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Enstitüsü**

T.C.
MARMARA UNIVERSITY
SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE
MARKETING (ENGLISH)

**CONSUMER EVALUATION OF BRAND ACTIVISM AUTHENTICITY: MEASURING
THE EFFECTS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

Master Thesis

SEÇİL ADIGÜZEL

İSTANBUL, 2023

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MARKA AKTİVİZMİ OTANTİKLİĞİNE TÜKETİCİ DEĞERLENDİRMESİ: TÜKETİCİ DAVRANIŞINA OLAN ETKİLERİNİN ÖLÇÜMLENMESİ

Değişen pazar ve rekabet koşulları ile arzın artması dünyayı küresel bir pazar haline getirmiş ve “tükettiğin kadar varsın” gibi bir sloganla ihtiyaçtan çok daha fazlasını tüketmeyi öneren bir akım yaratmıştır. Bu sorumsuz tüketim kıt kaynakların ve çevrenin tahribine neden olmuştur. Bu gelişmelerin başta sağlık olmak üzere, gelir eşitsizliği, işsizlik, çevre kirliliği vb. üzerine olumsuz yansımaları görülmeye başlanmıştır. Bunun sonucunda markaların üretim koşulları ve mesajları önce sivil toplum kuruluşları tarafından sorgulanmaya başlanmış, ardından da toplumun bilinçli üyeleri arasında dikkat çekmiştir. Markalar itibarlarını yeniden kazanmak ya da artırmak, imajlarını güçlendirmek ve rekabette öne geçmek için topluma bir nevi barış mesajları ileten sponsorluk ve kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk projelerine imza atmaya başlamış, böylece hem sivil toplum kuruluşlarını hem de tüketicileri ikna etmeyi amaçlamışlardır. Bu noktada, sosyal sorumluluk projeleri (CSR) ve marka aktivizmi projeleri ön plana çıkmıştır.

Marka aktivizmi, markaların, belirli bireyleri, grupları veya idealleri ve değerleri açık şekilde ve kamu önünde destekleyerek toplumu da bu yönde davranmaya ikna etmesi şeklinde tanımlanmıştır (Wettstein, Baur 2015). Marka aktivizminin markaya olan tutuma, otantiklik algısına ve o markanın ürün ve hizmetlerine daha fazla ödeme isteği üzerine etkisine ne gibi bir yansıması olduğu ise son dönemdeki pazarlama üzerine araştırmalara konu olmaktadır.

Bu çalışma, marka aktivizmine yönelik tüketici tutumlarını senaryo temelli bir deney yoluyla araştırmaktadır. Markanın savunduğu aktivist fikirle aynı doğrultuda düşünülmesi durumunda, tüketicinin markaya yönelik tutumunu ve o marka için daha fazla ödeme isteği üzerindeki etkisini ve bu etkideki otantikliğin düzenleyici rolünü ortaya koymayı amaçlar.

ABSTRACT

CONSUMER EVALUATION OF BRAND ACTIVISM AUTHENTICITY: MEASURING THE EFFECTS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

This study aims to (1) investigate consumer attitudes, brand authenticity and willingness to pay a premium price toward the brands that engage in brand activism and (2) understand whether the consumer attitude to the brand, perceived brand authenticity and willingness to pay a premium price change in case of agreement with the activist brand's stand. Drawing upon empirical and theoretical evidence in the relevant literature, a theoretical model with five hypotheses were developed and tested through a scenario-based between-subjects experiment. Data were collected from 521 generation Z university students, i.e. people who were born after 2000 (Armstrong, Kotler 2017) by an online survey and experiment tool – Qualtrics and were analyzed using SPSS 24. Findings reveal that first, while brand activism messages can improve brand attitude, it might not be sufficient to change the attitude towards positive since other factors might influence the customer's attitudes and behaviors. Second, its impact on willingness to pay a premium price may be influenced by factors such as the brand familiarity, content of the message and consumer budget constraints. Third, an essential aspect that emerges from the findings is the pivotal role of authenticity in shaping the perception of brand activism and its impact on brand attitude and willingness to pay a premium price. The study finalized with theoretical and practical implications for brand activism and future research directions.

Keywords Brand Activism, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), brand authenticity, brand activism authenticity, willingness to pay price premium (WTPPP), brand attitude, Generation Z

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1. INTRODUCTION

In order to express themselves brands have initially given importance to advertising, and they have also succeeded in attracting and persuading the consumer like this. During this time, the increase in supply with the changing market and competitive conditions has turned the world into a global market and have created consumption, suggesting consuming much more than what is needed, even with a motto like “you exist as much as you consume”. This was a lifestyle that almost necessitates excessive consumption, and this irresponsible consumption caused the destruction of scarce resources and environment. Negative reflections of these developments, especially health, income inequality, unemployment, environmental pollution etc. started to be experienced. As a result, the production conditions of the brands and the messages of "consume more" began to be questioned firstly by the non-governmental organizations and then the conscious members of the society drew attention to the situation. In order to regain or increase their reputation, strengthen their image and to get ahead of the competition, brands started to sign sponsorship and corporate social responsibility projects that convey a kind of peace messages to the society, thus aiming to convince both non-governmental organizations and consumers.

In today's marketing world, there is no other tool that can replace traditional message delivery methods at least as effective as they are. However, reinterpreting all these tools with an "activist" point of view, and being sincere and authentic in this change, constitutes today's discussion in this field. This discussion is about finding an answer to one of the questions: "Is it enough to convince the society that brands take action on corporate social responsibilities?" or is it time to evolve into an "activist brand" that proposes a new understanding (Yalın 2021: 157-158)? In an ever-increasing manner, consumers expect brands to take their stance not only in CSR (corporate social responsibility) but also in divisive political issues and take the responsibility in driving the social change and making the world a better place. A common distrust on governmental and public organizations is an undeniable fact behind this development. As a result, consumers rely more than ever on brands. Research showed that consumers have even more trust in businesses than in government (Edelman 2019). In 1999, an international questionnaire revealed that 2/3 of the respondents want the corporations to take actions for the society's common benefit. Another study in 2002 found that, 89% of the consumers stated that, it is more important than ever, that the companies should take responsibility in societal issues (Mohr 2005: 121). As reported by Accenture (2019) global research company, 62% of consumers await brands to involve in socio-political debates, in opposite case, brands must deal with the consequences. 53% of consumers states that they may spread negative comments about the brand if they don't agree with the brand's stand. And 47% will consider changing their brand preference, while 17% wouldn't return under any condition. These changing

conditions reveal that brands and their public relations cannot isolate themselves and avoid taking a side from political issues that are preoccupied by stakeholders and society at large on media, public and political agenda. CSR and brand activism are the two most common tools that are used to respond these changing customer demands. CSR is about “designing policies and practices of corporations that reflect business responsibility for some of the wider societal good” (Mirzai et al. 2022: 2). On the other hand, brand activism is defined as “public speech or actions focused on partisan issues made by or on behalf of a company using its corporate or individual brand name” (Moorman 2020: 388). CSR generally focus on widely accepted pro-social issues, whereas brand activism is differentiated from them with its controversial nature (Chernev and Blair 2015: 1412). Consequently, brand activism more tends to rise both positive and negative customer attitude (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020: 773; Hydock, et al. 2019: P78). Real life examples to brand activism can be Nike supporting the “Black Lives Matter” movement, Delta Airlines encouraging gun control, PayPal advocating the transgender bathroom access, Absolut using gay relationship in its advertisements, Walmart’s statement that supports immigration reform and Hobby Lobby’s debating the exclusion of birth control from health insurance policies. Generally, in order to make a purchase decision, buyers tend to assess common values with the brand and consider their principles even more than their products (Hoppner, Vadakkepatt 2019: 417). In this regard both CSR and brand activism enable brands to develop bonds with their target audiences (Isiksal, Karaosmanoglu 2020; Blair, Chernev 2015; Mirzai et al. 2022; Koch 2020). However, due to its divisive nature, brand activism seems riskier to brand attitudes, intentions and behaviors compared to CSR. Since people believe that their values are more legitimate than the others, in case of disagreement with the brand’s moral foundations, they tend to discriminate the brand, which may result in negative consumer behaviour outcomes (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020: 773).

Brands adjust their marketing strategy according to the changing conditions like the demands of their target consumers towards the brand. Younger generation, like Millennials and the Generation Z, are moral and value-oriented consumers that are more devoted to social well-being of the society (Ahmad 2019: 5). These consumer group tend to select, change, stop purchase and boycott a brand because of the brand’s stand. (Edelman 2020; Kam, Deichert 2020: 72). If the brands want to be recognized by these young consumer group, they cannot stand still (Ahmad 2019: 6). Brand activism inherits social movement from corporate communication management and CSR to attract responsible consumers and expands it to the political values by using messages, slogans and content (Sánchez 2019: 343-344). It is a new strategy in marketing world and has been worked on since 2008 after Dove Campaign for Real Beauty was launched in 2004. It was a genuine response for usage of women body as a marketing tool and promoting that a good body appereance defines women identity in the society (Govan 2008: 202). There are two main directions regarding the brand activism in the literature. Some studies focused on the theoretical background of brand activisim (Wettstein, Baur 2015; Nalick et al. 2016; Vredenburg et

al. 2020; van der Meer, Jonkman 2021; Mirzaei et al. 2022). Others expanded the literature with outcomes on brand attitude (Govan 2008; Ciszek, Logan 2018; Korschun et al. 2019; Hoffmann et al. 2020; Isiksal, Karaosmanoglu 2020; Mukherjee and Althuizen 2020; Rim et al. 2020), purchase intention (Dodd, Supa 2014; Hydock et al. 2019), company's financials (Hadani, Schuler 2013) and brand positioning (Ramirez, Veloutsou, Morgan-Thomas 2019; Koch 2020; Moorman 2020).

Research, which studied the theoretical background tried to enlighten its differences from similar terms like CSR (Wettstein, Baur: 2015; Vredenburg et al. 2020; Mirzaei et al. 2022) or used other theories to explain the reason of a company's sociopolitical involvement (Nalick et al. 2016; van der Meer and Jonkman 2021). Additionally, a considerable number of articles examined the authenticity aspect of brand activism in recent years. There are studies which investigated the authentic brand activism as an emerging marketing strategy and gave directions on how an authentic activist brand should act (Vredenburg et al. 2020). Others searched the authenticity perspective in case of a company defends a cause, which is not related with its core business (van der Meer, Jonkman 2021). Finally, the dimensions – “social context independency, inclusion, sacrifice, practice, fit, and motivation” of brand activism authenticity were studied and new dimensions like inclusion, social context independency and sacrifice were proposed (Mirzaei et al. 2022).

The second research direction in brand activism literature is the outcomes, which focused on brand attitude, purchase intention, company's financials and brand positioning. A considerable number of research took real or hypothetical brand activism cases into account and investigated the effects on brand attitude. The findings indicated that, brand attitude changes according to the company's relationship with its external environment. Market-driven company could avoid taking a stance but for a value-driven company, abstention was risky (Korschun et al. 2019). More importantly, if the perspective and the subject in a campaign were not clear, the risk was even higher in long term. In order to be successful, the brand should be more disruptive in social change (Govan 2008). When the consumer didn't agree with the brand's stand, the brand attitude was negatively affected (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020). More precisely, the level of the punishing behavior increased in case of self-referencing and transgression severity (Isiksal, Karaosmanoglu 2020). Punishing behavior could be seen as boycotting. In contrary, there was mostly not a significant impact on brand attitude when the customer agreed with the brand's stand. The result was the same with known and unknown brands (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020). When the purchase intention was considered, it was proven that consumers tend to buy more in case of agreement with the brand's stand but there was no clue whether the number outweighs the opposing customers (Dodd, Supa 2014). Moreover, there was no research conducted about the tendency to pay premium price for the activist brand in case of the agreement. Actually, consumer attitudes were driven mostly by contradictory impulses motivated by family, convenience and the cost. They were more likely to boycott brands for acting unethically than to buycott them for acting ethically. Buycotting was more

costly and burdensome (Hydock et al. 2019). Another subject was considered as the firm's financial benefit from brand activism. Firms' political investments were negatively associated with market and accounting performance. It was positively associated with market performance only in regulated industries (Dodd and Supa 2014; Hadani and Schuler 2013; Nalick et al. 2016). Lastly, the brand positioning was discussed within the outcomes of brand activism. Consumers focus on systematic changes rather than individual efforts could also help to develop the brand and increase positioning (Koch 2020). Accordingly, the company should position itself in regard to six perspectives, brand authenticity view, corporate citizen view, cultural authority view, calculative view, brands as educators view, political mission view, and employee engagement view (Moorman 2020).

Significance of the Research

Although there are many theoretical and conceptual studies about brand activism, few of them include an empirical finding to assert a trend (Govan 2008; Ciszek and Logan 2018; Korschun et al. 2019; Hoffmann et al. 2020; Isiksal and Karaosmanoglu 2020; Rim et al. 2020). The aim of this research is to explore whether brand activism authenticity influences consumers' brand attitudes and their intentions to pay more for the brand and whether consumers' attitudes towards the brand are more positive, and they are willing to pay more for the products when they agree with the activist message given by the brand. None of the studies examined the effect of agreement with the brand's stand on willingness to pay a premium price to our knowledge, yet more and more companies are adapting their marketing activities to this new concept. There are studies on purchase intention, but they are not related with the price of the product.

Moreover, there is insufficient research on how the Z generation actually perceives brand activism and how it affects their attitude towards the brand (Francis and Hoefel 2018; Hawkins 2022; Mukherjee and Althuizen 2020), brand authenticity and willingness to pay a premium price. Considering distinct behavior of this generation, this thesis seeks to make a valuable addition to the expanding body of research that examines the impact of brand activism as a contemporary communication trend on brand attitude, authenticity, and the willingness to pay a premium price.

The quantitative part of the research aims to reveal the aforementioned relationship between agreement with the stand of a known and an unknown activist brand, consumer attitude, willingness to pay a premium price and the authenticity of the brand, with data gathered by a scenario-based experiment among the Z generation university students in Turkey. It provides insights and develops deeper knowledge for academicians and practitioners into how the aforementioned factors interplay within the context of brand activism, shedding light on both known and unknown brands in the process.

Scope of the Research

The aim of this study is (1) to investigate consumer attitudes, brand authenticity and willingness to pay a premium price toward the brands that engage in brand activism and (2) to understand whether the consumer attitude to the brand, perceived brand authenticity and willingness to pay a premium price change in case of agreement with the activist brand's stand. A scenario-based experiment is conducted with 2x2 factorial design to access the impact of brand activism (message x no-message) in case of familiarity with the brand (well-known brand x unknown brand) on aforementioned variables. The data is then analyzed using SPSS 24.

The scope of this study is limited to generation Z consumers in Turkey, ages of 23 and below, who were selected among the university students (Armstrong, Kotler 2017). Generation Z plays an important role in consumption especially in Turkey because it represents a considerable part of the population - 13 million people, 15.3% of the total population. The young population rate of Turkey with 15.3% is higher than the average of young population rates of 27 European Union member countries, which is 10.6% in 2021. (Tuik 2022). In terms of consumption, Generation Z has even a bigger effect because they constitute 40 percent of global consumers as of 2020 and has become one of the strongest groups in the market. For this reason, they have become the new focus of marketers with its ever-increasing purchasing power and influence (Önder, 2022). Generation Z is even more political than the Millennials. They were born to a world filled with constant problems – air pollution, bad drinking water, crime and violence. Many would like brands to show concern not just for profits but for the communities they serve, and the world they live in (Kotler, P., Sarkar, C. 2018).

This introductory section is followed by a literature review, where corporate social responsibility, brand activism and authenticity are discussed in depth as concepts for data analysis. A methodology section then introduces the overview of the quantitative study and the analysis of data. Then follows the empirical findings of the case study analysis, which are discussed against the background of the brand activism before implications, conclusions and future research directions are offered.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Defining Brand Activism

Objections to social issues are increasing under the leadership of non-governmental organizations. To those who support these objections, it is necessary to add media and people who have been affected through the media. Public takes part in the system with the role of consumer and can direct it. The system, in which brands directed consumers in the last century with advertising and other promotional activities, is changing towards consumers directing brands in this century. Modernism and the developments after it caused the individualization of the society, which made individual objections (such as climate activist Greta Thunberg) to be heard, especially with the effect of social media. The institutions that are claimed to no longer function properly are replaced by brands, in other words, brands are candidates to meet the needs of individuals to belong and take shelter, and on the other hand, expectations regarding the solution of social problems have shifted from the institutions (government, church, family) to brands (Yalın 2021: 159 – 160).

Getz (1997: 32, 33) defined brand activism as “any deliberate firm action intended to influence governmental policy or process”. Another widely used definition is “a brand’s stand and actions with regards to its social commitments” (Hydock, et al. 2020: 1136). It is “a firm’s public demonstration (statements and/or actions) of support for or opposition to one side of a partisan sociopolitical issue” (Bhagwat et al., 2020, p. 1). It “refers to an organization making a public statement or taking a public stance on social-political issues” (Dodd, Supa 2014: 5). Brand activism consists of business efforts centered on a brand that aims to “promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to make improvements in society” (Sarkar, Kotler 2018: 554). Wettstein and Baur (2016: 200) defined the brand activism as the expression or demonstration of clear and public support for a particular individual, group, or ideal and values in order to persuade others to do so and claimed that the dissensus could be an effective way to study communication and can grow the seeds of social change. It supposed to get involved in political debates and not aim to please the majority, as a result, may only please some part of the society while keeping the others away (Hoffmann, et al. 2020: 156). It is divisive in nature and have both opposers and supporters (Hydock, et al. 2019: 78). Some scholars like Holtzhausen (2000: 105, 106, 107) argue that consensus is unfair because no solution that pleases both sides is possible, and the most powerful party, usually government prevails. The postmodern version of brand activism should encourage the debate rather than consensus so that it can create a ground for change. PR campaigns should aim to set up discussions and challenge established learnings and views. Brands see the brand activism as the new approach to get closer to their target customers and be or remain relevant for long (Mirzai et al. 2022: 8). Activist brands think that this is a

new way to create strong bonds with their target audience (Koch 2020: 603). As a result, brands have been involving into controversial socio-political discussions like gun control, birth control, LGBT rights, immigration etc. A good example would be PayPal's protest against state of North Carolina, when the state restricted the transgender bathroom access. Similarly, in 2015 Salesforce.com challenged the authorities of Indiana when they allowed firms the right to reject serving to same-sex couples. Salesforce threatened the authorities with withdrawal of its services and employees from the city as well as with cancellation of all its conferences in the city (Sibai, Mimoun, Boukis 2021: 11). Hobby Lobby debated the exclusion of birth control from the insurance policies, Walmart's has published a statement that supports immigration reform. Many companies are openly supporting Paris Climate Change Accord whose goal is to "limit global warming to well below 2", preferably 1 to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. "The letter was signed by Apple, BHP Billiton, BP, DuPont, General Mills, Google, Intel, Microsoft, National Grid, Novartis Corporation, PG&E, Rio Tinto, Schneider Electric, Shell, Unilever and Walmart" (Rehrmann 2017). Nike is supporting the "Black Lives Matter" movement (Hydock, et al. 2019: 77, Vrendenburg et al. 2020: 447 - 455), Starbucks and Budweiser stayed against the immigration ban of Donald Trump in 2017 (Rim et al. 2020: 1). Procter & Gamble donated 300 thousand products to the Turkish Red Cross to help Syrian refugees (Yalin 2021: 167). They are also active in case of animal rights. P&G doesn't test their products or ingredients on animals anywhere in the world. They developed more than 50 animal-free, alternative product testing methods and invested approximately \$410 million in finding alternatives and getting them regulated worldwide (Yalin 2021: 168).

2.2. Differences Between Brand Activism and CSR

Tough competition in the market, increasing demands of stakeholders and the focus of media, pushes companies to involve in CSR activities more and more. This has increased the researchers' interest on the context, process and outcomes of this social movement (Joo, Miller, Fink. 2019: 237). Barnett, Henriques, and Husted (2020: 938) consider CSR as "a force for greater social impact and call for purposeful solutions and initiatives to overcome social and environmental issues". They acknowledge CSR as an initiative that arise from a company's plans and activities and serves for the society's common good. CSR defines company's involvement in activities that are considered beneficial to society, through the direct benefit to those who receive the company's resources or by adhering to a set of generally accepted social norms and complying with legal requirements. In order to be considered as a CSR activity, it should benefit to the majority of society and should be perceived as beneficial by the society as well (Nalick et al. 2016: 385).

Governmental organizations also support CSR activities. For instance, care for employees' quality of life and safety, focus on environmental issues, poverty, education and health care are the priority focus

of Chilean CSR initiative (Beckman, Colwell, Cunningham 2009: 195). Many companies contribute to social responsibility initiatives to empower social change, encourage social challenges, help to raise responsible generations, support sustainability and to solve environmental issues. Unilever with its 28 brands, aims to reduce its carbon footprint and increase social awareness. Patagonia – an outdoor apparel brand – brings dedicated consumers and corporations together to work on environmental issues. It also gives away 1% of its turnover to this cause. Heineken initiated a “drink responsibly” campaign (Vrendenberg et al. 2020: 446 - 447). NFL (National Football League) has been a dedicated ambassador to raise awareness of breast cancer (Joo, Miller, Fink 2019: 236). Opet Petrolcülük A.Ş. initiated a social responsibility program called “Opet Kadın Gücü” in order to include women in the workforce and demonstrate the gender equality. Opet targeted to have at least two female employees at each fuel station, and to provide women with the opportunity to work in different positions such as fuel sales officer, market sales officer, station manager, shift supervisor, and accounting staff. Another project of Opet was “Temiz Tuvalet Kampanyası”, where they aim to establish hygiene awareness in Turkey. After their move, all the other oil companies had to follow the same change and relocated their toilets inside the fuel stations and kept them clean. To further support the project, the brand ambassadors visited 75 cities in Turkey and gave 6482 hours of hygiene training to 9.5 million people. It was announced that thousands of people were given training on the importance of toilet cleaning and hygiene in schools not only in Turkey but also in Mecca, Medina, Riyadh and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia and in Skopje, Macedonia (Boran, Ergül 2022: 184 - 185). Unilever Turkey started the “sustainable life plan” in 2010 on how we improve the health of our planet. They have launched a series of ambitious commitments and actions to fight against climate change, protect and restore nature (Yalın 2021: 166). The sanitary pad brand Always, decided to take action for Turkey and launched a campaign called “Kız gibi”. In Always's original ad, when little girls are told to "do something like a girl" they do it the best they can, instead of taking it as an insult. But when it comes to young women, things change. To them, making something girlish means making it as bad and ridiculous as possible. At this point, always shares the fact with the audience: “Girls' self-confidence drops rapidly during the adolescence”. The aim of the campaign is to rewrite the rules by changing the use of "girly" as an insult (Yalın 2021: 167). In order to increase the education level within women, Turkcell started a campaign called “Kardelenler – Çağdaş Türkiye’nin Çağdaş Kızları” and similarly Aydın Doğan Foundation started a campaign called “Baba beni okula gönder”.

Responses to CSR are generally positive and even can improve the reputation of a company resulting from negative publicity (Joireman et al. 2015: 32). In their study, Chernev and Blair (2015: 1421) proved that, customers perceive the performance of the socially responsible companies’ products as better than the others. They also showed that, this effect is even stronger with the customers who are less familiar with the researched product category. Baron (1999: 262) and Mohr and Webb (2005: 121) has proved

that some people voluntarily compromise from their own interest for the benefit of society and environment. Auger et al, (2003: 296), discussed ethical consumerism in their research and claimed that customers consider the functional and ethical qualities of a product as equal and agree to pay accordingly. According to the research of Burke et al. (2014: 2237), a considerable part of the respondents (42%) cares about the outcomes of their consumption behavior. On the other hand, 34% of the respondents don't take the ethical outcomes into account, because of disinterest, price, disorientation, or stigma. The rest (24%) is contradictory in self-assessment. Although they have some doubts on how the execution is, they are still positive about ethical consumption.

However, some studies also mentioned about factors that moderate the positive response of CSR. Profit oriented and inauthentic activities can lessen the positive response of CSR. "For organizations today, it is not enough to have a higher purpose. Purpose-driven means nothing if the behavior doesn't match the vision" (Kotler, P., Sarkar, C. 2018: 35). It is also affected by the nature of the product; thus, hedonic products get better response from the customers. Additionally, if the brand doesn't have a strong CSR reputation, the customer-brand identification as well as the brand attitude may be less positive (Hydock et al. 2019: 78).

Brand activism can be seen similar to CSR, which also concerns examining the corporate engagement in social and political issues but has actually significantly different attributes. CSR generally focus on widely accepted pro-social issues, whereas brand activism is differentiated from them with its controversial nature (Chernev and Blair 2015: 1412). Consequently, brand activism more tends to rise both positive and negative customer attitude (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020: 773; Hydock, et al. 2019: P78). For example, during the Nike's "Black Lives Matter" campaign, mainly Trump supporters and conservative consumers share many videos on social media where they burn their Nike shoes. The stock value was slightly hit right after the campaign, but it was outweighed by the loyal Nike consumers and within few days, Nike's stock made an all-time high (Van der Meer, Jonkman 2021: 7). There is a new concept called "Femvertising" which is "the third wave of feminist movement". The second wave was heavily criticized for appealing to a certain group of women, specifically white, educated, favorable income group. Hence, the third wave was expanded to embrace a wider community, including women of different colour, LGBTQ community and women from any other under-represented group in society (Elmi 2022: 23, 26). A recent example is the women movement in Iran which started in September 2022 after the arrest and murder of Mahsa Jina Amini by Iran's "morality police" due to "donning her hijab improperly". The public came together in front of the hospital where she died, and the voices rose demanding justice. Her passing acted as a catalyst, igniting a wave of protests in a deeply polarized nation. With each passing day, the demonstrations gained momentum, transcending the boundaries and spreading to neighboring cities. (Al Jazeera 2022). The national TV channel was supporting police. The

primary reaction came from “Nazari Food Company”, and they cut the agreement with the national TV channel. In order to show gratitude, protesters started to buy this company’s products. On the other hand, some companies like “Mihan Company” aided police with the transport in company vans and that rose big boycott against the company’s products. After the firm lost a lot of money and image, it had to publish a video and asked them to end the protests (Elmi 2022: 23, 24). In a notable instance of brands departing from their traditionally apolitical stance, a compelling illustration emerges in their response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. This event prompted the majority of prominent brands to swiftly react by divesting their investments, closing stores, and suspending sales activities within Russia. Brands that failed to promptly adjust their association with Russia and persisted in maintaining open stores faced severe criticism on social media for supporting Putin's decision (Kubetzek 2022: 2).

According to Wettstein and Baur (2015: 200), three points are critical in determining whether the activity corresponds with brand activism or not, first these activities should be over the brand’s own economic interest, second the brand advocates the values even in case where they are unrelated with its own business and independent from the sector, and third it targets the society in general rather than an institution or a political group. They also discuss that brands cannot stay aside in terms of political and social issues but take a role in decision-making process and balance the interests of stakeholders.

CSR activities are generally included in company’s strategic plans (Varadarajan, Menon 1988: 59), but brand activism is more likely to happen randomly. As it has higher risk and uncertainty, it may also have greater benefit to the company (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020: 773). Ciszek and Logan (2018: 118, 119) and Hydock, et al., (2019: 77, 78) argue that CSR considers the stakeholders benefit and prioritize profitability of the company, whereas brand activism doesn’t seek to find a common ground and put social change beyond the company’s benefit. It is “a conflict about who speaks and who does not speak, about what has to be heard as the voice of pain and what has to be heard as an argument on justice” (Bowman, Stamp, Ranciere, 2011: 2).

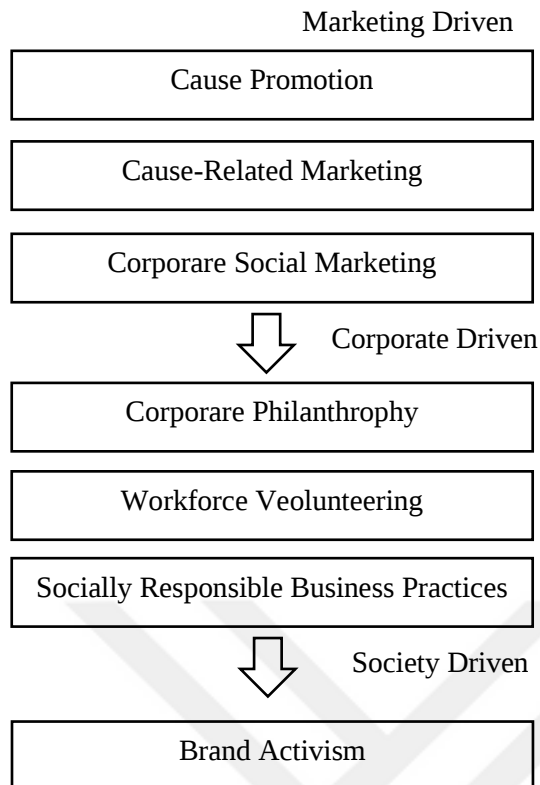


Figure 1. Evaluation of Brand Activism (Kotler, P., Sarkar, C. 2018: 39).

Brand activism evolved from the values-driven CSR activities, which are not fast enough to transform brands (Kotler, P., Sarkar, C. 2018: 38) and has a values-driven nature which cares about the earth resources and society itself (Kotler, P., Sarkar, C. 2018: 41).

2.3. Previous Research on Brand Activism

The term brand activism has been studied for a couple of decades, when companies have increasingly started to voice their opinions on politically contradictory issues. Objections to topics such as social activism (e.g. gender equality), workplace activism, political activism, environmental activism, economic activism and legal activism (Kotler, Sarkar 2018: 42) are increasing day by day under the leadership of brands and non-governmental organizations. Social activism concerns equality in gender, race, age etc. as well as education, healthcare, social security, privacy, consumer protection. Workplace activism includes governance of corporate organizations, CEO pay, worker compensation, labor and union relations etc. Political activism is about lobbying, voting, cheating in voting etc. Environmental activism includes “air and water pollution”, land use, “environmental laws and policies”. Economic activism is about salaries and tax policy, “income inequality and distribution of wealth”. Legal activism covers laws and policies that influence brands, such as tax, citizenship and employment laws (Kotler, Sarkar 2018: 43-44).



Figure 2. Domains of Brand Activism (Kotler, P., Sarkar, C. 2018: 39).

A literature related to different aspects of brand activism is considered in fields of ethics, psychology, and finance.

The ethics literature focuses on the relationship of consumer's values with the brand's political stance. Society requires common norms and standards of conduct to operate accurately. Respecting such norms and standards, such as not lying or being kind to people is essential to be considered a good member of society (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020: 773). Similarly, people also have moral views about the products that they purchase. These views can be about the outcomes of their actions on nature, on human rights, and on well-being of other living things. In case of any breach by a brand to their moral values, consumers can avoid from buying that product or any other products from that brand or even that nation (Baron 1999: 261). Research has shown that, there is no consensual way of communication due to the divisive nature of brand activism (Hoffmann et al. 2020: 156). If the consumer disagrees with the brand's message, the brand attitude is negatively affected, and it does not have a significant difference in case of a known or unknown brand. The stance of the brand is concerned even more important in disagreement cases, because it disrupts the person's moral ground (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020: 772, 774, 784). The ones that support the brand's stance does not tend to appreciate this brand for acting like expected or ethically appropriate (Higging 1998: 3).

Brand activism has a psychological direction as well. Past research has shown that, in case of criticism to their identity, people are tent to justify themselves by engaging into groups which defend similar believes. This theory is called as 'in-group favouritism' (Henderson-King et al. 1997: 1014). Brands that take a stand can attract two extreme groups. It may arouse affection for the brand or cause hostility and aggression (Osuna et al. 2019: 615). Self-identification theory is extended into brand identification and the attitude of customers based on moral reasoning strategies are examined. Three moral reasoning strategies are suggested, "moral rationalization", "moral coupling or moral decoupling" and "the effect of public backlash and issuing an apology" (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020: 774). Moral rationalization

means the intelligence of a person to rationalize between the stand of a brand and the cost-benefit ratio of that brand. Moral coupling refers to customer or consumer perception of relevancy between the brand's moral stand and the performance or quality. The moral decoupling, in contrary is the split of these two understanding from each other. In case of moral coupling, a disagreement with a brand's stance will have even more negative effects on attitudes and behaviors towards the brand because customer perceives it as an attribute of the brand. Finally, making an apology in case of public criticism to the brand is seen as a retraction from the brand's moral ground, and it is neither unlikely to reduce the negative effect nor support the positive brand attitude (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020: 775). Customer reaction is also examined for different kind of socio-political violations. A brand's value-based mild and severe violation like withholding overtime payments or endangering workers' health and safety can have different effects on customer reactions (Isıksal, Karaosmanoglu 2020: 1). The punishing behaviour of customer is stronger in case of a severe violation of the brand. Similarly, self-referencing also effects the customer punishing behaviour significantly both in mild and severe cases (Isıksal, Karaosmanoglu 2020: 2).

The financial aspect of brand activism is widely studied in many research. Some studies suggest that firm's financial performance in the market is correlated negatively with its political investment but positively correlated only in regulated industries like utilities and airlines sector (Hadani, Schuler 2013: 165). However, there are also cases where consumers intend to buy more from the brands when they agree with the brand's stand (Dodd and Supa 2014: 1), but there isn't any research to prove whether this number outweighs the number of opposing customers.

When a brand is involved in political issues, consumers tend to express their attitude towards the brand by buycotting or boycotting. "Boycotts and buycotts are commonly used to describe the collective action of a group of consumers to not purchase or to purchase a company's products" (Hydock et al. 2019: 79). Customers involve in boycotts to indicate their dissatisfaction with a corporation or public policies and actions and to address ethical issues they face. Boycotters intimidate companies by spreading negative word-of-mouth which can ultimately damage its reputation and by refusing to buy its products (Rim, Lee, Yoo 2020: 3). Their actions have also political outcomes. For example, if many rejects to buy a product because of its impact on nature, it will be simpler for governments to regulate the product usage and even the company could remove the product from production. Buycotting costs more to consumers and it is more demanding because of that, consumers tend to boycott a business for unethical behavior than to buycott it for ethical behavior (Hydock et al. 2019: 79-80).

Buying behavior of consumer changes according to their perception of the company. For example, consumers can tolerate the avoidance of a market-driven company from brand activism ("market-driven intended image"). On the contrary, for the companies that claim to remain loyal to their internal values

(“value-driven intended image), consumers feel that political abstention is hypocritical, and they lessen their purchase accordingly. Market-driven company is described with the ability to analyze and adapt to the market, value-driven company corresponds with staying loyal to its values (Korschun et al. 2019: 2).

Divisive issues have conflicting values and interests, are controversial in their words or actions, are politically sensitive, and evoke substantial reactions. Since all the consumers don't have similar views with the company, the company may potentially lose some of the consumers or target audiences (Vredenburg et al. 2020: 448). Thus, many studies tried to figure out whether the net impact of the brand activism is negative or positive to the company (Dodd, Supa 2014; Hydock et al. 2019; Hadani, Schuler 2013). Companies can make use of brand activism in particular circumstances (Hydock et al. 2019: 135). For instance, it may be related with the company's initial market share. A company with a high initial market share loses some consumers while engaging in brand activism, on the other hand a smaller company gains consumers instead. Hence, smaller companies have bigger potential to gain new consumers compared with a few existing misaligned consumers (Hydock et al. 2019: 135, 142, 143).

Brand activism is also linked with a new branding principle which is called as “citizen activist”. This principle suggests that customers focus on systematic changes in production and consumption rather than individual efforts. It is the consumer's attempt to bring real change to current product portfolio and marketing communications, with a primary focus on activism in regard to marketing and criticism of reality. In this way, brand activism initiatives can be conceptualized as an innovative positioning strategy, which can also help to develop the brand (Koch 2020: 593).

Table 1. Summary for Previous Research

Author	Aim of The Research	Sample Description	Methodology	Findings
Govan 2008	To explain the emergent contradictions and expose the riskiness this kind of activism poses as a brand strategy. The question asked from a social theory perspective is, can a brand take on social activist dimensions in this arena.		Two kinds of women's body activism were represented in two different cultural artifact. The question asked from a social theory perspective is, can a brand take on social activist dimensions in this arena.	The perspective and the subject in Dove campaign are not clear which will be risky for long term. To be successful, the brand should be more disruptive to change the gender order.
Hadani and Schuler 2013	to figure out how brand's political investment affects the financial results of a brand	A set of 943 S&P 1500 firms between 1998 to 2008 (943 large and mid-cap firms)	The utilization of regression analysis aids in discerning the association between variables	firms' political investment is negatively associated with market and accounting performance. It is positively associated with market performance only in regulated industries
Dodd and Supa 2014	Investigates the influence of organizational positions on social-political matters on the financial performance of corporations.	Three issues prompted divergent public stances among both U.S. consumers and organizations. "gay marriage, health care reform, and emergency contraception".	Experimental survey design methodology "Participants were randomly exposed to one of six potential CEO prompts" showing an "organizational stance on one of three social-political issues". Uses theory of planned behavior to undermine the purchase intention	Tendency to buy more in case of agreement with brand's stance No clue whether the number outweighs the opposing customers
Wettstein and Baur 2015	To conceptualize corporate political advocacy	N/A	Defines the corporate political advocacy and points out the differences from similar terms. Gives real examples from the market.	Dimensions of political advocacy are (1) being beyond the company's interest, (2) independent from the core business of the company, (3) addressed and visible for larger audience.

Nalick et al. 2016	Developing a model that bases on agency theory, stakeholder theory and institutional theory to explain firm's sociopolitical involvement.	N/A	Develop a theoretical perspective for companies' sociopolitical involvement: Risk taking on future stakeholder benefit, stakeholder pressure recognition and executive ideological bent. Identified a number of enabling mechanism to these three perspectives. Integrated stakeholder theory, agency theory, and institutional theory to explain companies' sociopolitical involvement.	Agency theory has engaged on differences in risk appetite between agents and principals, but the ideological differences may also cause tensivity. Stakeholder theory bases to create and distribute economic value, but social change is also an important result. Institutional theory focuses on the forces placed on a firm, but further research should be conducted to understand how a company guide the public.
Ciszek and Logan 2018	“challenges consensus-driven orientations of dialogue”, embracing dissensus and criticize the dialogic promise of digital communication	top 200 user-generated Facebook comments on Ben & Jerry’s initial Facebook post announcing support for Black Lives Matter.	“Analyzes Ben & Jerry's support of the Black Lives Matter movement” by applying critical discourse analysis (CDA). It uses “dialogic theory by presenting an agonistic orientation toward dialogue”.	Dialogue may not necessarily be the ideal for organizational communication online. Recognizing dissensus as an important concept and consequence when organizations advocate on behalf of contested political and social issues.
Hydock et al. 2019	to understand the motivation behind boycott and buycott a brand within the brand activism domain and the attitude-behaviour gap	“findings from existing literature in consumerism, CSR, and political orientation”	(1) build an initial understanding of socially responsible consumption in response to CPA (2) understand the company and consumer characteristics that might impact the effect of CPA on socially responsible consumption.	Consumer attitudes are driven mostly by contradictory impulses motivated by family, convenience and the cost. They are more likely to boycott brands for acting unethically than to buycott them for acting ethically. Buycotting is more costly and burdensome

Korschun et al. 2019	To reveal whether consumers prefer companies to abstain or take political stands based on companies' targeted image	161 university students for the pilot study. Field study sample is 250 participants at 250 unique pharmacy stores across 38 US states.	Pilot study to identify companies according to their targeted image. A field experiment used a 2 (intended image: values-driven, market-driven) × 3 (company stand: abstain from a stand, stand for, and stand against) between-subjects design.	Brand attitude changes according to the company's relationship with its external environment. Market-driven company can avoid taking a stance but for a value-driven company, abstention is risky.
Ramirez, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas 2019	to indicate the effects of brand polarization	22 semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face or over Skype. Informants were indicated and provided info on 27 loved and 28 hated brands from a wide range of sectors.	builds a research on polarizing brands and extends it with literature of political science, social psychology and brand rivalry. Uses qualitative data from 22 semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to identify benefits of brand polarization	advantages of brand polarization for three parties; (1) brand - as positioning and strength, (2) brand team, (3) passionate customers - as enjoyment, expression and belonging.
Hoffmann et al. 2020	to reveal whether there is a consensual way of communication despite the divisive nature of brand activism	Analyze Nike's "dream creazy" campaign through both the comments to the campaign photo on twitter and the full-length video.	a quantitative and qualitative analysis of a total of 360 comments on the video and photo on twitter. Measured frequencies of messages in determined categories.	1.9% more balanced negotiated meaning, a majority of 51.7% oppositional, 34.7% affirmative voices. The meaning of 'real' sacrifice is discussed more than racial discrimination.
Isiksal and Karaosmanoglu 2020	(1) To acquire insights about severing levels of brand transgressions (2) determine the likelihood of individuals encountering them.	pretest: 20 people (10 males and 10 females, ages 18-65) experiment: 189 people, 85% are 3rd year undergraduate students and 15% are graduated (ages 18-35).	Using an experimental format and employing a 2 × 2 factorial design to assess the impacts of the interaction of self-referencing in cases of corporate brand transgressions on consumer punishing behavior.	There is an interaction between self-referencing and transgression severity on consumer punishing behavior. If corporate brands violate even minor rules, they can have deleterious effect on consumer-brand relationship

Koch 2020	To make explicit how political activism can have an effect on consumption, production, politics, and ideas.	Oatly's positioning activities were examined. 14 interviews with key persons were made, incl. founders, managers, employees, experts, and consultants.	brand activism, cultural branding, and brand positioning are theoretically discussed. A process-focused single-case study applied (Oatly). Semi structures interviews and documents are used	New branding principle is "citizen activist", where consumers focus on systematic changes rather than individual efforts. It can also help to develop the brand and increase positioning.
Moorman 2020	To investigate top marketers' response to their brands' taking a stance	Top marketers that joined to 2018 CMO survey	Used the survey results to uncover six perspectives that companies use to decide the degree to involve in brand activism.	Political activism perspectives: "brand authenticity view, corporate citizen view, cultural authority view, calculative view, brands as educators view, political mission view, employee engagement view"
Mukherjee and Althuizen 2020	Contributes to consumer-brand identification by studying the impact of self-brand similarity on consumer attitudes, intentions, and moral behavior. Expands the marketplace morality literature by exploring diverse moral reasoning strategies' roles.	Throughout the 4 studies, participants are selected randomly from Prolific's online panel, students from a French business school and US participants from Amazon's Mturk.	Experimental survey design methodology, 2 x 2 Anova. Participants were exposed to activist messages and (1) brand attitude (2) brand agreement (3) brand identification (4) moral anger is measured. The issue of "known - unknown brand", effects of apology in case of public backlash as well as the role of spoke person is also examined.	In case of disagreement with the brand's stand, the brand attitude is negatively affected. In contrary, there was mostly not a significant impact on brand attitude when the customer agrees with the brand's stand. The result is the same with known and unknown brands
Rim et al. 2020	To identify characteristics in the boycotters' networks	Investigates the network structure during Starbucks & Budweiser response to Trump's 2017 immigration ban executive order, encompassing boycotts and advocacy.	Analyzes Twitter interactions to identify broker characteristics through quantitative content analysis of user descriptions and hashtags. Utilizes network analysis to understand collective patterns of connections and interactions among individuals and organizations.	Three unique characteristics: (1) The boycotters appeared in the aggregated brand boycotting and advocates' networks (2) engaged in boycotting other opposing brands or organizations (3) network of boycotters is very dense and highly connected among subgroups

Vredenburg et al. 2020	Examines authentic brand activism as an emerging marketing strategy.	N/A	Defines authenticity within brand activism domain, develop a theory-based typology, examine the effects of brand activism in case of desalination with the brand's reputation.	“Advance a theoretical typology of authentic brand activism. Authentic brand activists should avoid misleading and irrelevant claims”, qualify messages with accurate social interests and focus on efforts in the field of activism.
van der Meer and Jonkman 2021	To contextualize corporate engagement in a society characterized by large socio-political shifts.	N/A	Two examples of public relation efforts are discussed where certain intrinsic values are promoted that are not “directly related to the brands' core business” (Siemens & Volkswagen defending Germany's refugee policy and Nike defending black lives).	Brands can use public relations for brand activism in regard to their “own intrinsic values and moral standpoints, rather than efforts to balance competing interests of multiple stakeholders”
Mirzaei et al. 2022	explores the dimensions of woke branding authenticity	Data in the form of more than 46,000 and 34,000 consumer comments on Gillette and Nike’s video posts were collected.	Employs content analysis for available online conversations to woke brand activism campaigns and explore the dimensions of woke activism authenticity. Leximancer was used to analyze the content.	“identifies six dimensions for woke activism authenticity: social context independency, inclusion, sacrifice, practice, fit, and motivation”. Propose new dimensions such as inclusion, social context independency, and sacrifice

2.4. Role of Authenticity in Brand Activism

According to a recent research of GFK, 33% of global consumers will select one brand over another specifically because it supports a cause they believe in. According to 71% of global consumers, it is important that companies take environmentally responsible actions (Sedlmaier, 2021). On the other hand, they also await big companies to be involved in socio-political issues (Hoppner, Vadakkepatt 2019: 417): 65% of the consumers expect companies and CEO’s to express their attitude towards social issues (Larcker, Tayan 2018). However, a recent study of Edelman (2019) has pointed out that, 56% of consumers think that extensive number of brands utilize brand activism as a marketing strategy to increase their turnover.

Since a considerable part of consumers are still suspicious about brand activism, authenticity happens to play an important role in this topic. When they shop, consumers look for authentic brands as a response to the increasingly artificial nature of the modern life (Gilmore, Pine 2007). The concept of

authenticity is based on the Latin *authenticus* and the Greek *authentikos* (Cappannelli and Cappannelli, 2004: 1) and means authoritative, imaginary, non-imitation, and original. It is also defined as sincerity, innocence and originality (Fine, 2003: 153). Later it was also defined as “an evaluation, judgment, or assessment of how real or genuine something is” (Beckman et al. 2009: 199).

For the marketing field, authenticity is the creation process arising from the consumers' perception of authenticity and the subjectivity of the physical materials or created values in this creation process (Alexander 2009: 4). Brand authenticity is a concept that reflects the identities consumers desire (Beverland, 2009: 112) and helps brands to differentiate their brand identity from the others (Beverland 2006) as well as build emotional bonds with the consumer (Keller 1993: 2). Consequently, a lot of brands started to advertise features associated with authenticity. Some examples could be Levi's “Authentic StoneWash” jeans, Coca-Cola's campaign named “The real thing”, or Beck's revisit of the original 1873 beer recipe (Gue`vremont, Grohmann 2018: 322). In literature, there are research which studied the attributes of brand authenticity (Morhart et al. 2015; Napoli et al. 2014; Gundlach, Neville 2012), the outcomes of an authentic brand image (Eggers et al. 2013; Gue`vremont, Grohmann 2016; Morhart et al. 2015; Napoli et al. 2014), relevant elements of brand authenticity in terms of the brand being genuine in its communication with consumers (Ilicic, Webster 2014) and the role of brand authenticity in case of a brand scandal (Gue`vremont, Grohmann 2018: 323).

When brand authenticity is evaluated within the scope of consumer-based marketing, it is seen similar to concepts such as brand satisfaction, brand loyalty and brand image related to customer relations (Bruhn et al., 2012: 567). However, brand authenticity, which should be evaluated differently from these concepts, is an understanding that goes far beyond the commercial purposes of the brand (Beverland, 2009: 113), and is an understanding expressed with concepts such as holistic, quality-based, moral virtue understanding, sincere love for the brand (Napoli et al., 2014: 1091). In brand activism domain, authenticity of the brand means, that the company's activities go beyond economic well-being of the brand and become honest and sincere expression of the company's beliefs and actions toward society and environment (Wettstein, Baur 2016: 200). Simply stating that a brand is “authentic” will not be successful; for this reason, it is emphasized that marketers should demonstrate authenticity based on the characteristics of brands (Beverland, 2005: 460). When a brand is consistent with its certain aim and values of activist marketing message, as well as socially oriented business practices, it is perceived as authentic (Vrendenburg et al. 2020: 445).

A widely agreed opinion in the marketing world is that firms shouldn't be involved in political issues if they cannot do that in a way that consists with the brand and that bonds them with their target group in an authentic way. Crossing this line has the risk of being perceived as inauthentic and cause questioning the real motivation of the company (Moorman 2020: 389). The greatest potential for social change and

the highest benefit to brand occurs when the brands' activist messaging, aim and beliefs are in line with its pro-social business activities. Authentic brand activism is mostly experienced in such cases. The opposite case is associated with "woke washing" when manipulating of free speech about social justice, "green washing" in environmental concerns, "rainbow washing" for LGBT rights or "blue washing" for democracy and human rights, where messaging and the practice is inconsistent, and consumers are abused and misled by the brand (Sibai, Mimoun, Boukis 2021: 10-11). Authentic activist brands should stay away from confusing and deceiving messages. Message should be very clear with certain substantial social benefits (Vredenburg et al. 2020: 449 – 451 - 454). Purpose, values, messaging and practice is important alike values of the brand to create authenticity. If these factors are aligned, consumers tend to identify the brand as authentic on socio-political issues, which means consistent, reliable and honest. When the practice is not matching with the purpose and values of the brand, then this brand is identified as inauthentic (Vredenburg et al. 2020: 449 – 451 - 454). Consumers may respond to this by boycotting the brand, stopping the purchase or quitting the membership or even burning the product on the street. Razor brand Gillette, owned by Procter & Gamble, covered the topic of toxic masculinity in its viral 2019 video campaign. However, only during the initial step, with 901,000 negative YouTube reviews and 468,000 likes alone, many indicated alienations and argued the activist message, questioning whether Gillette was just a "sign of virtue". Since Gillette insisted to sell women's products at a higher price through its "Pink Tax", its values and execution was questioned (Vredenburg et al. 2020: 444). 2020 Black Lives Matter protests have erupted around the world following Colin Kaepernick's iconic 2018 "Dream Crazy" campaign. Brands like Nike, Adidas, Spotify, L'oreal and Apple have reinforced their messages to defend racial justice, but consumers and critics have discussed that the values, goals and practices they support are lamentably lacking like Black board members (Ritson 2020). Pepsi also involved in Black Lives Matter campaign and cooperate with Kendall Jenner. In its commercial, Jenner is presented as a peaceful protestor against the armed police force, where she delivers a can of Pepsi and the protest turns into a party. However, Pepsi was historically not seen in a socio-political business practice before. Due to that fact, the brand was not perceived sincere in its campaign (Vredenburg et al. 2020 : 451). The famous doll brand Barbie has been argued for promoting morally conservative type of femininity which characterize woman by her body outlook. Over the last 50 years Barbie entrepreneur series have been launched and Barbie has been characterized in different career roles from an astronaut in 1965 to a surgeon in 1973, a paratrooper in 2000, and a game developer in 2016. However, public hesitates to believe its sincerity due to the brand's heritage.

The continuity of the brand activism message is also important to be perceived as authentic. For example, Benetton has been considered as one of the activist brands between the years 1980 – 2000. During this period, the brand has initiated several campaigns that stand up to injustice in religion, race, and gender. However, the brand has lost its "taboo-breaking moral vision" throughout the past decades

and become an inauthentic brand. Salesforce.com was one of the activist brands that supported LGBT rights in the past, but it lost the reliability when it corporate with the US Custom and Border Protection Agency in severe execution of border rule in Mexican border which led children separated from their parents (Sibai, Mimoun, Boukis 2021: 10-11).

The authenticity of a brand relates with the three core values of the brand:

- (1) its primary aim and beliefs as a consideration of its workers, its brand promise and interest in the needs and desires of its shareholders, and how it is expressed and perceived in the market;
- (2) the kind of message and story distributed via brand's, traditional media, peer-to-peer and social media channels; and
- (3) business activities and how key shareholders classify, demonstrate and interpret these activities in the market (Vrendenburg et al. 2020: 445).

A good example for authentic brand activism is the Chick-fil-A fast food restaurant. This brand supports conservative Christian values and embodies them with action, from closing Sundays to giving away for anti-same sex marriage groups. Chick-fil-A's message to disagree gay marriage and provide monetary support to like-minded groups is in line with company values, objectives, and social business practices that need to be identified as authentic brand activism (Vrendenburg et al. 2020: 449 – 451 - 454).

2.5. Conceptual Background and Hypotheses

Brand attitude is defined as “buyer’s evaluation of the brand with respect to its expected capacity to deliver on a currently relevant buying motive” (Rossiter 2014: 537). Customers are much likely to choose the products which they have a more positive attitude on (Ajzen et al. 2008). Willingness to pay a price premium on the other hand, refers to the consumer's readiness or inclination to pay a higher price for a product or service compared to alternative options available in the market (Aaker 1996). At this point, it is crucial to gain consumer’s trust and to be perceived as an authentic brand by them. When a brand is consistent with its certain aim and values of activist marketing message, as well as socially oriented business practices, it is perceived as authentic (Vrendenburg et al. 2020: 445). Brand authenticity is a concept that reflects the identities consumers desire (Beverland, 2009: 112) and helps brands to differentiate their brand identity from the others (Beverland 2006) as well as build emotional bonds with the consumer (Keller 1993: 2) such as positive brand attitude and intentions. It is a very strong asset such that, there are even research that proves, if authentic brands are involved in brand scandals, they do not face any negativity; on the contrary, it is observed that consumers are more emotional towards these brands and their willingness to pay increases (Guèvremont, Grohmann, 2018: 2). However, there has been no research conducted before, which examines the effect of brand activism on these three variables (brand authenticity, willingness to pay a premium price and brand attitude).

Furthermore, there is no research which compares these results in terms of a well-known and unknown brand. In order to eliminate any potential influence of consumers' preexisting brand perceptions, hypotheses were formulated for both familiar and unfamiliar brands, ensuring the exclusion of any bias.

Improved upon the existing theoretical studies, the aim of this study is to reveal how these three variables are affected by the activist message of an unknown and known brand. Following two hypotheses are developed;

H1: Brand authenticity (a), willingness to pay a premium price (b) and brand attitude (c) is higher in case of an unknown brand when a brand activism message is given to the consumers.

H2: Brand authenticity (a), willingness to pay a premium price (b) and brand attitude (c) is higher in case of a known brand when a brand activism message is given to the consumers.

Divisive matters involve conflicting values and interests, often stirring controversy through their words or actions. They tend to be politically sensitive and elicit significant reactions. Given that consumers hold diverse perspectives, a company runs the risk of potentially losing some of its customers or target audiences (Vredenburg et al. 2020: 448). Recognizing the diversity of consumer perspectives, companies often face the challenge of finding a balance between expressing their values and maintaining broad appeal. They must carefully evaluate the potential impact of taking a position on divisive issues, considering the potential benefits and drawbacks. It becomes essential for businesses to engage in thorough market research and analyze the potential consequences before making decisions that may impact their customer base. It is proven that consumers who do not share a brand's position on an issue, consequently, have negative attitudes towards the brand (Rim, Lee, Yoo 2020: 3). The stance of the brand plays an important role in disagreement cases, because it disrupts the person's moral ground (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020: 772, 774, 784). On the other hand, there is no significant change of attitudes for those consumers that support a brand's position (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020: 777). The ones that support the brand's stance does not tend to appreciate this brand for acting like expected or ethically appropriate (Higging 1998: 3). Brand familiarity doesn't have a significant effect on attitude or brand preference in case of brand activism (Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020: 778).

When it comes to the purchase intention, there are cases where consumers intend to buy more from the brands when they agree with the brand's stand (Dodd and Supa 2014: 1). According to a study conducted at Marymount University in 1999, 75% of the consumers are willing to pay "\$1 more for a \$20 item" which is produced under higher labor standards. A similar study was conducted in 2000 at University of Maryland and the results showed that even a higher amount of money was considered to be paid for a brand with acceptable ethical features. These customers were ready to pay "\$5 more on a \$20 item" (Auger et al. 2003: 284). Another example to that, could be the sustainable production. Since the environmentally friendly production is more costly to the brand, companies consider getting this cost

back from the consumer and that makes the pricing as a crucial topic for that brand. Research shows that consumers are becoming more and more environmentally conscious and therefore willing to pay higher prices for green products (Kamboji, Matharu 2021: 559-560). The consumer behavior of Gen Z demonstrates a significant emphasis on sustainability and ethics, rendering them pivotal considerations when selecting a product. According to a recent survey with 1.000 generation Z consumers in America, they are ready to pay 10% extra for the sustainable products and consider environmental issues in their purchases (First Insights, 2020).

In this study, it is also investigated whether brand authenticity is affected by the agreement with the activist brand's message. Consumers tend to identify the brand as authentic, when the purpose, values, messaging and practice are aligned (Vredenburg et al. 2020: 449 – 451 - 454). In case of brand-agreement, the consumer evaluates the brand as more authentic. Consumers may respond to inauthentic brand messages by boycotting the brand, stopping the purchase or quitting the membership or even burning the product on the street (Vredenburg et al. 2020: 444). There are no research that focuses on the effect of agreement with the activist brand's stand on brand authenticity, willingness for consumers to pay more for that brand and brand attitude. Moreover, demographics was not even a subject in this field and brand familiarity was only studied for the brand attitude. In this study, it is expected that when a brand advocates for shared values, consumers are likely to reward it for supporting their cause, leading to a positive impact especially on Generation Z's willingness to pay a premium price. Following two hypotheses were developed;

H3: The effect of brand activism message on brand authenticity (a), willingness to pay a premium price (b) and brand attitude (c) is more positive in the case of agreement with an unknown brand's stand.

H4: The effect of brand activism message on brand authenticity (a), willingness to pay a premium price (b) and brand attitude (c) is more positive in the case of agreement with a known brand's stand.

90% of generation Z consumers expect that companies take the responsibility to address socio-environmental issues, while 75% express a keen interest in questioning a company's sincerity on such matters (Novelli 2019). Consequently, as a significant portion of the online content encountered by Gen Z has commercials from various brands, they quickly ignore the ones that they perceive as inauthentic (Much 2021). This discerning attitude extends to a diminished trust in brands and advertisements (Kitchen and Proctor 2015). However, there is insufficient research on how perceived authenticity is relevant in the brand activism literature with effect to brand attitude and willingness to pay premium price. In this study, it is aimed to find out the mediating role of perceived authenticity on brand attitude

and willingness to pay premium price in case of agreement with the brand's stand. Therefore, following hypothesis was developed;

H5: The level of perceived brand authenticity mediates the positive effect of brand activism message on brand attitude (a) and willingness to pay a premium price (b) in case of agreement with an unknown brand's stand.

In order to systematically investigate this issue, a conceptual model has been developed (Figure III).

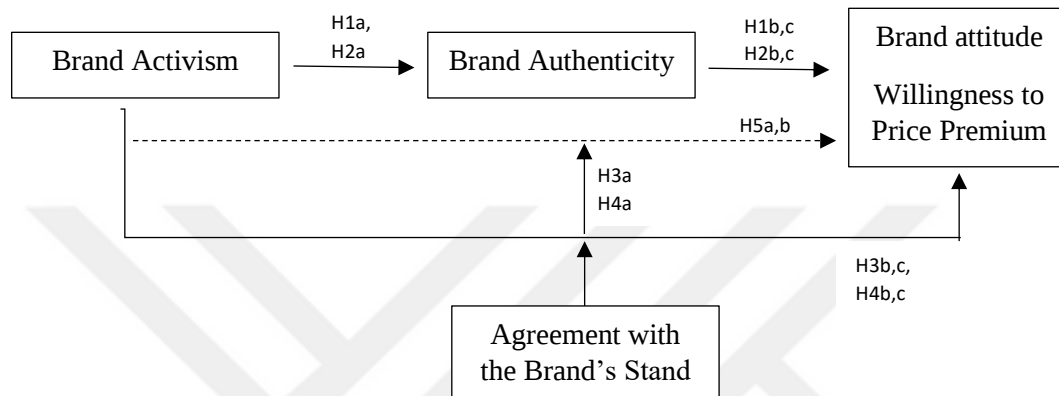


Figure 3. Conceptual Model

3. METHODOLOGY

This study investigates above stated hypotheses through quantitative research and a scenario-based experiment. It utilizes an experimental format and employs a 2x2 factorial design to assess the impact of the brand activism (message vs no-message) in cases of familiarity with the brand (known brand vs unknown brand) on brand attitude, brand authenticity and willingness to pay a premium price. Prior to gathering the research data, two pretests are conducted to determine the activist message and brand familiarity. The scenarios used during the studies were hypothetical stories about brand activism.

Table 2. Design of the 2x2 Experiment

<i>Brand Activism Message</i>		
	Message	No Message
<i>Brand Familiarity</i>	unknown brand	unknown X message (Group 1) unknown X no message (Group 3)
	known brand	known X message (Group 2) known X no message (Group 4)

3.1. Pre-Study I and II

The product category to be used in the study was selected as jeans due to high involvement by generation Z to the category without any gender limitations. A detailed analysis on the follower and engagement numbers of several jeans brands' social media accounts resulted in a list of 9 brands to be used in the first pre-study. The aim of this pre-study was to determine the brands (unknown and known) to be used as stimuli in the main study. Participants were asked to indicate their familiarity level concerning a list of 9 Jean brands (1 = "not familiar at all" to 9 = "extremely familiar"). 52 participants with an average age of 21 participated in the study. The study pointed out that Calvin Klein was evaluated as the most familiar and Esprit was evaluated the least familiar among the participants.

Next, in order to determine the most appropriate controversial scenario to be used during the empirical studies, another pre-study has been conducted, where 55 undergraduate students (mean age = 21.4 ; 56.3% female) were given a short theoretical background of brand activism and asked to evaluate a list of activist messages in terms of (1) whether they think that this brand is an activist brand or not and (2) whether they support that cause or not. The activist messages involved three topics: (1) animal rights, (2) women rights and (3) immigrant rights that created controversial differences within the society and were determined based on a thorough investigation of the media. The pre-study showed that the message advocating the animal rights was perceived significantly more controversial than the other messages on the researched list, meaning that respondents' opinions were split the most on this issue.

As the result of these two pre-studies the final scenarios involving Esprit and Calvin Klein in activist messages on animal rights were used as stimuli (Appendix).

3.2. Data Collection

For the main study, five hundred and twenty-one participants participated in the online study. Among them, 64% were female and 36% were male. The age group was generation Z, meaning the age below 23. An activist message of animal rights was selected in order to manipulate the brand's stand. Participants were randomly assigned into 4 groups (Table II). The first group consisted of 270 participants and was first given the activist message concerning the unknown brand's stand, after that asked their attitude towards the brand, their willingness to pay premium price and the brand authenticity. The second group had 76 respondents. They are first asked about their brand attitude towards the known brand and then shown the activist message and asked the brand attitude once more, their agreement with the brand's stand, followed by willingness to pay a premium price and authenticity. The third (91 participants) and fourth groups (84 participants) are control groups, to whom no message was given. Brand attitude, willingness to pay a premium price and brand authenticity were measured within these groups as well. The unknown brand is given to third group and the known brand was given to the fourth group. The data is then cleaned by eliminating the inappropriate respondents. In total 206 surveys were eliminated, 18 surveys out of it was not completed, 157 respondents were not generation Z and lastly the responses in 31 surveys were inconsistent which was an indicator of manipulative responses (Table III). All the individual items scores are averaged to obtain a single measure of participant's response for the related variable .

Table 3. Data Clearance Results

	Nr of participants	Nr of incomplete	Age out of range	With inconsistent replies	Nr of Remaining
Group 1	270	7	144	7	112
Group 2	76	5	5	15	51
Group 3	91	4		5	82
Group 4	84	2	8	4	70
	521	18	157	31	315

3.3. Measurements

Multiple items adapted from the literature survey were used to measure each variable in the model to improve the study's content validity (Please see Table IV).

3.3.1. Attitude towards the brand

Brand attitude was measured based on the scale developed by Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020). The participants indicated their attitude towards the brand on a three-item, five-point, semantic differential scale (items: Good-Bad, Pleasant-Unpleasant, and Like-Dislike).

3.3.2. Willingness to pay premium price

Willingness to pay premium price was measured based on the scale developed by Netemeyer et al. (2004). The respondents are asked to select their willingness level to pay a premium price for the brand in a three-item, five-point, semantic differential scale (items: I am willing to pay a higher price for products of this brand than for other brands, I am willing to pay a lot more for this brand than other brands in this category, I am willing to pay___ more for the brand over other brands in this product category).

3.3.3. Brand Authenticity

The level of perceived brand authenticity was measured using a three-item, five-point, semantic scale (items: stays true to itself, clearly stands out from other brands, and delivers what it promises) which was developed by Akmar and Wymer (2017).

3.3.4. Agreement with the Brand's Stand

It was asked to the participants of first (unknown vs message) and second group (known vs message) to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that “It is everyone's duty to protect street animals in a situation such as being forced into shelters” and measured with a five-point, semantic scale (1 = “definetely no” to 5 = “definetely yes”) which was developed by Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020). Based on the answer to this question, the participants were divided into two groups. If their response was “definitely yes” or “yes”, they were considered to be supporter of the brand's stand and “definitely no” or “no”, were labeled as opposers to it. Respondents who selected “either yes and no” was eliminated (5 respondents from second group). After that, their personal viewpoint was matched with the brand's stand to create the following two groups: agreement with brand's stand (first group – 98 ; second group – 46 respondents) and consumer-brand disagreement (first group – 14 ; second group – 5 respondents).

3.3.5. Product Category Involvement

Lastly, the study utilizes a scale created by Flynn, Goldsmith, and Eastman (1996) to measure product category involvement. A three-item, five-point, semantic scale was used (items: in general I have a strong interest in jeans, jeans are very improtant for me, jeans matter a lot to me).

Table 4. List of Variables and Their Items

Variables	Items	Reference
Attitude towards the brand	Please indicate your attitude towards the brand	Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020
	BAT1. Good - Bad	
	BAT2. Pleasant - Unpleasant	
	BAT3. Like - Dislike	
Willingness to pay premium price	WTPPP1. I am willing to pay a higher price for products of this brand than for other brands.	Netemeyer et al 2004
	WTPPP2. I am willing to pay a lot more for this brand than other brands in this category.	
	WTPPP3. I am willing to pay___ more for the brand over other brands in this product category.	
Brand Authenticity	BAU1. [X] stays true to itself.	Akmar, Wymer 2017
	BAU2. [X] clearly stands out from other brands.	
	BAU3. [X] delivers what it promises.	
Brand's Stand Agreement	Please indicate your level of agreement with the statement that ...	Mukherjee, Althuizen 2020
	BA1. Definitely No - definitely Yes	
Product Category Involvement	CAT1. In general, I have a strong interest in jeans	Flynn, Goldsmith, Eastman 1996
	CAT2. Jeans are very important for me.	
	CAT3. Jeans matter a lot to me.	

3.4. Analyses and Results

3.4.1. Demographic Descriptions and Characteristics of Respondents

After eliminating the inappropriate respondents, 315 surveys remained, and group split is shown on Table V. The sample is dominated by female respondents. Majority of the students are 20 years and older. 41% of the total respondents spend less than 2.000 TL, only 6% spend 10.000 TL and more.

Table 5. Demographic Descriptions and Characteristics of Respondents

Attribute		Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Sample Size		112	100%	51	100%	82	100%	70	100%
Gender	Male	43	38%	13	25%	21	26%	14	20%
	Female	69	62%	25	49%	35	43%	33	47%
	N/A	0	0%	13	25%	26	32%	23	33%
Age	<20	5	4%	16	31%	25	30%	23	33%
	20-23	107	96%	35	69%	57	70%	47	67%
Monthly Spending	<2,000	37	33%	23	45%	35	43%	34	49%
	2,000-4,999	41	37%	19	37%	24	29%	27	39%
	5,000-9,999	22	20%	8	16%	16	20%	9	13%
	10,000≤	12	11%	1	2%	7	9%	0	0%

3.4.2. Hypotheses Testing

3.4.2.1. Effect of Brand Activism Message

As the first step, the effect of brand activism message is examined both for known and unknown brand in regards to brand authenticity (a), willingness to pay a premium price (b) and brand attitude (c). A two sample t-test is conducted between the control groups and message groups.

Unknown Brand

H1: Brand authenticity (a), willingness to pay a premium price (b) and brand attitude (c) is higher in case of an unknown brand when a brand activism message is given to the consumers.

The mean in brand attitude for message group (Group 1) is significantly different than that of non-message group (Group 3) ($p=,006$) and lower. The result doesn't support H1c. Similarly the mean in brand authenticity and willingness to pay premium price is significantly different between the two groups ($p=,000$) (Table VI) but this time higher in case of brand familiarity. We accept H1a and H1b.

Table 6. Test results of control group vs message group for unknown brand

Group Statistics					
	GR_Nr	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Brand Attitude	Group1	112	1,9402	,90936	,08593
	Group 3	82	2,3207	,96363	,10641
Brand Authenticity	Group 1	112	3,4482	,62572	,05913
	Group 3	82	2,9463	,67881	,07496
Willingness to Pay	Group 1	112	2,8241	,89727	,08478
Premium Price	Group 3	82	2,1098	,83852	,09260

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances - Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Brand Attitude	Equal variances assumed	,698	,405	-2,81	192	,006	-,3805	,13555	-,6479	-,1132
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,78	168,7	,006	-,3805	,1368	-,6506	-,1105
Brand Authenticity	Equal variances assumed	,013	,908	5,32	192	,000	,5019	,0943	,3159	,6878
	Equal variances not assumed			5,26	166,2	,000	,5019	,0955	,3134	,6904
Willingness to pay premium price	Equal variances assumed	1,043	,308	5,63	192	,000	,7143	,1269	,4641	,9646
	Equal variances not assumed			5,69	180,9	,000	,7143	,1255	,4666	,9621

Known Brand

H2: Brand authenticity (a), willingness to pay a premium price (b) and brand attitude (c) is higher in case of a known brand when a brand activism message is given to the consumers.

The mean in post brand attitude for message group (Group 2) is significantly different than that of non-message group (Group 4) ($p=,034$) and lower. On the other hand, the mean in brand authenticity and willingness to pay premium price is not significantly different between the two groups ($p=,306$ & $p=,557$ respectively) (Table VII). The results don't support H2a, H2b and H2c.

Table 7. Test results of control group vs message group for known brand

Group Statistics					
	GR_Nr	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Brand Attitude	Group 2	51	1,5922	,90815	,12717
	Group 4	70	1,9800	1,02965	,12307
Brand Authenticity	Group 2	51	3,4373	,67170	,09406
	Group 4	70	3,5514	,54712	,06539
Willingness to Pay	Group 2	51	2,9000	,98204	,13751
Premium Price	Group 4	70	2,7914	1,01364	,12115

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances - Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Brand Attitude	Equal variances assumed	1,17	,281	-2,15	119	,034	-,388	,180	-,745	-,0304
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,19	115	,030	-,388	,177	-,738	-,0373
Brand Authenticity	Equal variances assumed	3,46	,065	-1,03	119	,306	-,114	,111	-,334	,1055
	Equal variances not assumed			-,997	94,1	,321	-,114	,115	-,342	,1133
Willingness to Pay	Equal variances assumed	1,502	,223	,589	119	,557	,109	,184	-,256	,4733
Premium Price	Equal variances not assumed			,592	109,8	,555	,109	,183	-,255	,4718

Both for the unknown brand and known brand, since p values are lower than our chosen significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ for brand attitude, H1c and H2c are not supported.

However, brand authenticity and willingness to pay premium price show different results for known and unknown brand. For the unknown brand, brand activism message has significant effect on both variables but for known brand it has no significant effect on them. So, we accept H1a and H1b but H2a and H2b are not supported.

For a further investigation, a study within the subject design with repeated measures of brand attitude (pre-treatment vs post-treatment) was conducted for the message group of known brand (Group 2). The difference between pre-treatment measure of the attitude towards the brand (known brand: $M_{PreAttitude} = 1.55$; $p < .001$) and the post-treatment measure (known brand: $M_{PostAttitude} = 1.59$; $p < .001$) was significant. The attitude toward the brand was lower before the message is given to the consumer (Table VIII). It can be said that, brand activism message effected the brand attitude positively within Group 2.

Table 8. The brand attitude test results of pre-treatment and post-treatment for known brand

One-Sample Test						
	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
						Lower Upper
Pre-treatment brand attitude	14,291	51	<,001	<,001	1,5490196	1,33130 1,76674
Post-treatment brand attitude	12,549	51	<,001	<,001	1,5947712	1,33952 1,85002

3.4.2.2. Effect of Brand Activism Message in Case of Agreement with the Brand's Stand

The message groups (Group 1 and Group 2) were divided into two sub-groups. The respondents who agreed with the brand's stand (selected 5 and 4 in likert scale) were assigned to the agreement group and who disagreed with the the brand's stand (selected 1 and 2 in likert scale) were assigned to the disagreement group. Majority of Gen Z participants indicated a high level of agreement with the brand's stand. 98 (87.5%) respondents agreed with the stand of the unknown brand whereas only 14 respondents disagreed. For the known brand it is 46 (90.2%) agreed respondents and only 5 disagreed respondents. In order to test the second hypothesis, we conducted manova analysis between brand's message agreement groups, brand's message disagreement group and the control groups in order to reveal the effect of agreement with the brand's stand.

Unknown Brand

H3: The effect of brand activism message on brand authenticity (a), willingness to pay a premium price (b) and brand attitude (c) is more positive in the case of agreement with an unknown brand's stand.

The test showed that, difference between groups in terms of brand attitude, brand authenticity and willingness to pay premium price is statistically significant (Sig. = ,000) (Table IX). Therefore, we can conclude that these three factors were significantly dependent on the agreement with the brand's stand. Moreover, brand attitude is lower in case of agreement with the brand's stand. On the other hand, brand authenticity and willingness to pay premium price is higher in case of the agreement. These results don't support H3c but H3a and H3b are accepted.

Table 9. Unknown brand's test results between control group vs disagreement and agreement message groups

Descriptive Statistics				
	Gr_Nr	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Brand Attitude	Group 1 (agreement)	1,7827	,78793	98
	Group 1 (disagreement)	3,0429	,96533	14
	Group 3 (control group)	2,3207	,96363	82
	Total	2,1010	,94912	194
Brand Authenticity	Group 1 (agreement)	3,5194	,60678	98
	Group 1 (disagreement)	2,9500	,53887	14
	Group 3 (control group)	2,9463	,67881	82
	Total	3,2361	,69307	194
Willingness to pay premium price	Group 1 (agreement)	2,9796	,81430	98
	Group 1 (disagreement)	1,7357	,68456	14
	Group 3 (control group)	2,1098	,83852	82
	Total	2,5222	,93983	194

Multivariate Tests ^a									
Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent Parameter	Observed Power ^d
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	,960	1512,2 ^b	3	189	,000	,960	4536,5	1,000
	Wilks' Lambda	,040	1512,2 ^b	3	189	,000	,960	4536,5	1,000
	Hotelling's Trace	24,0	1512,2 ^b	3	189	,000	,960	4536,5	1,000
	Roy's Largest Root	24,0	1512,2 ^b	3	189	,000	,960	4536,5	1,000
Gr_Nr	Pillai's Trace	,323	12,181	6	380	,000	,161	73,085	1,000
	Wilks' Lambda	,688	12,97 ^b	6	378	,000	,171	77,802	1,000
	Hotelling's Trace	,439	13,754	6	376	,000	,180	82,524	1,000
	Roy's Largest Root	,401	25,42 ^c	3	190	,000	,286	76,273	1,000

a. Design: Intercept + Gr_Nr

b. Exact statistic

c. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

d. Computed using alpha = ,05

Known Brand

H4: The effect of brand activism message on brand authenticity (a), willingness to pay a premium price (b) and brand attitude (c) is more positive in the case of agreement with a known brand's stand.

The test results revealed that, similarly with unknown brand, difference between groups in terms of brand attitude, brand authenticity and willingness to pay premium price is statistically significant (Sig. = ,000). Therefore, we can conclude that these three factors were significantly dependent on the agreement with the brand's stand. Moreover, brand attitude is lower in case of agreement with the brand's stand. On the other hand, brand authenticity and willingness to pay premium price is higher in case of the agreement (Table X). These results don't support H4c, but H4b and H4a are accepted.

Table 10. Known brand's test results between control group vs disagreement and agreement message groups

Descriptive Statistics				
	Gr_Nr	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Brand Attitude	Group 2 (agreement)	1,4239	,64917	46
	Group 2 (disagreement)	3,1400	1,49933	5
	Group 4 (control group)	1,9800	1,02965	70
	Total	1,8165	,99510	121
Brand Authenticity	Group 2 (agreement)	3,5196	,64485	46
	Group 2 (disagreement)	2,6800	,40866	5
	Group 4 (control group)	3,5514	,54712	70
	Total	3,5033	,60276	121
Willingness to pay premium price	Group 2 (agreement)	2,9978	,95394	46
	Group 2 (disagreement)	2,0000	,83367	5
	Group 4 (control group)	2,7914	1,01364	70
	Total	2,8372	,99776	121

Multivariate Tests ^a									
Effect		Value	F	Hypot hesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent Parameter	Observe d Power ^d
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	,940	610,6 ^b	3	116	,000	,940	1831,842	1,000
	Wilks' Lambda	,060	610,6 ^b	3	116	,000	,940	1831,842	1,000
	Hotelling's Trace	15,79	610,6 ^b	3	116	,000	,940	1831,842	1,000
	Roy's Largest Root	15,79	610,6 ^b	3	116	,000	,940	1831,842	1,000
Gr_Nr	Pillai's Trace	,210	4,582	6	234	,000	,105	27,490	,986
	Wilks' Lambda	,798	4,624 ^b	6	232	,000	,107	27,746	,987
	Hotelling's Trace	,243	4,666	6	230	,000	,109	27,995	,988
	Roy's Largest Root	,191	7,435 ^c	3	117	,000	,160	22,305	,983

a. Design: Intercept + Gr_Nr

b. Exact statistic

c. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

d. Computed using alpha = ,05

3.4.2.3. The Mediating Role of Authenticity

To test whether brand authenticity mediated the positive effect of brand activism on consumer attitudes (H5), a mediation analysis in PROCESS (Model 4) (Hayes, 2013) was conducted. Mediation analysis was performed with the unknown brand message group, as the effect of brand activism could be more clearly seen in this group previous tests showed.

H5: The level of perceived brand authenticity mediates the positive effect of brand activism message on brand attitude (a) and willingness to pay a premium price (b) in case of agreement with an unknown brand's stand.

First, the total effect of agreement with brand's stand on brand attitude was negative (Coeff = -0.542 SE = 0.070, $t = -7.759$), and it was significant ($p = 4.704e-12$). This finding support our previous test results which shows that the brand attitude was the lowest in brand-agreement group among the others.

Second, indirect effect shows us the mediation results. Since the coefficient is negative (-0.101), the indirect effect is negative in the sample. Because the bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero, the result is statistically significant. This means that agreement with brand's stand has a significant impact on brand authenticity, which in turn has a significant impact on brand attitude but the effect was negative. It can be said that, brand authenticity significantly mediated the negative effect of agreement with brand's stand on brand attitude (H5a is not supported).

Finally, agreement with brand's stand has a direct significant impact on brand attitude and it has a significant impact on brand authenticity, which also has a significant impact on brand attitude, this is known as a case of partial mediation.

Table 11. Total Effect of Agreement with Brand's Stand on Brand Attitude

Y : BAT (Brand Attitude)

X : BA (Agreement with Brand's Stand)

M : BAU (Brand Authenticity)

Sample Size : 112

Outcome Variable:

BAT

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	0.590	0.348	0.053	60.2	1.000	110.000	<,000
		coeff	se	t	p		
(Intercept)		4.157	0.294	14.159	<,000		
BA		-0.542	0.070	-7.759	<,000		

Table 12. Mediation Effect of Brand Authenticity on Brand Attitude

******* TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *******

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-0.542	0.070	-7.759	<,000	-0.726	-0.390

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-0.442	0.074	-5.942	<,000	-0.634	-0.290

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
BAU	-0.101	0.071	-0.171	-0.030

Overall, these results suggest that agreement with brand's stand has a negative impact on brand attitude. However, this negative effect is partially mediated by brand authenticity. The findings highlight the importance of brand authenticity in influencing brand attitudes and suggest that efforts to enhance brand authenticity may help mitigate the negative impact of agreement with brand's stand on brand attitude.

Regarding the H5b testing, first, the total effect of agreement with brand's stand on willingness to pay a premium price was positive (Coeff = 0.429, SE = 0.075, $t = 5.691$) and it was significant ($p = 1.06E-07$). This indicates that when there is agreement between consumers and the brand, there is an increase in willingness to pay a premium price.

The mediation effect would then examine how authenticity operates as a mediating variable between agreement with brand's stand and willingness to pay a premium price. In other words, it explores whether the relationship between agreement with brand's stand and willingness to pay a premium price is influenced by participants' perception of authenticity. Indirect effect shows the mediation results. As it is seen on Table XIV indirect effect was positive (0.134). Since the bootstraps interval ranges from 0.056 to 0.230 does not include zero, it indicates that the indirect effect being estimated in the mediation analysis is statistically significant. If both the total effect and indirect effect are positive, as mentioned earlier, it indicates a positive mediation effect (H5b accepted). This means that agreement with brand's stand has a significant indirect impact on brand authenticity, which, in turn, significantly influences willingness to pay a premium price.

Finally, agreement with brand's stand has direct significant impact on willingness to pay a premium price and indirect significant impact on brand authenticity, which also has a significant impact on willingness to pay a premium price, this is known as a case of partial mediation.

Table 13. Total Effect of Agreement with Brand's Stand on Willingness to Pay Premium Price

Y : WTP (Willingness to Pay Premium Price)

X : BA (Agreement with Brand's Stand)

M : BAU (Brand Authenticity)

Sample Size : 112

Outcome Variable:

WTP

Model Summary

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	0.469	0.228	2.252	32.39	1.000	110.000	<,000
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
(Intercept)	1.072	0.316	3.390	0.001			
BA	0.429	0.075	5.691	<,000	0.285	0.540	

Table 14. Mediation Effect of Brand Authenticity on Willingness to Pay Premium Price

******* TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *******

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
0.429	0.075	-4.458	<,000	0.285	0.540

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
0.295	0.078	3.770	0.000	0.129	0.440

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
BAU	0.134	0.044	0.056	0.230

In summary, the findings suggest that agreement with brand's stand positively influences consumers' willingness to pay a premium price. This relationship is partially mediated by the perception of authenticity. The results highlight the importance of both the direct impact of agreement with brand's stand and the indirect impact mediated by authenticity in shaping consumers' willingness to pay more for the brand's offerings.

4. DISCUSSION

An ever increasing polarization trend has taken over the world (Mukherjee, Althuisen 2020: 783). Since the opposite sides tend to disfavor each other, it is important for the brands to understand the impact of taking a stand on consumer attitudes in the face of such divisive issues. Therefore, with this study, we aimed to explore through a scenario-based experiment, whether the consumers' attitude towards the brand is more positive, and they are willing to pay more for the products when they agree with the activist message given by the brand. Very few of previous studies include an empirical finding to suggest a pattern (Govan 2008; Ciszek and Logan 2018; Korschun et al. 2019; Hoffmann et al. 2020; Isiksal and Karaosmanoglu 2020; Rim et al. 2020). Perhaps, no study has been made previously based on the willingness to pay premium price for an activist brand and the role of perceived brand authenticity. This study extends the literature by adding a generation aspect and brand familiarity to the subject, which was not examined before. The findings of quantitative research will be compared with the existing literature and discussed in this section.

4.1. Brand Attitude

When considering the brand attitude, previous studies suggest, in case of disagreement with the brand's stand, the brand attitude is negatively affected (Mukherjee, Althuisen 2020) and it is even stronger in case of self-referencing and severe transgression (Isiksal, Karaosmanoglu 2020). In contrary, it was proved that, in case of agreement with the brand's stand, regardless of known or unknown brand, there is mostly not a significant impact on brand attitude (Mukherjee, Althuisen 2020: 777). This suggests that alignment between consumers' own beliefs and the brand's stance does not necessarily lead to a notable change in their perception of the brand but when they disagree with a brand's stance on a particular issue, their overall attitude towards the brand tends to be negatively affected.

The findings of this study reinforce previous research suggesting that brand familiarity (being a well-known or an unknown brand) does not have an impact on brand attitude. Regardless of whether the brand is well-known or unknown, the tests conducted in this study consistently yielded similar results in terms of brand attitude. However, the study made an interesting observation that brand attitude was significantly lower for the message groups (H1c, H2c not supported), and even lower for the agreement groups (H3c, H4c not supported). This finding supports the view that, shared values alone may not have a substantial impact on consumer attitudes. Consumer attitudes can rapidly fluctuate depending on other factors such as "behavior, motivation, demography, the sales environment, and technical advancement" (Nosita and Lestari, 2019). At this point, it is important to eliminate the between subject effect and evaluate the within subject test results of known brand's message group to identify whether there is a significant positive change between the test results of pre-treatment and post-treatment attitude of the same group. It was found out that the attitude improved slightly ($M_{\text{pre-treatment}}: 1.55$ vs $M_{\text{post-treatment}}: 1.59$)

after the message is given, but the mean value is still below 3. Here it can be said that the message alone was not enough to turn the attitude into positive. As the test results don't support the hypotheses, three other alternatives can be assumed:

- 1) brand attitude is developed with a long term and continuous marketing investment, and it might have been irrational to expect significant positive effect of a brand's activist message in an artificial scenario-based 10 minutes experiment, or
- 2) even though the respondents express support for the brand message, their attitude may remain negative as they prioritize other selection criteria over the brand's stance, or
- 3) despite the general support for brand activism among participants, they may view the brand's implementation as poor or inconsistent with the brand's reputation and the issue it advocated. Consequently, their attitude remains negative toward the brand.

Nevertheless, the study found that brand activism message had a significant positive impact on brand attitude, but it was not enough to change the attitude from negative to positive since aforementioned other factors may come into play. Moreover, it was discovered that this negative effect was partially mediated by brand authenticity. These results suggest that agreement with brand's stand has a negative impact on brand attitude. However, this negative effect is partially mediated by brand authenticity. The findings highlight the importance of brand authenticity in influencing brand attitudes and suggest that efforts to enhance brand authenticity may help mitigate the negative impact of agreement with brand's stand on brand attitude (H5a is not supported). This suggests that consumers may respond favorably to brands that demonstrate brand activism if they perceive them as genuine and trustworthy.

4.2.Brand Authenticity

Numerous studies have investigated brand authenticity and its significance extends to various subcategories of marketing. Authenticity plays a crucial role in brand activism. Research has put forth the argument that the perceived authenticity of a brand exerts a favorable influence on brand attitudes, purchase intentions, and subsequently, the overall efficacy of marketing efforts (Shoenberger et al., 2021). If the message fails to align with the core brand's values, practices, and heritage, it is regarded as lacking authenticity (Loebnitz & Grunert, 2022; et al., 2012). Neglecting its importance can lead to negative outcomes, including the detrimental "woke-washing" effect (Vredenburg et al. 2020). The test results of this study shows that authenticity is higher for the message group of the unknown brand (H1a accepted) and again higher for the agreement group (H3a accepted). However, the results are different for the known brand. Perceived brand authenticity was not significantly different between groups in case of the well-known brand (H2a is not supported). It can be said that the unfamiliarity of the brand allows participants to perceive its activism as more genuine, potentially leading to a more positive evaluation in experiment. On the other hand, participants' prior knowledge and familiarity with the brand may mitigate the influence of brand activism on authenticity if they have a negative prior experience and

perception on that brand. Other factors, such as brand reputation, past experiences, and the consistency of the brand's actions, might come into play and change impact of brand activism on perceived authenticity. Overall, these findings suggest that while authenticity plays a critical role in evaluating brand activism, it's influence can vary depending on the brand's level of recognition. However, it shouldn't be forgotten that the study is just conducted among generation Z students. Generations distinguish from each other in different aspects such as their communication styles, unique characteristics, principles, strengths, and weaknesses. Variations in how different generations perceive things add further relevance to the concept of perceived authenticity (Çankaya et al., 2020).

4.3. Willingness to Pay Premium Price

When the purchase intention is considered, it is proven in existing literature that consumers tend to buy more in case of agreement with the brand's stand but there is no clue whether the number outweighs the opposing customers (Dodd, Supa 2014). However, there is no research conducted about the tendency to pay premium price for the activist brand in case of the agreement. The findings of this study show that, willingness to pay a premium price was higher in case of unknown brand (H1b accepted) and again higher for the agreement group (H3b accepted). However, the results are different for the known brand and was not statistically significant between groups in case of known brand (H2b rejected). This supports the existing literature in case of an unknown brand, which defend higher customer preference for activist brand's products in buying decision. The results indicate a significantly positive behavior in case of agreement with the brand's stand (unknown brand), and it expands the extant literature by stating that these number outweighs the disagreement group and control group. The reason of the different results between known and unknown brand might be similar with the authenticity case. The familiarity with the brand might affect buying behavior, bringing the past negative experiences and brand's perception into play or the values of the brand might have seen as not consistent with the message itself. Results of mediation analysis shows a similar outcome. Authenticity, as a mediator, positively influences the relationship between agreement with brand's stand and willingness to pay a premium price. Since both the total and indirect effects are positive test results, it suggests that authenticity mediates the relationship by increasing the willingness to pay a premium price. As the perception of authenticity increases, it leads to an increase in willingness to pay a premium price. This implies that when consumers strongly agree with the brand's stance and perceive it as authentic, they are more likely to be willing to pay a higher price for the brand (H5b accepted).

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study aimed to explore the impact of brand activism on consumer attitudes and willingness to pay a premium price for products. By quantitatively measuring the impact of brand activism on brand attitude, this study adds to the existing body of literature in this field. Moreover, the study breaks new ground by quantitatively examining the effect of brand activism on willingness to pay a premium price, an aspect that has not been extensively explored previously. Additionally, the study introduces the concept of authenticity as a mediator, which has not been thoroughly investigated in relation to brand activism. Lastly, this research incorporates a generational perspective and considers the influence of brand familiarity, thereby broadening the scope of the existing literature.

The study found that brand familiarity does not have a significant impact on brand attitude, but it has significant impact on perceived authenticity and willingness to pay a premium price. Brand activism messages had a positive impact on brand attitude, but this effect was not strong enough to shift attitudes from negative to positive. The positive effect of brand activism on brand attitude was fully mediated by perceived brand authenticity, indicating that consumers respond favorably to brands that demonstrate brand activism if they perceive them as genuine and trustworthy.

The importance of authenticity in brand activism is emphasized in previous research, as it influences brand attitudes and purchase intentions. However, the influence of perceived authenticity can vary depending on the brand's level of recognition. In case of an unknown brand, since the participants don't have a prior knowledge on brand, they are more likely to perceive the activism as more genuine, leading to a more positive evaluation. In contrast, participants' negative prior knowledge and familiarity with the brands values and activities may mitigate the influence of brand activism on perceived authenticity.

Regarding purchase intention, the study found that willingness to pay a premium price was higher for an unknown brand and in cases of agreement with the brand's stand. However, the results were not statistically significant for a known brand, suggesting that familiarity with the brand and past experiences may also impact buying behavior. The study also revealed that perceived authenticity negatively influenced the relationship between agreement with brand's stand and willingness to pay a premium price. Higher levels of authenticity were associated with lower levels of willingness to pay a higher price for the brand.

It is important to note that the study was conducted among Generation Z students, and their emphasis on authenticity in marketing distinguishes them from other generations. The limited budget of the student group may have influenced their willingness to pay a premium price, despite perceiving brand activism as authentic.

In summary, this study highlights the complex dynamics between brand activism, brand familiarity, perceived authenticity, consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. First, while brand activism messages

can improve brand attitude, it might not be sufficient to change the attitude towards positive since other factors might influence the customer's attitudes and behaviors. Second, its impact on willingness to pay a premium price may be influenced by factors such as the brand familiarity and content of the message. Third, an essential aspect that emerges from the findings is the pivotal role of authenticity in shaping the perception of brand activism and its impact on brand attitude and willingness to pay a premium price. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for brands aiming to navigate the challenges of polarization and effectively communicate their stance on social and environmental issues.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

Theoretical implications contribute to the existing literature by expanding the understanding of the role of authenticity, generation differences, and the influence of brand familiarity on consumer behavior. In this sense, we can say that the study contributes to the ethical and financial aspects of the existing literature.

The findings support existing research that emphasizes the positive influence of authenticity on brand attitudes. Perceived authenticity affects consumer evaluations, purchase intentions, and the overall effectiveness of marketing efforts. The findings indicate that consumers are more willing to pay a higher price when they perceive a brand's activism as authentic. In addition, there are differences in buying behavior between known and unknown brands such that consumers' past negative experiences and perceptions might potentially impact their willingness to pay premium price and authenticity perception.

5.2. Managerial Implications

Given the increasing polarization in society, brands need to recognize the potential impact of taking a stand on consumer attitudes. It is crucial to assess how consumers' agreement with activist messages affects their brand attitude and willingness to pay a premium price for products. This study provides insights into the importance of aligning brand values with consumer values.

The findings highlight the role of perceived brand authenticity in mediating the relationship between agreement with brand's stand and consumer attitudes as well as willingness to pay premium price. Brands should strive to cultivate authenticity and demonstrate genuine commitment to social or environmental causes. This can help mitigate the negative brand attitude and help to sell products with higher price. Moreover, brand and message / values consistency play a crucial role in influencing behavioral intentions. Brands should ensure that their activism aligns with their core values, practices, and heritage. Inconsistencies can lead to negative outcomes and undermine brand authenticity.

The current marketing field places significant emphasis on the relevance of Generation Z, as they are known for setting trends and increasing purchasing power (Zatwarnicka-Madura et al., 2022). Perception of authenticity is more important for them in their attitudes and behaviours (Carroll et al.

2022). For that reason, this study includes important implications for managers since it reveals this generation's reaction toward brand activism.

Familiarity with a brand, consumers' past experiences and perceptions might potentially impact their willingness to pay premium price. Unknown brands would have better chance to sell price premium products when they invest in brand activism. Managers should not solely rely on brand familiarity to drive positive attitudes, instead, they should focus on authentic activism and shared values to shape consumer perceptions. Because the study indicated that even with a simple message, the attitude could be improved, long term and continuous brand marketing investments would help to built positive brand attitude and higher willingness to pay premium price. Managers should consider these factors when developing their marketing strategies.

In summary, these findings provide valuable insights for brand managers, highlighting the importance of authenticity, consistency, and understanding consumer attitudes in the context of brand activism.

5.3. Limitations and Further Research Directions

The study contains some methodological shortcoming. First, the number of female respondents was higher than males and the age group covers only the generation Z university students. Thus, these results could be biased toward these group's opinions. The research lacks response from different social and age groups of the society due to the limitation in target group of this study. It can be argued that the other social circles and age group might come up with a completely different perspective toward brand activism.

Second, when asking participants about their agreement with the brand's stand, a four-point Likert scale could have been used to better divide participants into two groups that either support or oppose brand activism, instead of creating a third "neutral" group. This way, the analysis towards brand activism could have been more representative with only two groups and thus a higher absolute and relative number of participants.

In addition, the disagreement group was relatively smaller compared with the agreement group. It was not the case during the pretest where the activist message scenario was selected. The participants were given three different scenarios and asked to evaluate them in order to select the best contradictory topic. During this pretest, protecting stray animals was selected the most contradictory topic among the others (see Appendix). The reason for that could be the volatile agenda of Turkey and the rapid changing focus of Z Generation. Since the country's agenda changes so rapidly, respondents' opinions may have also changed in the period between the two tests. If the disagreement groups were bigger, the results could differ. This makes it one of the shortcomings of this research.

Moreover, in this study, the short-term effect of a one-time activist message on consumer attitudes was investigated. However, in case of regularly and consistently participating in such activist actions, the

perception of authenticity of the brand can increase and it can have a positive effect on customer behavior in the long run.

Other limitations might be the culture effect and message type. The reaction to the type of activist messages can differ from culture to culture. For example, there is no stray animals in Germany at all and German consumers may perceive this message as irrelevant, and it may not have any impact on their behaviors. It should be also considered that; same consumer may react differently to different scenarios depending on their moral foundations and socio-political views. It can be argued that only one scenario may not be sufficient to generalize the findings. Studies including different type of activist scenarios may validate, expand, and generalize the findings of this research.

Since liberals and conservatives place varying degrees of importance on basic moral constructs, it is to be expected that there will be differences in their responses to brand activism. Additional investigation could delve into the potential moderating influence of consumers' political ideology on brand activism, examining its nature and extent.

Moreover, a message and value consistency with the known brand was not taken into consideration in this study. Further research can investigate how the brand attitude, WTPPP and authenticity changes if the message is consistent with a well-known brand's values, purpose and practices. A luxury brand investigation could be beneficial in this sense.

Another further research directions could be conducting within subject test not only for brand attitude but also for brand authenticity and willingness to pay premium price for both known and unknown brands and comparing the results with between subject test results.

Lastly, in this study, brand activism is examined only from a consumer perspective. Examining the same issue from a management perspective can help to better understand why brands take sides on controversial socio-political issues, despite the high risk.

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APPENDIX

Pre-Study I: Selecting the Well-Known and Unknown Brands

Rank the following brands from the one you know the most (9) to the least you know (1).

- Levi's
- Mavi Jeans
- Calvin Klein
- U.S Polo
- Jack & Jones
- Esprit
- G-star
- S.Oliver
- Tom Tailor

Age:

Gender:

Aşağıdaki markaları hakkında en çok şey bildiğinizden (9) en az bildiğinize (1) sıralayınız.

- Levi's
- Mavi Jeans
- Calvin Klein
- U.S Polo
- Jack & Jones
- Esprit
- G-star
- S.Oliver
- Tom Tailor

Yaş:

Cinsiyet:

Pre-Study II: Selecting Manipulation Scenarios

PLEASE READ THE INFORMATION ON BRAND ACTIVISM CAREFULLY

Brand activism represents a form of market-based activism that challenges conceptions of good in markets' socio-technical arrangements.

Brand activism increases awareness, encourages behavioral and sociopolitical change.

Brand activism consists of business efforts centered on a brand that aims to “promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform with the desire to make improvements in society”.

An activist brand is

1. Purpose-, moral and values-driven

2. It can focus on social, legal, business, economic, political, or environmental social issues which are subjective and determined by ideologies/beliefs

3. It addresses a controversial, contested, or polarizing sociopolitical issue(s); challenging existing judgments and promoting alternative ones. Activist brands commonly engage in controversies to redefine which opinions and ideas are acceptable to express publicly.

Even though CSR activities are viewed as beneficial by the majority of society, brand activism lacks this type of consensus because there is often no universally “correct” response to the sociopolitical issues involved.

4. It contributes toward a sociopolitical issue(s) through messaging and brand practice.

According to you, which scenario below on a hypothetical brand best represents an activist brand?

A: This brand has embraced a global awareness-raising campaign for violence against women and says: “Now, when we face a problem like violence against women, we believe that it is everyone’s duty to stop and prevent violence against women. We are against all forms of violence against women. We are ready to do everything that will contribute to the prevention of violence against women, the protection and development of women’s rights in Turkey”.

B: This brand has embraced a global awareness-raising campaign against climate change, saying "Now, when we face a problem like global warming, and that the biggest impacts on global warming come from business and industry, we believe that it is everyone’s duty to stop and prevent global warming. We are ready to do everything to take a leading role to prevent global warming."

C: This brand has embraced a global awareness-raising campaign against forcefully taking the stray animals to shelters and says, “Now, when we face a problem like stray animals to be forcefully taken to shelters, we believe that it is everyone’s duty to protect stray animals and say that they are not unclaimed . We are ready to do everything that will contribute to the wellbeing of stray animals.”

Scenario used in the main study

Adopting a global awareness campaign against the forced admission of stray animals to shelters, Esprit / Calvin Klein wrote on its social media account, "We believe it is everyone's duty to protect them and to say that they are not homeless in a situation such as the forced admission of stray animals to shelters. As a brand, we are ready to do everything that will contribute to the welfare of stray animals”.

LÜTFEN MARKA AKTİVİZMİYLE İLGİLİ BİLGİLERİ DİKKATLİCE OKUYUNUZ

Marka aktivizmi, piyasaların sosyo-teknik düzenlemelerinde iyi kavramlarına meydan okuyan bir piyasa temelli aktivizm biçimini temsil eder.

Marka aktivizmi farkındalığı artırır, davranışsal ve sosyopolitik değişimi teşvik eder.

Marka aktivizmi, "toplumda iyileştirme yapma arzusuyla sosyal, politik, ekonomik ve/veya çevresel reformları teşvik etmeyi, engellemeyi veya yönlendirmeyi" amaçlayan marka merkezli şirket aktivitelerinden oluşur.

Aktivist bir marka;

1. Amaç odaklı, ahlak odaklı ve değer odaklıdır
2. Öznel ve ideolojiler/inançlar tarafından belirlenen sosyal, yasal, ticari, ekonomik, politik veya çevresel sosyal konulara odaklanabilir.
3. Tartışmalı, çekişmeli veya kutuplaştırıcı bir sosyopolitik konuyu/konuları ele alır; mevcut yargılara meydan okumak ve alternatif yargıları teşvik etmek. Aktivist markalar, hangi fikir ve fikirlerin halka açık bir şekilde ifade edilmesinin kabul edilebilir olduğunu yeniden tanımlamak için genellikle tartışmalara girer.

Sosyal sorumluluk faaliyetleri toplumun çoğunluğu tarafından faydalı olarak görülse de, marka aktivizmi bu tür bir fikir birliğinden yoksundur çünkü söz konusu sosyopolitik konulara genellikle evrensel olarak "doğru" bir yanıt yoktur.

4. Mesaj verme ve aksiyona geçirme yoluyla sosyopolitik sorun(lar)ın çözümüne katkıda bulunur.

Size göre, aşağıdaki senaryolardan hangisi varsayımsal aktivist bir markayı en iyi şekilde temsil eder?

Y: Bu marka, kadına yönelik şiddetle ilgili küresel bir bilinçlendirme kampanyasını benimsemiştir ve şöyle demiştir: "Kadına yönelik şiddeti durdurmanın ve önlemenin herkesin görevi olduğuna inanıyoruz. Kadına yönelik şiddetin her türüne karşıyız. Türkiye'de kadına yönelik şiddetin önlenmesine, kadın haklarının korunmasına ve geliştirilmesine katkı sağlayacak her şeyi yapmaya hazırız".

B: Bu marka, "Küresel ısınmanın en büyük sebebinin iş ve sanayi kaynaklı olduğu bir dönemde, küresel ısınmayı durdurmanın ve önlemenin herkesin görevi olduğuna inanıyoruz. Bunu durdurma ve önlemede öncü rol üstlenmek için her şeyi yapmaya hazırız." " diyerek iklim değişikliğine karşı küresel bir bilinçlendirme kampanyası benimsedi.

C: Bu marka, sokak hayvanlarının zorla barınaklara alınmasına karşı küresel bir bilinçlendirme kampanyası benimsedi ve "Artık sokak hayvanlarının zorla barınaklara alınması gibi bir sorunla karşılaştığımızda, onları korumanın herkesin görevi olduğuna inanıyoruz. sokak hayvanları sahipsiz değildirler. Onların refahına katkı sağlayacak her şeyi yapmaya hazırız."

Ana çalışmada kullanılan senaryo

Sokak hayvanlarının zorla barınaklara alınmasına karşı küresel bir bilinçlendirme kampanyasını benimseyen Calvin Klein / Esprit, sosyal medya hesabından “sokak hayvanlarının zorla barınaklara alınması gibi bir durum karşısında, onları korumanın ve sahihsiz olmadıklarını söylemenin herkesin görevi olduğuna inanıyoruz. Marka olarak sokak hayvanlarının refahına katkı sağlayacak her şeyi yapmaya hazırız” mesajını paylaşmıştır.

Main-Study: Experiment for Group 1 (Message X Unknown Brand)

Please review the ad below and read the text.



Adopting a global awareness campaign against the forced admission of stray animals to shelters, Esprit wrote on its social media account, "We believe it is everyone's duty to protect them and to say that they are not homeless in a situation such as the forced admission of stray animals to shelters. As a brand, we are ready to do everything that will contribute to the welfare of stray animals".

What topic is mentioned in the content you read?

a- Please indicate your attitude towards the Esprit brand whose advertisement and social media message content you saw above. (5 point semantic scale)

Good - Bad

Pleasant - Unpleasant

Like - Dislike

b- Please answer the level of your agreement with the cause advocated by Esprit by selecting the number closest to you.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree

c- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by evaluating the Esprit brand whose advertisement and social media message content you have seen above.

This brand stays true to itself.

This brand clearly stands out from other brands.

This brand delivers what it promises.

Compared to products of other brands, I am willing to pay higher price for the products of this brand.

Compared to other brands in this category, I am willing to pay a lot more for this brand.

I am willing to pay___ more for the brand over other brands in this product category.

In general I have a strong interest in jeans.

Jeans are very important for me.

Jeans matter a lot to me.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree

d- Your monthly expenses for your personal needs.....

e- Age.....

f- Gender.....

Lütfen aşağıdaki reklamı inceleyiniz ve metni okuyunuz.



Sokak hayvanlarının zorla barınaklara alınmasına karşı küresel bir bilinçlendirme kampanyasını benimseyen Esprit, sosyal medya hesabından “sokak hayvanlarının zorla barınaklara alınması gibi bir durum karşısında, onları korumanın ve sahipsiz olmadıklarını söylemenin herkesin görevi olduğuna inanıyoruz. Marka olarak sokak hayvanlarının refahına katkı sağlayacak her şeyi yapmaya hazırız” mesajını paylaşmıştır.

Okuduğunuz içerikte hangi konudan bahsedilmektedir?

a- Yukarıda reklamını ve sosyal medya mesaj içeriğini gördüğünüz Esprit markasına olan tutumunuzu belirtiniz. (5’li semantik ölçek)

İyi-Kötü

Hoş-Hoş değil

Sevdim-Sevmedim

b- Esprit’nin savunduğu konuya katılma derecenizi size en yakın gelen rakamı işaretleyerek yanıtlayınız.

1 = Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum, 5 = Kesinlikle Katılıyorum

c- Yukarıda reklamını ve sosyal medya mesaj içeriğini gördüğünüz Esprit markasını değerlendirerek aşağıdaki ifadelerle katılma derecenizi belirtiniz.

Bu marka kendi doğrularına göre hareket eder

Bu marka diğer markalardan açık şekilde ayrışır.

Bu marka vaadettiği değeri yerine getiren bir markadır.

Diğer markaların ürünleri ile kıyaslandığında, bu markanın ürünlerine daha fazla para ödemeye istekliyim.

Bu kategorideki diğer markalarla kıyaslandığında, bu markaya çok daha fazla para ödemeye istekliyim.

Bu ürün kategorisindeki diğer markalarla kıyaslandığında, _____ fazla para ödemeye istekliyim.

Genel olarak kot pantolonlara büyük ilgim vardır.

Kot pantolonlar benim için çok önemlidir.

Kot pantolonların benim için anlamı büyüktür

1 = Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum, 5 = Kesinlikle Katılıyorum

d- Aylık kişisel ihtiyaçlarınız için harcama tutarınız.....

e- Yaş.....

f- Cinsiyet.....

Main-Study: Experiment for Group 2 (Message X Known Brand)

a- Please indicate your attitude towards the Calvin Klein brand.

Please review the ad below and read the text.



Adopting a global awareness campaign against the forced admission of stray animals to shelters, Calvin Klein wrote on its social media account, "We believe it is everyone's duty to protect them and to say that they are not homeless in a situation such as the forced admission of stray animals to shelters. As a brand, we are ready to do everything that will contribute to the welfare of stray animals".

What topic is mentioned in the content you read?

b- Please indicate your attitude towards the Esprit brand whose advertisement and social media message content you saw above.

c- Please answer the level of your agreement with the cause advocated by Esprit by selecting the number closest to you.

d- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by evaluating the Esprit brand whose advertisement and social media message content you have seen above.

This brand stays true to itself.

This brand clearly stands out from other brands.

This brand delivers what it promises.

Compared to products of other brands, I am willing to pay higher price for the products of this brand.

Compared to other brands in this category, I am willing to pay a lot more for this brand.

I am willing to pay___ more for the brand over other brands in this product category.

In general I have a strong interest in jeans.

Jeans are very important for me.

Jeans matter a lot to me.

e- Your monthly expenses for your personal needs.....

f- Age.....

g- Gender.....

a- Yukarıda reklamını ve sosyal medya mesaj içeriğini gördüğünüz Esprit markasına olan tutumunuzu belirtiniz.

Lütfen aşağıdaki reklamı inceleyiniz ve metni okuyunuz.



Sokak hayvanlarının zorla barınaklara alınmasına karşı küresel bir bilinçlendirme kampanyasını benimseyen Esprit, sosyal medya hesabından “sokak hayvanlarının zorla barınaklara alınması gibi bir durum karşısında, onları korumanın ve sahipsiz olmadıklarını söylemenin herkesin görevi olduğuna inanıyoruz. Marka olarak sokak hayvanlarının refahına katkı sağlayacak her şeyi yapmaya hazırız” mesajını paylaşmıştır.

Okuduğunuz içerikte hangi konudan bahsedilmektedir?

b- Yukarıda reklamını ve sosyal medya mesaj içeriğini gördüğünüz Esprit markasına olan tutumunuzu belirtiniz.

c- Esprit’nin savunduğu konuya katılma derecenizi size en yakın gelen rakamı işaretleyerek yanıtlayınız.

d- Yukarıda reklamını ve sosyal medya mesaj içeriğini gördüğünüz Esprit markasını değerlendirerek aşağıdaki ifadelerle katılma derecenizi belirtiniz.

Bu marka kendi doğrularına göre hareket eder

Bu marka diğer markalardan açık şekilde ayrışır.

Bu marka vaadettiği değeri yerine getiren bir markadır.

Diğer markaların ürünleri ile kıyaslandığında, bu markanın ürünlerine daha fazla para ödemeye istekliyim.

Bu kategorideki diğer markalarla kıyaslandığında, bu markaya çok daha fazla para ödemeye istekliyim.

Bu ürün kategorisindeki diğer markalarla kıyaslandığında, _____ fazla para ödemeye istekliyim.

Genel olarak kot pantolonlara büyük ilgim vardır.

Kot pantolonlar benim için çok önemlidir.

Kot pantolonların benim için anlamı büyüktür

e- Aylık kişisel ihtiyaçlarınız için harcama tutarınız.....

f- Yaş.....

g- Cinsiyet.....

Main-Study: Experiment for Group 3 (No-Message X Unknown Brand) & Group 4 (No-Message X known Brand)

Please review the ad below



a- Please indicate your attitude towards the Esprit / Calvin Klein brand whose advertisement you saw

b- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by evaluating Esprit / Calvin Klein brand whose advertisement you have seen above.

This brand stays true to itself.

This brand clearly stands out from other brands.

This brand delivers what it promises.

Compared to products of other brands, I am willing to pay higher price for the products of this brand.

Compared to other brands in this category, I am willing to pay a lot more for this brand.

I am willing to pay____ more for the brand over other brands in this product category.

In general I have a strong interest in jeans.

Jeans are very important for me.

Jeans matter a lot to me.

d- Your monthly expenses for your personal needs.....

d- Age.....

e- Gender.....

Lütfen aşağıdaki reklamı inceleyiniz.



a- Yukarıda reklamını gördüğünüz Esprit/Calvin Klein markasına olan tutumunuzu belirtiniz.

b- Yukarıda reklamını gördüğünüz Esprit / Calvin Klein markasını değerlendirerek aşağıdaki ifadelere katılma derecenizi belirtiniz.

Bu marka kendi doğrularına göre hareket eder

Bu marka diğer markalardan açık şekilde ayrışır.

Bu marka vaadettiği değeri yerine getiren bir markadır.

Diğer markaların ürünleri ile kıyaslandığında, bu markanın ürünlerine daha fazla para ödemeye istekliyim.

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c- Aylık kişisel ihtiyaçlarınız için harcama tutarınız.....

d- Yaş.....

e- Cinsiyet.....