in terms of variable relationships. This review attempts to gather, synthesize, and analyse all the relevant studies regarding brand activism and focus on the academic research gap identified. Achieving this attempt requires a very meticulous and exhaustive search process, hence, the methodology of systematic literature review was deemed to be a perfect fit. The reviewer used terms and keywords associated with the topic in several important databases and examined thousands of results.

The methodology stayed loyal to the PRISMA guidelines during all the steps of searching, collecting, evaluating, and including studies in the review, resulting in thirty-seven (37) studies that included the final sample. During the procedure, the research gap was identified, as the lack of a collective work reflecting how brand activism can affect consumer's attitude. The data extraction and synthesis were done in an excel sheet where a table containing all the necessary information of the studies was created. This organized manner of managing the data proved ideal for such an analysis and helped the reviewer identify two big thematic groups according to the independent variables of the studies. These two groups refer to brand activism topic and brand activism communication.

The results showcase that brand activism, influences consumer's perception and attitude towards the brand both in a positive and a negative way. The review's scope and exhaustive nature led to the presentation of outcomes regarding the direct cause-and-effect relationships of brand activism actions with consumer behavior. It essentially produced an academic guide covering all the crucial information and findings on the topic, setting a kind of foundation for future research. In addition, it offers managerial implications by contemplating the rise of data as the new touchpoint between consumers and businesses. Marketing and consumer insights managers can greatly benefit from this

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review, as it can ignite new ways for them to understand their consumers, accurately separate them and target them, via statistical models and algorithms.

Finally, future research should aim towards conducting empirical studies in more countries as well as study other factors that might influence brand activism and brand attitude.

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I want to dedicate this thesis to my grandparents, as I deeply admire them for all their success, but mostly for their generous character and kind hearts. They gave me values and supported me unconditionally from the very beginning.

Moreover, while working on my masters, their constant presence in my life taught me how to be patient, never give up, always try my best and face all the difficulties with a big smile.

 I couldn't be more thankful for having them in my life and I hope to make them proud.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my whole family and friends for being there and fully understanding me. They supported me at all my decisions in every way they could, and they created the ideal circumstances for me to conduct my work.
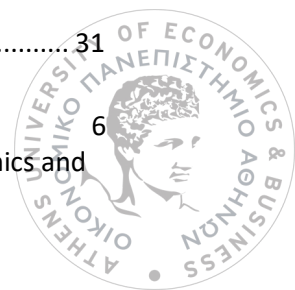
Special thanks to my sister for being my best friend and always forgiving me.

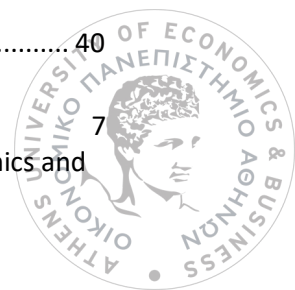I would not have been able to come this far in life and accomplish anything without them.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Focus of the study

Brand activism is a phenomenon that concerns the researchers for the past few years. More and more sociopolitical issues are coming at the surface and consumers want to see brands taking a stand and act towards those matters. According to Sarkar and Kotler (2017), brand activism 'consists of business efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to promote or impede improvements in society'.

In the marketplace, brand activism is becoming more common, with brands taking sides on a controversial sociopolitical issue (Nitika & Saluja, 2022).

When a brand is taking stand on a contentious social or political issue, it shows the emphasis it places on these moral foundations. For example, a brand that has a negative opinion towards marriage equality gives a greater emphasis on protecting the in-group and purity. However, there is the possibility that a brand that supports hiring refugees which is characterized by care and fairness (Sourjo & Niek, 2019).

There are two important types of brand activism. Authentic brand activism is when, brands match activist messaging, purpose, and values with prosocial corporate practice. With this practice, it is more possible to succeed social change and brand equity. In addition, when brands detach their activist messaging from their purpose, values, and practice are enacting, then there is inauthentic brand activism. This potentially misleads consumers with their claims, damaging both their brand equity and potential for social change (Vredenburg & Kapitan & Spry & Kemper& Joya).

1.2 Originality & Purpose of the Review

This systematic literature review is the first of its kind, in the sense that never in the history of academic literature, any other study has explored systematically the concept of brand activism.

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Bhargava et al. (2021), have conducted an interdisciplinary study, attempting to create a common ground of definitions and theories for brand activism, however their review aimed to illuminate a number of ethical requirements on branding, and reconceptualize the role of brand managers. This review is inherently unique, as it is the first to explore systematically the phenomenon of brand activism. All these facts alone, constitute a clear indication of the value such an endeavor can create for the academic fields of marketing and brands. Additionally, the topic of the review is very appropriate for our era, while it is going to be more and more relevant as years go by, especially for the new generations that seems to care more and more about sociopolitical issues and choose brands that are taking a stand about these matters. Another aspect enhancing the review's originality while being part of its purpose, is that this systematic literature review will produce a kind of academic guide containing all the necessary information and findings on its topic, assisting those looking simply for knowledge extraction on the matter, or those conducting future research on the academic topic of brand activism. The review will attempt to synthesize all studies regarding this subject, analyse them, group them in thematic groups, and provide findings regarding their demographics, methodologies and variable relationships examined.

1.3 Thesis Outline

Besides the introduction chapter, there are four other main chapters that this review comprises of: literature review, methodology, results, and conclusion. The literature review chapter maintains a gateway role. Firstly, it explains the definition of branding and how important is to create brand identity. Then it enlightens the reader about the phenomenon of brand activism by explaining the definition of this subject, as this is the main issue of this review. Moreover, at the chapter of literature review, the reader can see the definition of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the differences that has with brands activism. Last but not least, it discusses the definition of authentic brand activism and inauthentic brand activism giving to the reader a sense of what is going to be examined and analysed in this review. The chapter of methodology, the
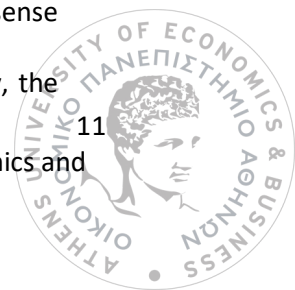
most important chapter second to the review's results, showcases the meticulousness and integrity of the reviewer's work. It starts of by presenting the significance of the systematic literature review methodology and the replicability characterizing it. The whole literature search method for relevant studies is presented in a very detailed manner, together with the inclusion and exclusion criteria, accompanied by the process of relevance appraisal according to the standards set by the PRISMA guidelines. At the end of the chapter, the data extraction and synthesis procedures are explained. The outcome of the analysis produces a few major thematic groups, where inside each one of them several variable relationships are examined, and findings arise based on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive responses. Finally, the last chapter is the conclusion, where the course and outcomes of the review are discussed. The key findings are once again presented, while the reviewer justifies the academic contribution of the review, the limitations of the study, what are the managerial implications of the review's outcomes and where future research should focus, so it extends and strengthens the existing relationship findings.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Branding

For the past few years marketing has become integral for most of the firms. Marketing is considered a fast-paced industry and brands, when aiming at success and an increase in customers, must predict changes (Golder, 2002). A brand is described as a name, symbol, and sign that categorizes the company's products or services while disassociating them from other products or services provided by the competition (Keller, 2002). A brand can influence consumers in many ways. Having a power brand can lead not only to consumer loyalty, but to market leadership too (Yoo, 2000).

According to marketers, a brand can be a product, a service, or a business. Branding should impress customers either because of the product provided or simply because of name used. The company's goal is to create brand identity as this can lead to consumer's loyalty (Vaid, 2003).

2.2 Brand Activism

Brand Activism is a phenomenon that keeps evolving for the past decade and tries to make its way into the science of management. There are six categories of brand activism:

- Social activism that includes areas such as equality – gender, LGBT, race, age, etc.

- Legal activism which deals with the laws and policies that impact companies, such as tax, workplace, and employment laws.

- Business activism which is about governance – corporate organization, CEO pay, worker compensation, labor and union relations, governance, etc.

- Economic activism that may include minimum wage and tax policies that impact income inequality and redistribution of wealth.

- Political activism which covers lobbying, voting, voting rights, and policy (gerrymandering, campaign finance, etc).

- Environmental activism which deals with conservation, environmental, land-use, air and water pollution laws and policies.

Figure 1 (Sarkar and Kotler, 2017)

   The literature identifies several different definitions of brand activism, but according to Sarkar and Kotler (2017), it 'consists of business efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to promote or impede improvements in society'. An important part of Brand Activism is that it can either increase brand's success or harm it.

Brands put their shelf at a serious risk by taking a public stance for sensitive matters. For example, Gillette's campaign confused consumers about brand's values. It is possible for a brand to be negatively criticized for its stance and there are many cases like the one we mentioned above, that shows, that customers are cautious. There is a challenge in this kind of activism that can be found in the process of discovering the ways in which you, as an individual, read between the lines, the reality behind brand actions (Vredenburg et al. 2020).

For many years, brand managers used to avoid political controversy but are now concerned and guide their brands, where financial performance and societal objectives align. However, many of the issues addressed, such as, for instance, Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ, Gun laws, have no obvious tie to the brand's operations (Korschun, 2021).

Nonetheless, everything points out that Brand activism is here to stay. Consumers, employees, investors, and other stakeholders are increasingly using brand activism to understand the brand's true values and to predict how it may treat them in the future. Under the right circumstances,

activist brands can change their political discourse and perhaps even improve their business performance. Of course, activism may not be the right approach for all brands. Although it seems obvious that activism will remain part of brands for as long as consumers use it to decide with whom they like to engage with (Korschun 2021)

Table 1. Brand Activism and CSR Marketing Activities.

CSR Activity	Cause Promotion and Cause-Related Marketing	Corporate Social Marketing	Advocacy Advertising	Brand Activism
Form	Monetary (also involves advertising)	Advertising	Advertising	Advertising and practice
Aim	Seek to influence consumer perception through company-cause associations	Seek reputational and economic benefit via consumer appreciation of association with cause/issue	Incite institutional change through shifting public opinion and behavior	Support a cause, raise awareness, change behavior, and encourage sociopolitical change; also seeks reputational and economic benefit via consumer appreciation of association with cause
Initiative (Kotler, Hessekiel, and Lee 2012)	Marketing driven	Marketing driven	Marketing driven	Purpose and values driven
Degree of controversy	Noncontroversial charity, cause, or event	Noncontroversial issue	Noncontroversial issue	Controversial sociopolitical cause, issue, charity, or event
Nature of issue	Progressive	Progressive	Benefit industry	Progressive or conservative
Issues addressed	Social, environmental	Social, environmental	Political	Social, political, environmental, legal, business, or economic
Nature of engagement	No/minimal internal practice	Messaging only, no internal practice	Messaging only, no internal practice	Alignment between messaging and practice
Illustrative topics	Breast cancer research, Red Cross, UNICEF	Issues affecting the corporation's immediate industry	Issues involved with firms' operations, defending themselves from criticism; mainly occurs in harmful industries such as oil and tobacco	Immigration, gender rights, LGBTQIA+, U.S. gun reform, and climate change
Example	Pampers donates a portion of its profit to UNICEF for vaccine against neonatal tetanus	Heineken began a "drink responsibly" campaign	R.J. Reynolds disputed the harmfulness of smoking	Gillette viral ad explores toxic masculinity
Indicative Literature	Crimmins and Horn	Haley 1996; Inoue and	Cutler and Muehling 1989; Fox	Dodd and Supa 2014; Korschun et al.

Table 1 (Vredenburg, 2020)

2.2.2 Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is different from Brand Activism in two ways. Firstly, it focuses more on the actions, and their consequences (i.e., reputation, sales), than the company values (Wettstein and Baur 2016). Moreover, CSR activities are considered beneficial by most of the society. Brand Activism is different as there is no "correct" response to the socio-political issues (Korschun et al. 2019; Nalick et al. 2016). It is important, however, to mention that brand activism is an evolution of CSR (Sarkar and Kotler 2018).

Table 2. Defining Characteristics of Brand Activism.

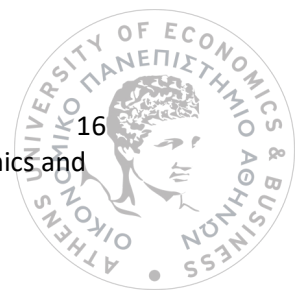| Characteristic	Definition	Links to Brand Activism	Example
Purpose and values driven	Brand purpose is embedded as well as derived from its core values. Thus, a brand is not driven solely by profit but focuses on a brand's contribution to wider public interest and societal goals (The British Academy 2019), prioritizing delivery of social and environmental benefits (Bocken et al. 2014).	Brand activism, driven by brand purpose and values, seeks to impact sociopolitical issues beyond immediate economic interests (Sarkar and Kotler 2018; Wettstein and Baur 2016).	*Unilever:* 28 "sustainable living" brands (i.e., brands focused on reducing environmental footprint and increasing social impact) (Unilever 2019a). *Tony's Chocolonely:* created a reference price (living income) for cocoa and seeks to cooperate with other chocolate companies to create change in the industry (Tony's Chocolonely 2020). *Patagonia:* created "Action Works" to connect committed individuals to organizations working on environmental issues and donates 1% of sales to such organizations (which has encouraged other companies to do the same starting "1% for the Planet") (Patagonia 2018).
Contested, controversial, and polarizing Sociopolitical issues	Controversial issues have competing values and interests, engender disagreements about assertions or actions, are politically sensitive, and arouse strong emotions (Flinders University 2019; Nalick et al. 2016). While what represents a contested issue may change over time and differ across culture, current issues in the media include climate change, sexual harassment, gender equality, LGBTQIA+ rights, racism, immigration, gun control, reproductive rights, and public health.	Brands are choosing to, and are comfortable with, alienating certain consumers by engaging with divisive sociopolitical causes (Smith and Korschun 2018).	*Gillette:* advertisement and donations to charities addressed toxic masculinity (Al-Muslim 2019). *Nike:* advertisement featuring Black Lives Matter protestor and former NFL football player Colin Kaepernick addressed racial inequality (Boren 2018).
Progressive and conservative stances	Adoption of progressive or conservative stances. Both may be considered prosocial as they believe their actions benefit society (Chatterji and Toffel 2018; Eisenberg 1982).	Brand activism can address any sociopolitical issue along the political divide (subjective based on political ideology or religion) (Moorman 2020).	*Dick's Sporting Goods:* The firm was historically a supporter of the U.S. National Rifle Association and a purveyor of firearms and, thus, had a conservative following. Dick's outlawed the sale of assault-style rifles in their stores following the Parkland, Florida, school shooting in 2018, prompting backlash from a largely conservative customer base. In contrast, gun control consumers supported this action, as it aligned more with their values (Edgecliffe-Johnson 2018). *Nordstrom:* The firm discontinued the fashion line of Ivanka Trump, the daughter of President Donald Trump. Supporters of Trump started a "Boycott Nordstrom" social media campaign. Yet, Nordstrom was previously boycotted by people who did not support Trump (Creswell and Abrams 2017).

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Characteristic	Definition	Links to Brand Activism	Example
Messaging and practice	Brand activism involves both intangible (messaging) and tangible (practice) commitments to a sociopolitical cause (Delmas and Burbano 2011).	Brand activism goes beyond merely advocacy/messaging (i.e., Dodd and Supa 2014; Nalick et al. 2016; Wettstein and Baur 2016) and involves alignment with corporate practices that uphold brand purpose and values.	Messaging: Several CEOs spoke out against U.S. President Donald Trump's immigration ban (Cohn 2017). *(CEO statements)* The 2017 Super Bowl commercials were acknowledged for drawing attention to immigration, gender, and environmental rights (WGSN Insider 2017). *(Advertising)* Practices: Target's introduction of gender-inclusive bathrooms advocated for transgender rights. (WGSN Insider 2017). *(Organizational practice)* Procter & Gamble's commitment to donate $3 million to relevant causes following the Gillette toxic masculinity campaign (Gillette 2019). *(One-off support)* Kenco's "Coffee vs. Gangs" project, which trains young men in Honduras to be coffee farmers, not gang members (Holder 2017). *(Continued support)*

Table 2 (Vredenburg, 2020)

2.3 Authentic Brand Activism

Authentic Brand Activism is considered to be a strategy, where brands not only clearly communicate their purposes and values according to socio-political issues, but also engage in prosocial corporate practice. An important characteristic that makes authentic brand activism a good strategy to follow, is that it matches the purposes and the values of a brand with its actions. Purposes, values, messaging, and practices of the brand can influence, determine and create a holistic system of authenticity (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Focusing both on articulating purposes and values and committing to action through corporate practice seems to be a necessity for a brand to maintain authenticity. However, it is not enough. As mentioned above, for authentic brand activism to be achieved, there must be a symmetry among their purpose, values, messaging, and practice. This success leads to consumer loyalty as it is more likely for the public to consider the brand's position on socio-political matters truthful.

In contrast, if a brand takes a stand on socio-political issues, on an urge or due to market responsiveness, it risks being distanced from its purpose, values, and corporate practices (Georgallis 2017). This could result in woke washing.

Companies and brands sometimes could mislead customers about their actions on sensitive matters or even for the quality of their products (Delmas and Burbano 2011). Those kinds of tactics can lead to a division among marketing message and practice (Campbell 2007).

However, when brand's actions are not authentic, consumers are negatively influenced. It is possible for the consumers to lose their trust if the messaging and the practices of the brand are not truthful. As a result, customers don't consider brand activism authentic, and they believe that brands are not capable of actively taking a stand on socio-political problems. Thus, this strategy can be less effective for social good outcomes (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

For all this reasons authenticity on brand activism should be protected. For this to happen, brands should think like the consumer and focus on what expectations they might have and on the comments that have been made during the brand's support for a social or political cause.

Authentic Brand Activism is easy to be spotted as the brand will provide high activist marketing messaging, as well as high engagement in prosocial corporate practice.

2.4 Inauthentic Brand Activism

Looking into the definition of inauthenticity it is understood, that, it has to do with something that is not true. When it comes to brand activism though, the meaning changes.

Brands in that category are already endorsing activist marketing messaging that shows their support at socio-political issues. The difference between authentic and inauthentic brand activism is that those following the second strategy do not have brand purpose or values and lack of practices. That is why the perception of their brand activism is considered as inauthentic and sometimes even deceptive (Vredenburg et al. 2020). Simply put, when actions of a firm are misaligned with purpose, values, and messaging, its practice is perceived as being inauthentic. However, now that the transparency of brand behaviour has been increased, brands in that category are in a serious risk (Schultz, Hatch, and Larsen 2000). Consumer's expectation become higher day by day, and brands must take a stand on sensitive matters to gain their loyalty (i.e., Barton et al. 2018). Inauthentic

brand activism does not only show negative brand equity, but it is also unethical and can mislead consumers (similar to greenwashing, i.e., Kapitan, Kennedy, and Berth 2019), which further limits the potential for social change.

Looking at the Figure 1 bellow (Vredenburg et al. 2020) it is clear that Inauthentic Brand Activism, has some specific characteristics. Although there is high activist marketing messaging, there is no engagement in prosocial corporate practice.
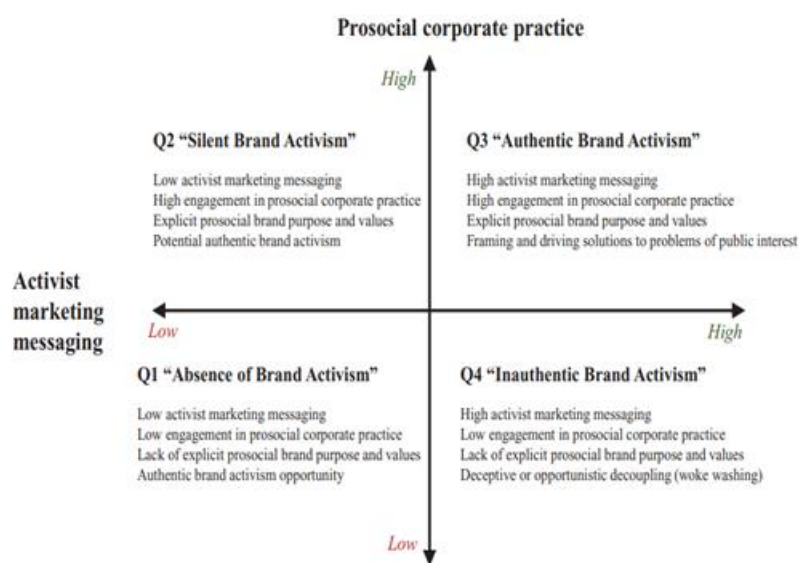

Figure 2 (Vredenburg et al. 2020)

3. Methodology

3.1 Systematic Literature Review

The method of Systematic literature review (SLR) is a systematic way to collect findings from already existent articles after extended research on the research question. (Lorusso & Pati, 2017). The aim is to critically evaluate, integrate, synthesize, and report findings from multiple publications on our topic of interest.

The main difference between the systematic literature review and other traditional methodologies, is that it SLR is characterized by replicability, transparency and aspires to diminish the possibility of bias. It achieves this by providing a better and more accurate grasp on the phenomena of interest and by offering a clear trail of thought and procedure followed by the reviewer. Systematic review methodology investigates research fields whose literature tries to explain relations such as those of cause and effect by providing further information about it (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2012; Tranfield et al., 2003). Essentially, this method of review manages to pinpoint and bring together data and results, from all the available previous studies conducted in the research field in hand.

In essence, this systematic literature review is steadfastly associated with the ideology and protocol mentioned above, namely the ones portraying optimal approach to reviews. During the following chapters there will be a presentation and discussion of the method followed and the databases that were chosen, the analytical process of research that was utilized, the criteria of inclusion and exclusion, the relevance appraisal, the data extraction and, last but not least, the data synthesis.

3.2 Research Question

While using SLR, is very important to have a sufficiently focused research question (Beecroft et al. 2006). However, it is possible that the systematic literature review process can either lead to the optimization of such a question or switch the researcher's focus on another broader question altogether. In addition, it can be a useful way to polish or select a research topic and create conceptual or theoretical frameworks (Cronin, Ryan, & Coughlan, 2008).

The purpose of this study is to determine and understand the interaction and relation between the phenomena of brand activism and consumer's behavior. After an exhaustive research of available research material, this study initially aimed to show how the phenomena of brand activism is perceived by consumers (attitude towards the activism and attitude towards the brand), what emotions this triggers and if it influences purchasing decisions. A systematic literature review approach is considered the most appropriate option for the purposes of this study, as it can offer, among other things, a high-quality synthesis and organization of brand activism literature (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019) and provide academic knowledge and studies with considerable results (Ghosh, 2022), something that, until now, does not exist on that matter. Moreover, it identifies research gaps and opportunities for future research. We followed the guidelines outlined by Sachdev, Chahal and Jain (2021).

3.3 Literature Search Method

The whole search process was conducted with the utmost respect to the ideology and protocol mentioned in previous chapters. That is to adhere to a transparent way of search that is easy to replicate and is not biased in any way, at least as far as the reviewer's actions are concerned. The strategy employed for this task, was characterized by diligence and efficacy, as its higher purpose was to create the necessary foundations for a smooth research execution.

The search performed took place in in four major electronic databases: Web of Science, EBSCO, Scopus, and, eventually, Google Scholar. These databases were chosen because they provide the greatest coverage and are usually used by the latest systematic reviews. However, no previous systematic reviews within the field of Brand activism and consumer behavior were found. The search was limited to academic journal articles written in English, omitting books, book chapters, conference proceedings, editorials and other nonrefereed publications (Johnson & Paul Elliott, 2019), This limitation provided only academic journal articles that are considered validated knowledge.

To ensure the article's quality, the review was restricted to articles published in academic journals. Thus, a keyword pattern was identified to appear more often in the academic research on Brand Activism, in an initial scoping search and it helped to select the most appropriate search terms.

As a first step, a pilot search was conducted using the term "Brand Activism" for an extensive cover of the topic. Then, more searching rows were added, like titles, keywords provided by the authors, and subsequently abstracts of potentially relevant articles. There were not many alternative keywords found as Brand Activism is a restricted definition and there are no other ways to describe this currently evolving phenomenon. Although there was a relevant keyword that was noted and included in the next search:

- [*] and the Boolean OR operator, the search formula used was: "brand activi*" or "political advocacy".

While this search algorithm is not exhaustive, there is the confidence that it has captured most of the relevant articles. As in almost all systematic literature reviews, titles, keywords/subject terms, and abstracts were also searched. The intention was to review the entire literature on Brand Activism, so there was no restriction on the date. Keeping all this in mind and considering that this subject has been recently established, it makes sense that the initial search had:

- 577 hits in EBSCO
- 170 hits in Web of Science
- 50 hits in Scopus
- 1,440 hits (initially) in Google Scholar

From the initial research the total counts of hits from all four databases were 2.237.

Once nonacademic peer-reviewed articles, non-CABS-ranked journals and articles not written in English had been excluded, 468 potentially relevant articles were found. Through this process, titles and abstracts of all articles were manually read and identified. Unrelated and duplicated articles were removed. The remaining journal articles were in total 114. When relevance and eligibility based
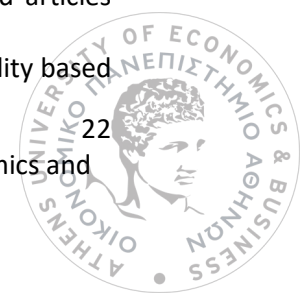
on the title or the abstract were not clear, a full-text reading was conducted. After this screening process, 50 more studies were rejected. The reference lists of the articles selected thus far were reviewed to identify additional articles that may have been associated with Brand Activism. This further step provided us with two additional studies, allowing us, hence, to collect 22 articles in total. Thirty – seven studies were selected and analyzed as related to Brand Activism literature (for the full list of articles included in our review see Appendix). It is important to mention that during this step, the PRISMA flow diagram (figure 1) was implemented in order to create a clear and easy to present illustration of the process that was followed. The PRISMA flow diagram (Moher et al., 2009) below visually presents the whole search procedure distinctly, showcasing each step of the process with complete transparency:
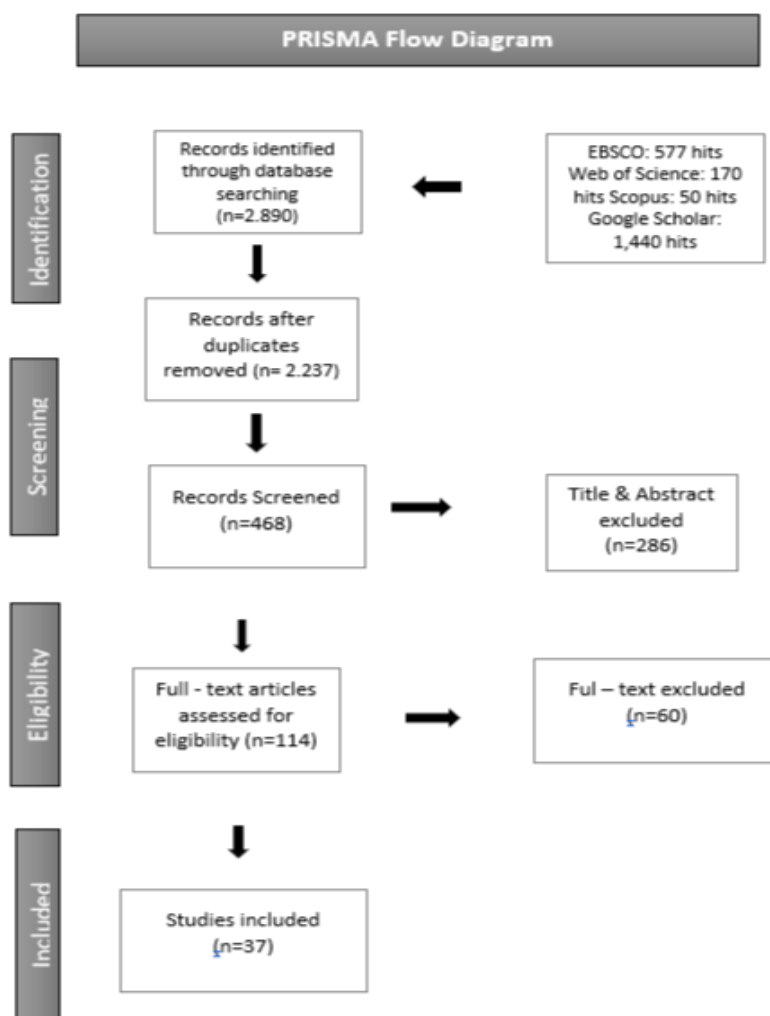
Figure 3 PRISMA flow diagram (Moher et al., 2009)

3.4 Criteria of Inclusion & Exclusion

When the research topic was defined and all the relevant material were gathered, the need for a procedure that would allow us to set inclusion and exclusion criteria became apparent. These criteria help a lot in order to identify which of the collected studies meet the standards set by the researcher, by screening each study separately in a two-step procedure:

- where the title plus abstract refer to,

- the quality and content of the full text (Xiao & Watson, 2017).

Those criteria must be determined based on the research question and must be practical. According to the Cochrane collaboration, they should reflect the primary and secondary objectives of the review and be informative but not unclear (Bossuyt & Leeflang, 2008). The studies deemed to be unrelated to the set criteria are expected to be eliminated via this process (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). Following these parameters, the reviewer implemented certain inclusion and exclusion criteria, so that the paper elimination process could be executed with ease and consistency. Every study was assessed on its own, both by title/abstract and later by full text. All the essential criteria that were put in place for this procedure are presented below:

• Must study the effect of brand activism.

• Must contain at least one independent or dependent variable concerning brand activism.

• The material should be written in the English language, any source that was in another language was excluded from the beginning.

•The papers should study how consumers feel about social matters and if they are influenced by the way a brand reacts to them.

• All relevant studies had to include primary data, so methodologies like other systematic literature reviews, meta-analyses and conceptual papers were excluded.

• Non retrievable studies were automatically excluded, due to inability to obtain them.
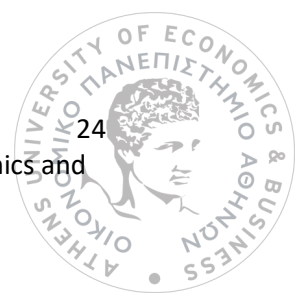
3.5 Relevance Appraisal

As it has already been mentioned in the literature search method chapter earlier, the search for relevant studies had more than 2.000 results. However, some of them were later screened according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria set by the reviewer. It is common for papers to initially seem appropriate for the review and to be later dismissed after more detailed inspection.

The following step was to focus on which of the remaining relative studies could provide answers to the research question (Booth et al., 2012). After identifying the total number of records via the database search process, all the duplicated studies had to be pinpointed and removed. This instantly limited the workload. The identified duplicates together with irrelevant material, left the reviewer with only 468 studies to further assess. The next step as also visually presented at the PRISMA flow diagram above (figure 1.) was to carefully study the sample of papers and read the titles and abstracts of all of them, to eliminate the studies. After removing 354 irrelevant studies, the reviewer was left with 114 to further investigate. Studying the full texts led to the exclusion of 67 more papers on the basis of them not meeting the necessary criteria. Finally, upon having evaluated all studies and having examined their compliance with the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the total number of studies of the review came to 37.

3.6 Data Extraction Process

Data extraction is the process where the reviewer has all the necessary information of each study, for example its characteristics, demographics, methodology, variable relations, and findings. Of course, there are variations between each review and the data that each reviewer obtains, so the extraction template should be designed according to each review's research question. It is important to define what type of analyses, relations, and tables the reviewer desires to display so that the data extraction process can become smoother (Systematic Reviews: CRD's guidance for undertaking reviews in health care, 2009).
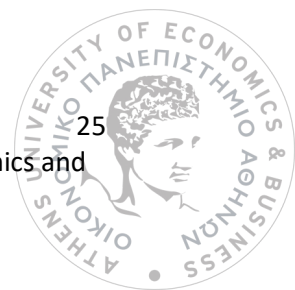
In this literature review, to serve the purpose of noting and summarizing important data collected from each article, a data extraction form in excel was created to eliminate human errors and help document the information. Each article was coded according to (1) title (2) author (s), (3) journal name, (4) year of publication, (5) methodology (quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods), (6) number of participants, (7) keywords, (8) independent variables, (9) dependent variables, (10) hypothesis, (11) result //conclusion, (12) other conclusions, (13) source, (14) abstract and (15) the link of the article. Furthermore, in some articles it was considered significant to add two more columns, (16) authentic brand activism (17) inauthentic brand activism. Those two extra additions would firstly help to identify the definition of authentic and inauthentic activism (Manfredi-Sanchez Juan, 2019) and later, to categorize some of the articles based on that. The coding categorization using the data extraction form enabled the reviewer to descriptively and thematically analyze the reviewed field. The overall strategy of the review methodology is illustrated in Figure 1 were there is the PRISMA map of the literature's analysis. As far as, descriptive analysis, is critical to capture trends, strengths, and weaknesses of this topic. In this section, observations on the technical characteristics of the reviewed studies (e.g., year of publication, article type, methods applied and publication outlets) and contextual features (e.g., familiarized with case studies of brands taking a stand, and whether they influence consumer's behavior or are influenced by them etc.) are reported. This information can appear to be a significant milestone in understanding the nature of this research and in identifying possible gaps that could be used for further study.

3.7 Data Synthesis

  According to Cochrane consumers and communication review group (2013), various techniques can be utilized to produce a data synthesis for a systematic literature review. Still, the method chosen is usually determined by the review question waiting to be answered.

4. Results

4.1 Introduction of the results

As mentioned in the previous chapters, thirty – seven studies were included in this literature review. The year of publication, country and continent where each study took place were mentioned at the excel spread among other information. Moreover, cells were created for any existing independent, dependent, mediating, and moderating variables. It is important to analyse this information to have an integrated literature review and come to a conclusion that will be useful for future researchers.

4.2 Analyses of the studies

As aforementioned, after extensive research, thirty-seven (n=37) studies were considered relevant to form this systematic literature review's research sample, according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria that were set. In this chapter there will be a presentation of findings per thematic category, that transpired through the analysis of the data set formed from the total studies.
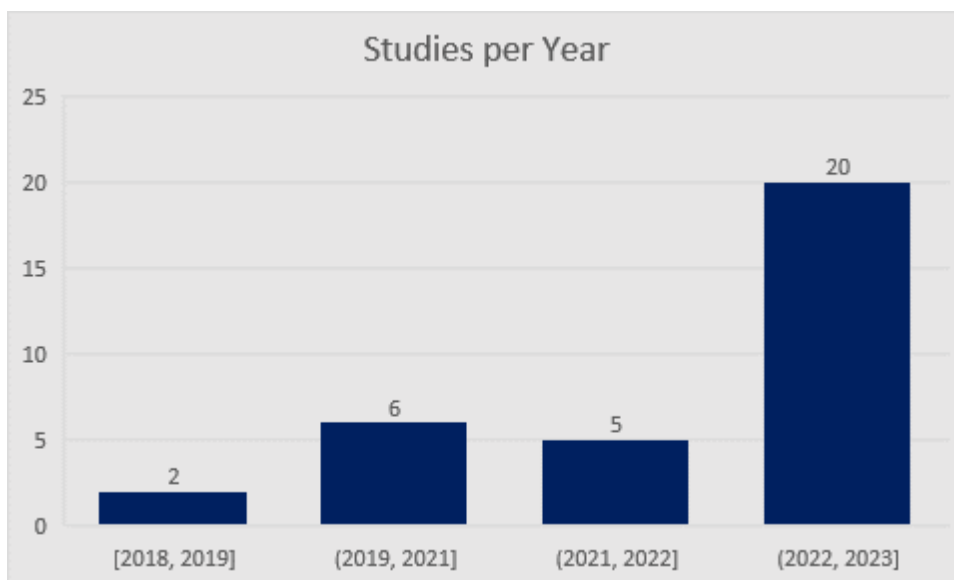
Figure 4: Studies per year

From an initial look on the sum of the studies, it is quickly revealed that the phenomenon of Brand Activism is indeed a modern theme, as it has been concerning researchers for only eight years. The

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first papers used began getting published in 2018, while several papers have been published even months before the beginning of this review in 2022. The modernity of this review's theme is also prominent when we acknowledge that 68% (n=25) of the studies were published from 2021 and onwards, a time span of only a year.
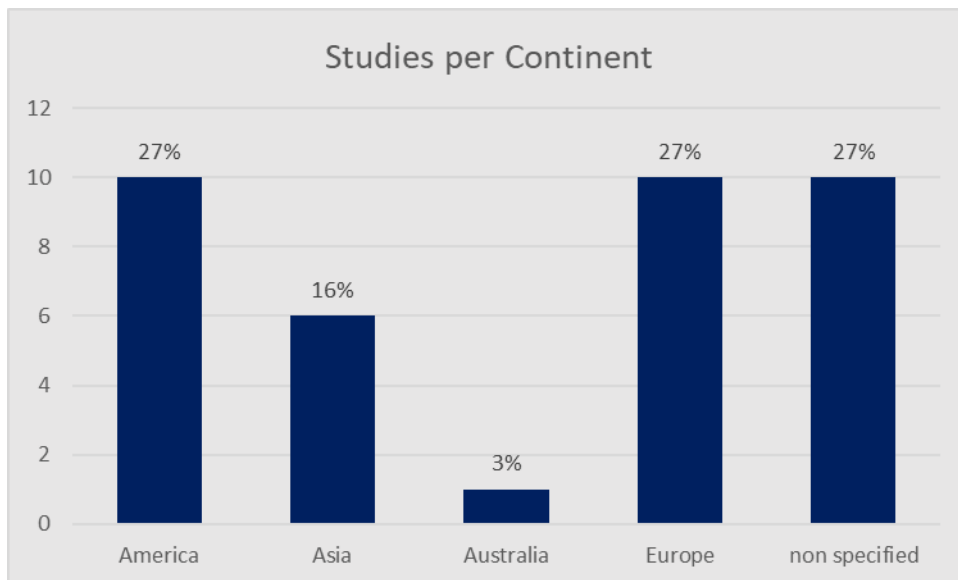
Figure 5: Studies per Continent

An important observation made during the research process was that 27% of the total studies did not specify the continent where they took place, coming to the sum of ten (n=10) studies. From the remaining ones, an equal amount was conducted both in Europe and America, with a percentage of 27% (n=10) respectively. The Asian continent is next with 16% (n=5) and, finally, there is the Australian continent with only 3% (n=1) of them.

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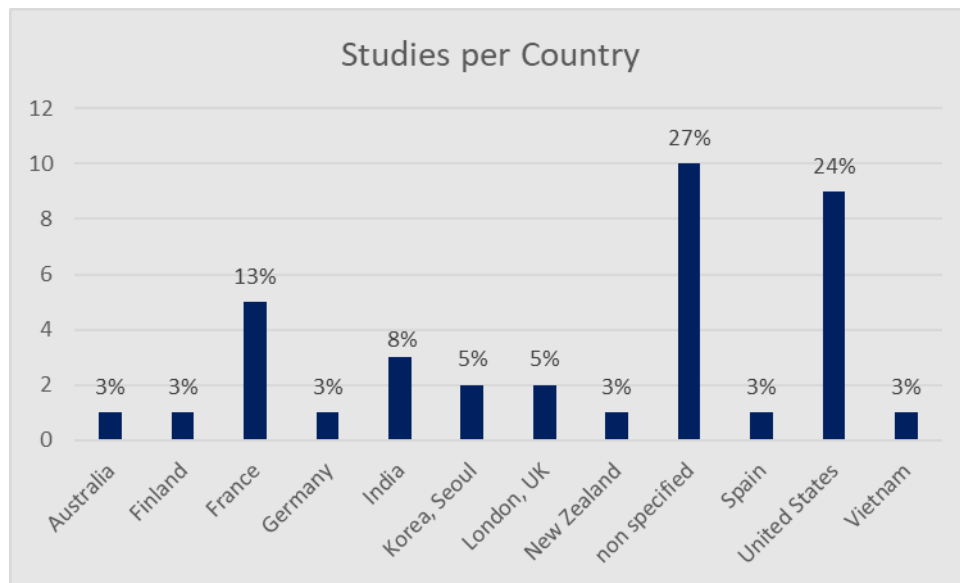
Figure 6: Studies per Country

As far as the countries that the studies took place are concerned, it is obvious from figure 3 above, that the majority of the studies 27% (n=10) did not specify where the research took place. However, and as expected, 24% (n=9) of the studies were conducted in the United States. Following up 13% (n=5) of the collected studies took place in France. All other countries attributed a 3-8% (n=1-3) on average to the total sample of studies. Those countries were: Vietnam, Germany, Korea Seoul, London UK, Spain, New Zealand, India, Finland, and Australia. Considering the types of methodologies adopted, one should note that the majority of the studies (n=23) included questionnaires, due to the nature of the topic. Furthermore, two (n=2) studies involved the execution of experiments, four (n=4) employed thematic analysis of users' profile content, while other methods implemented in the rest of the studies included: full or semi-structured interviews, focus groups, or a mixed methods approach.

4.3 Analysis of the result

The sum of studies collected were characterized by great heterogeneity in terms of variable variety and relations between variables. In the next stages the reviewer will present the independent, mediating, dependent and moderating variables. It is important to point out that, after the first stages of analysis, several broader thematic groups became apparent. More specifically, two

thematic groups were created according to the topic explored and the independent variables of each study. The thematic groups will be analyzed on the following chapters and consist of:

- Strategic Aspects (N=32)

- Tactical Aspects (N=5).

For the outcomes there were three groups

- Cognitive Responses

- Emotional Responses

- Behavioral Responses.

As far as the mediating and moderating variables no groups were able to be formed.
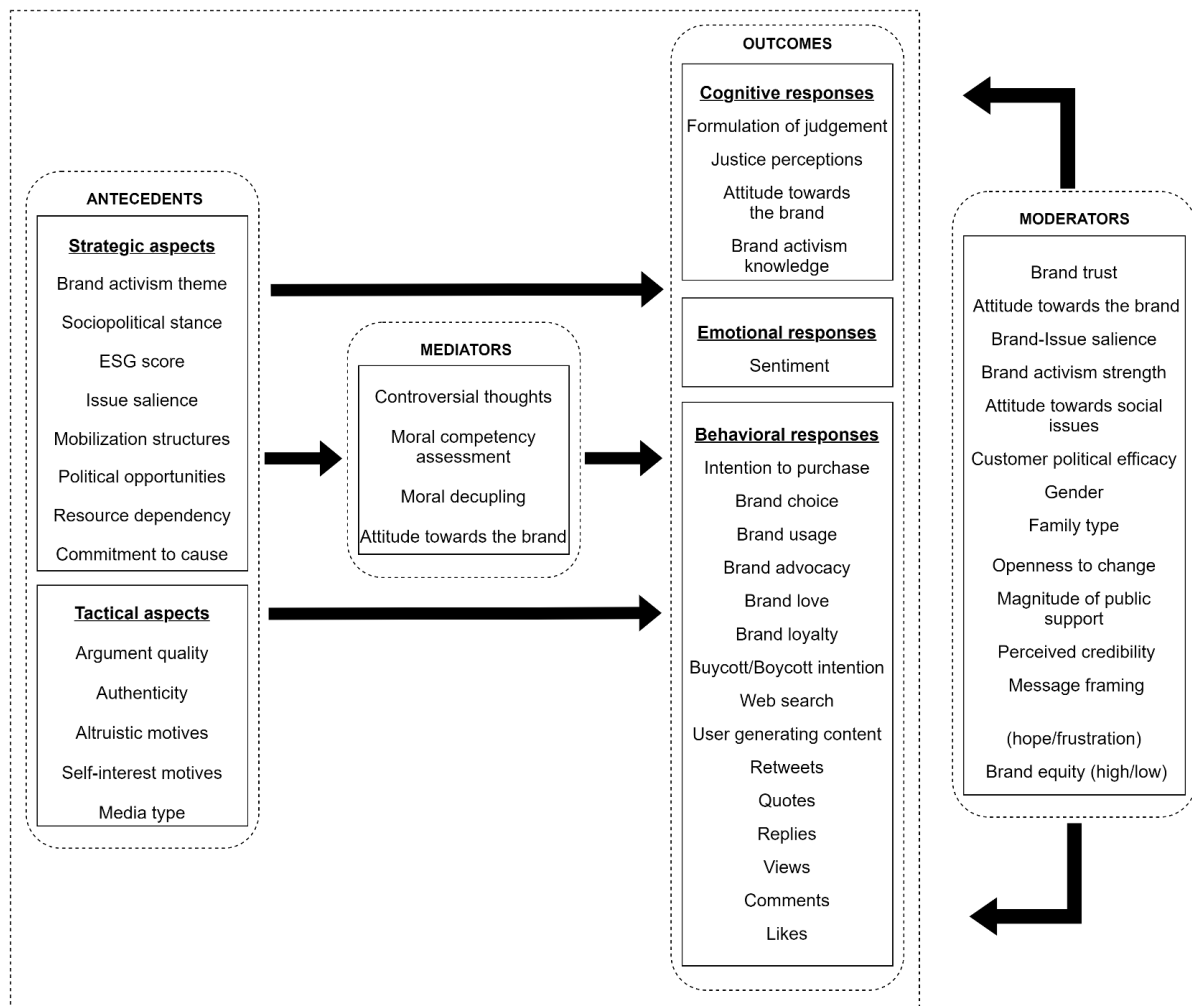
Figure 7 Antecedents, Mediators, Outcomes and Moderators

4.4 Independent Variables

4.4.1 Strategic aspects

4.4.1.1 Brand activism theme

The main issue of this literature review is brand activism, so as it was expected for more than half of the studies, 54% (n=20) included to have the brand activism theme as an independent variable. The results of the studies show several different aspects of brand activism, and the reviewer will present them in this section. Firstly, an important observation to make is that a study included in this review found, after research into the perception of millennials in relation to brand activism, that millennials care about whether a brand takes a stand on a socio-political issue. It is actually preferred to buy from a brand that supports a cause or purpose in accordance with their ideology and personality and to avoid non-activist brands (Shivakanth & Nagendra & Kerena, 2019). By contrast, in a research conducted later by Sourjo & Niek (2020), that included five different studies, a negative effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes, intentions, and behavior was discovered. Such effect was irrespective of whether consumer-brand disagreement was measured indirectly, by comparing the brand's stand to the participants' self-reported opinion on the issue or their political ideology or directly via their self-reported level of agreement with the brand's stand. In each study, observations on controversial matters, such as immigration, abortion rights and absolute freedom of speech, were analyzed. It was, hence, discovered, that brand activism did not only influence consumer attitudes but also behavioral intentions and actual brand choices. It is also important to point out that this asymmetric effect of brand activism existed both for unfamiliar and well-known brands (Sourjo & Niek, 2020). Another aspect of brand activism is presented in a study that refers to it as corporate political advocacy (CPA). This study that does not differ significantly from previous ones, shows that when brand's actions conflict with consumers values, it is more likely for the consumers to form a negative opinion about the brand (Weber & Joireman & David & Sprott & Hydock, 2023). This can harm brand perception (Klostermann & Hydock & Decker, 2022). Furthermore, such conflicts can

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even provoke hostile behaviour when, for instance, a brand launches a campaign promoting an issue that bothers the consumers (Pöyry & Laaksonen, 2022). It is a fact and a common pattern to all included studies, that those brands who take a political stance are viewed more positively. However, for a stance to be credible, it must be rooted in a long-term commitment that aligns with the brand's strategy and values (Schmidt & Ind & Guzman & Kennedy). On the other hand, there is a study that points out that, nowadays, brands acknowledge the essence of the concept of Brand Activism, and are aware of the customers' feelings towards it. That is why more and more brands are prominently participating in the social and political causes, as their main goal is to value their customer sentiments (Kumar, 2020). Last but not least, a study based on the analysis of Always campaign #LikeAGirl, showed that consumers lost their attention after seeing the same ad for the fifth time. At this paper, the case study of this campaign is divided in five periods. At each period likes, views and comments of the customers are studied, and the results showed that even though the first period had the support of the consumers, every period after that had lower numbers. Finally, the fifth period had the lowest numbers, showing that customers lose their attention after some time, even if the brand is taking a stand actively (Lee & Yoon, 2020).

4.4.1.2 Sociopolitical stance

An issue also reported at the studies was the sociopolitical stance of the brand. Using a different case study from the one mentioned above, the "Ben & Jerrys" case study, it showed whether consumers prefer (more or less) or do not care when brands are taking a stand for sociopolitical issues. The ice-cream brand "Ben & Jerrys" is in favor of gun control and the results of that research showed that those having the same opinion with the company preferred to buy their products over that of other firms (Hong & Li, 2020).

4.4.1.3 Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) score

Another important variable for this literature review, seems to be the environmental, social and governance score, which measures how actively the consumers react to a brand's post concerning a

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public issue. The article, that was divided in two different studies, proved that the higher the ESG score of a post was, the higher the active reaction of the consumer was. The importance of those studies is that they demonstrate the effectiveness of communication methods in which brands take a public stance on social media (Berestova et al., 2022).

4.4.1.4 Issue salience

During the reviewer's research, a study with multiple independent variables came up. Firstly, the study aimed to show that brands 'action and influence are shaped by issue salience, mobilization structures, political opportunities/contexts, and resource dependency. In this section, the reviewer analyses the issue salience variable, which is defined by Bundy, Shropshire, & Buch-holtz, (2013) as the "the degree to which a stakeholder issue resonates with and is prioritized by management." Issue salience has both a social and a strategic dimension as brands will probably act on issues when there are social expectations, and it is likely for them to significantly impact on the business (Oka & Chikako, 2018). The study based on qualitative research and on a literature review that has to do with brand advocacy and supply chains, a review different from this one, concludes that brands are more likely to respond to an issue, when it has important implications for their image and/or firm performance (Oka & Chikako, 2018).

4.4.1.5 Mobilization Structures

As mentioned above, mobilization structures can influence and shape brands 'actions. As defined by McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald (1996) mobilizing structures are "collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action". In other words, mobilizing structures can be formal organizations or informal networks that facilitate collective action by providing a resource base that will help to overcome the high starting cost (King, 2008). Brands need some kind of mobilizing structures to coordinate them and solve collective action problems as this will make them more active at sociopolitical movements (Oka & Chikako, 2018).

4.4.1.6 Political opportunities

Another variable that is mentioned at the study is related to political opportunities and, as seen on the figure above, belongs to the same category as mobilization structures. Political opportunities refer to the broader political environment that shapes opportunities and poses external constraints for social movements. The level of democratization and the nature of regime affect the movement's influence on the outcome. As a result, brands' collective actions, whether political opportunities or mobilization structures, are enabled by political opportunities (Oka & Chikako, 2018).

4.4.1.7 Resource dependency

Last but not least, the study includes the resource dependency theory as a way to shape brands 'actions. According to Oka & Chikako (2018), resource dependency is "the product of the importance of a given input or output to the organization and the extent to which it is controlled by a relatively few organizations.'' When the resource exchange is not equally important to both parties, the relationship becomes that of an asymmetry, giving power to the less dependent party and allowing them to influence the behavior of the more dependent one. In this study, resource dependency is considered as the less dependent part and brand advocacy as the more dependent one (Oka & Chikako, 2018).

4.4.1.8 Commitment to cause

Finally, there is one more thing worthy of reference when it comes to strategic aspects and that is ''commitment to cause''. This variable is mentioned in five studies that are included in the same paper and based on them, one can conclude that it is the most effective type of messaging both for high and low equity brands. After the reviewer's research, it is now fact that consumers expect activism from brands and that is why they have increased their commitment to various sociopolitical issues. Brands' activism messages mostly express a rhetorical, financial, or non-financial commitment to any sociopolitical issue. It is indicated that high equity brands should establish financial

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commitment to gain authenticity and love, but low equity brands should emphasize on a non-financial commitment (Ahmad, Guzman & Kidwell 2022).

4.5 Tactical aspects

4.5.1 Argument quality

Looking at the tactical aspects of the antecedents, the reviewer came across various variables. One of them was ''argument quality'' a term that refers to the persuasive power of the arguments that are included inside a message. In the study, the term is actually reported as perceived argument quality, which is defined as the coherence and logical sequence of a brand's message delivered through a brand activism campaign (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). In other words, the argument that the brand tries to communicate to the consumer must be clear to avoid misunderstandings. Consumers' perception of argument quality is also of the utmost importance. Therefore, the quality of arguments is fundamental as proved in the research, as it has a positive influence on brand attitude and brand trust (Nguyen, Le, Truong, N. Truong & Vu, 2022).

4.5.2 Authenticity

Authenticity is a term that has already been mentioned in this study in the literature review section. The word ''authenticity'' is used to describe something unquestionably real and probably verified by evidence (Keller et al., 2008). Authentic brand activism is one of the main variables that outperforms all other types of brand activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Authenticity is a critical attribute of brand activism, as it not only has a positive influence on brand attitude but also on brand trust (Nguyen, Le, Truong, N. Truong & Vu, 2022).

4.5.3 Altruistic motives & Self – interest motives

Altruistic motives have to do with ethical issues and the state of helping the society. In marketing, in the case of successful cause-related marketing (CRM) campaigns, the motives of a brand should be perceived as altruistic and the brand should portray itself as sincerely concerned about society

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(Yuksel et al., 2016). Consumers tend to be skeptical about CRM campaigns and brand's intention in terms of its prospective advantages to a societal cause. They tend to examine how beneficial a campaign can be to the brand itself to see whether the motives are egoistic or not. When there are doubts, consumers rarely respond to the CSR initiatives of brand practices due to the fact they feel deceived. Therefore, a company's motives can influence a CRM campaign's effectiveness. There are two types of CSR motives: altruistic and self-interest. Self-interest motives are equivalent to the strategic-driven motive and the egoistic driven motive. After extended research, it is noted that altruistic motives have a positive influence on brand attitude and brand trust. Self-interest motives, by contrast, might have a positive influence on brand attitude, but they do not have such influence on brand trust.

4.5.4 Media type

Media type has to do with virtual content such as videos or photos that brands can use in their social media posts to increase interactions with the consumers. Such posts usually have more views among social media users than those including only text. A study of the effect of media type on consumers' active reaction to brands taking stands on public issues on twitter showed that, the tweet media type studied, based on the inclusion of a photo or video, does not have a positive effect on consumers' active reaction (Berestova et al., 2022).

4.5 Mediators

4.5.1 Moral competency assessment

As seen at the figure above, one of the mediators, is moral competency, which is the ability to pass accurate moral judgments. Stakeholders divide moral competency in three categories:

- Moral sensitivity (brands' ability to recognize the moral content). Brands demonstrate high sensitivity by raising burning moral issues.

- Moral vision (insight into the future of morality)

- Moral integration (brands' ability to pursue their moral beliefs).

The study included analyzed brands that define themselves as activists, and how those brands negotiate the boundaries of free speech through controversial strategies. The results of the research indicated that brands' effectiveness depends on the perceived moral competency, and this can have a huge impact on brand activism (Sibai, Mimoun & Boukis, 2021).

4.5.2 Moral decoupling

Moral decoupling is used as a mediator in three included studies. Moral decoupling and rationalization can protect a company from negative outcomes in the case of consumer-brand disagreement. Something like this would be possible if consumers were to separate the perceived immoral stand from the brand. The results of the studies showed that when the relation between the brand and the source of the stand is considered distant, consumers will most likely pursue a moral decoupling strategy (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020).

4.5.3 Attitude towards the brand

Last but not least, the attitude towards the brand was examined as a mediator on boycott/buycott intention. This relationship has been examined in past studies and it has been proved that when people engage in boycott, they tend to form less favorable brand attitudes. When consumers have low product preferences toward the brand, it is more likely for them to boycott and when they have the same stance on sociopolitical matters, they tend to form more favorable attitudes towards the brand. The study included revealed a significant effect of brand attitude on boycott/buycott intention. Brand attitude mediates the three-way interaction effect between consumer personal stance (consistent vs inconsistent with the target company), magnitude of public support (personal stance congruent with majority vs. minority), and perceived credibility of public support information (high vs. low) on boycott/ boycott intention (Hong & Li, 2020).

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4.6 Cognitive responses

4.6.1 Formulation of judgement

 After analyzing the antecedents and the mediator variables, it is time to examine the outcomes. The dependent variables of this study are divided in three categories:

- Cognitive responses

- Emotional responses

- Behavioral responses

At this section the reviewer will analyze the cognitive responses, with the first one being the formulation of judgement. To begin with, activist brands can influence moral judgement of their customers either through a persuasive or a controversial way. Moral judgment is defined as a social process of justification, during public debates or moral controversies. It relies on orders of worth. At this point and, for the reader to have a better understanding, it is important to explain the meaning of orders of worth. They are moral worlds that individuals use to explain their moral stance (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). At the study included it is noted that brand managers could challenge the moral establishment, bringing to light the flaws in moral judgments. This moral movement often demands that brands will take a stand on important matters, and this is a great challenge for the companies (Sibai et al., 2021).

4.6.2 Justice perceptions

 Social Justice is defined as the philosophy that citizens should have, regarding material equality. It is considered as a '' fair way to distribute society's benefits and responsibilities''. In other words, social justice is about equity and, hence, emphasizes the need for all individuals to have the same rights and complete access on resources. Social justice branding is also about equity. Brands empower thoughts and actions of fairness. However, as a marketing strategy, it does not seem to be the best choice. Evidence showed that some consumers feel disrupted and disoriented when their perception of justice is being questioned. This can lead to them having second thoughts on whether they should
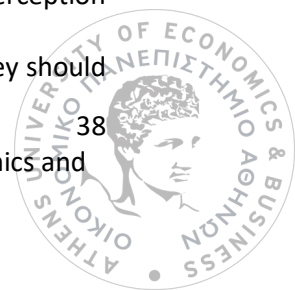
use the product the brand is producing or not. Nonetheless, other customers feel empowered and tend to respond to the social justice messaging, no matter whether that is a negative or a positive one. According to the study that explored the concept of social justice branding, this perception of justice provokes multiple emotions that empower action (Smith, James & Griffiths, 2021).

4.6.3 Attitude towards the brand

Brand attitude or else attitude towards the brand is a dependent variable that is mentioned in fourteen (n=14) studies that are included in this literature review. Firstly, it is discovered that negative effects on brand activism, including brand attitude, are more likely to originate from people who disagree with the promoted cause rather than those who agree with it. Therefore, when consumers agree with a brand's stance, their attitude towards the brand is not affected. Those who are opposed to the promoted ideology, however, respond negatively to the brand. Still, when a public backlash against the brand occurs, there seems to be a small increase concerning the brand attitude of those who support the brand's stance (Poyry & Laaksonen, 2022).

On the other hand, when consumers become aware of misbehaviors of companies, they develop negative attitudes toward those brands, which motivates them to engage in anti-brand activity against them (Sachdev et al., 2021). Other studies on brand activism and consumers' attitude towards the brand, present evidence that shows that consumers tend to react negatively or even express hostile behaviors towards a brand, that launches a campaign promoting a disputed issue (Pöyry & Laaksonen, 2022).

4.6.4 Brand activism knowledge

Brand activism knowledge is extremely valuable for most firms. However, many brands seem to act in a rush and not think their actions through. To begin with, to attract consumers driven by values and ethics, brands sometimes rush to support a sociopolitical cause. Interestingly enough, this may harm them since it could lead to incorrect actions and communicate the wrong message to its audience. Therefore, it is essential for companies and brands to have extensive knowledge about

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consumer behavior towards cause-related marketing and brand activism, before they jump into other actions (Shetty et al., 2019).

4.7 Emotional responses

4.7.1 Sentiment

The next category relates to emotional responses. The only variable that meets the criteria to this category is the sentiment or, as reported at the paper, negative sentiment. The paper includes three studies and the findings of all of them help to better understand the differentiation between CPA and CSR and how CPA may contribute to polarization and radicalization via negative sentiment expressed through social media and consumer actions. More specifically, it is discovered that consumer sentiment (as reflected in social media posts and brand attitudes) is less favorable in response to CPA than in response to CSR.

Moreover, the firm action (CSR vs. CPA) moderates the anticipated value-match effect, such as the anticipated two-way interaction between a firm's liberal versus conservative stance. Consumers' political orientation is stronger under CPA than under CSR. Finally, it is found that the anticipated value-match effect in response to CPA is stronger among consumers who do not rank as highly in political efficacy (Weber et al., 2023).

4.8 Behavioral Responses

4.8.1 Intention to purchase

Most of the studies included focused heavily on consumer behavior when brands decided to either take or avoid taking a stand on sociopolitical issues. It is explained that, with time, consumers become more and more passionate about sociopolitical matters and expect to see brands taking a stand and aim to bring about social change. Research concludes that consumers are more loyal to brands that not only offer them products or services but also share their values and beliefs.

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Therefore, it is essential to report the following notes. Firstly, brand social activism and brand political activism along with brand referral marketing can impact consumer buying behavior significantly. Moreover, brand's stance on social and political influences consumer buying behavior (Kumar, 2020).

4.8.2 Brand choice

Brand choice does not differ notably from intention to purchase. Five studies used brand choice as a dependent variable. All of them came to the same conclusion. Brand activism not only influenced consumer attitudes but also behavioral intentions and actual brand choices (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020).

4.8.3 Brand advocacy

Brand advocacy is somewhat a synonym of brand activism. There is, however, a growing phenomenon of brand advocacy, where brands pressure governments to take actions that will protect workers by respecting their rights. An example of that could be raising minimum wage.

The study included seems to present both the advantages and the limitations of brand advocacy. Brand advocacy can call on sector-wide matters that cannot be organized by the CSR approach of individual brands. When the level of issue salience is high, impacting brand image and firm performance, brands are likely to act in a concerted and determined manner. On the other hand, brand advocacy faces severe restrains when issue salience is limited and political contexts are unfavorable, as in the case of the trade union law (Oka & Chikako, 2018).

4.8.4 Brand love

Brand love is understood as a high passionate emotional attachment that expresses the satisfaction consumers feel towards the brand. The definition is not different of what love as a feeling could represent. After extended research, five studies came to some important conclusions that connect brand activism with brand love. Firstly, it is proved that when brand activism does not involve

financial commitment, it generates higher brand love than when it does. Moreover, brand authenticity holds the role of the mediator in the relation among brand activism commitment and brand love. Another important conclusion is that when the brand activism message is focused on hope rather than anger, it will probably, affect perceived brand love in a positive way. Taking all these into account, the author of that study concludes that, financial and non-financial commitment brands that are focused on hope rather than anger will have a more positive effect on brand love. Also, rhetorical commitment focusing on frustration rather than hope will have a more positive effect on brand love. Last but not least, brand activism from high equity brands will have a more positive effect on brand love than brand activism from low equity brands (Ahmad t al., 2022).
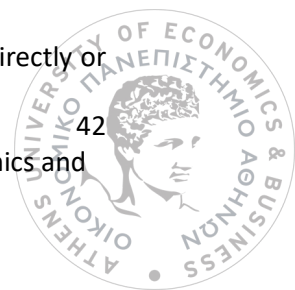
4.8.5 Boycott/Boycott intention

Boycott is the way consumers use to state their disappointment or their negative stance towards the brand. In other words, it is a way to punish a company by avoiding to purchase its products or services on purpose. Nowadays, many brands use digital media, to show their brand activism activities online. Therefore, consumers are talking about their boycott or buycott actions in an online setting as well. It is found that there is an indirect effect of consumer personal stance (consistent vs. inconsistent with the target brand) on boycott/ buycott intention through brand attitude.

When brands do not act as their audience expects them to, or when consumers do not agree with brands stance, it is more likely that they will express their negative feelings and actively show their boycott intentions. There is a study that confirms that many consumers express their self on social media as there they can write about their boycott or buycott actions to express attitudes toward the target company and its sociopolitical stance (Hong &Li, 2020).

4.8.6 User generator content, Views, Comments & Likes

On the Internet and social media era, users can be as active as they want. There are people that are more engaged and express their opinion and might be considered influencers and there are less active users that are more likely to be exposed to information directly by the mass media directly or

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by opinion leaders. There are several ways to express how you feel about what you see or read; views, comments, or even likes. In fact, a study that mainly analyzes Always campaign #LikeAGirl, actually uses views, comments, likes and user genitor content to measure the success of the video campaign. At the first period of the campaign consumers seemed to be more active than in the following-up campaign periods that were not as successful as the initial one. The substantial amount of views, comments, likes, and user-generated content showed that the consecutive campaigns still had impact. To test campaign's reach and influence, the evidence of cognitive (views, comments), affective (likes, dislikes, comments), and behavioral participation (user-generated videos, comments) were observed in all five periods of the campaign. The results showed that companies should not take on long-term campaigns even if they believe that aligns with the company's values as this does not maintain engagement. Brands should figure new innovative ideas that will provide new solutions to issues. Even though the attempt by Always to revitalize the campaign by posting a series of videos titled 'Keep Playing' seemed successful, as the second largest number of user-generated videos was generated, the success did not last (Lee et al., 2020).

4.8.7 Quotes & Replies

As mentioned above, social media is an easy way for the consumers to communicate their feelings towards the brands. However, how consumers react to brands posts on digital media platforms can help companies understand how they are influenced by public issue posts. According to a study that used a sportswear brand page on a famous social media platform, it is discovered that public-issue posts have a positive influence on consumers' active reaction (i.e., number of retweets, number of quotes, number of replies, and post-social search behavior). Consumer's active reactions are examined through quotes, and replies. Several important implications came up from exploring the effect of public-issue posts on the number of retweets, quotes, replies, and post-social search behavior. Thus, the study proves that public-issue posts have a positive effect on consumers' active reaction retweets, quotes, replies, post-social search behavior (Berestove et al., 2022).

4.9 Moderators

4.9.1 Brand trust

 Brand trust is when consumers are willing to rely on a brand despite the risk associated with that brand. It is indicated that brand trust plays a critical role in the formation of consumers' attitudes and loyalty towards the brand and can be achieved when companies attach to their brand a sense of safety, honesty and reliability for the consumers to acknowledge. Brand trust can provide marketing benefits such as lowering marketing costs, attracting new customers, providing greater trade leverage, word of mouth, and resisting competitors' marketing efforts. In this literature review brand trust is found as a moderator variable and it is proved that perceived argument quality and perceived authenticity has a positive influence on brand trust. Moreover, perceived altruistic motives have a positive influence on brand trust and brand trust has a positive influence on brand attitude. Finally, brand trust has a positive influence on brand loyalty (Nguyen et al., 2022).

4.9.2 Gender

 Another perception of brand activism is stated by Shetty et al. and it says that ''it is when a company or brand takes plunge into the social, cultural, gender, environmental issue and supports the same in its marketing and advertising communication to the society''.

Gender is undeniably a matter that concerns many activists. A lot of them expect brands to take a stand on this controversial issue. Based on the results of a study targeting mainly millennials, it can be concluded that there is no gender difference amongst the millennials in their perceptions of brand activism. Thus, millennials regardless of gender, always welcome brands, which voice social, cultural, political and environmental issues and tend to disregard brands that choose to remain silent or neutral (Shetty et al., 2022).

4.9.3 Family type

Family type is a factor that can influence choices feelings and attitudes of consumers. In a quantitative study, participants were asked about the type of family they belonged to and the authentic influence they believed brands had had on their lives due to brand activism. The results showed that people who were part of nuclear and joint families believe that brands should take a proactive stance on social matters. However, this seemed to be less significant for people who were raised in extended families. To them, the idea that brand activism will have a real impact seemed more important. Results also showed that participants raised in nuclear families support campaigns related to social aspects more than those who were raised in extended and common family types (Sachdev et al., 2021).

4.9.4 Magnitude of public support

As mentioned in previews sections, there was a study that discovered, through an experimental design, an indirect effect of consumer personal stance (consistent vs. inconsistent with the target brand) on boycott/ buycott intention through brand attitude. That study also had a moderating variable, the magnitude of public support and perceived credibility of public support information. It was hypothesized that both could help consumers to have an opinion. After an experiment that took place in that study, a three-way interaction effect among consumer personal stance, magnitude of public support, and perceived credibility of public support information on brand attitude was discovered. The impact of sociopolitical stances (consistent vs. inconsistent) on brand attitude was salient for those who perceived the stimulus poll data as highly credible, when those stances were shared with the majority of society (Hong & Li, 2020).

4.9.5 Brand equity

Brand equity is defined as a brand's ability to provide equal value to a product or service. Brand may have a more positive effect on brand authenticity and brand love when it comes from strong and famous brands. However, after researching extended studies, it was proved that there is no

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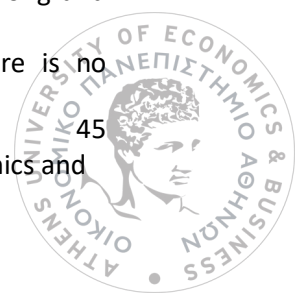
interaction effect between message type and brand equity, or three-way interactions between activism commitment. It was also found that brand activism coming from high equity brands will have a more positive effect on brand authenticity, than brand activism from low equity brands (Ahmad et al., 2022)

5. Conclusions

5.1 Analyses of the conclusion

Until now, brand activism studies focused on discovering common denominators of definitions or investigated the phenomenon. This systematic review examined the phenomenon of brand activism to see what happens when a brand takes a stand on sociopolitical issues and how consumers respond to it.   Although the papers collected and analysed were characterized by great heterogeneity, radiating, at first glance, an almost chaotic situation, the reviewer managed to organize the data in a comprehensive manner and draw conclusions. Hence, the reviewer presents an extent analysis of the variables collected out of the final thirty-seven (37) studies. Firstly, there were independent, dependent, mediating, and moderating variables. Independent variables were categorized in two thematic groups, whereas the independent (antecedents) were divided into three groups. Out of this organization of the selected studies, the reviewer managed to present whether and how brand activism affects consumer's purchases and attitude towards the brand. At this point it is important to highlight that, the phenomenon of brand activism is something that influences consumers but also the brand itself in many levels, either in a positive or negative manner. A noteworthy observation is that even though most of the studies showed that consumer's ask for brands to take a stand, sometimes this harms the brand in an irreversible way. Brand authenticity seems to be the key to this problem. It is an undeniable fact that consumers want brands to act by supporting their beliefs but even then, if their support seems inauthentic, or misleading, costumers boycott the company. In other words, when a brand does not represent the consumer's values and feelings, they avoid buying its products and, in some occasions, even express their negative feelings about the company and their attitude towards the brand changes online. In contrast, when consumers do not like a brand, but it stands by their value, there is a major possibility they will choose to purchase it. However, when the brand supports consumer's kind of ethics but in a not authentic way and with the purpose to mislead the customer then the company is, again, negatively affected.

Moreover, a truly important finding is that social media play a decisive role on brand activism. Firstly, users' profile content, comments, likes and views can show whether they agree or disagree with a brand's stand. More importantly though, it helps them boycott the brands that are not in tandem with their thoughts. It also helps brand managers estimate whether and to what extent their campaigns had been successful.

Brand activism is neither influenced by age nor gender, as there were studies showing that millennial consumers were also looking for activist brands that would support a cause. Studies that attempted to discover how brand activism complies with the consumer's family type were led to the same conclusions.

Another valuable result is that when a brand keeps repeating an activist campaign it misses its target, after a while. Always's campaign, #LikeAGirl used the same video during five periods and the results pointed that, even though consumers liked the campaign a lot and the video had many views, each repeat of the video was less successful in terms of views. This happened because consumers lost their interest, as the brand did nothing new to change or address the issue. This disappointed consumers and during the fifth period there was not much interaction. Brands should show their activism in many ways and renew their campaigns to stay consistent with what they promise.

In addition, many studies showed that it is a big risk for a brand to take a stand. There are many difficulties, as sometimes it is hard to understand consumer behaviour and act in a way that will attract them and make them commit. The main goal is to gain brand trust, but in many case studies, it was proved that, in the end, brands were boycotted by consumers for their activist actions as there was poor use of the message framework. Sometimes this was due to a misunderstanding, but it harmed the company's image. There is a negative effect in the case of consume – brand disagreement.

In conclusion, it is obvious, in most studies, that consumers expect brands to be socio-politically active. Brands that decide to take that road, are better perceived, as long as their stance seems authentic. Furthermore, it shows that brand managers are aware of consumers' expectations and the

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opportunities and risks of taking a stance. Taking both perspectives into consideration, brands that take a sociopolitical stance should be committed to it over time, ensure that it aligns with their strategy and values and be aware of the potential polarization their stance and sociopolitical activism might create.

5.2 Contribution to Academic Research

As previously mentioned in the introduction concerning the originality of the study, this review offers great novelty on the topic of brand activism, as it is a phenomenon that is currently evolving and still studied by researchers. Up to this day, no other review has approached the topic of brand activism under this scope. This review is the first to go beyond mere associations and present an exhaustive research of the direct cause-and-effect relationships of brand activism and consumer's attitude towards the brand. Since this field of study is fairly new and will continue to remain relevant for years to come, as more and more sociopolitical issues that concern the consumers come to the surface, the contribution of this review is indisputable. This study contributes to the extension of the existing literature on brand activism and attitude towards the brand, in an innovative manner. In addition, this review can operate as an academic manuscript that offers a clear overview of all the relevant information on the subject and can constitute the foundation for guiding other researchers for future endeavors on the topic. Finally, the results of the review manage to present, after careful synthesis, thematic groups where people can choose to extract information from or conduct research inside a specific group. Apart from offering findings for each thematic group, cross-group assumptions have been presented, paving the way for individuals who desire to either investigate this field of study on an overview level or explore new paths.

**5.3 Managerial Implications**

The topic of brand activism and how this phenomenon is evolving and changing consumer's behavior towards the brand and brand attitude in general is not only a concept that concerns academic research on marketing. Its importance extends to the business world of marketing, too.
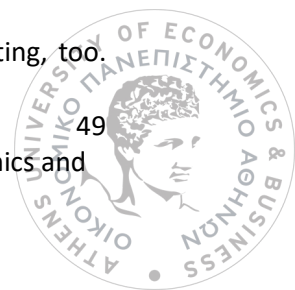
Consumers do not buy products mainly based on their price, the name of the brand or what is in fashion. Most customers prefer to buy products by brands that are taking a stand. Therefore, the knowledge provided by this review can be of the utmost importance for companies, brand managers, organizations, and consumers. Our era is based on data; everything we touch or see provides us with information about the world we live in. Following this train of thought, the opportunity for corporation departments of strategy, marketing, and consumer insights offered by this study is undoubted. Brand managers can benefit from this review by getting inspired to produce new ways in which they can, firstly, better understand their consumers, then accurately separate and target them. Special statistical models or algorithms, able to observe how consumers react on sociopolitical matters, how much they are influenced by them and whether they want to see brands picking a side or not, can be generated to support such a cause. These models could operate by obtaining data through content analysis of users' social media profiles. The greater the tools the managers hold, the better their offers to the public and the happier the consumers will become.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

A systematic literature review can be perceived as a scientific and methodical assessment of all available evidence. A good review must contain explicitly defined research objectives, relevant material, and research methodology (Bigby & Williams, 2003). Despite the exhaustive nature of the research required for a systematic review and the diligence of the whole procedure, there are always ways in which bias can enter the frame. At the end of the day, a review is as good as the studies it contains (Bigby & Williams, 2003; Egger, Dickersin, & Davey Smith, 2008). A systematic review essentially is an analysis with secondary data, as it assembles and synthesizes other researchers' primary data. There are always uncontrollable inadequacies that exist in each individual study which a systematic review author cannot account for. Since this thesis is not a typical research paper but an aggregation of several studies other authors had conducted, the quality of the review depends on the quality of the material gathered. Although the author explored several important databases to extract the largest possible number of studies, there are always limitations to how much research

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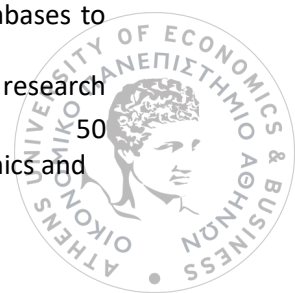
one reviewer can do by themselves, especially considering the thousands of results the review's research question keywords returned in some databases. Since the reviewer is merely the collector of existing studies, he is not responsible if certain relationships between variables have not been researched at all in any of the pool of studies. Despite the extensive search for material, the reviewer is not to blame for not discovering grey literature in case any exists, like unpublished papers, theses, conference papers and so on. Furthermore, only studies written in the English language were selected as there was no way to work around not understanding papers penned in foreign languages. Finally, a big part of the studies took place in the US, so even though results in some thematic groups may seem aligned we have to keep in mind that each country has its own cultural idiosyncrasy, meaning that some relationships should be ideally examined in countries in the rest of the world as well. To battle these shortcomings, the author of this review tried to limit all possible forms of bias by being very meticulous during the whole search for studies, evaluating all material thoroughly for relevance and by following the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA). Regardless of the reviewer's attempts at minimizing bias some aspects of the process were out of his control.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

   As mentioned in the chapter above, many of the studies analysed took place in America and Europe. It is important that future research aims to explore how brand activism operates in other countries, especially in the Asian continents where there is already some common ground as some studies have proved. This way different cultures will provide a variety of outcomes which can assist in validating or challenging certain variable relationships.

Although the studies overall do cover the phenomenon of brand activism and most of its aspects, there are still a lot to study. From the research that the reviewer did, it is shown that there are some gaps to study in future research. Firstly, as mentioned above, due to the continuous use of the same campaign consumers stop showing their interest, even though brand showed consistency. It is essential for brands to know why consumers stop caring after one point and how they can avoid it.
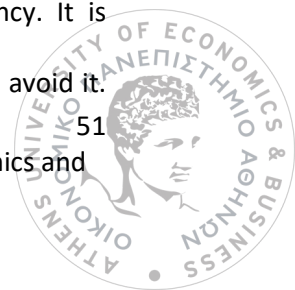
Furthermore, it seems essential to study whether finance issues could influence either the brand or the consumer as, based on the studies published, there is no such information. Methodology-wise, most of the studies included a questionnaire as the basis of their method of gathering data, but there were some that used case studies as examples. This is expected since they deal with brands, however the studies that included interviews, focus groups and experiments showcased a more analytical and deeper level of participant responses. It would be ideal for future research to focus on conducting empirical studies with a variety of methodologies implemented. This can lead to more useful insights about gender, age groups or cultural characteristics, while it will provide an even better understanding on brand activism actions and consumer's attitude towards them.

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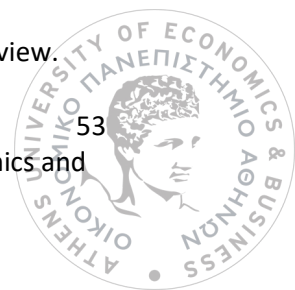
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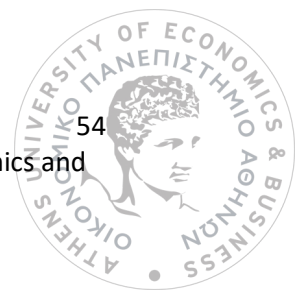
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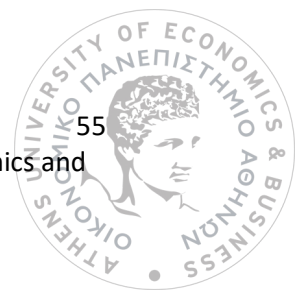
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Appendix

Title	Author	Journal name	Year	Country	Methodology	No. of participants	Independent variavles	Mediating variables	Moderating variables	Dependent variables	Result //conclusion
Differential Response to Corporate Political Advocacy and Corporate Social Responsibility: Implications for Political Polarization and Radicalization	T.J. Weber, Jeff Joireman, David E. Sprott, and Chris Hydock	Journal of Public Policy & Marketing	2023	non specified	quantitative	223,884 tweets	brand activism		Custommer political efficacy	Custommer responses (negative sentiment)	The present work used three studies to offer insights to practi tioners and policy makers interested in the impact of companies' interactions with society through CPA and CSR. Study 1 revealed that Twitter users responding to brands after a CSR (CPA) action were more positive (negative) than before the action. Second, using a large, politically representative panel, Study 2 found that, across a variety of CPA and CSR action types, worse outcomes accrue to firms undertaking CPA because of perceptions that it is less appropriate and more con troversial than CSR. Lastly, Study 3 uncovered evidence that negative responses to misaligned CPA are concentrated among those lower in EPE. Next, we outline the theoretical, empirical, practical, and policy implications of our work and suggest future research directions
Differential Response to Corporate Political Advocacy and Corporate Social Responsibility: Implications for Political Polarization and Radicalization	T.J. Weber, Jeff Joireman, David E. Sprott, and Chris Hydock	Journal of Public Policy & Marketing	2023	non specified	Quantitative	3914 US residents	brand activism		Custommer political efficacy	Custommer responses (negative sentiment)	The present work used three studies to offer insights to practi tioners and policy makers interested in the impact of companies' interactions with society through CPA and CSR. Study 1 revealed that Twitter users responding to brands after a CSR (CPA) action were more positive (negative) than before the action. Second, using a large, politically representative panel, Study 2 found that, across a variety of CPA and CSR action types, worse outcomes accrue to firms undertaking CPA because of perceptions that it is less appropriate and more con troversial than CSR. Lastly, Study 3 uncovered evidence that negative responses to misaligned CPA are concentrated among those lower in EPE. Next, we outline the theoretical, empirical, practical, and policy implications of our work and suggest future research directions
Differential Response to Corporate Political Advocacy and Corporate Social Responsibility: Implications for Political Polarization and Radicalization	T.J. Weber, Jeff Joireman, David E. Sprott, and Chris Hydock	Journal of Public Policy & Marketing	2023	non specified	Quantitative	504 US resident	brand activism		Custommer political efficacy	Custommer responses (negative sentiment)	The present work used three studies to offer insights to practi tioners and policy makers interested in the impact of companies' interactions with society through CPA and CSR. Study 1 revealed that Twitter users responding to brands after a CSR (CPA) action were more positive (negative) than before the action. Second, using a large, politically representative panel, Study 2 found that, across a variety of CPA and CSR action types, worse outcomes accrue to firms undertaking CPA because of perceptions that it is less appropriate and more con troversial than CSR. Lastly, Study 3 uncovered evidence that negative responses to misaligned CPA are concentrated among those lower in EPE. Next, we outline the theoretical, empirical, practical, and policy implications of our work and suggest future research directions
Brand activism: Does courting controversy help or hurt a brand?	Sourjo Mukherjee Niek Althuizen	International Journal of Research In Marketing	2020	France	Quantitative	Study 1 A 154 participants	brand activism	moral decupling	brand - stand distance	Brand attitude, behavioral intentions, choice	1The results of this first study provide support for our main hypothesis (H1) regarding the asymmetric effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes, i.e., a negative effect in the case of consumer-brand disagreement and no significant effect in the case of consumer-brand agreement. Consumer-brand identification was found to (partially) mediate this negative effect of consumer brand disagreement on consumer attitudes, which provides support for H2. However, we must note that the evidence for the me diating role of consumer-brand identification is not conclusive given the difficulty to establish the order of effects. That is, we can not rule out that consumer brand disagreement influences brand attitude, which then influences consumer-brand identification. 2.Besides replicating the asymmetric effect of brand activism (H1) and the mediating role of consumer-brand identification (H2), Study 2 provided important additional insights. The effect of brand activism was found to be different from the effect of general (non-moral) product-related information. That is, a single piece of general (non-moral) product-related information (positive or negative) did not significantly change consumer attitudes towards a well-known brand, whereas one act of brand activism did have a significant negative effect on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions in the case of consumer-brand disagreement regarding the brand's stand. Interestingly, the participants who disagreed with the brand's stand were willing to forego a financial bonus by refusing to share a positive news story about the brand on social media, which was not the case for the participants who were exposed to negative general (non-moral) product-related information. 3. A source of the stand that is less closely related to the brand can mitigate the negative effect of brand activism (H3) by allowing consumer to apply a moral decoupling strategy (H4) 4. for our hypotheses (H5 and H6) that public reaction can influence the effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes. In the case of consumer-brand disagreement regarding the stand, the change in attitude towards the brand was negative regardless of public backlash or subsequent corrective actions. However, in the case of consumer-brand agreement regarding the stand, public reaction did matter for consumer attitudes. In all previous studies, taking a stand with which the con- sumers agreed did not result in significant changes in brand attitude. Nevertheless, in this study, the consumers were inclined to reward the brand for taking a stand when it faced public backlash. We argued in

Brand activism: Does courting controversy help or hurt a brand?	*Sourjo Mukherjee Niek Althuizen*	*International Journal of Research In Marketing*	2020	France	Quantitative	**Study 1B 2 Phases, 115 students**	brand activism	moral decupling	brand - stand distance	Brand attitude, behavioral intentions, choice	*1The results of this first study provide support for our main hypothesis (H1) regarding the asymmetric effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes, i.e., a negative effect in the case of consumer-brand disagreement and no significant effect in the case of consumer-brand agreement. Consumer-brand identification was found to (partially) mediate this negative effect of consumer brand disagreement on consumer attitudes, which provides support for H2. However, we must note that the evidence for the me diating role of consumer-brand identification is not conclusive given the difficulty to establish the order of effects. That is, we can not rule out that consumer brand disagreement influences brand attitude, which then influences consumer-brand identification. 2.Besides replicating the asymmetric effect of brand activism (H1) and the mediating role of consumer-brand identification (H2), Study 2 provided important additional insights. The effect of brand activism was found to be different from the effect of general (non-moral) product-related information. That is, a single piece of general (non-moral) product-related information (positive or negative) did not significantly change consumer attitudes towards a well-known brand, whereas one act of brand activism did have a significant negative effect on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions in the case of consumer-brand disagreement regarding the brand's stand. Interestingly, the participants who disagreed with the brand's stand were willing to forego a financial bonus by refusing to share a positive news story about the brand on social media, which was not the case for the participants who were exposed to negative general (non-moral) product-related information. 3. A source of the stand that is less closely related to the brand can mitigate the negative effect of brand activism (H3) by allowing consumer to apply a moral decoupling strategy (H4) 4. for our hypotheses (H5 and H6) that public reaction can influence the effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes. In the case of consumer-brand disagreement regarding the stand, the change in attitude towards the brand was negative regardless of public backlash or subsequent corrective actions. However, in the case of consumer-brand agreement regarding the stand, public reaction did matter for consumer attitudes. In all previous studies, taking a stand with which the con- sumers agreed did not result in significant changes in brand attitude. Nevertheless*
Brand activism: Does courting controversy help or hurt a brand?	*Sourjo Mukherjee Niek Althuizen*	*International Journal of Research In Marketing*	2020	France	Quantitative	**Study 2 197 participants**	brand activism	moral decupling	brand - stand distance	Brand attitude, behavioral intentions, choice	*1The results of this first study provide support for our main hypothesis (H1) regarding the asymmetric effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes, i.e., a negative effect in the case of consumer-brand disagreement and no significant effect in the case of consumer-brand agreement. Consumer-brand identification was found to (partially) mediate this negative effect of consumer brand disagreement on consumer attitudes, which provides support for H2. However, we must note that the evidence for the me diating role of consumer-brand identification is not conclusive given the difficulty to establish the order of effects. That is, we can not rule out that consumer brand disagreement influences brand attitude, which then influences consumer-brand identification. 2.Besides replicating the asymmetric effect of brand activism (H1) and the mediating role of consumer-brand identification (H2), Study 2 provided important additional insights. The effect of brand activism was found to be different from the effect of general (non-moral) product-related information. That is, a single piece of general (non-moral) product-related information (positive or negative) did not significantly change consumer attitudes towards a well-known brand, whereas one act of brand activism did have a significant negative effect on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions in the case of consumer-brand disagreement regarding the brand's stand. Interestingly, the participants who disagreed with the brand's stand were willing to forego a financial bonus by refusing to share a positive news story about the brand on social media, which was not the case for the participants who were exposed to negative general (non-moral) product-related information. 3. A source of the stand that is less closely related to the brand can mitigate the negative effect of brand activism (H3) by allowing consumer to apply a moral decoupling strategy (H4) 4. for our hypotheses (H5 and H6) that public reaction can influence the effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes. In the case of consumer-brand disagreement regarding the stand, the change in attitude towards the brand was negative regardless of public backlash or subsequent corrective actions. However, in the case of consumer-brand agreement regarding the stand, public reaction did matter for consumer attitudes. In all previous studies, taking a stand with which the con- sumers agreed did not result in significant changes in brand attitude. Nevertheless*

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Title	Authors	Journal	Year	Country	Method	Sample	Keywords	Concept	Variables	Findings
Brand activism: Does courting controversy help or hurt a brand?	*Sourjo Mukherjee Niek Althuizen*	*International Journal of Research In Marketing*	2020	France	**Quantitative**	**Study 3 210**	brand activism	moral decupling	brand - stand distance	Brand attitude, behavioral intentions, choice	*1The results of this first study provide support for our main hypothesis (H1) regarding the asymmetric effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes, i.e., a negative effect in the case of consumer-brand disagreement and no significant effect in the case of consumer-brand agreement. Consumer-brand identification was found to (partially) mediate this negative effect of consumer brand disagreement on consumer attitudes, which provides support for H2. However, we must note that the evidence for the me diating role of consumer-brand identification is not conclusive given the difficulty to establish the order of effects. That is, we can not rule out that consumer brand disagreement influences brand attitude, which then influences consumer-brand identification. 2.Besides replicating the asymmetric effect of brand activism (H1) and the mediating role of consumer-brand identification (H2), Study 2 provided important additional insights. The effect of brand activism was found to be different from the effect of general (non-moral) product-related information. That is, a single piece of general (non-moral) product-related information (positive or negative) did not significantly change consumer attitudes towards a well-known brand, whereas one act of brand activism did have a significant negative effect on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions in the case of consumer-brand disagreement regarding the brand's stand. Interestingly, the participants who disagreed with the brand's stand were willing to forego a financial bonus by refusing to share a positive news story about the brand on social media, which was not the case for the participants who were exposed to negative general (non-moral) product-related information. 3. A source of the stand that is less closely related to the brand can mitigate the negative effect of brand activism (H3) by allowing consumer to apply a moral decoupling strategy (H4) 4. for our hypotheses (H5 and H6) that public reaction can influence the effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes. In the case of consumer-brand disagreement regarding the stand, the change in attitude towards the brand was negative regardless of public backlash or subsequent corrective actions. However, in the case of consumer-brand agreement regarding the stand, public reaction did matter for consumer attitudes. In all previous studies, taking a stand with which the con- sumers agreed did not result in significant changes in brand attitude. Nevertheless*
Brand activism: Does courting controversy help or hurt a brand?	*Sourjo Mukherjee Niek Althuizen*	*International Journal of Research In Marketing*	2020	France	**Quantitative**	**Study 4 304 participants**	brand activism	moral decupling		Brand attitude, behavioral intentions, choice	*1The results of this first study provide support for our main hypothesis (H1) regarding the asymmetric effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes, i.e., a negative effect in the case of consumer-brand disagreement and no significant effect in the case of consumer-brand agreement. Consumer-brand identification was found to (partially) mediate this negative effect of consumer brand disagreement on consumer attitudes, which provides support for H2. However, we must note that the evidence for the me diating role of consumer-brand identification is not conclusive given the difficulty to establish the order of effects. That is, we can not rule out that consumer brand disagreement influences brand attitude, which then influences consumer-brand identification. 2.Besides replicating the asymmetric effect of brand activism (H1) and the mediating role of consumer-brand identification (H2), Study 2 provided important additional insights. The effect of brand activism was found to be different from the effect of general (non-moral) product-related information. That is, a single piece of general (non-moral) product-related information (positive or negative) did not significantly change consumer attitudes towards a well-known brand, whereas one act of brand activism did have a significant negative effect on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions in the case of consumer-brand disagreement regarding the brand's stand. Interestingly, the participants who disagreed with the brand's stand were willing to forego a financial bonus by refusing to share a positive news story about the brand on social media, which was not the case for the participants who were exposed to negative general (non-moral) product-related information. 3. A source of the stand that is less closely related to the brand can mitigate the negative effect of brand activism (H3) by allowing consumer to apply a moral decoupling strategy (H4) 4. for our hypotheses (H5 and H6) that public reaction can influence the effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes. In the case of consumer-brand disagreement regarding the stand, the change in attitude towards the brand was negative regardless of public backlash or subsequent corrective actions. However, in the case of consumer-brand agreement regarding the stand, public reaction did matter for consumer attitudes. In all previous studies, taking a stand with which the con- sumers agreed did not result in significant changes in brand attitude. Nevertheless*

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Authenticating brand activism: Negotiating the boundaries of free speech to make a change	Sibai Olivier Mimoun Laetitia Boukis Achilleas	Psychology & Marketing	2021	London, UK	Qualitative (conducting a comparative case study of 18 activist brands)	113 brand controversies	Brand activism strategy	moral competency assesment	Formulation of judgement	This study unearths some important managerial implications for brand managers' strategic engagement in activism through controversy. Our findings provide insights into how managers of activist brands can reform moral judgments in society effectively and morally. We uncover three strategies that can help managers use controversies to communicate their brands' reformist commitment effectively. Brands can use our first strategy to break taboos, revitalize public interest around important but displaced causes (e.g., environmentalism), or bring to light emerging values in public debates (e.g., gender nonbinariness). To do so, brands should ignite controversies by creating monstrous hybrids with ambiguous moral worth to blur the social norms defining what can be said in public spaces. Second, brand managers could challenge the moral establishment, bringing to light the flaws in the moral judgments promoted by powerful social actors. This strategy positions activist brands as agents who rebalance morality by shifting the boundaries of free speech to render them fairer. As challenging the moral establishment often involves taking a stance in existing controversies, this strategy also allows brands to render the reforms they defend topical and contemporary. The third strategy, demonstrating exemplarity, focuses on activist brands as moral innovators prefiguring the future of morality. This strategy introduces new boundaries to free speech and is, therefore, more relevant for the more radical activist brands whose moral positions are novel and only shared by a small minority. Brands can demonstrate moral exemplarity by pioneering moral precepts, supporting emerging moral leaders whose values align with theirs, or even creating their own social movement.
Brand activism and millennials: an empirical investigation into the perception of millennials towards brand activism	Shetty, Shivakanth Venkataramaiah, Nagendra Beiavadi Anand, Kerena	Problems and perspectives in management	2019	India	Quantitative	286 respondents	brand activism		custommer gender	brand activism knowledge, attitude towards brand activism	Based on the results of the study and discussion in sections 4 and 5, it can be inferred that millennials, irrespective of their gender and income levels, always welcome brands, which add voice to the social, cultural, political and environmental causes than the brands, which choose to remain silent or neutral. Hence, for brands, especially those brands aimed at millennials do not have the luxury of being neutral or indifferent, but they have to take a stand and initiate meaningful and impactful action. The results and findings of the study also proved the fact that millennials even do not hesitate to pay the premium price for such activist brands, as their emotional bonding with such brands goes beyond the price logic. Therefore, it becomes imperative for the brand managers to start thinking strategically towards activism and navigate their brands carefully in the turbulent waters of activism, demonstrating brand's core values and sincerity towards the cause they champion
Gender Marginalization in Sports Participation through Advertising: The Case of Nike	Rasmussen, Kirsten Dufur, MJ Cope, MR Pierce, H	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	2021	United States	Qualitative	131 commercials // 675 athletes Identifying initial codes of interest Example: Gender				The results of our analysis indicate that Nike continues to treat sports as a predominantly masculine realm in which male athletes compete. This may help to reify boundaries around sports participation that tell women and others who do not conform to hegemonic masculinity stereotypes that sport is not for them. There was a total of 675 athletes featured in this sample of commercials, of which 65% were male athletes, 35% were female athletes, and 3 athletes (0.45% percent) were outside of the male–female binary. In addition to depicting almost twice as many male athletes as female athletes, close to half (47% percent) of the commercials in our sample did not include any female athletes at all. In comparison, only 21% of commercials featured no male athletes. These proportions begin to illustrate a preference in Nike's commercials for male athletes, and an analysis of the sports these athletes are shown participating in indicates similar trends. In regard to the representation of different sports, less than 6% of athletes were shown competing in a sport that is considered appropriate only for female athletes, despite 20% of all sports presented by Nike being categorized as traditionally feminine. Additionally, female athletes were more frequently shown in masculine sports (22%) than they were in feminine sports (14%), indicating that Nike underrepresents feminine sports in favor of privileging masculine sports, even among female athletes. These trends in representation of both different athletes and different sports indicate that male athletes and masculine sports continue to hold the preeminent position in Nike's advertising, and that Nike's brand activism efforts do not extend to gender equality in their commercials in ways they might profess. Nike's supposedly progressive brand activism is not working to create a more inclusive arena in which a broader segment of the population might enjoy sports participation and the related health benefits—at least not in terms of gender
Gender Marginalization in Sports Participation through Advertising: The Case of Nike	*Rasmussen, Kirsten Dufur, MJ Cope, MR Pierce, H*	*International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*	*2021*	*United States*	*Qualitative*	*131 commercials // 676 athletes Identifying the broader themes and implicit messages Example: Presence of gender stereotypes*				*The results of our analysis indicate that Nike continues to treat sports as a predominantly masculine realm in which male athletes compete. This may help to reify boundaries around sports participation that tell women and others who do not conform to hegemonic masculinity stereotypes that sport is not for them. There was a total of 675 athletes featured in this sample of commercials, of which 65% were male athletes, 35% were female athletes, and 3 athletes (0.45% percent) were outside of the male–female binary. In addition to depicting almost twice as many male athletes as female athletes, close to half (47% percent) of the commercials in our sample did not include any female athletes at all. In comparison, only 21% of commercials featured no male athletes. These proportions begin to illustrate a preference in Nike's commercials for male athletes, and an analysis of the sports these athletes are shown participating in indicates similar trends. In regard to the representation of different sports, less than 6% of athletes were shown competing in a sport that is considered appropriate only for female athletes, despite 20% of all sports presented by Nike being categorized as traditionally feminine. Additionally, female athletes were more frequently shown in masculine sports (22%) than they were in feminine sports (14%), indicating that Nike underrepresents feminine sports in favor of privileging masculine sports, even among female athletes. These trends in representation of both different athletes and different sports indicate that male athletes and masculine sports continue to hold the preeminent position in Nike's advertising, and that Nike's brand activism efforts do not extend to gender equality in their commercials in ways they might profess. Nike's supposedly progressive brand activism is not working to create a more inclusive arena in which a broader segment of the population might enjoy sports participation and the related health benefits—at least not in terms of gender*

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Brands as labour rights advocates? Potential and limits of brand advocacy in global supply chains	Oka, Chikako	Business Ethics - A European Review	2018	London, UK	Qualitative	3 case studies + 12 interviews	issue salience, mobilization structures, political opportunities/ contexts, and resource dependency		brand advocacy	
Study of Brand Activism on Millennials and Generation Z	Naresh Sachdev, Sumita Chahal Sahanu Jain	Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accountin	2021	India	Quantitative	115 respodents	brand activism	gender, attitude towards social issues,family type	attitude towards the brand	1. Females have higher optimism and inclination towards brands that consider and engage themselves in brand activism campaigns. 2. With age, awareness has increased. So, the target audience is adults need to be tackled efficiently by the brands. 3. Environmental concern is the highest and political the lowest among the respondents. So, brands should focus more on environmental impact, followed by social. 4. The increase in education level more awareness can be seen in the respondents. So, if a brand is dealing with people from higher education levels, they need to be insightful about prevalent issues. 5. The brands that deal with higher income group as a target audience needs to focus on the brand activism. 6. Respondents belonging to a neutral family support the campaigns related to social aspects better than the extended and common family types
STUDY THE IMPACT OF BRAND ACTIVISM AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM ON MARKETING TRENDS	Nainika Kumar	European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine	2020	India	Quantitative	91 respondents	brand activism		itention to purchase	In the age of social media people are connected globally. They value each other's sentiment and stand for their own ethics. They express their stand for every social and political cause and determine to make their stance prominent. So, one word the consumers are caring for their own value and ethics. They also want their preferred brand to take the same stance as they do and at the same time the brand should actively participate in social and political causes. As consumers become more engrossed in campaigning for socio political change, they want to see the giant brands take a stand and support something greater than corporate profits. As a matter of fact, consumers are vouching more loyalty to brands that go beyond providing them with just a product or service and support for the same values and beliefs they hold.In this research paper numerous examples are being cited for reference. The empirical analysis of the paper also exhibits the same. Brands are realizingthese very essences of Brand Activism concept and participating evidently in the social and political causes to value their customer sentiments
Brand activism	Luis Manfredi-Sanchez Juan	Communication &Society-Spain	2019	Spain	Qualitative	45 campaigns				In the sample, a distinction was drawn between final and instrumental values. The former is generic and unrelated to business. Brands broach political or social issues in the quest for the global public good, thus corresponding to a general approach to burning issues that avoids partisan connotations. They appropriate platitudes that are increasingly more accepted in society, above all among the younger generations. In the building of personal identity, in its consumer dimension, they do their utmost to avoid party or political structures in favour of values like feminism, tolerance and sexual orientation. In the context of political economy, instrumental values can affect economic activity per se and, therefore, be less transparent with respect to their ultimate purpose. Investment in these campaigns would be attuned to corporate interests and in line with the traditional lobbying activities. The second group of campaigns may seek to gain a direct competitive edge: regulation, competition, access to decision-makers and impact on public opinion. The use of values as a marketing technique for creating niches has attracted a fair bit of opprobrium. For instance, Rynair's criticism of Brexit has nothing to do with the EU ideal, but with restrictions on the freedom of movement and mobility rights, the cornerstone of the airline business

Title	Authors	Journal	Year	Country	Method	Sample	Focus	Moderator	Outcome	Findings
When Brand Activism Advertising Campaign Goes Viral: An Analysis of Always #LikeAGirl Video Networks on YouTube	Lee, Mina Yoon, Hye Jin	International Journal of Advanced Culture Technology	2020	non specified	Quantitative	372 videos	brand activism		user generating content, views, comments, likes	Corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices have evolved from CSR as a side operation to CSR as the center of a company's strategic focus [10]. While previous efforts were seen as marketing-driven (e.g., cause-promotion and cause-related marketing) and corporate-driven (e.g., corporate philanthropy, workforce volunteering), more recent changes show companies engaging in values-driven brand activism, where the company's businesses and operations center around a core set of values, whether that's social, economic, or environmental [6]. Consumers welcome this progress as they want companies to be an authentic force for good and have values they can align themselves with. Out of 14,000 consumers surveyed in 14 countries, 57% said they would buy or avoid brands based on its stance on social or political issues [5]. Millennials and Generation Z, with unprecedented access to information and social activism tools, demand companies to be value-driven [7]. To satisfy social media-savvy consumers' demand on value-driven brand activism, social media and hashtag (#) campaigns are actively pursued by marketers and is considered to be a highly recommended strategy. Various reputable industry websites and trade publications give tips on how to conduct effective hashtag campaigns on social media (e.g., semrush.com, sproutsocial.com, adweek.com, digitalmarketinginstitute.com). Campaigns such as Coke's #ShareACoke, Always #LikeAGirl, ALS Association's #IceBucketChallenge, and KFC's #NationalFriedChickenDay were successful in building awareness, increasing consumer engagement, and leading to action [11]. As one of the successful brand activism viral marketing campaigns utilizing social media in recent years, the current study focuses on the Always #LikeAGirl campaign that took on the issue of girl empowerment
Strategic B2B brand activism: Building conscientious purpose for social impact	Kapitan Sommer, Kemper Joya A, Vredenburg Jessica, Spry Amanda	Industrial Marketing Management	2022	New Zealand	qualitative	22 industrial marketers				We found seven aggregate dimensions (see Fig. 1) that explain the phenomenon of B2B brand activism and the drivers and barriers to its strategic implementation. The findings give rise to a sense of faster versus slower adoption of the practice, thus, we term these dimensions as accelerators or decelerators of B2B brand activism. We note the way participants described the concepts and their relationship to either enabling activism in the supply chain (accelerators) or inhibiting and slowing uptake of activism in the supply chain (decelerators). Fig. 2 shows the overarching relationship between the seven dimensions.
The effect of corporate political advocacy on brand perception: an event study analysis	Jan Klostermann Chris Hydock Reinhold Decker	Journal of Product & Brand Management	2022	non specified	Quantitative	172 events	Brand activism	Brand activism strength (effort concurrence)	attitude towards the brand	Through the analysis, this paper provides insight into how consumer brand perception is affected by CPA and documented moderating effects. It contributes to the literature on CPA by filling three research gaps, namely, the model showed a negative main effect of CPA on the brand perception among consumers that is greater for customers than for non-customers (research gap (i)). It also showed that the effect of CPA depends on several key characteristics of the CPA event (research gaps (ii) and (iii)) – namely, concurrence (i.e. multiple brands taking a similar stance simultaneously), which reduces negative outcomes directly, and the effort put into the CPA, which negatively affects brand perception and further
Sociopolitical activist brands	Holger Joerg Schmidt Nicholas Ind Francisco Guzman Eric Kennedy	Journal of Product & Brand Management	2022	non specified	Quantitative	Focus groups: 5 Groups with an average of 10 participants each	brand activism	attitude towards social issues	attitude towards the brand, brand usage	Our research demonstrates that consumers expect brands to be sociopolitically active and that brands that do so are better perceived, as long as the stance seems authentic. Moreover, it shows that brand managers are aware of consumers' expectations and the opportunities and risks of taking a stance. Considering both perspectives, brands that take a sociopolitical stance should be committed to it over time, ensure that it aligns with their strategy and values and be aware of the potential polarization their stance and sociopolitical activism might create.

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Sociopolitical activist brands	*Holger Joerg Schmidt Nicholas Ind Francisco Guzman Eric Kennedy*	*Journal of Product & Brand Management*	*2022*	*non specified*	*Quantitative*	*Online survey: n= 33*	*brand activism*		*attitude towards social issues*	*attitude towards the brand, brand usage*	*Our research demonstrates that consumers expect brands to be sociopolitically active and that brands that do so are better perceived, as long as the stance seems authentic. Moreover, it shows that brand managers are aware of consumers' expectations and the opportunities and risks of taking a stance.Considering both perspectives, brands that take a sociopolitical stance should be committed to it over time, ensure that it aligns with their strategy and values and be aware of the potential polarization their stance and sociopolitical activism might create.*
Sociopolitical activist brands	*Holger Joerg Schmidt Nicholas Ind Francisco Guzman Eric Kennedy*	*Journal of Product & Brand Management*	*2022*	*non specified*	*Quantitative*	*Experiment: n= 99*	*brand activism*		*attitude towards social issues*	*attitude towards the brand, brand usage*	*Our research demonstrates that consumers expect brands to be sociopolitically active and that brands that do so are better perceived, as long as the stance seems authentic. Moreover, it shows that brand managers are aware of consumers' expectations and the opportunities and risks of taking a stance.Considering both perspectives, brands that take a sociopolitical stance should be committed to it over time, ensure that it aligns with their strategy and values and be aware of the potential polarization their stance and sociopolitical activism might create.*
Sociopolitical activist brands	*Holger Joerg Schmidt Nicholas Ind Francisco Guzman Eric Kennedy*	*Journal of Product & Brand Management*	*2022*	*non specified*	*Quantitative*	*Experiment: n= 208*	*brand activism*		*attitude towards social issues*	*attitude towards the brand, brand usage*	*Our research demonstrates that consumers expect brands to be sociopolitically active and that brands that do so are better perceived, as long as the stance seems authentic. Moreover, it shows that brand managers are aware of consumers' expectations and the opportunities and risks of taking a stance.Considering both perspectives, brands that take a sociopolitical stance should be committed to it over time, ensure that it aligns with their strategy and values and be aware of the potential polarization their stance and sociopolitical activism might create.*
Opposing brand activism: triggers and strategies of consumers' antibrand actions	Essi Pöyry Salla-Maaria Laaksonen	Emerald Insight	2022	Finland	Quantitative	1,615 unique messages posted by 655 unique usernames	Brand activism			attitude towards the brand	The purpose of this study was to identify triggers and strategies of political antibrand actions aimed at a marketing campaign that supported a politically divisive cause and used an algorithmic intervention approach. In the following section, we will first summarize the results, and then discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the study. Three top-level categories of triggers were identified: field infringement, political accusations and questions regarding the impact of the campaign. The first trigger shows how consumers evaluate the legitimacy of the brand to take upon the cause and regard the adopted role of a political actor as noncompatible with the brand image. The second trigger relates to the political associations of the cause: the company was accused of supporting too liberal immigration policies or multiculturalism. As the word hate speech has been used in political discussions (Gagliardone et al., 2015; Pohjonen, 2018), it is assumed that some degree of disapproval was inevitable, regardless of how the campaign had been implemented. Based on the analysis, people drew inferences on a much larger set of issues than probably expected by the brand. The parent company stated that the campaign was not politically motivated, but the discussants still made multiple political associations. A similar array of associations was also observed in how consumers criticized Nike's Dream Crazy campaign (Hoffmann et al., 2020). The third trigger relates to the way the campaign was implemented. Some thought the campaign was ineffective in impeding hate speech or that it would only increase it. Many also criticized the way the campaign defined hate speech. These comments, however, were mostly intertwined with the first two categories, as they pinpoint the divisive and politicized concept of the cause. Cause-related marketing literature has widely disc

The effect of Generation Z's perceptions of brand activism on brand loyalty: evidence from Vietnam	Dinh Toan Nguyen Dang Ha Anh Le Linh Giang Truong Ngan Giang Truong Viet Vinh Vu	Asia Pacific Journal Of Marketing And Logistics	2022	Vietnam	Quantitative	1,133 participants	perceived argument quality, perceived authenticity, perceived altruistic motives, perceived self-interest motives		brand trust, brand attitude	brand loyalty	This study offers theoretical contributions to the existing literature on brand activism, various aspects of message recipients' perceptions of communication subjects and how these influence Generation Z consumers' brand loyalty, as measured by consumers' attitudes towards and trust in a brand. The proposed ELM model provides a basis to examine effect of perception of brand activism. The study contributes to the conclusions of Mun et al. (2013), Berger et al. (1999), and Chu and Kamal (2008) about the influence of perceived argument quality on brand trust and attitude. Moreover, it also complements Hernandez-Fernandez and Lewis (2019) and Kim and Lee (2020), with a higher level of perception of brand authenticity leading to a higher level of perception of brand trust. Like Wongpitch et al. (2016), the results of this study indicated that consumers' perceptions of altruistic motives have a positive impact on their attitude towards the brand. However, the influence of consumers' perception of self-interest motives on their attitude towards the brand is insignificant.
Co-brand partnerships making space for the next black girl: Backlash in social justice branding	Debra C. Smith Channelle D. James Merlyn A. Griffiths	Psychology & Marketing	2021	United States	Conceptual framework	a consumer review platform	Brand activism (social justice branding)	controversial thoughts	openness to change	attitude towards the brand, justice perception	Through the dual-analysis process, five overarching themes emerged; justified release of suppressed prejudice, empowered acceptance and resistance, racist and shameful behavior, willful ignorance and re-taliation. Justification occurs as a result of the facilitative environ-ment, characterized by free speech, anonymity and social media. In combination, the facilitative environment and strength of the in-dividual's resistance or acceptance of social justice branding, allows some consumers to feel empowered to respond. These responses expressed support for the co-branding relationship or rejection of social justice messaging. Acceptance manifests as openness and de-fensiveness of the social change intent. However, rejection appears as racist and shameful behaviors, willful ignorance and retaliation. Elaborating on each of these themes, combined with extant literature discussed in our literature review, results in our conceptual model of the impact of social justice branding.
Will Consumers Silence Themselves When Brands Speak up about Sociopolitical Issues? Applying the Spiral of Silence Theory to Consumer Boycott and Buycott Behaviors	Cheng Hong & Cong Li	Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing	2020	United States	Quantitative	122 participants	sociopolitical stance		brand attitude	magnitude of public support, perceived credibility	Boycott/ Buycott intention	With an experimental design, this study found an indirect effect of consumer personal stance (consistent vs. inconsistent with the target brand) on boycott/ buycott intention through brand attitude. It also revealed the moderating effects of magnitude of public support and perceived credibility of public support information, suggesting that both could help consumers estimate the opinion climate. Through the findings of this moderated moderated mediation effect, this study expands the explanatory power of spiral of silence theory to boycott and buycott behaviors as responses to brand activism in an online setting. The spiral of silence theory is not limited to explain individuals' expressions of their stances and opinions on social, political, or environmental issues. It can also be used to predict consumers' boycott/buycott intentions on social media, which is considered as a new form of political expression and participation (Baek, 2010; Stolle et al., 2005). In addition, this study confirms the notion that boycott and buycott behaviors are expressive in nature, especially in the context of digital media where consumers can write about their boycott or buycott actions to express attitudes toward the target company and its sociopolitical stance (Kam & Deichert, 2017; Makarem & Jae, 2016). Another theoretical contribution of this study is that it further confirms the significant linkage between attitude and behavioral intention in the context of brand activism.
Brand as Promise	Bhargava, Vikram R. Bedi, Suneal	Journal of Business Ethics.	2022	non specified	Qualitative	Nike and Gilette case studies					Brands have historically been viewed as a constellation of shared associations surrounding a company and its ofer ings. On the traditional view of brands, these associations are interpreted as perceptions and attitudes in consumers' minds in relation to a company and its oferings. We argued that this framing is incomplete and faces an important dif fculty: an explanatory problem. Specifcally, the traditional view is unable to satisfactorily explain why certain brand ing activism initiatives elicit the moralized reactive attitudes that are paradigmatic responses to wrongdoing. We argued that this explanatory problem can be avoided by refram ing brands as a series of normatively binding expectations that are ethically akin to promises. Our promissory account of brands illuminates a number of ethical requirements on branding, and reconceptualizes the role of a brand manager.

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Consumer responses to brand communications involving COVID-19	Andreas Hesse, Franziska Niederle, Laura Schön & Daniela Stautz	Journal of Marketing Management	2021	Germany	Qualitative	267 different posts by 50 brands 11 interviews 1 focus group (5 participants)					The purpose of our research was to understand how brands leverage COVID-19 in digital content, how consumers respond to that, and how brand communities are engaged. Building on these research objectives, we argue that brands utilise COVID-19 in manifold ways, pairing themselves with the social cause ('demonstrating solidarity' and 'providing support') but also taking on a role as a spokesperson for crisis communication ('gaining credibility'), educating, guiding, and informing their audiences in line with governmental or institu tional policies. Consumers demonstrate a varied and at times dichotomous range of responses; however, the responses tend to be positive overall.Table 6 highlights salient scenarios of different levels of social distance and corre sponding response trends in our study. This list does not aim for completeness and is limited in rigour and validity; however, scholars may be inspired to understand further facets of the influences of social distancing on consumer responses in future research projects.We found there to be an advocating and more uncritical response trend in brand communities, although a lower social distance can be assumed according to the general principles of theories of social distancing (Dickson & MacLachlan, 1990; Laumann & Senter, 1976). Furthermore, in cases of user-generated social media content, a proximal level of social distance can be assumed; however, we noted responses representing a higher congruence and, at the same time, higher levels of advocacy (Kim et al., 2008; Zhao & Xie, 2011). In addition, the consumers participating in our interviews and focus group who reported personal affectedness and relevance (e.g. COVID-19 cases in the family, working as a nurse) demonstrated higher support for themes of solidarity (Kim et al., 2008). Accordingly, we interpret this to mean that although a proximal level of social distance theoretically corresponds with a higher level of construal of interpretation, it can also facilitate congruence and advocacy of audiences, especially when themes are not controversial.'Gaining credibility' by educating and guiding consumers presents a more difficult challenge. Here, brands directly encourage their audiences to change social or individual behaviour; hence, consumers are personally affected. While in practical terms,corporate social marketing is known to avoid the use of controversial themes (Kotler & Lee, 2005)
Consumers' Active Reaction to Brands Taking Stands on Public Issues on Twitter	Anastasiia Berestova, Da-Yeon Kim Sang-Yong Kim	Sustainability	2022	Korea, Seoul	Qualitative	143 observations	ESG score, brand activeness, media type			retweets, quotes, replies, web search behaviour	Our study aimed to investigate the effect of public-issue posts on consumers' active reaction. In the modern world, where brands more actively take a stand on social and political issues by expressing their opinion online while shaping their personality, this study offers some guidelines on dealing with public-issue posts on Twitter. Several meaningful implications are apparent from exploring the effect of public-issue posts on the number of retweets, number of quotes, number of replies, and post-social search behavior. First, an index to measure public-issue posts is proposed relying on ESG dimensions previously examined only at the corporate level. ESG criteria were applied to a single post level in this study and integrated with the urgency of public-issue tweets contributing to the ESG literature. Second, the effect of public-issue posts on four types of consumers' active reactions was explored. The results of the two models verified the hypothesis that the higher the public issue score of a post, the more active the consumer reactions. The effect of a public issue post score was stronger for public-issue posts than other general posts. This study is significant because it established a quantitative foundation for re-establishing brand communication strategies by demonstrating the effectiveness of communication methods in which brands take a public stance through social media. Third, the effect of brand activeness and media type was examined. Although the relationships between photo or video inclusion and consumer reactions are insignificant for all posts, the effect of brand activeness exhibited a remarkable result. Tweeting more on social issues has a positive effect on the number of retweets and quotes in all posts on Twitter. However, in public-issue posts, brand activeness conversely led to a negative outcome. Consequently, mentioning ESG dimensions and taking a stand on urgent ongoing social issues on official Twitter pages might improve consumer engagement with a brand and boost online communication interactive platforms such as Twitter. However, taking an open stand on controversial issues might also have a reverse effect, such as when a brand tweets too much on public issues or does not diversify its Twitter content strategy with different types of content. A common suggestion for brands of all scales is to account for the quality of their posts and analyze the interactions with users under the posts to provide a balanced ratio of informational and entertaining content.

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Consumers' Active Reaction to Brands Taking Stands on Public Issues on Twitter	*Anastasiia Berestova, Da-Yeon Kim Sang-Yong Kim*	*Sustainability*	*2022*	*Korea, Seoul*	*Qualitative*	*1476 observations*	ESG score, brand activiness, media type		retweets, qoutes, replies,web search behavior	*Our study aimed to investigate the effect of public-issue posts on consumers' active reaction. In the modern world, where brands more actively take a stand on social and political issues by expressing their opinion online while shaping their personality, this study offers some guidelines on dealing with public-issue posts on Twitter. Several meaningful implications are apparent from exploring the effect of public-issue posts on the number of retweets, number of quotes, number of replies, and post-social search behavior. First, an index to measure public-issue posts is proposed relying on ESG dimensions previously examined only at the corporate level. ESG criteria were applied to a single post level in this study and integrated with the urgency of public-issue tweets contributing to the ESG literature. Second, the effect of public-issue posts on four types of consumers' active reactions was explored. The results of the two models verified the hypothesis that the higher the public issue score of a post, the more active the consumer reactions. The effect of a public issue post score was stronger for public-issue posts than other general posts. This study is significant because it established a quantitative foundation for re-establishing brand communication strategies by demonstrating the effectiveness of communication methods in which brands take a public stance through social media. Third, the effect of brand activeness and media type was examined. Although the relationships between photo or video inclusion and consumer reactions are insignificant for all posts, the effect of brand activeness exhibited a remarkable result. Tweeting more on social issues has a positive effect on the number of retweets and quotes in all posts on Twitter. However, in public-issue posts, brand activeness conversely led to a negative outcome. Consequently, mentioning ESG dimensions and taking a stand on urgent ongoing social issues on official Twitter pages might improve consumer engagement with a brand and boost online communication interactive platforms such as Twitter. However, taking an open stand on controversial issues might also have a reverse effect, such as when a brand tweets too much on public issues or does not diversify its Twitter content strategy with different types of content. A common suggestion for brands of all scales is to account for the quality of their posts and analyze the interactions with users under the posts to provide a balanced ratio of informational and entertaining*
Effective messaging strategies to increase brand love for sociopolitical activist brands	Ahmad, Fayez Guzmán, Francisco Kidwell, Blair	In Journal of Business Research	2022	United States	Quantitative	Ninety-nine participants	commitment to cause (financial, non-financial, or rhetorical)	message framing (hope or frustration), brand equity (high, low)	brand authenticity, brand love	The findings of five studies provide evidence of the comparative effect of different kinds of brand activism on brand authenticity and brand love (see Table 2). Study-one finds that a brand's non-financial activism commitment is perceived as more authentic and generates more brand love than a financial or rhetorical commitment. Study-one also proves that brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and brand love. Study-two adds message type (hope vs frustration message) into the original model, confirms study-one's findings, and shows that a message expressing frustration is more effective in generating brand F. Ahmad et al authenticity and brand love when the message is about rhetorical commitment, whereas a message expressing hope is more effective when the message is about either financial or non-financial commitment to a sociopolitical issue. The results also suggest a moderated mediation as the mediational effect of brand authenticity on the influence of socio- political activism on brand love is found for messages that express hope but not frustration. Therefore, brands need to use hope specific messages if they want incremental perceived authenticity and love from con- sumers. Although studies one and two support the argument that non- financial commitment is better than the other two commitment types, these studies did not address the effect of brand equity, which makes the findings incomplete. To address this issue, study-three tests the model with brand equity as a moderator instead of message type, and finds that an activism message from a high equity brand generates higher perceived brand authenticity and more consumer brand love than one from a low equity brand. It also shows that financial commitment is more effective in generating brand authenticity and brand love for high equity brands than non-financial and rhetorical commitment. Conversely, non- financial commitment is better than financial and rhetorical commit- ment for low equity brands. The results also suggest a moderated mediation, meaning that the mediational effect of brand authenticity on the influence of sociopolitical activism on brand love is found from a high equity but not a low equity brand. Therefore, the incremental effect on perceived brand authenticity and brand love will come from high equity, not low equity, brands. Finally, study-four and five test the whole model with both message type and brand equity as moderators. The results support all of the hypotheses. However, no interaction effect between message type and brand equity, or three-

Effective messaging strategies to increase brand love for sociopolitical activist brands	Ahmad, Fayez Guzmán, Francisco Kidwell, Blair	In Journal of Business Research	2022	United States	Quantitative	One hundred ninety-two participants	commitment to cause (financial, non-financial, or rhetorical)	message framing (hope or frustration), brand equity (high, low)	brand authenticity, brand love	The findings of five studies provide evidence of the comparative effect of different kinds of brand activism on brand authenticity and brand love (see Table 2). Study-one finds that a brand's non-financial activism commitment is perceived as more authentic and generates more brand love than a financial or rhetorical commitment. Study-one also proves that brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and brand love. Study-two adds message type (hope vs frustration message) into the original model, confirms study-one's findings, and shows that a message expressing frustration is more effective in generating brand F. Ahmad et al authenticity and brand love when the message is about rhetorical commitment, whereas a message expressing hope is more effective when the message is about either financial or non-financial commitment to a sociopolitical issue. The results also suggest a moderated mediation as the mediational effect of brand authenticity on the influence of socio- political activism on brand love is found for messages that express hope but not frustration. Therefore, brands need to use hope specific messages if they want incremental perceived authenticity and love from consumers. Although studies one and two support the argument that non- financial commitment is better than the other two commitment types, these studies did not address the effect of brand equity, which makes the findings incomplete. To address this issue, study-three tests the model with brand equity as a moderator instead of message type, and finds that an activism message from a high equity brand generates higher perceived brand authenticity and more consumer brand love than one from a low equity brand. It also shows that financial commitment is more effective in generating brand authenticity and brand love for high equity brands than non-financial and rhetorical commitment. Conversely, non- financial commitment is better than financial and rhetorical commitment for low equity brands. The results also suggest a moderated mediation, meaning that the mediational effect of brand authenticity on the influence of sociopolitical activism on brand love is found from a high equity but not a low equity brand. Therefore, the incremental effect on perceived brand authenticity and brand love will come from high equity, not low equity, brands. Finally, study-four and five test the whole model with both message type and brand equity as moderators. The results support all of the hypotheses.
Effective messaging strategies to increase brand love for sociopolitical activist brands	Ahmad, Fayez Guzmán, Francisco Kidwell, Blair	In Journal of Business Research	2022	United States	Quantitative	Two hundred participants	commitment to cause (financial, non-financial, or rhetorical)	message framing (hope or frustration), brand equity (high, low)	brand authenticity, brand love	The findings of five studies provide evidence of the comparative effect of different kinds of brand activism on brand authenticity and brand love (see Table 2). Study-one finds that a brand's non-financial activism commitment is perceived as more authentic and generates more brand love than a financial or rhetorical commitment. Study-one also proves that brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and brand love. Study-two adds message type (hope vs frustration message) into the original model, confirms study-one's findings, and shows that a message expressing frustration is more effective in generating brand F. Ahmad et al authenticity and brand love when the message is about rhetorical commitment, whereas a message expressing hope is more effective when the message is about either financial or non-financial commitment to a sociopolitical issue. The results also suggest a moderated mediation as the mediational effect of brand authenticity on the influence of socio- political activism on brand love is found for messages that express hope but not frustration. Therefore, brands need to use hope specific messages if they want incremental perceived authenticity and love from consumers. Although studies one and two support the argument that non- financial commitment is better than the other two commitment types, these studies did not address the effect of brand equity, which makes the findings incomplete. To address this issue, study-three tests the model with brand equity as a moderator instead of message type, and finds that an activism message from a high equity brand generates higher perceived brand authenticity and more consumer brand love than one from a low equity brand. It also shows that financial commitment is more effective in generating brand authenticity and brand love for high equity brands than non-financial and rhetorical commitment. Conversely, non- financial commitment is better than financial and rhetorical commitment for low equity brands. The results also suggest a moderated mediation, meaning that the mediational effect of brand authenticity on the influence of sociopolitical activism on brand love is found from a high equity but not a low equity brand. Therefore, the incremental effect on perceived brand authenticity and brand love will come from high equity, not low equity, brands. Finally, study-four and five test the whole model with both message type and brand equity as moderators. The results support all of the hypotheses.
Effective messaging strategies to increase brand love for sociopolitical activist brands	Ahmad, Fayez Guzmán, Francisco Kidwell, Blair	In Journal of Business Research	2022	United States	Quantitative	Three hundred fifty-two participants	commitment to cause (financial, non-financial, or rhetorical)	message framing (hope or frustration), brand equity (high, low)	brand authenticity, brand love	The findings of five studies provide evidence of the comparative effect of different kinds of brand activism on brand authenticity and brand love (see Table 2). Study-one finds that a brand's non-financial activism commitment is perceived as more authentic and generates more brand love than a financial or rhetorical commitment. Study-one also proves that brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and brand love. Study-two adds message type (hope vs frustration message) into the original model, confirms study-one's findings, and shows that a message expressing frustration is more effective in generating brand F. Ahmad et al authenticity and brand love when the message is about rhetorical commitment, whereas a message expressing hope is more effective when the message is about either financial or non-financial commitment to a sociopolitical issue. The results also suggest a moderated mediation as the mediational effect of brand authenticity on the influence of socio- political activism on brand love is found for messages that express hope but not frustration. Therefore, brands need to use hope specific messages if they want incremental perceived authenticity and love from consumers. Although studies one and two support the argument that non- financial commitment is better than the other two commitment types, these studies did not address the effect of brand equity, which makes the findings incomplete. To address this issue, study-three tests the model with brand equity as a moderator instead of message type, and finds that an activism message from a high equity brand generates higher perceived brand authenticity and more consumer brand love than one from a low equity brand. It also shows that financial commitment is more effective in generating brand authenticity and brand love for high equity brands than non-financial and rhetorical commitment. Conversely, non- financial commitment is better than financial and rhetorical commitment for low equity brands. The results also suggest a moderated mediation, meaning that the mediational effect of brand authenticity on the influence of sociopolitical activism on brand love is found from a high equity but not a low equity brand. Therefore, the incremental effect on perceived brand authenticity and brand love will come from high equity, not low equity, brands. Finally, study-four and five test the whole model with both message type and brand equity as moderators. The results support all of the hypotheses.

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Effective messaging strategies to increase brand love for sociopolitical activist brands	*Ahmad, Fayez Guzmán, Francisco Kidwell, Blair*	*In Journal of Business Research*	2022	United States	*Quantitative*	*601 participants*	commitment to cause (financial, non-financial, or rhetorical)		message framing (hope or frustration), brand equity (high, low)	brand authenticity, brand love	*The findings of five studies provide evidence of the comparative effect of different kinds of brand activism on brand authenticity and brand love (see Table 2). Study-one finds that a brand's non-financial activism commitment is perceived as more authentic and generates more brand love than a financial or rhetorical commitment. Study-one also proves that brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and brand love. Study-two adds message type (hope vs frustration message) into the original model, confirms study-one's findings, and shows that a message expressing frustration is more effective in generating brand F. Ahmad et al authenticity and brand love when the message is about rhetorical commitment, whereas a message expressing hope is more effective when the message is about either financial or non-financial commitment to a sociopolitical issue. The results also suggest a moderated mediation as the mediational effect of brand authenticity on the influence of socio- political activism on brand love is found for messages that express hope but not frustration. Therefore, brands need to use hope specific messages if they want incremental perceived authenticity and love from con- sumers. Although studies one and two support the argument that non- financial commitment is better than the other two commitment types, these studies did not address the effect of brand equity, which makes the findings incomplete. To address this issue, study-three tests the model with brand equity as a moderator instead of message type, and finds that an activism message from a high equity brand generates higher perceived brand authenticity and more consumer brand love than one from a low equity brand. It also shows that financial commitment is more effective in generating brand authenticity and brand love for high equity brands than non-financial and rhetorical commitment. Conversely, non- financial commitment is better than financial and rhetorical commit- ment for low equity brands. The results also suggest a moderated mediation, meaning that the mediational effect of brand authenticity on the influence of sociopolitical activism on brand love is found from a high equity but not a low equity brand. Therefore, the incremental effect on perceived brand authenticity and brand love will come from high equity, not low equity, brands. Finally, study-four and five test the whole model with both message type and brand equity as moderators. The results support all of the hypotheses*
Woke brand activism authenticity or the lack of it	Abas Mirzaei Dean C. Wilkie Helen Siuki	Journal of Business Research	2022	Australia	qualitative	2 campaigns					Woke activism is gaining traction, and brands have started showing interest and contemplating the risks of becoming woke and taking a stance. Thus, it is critical to better understand how consumers process woke activism communications. This study adopts a boundary-breaking content analysis approach (MacInnis et al., 2020), and contributes to the theory by providing structure to a real-world disorganized phenomenon (MacInnis, 2011). Specifically, this study identifies six critical dimensions (social context independency, inclusion, fit, practice, motivations, and sacrifice) and explores and maps the relationships between them. This approach provides a greater understanding of the process of authentication for high-tension socio-politically charged campaigns. The proposed conceptual relationship among the constructs addresses the dynamics of woke activism authenticity and explains consumers responses to such campaigns. Based on MacInnis (2011) conceptual contribution categorization, this study falls under explicating as a general contribution and delineating as a specific contribution. The proposed dimensions of woke activism authenticity and the conceptual framework also contribute to the consumer-brand relationship theory of attachment-aversion (Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013). Given the polarizing nature of woke campaigns, some consumers may feel more attached to brands because of greater alignment with their values and ideology (Schmidt et al., 2021). On the other hand, some consumers may feel annoyed, betrayed, or angry at the brand that has taken a stand that is not in line with their values and ideology. As a result, they may avoid the brand, as they perceive a lower degree of self-brand congruity. As highlighted by Schmidt et al. (2021), woke brand activism can turn into a strategic branding move (if it aligns with the organization's values), which can then lead to a stronger emotional attachment with the brand. This study also proposes a path for the authentication process of woke activism. Therefore, while previous studies mainly focus on dimensions, this study also discusses the interactions of the different dimensions and how they play different roles (e.g., mediating roles) in the journey toward woke brand activism authenticity