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Brands taking a stand: influence of brand activism on consumer behavior

Samia Moumade

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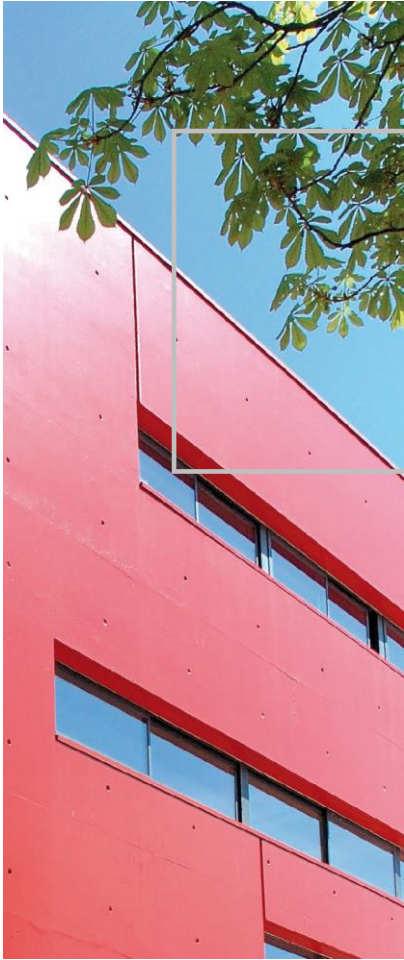
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Mémoire de recherche

Brands taking a stand :

Influence of Brand Activism on

Consumer Behavior



Written by : MOUMADE Samia
Supervisor : GAVARD-PERRET Marie-Laure

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ABSTRACT

Brands are increasingly pressured into taking stands on important issues brewing in society and voice their opinions on the matter. Neutrality is no longer an option. When brands engage in this process, it is called brand activism. The subject of brand activism is sorely understudied in academia, thus this research seeks to analyze the influence of brand activism on consumer behavior, following two potential routes of consumer responses to brand activism, positive and negative. The purpose of this study is to discover the characteristics of the consumer-brand relationship between consumers and activist brands, thus contributing to the research field of brand activism. Moreover, our research provides different paths for consumers' responses to brand activism and seeks to investigate the concept deeper through the adoption of a mixed-method approach.

KEYWORDS: Brand Activism; Consumer Resistance; Corporate Social Responsibility, Perceived Congruence, Perceived Corporate Hypocrisy, Willful Ignorance

RÉSUMÉ

Les marques sont de plus en plus obligées de prendre position sur des questions importantes qui se préparent dans la société et d'exprimer leurs opinions à ce sujet. La neutralité n'est plus une option. Lorsque les marques s'engagent dans ce processus, cela s'appelle l'activisme de marque. Le sujet de l'activisme de marque est cruellement sous-étudié dans le monde universitaire, donc cette recherche cherche à analyser l'influence de l'activisme de marque sur le comportement des consommateurs, en suivant deux voies potentielles de réponses des consommateurs à l'activisme de marque, positives et négatives. Le but de cette étude est de découvrir les caractéristiques de la relation consommateur-marque entre consommateurs et marques activistes, contribuant ainsi au champ de recherche de l'activisme de marque. De plus, notre recherche fournit différentes voies pour les réponses des consommateurs à l'activisme de la marque et cherche à approfondir le concept en adoptant une approche mixte.

MOTS-CLÉS : Activisme de la marque, Résistance du Consommateur, Responsabilité Sociale d'Entreprise, Congruence Perçue, Hypocrisie d'Entreprise Perçue, Ignorance délibéré.

INTRODUCTION

"We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference." —

Elie Wiesel

History is the witness of various conflicts fighting for the pressing issues at the time, such as women joining the Suffrage movement to demand women's rights, or African-American citizens requesting similar rights as their white compatriots, until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed to outlaw any sort of discrimination based on race, sex, or age. The issues have multiplied themselves, as social media and news outlets have facilitated the communication to the public, so after the posting of one viral video, or tweet, people have rushed into endorsing various issues. The current socio-political landscape has ushered a new age where people have the opportunity to speak out in issues that concerns them, issues that brewed in society for decades boiling to the breaking point (e.g. racism, sexism, etc....).

The rapid evolution of the internet, and social media platforms enabled people to share their thoughts on recent events, rapidly and efficiently, discussing the issues on a grander scale with a large community sharing their point of views and perspectives. It also means that individuals are informed about every main event going on around the globe. With information available on the net, individuals began turning their attention to companies and firms operating in a society with their capitalistic frame of thought and questioned their motives. Companies have gained in size and resources through successful profit-making activities and a higher consumer demand, and rapid consumption. Due to consumer's awareness and their easy access to information, corporations and firms have been the target of a growing resistance movement, due to consumers' preoccupation with their corporate practices, in the environmental matter but also human rights, leading in long-term in the formation of anti-branding, and social movements (Hollenbek & Zinkhan, 2006). Consumers have started to question the contribution of these companies, besides their profit-making activities. Regarding this change, companies could no longer sit neutrally, and detach themselves from what is happening in their environment.

According to Fournier (1998a, p.367):" Consumers do not choose brands, they choose lives". Thus consumers choose brands that have matching values and beliefs, so they become a part of the consumer's lives. Consumers are nowadays looking for meaning in their consumption, they are no longer choosing the first brand available, or the most functional. They want to communicate a style of life and identity. Thus companies have upgraded their branding strategies, to includes values, and culture to differentiate themselves from similar products and services (Aaker, 1996). Consumers no longer put the effort into

forging a relationship with their brands or identify with the marketplace (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). Consequently, consumers are no longer satisfied with the relationship with brands, they require something more. They want brands to have a voice and take stands on important issues. This has been confirmed by the Sprout Social Survey (2018) which demonstrates that 66% of consumers stand behind the idea that brands should take public stances on social and political issues².

Companies have gradually adopted corporate social responsibility as a strategy, to communicate their involvement in an important issues, related to their profit-seeking activity throughout the last decades. CSR has enlarged to various manifestations and categories, such as cause-related marketing. However the profit-seeking is placed as a priority (Doane & Abasta-Vilaplana, 2005). Companies do consider their efforts in the CSR field as an investment in their overall business planning, an investment that yields benefits for company's business and for society (Rangan, Chase, and Karim, 2012). The intense competition growing in the marketplace, and the pressure from stakeholders rendered the efforts of CSR obsolete, so companies turned their attention in using their brands to differentiate themselves from their competitors in the eyes of the consumers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016) through brand activism (Kotler and Sarkar, 2018a). By becoming socially aware, and consistently exposed to the flow of information through technological advancement, consumers have set new standards for brands to go beyond profit-seeking activities and participate in social issues. Brands are expected to act authentically and take a stand on important issues to connect with their consumers (Sarkar and Kotler, 2017, 2018a). Taking a stand regarding important issues, Sarkar and Kotler (2018a, p.581) stipulated that brand activism addresses the "biggest and most urgent problems our society is facing today". Brands began taking strong stances on important issues such as racism, inequality and climate change. The issues they endorsed did not have a clear impact on their profit-seeking activities, instead they used their platforms and resources to contribute positively to their society.

Following suit, various brands have taken stands on prominent issues, such as Ben and Jerry's stand on climate change (Ben & Jerry's, 2018)³, or PUMA's stand on racial injustice, and inequality during their campaign #REFORM (PUMA, 2018)⁴. The most famous brand activism campaign would be assigned to Nike and their daring endorsement of the NFL player Colin Kaepernick who knelt during the national anthem to protest racism, thus placing themselves in the middle of the controversy, Nike took a risk and a leap of faith and decided to take a stand on the racism issue in the United States, which turned out to be a profitable gamble for the brand (McCarthy, 2018)⁵. The variety of brands adopting brand activism as a

² <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/data/2018-index/>

³ <https://www.benjerry.com/values/issues-we-care-about/climate-justice/>

⁴ <https://about.puma.com/en/newsroom/corporate-news/2018/2018-10-06-puma-launches-reform>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/sep/16/woke-business-nike-colin-kaepernick-levis-pepsi>

strategy demonstrated that the risky endeavor results in positive responses from consumers (e.g. Nike), or could backfire and result in negative backlash from the consumer.

As brand activism has been adopted by brands from a managerial context, the concept itself has been sorely understudied in academic literature, thus we aim to outline a research focused on studying the influence of brand activism on consumer behavior. We have considered different routes related to the possible influence of brand activism on consumer behavior, either a positive impact which naturally results in purchase intentions for the brand, or a negative path, where brand activism could lead consumers into resisting the brand through various forms such as consumer boycott, or brand avoidance. Consequently, this research aims to answer the following questions: *How does brand activism as a branding strategy influence consumer behavior?* But more specifically, we seek to find answers to this question: *How does brand activism influence mechanisms that result in either a positive or a negative attitude?* Departing from this research question, our research will allow us to delve deeper into the subject, and analyze it from various facets, accordingly this thesis is structured in three main parts.

The first part, the conceptual background, introduced the research background through an extensive literature review of three main streams, brand activism, consumer resistance, then congruence. The concepts are well-developed and discussed from various angles besides Marketing. The second part, the theoretical framework, focuses on the importance of conducting this research. The first chapter underlines the main questions, as well as the research gap, to conclude with the elaboration of the research model compiling the chosen variables and the potential links between them. The second chapter elaborates on the link between the variables, and formulate hypotheses. The third and final part of the thesis is centered around the proposed methodology. The first chapter proposes methods and techniques to collect the data and the targeted sample for the research. The following chapters would treat the proposed measurement scales and data analysis methods. The conclusion compiles the main findings of the thesis, limitations, and suggestions for future research. The future findings of this research will prove to be useful in both the academic field and the business field. The interest in brand activism has started to garner attention, and this research is a starting point in providing a scientifically sound explanation for the influence of brand activism on consumer behavior. It could be used as a base for brands seeking to make their voice heard on important issues, and positively support causes.

PART 1: CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The first part of this thesis seeks to explore carefully the origins and research surrounding the concepts discussed previously in the Introduction. This first part of the thesis named “Conceptual Background” will be divided into three chapters, the first chapter seeks to get us familiarized with brand activism, while also raising the question behind a jointed phenomenon rising with brand activism, named woke-washing. The second chapter will explore one of our main mechanisms in this research, the concept of consumer resistance. We will explore the concept through various fields of applications, while also identifying possible antecedents and consequences that could be relevant to our research. The third and final chapter of the conceptual background part will treat various concepts linked with the accordence between cause and brand, such as congruence, perception of corporate hypocrisy and accordence between the thoughts and acts of individuals, such as cognitive dissonance.

CHAPTER 1: BRAND ACTIVISM

The Marketing Science Institute asked the question in their forecast for the 2016-2018 research priorities: “Should brands take stands? What is marketing’s role as a driver/enabler of social change?” (Marketing Science Institute, 2016)⁶, thus brands are increasingly receiving attention for their involvement in various issues ranging from fighting global warming to reducing the gender inequality gap and race discrimination.

This research revolves around a concept that was barely studied in the academic field due to its novelty, named brand activism. The concept was brought in stark attention to the public by Sarkar and Kotler (2017,2018a,2018b). Furthermore, Sarkar and Kotler (2018a) defined Brand Activism as a valued-based strategy used by corporations to promote and drive positive change in society by tackling the most pressing urgent issues brewing in society. It is a strategy that succeeds in communicating the social inclination and ethical concerns of the company, filling the lack of impact left by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

1.1 EXPLORING BRAND ACTIVISM

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2020) defines activism as a “doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue”. Based on this definition of activism; we can conclude that activism aims for change, generally used in the context of

⁶ https://www.msi.org/uploads/articles/MSI_RP16-18.pdf

environmental activism or political activism, it represents change on a grand scale. Kozinets and Handelman (2004) determined three public representations of the ideology of any social movement: the activists' goals, the activists, and their adversary. Working from a relatively new perspective, the definitions surrounding brand activism are still emerging into the academic literature. However, we will base our research on the definition brought forward by Sarkar and Kotler (2018a,2018b).

Sarkar and Kotler (2018a,2018b) define brand activism as a “ business effort to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and environmental reform or stasis with the desire to promote or impede improvements in society.” The authors see it as a strategy to positively influence the corporation’s reputation, as much as this definition would point out naturally to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Sarkar and Kotler (2018a) insist while CSR is corporate-driven, then brand activism is to be considered societal-driven. Thus, Sarkar and Kotler (2018a) ponder brand activism as the natural evolution of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) field, emerging to accommodate the evolving needs of society and consumers. Companies are now faced with the obligation to voice an opinion and detach themselves from neutrality, thus taking a stand on the critical issues brimming in the society that they serve. Brands issue their support through public statements and other strategies to prove their dedication to the chosen social cause. Craddock et al. (2018, p.1) precise the difference between CSR and brand activism by saying that:” Unlike corporate social responsibility efforts (which focus on making a company’s core operations more sustainable or ethically minded), brand activism often tackles societal, environmental, or human issues that are not directly associated with the company’s core product or operations.“

From the corporate point of view, taking a stand on important issues in society would be considered a significant risk to take and a task to be handled the more carefully possible. Many of the brand activism campaigns emerge immediately after the appearance of an issue when the debate is still brewing between the concerned parties. It is a task that should be handled with finesse, or the backlash resulting from it would be crippling in the long term. We will illustrate this point through examples of real brands that launched their brand activism campaigns, and the discerning success (e.g., Nike) and failure (e.g., Pepsi) between them.

Nike launched one of the most successful brand activism campaigns. Nike decided to take the risk and demonstrate what it stands for. Nike was one the most prominent brands to take a significant stand through Brand Activism, by making Colin Kaepernick the fact of the 30th anniversary of their slogan “Just Do It”. In doing this, Nike took a stand against the raging issues over rights, patriotism, and the politicization in sports, as Kaepernick became notorious for kneeling during the National Anthem of the

United States of America (Guardian sport and agencies, 2018)⁷. Regardless of adverse reactions, the spot diffused on Twitter, “Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything” generated a total of 43 million dollars’ worth of media exposure for the Brand (Novy-Williams, 2018)⁸. Nike took a calculated risk and ran the ad during the NFL game in prime-time, cementing her position even further. The reason that the Brand Activism campaign brought forward by Nike succeeded is mainly due to the consumer base of the brand being primarily composed of consumers under the age of 35 belonging to the Millennials and Generation Z⁹ (Pengelly, 2018). Consequently, Gibson (2018) reports that Nike shares have grown by 36%, and adding nearly \$6 Billion to the company’s market value¹⁰.

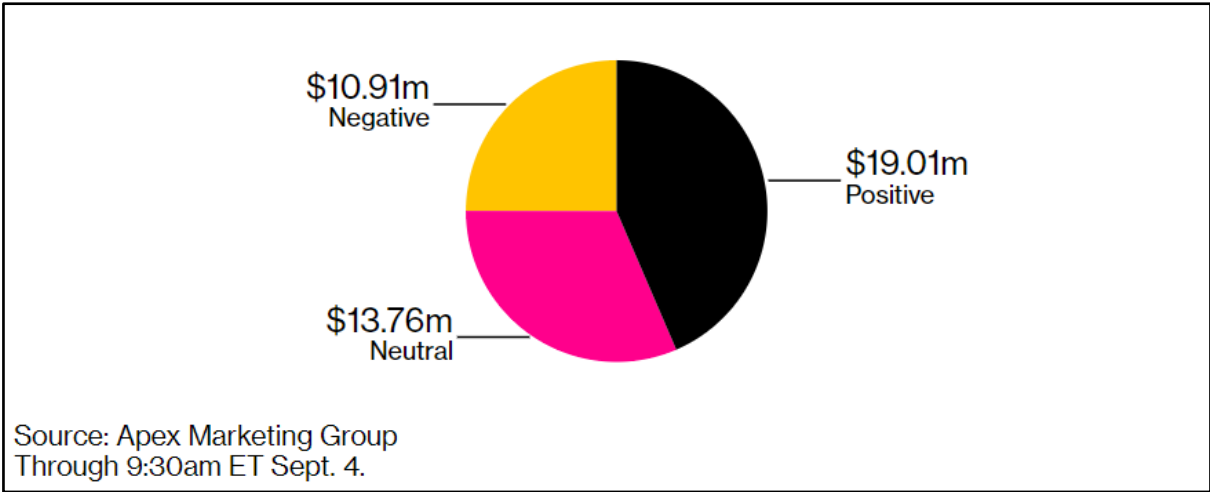


Figure 1: Nike’s Campaign with Kaepernick generated a total of over \$43 million in media exposure. Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-09-04/kaepernick-campaign-created-43-million-in-buzz-for-nike-so-far>

Through this campaign, Nike sought to link their infamous slogan “Just Do It” not only to athletic excellence but also to pressing social issues happening at the moment. Nike made a calculated risk knowing that its consumer base leans towards Millennials and Gen Z majority. According to Aziz (2018): “Gen- Z makes up a quarter of the U.S. population, currently holds \$44 billion in spending power, and will account for 40% of all consumers by 2020, and their opinions on whether brands should get involved in activism are pretty clear-cut.”¹¹ The reason behind the success of the brand activism campaign launched by Nike is that they knew how to target their consumer base, Nike communicated their stance and position towards essential issues in the American society like racism, inequality and police brutality against the

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/sep/03/colin-kaepernick-nike-just-do-it-campaign-nfl>
⁸ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-09-04/kaepernick-campaign-created-43-million-in-buzz-for-nike-so-far>
⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/sep/08/colin-kaepernick-nike-ad-sales-up>
¹⁰ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/colin-kaepernick-nike-6-billion-man/>
¹¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/afdelaziz/2018/09/04/the-power-of-purpose-nike-and-colin-kaepernick/#afe6e556f33c>

African-American communities, going far as to be the target of the scorn of the President of the United States of America¹²(Green, 2018).

Generation Y or millennials are specifically prone to be interested in brand activism (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018a). Targeting millennials is a priority for activist brands (Edelman, 2018). Millennials are known to be a value-driven generation, with prime concerns for businesses such as ethical behavior, the behavior of the leader of the organization, or the impact (positive or negative) product has on the environment (Deloitte Millennial Survey, 2019). There is currently arguing over the limits between the Generation Y, however, the delimitation adopted by the Pew Research Center (2019) is the most common: Generation Y (millennials) refers to any individual born between the years of 1981 and 1996 (ages 24 to 39 in 2020). Generation Y is the first generation to experience technology while growing up and benefit from the all-time access of news and information, which made them a very aware consumer base and concerned with the issues brewing in society (Kotler & Sarkar, 2018a). According to the recent Deloitte Millennial Survey (2019), while studying Generation Y (millennials) arrived at the conclusion that they are highly concerned with the issues around them, such as climate change and protecting the environment. However, millennials turned their attention to corporations and firms, to pursue social responsibility besides their profit-making activities, through brand activism (Sarkar and Kotler, 2018a).

While Nike is one of the most successful brands in carrying out a brand activism campaign in the last few years, there have been unsuccessful attempts in that area. Some brands like Pepsi and Gillette took a risk in communicating their stance against a social issue but ended committing a faux-pas that cost them more than what they endeavored to lose in the process. For instance, Pepsi launched a campaign titled “Live for Now-Moment” on April 4th, 2017, to appeal to the millennial consumer base and position itself as a socially conscious brand (Wong, 2017)¹³. Pepsi was taking a stand against specific pressing social issues; in this case, it was the “Black Lives Matter” movement that sparked in the United States. The ad displays the supermodel Kendall Jenner going between the police and the protesters and handing a can of Pepsi to a police officer (Wong, 2017). The public’s reaction was precisely the opposite of that, the choice of the person embodying the fight for racism and equality for the “Black Lives Matter” movement could not have been more wrong for Pepsi (Wong, 2017). The brand thought that choosing a popular figure among millennials would overshadow the fact that the model in question has no affiliation to any activist movement, nor has taken a stand in any social issue publicly to justify her choice in such a sensitive ad. The ad made light of the issue that impacts the lives of many Americans and diminished the seriousness

¹² <https://www.businessinsider.fr/us/trump-tweet-nike-boycott-colin-kaepernick-ad-2018-9>

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/apr/05/pepsi-kendall-jenner-pepsi-apology-ad-protest>

of it, displaying that a can of soda would resolve all problems surrounding race in the USA was simply outrageous to the consumer base of Pepsi (Wong, 2017).

The Pepsico (2017)'s response to the backlash was: "We did not intend to make light of any serious issue. We are removing the content and halting any further rollout. We also apologize for putting Kendall Jenner in this position."¹⁴ Under the crushing weight of the criticism and backlash, the brand was forced to remove her controversial ad to salvage the brand's reputation. According to YouGov BrandIndex (2018): "It took nine months for Pepsi's perception to fully recover with millennials from the ad's backlash, which stemmed from making light of the Black Lives Matter movement. Pepsi's perception level was stuck in a "trough" from May through July last year, the lowest it had been in at least eight years"¹⁵. The Pepsi example showcases the risks surrounding taking a stand around a severe social issue, but not handling it appropriately, and thus offending the base of consumers they were hoping to attract even more through the ad. The brand's reputation took quite some time to recover and redeem itself to the eyes of the consumers.

In summary, neutrality is no longer an option for brands that seek to cement themselves as more than the profit-seeking establishment. Brands need to get closer in touch with the reality that surrounds them and society in which they operate and make their print by contributing to positive change, as demonstrated previously by Nike.

A. CEO ACTIVISM, A PART OF BRAND ACTIVISM

The CEO is an essential drive behind the brand; in some cases, they are the creators of some iconic brands like Steve Jobs with Apple, or Howard Shultz with Starbucks. Their identity is etched to the brands that they created and nurtured. The CEO guides the brand and protects it to guarantee the continuity of the brand in the long term. It would make sense for the CEO to speak up and take the stand in essential issues alongside their brands, leading to CEO Activism. Business leaders are increasingly engaging in CEO activism by taking public stands on social and environmental issues that are not directly related to their company's core business.

CEO Activism is based on the engagement of business leaders or CEOs; as the name indicates, in taking stands on important issues in society, these issues are not related to the company's core mission (Chatterji & Toffel, 2015, 2018). CEO activism is encouraged many CEOs to voice their opinions on important issues

¹⁴ <https://www.pepsico.com/news/press-release/pepsi-statement-re--pepsi-moments-content04052017>

¹⁵ <https://today.yougov.com/topics/food/articles-reports/2018/04/17/one-year-after-jenner-ad-crisis-pepsi-recovers>

on platforms like social media. Twitter is famous for allowing CEOs to express their opinions on important issues in their society. For example, Indra Nooyi (2017), who is CEO of Pepsico, showed her support for gender equality and the feminist movement #MeToo by tweeting this on October 18th, 2017: “The women standing up to say #MeToo are brave and inspiring. We must strive to ensure all women are safe at work.”¹⁶ Previous research by Weber Shandwick and KRC Research (2018) uncovered the positive impact of CEO activism on purchasing decisions; they discovered that 46% of consumers would be more likely to purchase from a company which is led by a CEO who spoke publicly about an important issue¹⁷. Additionally, based on a study conducted the following year by Weber Shandwick and KRC Research (2019), 67% of communications and marketing executives in the USA, UK, and China, in which CEO voiced their stance on an important issue and participated in CEO Activism found to generate substantial reputation boost for the brand¹⁸. It results in generating a positive long-term benefit for the brand.

Using CEO Activism can be done to raise awareness over an issue with urgency to attract attention and call upon the responsible governing bodies in charge of making a difference; it involves making a public statement to the news or in social media (Chatterji and Toffel, 2018). For example, Tim Cook, who came out as a member of the LGBTQ community, vividly voiced his support for the community’s rights. This stance adopted by Tim Cook goes back to 2013 when he supported the voting and passing of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which forbids any discrimination based on an employee’s sexual orientation and gender identity (Goldstein, 2013)¹⁹. Another type of use for CEO Activism would be to leverage the economic power of the firms to induce a change in favor of the causes supported by the CEOs (Chatterji and Toffel, 2019). Companies have recently joined the fight for their favored causes, such as Lyft, who donated \$1 million to the American Civil Liberties Union, who is challenging the immigration ban put by President Trump in 2017, targeting specific ethnicities for their moral choices (Liptak, 2017)²⁰.

According to Larcker et al. (2018), who studied CEO Activism per topic in S&P 500 companies and S&P 1500 companies, they discovered that two of the most discussed issues by activist CEOs were diversity (gender, racial, or based on sexual-orientation), followed closely by environmental issues. CEO activism should be congruent with the company’s values, as Korschun, Aggarwal, Rafieian, and Swain (2016) found that CEO Activism would have an impact only if the company is perceived as values-oriented, that impact is influenced by the degree of perceived corporate hypocrisy. There is, however, one potential risk by merging CEO Activism and brand activism in the same context, if the CEO of any given brand would harm

¹⁶ <https://twitter.com/indranooyi/status/920653352438042624?lang=fr>

¹⁷ https://www.webershandwick.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CEO-Activism-2018_Purposeful-CEO.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.webershandwick.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CEO-Activism-Inside-Comms-and-Marketing.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/05/employment-non-discrimination-act-falls-short>

²⁰ <https://www.theverge.com/2017/1/29/14429452/lyft-donating-1-million-american-civil-liberties-union>

the brand by expressing his stance on social media, going against the consented general opinion in a social issue. For example, the CEO of Chick-fil-A made anti-LGBT remarks that are still associated with this brand (Rogers, 2012)²¹. The previous example is a prime example of a CEO taking a stand on an important issue such as same-sex marriage and alienated a part of the consumer base for their choice of sexual orientation, furthermore harming the reputation of the brand in the process.

B. TYPES OF BRAND ACTIVISM

The notion of categorization in the CSR literature appeared with Carroll (1974), who delimited four categories of CSR, putting them in order of layers under the labels: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary responsibilities. Carroll (1974, p.500) explained the order in the form of layers of the four classes “are simply to remind us that motives or actions can be categorized as primarily one or another of these four kinds”. Furthering his research a little bit, Carroll (2004) incorporated the notion of stakeholders in the pyramid displaying the four categories of CSR. The first category displayed in Carroll’s pyramid (1974, 1991, 2004) displayed the economic responsibility at the base of the pyramid, as corporation’s first goal to make a profit to stay in business and also reduced wasted capital, by investing it wisely and with a long-term vision in mind, businesses need to be efficient on the market and ready to tackle competitors, the pyramid has a corporate-perspective in which the economic responsibility takes precedence over the ethical considerations.

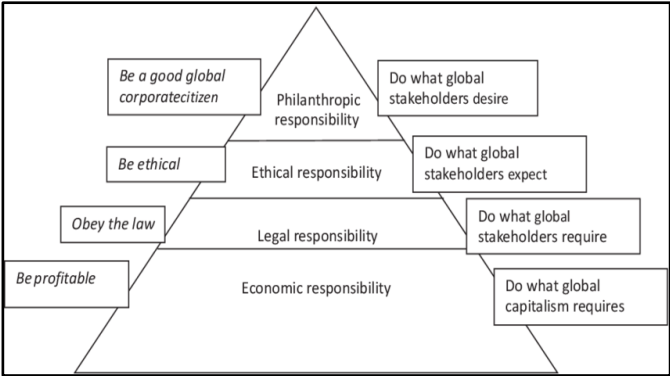


Figure 2: The CSR Pyramid Source: Carroll (1979, 1991, 2004)

Through literature, there have been two known classification systems for brand activism campaigns. The first one is based on a spectrum in which the brand is either labeled progressive; it is advocates for a specific issue and seeks positive change in society or regressive who harms society (Sarkar and Kotler, 2018a). The first one is based on a spectrum ranging from progressive to regressive, neutral being in the

²¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/us-news-blog/2012/jul/19/chick-fil-a-comes-out-as-anti-gay>

middle. The way to uncover if a brand is progressive or regressive is based on the public opinion of that particular brand. Thus the indication of whether a brand is progressive or regressive rests in the perceived brand image in consumers' minds; it remains a biased means of categorization of brand activism.

According to Sarkar and Kotler (2018a), brand activism can be positioned along a spectrum going from regressive to progressive, as one possible classification of Brand Activism strategies used by companies. Patagonia has been mentioned as one of the most progressive brands recently, for launching their campaign "*The president stole your lands*", raising concern over preserving public lands (Andrews, 2017) The campaign was made as a response to President Trump to cut some of the protected lands in the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments in Utah. They were going further than other brands in the same activity sector by filing a lawsuit. The progressive side is evident as the company is seeking to make an impact on an important issue, such as preserving public lands, going beyond profit-seeking. One of the regressive brands mentioned in Kotler and Sarkar's book (2018a): "*Brand Activism from Purpose to Action*" was Big Tobacco. This tobacco company denied for many years that its products were harmful to consumers' health, even when the research they conducted revealed that. The company insisted on promoting the benefits of smoking. brand activism is not restricted to social issues exclusively; they represent but a parcel of the entirety of the brand activism concept.

Kotler and Sarkar (2017,2018a) proposed a second classification of divisions into six categories, to broaden the scope of the problems possibly tackled by future brand activism strategies: Social, legal, business political, economic, or environmental activism. The first category being social activism refers to issues surrounding all sorts of equality like gender, LGBTQ, race, but also including causes linked to education and school funding. One example of a corporation endorsing social activism was made by Airbnb (2017) in their campaign "We accept" which was shot and aired during the Superbowl as a response to President's Trump decision to close America's borders to refugees. The ad cemented Airbnb's position in terms of issues like race and equality²². The second category concerns legal activism, which refers to issues surrounding laws and policies that concern companies, like taxes, workplace, and employment. The third category is business activism which refers to issues about governance like corporate organization, labor and union relations, worker compensation. One of the leading corporations in this type of activism is Starbucks (2020)²³, which has risen to the occasion in the time of the global pandemic COVID-19. Starbucks (2020) provided a catastrophe pay which a financial aid designed explicitly for the pandemic, for their workers, whether they are showing or not symptoms up to 14 days, to protect their vulnerable workers, this displays an example of worker compensation in a time of crisis.

²² <https://www.airbnb.fr/weaccept>

²³ <https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2020/navigating-through-covid-19/>

The fourth type of activism is economic activism, which centers around issues concerning minimum wage, tax policies that create income inequality in a society, but also fair redistribution of wealth. One stark example has made the news recently centering around a company named Gravity, which endeavored to provide a minimum payment of \$70,000 for their workers, to help bridge the wealth gap and financial inequality and ensure they lead comfortable lives in the city (Gravity Payments, 2015)²⁴. The fifth type is political activism, which refers to issues about lobbying, voting, and voting right. For example, Levi's (2020) support their employees' right to vote in 2020 in their campaign "Rock the Vote", by urging everyone into letting their voices be heard in the next elections of the United States of America²⁵. The company also gave their retail workers paid time off to vote. The last category of brand activism is environmental activism, which refers to issues surrounding conservations, environmental laws, and policies. For instance, the brand Ben and Jerry (2015) advocates against climate change by raising awareness through their campaign in 2015, "Save our Swirled Climate Tour." They also put efforts on their part by reducing the greenhouse gasses emitted by their products and switching to renewable energy (solar and biodegradable waste) to fuel their factories partly²⁶.

1-2 – FROM CSR AND CRM TO BRAND ACTIVISM

According to Sarkar and Kotler (2018b), brand activism is to be considered as the natural evolution in CSR: "what we are seeing now is a transformation from marketing-driven cause marketing to corporate-driven CSR to societal-driven brand Activism". Sarkar and Kotler (2017a,2018a) identified previous efforts in the field as being marketing-driven and corporate-driven, which would indicate the core mission of CSR and CRM. They also were criticized for not being transformative enough and having a slower impact on influencing companies. Porter and Kramer (2011) stated in the same context that CSR policies are not efficient enough to bridge the gap between economic and societal development. Sarkar and Kotler (2017a) position values in the center of the core mission of this new concept, and justifies the choice by the current wave of preoccupation about the future society and the planet.

A. COMPARISON BETWEEN CORPORATE-DRIVEN CSR AND VALUE-DRIVEN BRAND ACTIVISM

The precise definition cannot be found in literature as numerous have been attempted into defining the complex construct, Matten & Moon (2004, 2008) shows this complexity listing the various concepts like

²⁴ <https://gravitypayments.com/thegravityof70k/>

²⁵ https://www.levi.com/US/en_US/itsyourvote

²⁶ <https://www.benjerry.com/whats-new/2015/save-our-swirled>

business ethics or corporate philanthropy under the CSR umbrella. These concepts constructed into policies and practices that the corporations use to communicate their responsibility for the benefit of society. Kotler and Lee (2005) proposed a typology of the variety of CSR activities, classifying them according to their aim and use, there was a total of six different types: corporate cause promotion, cause-related marketing, corporate social marketing, corporate philanthropy, community volunteering, and socially responsible business practices.

INITIATIVES	MAIN FOCUS
Cause Promotions	Persuasive communications, to raise awareness or interest for a social cause. Emphasis on promotional strategies (focus on external communications). Target audiences, outside the organization.
Cause-Related Marketing	Contributions and support, linked to sales of company's specific products. It depends on the action or consumer's response. It includes more communication (mainly advertising).
Corporate Social Marketing	Influence individual's behavior changes (focus on behavior change).
Corporate Philanthropy	'Extending a check'. Direct contributions to a cause or a charity (cash donations and / or in kind). It is the most traditional of all corporate social initiatives.
Community Volunteering	Corporate volunteering service in the community (employees donate their time and talent).
Socially Responsible Business Practices	Discretionary business practices and investments that support social causes to improve the community's welfare and to protect the environment.

Figure 3: Typology of CSR activities, Source: Kotler and Lee (2005)

One the earliest attempts in understanding CSR was by Bowen (1953, p.6) who defined CSR as “the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society.” The author pointed out the obligatory nature that was linked to CSR, which was understandable considering the time frame. When corporate giving used to be limited to stockholders that benefited the firm directly, before being overturned by a New Jersey Supreme Court decision granting companies the possibility to give grants to nonprofit organizations that do not benefit them nor generate profit for the company or the stockholders (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). Furthermore, corporate social responsibility is voluntary practices, extending above legal obligations, to attain a viable future (Idowu and Pappasolomou, 2007)

Emphasizing the community, Kotler & Lee (2005, p.3) defines CSR as “a commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources.” While on the other hand, Brown & Dacin (1997) and Maignan & Ferrell (2004) adopted a different perspective by placing the stakeholder obligations and norms that orient the CSR activity. CSR action projects an identity can also present itself a tool identification for the stakeholders, who see a degree of congruence and heterogeneity between their own identities and those of the company or firm, leading to a positive attitude towards the brand (Lichtenstein et al. 2004, Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). In a certain way, we could associate CSR to the company's brand strategy when the CSR activities are chosen in a specific way that communicates brand characteristics as well (Polonsky and Jevons, 2006).

Literature encompassing CSR tried in several attempts to categorize the CSR motives, like Becker-Olsen et al. (2006) proposed two categories, one referred to as motivated by profit, and the other category called motivated by social change, here we can see the dichotomy that begins to set place when it comes to the intent driving CSR. In the same context, Forehand and Grier (2003) categorized motives of the CSR activities into two categories, one called public-serving and firm-serving. Consumers' perspective plays a role in an assignment either altruistic motives to CSR activities, or egoistic motives, to judge the efficiency of those activities (Menon and Kahn 2003, Becker-Olsen et al. 2006). From a corporate perspective, companies develop and instill CSR policies and strategies to maintain legitimacy in front of their consumers. The marketplace in which they operate (Suchman, 1995), however, CSR can be used as protection, ensuring the survival of the company in case of the crises, targeting CSR-responsive customers specifically (Klein and Dawar, 2004). CSR is used in a way that indirectly benefits the company and their profit-seeking activities, reinforcing the corporate-driven core mission of CSR, Beise-Zee, R. (2011, p.28) precise that: "corporations utilize the CSR concept strategically by selecting areas of focus that fit with corporate values: for instance by selecting initiatives that support specific business goals, choosing issues related to core products and core markets, and supporting issues that provide opportunities to meet marketing objectives".

Additionally, CSR is put in place by companies with their financial stability in mind as a priority. The profit-seeking activity comes before the social issue they are championing (Doane and Abasta-Vilaplana, 2005). There has been extensive literature witnessing that CSR has been put in place with business goals in mind, as Brown and Dacin (1997, p. 68) said that "we do all good things,... but we don't know if we get anything out of it.". We are highlighting the need for corporate incentives and advantages for companies to consider CSR strategies in their overall business planning, to strategically maximize the benefits to the society and create value for their stakeholders (Rangan, Chase, and Karim, 2012). CSR plays an important role in fulfilling marketing purposes through communication (Lantos, 2001). The idea that business should be first and foremost profit-motivated, and the CSR activities are just an edge to be used against the competition, comply with standards put by society. Governing bodies, the only moral standard that was put for social responsibility besides profit-making, is abiding by the law (Carr, 1996), in the same context, Friedman (2007) encouraged businesses to act in the interest of making more value for their shareholder, legally and honestly (representing the ethical and legal duties of the business), the social issues brewing in society were not to be priorities of companies and firms. The research demonstrated that CSR activities have a positive effect of consumer satisfaction, leading to the constructing of a satisfied consumer base, leading in a macro-level in enhancing the market value of the firm and important financial results due to the investment in CSR and long-term profitability (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006). CSR will be viewed to

have a strategic motive if it is targeting the enlarging of the customer base and generating profit (Ellen et al., 2006).

Kotler and Sarkar (2017a) put brand activism as the newest form of corporate social responsibility because CSR is not impactful enough. CSR seems too slow to face immediate problems, and with corporations switching to values-driven agenda have turned their attention to brand activism. Kotler and Sarkar (2017a) argued further that brand activism as a tool goes beyond CSR activities by tackling the biggest and most prominent issues brewing in society. Brand activism is the natural evolution of CSR (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017a) is bound to share some common characteristics with it. Despite not having values as starkly underline in its core mission, CSR finds the perfect equilibrium between corporate benefits and the ethical responsibility these companies have towards society and their stakeholders (Carroll, 1999). Brand activism is following the same logic by undertaking to face the issues that are of great importance to their stakeholders (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017,2018a), guided by the change their customers want to see in society, Kotler and Sarkar (2018a) underlined the relevance of customers' identity and what they want. CSR strategies have been designed to reflect the company's social responsibility and ethical concerns, bearing in mind the fit between their core activities and the cause endorsed by their CSR strategies to be congruent on certain levels. Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006) demonstrated that low fit between social initiative and corporate objectives are bound to handicap the company. However, for brand activism, Kotler and Sarkar (2018a) stipulate that brands ought to turn their attention to the most urgent problem currently being debated in society, to gain attention for the firm. However, they must do so in an authentic manner, by approaching a problem that relates to the firm's core mission, to avoid any perception of inauthenticity or woke-washing (Vredenburg et al. 2018). (e.g., Nike endorsing an NFL football player and by extension the issue of equality and racism).

The reason brand activism is called upon when CSR is deemed not impactful enough (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017, 2018a) is because by courting controversy and endorsing a cause that already has the public's attention. Brand activism is more impactful as a strategy. It can be used as a tool to endorse responsibility for important issues when government and related institutions are not bringing social change fast enough (Kotler and Sarkar, 2018a). When it comes to societal marketing, the idea is appealing in theory. However, it is a difficult idea to sell to the shareholders (Blythe , 2006). This statement is true whether we are talking about CSR or brand activism. Brand activism is indeed more value-driven than CSR (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017, 2018a). However, the authors deemed brand activism as a strategic move for profit-making (Kotler and Sakar, 2018a) and a tool for brands to set themselves for consumers and harness positive reactions (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017a).

B. COMPARISON BETWEEN MARKETING-DRIVEN CRM AND VALUE-BASED BRAND ACTIVISM

Cause-related marketing is related to CSR, Kotler, and Lee (2005) cited CRM in their typology, presenting the six possible manifestations of CSR. Research set itself early on to demonstrated the positive impact of cause-related marketing (Barone et al., 2000; Strahilevitz, 1999; Strahilevitz and Meyers 1998). For instance, Strahilevitz and Myers (1998) studied the characteristics surrounding the positive impact of CRM and found that the CRM had more chances to be efficient when it was paired with a hedonic product, instead of a practical product.

The most popular definition for cause-related marketing (CRM) was by Varadarajan and Menon (1988, p.59), who defined CRM as follows: "CRM can be viewed as a manifestation of the alignment of corporate philanthropy and enlightened business interest. It is a marketing program that strives to achieve two objectives-improve corporate performance and help worthy causes-by linking fundraising for the benefit of a cause to the purchase of the firm's products and/or services." The authors consider CRM as a marketing tool without mentioning it as a type of CSR. Cause-related marketing's goal is to combine the practical needs of the consumer by allowing them to purchase the product they need or require, and contribute positively to a charitable cause or a social issue at the same time. This definition has been the base of many studies conducted around CRM, to find the influence of fit between the cause of a cause-related marketing campaign, the company and the consumer (Gupta and Pirsch, 2006), or demonstrating in a precise quantitative way the impact of CRM on choice and the effect of fit between the brand and the cause (Pracejus and Olsen, 2004). The literature surrounding CRM has studied the different characteristics of CRM programs that result in the active participation of the consumers in those campaigns and their positive assessments (Strahilevitz and Myers, 1998; Ross et al., .1992, Barone et al. 2000, Pracejus and Olsen, 2004). For example, in their research Ross et al. (1992) studied the effect of gender and proximity in the context of CRM campaigns and found that women were more inclined to have a positive perception of the firm than men. For example, American Express launched one of the oldest examples of a successful cause-related marketing campaign (Gottlieb, 1986). The company set to contribute a penny to the restoration of the Statue of Liberty every time their credit cards were used in 1983, this endeavor succeeded in amassing a total of \$1.7 million for the Statue building, thus positively contributing to the cause, but also resulted in a 30% increase of American Express card used during the campaign (Gottlieb,1986)

Cause-related marketing is built on pairing between the purchase of the corporation's products or services, while also contributing to a cause or a charity. Thus consumers can acquire their products while also expressing their concern for a cause Lantos (2001). Cause-related Marketing is put under the umbrella

of the Corporate Social Responsibility typology proposed by Kotler and Lee (2005). However, it is, first and foremost, a marketing tool focused on advertising a specific product by appealing to the altruistic side of consumers. Organizations go through a certain process to use the social angle in their advertisements (Drumwright, 1996), to appeal to the consumer base and influence their attitude towards the company and their products (Brown and Dacin 1997; Ross et al. 1992). Consumers would be most likely to choose a brand whose products are associated with the support of a particular cause (Barone et al. 2000).

CRM strategies are used powerful promotional tools, seeking to boost their reputation and associate themselves with socially responsible behavior. Thus addressing a particular consumer who seeks to associate themselves with that particular kind of brand (willing to switch brands if necessary) and contribute to the cause. (Demetriou, Papasolomou, Vrontis, 2010). Henceforth, consumers have a positive disposition towards advertisements linked with cause-related campaigns (Nan and Heo, 2007). However, consumers' perception plays a role in the shift occurring to the company's image after a CRM campaign; it depends on what they perceive to be the motive of the company behind their endorsement of that particular cause, as well as the size of efforts put in place to aid the cause (Webb & Mohr 1998). Choosing products linked with cause-related marketing can have extrinsic values for consumers who wish to display themselves as socially inclined individuals to their surroundings (Peloza and Shang, 2011).

According to the CSR typology by Kotler and Lee (2005), cause-related marketing is one of the six types of CSR, used primarily as a marketing tool in an advertisement by linking the sales promotion of a product to the support of a particular cause. CRM seeks to gather the attention of the customer towards one particular product to boost sales and make a profit (Lantos 2011; Varadarajan and Menon 1988). While brand activism by supporting the most urgent and biggest issue in society does not associate itself with one particular product of the brand, but rather with the brand as a whole (Kotler and Sarkar, 2018a). Secondly, brand activism campaigns are used to raise awareness towards a particular issue and captivate the general public's attention; it is a way to court controversy by voicing an opinion that will result in extreme responses, whether positive or negative. Brand activism campaigns may contribute financially to an issue alongside their public stance to solidify their position on the matter (Kotler and Sarkar, 2018a). However, it is not the core purpose; it is not a donation-gathering process.

CRM directs the profits generated from the product sales to the cause it aligned itself with (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). The point of similarity between brand activism and cause-related marketing is that they are both used as strategies to harness positive consumer reactions, the only difference is that brand activism uses the social issue in a value-driven agenda (Kotler and Sarkar, 2018) to approach the idealistic

liberal consumer base, and CRM brings the balance between the products they seek to use and the positive feeling they generate from giving to a good cause (Ross et al. 1991).

1-3 – CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS

The base of the consumer-brand relationship started with the appearance of Relationship Marketing (RM). According to Berry (1983, p.25) Relationship Marketing emerged with the goal of : “attracting, maintaining, and – in multiservice organizations – enhancing customer relationships” . Thus companies and firms see to build and maintain relationships with their customers, relationships that impact both parties positively (Hougaard and Bjerre, 2002). Consumer-brand relationship emerged as an extension of Relationship Marketing, through deepening the link between brands and their consumers (Blackston 1992a, 1992b). Consumer-brand relationships were defined by Shimp and Madden (1988 p. 951) when: “consumers form relations with consumption objects (products, brands, stores, etc.), which range from feelings of antipathy to slight fondness, all the way up to what would, in person-person relations, amount to love”. Branding research allowed the consumer-brand relationship to flourish, and grow in complexity, which allowed the appearance of different research streams, such as brand loyalty (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978), brand personality (Aaker, 1997), brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), brand attachment (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005) and brand commitment (Sung & Choi, 2010). The consumer-brand relationship can range from positive impact on behaviors towards the brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2002; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Park et al., 2010), to negative impact on behaviors towards the brand (Romani et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2009a; Lee et al., 2009b; Zarantonello et al., 2016; Romani et al., 2015).

A. CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE REACTIONS

According to Fournier (1998, p.367):” consumers do not choose brands, they choose lives”. Fournier (1998) considered that brands could hold meaning for consumers in the environment where they operate because brands craft personalities through their managerial activities, making them capable of forging bonds and relationships with their consumers. In the same vein, Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel, (2004) extended the consumer-brand relationship research, by demonstrating that a genuine relationship between brand and consumer can strengthen their bond, and generate loyalty, trustworthiness, and growth. Labeling the consumer-brand relationship as a genuine relationship would be considering brands as living entities similar to a human being, Alvarez and Fournier (2016) explained that brands should be considered anthropomorphized on a certain level, but not on the same level as humans. Henceforth, consumer-brand relationships play a central role in the lives of consumers. Since our research will be

centered around brand activism, it is necessary to look at some of the previously studied consumer-brand relationships.

Research inquired about the relationship between consumers and their brands and uncovered concepts such as brand trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001), and brand attachment (Park et al. 2010). These concepts result in positive behaviors from consumers; for instance, brand attachment has been linked to people's ability to build and maintain an emotional relationship with their brands (Belk 1988; Fournier 1998). Furthermore, Park et al. (2010) explored brand attachment. They found that consumers develop a resistance to brand switching once attached to a certain brand, and resilience to the spread of negative information regarding that particular brand. Consumers can develop feelings towards brands, in the form of brand love (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Batra et al., 2012). Consumers develop love relationships with their brands (Fetscherin, 2014). Thus brand love is the pinnacle of the relationship between consumer and brand (Huber et al. 2015). Brand love can result in loyalty to the brand, and resilience to negative information (Batra et al., 2012), thus consumers can be more lenient towards brands they love, and forgive any perceived misconduct (Leventhal, Wallace, Buil & de Chernatony, 2014).

Additionally, Consumers may see the reflection of their identity in the brand's image (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006), which results in numerous advantages for companies, such as consumer loyalty, the ability to charge higher prices, and positive word-of-mouth intentions (Wolter and Cronin, 2016). People are inclined into resistance when it comes to confronting negative information regarding them (Ahearne et al., 2005). Brands become a part of the consumer's identity, so consumers are more lenient towards them in case of moderate unethical misconduct, to protect themselves (Einwiller et al. 2006). Consumers feel personally threatened when the brand they identify with is under scrutiny for unethical behavior (Lisjak et al. 2012). Under moderate circumstances, brand identification is a valuable strategy in protecting the company and the brand in times of crisis (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). However, if the situation becomes extreme, then the relationship between the brand and the consumer is in danger of being ruptured, through consumer distancing themselves away from the brand and the misconduct, to show their discontent (Bandura 1991, 1986).

Fournier (1998) mentioned two models of relationship dissolution between consumer and brand: the stress model and the entropy model. The stress model refers to the abrupt rupture of the relationship for reasons such as personal tastes. In contrast, the entropy model refers to the gradual degradation of the relationship due to the failure of maintenance and lack of activities. Marketing research studied carefully the negative side of consumer relationships with their brands like brand hate (Romani et al., 2015; Zarantonello et al., 2016), which results in antagonizing behaviors such as brand avoidance (Lee et al., 2009a; Lee et al., 2009b), negative word-of-mouth (Romani et al., 2012; Zarantonello et al., 2016), anti-

brand consumer activism (Romani et al., 2015), protest (Zarantonello et al., 2016), or switching brands (Romani et al., 2012). Consumers are motivated to resist brands, thus severing their links with them, for reasons such as the incompatibility between the consumer and the brand's identities. Thus we have an identity avoidance (Lee et al., 2009b). The consumer will seek to step away from a brand that does not communicate his reflected identity. One possible reason for consumer-brand relationship rupture is due to the brand committing a perceived immoral or unethical action, that causes the consumer to respond by anti-brand behavior (Zarantonello et al., 2016).

B. WOKE-WASHING

In their attempts to stand out in a crowded and competitive marketplace, brands are adamant in engaging in doing good and supporting the social issues championed by their consumers. However, their intentions may, sometimes, how a cause is endorsed or a message sent out is not properly managed and results in the perception of inauthenticity; this phenomenon is called woke-washing. The concept of woke-washing goes in the same context of use as green-washing, Delmas and Burbano (2011, p.65) defined green-washing as "the intersection of two firm behaviors: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance." It is a process based on communicating erroneous information to mislead the consumer in thinking the products are environmentally conscious.

Woke-washing has been mentioned in conventional news articles (Jones, 2019), but scarcely mentioned in academic work, so defining the concept will be done approximately. However, the general idea resides that woke-washing happens when companies are driven by their need to make profit base their marketing campaigns on their consumers' favored social issues and idealism, trying to appear as progressive as possible, as woke as possible, to sway attention away from their corporate practices and unethical practices. Woke is defined by Merriam Webster (2019, n.p.) as "aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice)." Based on this definition, being woke for a brand is based on whether it shows awareness to certain issues in society, the concept of wokeness is strongly present in brand activism.

Vredenburg et al. (2018) referred to woke-washing in the case when some brands "unclear or indeterminate records of social cause practices even though they use social activism marketing to position their brands in the marketplace". Research conducted by the University of Auckland demonstrates that pairing a brand activism marketing message with authenticity in the business' practices, distances it from woke-washing (Vredenburg et al. 2018). This adds some complexity to the concept of brand activism; in this case, the brand activism campaign will not be welcome with open arms by the consumers. Instead, there will be comparisons to be made between the firm's practices and the claims boasted through their

newest socially aware campaign. Inauthenticity is a brand's marketing and inconsistency with the message they are projecting results in woke-washing perception (Vredenburg et al. 2018).

One of the prime examples that attracted the scorn the consumers is the Brand Activism campaign launched by Gillette called "The Best Men Can Be" referring to their usual slogan, "The Best a Man Can Get." The campaign was launched in the context of brand activism to tackle the problems linked with sexism and toxic masculinity (Toppins, Lyons and Weaver, 2019). The inauthenticity in Gillette's case appeared when the critics began pointing out that Gillette's pink tax, the tax imposed on feminine products, makes women's products noticeably higher in prices. This points out to clear gender-based price discrimination, contradicting everything they stood for with the #MeToo cause. Despite the effort put in the campaign and the risk undertaken to put themselves forward and taking a stand in an important issue such as gender discrimination, their corporate practices contradicted with the cause (Vredenburg et al., 2019). Some can perceive the phenomenon behind brands taking a stand against important issues and voicing their opinion on the matter while committing to change on their side in various forms as woke-washing, and by others as companies shedding light and raising awareness on important issues. It is largely due to the adaptive nature of capitalism; companies are appealing to the young consumers' idealism (Jones, 2019).

CONCLUSION

In this first chapter, we explored the concept of brand activism to understand the working of brand activism in the field; we displayed various examples showcasing the risk undertaken by companies when they engage in a brand activism campaign and the reason for their success or failure. The first part of the chapter displayed the definitions of brand activism along with examples of campaigns that had been conducted on the field. The second part of the chapter focused on defining the concepts of CSR as corporate-driven strategy and CRM as marketing-driven, then comparing them to brand activism. The third part of the chapter focused on the consumer-brand relationship and their positive and negative impact on companies. We referred to a new problem surrounding brand activism, which refers to the attempts of companies to display themselves as socially involved in pressing issues. This last part guides us to the main mechanism discussed in the next chapter, consumer resistance when we will explore the reasons underlying resistance displayed by consumers in general and in the CSR perspective, and the manifestations of the consumer resistance.

CHAPTER 2: CONSUMER RESISTANCE

Resistance has been discussed widely in various fields of study, mainly historical contexts that could recall many conflicts through history resulting from resistance, or a philosophical perspective (Bourdieu, 1984; Foucault, 1988). It is a concept deeply intertwined with human nature, it would be natural for marketing research to turn their attention to it. Consumers and marketers share a relationship, that is characterized as being symbiotic, and full of exchange (Kotler and Armstrong, 1996). Consumers have relationships with their brands, and the marketplace as a whole, it is no longer a single interaction with companies offering their products on the market. Companies communicate through their brands and express their opinion on various subjects and cause, and as we saw in the previous chapter may even venture further and engage in brand activism, publicly supporting an on-going cause in society (Sarkar and Kotler, 2018a, 2017a). There are some cases where consumers can be triggered through corporate behaviors, which would prompt them to oppose the company or brand, and even in some cases, have a global perspective and oppose the marketplace as a whole.

The first section of this chapter will dedicate itself to the definition of the concept resistance and exploring the research surrounding the research, not only in the marketing context but in adjoining fields such as persuasion and innovation. In supplying a global context for resistance, we have a better understanding of the concept, as it is considered one of the main mechanisms of this research. The second section will pay special attention to the antecedents prompting the manifestation of consumer resistance, whether inconsistencies in the marketplace as a whole or specific case of situational antecedents such as skepticism and cynicism. The third and last section will devote itself to the consequences of consumer resistance, such as behavioral manifestations towards the marketplace, or a specific brand or company. For the sake of our research, we will focus on a few manifestations of consumer resistance, such as consumer boycott, anti-brand activism, brand avoidance, and negative word-of-mouth. They would be considered the chosen consequences for our research model in upcoming chapters.

2-1 – EXPLORING CONSUMER RESISTANCE

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2020) defined resistance in one of its definitions as "the inherent ability of an organism to resist harmful influences (such as disease, toxic agents, or infection." The term resistance has been used in the historical context to illustrate the opposition to a rule. According to Roux (2007, p.60):" The term "resistance" also encompasses a broad semantic field and designates both a physical phenomenon and a human act of opposition." As the term resistance is bound to be used in different

contexts, we will shift our focus to one particular kind of resistance that interests our research, situational resistance. Situational resistance has been the focus of research in fields like history, and political science and sociology, before being used in the management and marketing field (Roux, 2007).

A. THE CONCEPT OF CONSUMER RESISTANCE IN VARIOUS CONTEXTS

Resistance is an umbrella concept that has been dissected in various fields of study like philosophy (Bourdieu, 1984; Foucault, 1988). In the context of social sciences, resistance manifests itself when there are certain conditions available simultaneously. The contradictions that arise between the information of stimulus (e.g., source, content) and the pre-conceived representations are ground for resistance to emerge (Ram and Sheth, 1989). The significant component is the struggle and contradiction between the pre-established ideas or beliefs and the newly established force. Thus ending the struggle and terminating the effect of this force is the main priority, there cannot be any resistance if there is not any will to act fueled by internal conflicts (Roux, 2007).

Resistance has been the concern of researchers in the innovation context, Ram and Sheth (1989, p. 6) define innovation resistance as “the resistance offered by consumers to an innovation, either because it poses potential changes from a satisfactory status quo or because it conflicts with their belief structure” Thus innovation resistance displays the contradictory nature between the current situation and any potential change that may disturb it. For instance, Garcia and Atkins (2007) found that wine drinkers refused to switch into a screw-capped wine bottle, instead of the usual cork wine bottles, displaying a refusal to change the status quo, as wine bottles have always been synonymous with the traditional cork seal. The main problem surrounding innovation resistance is consumers' reluctance to try the newest innovation (Ram and Sheth, 1989), and that could be resolved by easing them towards the innovation and facilitating the transition (Rogers, 2003). This reduces the problem of innovation resistance to a simplistic reluctance to try new things. However, there have been classifications surrounding the types of innovation resistance, such as classifying innovation resistance either as active or passive. The active reaction is blatantly refusing any interaction with the marketers or salespeople championing the innovation. In contrast, the passive reaction is more discrete and can be translated as refusing to buy the product or switching to another one who meets the same needs (Bagozzi and Lee 1999, 2005). Building on this same train of thought, Kleijnen et al. (2009) proposed a model to classify types of innovation resistance, starting from the least active (postponement), the middle ground (rejection) and finally the most active form (opposition), thus embodying consumers' perceptions of innovation resistance.

If we were to look at resistance from the persuasion perspective, persuasion plays a role in communication, would it be an advertisement or social media post encouraging consumers to choose a particular brand over others, or a product amongst similar ones in function. Persuasion resistance can be driven by the need to maintain freedom or consistency and a sense of control. Additionally, it can be used to uphold attitudes (Wegener, Petty, Smoak, & Fabrigar, 2004). The concept has been explored early on in general, by researchers like Brehm (1966) who investigated the possibility of reactance when the message threatens the personal freedom of the person or Petty and Cacioppo (1977) who demonstrated that resistance against persuasion manifested itself when people were forewarned of a potential persuasive intent. Research extended their findings on the subject by demonstrating that resisting a persuasion can build stamina to resist future persuasions of the same kind, underlining the role of metacognition in persuasion (Tormala and Petty, 2002,2004). In the same context of research Zurewink & Devine (1996) asserted that strong attitudes were difficult to persuade. Furthermore, the process of resistance is cognitive and affective. Besides studying the phenomenon of resistance in persuasion literature, it has been researched surrounding the mechanisms used by people performing the resistance. Counterarguing is one the most studied resistance mechanism in this regard, Brock (1967) saw counterarguing as a proper response to propaganda, used to question the message, and offer new explanatory possibilities. Thus we can say that counterarguing is based on expressing contradictory cognitive responses to a specific message. Furthermore, there have been other mechanisms employed to stand against persuasion, such as avoiding a persuasive message bearing negative information about a valued concept (Tannenbaum, Macauley, & Norris, 1966). Additionally, emotions play an essential role in resisting persuasion, such as swaying the attitude of people through emotional appeal (Lewan & Stotland, 1961) or being guided by negative emotions like anger, thus projecting the effect of those emotions unto the persuasive message (Zuwerink & Devine, 1996).

B. CONSUMER RESISTANCE IN MARKETING

In the Marketing context, when we refer to resistance, it is usually linked with consumer resistance, defined by Peñaloza and Price (1993). They used the definition put forward by Poster (1992, p.1) as: "The way in which individuals or groups practice a strategy of appropriation in response to structures of domination," in the same context, Fournier (1998b) views consumer resistance as the ensemble of actions used by the consumer to face the structures of dominations. These actions can be either neutral or on the offensive. Before putting any action into motion, it is necessary to determine the presence of a will to act, or a "motivational state" (Knowles and Linn, 2004, p.5), as Roux (2007,p.69) stated in her definition of resistance, it is "a motivational state leading to variable manifestations of opposition and which is

triggered by certain factors linked to corporate behaviors and marketplace practice and leads to (2) types of responses triggered – manifestations of resistance –by this state of opposition to marketplace practices, strategies or discourse perceived as dissonant".

The target of resistance can vary upon the context; it is safe to assume that when we are discussing consumer resistance, it is towards a particular brand, company, or entity. However, there has been research demonstrating that resistance can target the marketplace ideology as a whole, resisting the entire system that influences the daily lives of typical consumers (Roux, 2005). Acknowledging the code by which society abides by, and putting some distance away from the eternal chase of consumption may offer consumers the chance to resist the system (Ozanne and Murray, 1995). Consumers may seek to detach themselves from the pre-conceived rituals set in society by forging the lifestyle that suits their preferences, thus liberating themselves from the pressure to act a certain way and purchase certain items (Dobscha 1998). Through the study of the Burning Man, a week-long antimarket event, Kozinets (2002) joins the project where consumers seek to escape the market and rebel against the pre-conceived social paradigm set in society, by joining the project, the consumers reject entirely the reality that they know and the marketplace that governs it and lives amongst themselves as a community with rules and rituals that suits them. The author quickly points out that it is not an outlet for significant social change, but rather change at the personal level, Kozinets (2002,p. 36) stated that:" Rather than providing a resolution to the many existing social tensions in contemporary life—such as those surrounding the beneficial and oppressive elements of markets—it offers a conceptual space set apart within which to consider, to play with and within those contradictions temporarily. It falls short of some ideal and uncontaminated state, but it may be all the consumer emancipation most consumers want or need." In this context, consumer resistance presents a chance for consumers to engage in non-conventional sanctioned experimentation and indicate new ways in which the market can reinvent itself to accommodate consumer needs (Holt, 2002). The opposition is made against the consumerist ideology that drives consumers in purchasing goods and services without questioning the ethical side and thus adhering to the avaricious consciousness rampant in the marketplace governed by capitalistic ambitions (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004).

The second type of resistance is more focused at a specific entity, be it a brand, company or organization, one of the main concerns surrounding resistance against companies operating in the market is the contradiction between their dominance and the image of authenticity they try to project to the consumers (Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Thompson et al. 2006). For instance, Lunardo et al. (2012) researched the in-store atmosphere and how it influences the emotional responses of consumers. If they are found to be linked with manipulative intent, pleasure turns to skepticism, leading to a negative attitude towards the store and by extension the corporation. Since the present research is operating in the context of branding

and brand activism, it would be interesting to glance at resistance in brands. Upon deciding between products or services to purchase, the name and notoriety of the brand play a vital role in influencing that decision-making process, it is a relationship established between the brands and the consumers (Fournier, 1998a). That relationship can deviate into an unwanted scenario, where negative emotions towards the brand may prompt behaviors that can be seen as resistance such as negative WOM or switching to another brand (Romani et al.,2012), these negative emotions may be prompted with the political affiliations related to the brand, which proves to be incongruent with the consumers' affiliations (Sandikci and Ekici, 2009). Resistance can manifest itself upon the perception of manipulation or lack of authenticity in various setting, such as advertising campaigns, in some cases the communication adopted in advertising campaigns prompts consumers to be wary of the message and grow skeptical as they sense manipulative intent from the advertisement (Kirmani and Zhu, 2007). Brand resistance is usually motivated either through the incompatibility between the identities of both consumers and brand (Lee et al.,2009b) or through the perception of immoral behavior from the brand (Zarantonello et al. ,2016).

2-2 – ANTECEDENTS OF CONSUMER RESISTANCE

The perception of discrepancy and dissonance in the acts or verbal proclamations of brands and companies lay the groundwork for the consumer resistance to rising (Roux, 2007). For the consumer to be triggered into resisting a firm or brand, there has been some sort of attachment or relationship linking the two parties; then dissonances will appear as a result of the gap between the situation perceived by the consumer, the moral principles and behaviors (Friestad and Wright, 1994). In the following parts, we will explore the situational antecedents that prime consumer resistance, as well as individual characteristics.

A. SITUATIONAL ANTECEDENTS

According to Roux (2007,p. 61): "The study of resistance in different disciplines shows that it is the result of a state of opposition – leading to a variety of responses – to a force exerted and perceived as unacceptable due to the dissonant representations and negative emotions it produces in the subject." From a global perspective, consumer resistance may be prompted due to inconsistencies in the marketplace, or rejection of the dominant consumption paradigm in society. Moisio and Askegaard (2002) pointed out three factors related to resistance, the first one being dissatisfactory market conditions, the second is the non-conformity of products or brand with the consumers' self-image, and the third one is the rejection of the dominant cultural values.

Delving deeper into the inconsistencies surrounding the marketplace, the concept of market metacognition has been defined by Wright (2002, p.677) as " marketplace metacognition refers to everyday individuals' thinking about market-related thinking. This includes people's beliefs about their own and others' mental states and processes and their beliefs about other people's beliefs on those topics as these beliefs pertain to the specific domain of marketplace cooperation and manipulation." Market metacognition is considered an antecedent of resistance due to the fact it is based on consumer perception and their knowledge, which they employ to build their database of the manipulation techniques and mechanisms used formerly by brands or companies, thus reinforcing their immunity to that sort of effective methods in a way, they can identify those techniques and dampen their influences (Friestad and Wright 1994; Roux, 2007).

Moving from the global scope, resistance behaviors can manifest themselves due to corporate misconduct, thus losing the trust of their customers (Davies and Olmedo-Cifuentes, 2016). Looking into to a more specific approach related to brands, as our research will ultimately feature brands, antecedents related to brands are constituted of the rejection of the brand, as they represent the embodiment of mass culture dominant in society, with which some consumers ultimately do not identify with (Thompson and Arsel, 2004). In the same context, Naomi Klein (2015) discussed in her book "*No Logo*" the danger represented by brands that extend without limits and restrict choices available to the consumers, redefining the rules of the market and dominating at the same time, and thwarting any attempt of the competition. The source of consumer resistance can reside in the perception of the immorality of a brand by the consumers, Zarantonello et al. (2016) refer to this phenomenon as company misconduct and associated it with the brand, where consumer perceived the brand committing wrongdoings and acting in contradiction of their consumer's expectations, resulting in a plethora of negative emotions aimed towards that particular brand. In other cases, consumers may resume themselves to practice brand avoidance and reject the brand because of the dissonance between the values of the consumers and those associated with the brand (Lee et al., 2009b).

B. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

As antecedents of consumer resistance, there are other characteristics linked to the specificities of the person who have been studied in resistance literature, resistance behaviors can be fueled by the presence of negative emotions like anger, discontent, and sadness (Antonetti and Maklan 2016; Romani et al., 2012). As much as our research will choose to focus on consumer skepticism, it is interesting to view other potential antecedents as well; in this part, we will discuss: skepticism and cynicism. Roux (2007)

mentioned two variables linked with doubt, skepticism, and cynicism, that seem to influence resistance as antecedents.

First, exploring skepticism a little deeper, the definition of the concept has been a little ambiguous in literature, regarding the nature of skepticism, either a predisposed personality trait (Boush et al., 1994; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998) or situational state that can be induced through context (Forehand & Grier, 2003; Mohr et al., 1998; Vanhamme & Grobden, 2009). Forehand and Grier (2003) tackled this issue by arguing that consumers have various levels of skepticism as a trait. However, this does not limit skepticism not to be induced temporarily in a particular situation, due to the presence of a specific stimulus. Skeptic people tend to question everything around them; it is a part of their nature. However, those whose skepticism is induced through context would direct their skepticism toward a specific subject. Research in advertising devoted some interest in studying skepticism in their context (Boyer et al., 2006; Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998). Skepticism was defined as distrust or disbelief of the motives of advertisers, or the advertising claims in general (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998, 2000). It is referred to a distrust of the honesty and authenticity of the marketer's actions and questioning the truth of what is displayed in the advertisement. (Forehand and Grier 2003, Koslow 2000). The doubt surrounding the motives of advertisers, as well as the sincerity of the claims broadcasted in an advertisement, could be appeased if a tangible, convincing proof is presented to the skeptic consumer.

Skepticism has been studied at length in many contexts and domains, such as psychology (Lilienfeld, 2012), however as our focus would be ultimately oriented towards corporate social responsibility, it would be interesting to look at the previous research conducted in that particular context. Research previously explored how CSR activities and involvement in causes prompts consumers to perceived sincerity and bear positive attitudes towards the company (Bae and Cameron, 2006; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Yoon et al., 2006; Forehand and Grier, 2003), or in some other cases, the opposite happens, a negative attitude where consumers have some doubts surrounding the accuracy of the information (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). For instance, Bae and Cameron (2006) demonstrated that consumers are more likely to have a positive attitude towards a company that engages in corporate giving for altruistic reasons and would harbor negative attitudes towards a company that engages in corporate giving for self-serving reasons. Skepticism is one of the reactions that appeared in case of doubt in the corporate social marketing context; it has been studied as such by Forehand and Grier (2003) who had taken skepticism as a trait and a situational state in the context of corporate social marketing, they found that skepticism arises when there is a conflict between the motives and intentions publicly stated by the company, and the actual motives displayed, consumers were lead to believe that the company was being deceptive in the ways it benefits from the CSM—thus displaying that the lack of congruence and perceived lack of authenticity

would likely lead consumers into questioning the motives of companies behind their public CSR endorsement. Other research focused explicitly on cause-related marketing (Mohr et al. .1998, Chao, Singh, Kristensen, & Villasenor, 2009), as a part of the Corporate Social Responsibility typology made by (Kotler and Lee, 2005), for example, Chao, Singh, Kristensen, & Villasenor (2009) found that skepticism appears strongly in consumers do not feel a familiarity with the CRM campaigns used by the companies to build their brands, the feeling of uncertainty and lack of credibility are pillars for consumers to be skeptical of CRM. Looking at CSR program-related research with skepticism (Vanhamme & Grobбен, 2009 ; Pirsch, Gupta, & Grau, 2007), it is understood that investing in a CSR program is a way to increase customer loyalty and by the same occasion decrease skepticism, however communicating those CSR deeds without a background supporting the inclinations towards the support of those cause may prompt consumers to perceive it as a ploy and doubt the company's sincerity, thus feel skeptical towards the CSR program and the company. Skarmeas and Leonidou (2013) concluded that CSR skepticism has more chance to appear and grow within the consumer base when the company does not place importance on consumers' attributions for CSR engagement, in which case they could perceive it as being egoistic or self-serving. In a follow-up qualitative study, Skarmeas, Leonidou, and Saridakis (2014) pushed beyond the motives behind adopting a CSR program, whether value-oriented or egoistic-oriented and highlighted the role that customer orientation and retailer equity have on dampening the effect of CSR skepticism.

Cynicism, previously mentioned by Roux (2007), as one of the potential antecedents for consumer resistance, has been put on a continuum of doubt by Boyer et al. (2006), demonstrating it as less flexible than skepticism. Cynicism is based on the fact that people behave under selfish motives, and it is considered a predisposition personality trait, unchanged in various situations and context (Mohr, Eroglu, & Ellen, 1998). In some studies, cynicism has been considered, in some cases a dimension in skepticism within a larger ensemble of adverse reactions of adolescents to advertisers' tactics and persuasive techniques used (Boush et al.,1994). However, in other studies, cynicism was set apart from skepticism in a way that cynicism is focused on the nature of the motives and intentions of any action, while skepticism is concerned with the accuracy of the content of the message (Kanter and Wortzel, 1985). When it comes to doubt, cynicism targets the motives behind any information or message displayed, it would not be surprising to find this effect at work in the marketing context. Skeptic consumers might be convinced of the truth of a statement and revert from their doubtful composure. The same cannot be said for cynical consumers, and targeting them is a difficult task as well (Boush et al., 1993). Nevertheless, research has been conducted with cynicism, amongst them Chylinski and Chu (2010) who used a negative stimulus in their studies, to prompt cynical reactions from their consumers, and found different classes of cynicism, either positive, neutral or negative, meanwhile Helm (2004) stated that while cynical consumers are a difficult target to acquire by brands, they do trust a few select brands and devote their loyalty to them,

she studied cynicism as well to uncover four categories of cynical behaviors: disparaging, withdrawal, precaution and retribution

2-3– CONSEQUENCES OF CONSUMER RESISTANCE

Consumer Resistance is bound to have behavioral manifestations appearing in various forms and degrees of intensity amongst the people who seek to manifest their oppositions; these manifestations can translate into a long-term impact on the brand or company.

First, we will discuss the behavioral manifestations resulting from consumer resistance in literature, as we have discussed in previous parts, resistance can be directed towards the marketplace in general, in the potential case where firms conduct themselves in a behavior contradicting their claims, the consumer rejects the marketplace as a whole by engaging in voluntary simplicity and anti-consumption behaviors (Hirschman, 1983), and more broadly this rejection could be expressed through anti-consumerism and market exit (Ritson and Dobscha 1999), consumers' rejection of the marketplace can be possible through the detachment from the current consumer culture and adopting a new way of life that is congruent with their current beliefs and values, basically crafting a new identity for themselves. (Cherrier and Murray, 2007; Cherrier, 2008; Dobscha, 1998; Pentina and Amos, 2011). However when resistance is directed towards a particular brand, company or firm, then Fournier (1998b) put the potential manifestations of consumer resistance on a spectrum divided into three stages, starting from the avoidance of the brands or products that are the focus of the resistance, into intermediate measures like reducing consumption or adjusting consumption habits, into intense actions targeting brands or firms in general, such as boycotts, complaints.

One of the general classifications of consumer resistance manifestations, is based on labeling the actions either as passive or active (Pentina and Amos, 2011), the passive actions, are less visible, usually carried out discretely by the consumer, such as modifying their consumption ideology (Sandikci and Ekici, 2009; Cherrier, 2009; Iyer and Muncy, 2009) or modifying their consumption habits to detach themselves from the generalized consumer culture, such as engaging in voluntary simplicity (Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001; Cherrier and Murray, 2007), on the other hand, the active actions are more visible and apparent, even sometimes carried out in collective, for example, contrary word-of-mouth (Richins, 1983), and boycotts (Klein et al., 2004; Sen et al., 2001; Herrmann, 1993). When it comes to consumer resistance towards a particular organization, or brand, consumers have a variety of behaviors they can adopt, for the sake of this research focus, we will turn our attention to these particular behaviors: consumer boycott (Klein et

al., 2004; Sen et al., 2001), negative word-of-mouth (Richins, 1983), brand avoidance (Lee et al., 2009b), and activism (Romani et al., 2015). We will look at them correctly in the following paragraphs.

First, consumer boycott has been defined by (Friedman 1985, p.97) as "an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace", and it has been mentioned the continuum established by Fournier (1998b) as an intense active rebellion action against a brand or a company. Consumers are demanding environmental and ethical oriented actions from companies (Klein et al., 2004), if companies fail in acting responsibly, they put themselves as a target for resistance (Klein et al., 2002). Thus consumer boycott is an effective way through which the consumers can voice their discontent with a company's behavior (Sen et al., 2001; Klein et al., 2004; Tyran and Engelmann, 2005). For instance, Sen et al. (2001) distinguished between two kinds of consumer boycotts: the first one named economic boycott targets the unjust marketing actions while the second one named social or ethical control boycott coerces the companies in adopting ethical or socially responsible practices in their activities. Literature has identified several antecedents leading to a consumer boycott, such as self-enhancement and the perceived egregiousness of the actions of a specific company (Klein et al., 2002, 2004), influencing change on a bigger scale in society (Kozinets and Handelman, 1998), motivation through the influence of negative emotions such as Australians' feelings towards France and french products, due to the fallout of the French nuclear testing in the pacific (Ettenson and Klein, 2005), or weighing the likelihood of a boycott through two determinants, the susceptibility to normative influences, and the preferences for the boycotted products or availability of substitutes (Sen et al., 2001). One of the most famous consumer boycotts is the 1977 Nestlé (2020) boycott launched in the United States of America. The brand has been under fire for its marketing of the components of baby milk, which they dubbed as being breast milk substitute. Their marketing campaign has misled consumers into thinking Nestlé baby milk can be used safely as a substitute for breast milk, which resulted in numerous health issues and infant deaths in developing countries²⁷.

Secondly, as a second consequence of consumer resistance, negative word-of-mouth is defined as communications between consumers about a specific product, brand, or company, in a negative manner (Richins, 1984; Weinberger, Allen, & Dillon, 1981). The primary source driving negative word-of-mouth is dissatisfaction (Goldenberg, Libai, Moldovan, & Muller, 2007; Richins, 1983). Upon being unleashed, negative word-of-mouth is a great outlet that can influence consumers' attitude towards the brand or company that caused the dissatisfaction (Engel, Kegerreis, & Blackwell, 1969), as well as influence the behaviors of consumers (Haywood, 1989). For instance, Richins (1983) found that upon experiencing a

²⁷ <https://www.nestle.be/fr/entreprise/faq/entreprise/le-boycott-contre-nestle>

strong dissatisfaction, and the inactivity of the concerned organization or company in remedying the problem, consumers turn towards communicating their dissatisfaction to their surroundings and thus do not repurchase the product as well.

When the target of consumer resistance is a brand, then one of the possible consequences would brand avoidance, the rejection is due to the loss of meaning added through the purchase a particular brand (Holt, 2002; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel, 2006). Brand avoidance was defined by Lee et al. (2009a, p.422) as the "phenomenon whereby consumers deliberately choose to keep away from or reject a brand," thus avoidance is possible when consumers have access to these brands and the financial power to purchase them, but instead chose not to (Lee et al., 2009a). The reasons underlying brand avoidance are usually linked to a gap between expectations and the reality of brands, prompting consumer resistance (Holt, 2002; Rumbo, 2002). Lee et al. (2009b) identified multiple reasons behind brand avoidance through qualitative studies such as failure to meet consumers' expectations, the incongruity between the consumers' sense of self and the brand's identity, and ideological incompatibility, where consumers are driven by their morals to avoid the brand, henceforth larger brands are sometimes perceived to be irresponsible leaning toward unethical practices (Lee et al., 2009a; Lee et al., 2009b).

On a more offensive position, consumers may lean towards voicing their discontent, instead of just avoiding the brand (Lee et al., 2009a). Thus they practice anti-brand activism, which is an active form of resistance against brands or corporations that are perceived negatively by consumers (Iyer and Muncy, 2009; Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2010). Henceforth, consumers are moved into action, targeting brands due to injustice in the marketplace, and associating brands with unethical and exploitive behaviors (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2006). For instance, big brand names have been the target of anti-brand activism due to perceived misconduct, such as Starbucks (Thompson and Arsel, 2004) and Nike (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004). In their research, Romani et al. (2015) linked the perceived misconduct of brands with the instigation of negative feelings, such as hate and disgust, which results in speaking of bad publicity and negative word-of-mouth communication, building towards a grand scale opposition, namely anti-brand activism.

In the long term, consumers resisting a particular brand or company can result in an increasing inclination to doubt any claims (Roux, 2007), as trust towards the brand or company begins to deteriorate. In case of the absence of corrective measures from the firm, the consumer begins to perceive the brand image or firm negatively based upon the behaviors (Roux, 2008).

CONCLUSION

In the second chapter, we focused on the mechanism underlying consumer resistance through literature, by defining the concept from the marketing perspective, then exploring the research surrounding resistance fields like innovation and persuasion. In the second part, we focused our research on the antecedents of consumer resistance, precisely skepticism, and cynicism, as situational antecedents that prime the consumer into engaging in resistant behaviors. The third part revolved solely on the manifestations of consumer behaviors studied through literature, with a specific focus on some behavioral manifestations that prove to be new variables for our research such as Boycott, WOM, Activism, and Brand Avoidance. In the next chapter, we will turn our attention to the concept of congruence within the CSR literature, while also raising the question of perceived corporate hypocrisy and how it impacts the brand or company under scrutiny, which proves to be incentive to feel skeptical and resist a brand, or in some cases judge the effort to be costly and engage in cognitive dissonance resolution through willful ignorance.

CHAPTER 3: CONGRUENCE, DISSONANCE AND THE PERCEPTION OF CORPORATE HYPOCRISY

The alignment of cause and brand has been causing for debate through literature; companies are positioning themselves through a dilemma. On the one hand, being congruent with their cause puts them in an advantageous position where they can contribute to a cause relevant to their field. Congruence and accordance are appealing to individuals based on the theory of congruity. On the other hand, endorsing a cause that does not have an apparent link with the corporate mission of the brand, leads consumers into dismissing the self-serving and opportunistic motives. The mechanism at work from the consumer's perspective is different; whether there is congruence or incongruence, some consumers are exposed to informational cues that trigger an inconsistency within them, thus experiencing cognitive dissonance. While other consumers are exposed to the same informational cues, but it triggers in them the perception of corporate hypocrisy.

The first section of this chapter will be solely dedicated to the exploration of the concept of congruence through various literature fields, and offer an overview of the research undertaken supporting each of the types of congruence: high congruence or low congruence. This provides a base for one of our primary mechanism in this research. The second section will treat the perception of corporate hypocrisy by

drawing on the literature surrounding hypocrisy in general, and similar close concepts in the field of corporate social responsibility. As a form of corporate misconduct and perception of deception and manipulation, this construct will be considered an important mediator is transitioning between the perception of incongruence or congruence, to the active doubt and ultimately resistance of the brand. The third and final section will be focused on cognitive dissonance, by providing a global overview of very complex and rich theory, while also hinting at the very few works undertaken concerning incongruence. While also shedding light on a new concept, willful ignorance, used in situations where consumers want to avoid negative information.

3-1 – PERCEIVED CONGRUENCE AND INCONGRUENCE

The notion of congruence has been defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2020) as: "The agreement with something; the state of being similar to something and not in conflict with it"²⁸. The concept has appeared for the first time in psychology research; Hastie and Kumar (1979) studied the role of congruence between behaviors and personality traits into stimulating memory. Following suit as many of the concepts preceding it, congruence as later adopted in marketing research as well (Lynch and Schuler, 1994 ; Kirmani and Shiv, 1998). In that regard, consumers tend to lean towards products that are congruent with their values (Rokeach and Rothman, 1965), thus out of two products proposed, consumers would value the one congruent with their values (Rokeach, 1960) positively. Various fields of research attempt to give meaning to congruence. The fields that applied congruence in research work are numerous, such as congruent scents with the retail atmosphere had a positive impact on the product selection process (Mitchell et al., 1995). However, we will focus on the next sub-part on two main fields that utilized the concept of Congruence, sponsoring, and branding.

A. PERCEIVED CONGRUENCE IN VARIOUS CONTEXTS

In branding, the concept of congruence and linked its meaning to the accordance between the parent brand and the extension (Aaker and Keller, 1990; Park, Milberg, and Lawson, 1991), For instance, celebrity endorsement is to be considered an extension of the brand, in their research, Fleck, Korchia, and LeRoy (2012) found that when the celebrity endorsing a brand is both congruent with each other, leads to a shift in brand image. Self-concept rose in the branding literature surrounding congruence (Govers and Schoormans, 2005; Elbedweihy et al., 2016), such as consumers are inclined to favor congruence between their actions and their self-concept, those actions can take the form of product buying (Elliott, 1997).

²⁸ <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/congruent>

Sirgy et al. (1997) identified two types of congruence linked to consumers and their brands or products. The first type of congruence is called the product-personality congruence, it refers to the congruence between the personalities of both consumers and their brands. The second type of congruence is called the user-image congruence, it stands for the congruence between the personality of a particular product, and the typical potential personality of its users. Consumers seek brands that are congruent with their personalities, to develop their self-concept, thus resulting in enhancing product evaluation (Rokeach, 1960; Roy and Rabbanee, 2015; Elbedweihy et al., 2016; Freling and Forbes, 2005; Hong and Zinkhan, 1995; Sirgy et al., 1997). Research delved more in-depth in the congruence between products and consumers' personalities, by analyzing result proper to specific categories of products, such as clothes (Wang and Heitmeyer, 2006), cars (Hong and Zinkhan, 1995), services (Malär et al., 2011). For example, Gaeff (1996) researched the congruence between brand image and the self-image that yielded results supporting consumers evaluating brands positively, when those brands are congruent with their self-image. We can see that brands are used as socially distinctive traits and personal meaning motivating consumers in choosing them (Belk, 1988; Sirgy, 1982).

The concept of congruence was mentioned in sponsorship of academic research. Cornwell (1995) identified two possible sponsorship routes, logical or strategic. The logical option is when the link between the sponsor and the cause is visible. However, the strategic option is when the sponsor chooses a cause to reach a specific target. Cornwell and Maignan (1998) categorized two activities within sponsorship, the first one is the sponsor is linked with the activity sponsored, and the sponsored received financial assistance, the second one is that sponsor is in charge of marketing the association. In sponsoring, congruence referred to the harmonious relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored organization (Weeks, Cornwell and Drennan, 2008), there have been numerous academic writings on the subject of congruence in sponsorship literature (Cornwell, Humphreys, Maguire, Weeks & Tellegen 2006; Fleck and Quester 2007; Roy and Cornwell 2003; Speed and Thompson 2000) showing that congruence between an event and an organization or a brand helps in increasing positive attitude towards the sponsor, and facilitates recall memory, while a lack of congruence can lead to a perception of lack of credibility and dampens the intended effect of the communication. Sponsorship provides advantages for the sponsoring company or brand, such as influencing the attitude towards the sponsor (Speed and Thompson, 2000), influencing consumers' recall of the sponsor (Hansen and Scotwin, 1995; Nicholls, Roslow and Dublish, 1999), and enhance purchase intention (Madrigal, 2001). Following congruity theory (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955), the harmonious congruence between a sponsor and their sponsored event is illustrated as a match between the two parties, displaying consistency and similarity, a union that makes sense and appeals to the targeted public (Becker-Olsen and Hill, 2006; Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006).

For instance, Speed and Thompson (2000) found that perceived congruence between sponsor and event generates a positive response, and asserts the effectiveness of the sponsor.

B. PERCEIVED CONGRUENCE AND INCONGRUENCE IN CSR

For the sake of our research, we will look closely at the concept of congruence and perceived congruence from the Corporate Social Responsibility context, to provide a basis for brand activism-related research we wish to conduct.

Corporate Social Responsibility has proven to be a powerful tool for companies, and their brands, to survive in the current marketplace, yielding numerous advantages like increased purchase intentions which leads to a better brand image and a solid loyal consumer base (Du et al., 2010; Smith and Langford, 2009). As more companies engaged in CSR strategies to reap the benefits in short and long-term, they underestimate the effect of communicating those activities to the concerned stakeholders (Du et al., 2010; Fatma and Rahman, 2015), thus shrouding them in mystery and leaving the blank to be interpreted by the consumers as they please. Consumers may feel skeptical about the CSR communication from any brand, doubting the veracity of their claims (Skarmeas and Leonidou, 2013; Skarmeas et al., 2014; Webb and Mohr, 1998). Henceforth the CSR communication introduced the concept of Congruence to appease any misunderstanding or perceived inaccuracy surrounding their claims, seeking to be in accordance with their stakeholders.

Looking at congruence, the CSR lens, Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) defined congruence as the amount of convergence perceived by consumers between a CSR campaign and the company behind it. Congruence is sometimes referred to as a fit; this fit was defined by Varadarajan and Menon (1988) as the “the perceived link between a cause and the firm’s product line, brand image, position, and/or target market”. In the same vein, CSR fit was defined through research as the link between CSR field of application or a specific social issue with the company’s business (Elving, 2013; Du et al., 2010). As the definitions of congruence varied in CSR research, some authors (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006; Woisetschläger & Michaelis, 2012; Menon and Kahn, 2003) dived more in-depth into the concept and uncovered types of fit within CSR fit. For instance, Simmons and Becker-Olsen (2006) made the difference between two types of fit: natural fit and created fit. Natural fit means the link between the company and the cause, and the created fit is made through targeted communications that seek to tie the organization with a specific cause.

The most used distinction made in CSR fit is the high/low fit separation that dominates the literature, each side arguing the benefit of either adopting high fit or low fit, authors like Menon and Kahn (2003) combined the high and low CSR fit in their research, and found that in situations where we have cause promotion and stakeholders are focused on the sponsor brand, a high fit is preferred, however in case of advocacy promotions and stakeholders are concerned with the cause or social issue, then a low fit is more suitable. In the same context, Chen et al. (2014) found that high CSR fit is suitable for organizations that have strong ties with CSR, and low CSR fit is suitable for organizations more lenient towards their corporate activities. Thus, we will explore the literature surrounding each of the high CSR fit, and low CSR fit individually to observe the different cases of fit and how it operates in different contexts.

Research surrounding the lack of CSR fit or low CSR fit found that CSR fit does not play a key role in CSR campaigns (Chernev and Blair 2015; Lafferty 2007, 2009), and sometimes the lack of fit would lead to a positive outcome for the campaign (Drumwright 1996). Adopting a CSR campaign whose focus is detached from the company's core mission of the business, lead consumers into associating it with altruistic motives, that do not benefit the company in a direct, obvious way in their profit-making strategies, henceforth, consumers evaluate the company positively (Webb and Mohr 1998; Du et al. 2010; Barone et al. 2000; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). Adopting a low CSR fit campaign emphasizes the credibility of the organization, by dismissing any hidden motives or benefits they might reap from the support of the cause (Folse et al. 2010; Koschate-Fischer et al. 2012). However, there is a potential drawback in case of low CSR fit; then, the CSR campaign becomes a handicap for the organization. (Simmons and Becker-Olsen, 2006).

Congruity Theory (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955) stated that people would lean toward accord and harmony in their thoughts, actively avoiding dissonance and conflict. High fit proves to be an advantage in sponsorship, in a way where corporations undertaking causes that are congruent with their core mission are perceived to be more effective (Rodgers, 2003), which fosters a positive attitude towards the organization (Aaker & Keller, 1993; Gross & Wiedmann, 2015; Speed & Thompson, 2000). High fit has been discussed in the branding context as well, Cha, Yi, and Bagozzi (2016) studied the link between CSR and brand fit, so in case of high fit, it resulted in personal and social brand identification which extends to brand loyalty. In the case of high CSR fit, research demonstrated numerous positive outcomes when the cause and the corporation's core mission are aligned (Becker-Olsen and Hill 2006; Koschate-Fischer et al. 2012; Prajescu and Olsen 2004; Samu and Wymer 2009; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006). In that context, Menon and Kahn (2003) stated reasons are fueling high CSR fit perception, such as corporate image associations, personal involvement, and specific segments. For instance, Nan and Heo (2007) studied congruence in a cause-related marketing campaign, and linked the potential positive benefit for the firm

with high congruence, only if consumers are aware of the brand in question, while Rim, Yang, and Lee (2016) demonstrated that high Congruence between a firm and an NGO results in positive word-of-mouth. In the case of CSR skepticism (Forehand and Grier, 2003), Roy (2010) conducted research demonstrating the positive effect of high congruence compared to low congruence on skeptic consumers, while (García-Jiménez al. 2017) stated that the positive effect of congruence would be apparent only for less skeptical consumers.

3-2 – CORPORATE HYPOCRISY

Companies walk a fine line when they engage in CSR activities and communicate their claims to the public, the looming threat of being perceived as inauthentic or even at times manipulative is real. The misalignment between claims and actions can be an essential part of hypocrisy (Greenbaum et al., 2015), and it could induce the perception or intent of manipulation (McKinnon, 1991). Companies have usually been assigned two types of motives behind their actions, either self-serving motives or public-serving motives (Forehand and Grier, 2003), consumers would perceived firms with public-serving motives more positively than those with self-serving motives, supporting their efforts in contributing to social causes (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006). However, Lee et al. (2017) conducted a research where organizations that communicated intensely on their involvement in a social cause but made a considerable profit in the marketplace were perceived as greedy. Viewers may perceive manipulative intent, an advertisement, which would prompt them to resist the message (Eagly et al. 1978; Wood and Eagly 1981), the perception of deception is called inferences of manipulative intent, and it has been defined as “consumer inferences that the advertiser is attempting to persuade by inappropriate, unfair, or manipulative means” (Campbell, 1995, p.228). Research in an advertisement (Cotte, Coulter, and Moore, 2005) demonstrated that negative ad appealing to the consumers’ guilt would trigger potential inferences of manipulative intent, which leads to a negative attitude towards the corporation. On the other hand, Klein and al. (2004) introduced the concept of perceived egregiousness, as an antecedent for consumers’ motivation for boycott participation; they defined as companies engaging in activities that are deemed harmful and wrong, with potential repercussions in their environment and stakeholders. The perception of misconduct is somewhat similar to perceived corporate hypocrisy and perceived manipulative intent.

A. HYPOCRISY

The term “hypocrisy” has been defined in dictionaries, such as Merriam-Webster (2020) as “a feigning to be what one is not or to believe what one does not,” This definition reflects the falsehood and the gap between claims and actions that stand in the heart of corporate hypocrisy. We will explore the research

surrounding hypocrisy in various fields, provide a global understanding of the concept. Hypocrisy descends from the Greek root word *hypokrisis*, which refers to playing or acting a role on stage.

Similar to many concepts, hypocrisy has been borrowed from research in the psychological field (Batson et al., 2002; Watson and Sheikh, 2008). Barden et al. (2005) introduced the concept of self-hypocrisy, which stands on the inconsistency between public announcement and private conduct. Barden et al. (2005, p.1463) referred to hypocrisy as “saying one thing and then doing another.” On the other hand, psychology research identified another type of hypocrisy, moral hypocrisy (Batson et al., 1997). Moral hypocrisy stands on an individual’s drive to appear moral to their surroundings, without committing to moral behavior in reality (Batson et al., 1999). Research extended the definition of moral hypocrisy, to include that individuals would judge a moral transgression made by others harshly, than what they would have judged their transgressions (Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2007). Henceforth, Watson and Sheikh (2008) adopted a different perspective to investigate moral hypocrisy and found that moral hypocrisy is more likely to be linked to a collection of behaviors following the same pattern, than one single inconsistency. The drive for appearing moral to the outside environment is clear, Gilbert and Jones (1986) investigated the judgment against people practicing hypocrisy, and their general finding supported that hypocritical people were not kindly viewed by their surroundings, showcasing the negative image of hypocrites in society (Barden, Rucker, & Petty, 2005). Barden et al. (2014) investigated the potential effect of factors such as group membership in influencing the hypocrisy judgment issued.

Management research paid particular interest to the gap between public business ethics, and the business practices put in place (Fassin and Buelens, 2011; Jahdi and Acikdilli, 2009), this inconsistency was named organizational hypocrisy, and Philippe and Koehler (2005, p.13) define organizational hypocrisy as the “perceived inconsistency between words, previous actions and subsequent action of the organization’s trustees”. The perceived inconsistency could be assigned solely to the leader of the organization (Brunsson, 1989). Leaders who make claims but act differently are dubbed a perfect example of leader hypocrisy (Cha and Edmondson, 2006).

Marketing research tackled the subject of hypocrisy, mainly from the social responsibility perspective (Wagner et al., 2009). Wagner et al. (2009, p.79) defined corporate hypocrisy as “the belief that a firm claims to be something that it is not”, referencing to the inconsistency between a firm’s CSR claims, and their behavior (Wagner et al., 2009). The most recent application of hypocrisy in the marketing field is Brand Hypocrisy (Guèvremont, 2019), who defined it as “brand perceived as intentionally projecting false or unrealistic appearances, thereby implying the dissimulation or manipulation of attributes, motivations or beliefs.” Guèvremont (2019), is one of the very first authors to fill the gap in branding literature,

provided multiple dimensions to the concept of brand hypocrisy: image hypocrisy, mission hypocrisy, message hypocrisy, and social hypocrisy.

B. PERCEIVED HYPOCRISY IN CSR

Information related to CSR activities and campaign has been found to exert an effect on consumers, either positive or negative (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001), furthermore CSR activities can lead to positive customer feedback (Brown and Dacin, 1997), and build a stronger relationship between firms and their stakeholders (Sen et al., 2006). From a bigger perspective, CSR activities boost the market value of corporations and also result in better consumer satisfaction (Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006). For all the benefits resulting from CSR, there has been a rise in negative responses to CSR activities, such as CSR skepticism, where consumers are more doubtful of the claims of a firm (Skarmeas and Leonidou 2013), these consumers will evaluate those claims carefully (Brown and Krishna, 2004). Skeptical consumers evaluate the truthfulness of CSR claims carefully to determine the motives lying behind those claims (Vanhamme and Grobben, 2008; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). The gap found between the claims of a company or brand, and their actual behavior, or any perceived misconduct would be grounds for perceived corporate hypocrisy to be attributed to the firm.

Based on psychology research, Shklar (1984, p.62) refers to the perception of hypocrisy as a “distance between assertions and performance”. Thus marketing research borrowed the term and applied to consumer’s perception of corporate activities (Aaker, 1997). Wagner et al. (2009, p.79) defined it as “the belief that a firm claims to be something that it is not” while finding in their research that issuing CSR claims before contradictory behavior fuels the perceived corporate hypocrisy and thus results in a negative attitude towards the company. In the same vein, Yoon et al. (2006) found that consumers receiving information about a CSR campaign through advertisement would prompt them to suspect the firm targets advertising their efforts, instead of contributing to the cause, while Bae and Cameron (2006) demonstrated that self-interested motives linked to CSR activities lead to the negative attitude towards the company. Furthermore, Connors et al. (2017) linked perceived corporate hypocrisy with CSR skepticism, while considering the role of construal level theory in the matter. Connors et al. (2017) found that presenting information concretely would make it more credible and generate a positive attitude for skeptical consumers, thus low-construal level messages help mitigate the effect of perceived corporate hypocrisy. Although engaging in CSR activities can prove to be a delicate matter for companies with controversial products (tobacco, beer...), and while a consumer may be aware those companies often act as hypocrites (Palazzo and Richter, 2005), engaging in CSR activities may cement that statement, and

influence their perceived reputation, but it does not lead to a change in consumer attitudes (Arli et al., 2017). In that regard, Goswami & Ha-Brookshire (2016) argued that the gap between sustainable claims, and the actions conducted in reality fuel the perceptions of corporate hypocrisy, making any current or future CSR communication less credible, and tarnishing the reputation of the firm (Yoon et al., 2006; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). The manifestation of corporate hypocrisy can take the form of greenwashing (Delmas and Burbano, 2011; Furlow, 2010), which refers to a firm appearing environmentally conscious or bluewashing (Berliner and Prakash, 2015), which refers to supporting human rights. Rickett (2020) uncovered a new form of corporate hypocrisy called coronawashing, operating in the same context as greenwashing or woke washing, it gives corporations the appearance of stepping up to the challenge and helping the general public in this global pandemic when the reality is something else. Numerous companies have broadcasted their pleas to the public, urging them to stay in their homes and practice social distancing while requesting emergency funds from the government and taking advantage of the crisis for their benefits. Rickett (2020) illustrated coronawashing with examples, such as the corporation Virgin, lead by Richard Branson, communicated their contribution to the crisis by manufacturing ventilators, while their CEO is currently taking legal action against the National Health Service and request government funding. Primark contributed to the pandemic by donating care packages to the staff of a London hospital to uplift their morale and support their hard work during this pandemic, however by canceling their production in Bangladesh; the firm ended up costing numerous workers their livelihood.

3-3. COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Cognitive dissonance theory was first formulated by Festinger (1957), where he stated if an individual is exposed to two pieces of information, one relevant to the others, however inconsistent, this situation creates discomfort, and an undesirable state called “dissonance”. Dissonance can be expected to appear when there is an expected succession to actions or events related to the two cognitions (Frey et al., 1982). From a different perspective, dissonance has been linked with the feeling of apprehension or fear of undesirable outcomes, instead of the inconsistency itself (Cooper and Fazio 1984).

Cognitive dissonance theory is related to free-choice, when confronted with two inconsistent cognitions, the person must choose to reduce the discrepancy, Brehm (1956) found in experiments of post-decision that participants that were confronted with a difficult choice, would view the rejected choice rather negatively, to cement their position and their choice of their option. In the same context of changed attitude to accommodate the situation and reduce dissonance, Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) found that

participants who were bribed with a lower compensation to lie to their counterparts, also changed their attitudes towards the task to reduce their dissonance, and act according to their claims.

Furthermore, the dissonance is not a stable feature, it varies according to the magnitude of the inconsistency between the two cognitions, in simpler terms, the greater the inconsistency, the greater the dissonance, which fuels the person's motivation even further to reduce it. Cooper (2007) illustrated the magnitude of cognitive dissonance, by giving an example of a person who cares about the poor people's cause, so when confronted with a situation where he is asked to donate to the soup kitchen, the person can either give nothing (which would not be consistent with his beliefs), or he could write a check with a large amount of money (this would be consistent with his beliefs), however, if the person just gives the spare change found in his pocket as a contribution, this would not create conflict and dissonance because that contribution does not display his beliefs that poor people's situation deserves financial support.

Cognitive dissonance theory awakened interest in the motivational aspects for dissonance reduction, enlarging the initial theory proposed by Festinger (1957), some theories emerged in the field to explain the motivation aspect of dissonance. First, Aronson (1968,1999) developed the self-consistency theory, where dissonance refers to acting in a way that is not consistent with the sense of self that a person has. The behavior usually refers to negative behavior; the varying degrees of self-esteem plays a role in regulating the attitude change in reducing dissonance. In this theory, people are motivated by the preservation of their sense of self and avoid inner conflicts. Another theory emerged by Steele (1988) named the Self-Affirmation Theory, where the presence of inconsistencies and dissonance generates a threat to the positive self-image and integrity of the self. Another possible motivational aspect for cognitive dissonance is the apprehension of the possible outcomes and consequences of two opposed cognitions, is the source of the unease and discrepancy felt by individuals, they bear responsibility for this uncomfortable situation (Cooper and Fazio, 1984)

Apart from social studies and psychology, marketing has also taken an interest in studying the working of cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). The process of decision making is complicated with limited information available, or the overwhelming presence of delicate information to process (Bettman et al., 2008), so consumers turn to heuristics in their decision-making process (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974).

The earliest research combining consumer behavior and cognitive dissonance theory focused on post-purchase dissonance and their interest in advertisements to reduce it. However, the results indicated that consumers paid attention to the advertisements because of the relevance of the topic (Ehrlich et al.,1957).

Linking product choice with cognitive dissonance, Kaish (1967) stated that choosing a specific category of product, from the three classes of consumer goods, would help the consumer preserve his self-image. However, Hunt (1970) chose to pursue the route of post-purchase research in the cognitive dissonance theory and found that letters as a communication method do decrease dissonance and increase the possibility of future purchases, while phone calls produce the opposite outcome. In the same vein, Korgaonkar and Moschis (1982) found that consumers bearing high expectations for the product contribute to generating less dissonance post-purchase.

A. COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND INCONGRUENCE

Rare attempts in research tackled the link between cognitive dissonance theory and incongruence together (Heckler and Childers, 1992; Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989; Fleck and Maille, 2011). Inconsistency is sometimes used as incongruency interchangeably (Heckler and Childers, 1992), knowing the incongruence is used through comparison with the mental schema of any given category (Alba and Hutchinson, 1987; Cohen et Basu, 1987). Congruence is the basis for establishing a lack of cognitive dissonance (Fleck-Dousteyssier, Roux and Darpy, 2005).

Some research acknowledged that incongruence is close to inconsistency, without linking it fully to cognitive dissonance (Fleck-Dousteyssier, Roux and Darpy, 2005; Amine and Glérant-Glikson, 2010) or presented dissonance and incongruence as similar concepts (Aurier and Fort, 2005). After acknowledging that cognitive dissonance is linked in some cases to incongruence, Maille and Fleck (2011) drew the difference between the two concepts, as they were different for two main reasons. The first reason is that cognitive dissonance is due to the psychological discomfort anticipating undesirable outcomes, and perceived incongruence does not match the same description but would be considered a valid cause for that discomfort. The second reason lies in the fact that dissonance results from two contradictory cognitions; however, the link is not explicitly clear in the case of perceived incongruence.

The state of inconsistency existing between two cognitions in cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) could be attributed to the incongruence between the two congruence, Maille and Fleck (2010) stated in their research that one of the ways for perceived incongruence to be reduced would be to reduce the cognitive dissonance (according to the principle of the homeostasis), either by ignoring the information (Aaker and Sengupta, 2000; Lee and Schumann, 2004) or processing the more accessible information (Lee and Schumann, 2004). This could refer to a new coping mechanism linked to ignoring potentially harmful information, named willful ignorance (Ehrich and Irwin, 2005).

B. WILLFUL IGNORANCE

The gap between attitudes and actual purchase behavior is an ongoing issue (e.g., Belk, 1985), consumers claim to be considerate about various social issues in society, but their behaviors did not deflect from their usual traditional purchases (Devinney et al., 2006), the pressure behind caring about issues and practicing ethical consumption prompts people to make socially acceptable claims (Ulrich and Sarasin, 1995). Consumers make claims about their moral standing, and values, they publicly show to their peers that they care about specific issues, but their behavior indicates otherwise, thus practicing moral hypocrisy (Batson, Thompson, and Chen, 2002). Having the option of a moral wiggle room, where people can remain ignorant or uncertain about consequences of their choices, would explain resorting to willful ignorance (Dana et al., 2007; Matthey and Regner, 2011)

In the context of donations, donors who contribute to a cause would choose to remain willfully ignorant of the success of the charity in tackling down their issue, to preserve their positive feeling about themselves (Niehaus, 2014), thus maintaining a positive self-image as well (Mazar et al., 2008; Bénabou and Tirole, 2011). The active component of avoiding potential negative information is the critical element of willful ignorance. Furthermore, in environmental issues, qualitative research demonstrated that people do not actively seek to learn facts about climate change, fearing negative information (Stoll-Kleemann, O’Riordan, and Jaeger, 2001). In that regard, willful ignorance received particular attention in the research done by Ehrich and Irwin (2005), where they found that consumers willfully ignore any information related to the ethical attributes of products, in the phase of product selection, to avoid any potential upsetting piece of information, they avoided information all-together. Receiving a piece of new information like the unethical work conditions of the factories making the products, for example, would put them in front of the dilemma of either giving up the product and stand by their values and beliefs, or purchase the product and feel discrepancy within themselves. Henceforth purposely ignoring a potentially disturbing action is more comfortable than choosing an action, even if the outcomes turn out to be the same (Baron and Ritov, 1994; Ritov and Baron 1995, 1999). In follow-up research by Reczek et al. (2018), they found an interesting link between willful ignorance as a coping mechanism, and memory, where consumers prefer forgetting than acknowledging that they failed to use ethical information about specific information during their process of product selection. Zane et al. (2016) extended literature on willful ignorance, by stating that willfully ignoring ethical attributes is the first step in ignoring undesirable potential negative information, some consumers can resort in denigrating ethical consumers, an attempt at reducing their dissonance and reconcile with their self-image, by turning their anger towards ethical consumers and lessening their likelihood of acting ethically in that area in the future. Recent research uncovered a concept closer to willful ignorance, according to Dalman, Buche, and Min (2019, p.878), the sin of omission

is defined as the “motivated inaction in which consumers actively choose not to bring up or completely ignore (when it is mentioned) the unethical issues linked with the brand to protect the brand”. The sin of omission requires consumers to willingly ignore the ethical failures of their favored brand to others (Dalman, Buche, and Min, 2019).

CONCLUSION

In this last and final chapter of the first part of our research, we focused on various mechanisms surrounding the accordance and harmony between the brand and the cause they endorse, but also the perceptions of inconsistency from the consumers’ perspective within the brand, such as incongruence or corporate hypocrisy. We also raise the question of the inconsistency felt between the thoughts and actions of the consumer, resulting in cognitive dissonance. Furthermore, willful ignorance was discussed as a coping mechanism used by consumers to evade being exposed to negative information. The next part will focus solely on the research project by tackling the theoretical framework and the conceptual model, while the following part will a potential methodology for the research.

PART 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND MODEL

In the previous chapters, we discussed in depth the main mechanisms at work in this research through previous research displayed in the literature review part of this document. This part of this thesis named “Theoretical Framework and Model” will focus on the research project by highlighting the research gap, and the main research question. We will also formulate our hypotheses by visualizing the links between the concepts displayed in the research model. The hypotheses will be the base upon which we will guide our future steps in choosing an appropriate methodology.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH GAP AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The objective of this chapter is to narrow the scope of the research by stating the current gap that prompts the elaboration of this research project, as well as the primary research question guiding us through. The starting point of our research is to understand the mechanisms of consumer behavior in cases of brand activism. It is a relatively new concept in the branch of social marketing and corporate social responsibility, with scarce academic references on it.

Brand activism was defined by Sakar and Kotler (2018b) as a "business effort to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to promote or impede

improvements in society." The first chapter of the research treats the concept in detail by drawing comparisons with corporate social responsibility and cause-related marketing. Sakar and Kotler (2018a) put brand activism as society-drive, by tackling issues and endorsing causes that are currently preoccupying the general public; those issues can be part of numerous categories, the specifics of all types of brand activism undertaken would add complexity to the research so that we will consider two distinct types of brand activism: social brand activism and environmental brand activism. Thus our first independent variable would be the type of brand activism. We will also add another area of exploration, with an explicit and implicit message of brand activism as our second independent variable. The problem with brand activism is the continuous ambiguity with the concept and its influence on consumer behavior.

Researchers have just started piecing together academic work in the field (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020), but it is still not enough to provide a conceptual background of this new concept. The abundant research in corporate social responsibility and cause-related marketing represents the imbalance by comparison of research works in brand activism. Thus research should turn their focus into an extensive study of consumer behavior in brand activism context, to explore the concept and its implications, but also its limitations and conditions of use. This research is unique because it seeks to fill the gap in brand activism literature from the consumer perspective, by linking it to concepts like congruence or fit that has been studied in corporate social responsibility (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012; Prajecsus & Olsen, 2004; Samu and Wymer, 2009; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006) and cause-related marketing (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988), and in some particular cases consumer resistance (Roux, 2007).

The importance of brand activism has been highlighted by authors such as Sakar and Kotler (2018a). However, there is limited empirical research focusing on the effect of adopting such as a branding strategy on consumer behaviors, and their reactions towards the brand. The present research seeks to fill the gap in the academic literature by providing various scenarios of consumer reactions to a brand activism strategy. Brand activism walks a thin line between the intent of purchase behavior (e.g., Nike) and behavioral manifestations of resistance (e.g., Pepsi), it is a risk undertaken by brand seeking to differentiate from the competition in the marketplace. To better evaluate the effect of brand activism, it is essential to consider the congruence between the cause and the brand. Consequently, this research aims to answer the following questions: *How does brand activism as a branding strategy influence consumer behavior?* However, more specifically, we seek to find answers to this question: *How does brand activism influence mechanisms that result in either a positive or a negative attitude?*

CONCLUSION

Our research can be considered the initiating steps in deepening brand activism-related research from the consumer perspective. The purpose of this research is to explore and analyze the influence of brand activism on consumer behavior, specifically in the French context, through studying the various consumer responses to a brand activism strategy, ranging from negative responses such as the intention to resist the brand to positive responses such as the generation of purchase intentions, while also considering the potential scenario where consumers may feel cognitive dissonance after they purchased the brand. The upcoming chapter will detail the links between the variables chosen in our proposed research model and formulate research hypotheses.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND MODEL

After highlighting the literature gap and the research question, this second chapter seeks to forge links between the chosen variables in this research: Stipulating the following hypotheses upon which the research methodology will be based upon, and formulating our suggested liaisons between the variables, culminating in the elaboration of a research model (see figure 4).

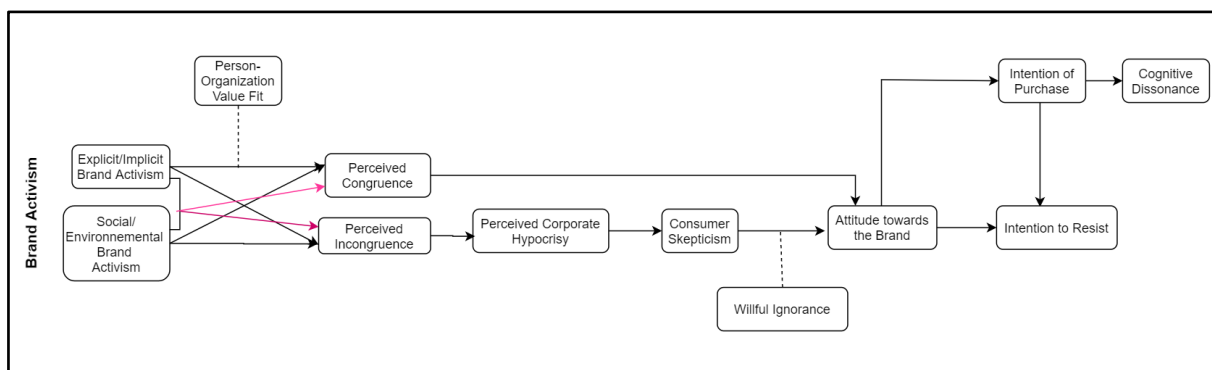


Figure 4: Proposed Research Model

The perception of congruence between the cause and the core mission of an organization fosters a positive attitude towards the organization (Aaker & Keller, 1993; Gross & Wiedmann, 2015; Speed & Thompson, 2000). The leniency towards congruent causes stands on the congruity theory (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955) which states that people would prefer accordance in their thoughts and avoid any conflicting uncomfortable situation. In the case of high CSR fit, research demonstrated numerous positive outcomes when the cause and the corporation's core mission are aligned (Becker-Olsen & Hill, 2006; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012; Prajescu & Olsen, 2004; Samu & Wymer, 2009; Simmons & Becker-Olsen,

2006). We have established on the base of previous research conducted in the high perception of congruence between the cause, and the brand or the organization in the CSR field, those findings are a solid base to speculate on the potential similar effect in brand activism. Consumers who are exposed to the perception of congruence between the brand activism's cause, and the company's core mission, would develop a positive attitude towards the brand. This prompts us to formulate the following hypotheses :

H1. Perceived congruence mediates the relationship between explicit/implicit brand activism and attitude towards the brand.

H1a. Explicit/Implicit brand activism positively influences perceived congruence

H1b. Perceived congruence positively influences attitude towards the brand.

H2. Perceived congruence mediates the relationship between social/environmental brand activism and attitude towards the brand.

H2a. Social/environmental brand activism positively influences perceived congruence

H2b. Perceived congruence positively influences attitude towards the brand.

Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) defined congruence as the amount of convergence perceived by consumers between a CSR campaign and the company behind it. Thus incongruence or low-congruence refers to the least amount of convergence between the cause and the brand or company endorsing it. Incongruence is not necessarily an undesirable outcome for the brand; companies resorted to adopting low-congruence CSR strategies to underline the fact that their contributions are not fueled with self-serving motives (Drumwright, 1996). However, incongruity leads consumers into putting more effort into their thought process about the CSR campaign, which leaves room for growing doubt and skepticism towards the motives of CSR activities (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). The consumer may dismiss their doubts and perceived the brand as being self-serving by contributing to an important cause that has no direct benefit for them, or they could go another route riddled with doubt and be wary of the brand. In the latter cause, the appearance of perceptions of corporate hypocrisy is fueled by the inconsistencies between CSR information available (Wagner et al., 2009). Incongruence between a brand activism campaign's cause and the brand's core mission is a way to attract the consumer's attention and surprise them with this unlikely association; however, it could also lead to fueling perception of hypocrisy (e.g., Pepsi's brand activism campaign). Vreenderberg et al. (2018) stated that considering an incongruent cause for a particular brand is a high-risk move when taken lightly and performed poorly; the brand is left open for consumer backlash and adverse reactions. The backlash is resulting from accusations of hypocrisy and manipulating the consumer's involvement in this case for profit-making reasons. This backlash has been called woke-

washing by Vrederberg et al. (2018). Operating in a similar context as greenwashing, woke-washing refers to companies' attempts in using social causes to benefit their brands in the marketplace, without fully committing to the cause. Woke-washing can be considered a form of corporate hypocrisy proper to brand activism. In this case, we will consider that low congruence between brand activism's chosen cause and the brand's core mission contributes to the perception of inconsistency, thus prompting the consumer to make an additional effort in understanding the link between the cause and the brand. We believe that perceived congruence mediates the effect of brand activism on perceived corporate hypocrisy. This prompts us to formulate the following hypotheses :

H3. Perceived incongruence mediates the relationship between social/environmental brand activism and perceived corporate hypocrisy.

H3a. Social/Environmental brand activism positively influences perceived incongruence

H3b. Perceived incongruence influence positively perceived corporate hypocrisy.

H4. Perceived incongruence mediates the relationship between implicit/explicit brand activism and perceived corporate hypocrisy.

H4a. implicit/explicit brand activism positively influences perceived incongruence

H4b. Perceived incongruence influence positively perceived corporate hypocrisy.

If we consider the interactions between the two independent variables displayed in our research model (see figure 4), then the interaction between implicit/explicit brand activism and social/environmental brand activism is bound to have an effect of mediation of perceived congruence and attitude towards the brand:

H5. Perceived Congruence mediates the relationship between brand activism and attitude towards the brand.

H5a. Brand activism positively influences perceived congruence

H5b. Perceived congruence positively influences attitude towards the brand.

If we consider the interactions between the two independent variables displayed in our research model (see figure 4), then the interaction between implicit/explicit brand activism and social/environmental brand activism is bound to have an effect of mediation of perceived incongruence and perceived corporate hypocrisy :

H6. Perceived Incongruence mediates the relationship between brand activism and perceived corporate hypocrisy.

H6a. Brand activism positively influences perceived incongruence

H6b. Perceived incongruence positively influences perceived corporate hypocrisy.

As incongruity puts consumers in a situation where they put effort into their thought process, to familiarize themselves with this new situation assembling a cause and a brand with no apparent accordance, this prompts them to doubt the motives of the CSR programs (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Perception of low congruence leads consumers into thinking longer and more in-depth about this unlikely relationship between the brand and the cause, thus questioning the validity of the claims of the brand as well. If consumers fail to perceive any truth behind the CSR claims issued by a brand, based on an inconsistency between their claims and their behaviors. It would lead to the perception of corporate hypocrisy (Wagner et al., 2009). While facing organizations or firms that perceived to be hypocritical, consumers are warier of their claims and doubt their accuracy. Skepticism builds as consumers are unsure of the truth (Forehand and Grier, 2003). Furthermore, the skeptical consumer seeks to evaluate the truthfulness of the CSR claims, and the motives behind them (Vanhamme and Grobben, 2008; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Incongruence within a brand activism campaign could prompt consumers to look deeper into the brand and find justification for the association between the brand and the cause. If elements come to light highlighting the contradiction concerning their support of that particular cause (e.g., Gillette engaging in gender equality cause, but charging higher prices on their feminine hygiene products), then consumers would have ground to perceived corporate hypocrisy. Consumers would seek to validate the truth of the statement by engaging in skepticism. Chao, Singh, Kristensen, & Villasenor (2009) found that skepticism appears strongly consumers who do not feel a familiarity with the CRM campaigns used by the companies to build their brands, the feeling of uncertainty, and lack of credibility are pillars for consumers to be skeptical of CRM. The rise in consumer skepticism could be transitioned into the brand activism context; if consumers perceive that the brand supporting the cause is hypocritical, only endorsing the cause for their future benefits, then consumers will feel skeptical towards the brand, and the company by extension. In this case, we will consider that incongruence leads to high perception of corporate hypocrisy. Furthermore, it contributes to the perception of inconsistency, thus fostering feelings of doubt and uncertainty towards the information related to the brand activism strategy adopted by the brand. In this research, we consider the perception of corporate hypocrisy as a form of incongruence between the brand's cause and the brand's core mission. Consumers can choose to feel skeptic towards a piece of inconsistent information given the situation. We believe that perceived corporate hypocrisy mediates the effect of perceived incongruence on consumer skepticism. This prompts us to formulate the following hypothesis :

H8. Perceived corporate hypocrisy mediates the relationship between perceived incongruence and consumer skepticism.

H8a. Perceived incongruence positively influences perceived corporate hypocrisy.

H8b. Perceived corporate hypocrisy positively influences consumer skepticism.

Skepticism has been mentioned as one of the antecedents of consumer resistance that is linked with doubt (Roux, 2007). By considering skepticism a situational state that could be induced through a given context (Forehand & Grier, 2003). The perception of self-serving motives and opportunistic tendencies are ground to believe the brand is being inauthentic and lacks sincerity, by dismissing the consumers' attributions for CSR engagement (Skarmeas and Leonidou, 2013) or suddenly engaging in a CSR campaign as a marketing ploy (Vanhamme & Grobбен, 2009; Pirsch, Gupta, & Grau, 2007). Doubt arises in the consumer base, when motives and intentions publicly stated by a company and their actual motives displayed in reality are in contradiction (Wagner et al., 2009), leaving a gap that could suggest deception and misconduct, hoping to benefit from endorsing a cause (Forehand and Grier, 2003). Consumers are lead to feeling situational skepticism when there is inconsistency within the brand activism strategy and claims made by a corporation, thus they would harbor a negative attitude towards the brand. This prompts us to formulate the following hypothesis :

H9. Consumer skepticism mediates the relationship between perceived corporate hypocrisy and attitude towards the brand.

H9a. Perceived corporate hypocrisy positively influences consumer skepticism.

H9b. Consumer skepticism negatively influences attitude towards the brand.

Previous research in corporate social responsibility has selected purchase intentions as one of the advantages resulting from adopting a CSR strategy (Du et al., 2010; Smith and Langford, 2009). This would be a solid base to assume that a positive attitude towards a brand adopting a brand activism strategy would result in higher intentions of purchasing the brand. Consequently, based on the fact that people develop intentions that push them into specific behaviors, these behaviors are influenced by attitudes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980): Consumers with a positive attitude towards a certain brand would be most likely to engage in intentions of purchasing that same brand. A positive attitude towards the brand would result in a higher intention of purchase. If consumers are inclined to purchase a certain brand, they automatically have a low intention to resist that particular brand. This prompts us to formulate the following hypothesis:

H10. The intention of purchase mediates the relationship between attitude towards the brand and intention to resist.

H10a. Attitude towards the brand positively influences the intention of purchase.

H10b. The intention of purchase negatively influences intention to resist.

Previous research in corporate social responsibility has selected purchase intentions as one of the advantages resulting from adopting a CSR strategy (Du et al., 2010; Smith and Langford, 2009). This would be a solid base to assume that a positive attitude towards a brand adopting a brand activism strategy would result in higher intentions of purchasing the brand. In this context, Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) conceptualized in their theory of reasoned action, that attitude influences behavior. People's motivation pushes them to action and towards the desired behavior (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Thus consumers expressing a positive attitude towards the brand would likely express the intention of purchasing the brand. On the other hand, cognitive dissonance theory has been pioneered by Festinger (1957), subsequent research in marketing found a link between the theory and the consumer's decision making, precisely the feeling of cognitive dissonance (between belief and behavior) after they purchased a product or a brand (Cummings & Venkatesan, 1976). In our case, consumers would be inclined to purchase the brand if they have expressed lower intentions to resist; despite their perception of incongruence, thus adopting a positive attitude and willfully ignoring any piece of information that highlights this inconsistency. Consumers can feel cognitive dissonance post-purchases due to their earlier willingness to downplay the importance of their doubts and willfully ignore any additional information about the activist brand. This leads to formulating the following hypothesis :

H11. The intention of purchase mediates the relationship between attitude towards the brand and cognitive dissonance.

H11a. Attitude towards the brand positively influences the intention of purchase.

H11b. The intention to purchase negatively influences cognitive dissonance.

Ehrich and Irwin (2005) refer to willful ignorance is purposely ignoring any piece of information that may cause negative feelings. When the situation pushes consumers into being skeptical of the information offered to them by the activist brand (Forehand and Grier, 2003), the logical course of action would be seeking additional information to confirm their doubts or discard them aside. However, the fear of being exposed to negative feelings puts them in a situation where they would instead not request, nor seek information related to the activist brand (Ehrich and Irwin, 2005). Consumers would dismiss their doubts by choosing not to pursue information, thus practicing willful ignorance. Avoiding any sort of information (positive or negative) prevents them from the potential situation of being exposed to negative information

that would create inconsistency and put them in an uncomfortable situation. Spears & Singh (2004, p.55) proposed the following definition for attitude towards the brand; they defined it as: "a relatively enduring, unidimensional summary evaluation of the brand that presumably energizes behavior." Consequently, their attitude towards the brand remains intact, as they assimilated only the information provided by the activist brand lowering their skepticism and increasing their likelihood of engaging in willful ignorance. We believe that willful ignorance has a positive moderating effect on the influence of consumer skepticism on attitude towards the brand. This prompts us to formulate the following hypothesis :

H12. Willful ignorance moderates the relationship between consumer skepticism and attitude towards the brand.

Organization-person value fit, it was defined by Chatman (1991, p.459) as "the congruence between patterns of organizational values and patterns of individual values, defined here as what individual values in an organization, such as being team-oriented or innovative," this moderator should not be confused with perceived congruence which refers to a congruence between the cause and the organization or brand. The person-organization fit was first studied in the organizational studies, where congruence between the employee and the organization's values result in preference and commitment for the job, thus job satisfaction (Kristof, 1996). People are usually guided by human values, defined by Schwartz (1994, p.88) as "desirable goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives," these values are a basis for actions, and a reference for evaluating objects and behaviors of others (Fraj and Martinez, 2006), additionally Rokeach (1973, p.5) defined values as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence." Brands or companies associate themselves with the cause that allows them to communicate their values (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) and identity (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001), to connect with their customers. Consumers' are guided by their values in appreciating and showing a positive attitude towards specific CSR actions (Basil and Weber, 2006; Siltaoja, 2006). For instance, Zhang and Bloemer (2008) demonstrated that value congruence plays a vital role in harvesting positive outcomes from the relationship between organizations or brands and consumers (satisfaction, trust, affective commitment, and loyalty). Consequently, the organization-person fit value would be a valuable moderator for the present research project, as it adds another dimension to the relationship between consumers and their brands that practice brand activism :

H13. Person-organization value fit moderates the relationship between brand activism and perceived congruence.

H14. Person-organization value fit moderates the relationship between brand activism and perceived incongruence.

CONCLUSION

This chapter clarified the links between the variables and the potential mechanisms at work in this research model based on our assumptions and previous research executed in the same field. We also drew the research hypotheses that will guide our future studies. The following part will illustrate the envisioned plan for the methodological part of this research, and the techniques and methods used in it.

PART 3 -PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

After introducing the variables chosen for the present research project, and the research model, supported with explanations about the potential links and connections between the different constructs. We drew the main hypotheses of our research. The third part will be called “proposed methodology”. In this part, we’ll turn our attention to the methodology that would be put in place to concretize our theoretical framework with scientific findings. This part will have three parts: The first part will detail the data collection process, then the second part will expose the chosen measurement scales for the variables in the research model, finally, the last part will be about the methods of data analysis.

CHAPTER 6 : DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

This research will adopt a mixed methodology, qualitative and quantitative, to collect relevant data for our research. The first type of methodology to be used is the qualitative method, to explore the type of brands that will be used for this research, and the relationship between consumer and brand. Henceforth, qualitative research is suitable for this context, as there little knowledge surrounding the brand activism research area, and in-depth interviews would help us gather further information on the phenomena (Yin, 2014). The second type of methodology to be adopted is the quantitative method. The quantitative method is based on the previously formulated hypotheses, seeking to test them and draw conclusions through data analysis. Quantitative research is based on measuring variables, by adopting a statistical approach to uncover the links between them (Punch, 2014).

Whether for the qualitative or the quantitative data collection procedure, ethical considerations have to be put first before conducting any sort of research. Ethical considerations are also called the participant’s rights, as Burns and Burns (2008, p.64) precise:“ Participants’ rights revolve around many important

issues, including the right to voluntary participation, the right of safety and freedom from harm, the right to be informed, the right to privacy and confidentiality”.

Thus our future participants will be informed enough about the research, and the role that they play by their contribution to our research. The information communicated to the participants should be strictly controlled so it does not compromise the result of our future studies and findings. The information and responses provided by participants will be kept strictly anonymous, for the sole purpose of the research. In this area, Bryman and Bell (2011) underlined four main breaches of ethical principles in research, such as harming the participants, failing to get the participants’ consent, invading the participants’ privacy, and finally manipulating the participants.

A. PRELIMINARY QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Interviews are considered one of the most used qualitative data collection techniques. Interviews can follow a structure, an order of questions to which the respondents answers promptly. On the other hand, interviews can be unstructured, in the form of a dialogue or a conversation between the interviewer and the respondent. Consequently, semi-structured interviews stand in the middle between the two mentioned types of interviews. The interviewer may prepare the list of topics relevant to the research but leaves freedom to the respondents to express themselves and uncover new elements.

As our research is heavily built on an undeveloped concept such as brand activism, it would be wise to adopt a qualitative approach as a primary step towards data collection for this research. We begin with preliminary qualitative research to form a general idea about consumers’ perceptions of activism. It would be interesting to explore the degrees linked with activism (what could be considered explicit activism or implicit activism), as well as whether activism is favorable or not.

The underlying issue of conducting a qualitative study before the quantitative data collection would be that the results of the qualitative data collection may influence our research model, and prompt us to make adequate changes based on our future findings. The qualitative data collection will be conducted through in-depth interviews with semi-structured questions. In-depth interviews enable respondents to express themselves in a relaxed, unrestricted way and offer the research new insight to investigate during the interview with follow-up questions. The interviews conducted in a semi-structured form allow the flow of the dialogue between the research and the respondents prompted with short descriptive questions (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989).

The interview would be divided into three separate parts. The first part would have a general scope in gathering information of the participants, and their purchase habits, and causes. The second part would be dedicated to understanding the role of brands in the participant's life and their views on brand activism. The final part would be dedicated to exploring deeper the participant's perceptions of brand activism campaigns (which form of activism is favorable/unfavorable). The brands chosen for the following quantitative data collection must be on the same level, without prior consumer bias influencing the perceptions. It would allow us to elaborate on stimuli based on the brands discussed by the participants.

The number of participants in the qualitative data collection is set between 15 and 20 participants, according to Crouch & McKenzie (2006), having less than 20 participants help the qualitative data collection maintain a certain closeness, which automatically improves the quality of collected information, while on the other hand Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) suggest that 12 participants is enough for a qualitative study. Henceforth conduction in-depth interviews through the administration of a survey with the open-ended questions would help us dive deeper, and explore the behaviors and attitudes of consumers when it comes to brands, and brand activism. The interviews would be set to last between 30 minutes and 1 hour. The interview would be conducted by one person asking the question and animating the conversation, while another person would help by taking additional separate notes (Bryman & Bell, 2011), the interviews would be audio recorded, with the full consent of the participant, to offer the best possible platform for transcription (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The maximum number of participants has been fixated at eight, following the disciplinary guidelines to determine new insight through in-depth interviews (McCracken, 1988). Consequently, the brands chosen from this preliminary investigation will be used to question and explore the relationship between consumers and brand activism, aiding in the fulfillment of the purpose of this research.

B. QUANTITATIVE METHOD

The experimental approach is used to measure the effect of different situations and conditions, controlled by the researcher, on one or multiple dependent variables. Experimenting, usually, a controlled environment will allow us to minimize the influence of undesirable or unexpected factors. Thus after being exposed to one of our eventual experimental conditions, we'll adopt one of the most used techniques in quantitative research, questionnaires.

Administering questionnaires, either in person or through electronic devices, where participants will be able to self-report on scales or answer some questions directly. The measurement scales (which will be discussed at length in the second chapter of this part) have to be carefully selected for their

reliability and validity. The questionnaire questions will be elaborated in the same sequences for all the respondents. The first questions will measure the moderators first, following that the participants will be exposed to one of the proposed stimuli in the experiment, then we will inquire about the consumer's intentions (which are positioned at the end of the research model), and climbing up until variables such as the perception of (in)congruence.

We endeavor to conduct a pretest before the administration of the questionnaire on a small number of respondents (7 or 8 respondents) to test the coherence of the questions of the questionnaire. The participants will provide valuable insight into the ambiguous parts. Data will be collected regarding the questions, the flow of the survey, the terminology used in the questions, and the time spent on the survey. The pre-test will also assess the viability of the stimuli used alongside the questionnaire. Based on this pre-test, the changes will be implemented to the best of our ability to our questionnaire.

The questionnaire will be self-completed by participants, and administered online, to gain efficiency in time and resources. Online surveys (contrary to in-person questionnaire) will allow us to save time in compiling and coding the data collected and reducing the risk of errors or loss of information through canals of transmission. There are a variety of platforms that facilitate the administration of surveys to participants, such as Amazon Mechanical Turk, Sphinx Online, or Survey Gizmo.

Participants will be able to answer the survey in complete privacy and away from any possible experimenter bias. To prevent any potentially erroneous information, the participants will not be able to complete the questionnaire more than once. The survey will include the chosen stimuli for this research, followed by the measures (see chapter 2. measurement scales) of the key construct of this research. By being assigned one of the potential experimental scenarios about brand activism, they will report their answers after being exposed to the stimulus. The questionnaire will be transmitted online to all participants within the sample in France. The questionnaire will dedicate a part for the information proper to the respondent, which would be used within the ethical restrictions of research. Finally, The data will be compiled and transferred to SPSS for data analysis.

C. SAMPLE SELECTION

Participants will be selected and assigned to different conditions of the experiments, following the concept of randomization. Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2005, p.81) defined randomization as a: "control method that helps to ensure that extraneous sources of artifact and bias will not confound the validity of the results of the study. In other words, randomization helps ensure the internal validity of the

study by helping to eliminate alternative rival hypotheses that might explain the results of the study.” Participants will be recruited after they give their consent for their data to be used for the sake of research. The target sample for this research would include individuals hailing from all ages, and different backgrounds, as previous research already precised that Generation Y is prone to be interested in brand activism (Sakar and Kotler, 2018a)

Due to the limits set by time and resources, the sample of this research will be selected due to their easiness and availability (Burns & Burns, 2008; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Participants could be recruited using social media platforms (eg. Facebook, linkedin..). The majority in marketing academic research resort to using students as research participants in exchange for course credit. This sample of students is called a convenience sample. The sample is used as a base for this upcoming research due to our inability to study the entire targeted population (Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger, 2005). Furthermore, the sample of participants selected for this research has to be randomly selected. The characteristics of our participants being students are not contributing to the research, it narrows down our perspective and makes the generalizability of our future findings questionable (Ashraf & Merunka, 2016). Thus we would target a variety of potential respondents, such as alumni to of the university who entered the workforce or work colleagues and acquaintances.

D. MANIPULATION CHECKS

Manipulation checks are used to ensure that participants have understood the conditions of future studies. Manipulation checks are placed before any experiment takes place, to make sure the independent variable is behind any influence on the dependent variable. We plan to use a manipulation check to ensure that participants understand and react as expected to the proposed stimuli are understood properly. Thus our manipulation will be under the form of these following questions: *“According to you, does this stimulus support a cause ?”*, *“Rate the degree of activism for a cause is displayed in this advertising message”* and *“Does this advertisement endorse a social/environmental cause ?”*.

Once the manipulation check is successful then, we can safely conclude the relationship between our independent variables and dependent variables. Participants will self-report their scores on a grid. The measures will be assessed on a 7-point Likert scale, from “not at all” to “extremely”.

E. EXPERIMENTAL STIMULI SELECTION

In the experimental design, we propose two advertisements as an example of potential stimuli. The advertisement will be showcase chosen orientations of brand activism chosen for this research: Social

brand activism and Environmental brand activism. As mentioned before, the current research will be based upon the brand names collected from the initial qualitative study. We deemed it wiser than choosing available brand activism advertisements that might have some preconceived bias around them. The chosen brands will not represent the stimuli chosen for the experiments, however, it provides an example of the types of activism displayed in advertisements. Therefore, participants will be exposed to one stimulus at a time, before completing the questionnaire.

The first advertisement belongs to the brand Nike, which has been mentioned previously in the conceptual part as one of the most successful brands in social brand activism (Sakar and Kotler, 2018a). The second advertisement belongs to the brand Patagonia who made impressive efforts in supporting environmental issues such as climate change. In choosing a brand activism advertisement, we took into consideration the recency of the advertisement, so our findings would be based upon recent information in the marketplace. The advertisements also communicate clearly on an activist issue according to the two types of brand activism chosen. The advertisement will be explained thoroughly in the following parts.

Social Brand Activism: Nike - 'Dream Crazy' with Serena Williams, 2019

The advertisement 'Dream Crazy' by Nike targets the prominent social issue in society related to sexism and gender equality. The advertisement shows several highly decorated athletes like gymnast Simone Biles, snowboarder Chloe Kim and Katherine Switzer, the first woman who ran the Boston Marathon despite being stopped along the way. At the center of the advertisement is Serena Williams, the 23-time Grand Slam winner who called out the double standards that female athletes were being subjected to after she expressed her anger at the decision of the U.S Open umpire²⁹. The message narrated by Serena Williams is: "If we show emotion, we're called dramatic. If we want to play against men, we're nuts. And if we dream of equal opportunity, we're delusional. When we stand for something, we're unhinged. When we're too good, there's something wrong with us. And if we get angry, we're hysterical, irrational, or just being crazy. But a woman running a marathon was crazy. A woman boxing was crazy. A woman dunking - crazy. Coaching an NBA team - crazy. [...] So if they want to call you crazy, fine, show them what crazy can do" (Nike, 2019). Nike actively stood against gender inequality by showing the difficulties that women athletes are subjected to in various fields, and the pioneering figures who rose against adversity, stereotypes, and prejudices, to defy standards previously set up by male athletes.

²⁹ <https://nationalpost.com/sports/tennis/scott-stinson-sure-she-was-angry-she-had-every-right-to-be>



Figure 5: Nike's advertising spot "Dream Crazy" with Tennis Player Serena Williams³⁰

The 'Dream Crazier' has a powerful impact due to the urgency surrounding the issue of gender equality that rose to the public's attention with famous feminist movements such as #MeToo and #TimesUp. In supporting gender equality, Nike takes a stand on issues related to women's position in society, while also staying loyal to their sport-related image.

Environmental Brand Activism: 'Facing Extinction' - Patagonia (2019)

Patagonia has decided to take action and joined the young activists striking for climate change and urging their countries' governments into taking serious measures regarding this issue. Thus on their part, the brand closed their stores and offices to encourage their employees into joining strikes.

The most recent campaign launched on September 20th, 2019 by the brand Patagonia is called "Facing Extinction" where the photos of various environmental activists are shown alongside messages expressing their fears over climate change halting their existence soon, thus the urgency of this upcoming catastrophe pushed them into calling for climate action and striking for the benefit of their generation's well-being. Videos, photos, and essays were displayed on the official website of Patagonia with a message: "We must act on climate now because, without profound changes, humans could end up on the endangered species list". The brand's president and CEO Rose Marcario stated to cement Patagonia's position as an environmental activist brand: "We all must make it clear to our elected leaders that there is no room in government for climate deniers and their inaction is killing us. We need our leaders to act on the science and follow the market forces—do their jobs and create policies that protect our planet and

³⁰<https://www.sportbuzzbusiness.fr/nike-devoile-sa-nouvelle-publicite-dream-crazier-dediee-aux-sportives-qui-ont-casse-les-barrieres.html>

our communities. Our customers are demanding we act—this generation of youth is not backing down and neither should we.”



Figure 6: Patagonia’s ad ‘Facing Extinction’ showing the profiles of environmental activists around the world³¹

For the sake of bridging the gap between our conceptualization of the present research, namely literature review, the elaboration of the research model, and drawing research hypotheses. It would be beneficial to draw potential studies that could be conducted in the quantitative data collection part of this research. Experimental studies usually draw comparisons based on two groups, the control group, and the experimental group, to conclude testing the hypotheses. The suggested studies are not exhaustive, they are proposition on how we may approach the experimental aspect of this research. With proper time and resources, additional studies will be added to this part.

Proposed Studies :

We tailored some studies to add a dimension of reality to the elaboration of the methodology part, the following table (see table) will resume the studies. It is important to note that the following studies are not an exhaustive list of studies for this research, it is a beginning. With adequate time and resources, other studies would be elaborated as well. The control group in our studies will be the group subjected to a stimulus with no message of brand activism.

³¹ <http://www.patagoniaworks.com/press/2019/9/19/facing-extinction>

Studies	Manipulated Factors	Experimental Design
Study 1: Unknown Brands or Fictional Brands	Brand Activism(Explicit/Implicit) x Type of Message (Social/Environnemental)	Between-Subjects : 2x2 + one control group (5 conditions)
Study 2: Known Brands	Brand Activism(Explicit/Implicit) x Type of Message (Social/Environnemental)	Between-Subjects : 2x2 + one control group. (5 conditions)
Study 3: Value Congruence	Brand Activism (Social/Environmental) x Brand-Cause Congruence (High/Low)	Between-Subjects : 2x2 + one control group (5 conditions)

Table 1: Summary of the studies

CHAPTER 7 : MEASUREMENT SCALES

The second part of this chapter will expose the measurement scales selected for the variables previously mentioned in the research model. As a precaution, the moderating variables such as person-organization value fit, and willful ignorance will be measured before the exposition of participants to the stimuli. The mediating variables such as perceived congruence, perceived corporate hypocrisy, consumer skepticism, cognitive dissonance, attitude towards the brand will be measured after the exposition of participants to the stimuli.

The following measurement scales will measure the variables on a 7-point Likert grid, where participants will report their responses ranging from The scale would be linked to a 7 point Likert answering grid, with responses ranging from 1 = “not at all” to 7 =“very likely”. The reason behind using a 7-point Likert scale is to guarantee a better distribution of the data.

- Perceived Congruence and Incongruence

Following suit of the extensive research that considered congruence as a key mechanism in the CSR field (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006; Woisetschläger & Michaelis, 2012; Menon & Kahn, 2003), we chose the perception of congruence as one of our mediators. Congruence refers to the amount of convergence perceived by consumers, between a CSR campaign and the company initiating it (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Fleck & Maille (2011) considered congruence to be a multidimensional concept. Heckler & Childers (1992) identified two dimensions linked to congruence, relevancy which refers to the meaning communicated through the assemblage of two entities, and expectancy which

refers to the predisposition of individuals to link the two items together based on a “predetermined pattern”. Following the contextualization made by Heckler & Childers (1992). The scale chosen to measure the perception of congruence has been drawn from the sponsorship literature, developed by Fleck & Quester (2007). Fleck & Quester (2007) ensured that the scale can be used in different cultural settings than France, however, as our research will be based on French participants then the scale is an adequate measure of congruence. The scale developed by Fleck & Quester (2007) is based on the bidimensionality of congruence, through relevancy and expectancy. The two dimensions of the scale are weakly corrected (.099). The scale (Fleck & Quester 2007) also displays good indicator of fit (chi-square 25.827; df 7 ; p .001; GFI .988; AGFI .964 ; CFI .978 ; RMSEA .059).

Previous research demonstrated that congruence and incongruence are different, and need to be measured separately, thus rendering the current measuring tools used for congruence useless in situations of incongruence (Gavard-Perret, Berthaud, & Carsana, 2012). When it comes to measuring perceived incongruence, finding a suitable scale proves to be a challenge, thus our options would be to delve deeper into literature from various fields to see if we could adapt a scale to perceived incongruence in our case, or elaborate our scale during the thesis. The chosen scale for perceived congruence will be composed of five items (see table), containing two components assessing the expectancy and relevancy of the relationship between the organization (or brand) and the cause supported. The scale would be linked to a 7 point Likert answering grid, with responses ranging from 1 = “not at all” to 7 = “very likely”.

Items	Authors
<p>Expectancy :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am not surprised that this brand supports this cause 2. One would expect this brand to support this cause 3. It was predictable that this brand supports this cause <p>Relevancy :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That this brand supporting this cause tells me something about it. 2. When I hear of this cause endorsement, I can understand [Brand] better. 3. With this cause endorsement, I discover a new aspect of this brand. 	<p>Fleck and Quester (2007)</p>

Table 2: Measurement Scales for Perceived Congruence, Source: Fleck and Quester (2007)

- Perceived Corporate Hypocrisy

Wagner et al. (2009, p.79) defined corporate hypocrisy as “the belief that a firm claims to be something that it is not”. The distance between the CSR claims issues by a brand or a corporation and their tangible

actions, in reality, creates the perception of inconsistency and instills doubt in consumers. To measure the perception of corporate hypocrisy, we chose the scale previously used by Wagner et al. (2009). The scale was developed within the context of Wagner et al (2009) research about corporate hypocrisy in corporate social responsibility. Our research draws most of its content from neighboring concepts such as CSR, which would make our choice for this measurement scale valid. The chosen scale for Perceived Corporate Hypocrisy will be composed of six items (see table), the constructs used in the scale were based on the studies conducted in Wagner et al (2009)'s paper.

This scale has been recently chosen to measure the perception of corporate hypocrisy in a Chinese setting (Zhao, Qin, Zhao, Wang, and Shi 2020). The scale would be linked to a 7 point Likert answering grid, with responses ranging from 1 = "not at all" to 7 = "very likely".

Items	Authors
<p>In my opinion ...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brand X acts hypocritically. 2. What Brand X says and does are two different things. 3. Brand X pretends to be something that it is not. 4. Brand X does exactly what it says. 5. Brand X keeps its promises. 6. Brand X puts its words into action. 	<p>Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz (2009)</p>

Table 3: Measurement Scale for Perceived Corporate Hypocrisy, Source: Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz (2009)

- Cognitive Dissonance

When individuals are exposed to two pieces of information, one linked to the other, but inconsistent, they experience an undesirable state called "dissonance" (Festinger, 1957). Dissonance was measured using the 22-item scale developed by Sweeney, et al. (2000), due to the length of the scale, it has been shorted later on by Sweeney (2006) to include a total of 12 items instead. The newly shortened scale (Sweeney, 2006) is composed of three dimensions, emotional dimension (alpha of Cronbach = 0.92), concern over the deal dimension (alpha of Cronbach = 0.81), and wisdom of purchase dimension (alpha of Cronbach = 0.86). The correlations between the three dimensions of the scale (Sweeney, 2006) are significantly less than one. This research seeks to measure the appearance of cognitive dissonance within the consumer after being exposed to conflicting pieces of information. The chosen scale for Cognitive Dissonance will be composed of 12 items (see table). The scale would be linked to a 7 point Likert answering grid, with

responses ranging from 1 = “not at all” to 7 =“very likely. It is important to bear in mind that the number of items on this scale still poses a disadvantage for the questionnaire administration, so to remedy to this problem, we might extend our research to find a smaller scale, or propose a modified version of this scale to carry out our measurement of cognitive dissonance.

Items	Authors
<p>Emotional (After I expressed the intention of buying the product...)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I felt frustrated 2. I was in despair 3. I was depressed 4. I felt sick 5. I felt hollow <p>Wisdom of purchase (I wonder if...)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. I really need this product 7. I should have bought anything at all 8. I have made the right choice 9. I have done the right thing in buying this product <p>Concern over deal (After I expressed the intention of buying the product, I wondered if...)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. I'd been fooled 11. They had spun me a line 12. There was something wrong with the deal I got 	<p>Sweeney (2006)</p>

Table 4: Measurement scale for cognitive dissonance, Source: Sweeney (2006)

- Consumer Skepticism

This research project has selected consumer skepticism as one of the antecedents of consumer resistance (Roux, 2007), the measurement scale widely used in academic research to measure consumer skepticism towards advertising, by Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) who defined consumer skepticism as to the inclination to doubt the accuracy of advertising claims and named this scale the SKEP scale. The authors developed this scale of 9 items with an Alpha of Cronbach equal to 86. However, we would like to mention some scales measuring the same construct that have been used in the literature, such as Boyer, Albert, Valette-Florence (2006) who developed an 8 item scale for consumer skepticism towards advertising, by

basing their theoretical foundations on the philosophical roots of skepticism and qualitative studies. The scale is composed of two main factors, the first being the tendency to doubt and the second factor is the skeptic consumers' expectations, both these factors have a Rho of Joreskog respectively, 0.825 and 0.736. Without forgetting the scale developed by Mohr et al. (1998), related to skepticism towards environmental claims in advertising and packages, the scale having fewer items (4 items) than the previously mentioned SKEP scale by Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998), the Alpha of Cronbach for this four-item scale is 79. The scale is mentioned to be both valid and reliable. The chosen scale for consumer skepticism (Mohr et al.,1998) will be composed of 4 items (see table). We have chosen this scale so we can measure situational consumer skepticism, but it does discard the possibility of using the scale by Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) as a potential moderator. The scale would be linked to a 7 point Likert answering grid, with responses ranging from 1 = "not at all" to 7 ="very likely.

Items	Authors
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Claims are true " 2. "Claims are exaggerated" 3. "Are intended to mislead" 4. "Do not believe" 	Mohr et al. (1998)

Table 5: Measurement Scales of Skepticism, Source: Mohr et al. (1998)

- Attitude Towards the Brand

Spears & Singh (2004, p.55) proposed the following definition for attitude towards the brand, they defined it as:" a relatively enduring, unidimensional summary evaluation of the brand that presumably energizes behavior". The chosen scale for Attitude towards the Brand will be composed of 5 items (see table). The scale would be linked to a 7 point Likert answering grid, with responses ranging from 1 = "not at all" to 7 ="very likely.

Items	Authors
<p><i>Please describe your overall feelings about the brand described in the ad you just read.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unappealing/appealing 2. Bad/good 	Spears and Singh (2004)

3. Unpleasant/pleasant	
4. Unfavorable/favorable	
5. Unlikable/likable	

Table 6: Measurement Scales for Attitude Towards the Brand, Source: Spears and Singh (2004)

- Person Organization value fit :

Person–organization fit is defined as “the congruence between patterns of organizational values and patterns of individual values, defined here as what an individual values in an organization, such as being team-oriented or innovative (Chatman, 1991, p. 459). As values are known to affect behavior, however indirectly, and one of the main motivations behind the behavior is individual beliefs (Ajzen, 1985). Thus consumers seek to express their values through purchasing brands or products who partake in the same values (Kahle, 1996). As we seek to provide a proper measurement for the perception of fit between a consumer’s value and a company’s value, Lee, Park, Rapert and Newman (2012) used an adapted scaled from Darley and Lim (1992)’s previous work, to measure the value fit between consumer and a company’s CSR activities through 5 items. (e.g., “This company's CSR activities are congruent with my interests”).

- Willful Ignorance :

Research surrounding willful ignorance (Ehrich and Irwin, 2005; Reczek et al. ,2017; Zane et al., 2016) used experimental techniques to measure willful ignorance in the ethical attributes of a product or the effect on the memory. The previously cited authors used deduction based on their experiment to conclude if consumers practiced willful ignorance or not (eg. proposing to participants to ask for information when they are choosing which desk to purchase). There is still a gap in the literature for a proper measurement scale for this construct, and it would be essential to provide one throughout our future research. One potential option for measuring willful ignorance in our future studies would be to suggest to consumers the option of consulting information relevant to the experiment, if they refuse to do so, we may deduce behavior related to willful ignorance. The second option would be to use the scale proposed by Onwezen, & van der Weele (2016), originally in a biological field of research.

Items	Authors
<p><i>Do you recognize this behavior in yourself?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have searched for information regarding the cause of the brand's activism 2. I ignore information regarding the use of corporate hypocrisy by the brand communicating on a cause in brand activism. 3. If I have the intention to buy a brand t I'd rather not think about the possibility that it practices corporate hypocrisy. 	<p>Onwezen, & van der Weele (2016)</p>

Table 7: Measurement Scales for Willful Ignorance, Source: Onwezen, & van der Weele (2016).

- Consumer's Intention to Resist

Since we are studying consumer resistance in the context of specific brands and organization, we took a special interest in studying the methodology adopted in studying resistant behaviors against specific targets, and the main discourse in literature was to adopt a qualitative methodology using sometimes longitudinal studies or netnography (Kozinets and Handelman, 1998; Moisis and Askegaard, 2002; Kirmani and Campbell, 2004; Dalli, Gistri and Romani, 2005; Roux, 2008; Cambefort and Roux, 2019). One of the first quantitative scale to emerge in the field is the "Anti-commercial Consumer Rebellion" is a 20 item scale developed, by Austin, Plouffe, and Peter (2005), who presented the first scale to measure consumer resistance with four factors: artifice, avoidance, cynicism, and manipulation. Roux (2007) criticized this measurement scale, by pointing out that two of the factors, namely artifice, and manipulation, are too close in meaning and would compromise the results. Due to the lack of proper measuring tools and the crushing majority of research in resistance turning towards qualitative studies, Banikema and Roux (2014) proposed a measurement scale for consumers' propensity to resist, and it is an 8 item scale. However, this refers to a personal trait proper to consumers who may resist by nature. It does not suit our goal of studying the situational causes of consumer resistance. Thus the intention of resistance will be measured through the chosen behavioral manifestations: negative word-of-mouth, brand avoidance, consumer activism, and consumer boycott.

Chosen as one of the consequences for consumer resistance, the intention to diffuse negative information about a brand or a product, is called "negative word-of-mouth" or NWOM. Negative word-of-mouth refers to the negative communications between consumers, about a brand, product, or company (Richins, 1984). Dissatisfaction with a brand or a company is the main motivation behind resorting to speaking ill to other

consumers (Goldenberg, Libai, Moldovan, & Muller, 2007; Richins, 1983). In their research, Cambefort and Roux (2019) mentioned negative word-of-mouth as an individual manifestation of the consumer’s resistance towards a certain brand, or company, furthermore, NWOM enclosed both the offline version (where the diffusion of the negative information is done face-to-face) and the online version (eg. messages, comments, reviews posted on the internet). Previous research demonstrated that angry dissatisfied consumers would be likely to engage in rebellious behaviors such as negative WOM (Bougie et al., 2003). Thus, to provide a proper measurement of NWOM, we chose two scales measuring NWOM face-to-face and online. The scale developed by Grégoire et al. (2010) measures NWOM as a revenge consumer behavior, fueled by anger. The scale is composed of three items, with both valid reliability and validity satisfactory over two studies conducted (Grégoire et al., 2010). The scale developed by Bougie et al. (2003) centers around NWOM in virtual platforms online (eg. social media). The chosen scale for negative word-of-mouth is composed of 6 items (see table). The scale would be linked to a 7 point Likert answering grid, with responses ranging from 1 = “not at all” to 7 =“very likely”.

Items	Authors
1. I have to intention to talk to other people to spread negative word of mouth about the company, online and face-to-face.	Grégoire et al. (2010) and
2. I have the intention to talk to other people to bad-mouth this company online and face-to-face.	Bougie et al. (2003)
3. I have the intention to talk to other people to warn them not to use this company, online and face-to-face.	

Table 8 : Measurement Scales for Negative Word of Mouth, Source : Bougie et al.(2003); Grégoire et al. (2010)

The continuum of consumer resistance contextualized by Fournier (1998b) displays intense actions, such as targeting brands or firms in general, in the extreme part of the spectrum. Anti-brand consumer activism relates to the active role of the consumer in voicing their discontent for the brand and thus resisting it. Consumers can adopt an offensive position when voicing their disapproval of a certain brand, such as Starbucks (Thompson and Arsel, 2004) or Nike (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004). Fueled by negative feelings, like hate or disgust, and a perception of brand misconduct Romani et al. (2015) observed that consumers engage in opposing behaviors towards the brand through engaging in anti-brand activism. Romani et al. (2015) listed consumer boycott as one of the possible manifestations of consumer anti-brand activism. The consumer boycott is considered one of the active ways chosen by the consumer to

voice their discontent with a company’s behavior (Sen et al., 2001; Klein et al., 2004; Tyran and Engelmann, 2005). Through their conceptualization of the motivations behind consumer boycott, Klein et al. (2004) considered the perception of misconduct or “perceived egregiousness” a proper trigger into engaging in resisting the brand or company through boycott. The scale has been adapted from the previous work by Grappi et al. (2013) and used to measure anti-brand consumer activism (and by extension consumer boycott) (Romani et al.,2015). The scale has a satisfying index of validity and reliability (alpha of Cronbach = 0.94, AVE = 0.73). The chosen scale has a total of 6 items (see table) and will be measured with 7-point Likert items ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

Items	Authors
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have the intention to participate in boycotting this brand 2. I have to the intention to blog against this brand 3. I have the intention to picket against this brand 4. I have the intention to sabotage against this brand (eg. tried to interfere with the selling of this brand) 5. I have the intention to join a collective movement or groups against this brand 6. I have the intention to join on-line anti-brand groups or communities. 	Romani et al. (2015), adapted from Grappi et al. (2013)

Table 9: Measurement Scale for Anti-Brand Consumer Activism, Source: Romani et al. (2015)

Brand avoidance was defined by Lee et al. (2009a, p.422) as the “phenomenon whereby consumers deliberately choose to keep away from or reject a brand”. Avoidance is mentioned in Fournier (1998b) continuum of resistance. It is a “silent” act of resistance behavior (Cambefort and Roux, 2019). The chosen scale to measure brand avoidance, is the scale recently developed by Odoom, et al. (2019), the scale has an alpha of Cronbach equal to 0.874, thus aims at providing a proper measurement for brand avoidance, with fewer items so it could be used practically. The chosen scale has a total of 4 items (see table), and will be measured with 7-point Likert items ranging from 1 = “not at all” to 7 =“very likely”.

Items	Authors
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have no intention of purchasing this brand. 2. This brand is not my intended choice in their product category. 3. I have no intention of patronizing this brand in the near future. 4. I have no intention of choosing this brand over others. 	Odoom et al. (2019)

Table 10: Measurement Scales for Brand Avoidance, Source: Odoom et al. (2019)

- Consumer’s intention to purchase

Spears and Singh (2004, p.56) defined purchase intentions as “an individual’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand”, to measure the likelihood of the purchase of a brand we choose to utilize the scale elaborated by Spears and Singh (2004). The chosen scale has 5 items (see table), and will be measured with 7-point Likert items ranging from 1 = “not at all” to 7 = “very likely”.

Items	Authors
<p><i>“Thinking back to [Brand], would you say the likelihood that you intend to purchase the brand is?”</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Never/definitely 2. Definitely do not intend to buy/definitely intend 3. Very low/high intention of purchase interest 4. Definitely do not intent not buy it/definitely intent on buying it 5. Probably no intention /probably has the intention of buying it 	Spears and Singh (2004)

Table 11: Measurement Scales for Purchase Intentions, Source: Spears and Singh (2004)

CHAPTER 8 : DATA ANALYSIS

After collecting the data necessary for this research, the next logical step would be to choose the appropriate technique for data analysis. Considering we have adopted a mixed-approach combining qualitative data collection and quantitative data collection, we will look at each method of data analysis proper to the type of data.

A. QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Content analysis refers to a careful interpretation of a particular material, to unearth the possible patterns, themes, and meanings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The purpose of this analysis is to “code” the content resulting from the in-depth interviews, in a way that makes it easier to answer our research question. This technique is widely used in qualitative research to form a base for classification and categorization of the interview transcripts into themes. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) identified three types of approaches for content analysis, we will follow the conventional content analysis. Conventional content analysis is based on coding categories based on the raw data collected from the in-depth interviews. Coding seeks ideally to result in mutually exclusive categories or themes, however realistically it cannot be the case, a parcel of text can be shared by more than one category. The content analysis follows a certain number of steps. The first step would be to transcribe the data collected from interviews into transcripts. The second step would be to identify the codes inductively from the data. The third step would be to transform the code into themes (based on criteria of selection previously put in place). The data is sorted into different themes (other themes may be added along the way). The fourth step is when the themes are examined individually to derive common meaning and patterns. Then finally, conclusions are drawn based on previous theory and the recent findings of the content analysis. Content analysis is possible due to the use of various software that helps in the process, such as NVivo, Atlas ti, Dedoose.com, and QCAmap. However, this does not exclude the role of the research from the analysis.

B. QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data analysis encompasses the use of a variety of statistical methods, to examine the previously stated hypotheses in the theoretical framework. Before starting any analysis of the data collected through questionnaire administering, the database is carefully cleaned to enable us to conduct descriptive analysis. We’ll endeavor to conduct several tests, such as mediation and moderation effect testing, but also testing the direct effects as well.

The first step before starting data analysis is to ensure the validity of measurement scales. Firstly, convergent validity has to be bigger than 0.5. The convergent validity refers to the shared variance of each of the variables. Secondly, Cronbach’s alpha is used to check the reliability of the measurement scales. To consider a measurement scale reliable, their Cronbach’s alpha has to be bigger than 0.7 or 0.8 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Finally, discriminant validity is a necessary step to ensure that the scales are indeed

measuring the concepts related to them. In this case, the average extracted variance (AVE) has to be bigger than squared correlations (r^2) between the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). After validating our measurement scale, we need to analyze the manipulation checks set before the studies.

We plan to use an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the direct effect of independent variables (brand activism) on dependent variables (intentions of resistance). Provided that the conditions of conducting an ANOVA are available such as independence of observations, normality, and homogeneity of variances. Further analyses, based on the nature of our variables, would help us determine the mediation and moderation relationships in the model, such as linear regressions (between quantitative variables such as perceived incongruence and a quantitative variable such as perceived corporate hypocrisy), and ANOVA (between qualitative variable such as brand activism, and a quantitative variable such as perceived congruence)

Our research model displays the mediation in a sequence of three constructs (perceived congruence, perceived corporate hypocrisy, consumer skepticism). The proper way to test a sequential mediation is through macro-process, specifically the model 6 of the macro process. Model 6 enables the control of any indirect effect of individual mediators, while also controlling other variables. Adopting a global perspective, we could resort to using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the relationships between some variables simultaneously. This technique combines factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, thus giving us an analysis of the entire research model with the method PLS PM.

CONCLUSION

According to Sarkar and Kotler (2018a), brand activism appeared to fill the gap left by cause-related marketing (CRM) and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Considering the fact that cause-related marketing is promotion or sales techniques used to combine products or services with a campaign for donation for a social cause (Beise-Zee, 2013). On the other hand, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is used primarily as a differentiation strategy (Drumwright, 1996; Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010). However as CSR strategies are implemented, there is a clear intent to link the social cause with the profit-making activities, which prompts consumers to assume that companies get involved in important causes for their own business gains (Webb & Mohr, 1998).

Consumer's preferences for socially responsible companies or firms is not a new concept (Drumwright, 1996; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Thus, brand activism is increasingly gaining attention from brands, who sought to adopt the branding strategy to communicate their stances on important issues in society. However the concept does not have any base, nor fundamental findings in the academic research. Sarkar and Kotler (2018a), being one of the very first attempts at conceptualizing brand activism, position it as the natural evolution of the corporate social responsibility field (CSR). Companies are under increasing pressure to have a voice and use their resources and platforms to voice their opinion and positively influence the society in which they operate. Neutrality is no longer an option, and pursuing profit-seeking activities alone may endanger them in the long-term. The lack of a strong basis, and the inconsistency in implementing brand activism as a branding strategy leaves brands at risk of committing mistakes. Thus having their efforts backfire (e.g. Pepsi...), going as far as instigating extreme negative responses from consumer, such as consumer resistance. To address this gap in literature, we have compiled previous research executed in the fields of CSR and cause-related marketing, to provide a close base upon which brand activism research could be built. Thus we considered variables that have already been studied in the CSR context, such as perceived congruence, because previous research demonstrated the role of congruence between a brand and a social cause (Gupta & Pirsch, 2006; Smith & Langford, 2009; Aguinis & Glavas, 2012), and consumer skepticism (Forehand and Grier, 2003), corporate hypocrisy (Wagner et al., 2009), consumer resistance (Roux, 2007). While also considering newer variables as moderators such as willful ignorance (Ehrich and Irwin, 2005) and organization-person value fit (Lee, Park, Rapert and Newman, 2012). Since Sarkar and Kotler (2018a) categorized brand activism into six different categories, we have chosen to focus on two types of brand activism : social brand activism and environmental brand activism. Additionally two types brand activism message diffusion : implicit and explicit.

Thus we have formulate the following research question : To better evaluate the effect of brand activism, it is essential to consider the congruence between the cause and the brand. Consequently, this research aims to answer the following questions: *How does brand activism as a branding strategy influence consumer behavior?* However, more specifically, we seek to find answers to this question: *How does brand activism influence mechanisms that result in either a positive or a negative attitude?*

In order to test the proposed hypotheses and the research model, we adopted a mixed-methodology approach combining qualitative data collection through In-depth Interviews and quantitative data collection through questionnaire administration after exposing them to experimental stimuli. Additionally, we suggested an envisioned plan of action on how the data will be analyzed during the research.

This research has chosen a fairly new concept as the core of the project, brand activism, which makes it fascinating for marketing scholars to explore further. The context of corporate social responsibility gaining the spotlight more than ever. This research would contribute significantly to the marketing theory, while also being useful for practitioners, in the field. From a theoretical point of view, this research will be a valuable contribution to the lacking literature surrounding brand activism. The concept has just started gathering the attention of scholars (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020). This research includes contributions such as the literature review on brand activism, the comparison between close concepts such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and cause-related marketing (CRM). The present research would enrich the field of consumer-brand relationships as well by introducing the consumer's behavior in the case of brand activism. This research proposes new insights in brand activism through the findings from the qualitative in-depth interviews, seeking to explore brand activism from the consumer's perspective in semi-structured interviews that leave freedom for expression. Henceforth, this research proposes various routes for consumer's behavior, in an attempt to view brand activism from a global perspective with both positive, neutral, and negative reactions.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this research would provide valuable insights for managers and marketing specialists who want to implement brand activism as their branding strategy. This research will provide managers with additional information to formulate an adequate brand activism strategy. One of the main considerations that managers need to be aware of is the impact of congruence between the brand and the cause on the perceptions of consumers, thus choosing an appropriate cause is crucial. Brand activism has become appealing as a strategy for numerous brands (eg. Nike, Patagonia, Gillette...). We cannot deny that it is a risky endeavor, but the rewards that it yields if implemented properly are larger than a usual corporate social responsibility campaign. This research would be valuable for managers

who seek to implement brand activism to keep up with the latest trends in social issues, and appeal to the younger generations (Generation Y and Generation Z) and avoid an undesirable scenario where the appeal turns into a provocation, thus leading into backlash for the brand and resistance. Accenture Strategy' (2018) states that nearly 63% of consumers would choose companies who took a stand on current issues. Secondly, this research has added a layer of complexity to brand activism by mixing it with notions like congruence, thus bearing in mind the fit between the cause and the organization could prove to be rewarding for the brand. This research may be useful for brand managers, and marketing specialists, who are seeking to convert their brand strategy into a value-driven strategy responding to the needs of society.

This research attempted to study brand activism from the perspective of the consumer, but as all research work preceding it, it has some limitations and the possibility of extension through future research. The first limitation of this research is considering brand activism as a one-dimensional construct when there are different types of brand activism identified by Sakar and Kotler (2018a) like social activism or business activism. The second limitation is considering few behavioral manifestations and antecedents for consumer resistance, as Chapter 2 demonstrated, resistance has been extensively studied and encompasses a large number of consequences and antecedents besides those used in the present research. The third possible limitation is related to the use of real brands after the conduction of the qualitative in-depth interviews. The use of real brands gives this research a realistic dimension to the potential findings, however, participants may have biases towards the brands that will be chosen for the quantitative step of data collection.

This research project yields numerous future research avenues. First of all, it would be interesting to study the remaining types of brand activism apart, to investigate the specificities of each type, and the changes they cause in consumer behavior. The second potential future research suggestion is to study brand activism from the brand's perspective and understand their willingness to endorse high risk in taking stands on important issues. The third potential future research suggestion is to study other behavioral manifestations of consumer resistance, such as anti-consumption, and other antecedents, such as negative emotions, or cynicism. The fourth potential route of future research would be to consider the dynamics between brand activism, and the newly discovered concept of brand hypocrisy (Guèvremont, 2019

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