



Lisbon School
of Economics
& Management
Universidade de Lisboa

MASTERS IN MANAGEMENT (MIM)

MASTERS FINAL WORK

DISSERTATION

**WHY DO CONSUMERS SUPPORT ACTIVIST BRANDS?
THE ROLES OF AUTHENTICITY, VALUE
CONGRUENCE, AND IDENTIFICATION**

RAQUEL MARGARIDA FERNANDES DO ROSÁRIO

JUNE - 2026



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RESUMO

O ativismo de marca tem-se tornado uma estratégia corporativa cada vez mais comum, levantando questões importantes sobre os fatores que determinam o apoio dos consumidores a marcas que se posicionam publicamente sobre causas sociais e políticas. Neste contexto, o presente estudo procurou examinar de que forma a autenticidade percebida da marca e a congruência de valores influenciam a identificação do consumidor com a marca. Adicionalmente, procurou-se compreender se o ceticismo do consumidor modera a relação entre a autenticidade percebida e essa identificação. Por fim, analisou-se de que forma a identificação do consumidor com a marca influencia a sua intenção de apoiar uma marca ativista.

Para testar o modelo conceptual proposto, foi aplicado um questionário estruturado a uma amostra de 128 consumidores portugueses, tendo os dados sido analisados através de Modelação de Equações Estruturais por Mínimos Quadrados Parciais (PLS-SEM), utilizando o software SmartPLS 4.1.1.8.

Os resultados revelam que a congruência de valores exerce um efeito positivo e estatisticamente significativo sobre a identificação do consumidor com a marca, ao passo que a autenticidade percebida não apresentou um efeito significativo. O ceticismo do consumidor não moderou de forma significativa a relação entre autenticidade percebida e identificação com a marca. Por fim, confirmou-se que a identificação do consumidor com a marca influencia positivamente a intenção de apoiar uma marca ativista.

Estes resultados sugerem que o apoio dos consumidores a marcas ativistas depende sobretudo do alinhamento de valores entre marca e consumidor, mais do que da percepção de autenticidade do ativismo comunicado. O presente estudo contribui para uma compreensão mais aprofundada dos mecanismos psicológicos subjacentes à resposta dos consumidores ao ativismo de marca, oferecendo também implicações relevantes para a gestão de marcas no que respeita a alinhamento entre causas defendidas e valores dos consumidores.

Palavras-Chave: Ativismo de Marca, Autenticidade Percebida da Marca, Congruência de Valores, Ceticismo do Consumidor, Identificação com a Marca

ABSTRACT

Brand activism has become an increasingly common corporate strategy, raising important questions about the factors that determine consumer support for brands that publicly take a stand on social and political causes. Against this backdrop, the present study examined how consumer perceived brand authenticity and brand value congruence influence consumer-brand identification. Additionally, it sought to understand whether consumer skepticism moderates the relationship between perceived authenticity and this identification. Finally, it analysed how consumer-brand identification influences consumers' intention to support an activist brand.

To test the proposed conceptual model, a structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of 128 Portuguese consumers, and the data was analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.1.1.8 software.

The results reveal that brand value congruence has a significant positive effect on consumer-brand identification, whereas consumer perceived brand authenticity does not show a significant effect. Consumer skepticism did not significantly moderate the relationship between perceived brand authenticity and consumer-brand identification. Finally, consumer-brand identification was confirmed to have a significant positive effect on consumers' intention to support an activist brand.

These results suggest that consumer support for activist brands depends primarily on value alignment between brand and consumer, rather than on perceived authenticity of the communicated activism. The present study contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying consumer responses to brand activism, while also offering relevant implications for brand management regarding the alignment between the causes supported and consumer values.

Keywords: Brand Activism, Consumer Perceived Brand Authenticity, Brand Value Congruence, Consumer skepticism, Consumer-Brand Identification

ABBREVIATIONS

AVE:	Average Variance Extracted
BVC:	Brand Value Congruence
CBI:	Consumer-Brand Identification
CPA:	Consumer Perceived Brand Authenticity
CS:	Consumer Skepticism
CSR:	Corporate Social Responsibility
GDPR:	General Data Protection Regulation
HTMT:	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio
INT:	Intention to Support an Activist Brand
LM:	Linear Model
PLS-SEM:	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling
RMSE:	Root Mean Square Error
SDG:	Sustainable Development Goal
SIT:	Social Identity Theory
SRMR:	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
VIF:	Variance Inflation Factor

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Academic and Business Relevance

The relationship between corporations and society has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. This shift is evident in the increasing number of brands that have publicly aligned themselves with social and political causes. For example, in 2018, Ben & Jerry's incorporated activism into its product portfolio by launching a flavour designed to encourage voter participation in the U.S. midterm elections (Vredenburg et al., 2020); in 2019, Patagonia, Ben & Jerry's and Lush Cosmetics chose to shut their doors and pause online operations during the global climate strike (Kim & He, 2025). Both cases exemplify brand activism, a phenomenon that has attracted growing attention from researchers. To understand why brand activism has gained such traction, it is necessary to consider the broader societal context in which it has developed. Sociopolitical issues have become a constant presence in media coverage, while governmental institutions have often been perceived as ineffective in addressing these concerns (Walter et al., 2024). A 2022 Edelman report corroborated this shift, revealing a decline in public confidence in governing bodies alongside a growing belief that corporations should play a more active role in tackling the problems that societies face (Verlegh, 2024).

For businesses, the decision to engage in brand activism offers both an opportunity and a risk. Brands that take a genuine stand on controversial issues can cultivate loyal consumer relationships and strengthen their market position. Yet this same stance can distance those who disagree, and the more divisive the issue, the greater the potential for backlash from consumers who feel excluded or opposed (Kim & He, 2025; Verlegh, 2024). Adding to this risk is the fact that consumers often remain skeptical of a brand's activist claims, questioning whether the commitment is genuine or merely opportunistic (Walter et al., 2024). Conversely, when consumers do perceive a brand's activism as authentic, research consistently shows that consumers respond with support (D'Arco et al., 2024). Academically, scholars have made significant progress in understanding why authenticity matters in brand activism, identifying its defining characteristics and behavioural consequences (Chu et al., 2023; Lou et al., 2024). What remains unclear,

however, is how this authenticity intersects with consumers' sense of self to influence their support for the brand (D'Arco et al., 2024). A similar gap exists regarding consumer skepticism, whose role has been explored mainly in cause-related marketing but remains underexamined within the specific context of brand activism (Walter et al., 2024). By addressing these gaps, the present study contributes to a better understanding of what drives consumer identification with brands engaging in activism, as well as the role consumer skepticism plays in this process. In doing so, the findings of this study can guide businesses toward more responsible and transparent forms of engagement, supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12, which calls for production practices that are accountable and free from misleading claims.

1.2 Objectives of the Investigation

The central aim of this study is to investigate the factors underlying consumer support for activist brands. Specifically, it aims to determine how consumer perceived brand authenticity and brand value congruence contribute to consumer-brand identification, while examining the extent to which consumer skepticism moderates the relationship between consumer perceived brand authenticity and consumer-brand identification, with implications for consumers' intention to support an activist brand.

To this end, the study addresses the following research questions:

- a) To what extent do consumer perceived brand authenticity and brand value congruence influence consumer-brand identification in the context of brand activism?
- b) What role does consumer skepticism play in the relationship between consumer perceived brand authenticity and consumer-brand identification?
- c) To what extent does consumer-brand identification influence consumers' intention to support an activist brand?

1.3 Structure of the Document

The dissertation is structured into six chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature on the main concepts of the study, namely brand activism, consumer perceived brand authenticity, brand value congruence, consumer skepticism and consumer-brand identification, and presents the research hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework. Building on this foundation, Chapter 3 introduces the conceptual model. Chapter 4 then describes the methodological approach adopted, detailing the research design, the target population, the sampling strategy and the data collection procedures. The empirical results are reported in Chapter 5, which covers the assessment of the measurement model, the evaluation of the structural model and the hypothesis testing. Lastly, Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by discussing the main findings and reflecting on its limitations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand Activism

“Meet activism with activism”. As Pattakos (1989) argued, brands can no longer remain passive observers of social change; they are now expected to act as participants in it (Cammarota et al., 2023). What was once considered cautious neutrality is increasingly viewed as detachment or irresponsibility (D’Arco et al., 2024). This shift gave rise to the concept of brand activism, understood as the public statements or actions taken by brands on divisive issues, spanning social, political, environmental, legal, business, or economic domains (Ahmad et al. 2024; Vredenburg et al., 2020). As brands become more vocal, their influence over public opinion has expanded, often positioning them as social leaders in areas where governments fall short (Cammarota et al., 2023; Luna-Amador et al., 2025).

Brand activism has emerged as a contemporary marketing approach primarily rooted in the brand’s identity and purpose rather than in its core business operations (Luna-Amador et al., 2025; Vredenburg et al., 2020). Moreover, brand activism operates at the intersection of marketing and politics, leading brands to engage with controversial sociopolitical issues that often divide public opinion (Luna-Amador et al., 2025; D’Arco et al., 2024). The nature of such engagement relies on the alignment between a brand’s messaging and its actual practices, which can take the form of alliances with advocacy organizations, funding social causes, or modifications to offerings that communicate the brand’s stance on polarizing topics such as gender equality, LGBTQIA+ rights, gun reform, immigration, climate change and international conflicts (Vredenburg et al., 2020; D’Arco et al., 2024).

Activist branding represents more than a moral stance; it has become a strategic resource that companies use to differentiate themselves in competitive markets (D’Arco et al., 2024). Yet the drivers behind this trend differ. Some brands adopt activist positions to gain competitive advantage and attract investors, while others are motivated by genuine sense of social responsibility and commitment to broader stakeholder value (Cammarota et al., 2023; Schmidt et al., 2022).

From an evolutionary standpoint, brand activism can be interpreted as the next stage in the development of corporate social responsibility (CSR), reflecting a broader shift in the way companies engage with society (Schmidt et al., 2022). CSR refers to voluntary business actions that promote social good beyond legal or regulatory obligations. While CSR has been linked to positive outcomes, such as reputation and sales (Vredenburg et al., 2020), it is increasingly viewed as insufficient to address complex societal challenges (Cammarota et al., 2023). As a result, companies have moved from broadly accepted, non-controversial initiatives toward more value-driven engagement (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020).

As brands increasingly take sides on polarizing issues, scholars have turned their attention to how consumers interpret these positions. Lou et al. (2024) suggest that consumers view activist brands more favorably than those that do not take a stance, though such responses are contingent on variables such as brand value congruence and perceived brand authenticity, both explored in the sections below.

2.2 Consumer Perceived Brand Authenticity

An increasing number of scholars have examined the concept of authenticity, recognizing it as a pivotal factor in the success of brand activism (D'Arco et al., 2024; Kim & He, 2025). Conceptually, perceived brand authenticity refers to the subjective judgment consumers make about how genuine or true to itself a brand appears to be (Chu et al., 2023). It is a socially constructed perception that integrates multiple conceptual dimensions, including temporal consistency (continuity and stability), moral attributes (integrity, credibility and reliability), authenticity markers (genuineness, naturalness and originality), and representational aspects (truthfulness and reality) (Chu et al., 2023; Luna-Amador et al., 2025; Schmidt et al., 2022). D'arco et al. (2024) describe authenticity as the “golden variable”, essential for achieving both strategic effectiveness and emotional connection with consumers.

Vredenburg et al. (2020) proposed a typology of brand activism that distinguishes between authentic and inauthentic brand activism. According to their framework, authentic brand activism occurs when a brand's purpose, values, communication and corporate practices are coherently aligned. When any of these elements operates in

isolation or contradicts the others, the perceived authenticity of the brand's activism is weakened, leading consumers to question the sincerity of its commitment.

When a brand's activism is perceived as genuine, it builds trust and credibility, while strengthens consumer identification and engagement, ultimately translating into positive behavioral outcomes, including loyalty, brand advocacy and purchase intention (D'Arco et al., 2024; Kim & He, 2025; Luna-Amador et al., 2025; Silva & Abreu, 2025). Conversely, when brands fail to demonstrate genuine commitment to the causes they endorse, consumers may perceive their actions as inauthentic brand activism or "woke washing" (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Such perceptions arise when activist communication is not supported by consistent corporate practices or underlying values (Chu et al., 2023). Moreover, the absence of a credible history of engagement with the promoted causes further reinforces this perception of inauthenticity (Luna-Amador et al., 2025). Over time, these negative responses may escalate into public criticism or even consumer boycotts (Ahmad et al., 2024; Luna-Amador et al., 2025). It can therefore be proposed that:

H1: Consumer perceived brand authenticity positively affects consumer-brand identification.

2.3 Brand Value Congruence

Similar to individuals, brands are associated with values that shape how they act (D'Arco et al., 2024). As in human relationships, consumers rely on values to evaluate brands and decide whether to form a relationship with them (D'Arco et al., 2024; He et al., 2018). Building on this perspective, and adapting the definition proposed by You et al. (2023), brand value congruence refers to the perceived fit between consumers' personal values and the values communicated by a brand.

Existing literature suggests that consumers tend to prefer brands whose values align with their own. This phenomenon can be explained by self-congruity theory (D'Arco et al., 2024; He et al., 2018). According to this theory, consumers evaluate brands by assessing how well a brand's characteristics align with their own sense of self (He et al., 2018; Sirgy, 2018). When consumers perceive alignment, they develop a sense of connection with the brand, as it validates their self-identity. Conversely, when consumers

perceive incongruence between their values and those projected by a brand, they experience dissonance and are motivated to avoid the brand to preserve their sense of self-coherence (D'Arco et al., 2024; He et al., 2018; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Sirgy, 2018).

In brand activism contexts, value alignment takes on heightened importance, as consumers assess whether a brand's activist stance reflects their beliefs (D'Arco et al., 2024). When the values communicated by a brand are consistent with consumers' own values, the alignment reduces psychological tension and signals sincerity, leading activist brands actions to be interpreted as authentic (Fritz et al., 2017). Moreover, brand value congruence enables consumers to express themselves through brand associations, thereby facilitating identification with brands that reflect their values (D'Arco et al., 2024). These considerations give rise to the following hypothesis:

H2: Brand value congruence positively affects consumer-brand identification.

2.4 Consumer Skepticism

According to Skarmeas & Leonidou (2013), skepticism can be defined as a “tendency to doubt, disbelieve, and question”. In a brand activism context, skepticism reflects a tendency to question brand practices and intentions, protecting consumers from potentially misleading marketing tactics (Ramasamy et al., 2020; Walter et al., 2024). Scholars have identified two conceptions of skepticism: predispositional skepticism, a consistent and generalized distrust of marketers' messages and actions, regardless of the specific context or situation, and situational skepticism, a doubt that arises in response to particular brand behaviors or communications (Ramasamy et al., 2020; Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013; Walter et al., 2024). For the purposes of this study, consumer skepticism is treated as a predispositional trait.

Given the conceptual proximity between brand activism, CSR and cause-related marketing, insights from these fields are considered theoretically transferable to the brand activism context and are used to support the arguments below (Walter et al., 2024). Research has shown that consumer skepticism can undermine the effectiveness of cause-related initiatives, negatively impacting consumers' intention to support brands engaged

in those causes. Furthermore, skeptical consumers tend to be more susceptible to unfavorable brand information, which may further weaken their connection to it (Amawate & Deb, 2021). In particular, consumers with higher levels of skepticism are more likely to question the motives behind a brand's actions and perceive them as less authentic and more self-interest driven (Yang & Mundel, 2021). Since perceived brand authenticity has been shown to positively influence consumer-brand identification, consumers with higher levels of skepticism may be less inclined to accept authenticity cues, reducing the extent to which perceived brand authenticity translates into identification with the brand. This line of reasoning leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: Consumer skepticism moderates the relationship between consumer perceived brand authenticity and consumer-brand identification, such that the relationship is weaker when consumer skepticism is higher.

2.5 Consumer Brand Identification

Consumer-brand identification (CBI) refers to the psychological connection consumers develop when they perceive a brand as relevant to their identity. It involves a sense of symbolic belonging that arises when the brand's identity holds personal meaning rather than serving purely functional purposes (Tuškej et al., 2013; Vahdati & Voss, 2019).

According to Tuškej et al. (2013), CBI can be understood through two complementary theoretical perspectives: sociological and psychological. The former focuses on the symbolic role of brands in identity construction, suggesting that identification occurs when there is a perceived sense of "sameness between the consumer and the brand". In this view, brands may be personalized and humanized to function as carriers of meaning. The latter adopts an individual-level perspective that draws primarily on social identity theory (SIT), which constitutes the dominant theoretical foundation for CBI in marketing and organizational research (D'Arco et al., 2024; Elbedweihy et al., 2016; Rather et al., 2022; Silva & Abreu, 2025; Tuškej et al., 2013). SIT conceptualizes identity as socially derived, emerging from individuals' affiliations with social entities and the meanings attached to those affiliations (D'Arco et al., 2024; Rather et al., 2022). When applied to brands, this implies that CBI depends on the extent to which a brand expresses how

consumers define themselves (Silva & Abreu, 2025). Accordingly, marketing research often distinguishes between personal and social forms of identification. Personal identification refers to the degree of overlap between the brand and the consumer's individual self-concept, while social identification reflects how brands enable consumers to signal group belonging or differentiation within their environment (Tuškej et al., 2013).

Recent research indicates that consumer-brand identification can be actively cultivated through organizational strategies, such as brand activism. In activist contexts, brands adopt explicit value-based positions that test alignment between their stance and consumer beliefs (Silva & Abreu, 2025). When such alignment is perceived, identification tends to strengthen, which in turn drives supportive consumer responses (D'Arco et al., 2024; Silva & Abreu, 2025). Prior studies show that strong identification positively influences behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth (Rather et al., 2022; Silva & Abreu, 2025), and advocacy behaviors (Rather et al., 2022), including willingness to recommend and defend the brand. Additionally, consumers with strong brand identification exhibit greater tolerance toward negative brand actions, increased loyalty, resistance to brand switching, and willingness to pay premium prices (D'Arco et al., 2024; Silva & Abreu, 2025). These favorable attitudes and behaviors suggest that CBI functions as an important antecedent of support for activist brands. On this basis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Consumer-brand identification positively influences consumers' intention to support an activist brand.

CHAPTER 3 – CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The conceptual model presented in Figure 1 was built upon the frameworks proposed by D’Arco et al. (2024) and Walter et al. (2024), with adaptations to suit the purpose of this study. Using social identity theory (Rather et al., 2022) and self-congruity theory (Sirgy., 2018) as theoretical foundations, the model seeks to capture the extent to which brand value congruence and consumer perceived brand authenticity influence consumer-brand identification, and whether this, in turn, drives the intention to support an activist brand. Consumer skepticism is introduced as a moderating variable in the relationship between consumer perceived brand authenticity and consumer-brand identification. Collectively, these relationships contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that lead consumers to support brands that engage in activist stances.

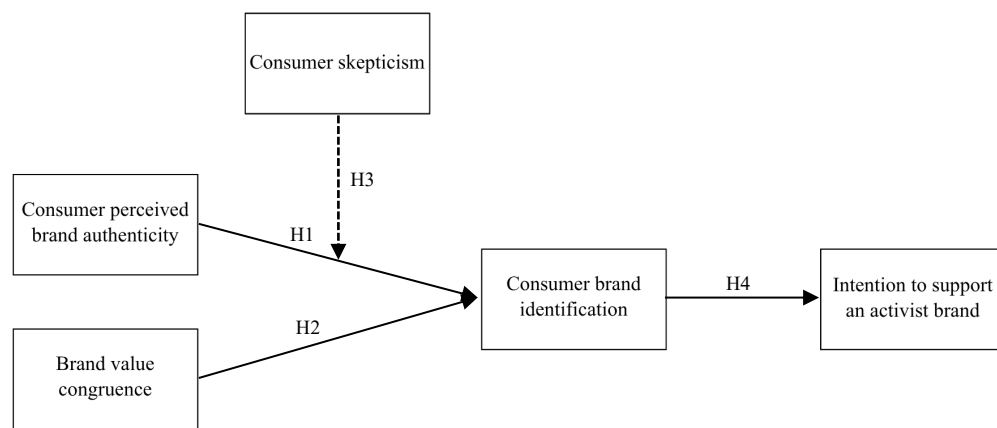


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Source: Own elaboration based on models from D’Arco et al. (2024) and Walter et al. (2024)

CHAPTER 4- METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study is grounded in a positivist research philosophy, which focuses on the analysis of observable and measurable phenomena to explain relationships between variables and develop generalizable insights into consumer behavior. In line with this philosophy, the research is conducted neutrally and impartially, relying on quantifiable data to minimize subjective influence on findings (Saunders et al., 2019). Following a deductive approach, the study develops its theoretical foundation from existing academic literature and formulates hypotheses that are subsequently tested through structured data collection and statistical analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). Regarding methodological choice, this study adopts a mono-method quantitative design, using a structured questionnaire as the single data collection technique (Saunders et al., 2019). This approach allows the examination of hypothesized relationships between established constructs using statistical analysis of numerical data (Lim, 2025). Specifically, a survey strategy is employed to implement this design, enabling the collection of standardized data from respondents and facilitating quantitative analysis through descriptive and inferential statistics (Saunders et al., 2019). Given the study's focus on current consumer perceptions and intentions, data collection occurs at a single point in time, following a cross-sectional time horizon. This temporal approach is suitable for examining relationships between variables at a specific moment rather than tracking their evolution over time (Saunders et al., 2019).

4.2 Target Population

The target population refers to the entire group of individuals about whom the research seeks to draw conclusions (Saunders et al., 2019). For this study, the target population comprised Portuguese consumers aged 18 years or older who are familiar with fashion brands that engage in brand activism. This population was selected given the study's focus on examining consumer responses to brand activism within the Portuguese market context.

4.3 Sampling Techniques

Regarding sampling techniques, this study employed non-probability sampling, combining haphazard and volunteer approaches. Specifically, convenience sampling (haphazard) selects participants who are readily accessible, while snowball sampling (volunteer) uses existing participants' networks to recruit additional respondents. Although non-probability sampling does not allow for statistical generalization to the population, it is appropriate for testing relationships between theoretical constructs (Saunders et al., 2019).

4.4 Data Collection Instrument

The data collection instrument consisted of a structured online questionnaire administered via Qualtrics. Questionnaires are particularly appropriate for explanatory research as they enable examination of relationships between variables through standardized questions that ensure consistent interpretation across respondents (Saunders et al., 2019). The survey comprised five main sections. The first section included an informed consent statement explaining the study's purpose and ensuring participant agreement. The second section provided contextual information on brand activism, illustrated with an example (Patagonia), to ensure respondents understood the concept. The third section included warm-up questions asking respondents to identify activism causes they relate to most, their primary contact channels with brand activism, and to name a fashion brand that engages in activism. The fourth section measured the study's key constructs using validated measurement scales. The final section collected sociodemographic information including gender, age, educational attainment and occupation.

All measurement scales were adapted from previously validated instruments that had been empirically tested in similar research contexts, ensuring reliability of the measurements (Saunders et al., 2019). Specifically, the following constructs were measured: Brand Value Congruence (4 items), Consumer-Brand Identification (4 items), Consumer Skepticism (4 items), Consumer Perceived Brand Authenticity (15 items), and Intention to Support an Activist Brand (4 items). As the original scales were developed in English, all items were translated into Portuguese to ensure respondents would interpret

questions as intended (Saunders et al., 2019). Items were measured using 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The original and adapted versions of the scales are provided in Annex C and Annex D, respectively. The complete questionnaire is provided in Annex B.

4.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection took place between January 13 and January 21, 2026. Prior to full distribution, a pilot test was conducted with 10 participants similar to the target population to identify potential issues with question clarity and data recording, as recommended for questionnaire refinement (Saunders et al., 2019). Pilot feedback led to several adjustments: the contextual example was modified to explicitly identify Patagonia as a fashion brand; all questions were set as mandatory to ensure data completeness; and the estimated completion time was updated from 7-10 minutes to 5 minutes based on observed duration. This pilot phase ensured the questionnaire was clear and easily understood by respondents before wider distribution (Saunders et al., 2019).

Following these refinements, the survey link was shared through the researcher's personal Instagram story and distributed directly to personal contacts via WhatsApp and text messaging. Following a snowball sampling approach, respondents were encouraged to share the link within their networks to expand participant reach. All data were automatically stored in the Qualtrics database with anonymized records to ensure participant confidentiality in compliance with GDPR regulations.

CHAPTER 5- DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Sample Size and Data Screening

A total of 537 responses were collected via Qualtrics. After data screening, 376 responses were excluded: 373 incomplete responses and 3 responses without informed consent. From the remaining 161 responses, an additional 33 were excluded for failing to meet inclusion criteria: 1 provided a blank response to the brand identification question, 22 identified brands from non-fashion industries and 10 indicated inability to identify a relevant brand. The final sample comprised 128 valid responses.

Prior to the statistical analyses, the negatively worded items of the consumer skepticism construct (CS_2, CS_3 and CS_4) were reverse coded to ensure that all indicators were oriented in the same direction. Reverse coding is recommended when a construct includes both positively and negatively worded items, as it prevents negative inter-item correlations that may compromise the reliability of the measurement scale (Kline, 2016). The recoded items were subsequently labelled CS_2_R, CS_3_R and CS_4_R.

5.2 Sample Characterization

The sample was predominantly female, with women accounting for 80.5% of respondents and men representing 19.5%. In terms of age, most respondents were young adults aged 18-24 years (39.1%), followed by those aged 25-34 (21.9%). Middle-aged groups were less represented, with 45-54 age group represented 18.0% of the sample, while 35-44-year-olds comprised 14.8%. Fewer respondents were aged 55-65 (5.5%) or over 65 (0.8%). Regarding education, the largest proportion of participants held a bachelor's degree (41.4%), followed by master's degrees (30.5%) and secondary education (25.0%). A small percentage reported holding a doctoral degree (2.3%) or other qualifications (0.8%). In terms of occupation, over half of participants were employed (54.7%), while nearly a quarter were students (24.2%). The remaining respondents included working students (7.0%), self-employed individuals (11.7%), unemployed participants (2.3%) and other occupations (0.8%). The sociodemographic profile of respondents is presented in Table I.

Table I: Sample Characteristics

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	Female	103	80,5%
	Male	25	19,5%
	Non-binary	0	0,0%
	Prefer not to answer	0	0,0%
Age group	18-24	50	39,1%
	25-34	28	21,9%
	35-44	19	14,8%
	45-54	23	18,0%
	55-64	7	5,5%
	65 or more	1	0,8%
Educational Attainment	High school diploma	32	25,0%
	Bachelor's degree	53	41,4%
	Master's degree	39	30,5%
	Doctoral degree	3	2,3%
	Other	1	0,8%
Occupation	Student	31	24,2%
	Working student	9	7,0%
	Employed	70	54,7%
	Self-employed	14	10,9%
	Unemployed	3	2,3%
	Other	1	0,8%

To provide a more comprehensive characterization of the sample, respondents were also asked to indicate the causes with which they most strongly identified. As participants were allowed to select more than one cause, the frequencies reported exceed the total sample size (N=128). As shown in Table II, environmental protection emerged as the most frequently selected cause (24,5%), followed by human rights (19,6%) and DEI (18,4%). Labor rights and fair working conditions accounted for 16,1% of responses, while animal welfare represented 13,0%. Geopolitical issues and international conflicts were selected by 7,8% of respondents, whereas only 0,6% identified with other causes. Additionally, respondents were asked to identify a clothing brand they perceived as engaging in brand activism. As presented in Table III, Nike was the most frequently mentioned brand (10,2%), followed by Natura and Benetton (9,4% each). Zara and H&M each accounted for 5,5% of responses, while Patagonia and Norm were also frequently mentioned (4,7%). Levi's represented 3,9% of responses, Adidas 3,1% and Zouri 2,3%. The remaining brands were individually cited by a relatively small number of respondents

and were therefore grouped under the category “Others”, which accounted for 41.4% of responses.

Table II: Causes Identified

<i>Cause</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Environmental Protection	85	24,5%
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	64	18,4%
Human Rights	68	19,6%
Labour Rights and Fair Working Conditions	56	16,1%
Animal Welfare	45	13,0%
Geopolitical Issues and International Conflicts	27	7,8%
Other	2	0,6%

Table III: Brands Identified

<i>Brand</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Nike	13	10,2%
Natura	12	9,4%
Benetton	12	9,4%
Zara	7	5,5%
H&M	7	5,5%
Patagonia	6	4,7%
Norm	6	4,7%
Levi's	5	3,9%
Adidas	4	3,1%
Zouri	3	2,3%
Others	53	41,4%

Finally, respondents were asked to indicate the communication channels through which they most frequently encountered brand activism initiatives. As presented in Table IV, digital media (social media, websites, and online platforms) was the primary communication channel through which respondents encountered brand activism initiatives, accounting for 64.1% of responses. A further 28.9% reported being exposed through both traditional media (television, radio, and newspapers) and digital media, whereas only 7.0% indicated traditional media as their sole source of exposure.

Table IV: Channels of Exposure to Brand Activism

<i>Communication Channel</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Traditional Media	9	7,0%
Digital Media	82	64,1%
Both	37	28,9%

5.3 Measurement Model Assessment

The proposed research model was assessed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.1.1.8 software. Given the presence of multiple constructs measured through several indicators (Sarstedt & Liu, 2024), this approach was considered appropriate for the present study. As a causal-predictive approach, PLS-SEM aims to explain the variation in outcome constructs through their relationships with antecedent constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

5.3.1 Reliability and Validity

The reflective measurement model was assessed following the procedure proposed by (Hair et al., 2022), which involves the evaluation of indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity.

The assessment of reflective measurement models begins with the examination of outer loadings. Indicator loadings (or outer loadings), indicate the strength of the relationship between an indicator and its underlying construct (Hair et al., 2021). The square of an outer loading, known as communality, represents the proportion of variance in an indicator that is explained by the latent construct. As a general guideline, constructs should explain at least 50% of the variance of their indicators. Accordingly, outer loadings above 0.708 are considered satisfactory, as they indicate that the construct accounts for a substantial share of the indicator's variance and thus provide evidence of adequate indicator reliability. However, loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 require further evaluation, as their retention or removal should be determined based on their contribution to the overall quality of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2022). The initial assessment revealed that three indicators did not meet the recommended threshold (0.708), namely CPA_3 (0.631), CPA_4 (0.586) and INT_4 (0.505). Nevertheless, these indicators were

retained because their respective constructs continued to exhibit satisfactory levels of reliability and convergent validity. All outer loading values are reported in Annex E.

A separate issue emerged in the measurement of the Consumer Skepticism construct. While CS_1 exhibited a high outer loading (0.982), the overall measurement quality of the construct was compromised by the weak performance of the remaining indicators. Following an iterative assessment process, CS_1 and CS_4_R were removed, resulting in substantial improvements in the construct's reliability and validity measures. As presented in Annex E, the retained indicators adequately captured their respective constructs, thereby supporting the reliability of the measurement model.

The second step involves assessing internal consistency reliability, which evaluates whether indicators measuring the same construct produce consistent results and exhibit strong correlations with one another (Hair et al., 2021). Following Hair et al. (2022), internal consistency reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (rhoC) and the reliability coefficient (rhoA). While Cronbach's alpha is considered a conservative estimative of reliability, rhoC may produce more liberal estimates. The rhoA coefficient is therefore regarded as a more accurate estimate of internal consistency reliability, as its values typically fall between Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. As a rule of thumb, values above 0.70 indicate satisfactory levels of internal consistency reliability, whereas values exceeding 0.95 may suggest redundancy among indicators (Hair & Alamer, 2022). As shown in Annex E, all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, supporting the internal consistency reliability measurement model. Although the CPA construct presented reliability values close to 0.95, these remained acceptable and therefore did not justify the exclusion of any indicators.

The next criterion examined was convergent validity, which refers to the degree to which indicators associated with the same construct are positively related and share a substantial proportion of common variance (Hair et al., 2022). Convergent validity was evaluated using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which reflects the average amount of variance explained by a construct across its indicators (Hair et al., 2021). An AVE value of 0.50 or above is generally considered evidence of convergent validity, as it indicates that the construct captures more variance in its indicators than remains

attributable to measurement error (Hair et al., 2022). Annex E shows that all constructs satisfied the recommended AVE criterion, confirming adequate convergent validity.

The final step involved evaluating discriminant validity, which determines whether the constructs included in the model are sufficiently different from one another (Hair & Alamer, 2022). To evaluate discriminant validity, three criteria were considered: the Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross-loadings and the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The Fornell-Larcker criterion compares the variance captured by a construct with the correlations it shares with other constructs and is satisfied when the square root of each construct's AVE exceeds its correlations with all other constructs. The cross-loadings approach verifies whether each indicator is more strongly associated with its designated construct than with alternative constructs. However, previous research has shown that both approaches may fail to reliably detect discriminant validity issues. To address these limitations, HTMT has been proposed as a more robust criterion for assessing discriminant validity in PLS-SEM. The HTMT is a measure that evaluates how well a construct explains its own indicators relative to the other constructs in the model. A conservative cut-off value of 0.85 was adopted, with values below this threshold providing evidence that the constructs are distinct from one another (Hair et al., 2022). The HTMT values (Table V), the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table VI) and the Cross-loadings (Annex F) all supported discriminant validity.

Table V: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	<i>BVC</i>	<i>CBI</i>	<i>CPA</i>	<i>CS</i>	<i>INT</i>
BVC					
CBI	0.641				
CPA	0.814	0.528			
CS	0.186	0.100	0.174		
INT	0.306	0.338	0.340	0.140	

Table VI: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	<i>BVC</i>	<i>CBI</i>	<i>CPA</i>	<i>CS</i>	<i>INT</i>
BVC	0.879				
CBI	0.597	0.887			
CPA	0.754	0.527	0.762		
CS	0.149	-0.062	0.121	0.901	
INT	0.272	0.309	0.305	-0.062	0.766

5.4 The Structural Model

The next stage consisted of assessing the structural or inner model, which focuses on the relationships linking the constructs in the research framework (Hair et al., 2021; Hair & Alamer, 2022). Figure 2 represents this study's structural model. Following Hair & Alamer (2022), the structural model was evaluated by examining collinearity, assessing the magnitude and statistical significance of the path relationships, evaluating the coefficient of determination (R^2), and evaluating out-of-sample predictive performance.

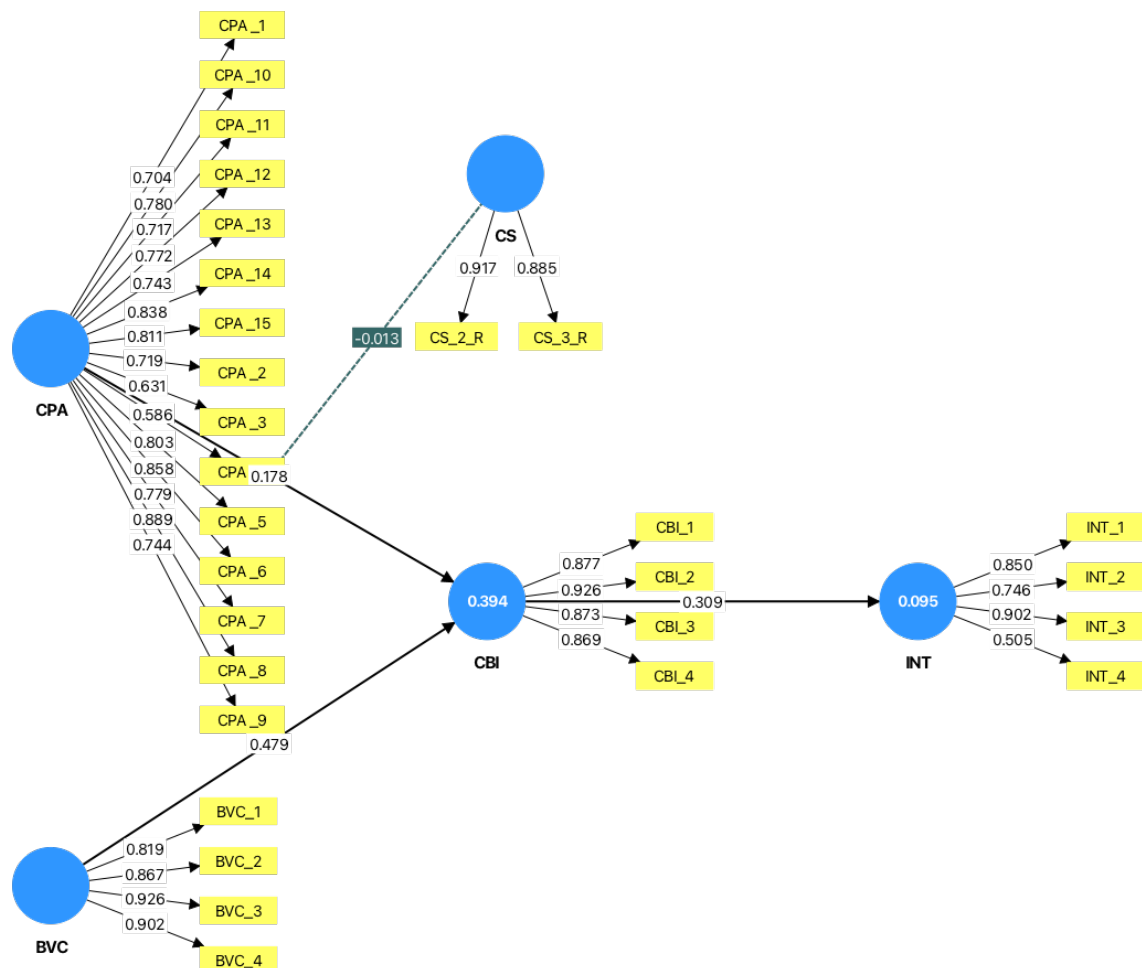


Figure 2: Structural Model of the present study

To ensure the accurate estimation of the structural relationships, collinearity among the predictor constructs was first examined (Hair & Alamer, 2022). High levels of collinearity may bias the estimation of path coefficients and affect the interpretation of the structural relationships. Collinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), whereby values below 3 suggest that collinearity is not a concern, while values exceeding 5 may indicate potential collinearity issues (Hair et al., 2022). As shown in Table VII, all inner VIF values met the recommended criterion, indicating that the structural model is not affected by collinearity problems. The corresponding outer VIF values are reported in Annex G. Although two indicators (CPA_6 and CPA_8) exceeded the threshold of 5 in the outer model, these values were not interpreted, as high correlations among reflective indicators are expected by design (Hair et al., 2022).

Table VII: Inner Model VIF

	<i>VIF</i>
BVC -> CBI	2.415
CBI -> INT	1.000
CPA -> CBI	2.352
CS -> CBI	1.040
CS x CPA -> CBI	1.197

The second step involved assessing the magnitude and statistical significance of the path coefficients. As PLS-SEM does not provide significance levels by default, a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 resamples was performed to obtain the corresponding statistical estimates (Hair & Alamer, 2022). Subsequently, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was examined to evaluate the explanatory power of the model. R^2 ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating a greater ability of the predictor constructs to explain the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2021; Hair & Alamer, 2022). In the context of social science research, explanatory power is commonly interpreted as weak at 0.25, moderate at 0.50 and substantial at 0.75. The findings of these two steps are presented in Annex E and discussed in Section 5.6. In addition, effect sizes (f^2) were assessed to evaluate the relative contribution of each predictor construct to the explanatory power of the endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2022). Following the guidelines adopted in PLS-SEM, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively, while values below 0.02 indicate no measurable effect. As presented in Table VIII, the results indicate a medium effect of brand value

congruence, small effects of consumer perceived brand authenticity, consumer skepticism, and consumer-brand identification, and no measurable effect of the interaction term.

Table VIII: Effect Size

	<i>CBI</i>	<i>INT</i>
BVC	0.157	
CBI		0.105
CPA	0.022	
CS	0.038	
CS x CPA	0.000	

The final step assessed the model's out-of-sample predictive performance using the PLSpredict procedure. This procedure evaluates the ability of the PLS-SEM model to predict observations outside the estimation sample (Hair & Alamer, 2022). Predictive relevance is first assessed through the Q^2 predict values, where values above zero indicate that the model provides meaningful predictive capability (Hair et al., 2022). Subsequently, predictive power is evaluated by comparing the root mean square error (RMSE) generated by the PLS-SEM model with that of a linear benchmark model (LM). According to Hair et al. (2022), predictive power is considered high when the PLS-SEM model produces lower prediction errors than the LM for all indicators, moderate when this occurs for the majority of indicators, and low when it occurs for only a minority of indicators. The results are presented in Table IX.

Table IX: PLSpredict Results

	<i>Q^2predict</i>	<i>PLS-SEM_RMSE</i>	<i>LM_RMSE</i>
CBI_1	0.347	1.239	1.323
CBI_2	0.279	1.462	1.393
CBI_3	0.144	1.479	1.585
CBI_4	0.251	1.477	1.447
INT_1	0.078	1.622	1.927
INT_2	0.052	1.580	1.885
INT_3	0.037	1.444	1.654
INT_4	0.003	1.377	1.574

Additionally, as part of the structural model assessment, model fit was evaluated using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), which measures the discrepancy between the empirical and model-implied correlation matrices (Henseler et al., 2016). As presented in Table X, the SRMR values were 0.084 for the saturated model and 0.089 for the estimated model. Although these values are slightly above the commonly suggested threshold of 0.08, Hair et al. (2022) note that the applicability of this threshold values to PLS-SEM remains uncertain.

Table X: Model Fit

	<i>Saturated model</i>	<i>Estimated model</i>
SRMR	0.084	0.089
d_ULS	3.060	3.439
d_G	1.614	1.620
Chi-square	1023.552	1025.460
NFI	0.688	0.688

5.5 Hypothesis Testing

To test the proposed hypotheses, the structural relationships between the constructs were analysed using the estimated path coefficients (β). In terms of relevance, path coefficients closer to +1 or -1 indicate stronger positive and negative relationships, respectively, whereas values closer to 0 reflect weaker relationships between constructs. The statistical significance of these relationships was subsequently determined through the bootstrapping procedure, which generated the standard errors required to compute the corresponding t-values and p-values. For this research, a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$) and a confidence interval of 95% were assumed, as commonly adopted in marketing research. Accordingly, relationships with p-values below 0.05 and t-values above 1.96 were considered statistically significant, and the corresponding hypotheses were therefore supported (Hair et al., 2022). The results reported in table X revealed that only two of the four proposed hypotheses received empirical support. Specifically, support was found for H2 and H4, while H1 and H3 were not supported.

Table XI: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Relationships</i>	<i>Path Coefficients (β)</i>	<i>T statistics ($O/STDEV$)</i>	<i>P values</i>	<i>Decision</i>
H1	CPA -> CBI	0.178	1.510	0.131	Not Supported
H2	BVC -> CBI	0.479	3.892	0.000	Supported
H3	CS x CPA -> CBI	-0.013	0.258	0.797	Not Supported
H4	CBI -> INT	0.309	3.719	0.000	Supported

5.6 Discussion of Results

The results revealed that consumer-brand identification was significantly influenced by brand value congruence (H2). This relationship was supported with a p-value below the 5% significance threshold ($p < 0.001$) and a t-value above the recommended threshold of 1.96. Furthermore, H2 represented the strongest effect observed in the model ($\beta = 0.479$), indicating that brand value congruence is the most influential predictor of consumer-brand identification. This outcome is consistent with previous research suggesting that consumers are more likely to identify with brands whose values align with their own (D'Arco et al., 2024; He et al., 2018). Additionally, the findings support the assumptions of the self-congruity theory, according to which consumers develop stronger relationships with brands that reflect and reinforce their self-concept (Sirgy, 2018). In contrast, H1 was not supported, as consumer perceived brand authenticity did not significantly influence consumer-brand identification. Specifically, this relationship presented a p-value of 0.131 and a t-value below the recommended threshold of 1.96, despite showing a positive path coefficient ($\beta = 0.178$). This finding contradicts previous studies that identified perceived brand authenticity as an important antecedent of consumer-brand identification and consumer engagement in activist branding contexts (Silva & Abreu, 2025). Similarly, H3 was not supported, indicating that consumer skepticism did not significantly moderate the relationship between consumer perceived brand authenticity and consumer-brand identification. The interaction effect presented the highest p-value in the model ($p = 0.797$) and a t-value well below the recommended threshold of 1.96. Moreover, the relationship showed the weakest path coefficient among all hypothesized relationships ($\beta = -0.013$), suggesting an almost negligible moderating effect. This result is not consistent with prior research that identified a

moderating role of consumer skepticism in CSR contexts (Elbedweihy et al., 2016; Walter et al., 2024). The findings further revealed that consumer-brand identification positively influences consumers' intention to support an activist brand (H4). This relationship was supported with a p-value below the 5% significance threshold ($p < 0.001$) and a t-value above the recommended threshold of 1.96. Furthermore, H4 represented the second strongest effect observed in the model ($\beta = 0.309$). This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that consumers who strongly identify with a brand are more likely to engage in supportive behaviors, including advocacy, positive word-of-mouth and purchase-related intentions (Rather et al., 2022; Silva & Abreu, 2025). Regarding the explanatory power of the model, the predictor constructs explained 39.4% of the variance in consumer-brand identification ($R^2 = 0.394$), indicating a moderate level of explanatory power. Additionally, the model accounted for 9.5% of the variance in consumers' intention to support an activist brand ($R^2 = 0.095$), suggesting weak explanatory power.

CHAPTER 6- CONCLUSION

6.1 Main Conclusions

The increasing adoption of brand activism by companies has raised important questions regarding the factors that influence consumer support for brands that publicly engage with social and political causes. In this context, the present study sought to examine how consumer perceived brand authenticity and brand value congruence influence consumer-brand identification, whether consumer skepticism moderates the relationship between perceived brand authenticity and consumer-brand identification, and how consumer-brand identification affects consumers' intention to support an activist brand. Overall, the objectives established for this investigation were successfully achieved, allowing the proposed research questions to be answered.

Regarding the first research question, which examined the extent to which consumer perceived brand authenticity and brand value congruence influence consumer-brand identification, the findings revealed that brand value congruence positively influences consumer-brand identification, whereas consumer perceived brand authenticity was not found to have a significant effect. The positive influence of brand value congruence is consistent with previous research by D'Arco et al. (2024) and He et al. (2018), suggesting that consumers are more likely to identify with activist brands when they perceive that the values communicated by the brand are consistent with their own values. However, although previous studies have identified perceived brand authenticity as an important antecedent of consumer-brand identification (Silva & Abreu, 2025), this relationship was not supported in the present study. This finding suggests that, within the context of brands engaging in activism, value congruence may play a more important role than perceived authenticity in explaining consumer-brand identification.

The second research question concerned the moderating role of consumer skepticism in the relationship between consumer perceived brand authenticity and consumer-brand identification. The findings showed that consumer skepticism did not significantly moderate this relationship. Therefore, the results do not provide evidence that higher levels of skepticism weaken the influence of perceived brand authenticity on consumer-

brand identification. This finding contrasts with previous studies that identified consumer skepticism as an important factor influencing consumers' responses in cause-related contexts (Ramasamy et al., 2020; Walter et al., 2024). The absence of a significant moderating effect suggests that consumer skepticism may operate differently in the context of fashion brand activism than previously reported.

Finally, the third research question examined the relationship between consumer-brand identification and consumers' intention to support an activist brand. The findings confirmed that consumer-brand identification positively influences consumers' intention to support an activist brand, supporting Rather et al. (2022) and Silva & Abreu (2025). This result indicates that consumers who feel a stronger psychological connection with a brand are more likely to express favourable behavioural intentions towards that brand. Consequently, consumer-brand identification emerges as an important mechanism through which activist brands can encourage consumer support.

Overall, the findings suggest that consumers' intention to support activist brands is primarily explained by the extent to which they identify with the brand. In turn, this identification is strengthened when consumers perceive that the brand's values are aligned with their own. These findings contribute to a better understanding of consumer responses to brand activism and provide additional evidence regarding the factors that influence support for activist brands.

6.2 Main Contributions

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on brand activism by providing empirical evidence of the factors that influence consumers' intention to support activist brands. More specifically, the findings demonstrate that brand value congruence plays an important role in fostering consumer-brand identification, whereas consumer perceived brand authenticity does not significantly influence identification in this context. In addition, the absence of a significant moderating effect of consumer skepticism suggests that its influence on consumers' responses to brand activism may be more limited or context-dependent than previously assumed. Finally, the confirmed relationship between consumer-brand identification and consumers' intention to support an activist brand reinforces the

importance of identification as a key mechanism linking brand activism to favourable behavioural intentions.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that fashion brands should prioritize selecting and supporting divisive causes that genuinely align with their core and the values of their target consumers. Rather than engaging in activism because a cause is popular or receives significant media attention, brands should ensure that their initiatives are consistent with their identity and long-term positioning. As brand value congruence emerged as the strongest driver of consumer-brand identification, fashion managers should invest in understanding the values and expectations of their target audience before developing activist campaigns. Ensuring a clear alignment between the brand's values and the supported cause may strengthen consumers' identification with the brand and, consequently, increase their willingness to support it. Finally, the findings indicate that building consumer-brand identification should be a strategic objective of brand activism initiatives. Fashion brands should therefore communicate their commitment through consistent actions over time, creating meaningful connections with consumers rather than solely on promotional messages or one-off campaigns.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study presents some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study relied on a non-probability sampling technique based on convenience and snowball sampling, meaning the results cannot be generalised to the entire Portuguese population. Additionally, the sample was predominantly composed of female respondents, which may have influenced the results obtained. Second, the study was limited to Portuguese consumers and to the fashion industry specifically, leaving open the possibility that consumer responses to brand activism vary across other cultures or industries. Future research could therefore replicate the proposed model in different countries or sectors to determine whether the observed relationships remain consistent. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design adopted in this study captures consumer perceptions at a single point in time. Considering that public attitudes towards social and political issues may change over time, longitudinal studies could provide a better understanding of how consumer responses to brand activism evolve. Finally, future research could expand the proposed model by incorporating

additional variables that may influence consumer support for activist brands, such as political ideology, brand trust, perceived corporate hypocrisy, or emotional responses to activist campaigns. Examining these factors could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour in the context of brand activism.

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ANNEXES

Annex A- Model Variables and References

<i>Variables presented in the model</i>	<i>Reference</i>
<i>Independent variables:</i>	
Consumer Perceived Brand Authenticity	(D'Arco et al., 2024)
Brand Value Congruence	(D'Arco et al., 2024)
<i>Moderator:</i>	
Consumer Skepticism	(Walter et al., 2024)
<i>Dependent variables:</i>	
Consumer-Brand Identification	(D'Arco et al., 2024)
Intention to Support and Activist Brand	(D'Arco et al., 2024)

Source: Own elaboration

Annex B- Questionnaire



Welcome.
Thank you for participating in this study.

This research is part of a **Master's in Management** dissertation at the Lisbon School of Economics and Management (ISEG). The aim of the study is to understand how consumers perceive and evaluate **brand activism initiatives**.

Your participation is **voluntary** and **anonymous**. The questionnaire should take approximately **7-10 minutes** to complete, and **you may stop** at any moment. **No identifiable personal data** will be collected, and the responses will be used solely for **academic purposes**.

By choosing to continue, you confirm that you are **at least 18 years old** and that you have **read and understood** the information above.

Do you agree to participate in this study?

- ☐ Yes, I agree to participate.
- ☐ No, I do not agree to participate.



For context, **brand activism** refers to the adoption of public positions and actions by brands on relevant social, environmental, cultural or political issues. These actions go beyond traditional corporate social responsibility and may involve reputational or commercial risks.

For example, the brand **Patagonia** has taken public positions in defense of environmental protection, namely through funding environmental organizations, promoting product reuse and encouraging consumption reduction.



Why Do Consumers Support Activist Brands? The Roles of Authenticity, Value Congruence, and Identification



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Please answer the following questions based on your personal preferences.

Which of the following causes associated with brand activism do you identify with **most**?

- ☐ Environmental protection and sustainability
- ☐ Diversity, equity and inclusion
- ☐ Human rights
- ☐ Labor rights and fair working conditions
- ☐ Animal welfare
- ☐ Geopolitical issues or international conflicts
- ☐ Other(s)

Through which means do you have the **most** contact with brand activism initiatives?

- ☐ Traditional media (television, radio, press)
- ☐ Digital media (social networks, websites, online platforms)
- ☐ Both

Now think of a **clothing brand** that you know and that practices brand activism.

Indicate the name of the brand:

Based on the brand you selected and the brand activism initiatives you associate with it, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements below.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My personal values match with values of this brand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Things, which I value in life are similar, that this brand values.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This brand's culture and values fits well with the things, which I value in life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
What this brand stands for is important to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



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Using the scale provided, please indicate your level of agreement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This brand is part of my sense of identity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This brand represents who I am.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel personally connected to this brand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This brand helps me express myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please evaluate the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most claims in brand activism initiatives are intended to mislead rather than to inform consumers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Because claims made in brand activism initiatives are exaggerated, consumers would be better off if this type of communication were reduced.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Most claims made in brand activism initiatives are true.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I do not believe most claims made in brand activism initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Why Do Consumers Support Activist Brands? The Roles of Authenticity, Value Congruence, and Identification



Please select the response that best reflects your level of agreement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
There is a logical connection between this brand and its activism initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This brand seems to be highly committed to its activism initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Brand activism initiatives achieve their intended goals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This brand's support for the activism initiatives described seems altruistic to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The activism initiatives described and this brand seem compatible.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This brand appears to be highly dedicated to its activism initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Brand activism initiatives accomplish what they say they will accomplish.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This brand provides a great deal of support for its activism initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The activism initiatives described seem to align well with this brand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This brand and its activism initiatives fit together well.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This brand seems steadfast in their support of its activism initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This brand seems to be highly involved with its activism initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The results of brand activism initiatives are in line with the desired outcomes.

Brand activism initiatives will actually do what they promise to do.

This brand supports the activism initiatives described because it cares about the respective causes.

	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The results of brand activism initiatives are in line with the desired outcomes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Brand activism initiatives will actually do what they promise to do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
This brand supports the activism initiatives described because it cares about the respective causes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Using the scale provided, please indicate how much you agree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I would pay more to buy products from brands that show care for the well-being of our society.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I avoid buying products from brands that have engaged in immoral actions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
If the price and quality of two product are the same, I would buy from a brand that has a socially responsible reputation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would pay more to buy products from an activist brand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Why Do Consumers Support Activist Brands? The Roles of Authenticity, Value Congruence, and Identification



Please indicate your **gender**:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Please indicate your **age group**:

- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 or older

What is your highest **level of education completed**?

- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree
- ☐ Other

What is your **current occupation**?

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Working student
- ☐ Employed
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Other

Annex C- Original Scales

Construct	Reference	Original Scale
Consumer brand identification	D'Arco et al. (2024)	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) CBI1: Brand X represents who i am. CBI2: Brand X is part of my sense of who i am. CBI3: Brand X helps me express my identity. CBI4: I feel personally connected to brand X.
Brand value congruence	D'Arco et al. (2024)	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) BVC1: What this brand stands for, is important to me. BVC2: this brand's culture and values fits well with the things, which i value in life. BVC3: My personal values match with values of this brand. BVC4: things, which i value in life are similar, that this brand values.
Consumer skepticism	Walter et al. (2024)	(1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) Most claims made on package labels or in ad are true. Because claims are exaggerated, consumers would be better off if such claims on package labels or in ad were eliminated. Most claims on package labels or in ads are intended to mislead rather than to inform consumers. I do not believe most claims made on package labels or in ad.
Consumer perceived brand authenticity	D'Arco et al. (2024)	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) CPA1: Brand activism campaigns will actually do what they promise to do. CPA2: Brand activism campaigns accomplish what they say it will accomplish. CPA3: Brand activism campaigns achieve their designated goals. CPA4: The results of brand activism campaigns are in line with the desired results. CPA5: The brand X provides a great deal of support for its activism campaign. CPA6: The brand X seems to be highly committed to its activism campaign. CPA7: The brand X seems to be highly involved with its activism campaign. CPA8: The brand X appears to be highly dedicated to its activism campaign. CPA9: The brand X seems steadfast in their support of its activism campaign. CPA10: The brand X and its activism campaign fit together well. CPA11: There is a logical connection between the brand X and its activism campaign. CPA12: The activism campaign X seems to align well with the brand X. CPA13: The activism campaign X and the brand X seem compatible. CPA14: The support by the brand X for the activism campaign X seems altruistic to me. CPA15: The brand X supports the activism campaign X because they care about this cause.
Intention to support an activist brand	D'Arco et al. (2024)	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) INT1: I would pay more to buy products from an activist brand. INT2: I avoid buying products from brands that have engaged in immoral actions. INT3: I would pay more to buy products from brands that show care for the well-being of our society. INT4: If the price and quality of two product are the same, i would buy from a brand that has a socially responsible reputation.

Why Do Consumers Support Activist Brands? The Roles of Authenticity, Value Congruence, and Identification

Annex D- Adapted Scales

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Adapted Scale</i>	<i>Adapted Scale in Portuguese</i>
Consumer brand identification	D'Arco et al. (2024)	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) CBI_1: This brand represents who I am. CBI_2: This brand is part of my sense of who I am. CBI_3: This brand helps me express my identity. CBI_4: I feel personally connected to this brand.	(1 = discordo totalmente, 7 = concordo totalmente) CBI_1: Esta marca representa quem eu sou. CBI_2: Esta marca faz parte do meu sentido de identidade. CBI_3: Esta marca ajuda-me a expressar a minha identidade. CBI_4: Sinto-me pessoalmente ligado(a) a esta marca.
Brand value congruence	D'Arco et al. (2024)	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) BVC_1: What this brand stands for is important to me. BVC_2: This brand's culture and values fits well with the things, which I value in life. BVC_3: My personal values match with values of this brand. BVC_4: Things, which I value in life are similar, that this brand values.	(1 = discordo totalmente, 7 = concordo totalmente) BVC_1: O que esta marca representa é importante para mim. BVC_2: A cultura e os valores desta marca estão alinhados com aquilo que valorizo na minha vida. BVC_3: Os meus valores pessoais correspondem aos valores desta marca. BVC_4: As coisas que valorizo na minha vida são semelhantes às que esta marca valoriza.
Consumer skepticism	Walter et al. (2024)	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) CS_1: Most claims made in brand activism initiatives are true. CS_2_R: Because claims made in brand activism initiatives are exaggerated, consumers would be better off if this type of communication was more honest. CS_3_R: Most claims in brand activism initiatives are intended to mislead rather than to inform consumers. CS_4_R: I do not believe most claims made in brand activism initiatives.	(1 = discordo totalmente, 7 = concordo totalmente) CS_1: Considero que a maioria das afirmações feitas em iniciativas de ativismo de marca são verdadeiras. CS_2_R: As afirmações feitas em iniciativas de ativismo de marca são frequentemente exageradas, pelo que os consumidores estariam melhor se este tipo de comunicação fosse mais honesta. CS_3_R: Muitas afirmações feitas em iniciativas de ativismo de marca têm como objetivo enganar em vez de informar os consumidores. CS_4_R: Não acredito na maioria das afirmações feitas nas iniciativas de ativismo de marca.
Consumer perceived brand authenticity	D'Arco et al. (2024)	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) CPA_1: Brand activism initiatives will actually do what they promise to do. CPA_2: Brand activism initiatives accomplish what they say it will accomplish. CPA_3: Brand activism initiatives achieve their intended goals. CPA_4: The results of brand activism initiatives are in line with the desired results. CPA_5: This brand provides a great deal of support for its activism initiatives. CPA_6: This brand seems to be highly committed to its activism initiatives. CPA_7: This brand seems to be highly involved with its activism initiatives. CPA_8: This brand appears to be highly dedicated to its activism initiatives. CPA_9: This brand seems steadfast in their support of its activism initiatives. CPA_10: This brand and its activism initiatives fit together well. CPA_11: There is a logical connection between this brand and its initiatives campaigns. CPA_12: This brand's activism initiatives appear to be well aligned with the brand itself. CPA_13: This brand's activism initiatives are compatible with what the brand stands for. CPA_14: This brand's support for its activism initiatives appears to be genuine. CPA_15: This brand supports its activism initiatives because it cares about the causes involved.	(1 = discordo totalmente, 7 = concordo totalmente) CPA_1: Iniciativas de ativismo da marca irão efetivamente cumprir o que prometem fazer. CPA_2: Iniciativas de ativismo da marca concretizam aquilo que afirmam que irão concretizar. CPA_3: Iniciativas de ativismo da marca atingem os seus objetivos pretendidos. CPA_4: Os resultados das iniciativas de ativismo de marca estão alinhados com os resultados pretendidos. CPA_5: Esta marca fornece um forte apoio às suas iniciativas de ativismo. CPA_6: Esta marca aparenta estar altamente comprometida com as suas iniciativas de ativismo. CPA_7: Esta marca aparenta estar fortemente envolvida nas suas iniciativas de ativismo. CPA_8: Esta marca aparenta ser altamente dedicada às suas iniciativas de ativismo. CPA_9: Esta marca aparenta ser consistente no apoio às suas iniciativas de ativismo. CPA_10: Esta marca e as suas iniciativas de ativismo combinam bem entre si. CPA_11: Existe uma ligação lógica entre esta marca e as suas iniciativas de ativismo. CPA_12: As iniciativas de ativismo desta marca parecem estar bem alinhadas com a própria marca. CPA_13: As iniciativas de ativismo desta marca são compatíveis com aquilo que a própria marca representa. CPA_14: O apoio desta marca às suas iniciativas de ativismo aparenta ser genuíno. CPA_15: Esta marca apoia as suas iniciativas de ativismo porque se preocupa com as respetivas causas.
Intention to support an activist brand	D'Arco et al. (2024)	(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) INT_1: I would pay more to buy products from an activist brand. INT_2: I avoid buying products from brands that have engaged in immoral actions. INT_3: I would pay more to buy products from brands that show care for the well-being of our society. INT_4: If the price and quality of two product are the same, i would buy from a brand that has a socially responsible reputation.	(1 = discordo totalmente, 7 = concordo totalmente) INT_1: Pagaria mais para comprar produtos de uma marca ativista. INT_2: Evito comprar produtos de marcas que se envolveram em ações consideradas imorais. INT_3: Pagaria mais para comprar produtos de marcas que demonstram preocupação com o bem-estar da nossa sociedade. INT_4: Se o preço e a qualidade de dois produtos forem iguais, compraria da marca que tem uma reputação socialmente responsável.

Annex E- Reliability & Validity

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Outer loadings</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha</i>	<i>Composite reliability (rho_a)</i>	<i>Composite reliability (rho_c)</i>	<i>Average variance extracted (AVE)</i>
Brand Value Congruence	BVC_1	0.819	0.902	0.917	0.932	0.773
	BVC_2	0.867				
	BVC_3	0.926				
	BVC_4	0.902				
Consumer-Brand Identification	CBI_1	0.877	0.909	0.915	0.936	0.786
	CBI_2	0.926				
	CBI_3	0.873				
	CBI_4	0.869				
Consumer Perceived Brand Authenticity	CPA_1	0.704	0.948	0.956	0.954	0.581
	CPA_2	0.719				
	CPA_3	0.631				
	CPA_4	0.586				
	CPA_5	0.803				
	CPA_6	0.858				
	CPA_7	0.779				
	CPA_8	0.889				
	CPA_9	0.744				
	CPA_10	0.780				
	CPA_11	0.717				
	CPA_12	0.772				
	CPA_13	0.743				
	CPA_14	0.838				
	CPA_15	0.839				
Consumer Skepticism	CS_2_R	0.917	0.770	0.783	0.896	0.812
	CS_3_R	0.885				
Intention to Support na Activist Brand	INT_1	0.850	0.767	0.855	0.845	0.587
	INT_2	0.746				
	INT_3	0.902				
	INT_4	0.505				

Annex F- Cross-loadings

	BVC	CBI	CPA	CS	INT	CS x CPA
BVC_1	0.819	0.512	0.622	0.163	0.237	-0.298
BVC_2	0.867	0.426	0.666	0.139	0.267	-0.343
BVC_3	0.926	0.511	0.717	0.194	0.213	-0.329
BVC_4	0.902	0.617	0.652	0.048	0.243	-0.340
CBI_1	0.623	0.877	0.537	0.007	0.247	-0.240
CBI_2	0.556	0.926	0.506	0.003	0.229	-0.246
CBI_3	0.432	0.873	0.352	-0.065	0.261	-0.219
CBI_4	0.484	0.869	0.449	-0.167	0.355	-0.246
CPA_1	0.538	0.531	0.704	0.119	0.273	-0.308
CPA_2	0.564	0.517	0.719	0.122	0.253	-0.322
CPA_3	0.425	0.403	0.631	-0.058	0.139	-0.249
CPA_4	0.393	0.320	0.586	0.057	0.207	-0.243
CPA_5	0.584	0.509	0.803	-0.006	0.216	-0.248
CPA_6	0.645	0.416	0.858	0.074	0.240	-0.252
CPA_7	0.591	0.401	0.779	-0.010	0.315	-0.259
CPA_8	0.678	0.449	0.889	0.110	0.226	-0.241
CPA_9	0.549	0.315	0.744	0.017	0.252	-0.276
CPA_10	0.574	0.339	0.780	0.211	0.190	-0.301
CPA_11	0.563	0.210	0.717	0.126	0.238	-0.263
CPA_12	0.603	0.318	0.772	0.107	0.283	-0.212
CPA_13	0.578	0.230	0.743	0.238	0.201	-0.186
CPA_14	0.674	0.369	0.838	0.211	0.253	-0.273
CPA_15	0.624	0.350	0.811	0.171	0.174	-0.350
CS_2_R	0.132	-0.060	0.095	0.917	0.000	0.060
CS_3_R	0.138	-0.051	0.126	0.885	-0.122	0.047
INT_1	0.292	0.323	0.322	-0.046	0.850	-0.251
INT_2	0.210	0.212	0.229	-0.106	0.746	-0.203
INT_3	0.164	0.237	0.197	-0.053	0.902	-0.226
INT_4	0.115	0.096	0.135	0.070	0.505	-0.159
CS x CPA	-0.372	-0.269	-0.354	0.060	-0.278	1.000

Annex G- Outer VIF

	VIF
BVC_1	1.903
BVC_2	2.883
BVC_3	4.493
BVC_4	3.172
CBI_1	2.578
CBI_2	4.074
CBI_3	2.910
CBI_4	2.397
CPA_1	4.388
CPA_2	4.469
CPA_3	2.144
CPA_4	2.137
CPA_5	2.790
CPA_6	6.609
CPA_7	3.610
CPA_8	7.386
CPA_9	2.715
CPA_10	3.539
CPA_11	3.328
CPA_12	4.490
CPA_13	4.207
CPA_14	3.939
CPA_15	3.384
CS_2_R	1.645
CS_3_R	1.645
INT_1	1.845
INT_2	1.618
INT_3	2.698
INT_4	1.256