

# **ACTIVISM, ADS & ALLYSHIP**

---

**A QUANTITATIVE STUDY ON CORPORATE SOCIAL ACTIVISM  
COMMUNICATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON CONSUMERS**

**DISHA MONGA**

**VAARUNI VENKATESH**

Bachelor Thesis  
Stockholm School of Economics  
2022



## **Activism, Ads and Allyship**

### **Abstract:**

This thesis identifies three distinct ways in which brands communicate their socio-political activism stance. Further it analyses the effect of these types of Corporate Socio-Political Advocacy (CSA) communication on consumer perceptions and intentions. The phenomenon of authenticity in brand activism is scarcely studied and establishing a difference in communication strategies has never been the subject of research. The empirical study focuses on variables such as authenticity, awareness of woke-washing, and CSA (racism) to finally comprehend the effect on brand perception and purchase intention. We find that the type of ad and awareness of woke-washing have a significant effect on authenticity perception as well as brand perception. We also conclude this difference is likely to depend on whether consumers align with the stance taken by the brand, as well as how the stance is communicated. This conclusion builds upon previous research conducted on brand activism and consumer-brand alignment, and the results are in line with previous studies.

### **Keywords:**

corporate socio-political activism, brand activism, CSA advertising, woke-washing, authenticity perception, brand perception, purchase intention, consumer-brand alignment

### **Authors:**

Disha Monga (24938)

Vaaruni Venkatesh (25014)

### **Tutors:**

Dr. Daniel Tolstoy, Assistant Professor, Department of Marketing and Strategy

### **Examiner:**

Dr. Patric Andersson, Associate Professor , Department of Marketing and Strategy

Bachelor Thesis

Bachelor Program in Business and Economics

Stockholm School of Economics

© Disha Monga and Vaaruni Venkatesh, 2022

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank...

### **Daniel Tolstoy**

*For the great insights and making sure we see the 'big picture'*

### **Katie Martell**

*For encouraging us with your work in the field and your high spirits*

### **Family and friends**

*For being there always, and for your patience and love*

### **Interviewees and respondents to our survey**

*For your time and support.*

# GLOSSARY

[Chernev & Blair \(2015\)](#) talks about the controversial nature of brand (social) activism that sets it apart from corporate social responsibility (CSR), which typically concerns generally accepted, non-divisive, pro-social issues such as supporting education or disaster relief. Based on this differentiation, and in general the plethora of terms and jargon in the marketing field, the following section endeavours to explain the different (and same) types of activism and social marketing methods.

## **Brand Activism**

Activism consists of efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to make improvements in society. Forms of activism range from writing letters to newspapers or to politicians, socio-political campaigning, economic activism such as boycotts or preferentially patronising businesses, rallies, street marches, strikes, sit-ins, and hunger strikes ([Sarkar & Kotler, 2017](#)).

## **Woke-advertising (Brand Activism/Purpose Marketing)**

Woke advertising refers to advertising that is aware of racial and social discrimination and injustice in the world, and that raises attention to these issues through advertising ([Simmonds 2018](#)).

## **Woke-washing**

Woke-washing is defined as “brands (that) have unclear or indeterminate records of social cause practices” ([Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry, & Kemper, 2020](#)) but yet are attempting “to market themselves as being concerned with issues of inequality and social injustice” ([Sobande 2019](#)), highlighting inconsistencies between messaging and practice ([Vredenburg et al. 2020](#)).

## **Brand Citizenship**

It is the strategic alignment of marketing, reputation management, corporate social responsibility, and social media community-building efforts ([Do Good, Anne Bahr Thompson, 2017](#)).

## **Cause Marketing**

A strategy that involves a commercial business supporting a non-profit organisation or charitable cause to bolster its corporate social responsibility and encourage customer loyalty. It is a type of Corporate Social Responsibility initiative where a company’s promotional campaign has the dual purpose of increasing profitability while bettering society ([Kotler and Lee, 2004](#)).

## **Corporate Philanthropy**

This involves a corporation making a direct contribution to a charity or cause, most often in the form of cash grants, donations, and/or in-kind services. Corporate Philanthropy is a type of CSR initiative, as described by [Kotler and Lee \(2004\)](#).

### **Corporate Social Activism (CSA)**

CSA is a firm's public demonstration (statements and/or actions) of support for or opposition to one side of a partisan socio-political issue ([Bhagwat, Warren, Beck, & Watson 2020](#)).

For this paper, the terms CSA, Brand Activism and Woke-Advertising are used interchangeably, since CSA is a type of brand activism.

### **Corporate Political Activism (CPA)**

These are the efforts by firms to sway political processes so that it is well-positioned to gain policy-based competitive market advantages ([Lux, Crook, and Wehr 2011](#)). Corporate political activity is intended to further a specific goal with direct financial payoffs rather than support a social cause ([Hillman, Keim, and Schuler 2004](#)). CPA and CSA differ in the extent to which each activity is publicized. ([Bhagwat et al., 2020](#)) While the underlying motivations to engage in CSA may vary, it is publicly promoted as a communication of the firm's values ([Kotler and Sarkar 2017](#); [Nalick, Josefy, Zardkoohi & Bierman, 2016](#)). By contrast, firms execute CPA quietly ([Lux et al., 2011](#)).

### **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

Corporate social responsibility refers to “company actions that advance social good beyond that which is required by law” ([Kang, Germann, and Grewal 2016, p. 59](#)). A chief difference between traditional CSR and CSA is the extent to which the focal issue is widely favored (e.g., community resources, education, donations to research for curing disease) rather than partisan (e.g., gun control, transgender rights, gender equality, racial equality) ([Bhagwat et al., 2020](#)).

### **Performative Allyship**

Performative allyship is when someone from that same nonmarginalized group professes to support and solidarity with a marginalized group in a way that either isn't helpful or that actively harms that group ([Holiday Phillips, Forge Medium 2020](#)).

# CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.1 Background.....</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1.1 Collision of social movements and marketing.....	8
1.1.2 Brand Activism.....	9
1.1.3 Consumer expectations and literacy .....	9
1.1.4 Woke-washing.....	10
<b>1.2 Research purpose and expected contributions.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.3 Relevance to research on marketing.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 2. Literature review and theoretical framework.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2.1 Corporate Social Activism .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2.2 Independent Variables.....</b>	<b>16</b>
2.2.1 Types of CSA Advertising.....	16
2.2.2 Awareness of Woke-washing.....	18
2.2.3 Consumer-Brand Alignment .....	20
<b>2.3 Dependent Variables .....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.3.1 Authenticity .....	20
2.3.2 Brand Perception.....	22
2.3.3 Purchase Intention.....	23
<b>Chapter 3. Methodology.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>3.1 Research Design .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>3.2 Pilot Studies .....</b>	<b>26</b>
3.2.1 Study of ad categories.....	26
3.2.2 Pre-Studies (1 & 2) .....	28
<b>3.3 Main Study.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>3.4 Data Collection and Statistical Methods.....</b>	<b>31</b>
3.4.1 Data collection and Quality .....	31
3.4.2 Data Analysis .....	32
3.4.3 Reliability .....	32
3.4.4 Validity .....	33
<b>Chapter 4. Results .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>4.1 Authenticity Perception of Activism ads.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>4.2 Brand Perception of Activism ads .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>4.3 Purchase Intention .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>4.4 Summary of Findings.....</b>	<b>38</b>

<b>Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>5.1 Discussion.....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1.1 Effect of CSA advertising on Authenticity.....	39
5.1.2 Factors affecting brand perception .....	40
5.1.3 Impact of authenticity and brand perception on purchase intention .....	41
<b>5.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>5.3 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>53</b>
.....	

# Chapter 1. Introduction

In a rebellious statement ([B&J](#)) posted on the company's website, Ben & Jerry's describes the death of George Floyd as the result of 'inhumane police brutality that is perpetuated by a culture of white supremacy'. Companies including Nike, Netflix, Twitter, Disney, Facebook, and Intel condemned racism and injustice during the 'Black Lives Matter' movement. But the statement from Ben & Jerry's was unusually direct, addressing the historical roots of discrimination in the United States and calling out systemic racism, while advocating specific policies to prevent further police abuses and redress racial inequality ([CNN news](#)). But what exactly does it take for consumers to believe that Ben & Jerry's is a real ally for the Black Lives Matter movement?

## 1.1 Background

According to [Jungle Scout's \(2021\) survey](#) of over 1,000 U.S. consumers, 58% of consumers said a brand's social activism impacts their impression of a brand- including their purchase intention. We are living in an era of value-based marketing, one in which brands use marketing as a tool to take a stand on social and socio-political issues and to make clear what they believe in. Most brands seek to connect with consumers on a deeper, psychological, level- one based on morals and principles. In social B2B marketer [Katie Martell's](#) words, this concept of brand activism is like "a good marriage founded on shared values".

Whether it is feminism, climate change, LGBTQ+ rights, abortion rights, gun legislation, or other social issues, matters historically considered outside the scope of conventional business are now extensively worked into marketing plans. A growing number of younger consumers seek to make purchase decisions based on shared values ([Taking a Stand, YouGov, 2017](#)). Fifty percent of millennials (18–34) want brands to take a public stance on social issues. Across all generations, 6 in 10 will not make a purchase if they do not believe in the causes the company stands for. But how exactly did this collision of social movements and marketing transpire?

### 1.1.1 Collision of social movements and marketing

'Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large' ([AMA, 2013](#)). By definition, marketing is intended to communicate offerings that have value for customers, stakeholders (including, the society). If we go look at the crux of business activities, brands will not be able to sell a product without having any customers. So, a marketer works to create offerings which are valuable to their customers. As noted, and in many more instances in this paper- the customer's needs are dynamic and they are important.

In the [1971 research paper](#), "Social marketing: An approach to planned social change", a term called social marketing was coined ([Kotler & Zaltman, 1971](#)). The research explained how it could

be possible to solve social problems through marketing practices. Through this practice of social marketing, brands will be able to convince their stakeholders that they have a positive, meaningful, and authentic message about the company and, naturally, society. [Drumwright \(1996\)](#) noted almost 3 decades ago that advertising was on the rise with a social dimension. In a recent study “Brand Activism: Impact of Woke Advertising on the Consumers’ Attitude” by [Cristobal, Del Prado, Cagampan & Dimaculangan \(2022\)](#), respondents were asked if they believed that brands have the responsibility to speak about key issues related to the society (equality, discrimination, violence etc). Out of 385 respondents, 97% of them answered “Yes”. The paper also relates to the work of [Bravo & Lee \(2019\)](#) that found that millennials who agree to the message of an advocacy advertisement create a positive attitude towards that advertisement and brand. In their study, [Mukherjee & Althuizen \(2020\)](#) discussed when consumers and brands share the same set of beliefs, there is a high consumer-brand similarity. This similarity drives the consumers to show an approving attitude regarding the woke advertisement. Clearly, consumers want brands to take a stand and engage in brand activism.

### 1.1.2 Brand Activism

Brand activism is defined as “The act of publicly taking a stand on diverse social or political issues by a brand or individuals associated with a brand” ([Kotler & Sarkar, 2017](#)). Brand activism, or ‘woke-advertising’, are the efforts made by a business to encourage or direct some type of societal reform with the desire to foster improvements. This can take various forms such as social, legal, business, economic, political or environmental ([Kotler & Sarkar, 2017](#)).

This brand activism is different from, and a natural extension of, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) programs that are also slowly transforming companies across the world ([Kotler & Sarkar, 2017](#)). The authenticity of brand activism relies on articulated purpose and values as well as practice and messaging. However, the lack of authenticity while practising brand activism can elicit both societal implications and consumer backlash.

### 1.1.3 Consumer expectations and literacy

Fifty-six percent of people believe too many brands use societal issues as a marketing ploy to sell more of their products. However, if consumers trust the brand on social issues, not only do they buy from the brand, 7 out of 10 will advocate for, and defend the brand ([Edelman, 2020](#)). According to [the Zeno Strength of Purpose \(2020\)](#) report, ‘brand trust’ ranks as a top buying consideration. Consumers want to trust brands to do what is morally right, for customers and society. Additionally, they expect brands to keep their promises by taking action that makes a real and legitimate difference. The study reveals that when consumers think a brand has a strong purpose, they are:

- **4.1 times** more likely to **trust** the company

- **4 times** more likely to **purchase** from the company
- **6 times** more likely to **protect** the company in the event of a misstep or public criticism
- **4.5 times** more likely to **champion** the company and recommend it to friends and family (Zeno, 2020)

While 94% of global consumers say it is important that the brands they engage with have a strong purpose (tangible goals contributing to the society), only 37% believe companies today have a clear and strong purpose. Quoting the Zeno report, "the days of humility are over – it is not enough to have a purpose, it also needs to be shared. The absence of communication will infer inaction, a potentially costly and damaging mistake." Customers want to make conscious and righteous decisions, regarding themselves and society. This leads to the notion that consumers, more importantly the belief-driven consumers (the segment that changes its purchase decision based on the company's moral standing), seek knowledge about how the business practises social ethics and values. Therefore, genuine brand activism can prove to be beneficial to brands but more importantly, society at large, however, this further insinuates the need to stay away from woke-washing.

#### 1.1.4 Woke-washing

The term ‘woke’ is defined as someone who is aware of and actively attentive to important societal facts and issues (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Derived from here is the term ‘woke-washing’ which refers to brands using marketing to take a socio-political stance with the purpose of increasing relevance or profit, or sometimes to mask unethical business practices. Brands lacking explicit brand purpose and values yet embracing activist marketing messaging can render perceptions of their brand activism as insincere, inauthentic, or even deceptive. Unfavourable brand associations and false signalling is unethical as it can involve making misleading and unsubstantiated claims that engender consumer distrust which further limits the potential for social change (Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry, & Kemper, 2020).

## 1.2 Research purpose and expected contributions

Although there is prior research on whether brands should engage in social activism (Swant 2021; Rim, Lee, & Yoo, 2020) and consumer expectations regarding whether brands should take a social stand (Moorman 2020; Sarkar and Kotler 2018), the effectiveness and the influence of the brand activism strategies have not been tested on consumers’ perception and purchase intention. The aim of this research is to test what type of CSA advertising, and brand activism, resonates most with consumers. **This is done not only through studying the type of communication that resonates most with consumers, but also how awareness of woke-washing impacts their evaluation.** Further, the aim is to determine the impact of communication for a brand on their image and quantifiable impacts on purchases. Through a quantitative study, we mainly aim to answer three questions through this research:

**1) How does the type of CSA communication affect the authenticity perception of the advertisement in both absence and presence of awareness of woke-washing ?**

**2) How does the perception of such CSA communications impact the overall brand perceptions for the brands engaging in CSA?**

**3) How does the difference in perceptions of authenticity, and thus brand, have an impact on the purchase intention?**

This thesis identifies the characteristics of activism communications which elicit differentiated responses from consumers and categorises the types of communication that exist in today's age of CSA. This distinction is a valuable contribution towards activism advertising which remains an understudied area. [Vredenburg et al. \(2020\)](#) in their scope for future research emphasise how the importance of authenticity has not yet been empirically tested on socio-political activism. This thesis addresses this through conducting an experimental study on authenticity perception. The previous studies and experimental research in the field of brand activism and communication effects have been limited to consumer responses on real life examples of certain ads from brands. However, this limits the generalizability of such studies as they remain limited to attributing their effects to certain products, companies, or industries. By choosing a fantasy brand and designing the campaign ourselves to mimic real counterparts, we contribute to being able to extend the effects we observe to the activism and the ad campaigns rather than a pertaining to a specific brand.

### **1.3 Relevance to research on marketing**

[Stephen Hahn-Griffiths, of the Reputation Institute](#), stated in an interview: “If you look at the top 10 in 2017—we are talking about companies like Lego, Google, Sony, Rolex and Walt Disney—they all operate with honesty and integrity and they stand for things that matter to people around the world, such as diversity and inclusiveness, environmental sustainability and education”. The world today thrives in a politically conflicted state filled with constant problems – discrimination, injustice, and violence. The accrual of consumer expectations for brands to take a political stance is necessitated by this. Consumers would like brands to show concern beyond profits, for the communities they serve, and the society at large.

A survey by [Sprout Social \(2017\)](#) reveals these key findings:

- Two-thirds of consumers (66%) say it is important for brands to take public stands on social and political issues

- Consumers say brands are most credible when an issue directly impacts their customers (47%), employees (40%) and business operations (31%)
- When consumers' personal beliefs align with what brands are saying, 28% will publicly praise a company. When individuals disagree with the brand's stance, 20% will publicly criticize a company.

It is in the interest of companies to support what their consumers are committed to, and the society objectively thinks is correct, to build a stronger relationship with the consumers- which in turn promotes the brand (Laufer, 2003). The decision by a brand owner to take a stance on an issue has been motivated with two main causes (Lawton, Doh, & Rajwani, 2014). Brands can adopt a socio-political stance either because they perceive an opportunity to maintain a competitive advantage and enhance goodwill to the primary benefit of shareholders (Friedman, 1970) or because managers recognize that brands exist in a social context and should deliver value to different stakeholders (Svensson and Wood, 2008). Therefore, from a business, and hence marketing, point of view- this topic is extremely significant, influential, and pertinent.

## Chapter 2. Literature review and theoretical framework

This section discusses the past literature and findings in the field of brand activism studies. The chapter begins by addressing CSA activities and needs, differentiating it from other forms of corporate activism. We eventually move on to discuss the implications of CSA in terms of authenticity and brand perception, as well as purchase intention.

### 2.1 Corporate Social Activism

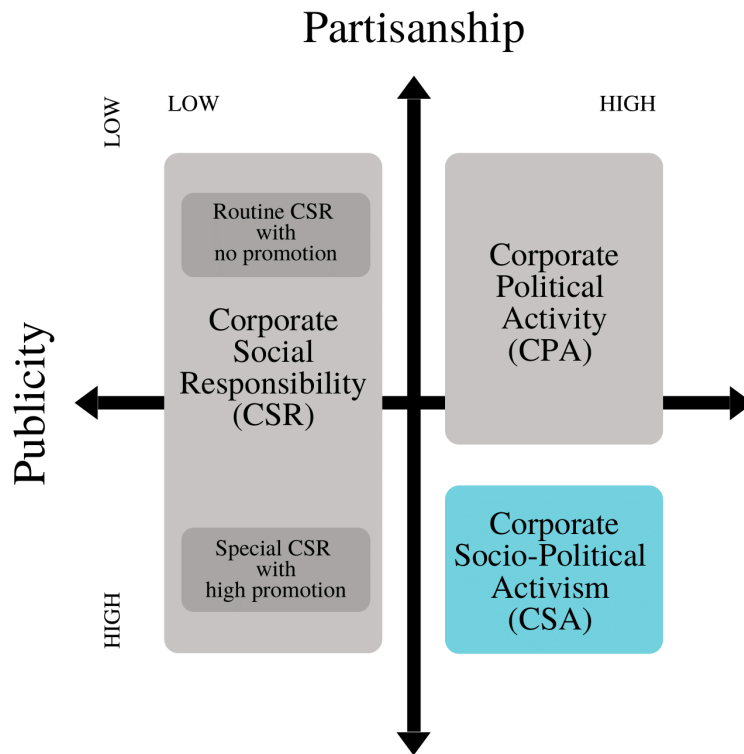
Corporate Social Activism (CSA) is a firm's public demonstration (statements and/or actions) of support for or opposition to one side of a partisan socio-political issue. [Nalick et al. \(2016\)](#) describe socio-political issues as "salient unresolved social matters on which societal and institutional opinion is split, thus potentially engendering acrimonious debate among groups." Importantly, such issues are partisan and yield polarised stakeholder responses ([Kotler and Sarkar 2017](#)).

According to the Moral Foundations theory ([Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009](#)), individuals may arrive at opposing moral judgments concerning socio-political issues due to differences in the emphasis placed on the five moral foundations: care v/s harm, fairness v/s cheating, loyalty v/s betrayal, authority v/s subversion and sanctity v/s degradation. A brand's stand on a contentious social or political issue thus reflects the emphasis it places on these moral foundations. ([Mukherjee & Althuisen, 2020](#)). The care/harm foundation leads us to disapprove of actions that cause pain and suffering and to approve of those which prevent harm. The fairness foundation makes us sensitive to issues of equality and justice and leads us to frown upon people that violate these principles. The authority foundation is based on our tendency to create hierarchically structured societies of dominance and subordination ([Koleva, Graham, Iyer, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012](#)). For example, a brand that is pro-abortion rights has a moral commitment to women's rights (fairness), whereas a brand that supports Black Lives Matter places greater emphasis on care and fairness. Clearly, there is room (and need) for consumers to determine whether a brand's moral foundations are congruent with theirs.

For years now, companies have tried to link their brands with social causes and social responsibility. Research shows that the world is more ideologically polarised than at any time in the past two decades, which leads to challenges for marketers who want to take a stand on a societal issue ([Mukherjee & Althuisen, 2020](#)). By taking a socio-political stance, brands offer consumers the opportunity of self-expression ([Aaker, 1996](#)). Consumers and shareholders also increasingly expect brands to engage socio-politically ([Swaminathan, Sorescu, Steenkamp, O'Guinn & Schmitt 2020](#); [Bhagwat et al., 2020](#); [Moorman, 2020](#); [Vredenburg et al., 2020](#)) and to solve social imbalances, by filling the void left by other established institutions ([Edelman, 2020](#)). [Matos et al. \(2020\)](#) found that consumers' self-brand connection and, indirectly, their purchase intentions are higher when a brand's socio-political position is aligned (vs. misaligned) to their individual socio-political affiliation.

There exists a stark difference when it comes to evaluating the impact of CSR initiatives on consumers against CSA (as shown in Figure 1). Brand activism can be seen as an evolution of CSR (Sarkar and Kotler 2018), however, CSR more strongly emphasises actions, and the consequences of those actions (i.e., reputation, sales), than it does inherent company values (Mirzaei, Wilkie, & Siuki, 2022). If we view brands taking a stand as an effort to possess points of difference or points of parity through the lens of branding theory (Keller, Sternthal, and Tybout 2002), we can see CSR activities being reduced to baseline requirement (Fleming and Jones 2013)— a point of parity; while emerging CSA as a more novel, less expected activity—a point of difference (Fleming and Jones 2013).

**Figure 1:** Difference between CSR, CPA and CSA



Source: Bhagwat et al., 2020

Studies on CSA demonstrate that by taking a stance on a controversial social issue, companies can increase their sales and strengthen consumers' brand loyalty (Dodd & Supa, 2015; Park & Jiang, 2020). Still, studies also indicate that taking a stance on a divisive issue can provoke polarised reactions that potentially backfire (Chatterji & Toffel, 2018; Rim, Lee & Yoo 2020). Overall, research on concepts related to socio-political brand communication suggests that taking a stance

on a socio-political issue can increase a company's sales and improve its image, whereas especially controversial issues might pose a threat of consumer boycotts ([Jungblut & Johnen, 2022](#)).

### 2.1.1 Racism

The 'need' for brand activism, in terms of racism, in advertising is rooted in intersectionality studies ([Sobande, 2019](#)). Coined in 1989 by Black feminist scholar [Kimberle Crenshaw](#), the term 'intersectionality' had been a useful (though not uncontroversial) one for discussions about the many facets that make up an individual's identity (including but not limited to race), and how these overlapping parts can impact someone in advantageous and disadvantageous ways. Advertising has traditionally taken a one-dimensional view of people (the word 'consumer' is a good example of how ingrained this one-dimensionality is), but intersectionality demands that advertising shows people with multiple intersecting identities ([Camilla Yates, The Drum 2021](#)). Global research by [The Unstereotype Alliance \(2021\)](#) found that advertising that represents people across a variety of social categorizations resonates with all consumers, not just the minorities represented in the ads. It also found that intersectional advertising grows and deepens consumers' ties with a brand, with more impact found among individuals from traditionally marginalised groups. Like intersectionality, woke firstly began to be used as a 'Black' word that was helpful for talking about the experience of racism. But the 'wokeness' we refer to is the modern, social, definition of it. It is not just about discrimination based on colour, but extends to all socio-political stances such as LGBTQ+, gun violence, abortion rights etc.

Advertising and media are key sites of cultural production that are shaped by and shape issues concerning race and Black life ([Davis, 2018; Sobande, 2017](#)), because capitalism and racism are intrinsically interwoven ([Davis, 2018](#)). While previously, representations of Blackness in marketing contributed to content which often evades depictions of racial inequality ([Crockett, 2008](#)), the unfixed and evolving ways that marketers make use of such portrayals includes more explicit references to racism and entangled injustices. An article from [Forbes](#) reported that "only 26% of African-Americans, 10% of Hispanics and 3% of Asians feel represented in advertising". This not only means that the portrayal of diversity in advertising matters, but also that consumers want to see themselves in these advertisements. When the Black Lives Matter movement took the spotlight, all brands stood up against racism. However, this also brings up a lot of questions. Did these brands previously portray diversity in their advertisements? Do these brands practise equality within their own organisation? We decided to choose anti-racism as the socio-political issue represented in our advertisement used in the survey to be able to answer these questions.

## 2.2 Independent Variables

### 2.2.1 Types of CSA Advertising

When the CSR message is predominantly about a social issue (rather than about the company or its products), consumers are more likely to be suspicious of ulterior motives, because such advertising does not fit their ‘schemer schema’ (Friestad and Wright 1994). Accordingly, a brand should emphasise the importance of the social issue and communicate a lack of vested self-interest (Menon and Kahn 2003).

Even though we previously talk about the contrasts between the nature of CSR (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010) and CSA, the previous research on their communication methods points towards the same direction. Schmidt et al. (2022) talk about the following characteristics in CSA communication:

- Many consumers link woke campaigns to trendy movements, accusing brands of ‘free riding’ or do so to follow market trends. The lack of social context independency element is considered important, making consumers more cynical about the authenticity.
- Brand sacrifice is also an important characteristic, suggesting that wokeness and virtue signalling (cost signalling theory), requires concrete measures to show a brand is willing to commit to the support social issues financially. (Kane & Zollman, 2015).
- Practice is defined as the extent to which the woke brands exercise and act on what they preach. This dimension of woke authenticity is the extent to which the brand delivers what it promises (Napoli, Dickinson, Beverland, & Farrelly, 2014). Perceived inclusion also influences woke activism authenticity.
- Fit is the extent to which the woke topic is in line with the brand’s current or past core business, meaning/image, positioning, and culture. When the firm’s action aligns with what the firm sells can influence authenticity perceptions.
- Previous research also suggests that evaluating the motivations and intentions behind brand activism can positively influence brand authenticity (Joo, Miller, & Fink, 2019).

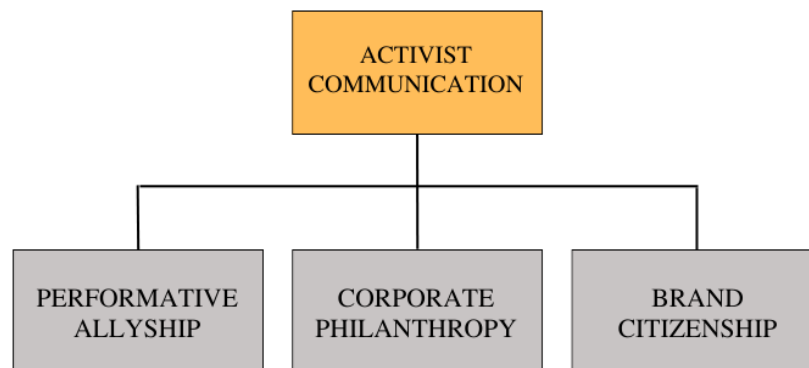
Performative Allyship (PA) is usually identified with some key characteristics or common phrases used, such as: “working for social good,” “socially responsible,” “a socially conscious brand,” or “we promote well-being.” They are empty promises, with vague words such as "condemn" or "we stand with..." without meaningful action. It is also often seen that such ads are 'opportunistic', only visible and supporting a cause when it is trending (Forge). Context matters.

According to Bhagwat et al. (2020), CSA in the form of 'actions' is more resource-intensive than in the form of 'statements'. Statements can be verbal or written declarations that support or oppose one side of a divisive issue without committing financial or other types of resources to it. By contrast, an action goes beyond a declaration and consists of a change in the firm’s conduct or

policies, such as publishing or retracting an advertisement, offering or discontinuing products or services, offering or withdrawing promotions, hiring or firing workers, and making or breaking contracts. Messages should be qualified with precise social benefits, using “clear, prominent and specific language”. (FTC 2019) Endeavor CMO Bozoma Saint John: “Sometimes, it is not about changing the entire world. If you just look in your own backyard; if you just look in your own company, there are probably things you can do to help make a difference, even in employees’ lives, and that’s what’s most important now.” (Zillman & Hinchliffe, 2020). Inward-looking and accountable communications are the 'real allies'. It is important that companies express honest intentions and that their CSA actions are not merely a result of self-interests or willingness to succeed in the way other companies have through their CSA actions (Yuhei & Kent, 2014). For example, in 2017- rather than merely voicing support for immigrants (a statement), Starbucks opposed restrictive immigration policies by announcing a plan to hire refugees (an action). Because actions require higher levels of resources and accountability (Kim and McAlister 2011) and are more difficult to reverse, they also signal more elevated levels of strategic commitment (Klein, Smith, and John 2004). Brands that are seriously invested in aiding efforts to address social injustices cannot simply do so in the form of marketing content, and instead, must assess their approaches to issues including the principles underpinning their in-house labour practices, production methods and sources and uses of profit (Sobande, 2019).

Building up on Bhagwat et al. (2020) and Du et al. (2010), and based on market research of brand activism ads- we have therefore divided the CSA advertising methods in the categories mentioned in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:** Categorization of Types of CSA Communication



### Performative Allyship

In the words of Katie Martell, "Rainbow-pandering (a form of LGBTQ+ Performative Allyship) masks the real work to be done. It hides the reality of the situation facing LGBTQ+ and creates an

illusion of progress". Performative Allyship is an 'empty promise' made by companies as a facade to rally support for the cause they are allegedly helping, whereas it might just be opportunistic and cash on the trend of social activism. Performative allyship is damaging for the society- and hence the business- and carries a real impact. It exploits human rights movements (for instance, BLM or Pride) for corporate and financial gain and creates a false perception of truth. It hides the real scope of the crisis. It gives an illusion of progress, in terms of the corporate world and society. Performative Allyship also undermines the trust of already suspicious consumers. Fifty-eight percent of adults do not trust a brand until they have seen 'real world proof' that it has kept its promises (Ipsos Connect).

Marketers and researchers have considered authenticity to be an essential part of advertising (Beverland et al., 2008). Further, as talked about by Vredenburg et al. (2020), authenticity is also a prerequisite for brand activism to function. However, the role of authenticity in terms of brand activism has been understudied, regarding what exactly works. Based on prior research and market practices, there exists a clear differentiation in the types of CSA advertising. The three ad distinctions previously made offer different advertising methods to be used when taking a stand.

### 2.2.2 Awareness of Woke-washing

Knowledge is an important resource often reflected in a few information-processing activities, such as reasoning, judgement, problem solving and the recognition of presented information (Mitchell & Dacin, 1996). Knowledge has been talked about and studied in various arenas of literature. In marketing studies, knowledge research is mostly conducted in the field of consumer behaviour (Bettman & Park, 1980; Mitchell & Dacin, 1996). There are two kinds of knowledge; objective and subjective (Brucks, 1985; Flynn & Goldsmith, 1999). The first of these is concerned with what individuals think they know, whereas the latter is concerned with what is stored in their memory.

Even though consumer knowledge has been researched frequently in the past (Brucks, 1985; Rao & Monroe, 1988; Sujana, 1985), less attention has been paid to consumers' awareness of external knowledge that might impact their purchase intention. A research paper in Lund university proved that knowledge about the difference between 'woke-washing' and brand activism has a significant effect on the level of trust that a consumer has towards activist brands (Voinow & Kropinova, 2021). By knowledge, they refer to 'subjective knowledge'. Subjective knowledge is "what individuals perceive they know, also indicated as perceived or self-rated knowledge" (Aertsens, Mondelaers, Verbeke, Buysse & Huylenbroeck, 2011, p. 1356). As reported by academics, subjective knowledge correlates with the purchase confidence of the consumer (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). Therefore, a consumer's high perception of their knowledge about a brand lead to high purchase confidence. Vice versa, consumers' high purchase confidence often reflects their actual knowledge about the brand (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987). According to Mitchell and Dacin

(1996), experts possess more in-depth knowledge, meaning that they can compare brands and product characteristics between product classes.

Given the controversial nature of brand activism, lack of knowledge of actual practice will lead to scepticism. Sceptics doubt the content of communication and perceive the certainty of it as low (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001). Scepticism has been defined as “the general tendency toward disbelief of advertising claims” (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998). Their paper demonstrates it as a variable that has an impact on consumers' response to the advertisement and conclude that all advertisement including claims (CSA, for example) are subject to disbelief to a certain degree. Consumer scepticism might lower the acceptance of advertising claims (Orazi & Chan, 2020; Kim & Lee, 2009). Since scepticism is a variable that contributes to the perception and degree of authenticity- a highly sceptical consumer, that already has knowledge about woke-washing and empty claims, is more likely to disbelieve a brand activism ad as compared to a less sceptical consumer. Sceptical consumers will have a less favourable attitude towards the advertisement and will be less persuaded by such claims (Gfk, 2010; Orazi & Chan, 2020).

Therefore, to increase exposure to knowledge about woke-washing and hence, induce scepticism to account for its effects- we introduce a newspaper article after exposing consumers to the three ads (See [Appendix](#)). Even though previous research discusses that successful brand activism leads to long-term competitive advantage (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore & Hill, 2006; Manfredi-Sanchez, 2019; Sarkar & Kotler, 2018; Weinzimmer & Esken, 2016), it might be possible that consumer awareness of woke-washing negatively impacts activist companies in general.

### 2.2.3 Consumer-Brand Alignment

When a brand takes a stand on a divisive social or political issue, it provides consumers with a unique opportunity to assess whether its moral foundations are aligned with their own, that is, to assess the level of self-brand similarity in the domain of moral judgments (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). When consumers agree with the stand taken by a brand, it indicates that the moral foundations of the consumer and the brand are well aligned, which implies higher self-brand similarity and, consequently, higher consumer-brand identification (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Engaging in CSA provides consumers with an opportunity to identify with the brand by virtue of their ideological alignment with the brand's values. CSA is also displayed to repel misaligned customers to a greater degree than it attracts aligned customers (Hydock, Paharia, & Blair, 2020).

## 2.3 Dependent Variables

### 2.3.1 Authenticity

The term 'authentic' is used either in the strong sense of being "of undisputed origin or authorship", or in a weaker sense of being "faithful to an original" or a "reliable, accurate representation" (Varga & Guignon, 2014). Authenticity has previously played a role in social movements and situations (Weber, Heinze, & DeSoucey, 2008). Employees are more willing to follow authentic leaders (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008), and people are happier if they feel they are being authentic (Schlegel, Hicks, Arndt, & King, 2009). There exist different definitions of authenticity, based on context and the subject of discussion:

*"An organizational identity that is authentic precludes certain alternatives from consideration simply on the grounds that they would not be genuine or thinkable, even if they might be profitable"* (Baron 2004, p. 14)

*"Act in accordance with one's own sense of self, emotions, and values"* (Gino, Kouchaki, and Galinsky 2015, p. 984)

*"Authenticity is conceptualized as the extent to which there is a synergy between an entity's internal activities and external expressions"* (Morhart, Malär, Guèvremont, Girardin, Grohmann, 2015)

One of the key factors that can determine the success of brand activism is authenticity (Vredenburg et al. 2020). Brand authenticity could be seen as an aspect of brand image and thus as constituting characteristics that consumers associate with a brand. (Bruhn, Schoenmüller, Schäfer, Heinrich, 2012) The study identifies continuity, originality, reliability, and naturalness as the 4 mutually

exclusive and collectively exhaustive factors of authenticity. Similarly, [Morhart et al., \(2015\)](#) identifies context-specific brand authenticity dimensions: credibility, integrity, symbolism, and continuity.

Although the role of authenticity in the brand activism context has been understudied, prior research in the advertising and CSR literature has demonstrated its importance. Advertising scholars have considered authenticity to be an essential part of advertising (e.g. [Becker, Wiegand, and Reinartz 2019](#); [Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink 2008](#)) as it encapsulates ‘what is genuine, real, and/or true’ ([Beverland and Farrelly 2010](#)). [Schmidt, Ind, Guzman & Kennedy \(2022\)](#) research socio-political activist brands and call for the need to research brand activism to explore the ways brands can take a social stance without being perceived as opportunistic woke-washing. The partisan quality of socio-political activism raises the level of risk and uncertainty beyond that of CSR ([Bhagwat et al., 2020](#)) and focuses on the importance of consumer-brand alignment ([Lawton et al., 2014](#)). Authentic brand activism captures the best-case scenario of a brand activism strategy because it relies on consistency between the brand’s previous actions, value articulation, credibility, and brand equity outcomes ([Vredenburg et al., 2020](#)). This fit is a crucial element for brand managers to consider, as demonstrated by well-known mission-driven brand activist strategies by brands such as Ben & Jerry’s, Unilever, and Patagonia.

If a brand aims to portray its authentic investment and commitment to social change via its activist stance, setting and articulating specific benchmarks will encourage consumer trust in the process. In this way, measurable goals, and specificity in language for messaging, purpose, values, and practices are a vehicle for trust and social change. ([Vredenburg et al., 2020](#)).

Even if the company’s communicated standpoint is in line with the consumers expectations, the problem remains that consumers may become sceptical about woke advertising. [Wernerfelt \(1988\)](#) argues that other types of brand activism pale in comparison to authentic brand activism because it produces the best results in terms of brand equity. As a result, authentic brand activism increases the probability of potential trustworthy campaigns, which in return will lead to brand awareness while also building brand equity for the current campaign. Based on the previous talk about Performative Allyship and authenticity, we hypothesize the following:

***H1: Pre-awareness of woke-washing the effect of PA on authenticity will be the smallest.***

To test for Brand Authenticity in our research, we have used the [Bruhn et al. \(2012\)](#) paper for a factor analysis. Their paper identified brand authenticity as a construct consisting of four dimensions, namely continuity, originality, reliability, and naturalness – with the dimensions being differentially evaluated for various brands. In our context, we could only test for 3 of these factors- ‘continuity’ being an untestable factor due to time constraints: originality, reliability, and naturalness. Scepticism increases when there is a discrepancy between a company's statements and its actions. This means that consumers are more sceptical when companies argue that their actions are purely social and it appears that their actions are profit-oriented ([Becker-Olsen, Cudmore &](#)

Hill, 2006). Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) remark that scepticism influences consumers' response to the advertisement. Additionally, these claims of brand activism and social stances are subject to disbelief to a certain degree. Since this scepticism has a negative impact on consumer perception, we hypothesize the following:

***H2: Awareness of woke-washing will have a negative effect on authenticity on***

***(a) PA; (b) CP, (c) BC***

Additionally, building on H1- the scepticism will be more for the 'PA' ad due to the existing perception of deceit or inauthenticity of the ad. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

***(d): The effect that awareness of woke-washing has on authenticity will be largest for PA ad.***

### 2.3.2 Brand Perception

Consumers increasingly associate brands with socio-political positions and partly base their consumption and perception upon perceived congruity between their socio-political opinion and the perceived socio-political positioning (or CSA advertising) of a brand (Baek, 2010; Hoewe & Hatemi, 2017; Matos et al., 2017). Prior studies showcase that authenticity is an important aspect of advertising (Becker et al. 2019; Beverland et al. 2008). Schmidt et al. (2022) also call for the need to research brand activism to explore the ways brands can take a social stance without being perceived as woke-washing. Building upon the need to measure the authenticity of different types of CSA advertising, we also test for authenticity having a positive effect on Brand Perception.

***H3: Authenticity has a significantly positive effect on Brand Perception for***

***(a) PA; (b) CP, (c) BC.***

As noted, prior studies have shown that consumers choose brands that reflect their present and desired identities. A perceived similarity between oneself and a brand's socio-political position increases the purchase of products, whereas "a misalignment between brand socio-political position and individual socio-political affiliation is perceived as an impactful norm violation of brand trust and the underlying brand relationship" (Matos et al., 2017, p. 128). Drawing from the theory and looking into brand activism and CSA- if a prior relationship between the individual and the company exists, it might be re-evaluated if a company takes a stance on a socio-political issue (Hoewe & Hatemi, 2017). If this stance creates an unbalanced relationship, the individual might re-evaluate how they think about the company, consequently, leading to negative implications on brand perception.

By associating with identity-consistent brands, consumers can express a version of their self-concept in the physical world, which then reinforces the sense of identity held in their minds (Reed,

Forehand, Puntoni & Warlop, 2012). Hydock et al. (2020) talk about the effect of consumer-brand alignment on the brand's perception and how a consumer is more (less) likely to desire a brand if their position is aligned (misaligned) with the said brand. This difference accrues from the consumer brand identification theory. Research has shown that when people face external threats to their self-identity, a common line of defence is to engage in “in-group favouritism” (Nail, McGregor, Drinkwater, Steele, & Thompson, 2009). That is, consumer-brand agreement regarding the stand, or consumer-brand identification in general, is likely to motivate consumers to come to the defence of the brand (i.e., the in- group) when it faces public backlash.

Testing for this, as an aggregate of our three ad groups, we hypothesize:

***H4 (a): Consumer-brand alignment of activism has a significantly positive effect on brand perception.***

Building upon the Mukherjee et al. (2020) theories, we also test for brand perception differences in the three ad groups. Hydock et al. (2020) conclude that low authenticity mitigates the positive effects of aligned CSA on identification but that it does not mitigate the negative effects of misaligned CSA. This is tested for the 'aligned group' because

***H4 (b): Brand perception of 'PA' ad is significantly lower than that CP and BC, for the 'aligned group'.***

### 2.3.3 Purchase Intention

According to Swaminathan et al. (2020), consumers take into consideration their socio-political attitudes while making purchase decisions. Therefore, brands taking a socio-political stand and congruence between the consumer's values and the company's values becomes an important influencer of consumers' purchases. The firm's public stance on an issue can be a salient signal of what the firm values and believes to benefit the greater good (Afego & Alagidede, 2021). According to scholars such as Berkman and Gilson (1974), purchase intention can predict future behaviour of consumers, thus purchase intention is an indicator of consumer response to brand activism. Brands with a clear brand personality can also have an indirect effect on consumer loyalty by influencing brand trust (Villagra Monfort & Méndez-Suárez, 2021), and, consequently, on sales.

Previous research has discovered various factors affecting a consumer's purchase intent in the context of brand activism. Trust is identified as a key driver of purchase intent (Giantari, Zain, Zain & Solimun, 2013; Ajzen, 2011; Terenggana, Supit, & Utami, 2013). Lafferty, Goldsmith, & Newell (2002) and Lim & Van der Heide (2015) found that the credibility of advertisements is a key factor determining purchase intention. Studies have also looked at how consumer attitudes, values and knowledge impact purchase intent (O'Rourke & Ringer, 2015). Consistent with the notion of a belief-driven consumer, research has found that people are willing to sacrifice their

narrow self-interest for the sake of their moral beliefs and environmental considerations (Baron, 2000). Previous research observed that a significant portion (42%) of the population takes the consequences of their consumption into account while 24% view ethical consumption positively but have some scepticism and uncertainty about the practice (Hydock, Paharia, & Weber, 2019). Research suggests that consumers both reward social responsibility and punish social irresponsibility by purchasing (buycott) or not purchasing (boycott) a company's products, respectively (Miller & Sturdivant, 1977).

To comprehend socio-political consumerism, the Balance Theory is a useful mechanism (Jungblut & Johnen, 2022). The Theory assumes that people seek balance in their relationships and perceive an imbalance between different relations as apprehension (Heider, 1946, 1958). Heider suggested that 'likes' and 'dislikes' are related to balance and imbalance. Humans search for consistency between their attitudes and relations with others to make the balance neutral. However, if there is an inconsistency between relations and a perceived imbalance, humans tend to seek modifications to reach consistency. (Harari, 1967, p.178). Consequently, the Balance Theory provides a framework for understanding why consumers might change their brand perception and purchase intention when a company takes a stance in their marketing activities. The Balance Theory, therefore, concludes that the decision to consume a brand (or avoid consuming it) is not only based on the characteristics of the brand or the product but must be regarded within a wider context including individual socio-political preferences and marketing activities (Jungblut & Johnen, 2022). Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) suggest that consumers have increasingly come to express and demonstrate their individual socio-political ideologies through consumption acts.

**Buycott vs Boycott:** In principle, there are two ways consumers must jointly respond to the socially irresponsible or responsible actions of firms by means of their consumption decisions (Hoffmann, Balderjahn, Seegebarth, Mai, & Peyer, 2018). Consumers can join boycotts of the companies that they deem to be irresponsible, or they may join initiatives to deliberately buy from companies that act responsibly, so-called buycotts (Friedman, 1996; Hoffmann and Hutter, 2012; Klein et al., 2004; Neilson, 2010). Consumers' decisions to reveal their attitudes through boycott or buycott behaviours are under the influence of others' presence or actions (Latane, 1981; Nowak et al., 1990).

**Attitude-Behaviour Gap:** Beliefs inform an individual's judgements or evaluations, which in turn inclines a particular behaviour, or intent (Shaw, McMaster, & Newholm, 2016). Compared with consumers' reported intentions and attitudes, their actual choices and behaviours reflect a much lower level of social responsibility (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001) that is, even though consumers say they will exhibit socially responsible behaviour, they often fail to follow through. According to Davies, Lee, & Ahonkhai (2012), 30 % of consumers identified as being ethically oriented or motivated fail to translate this into actual purchasing behaviour. There are lot of cognitive factors influencing this gap, including deficiencies in information and knowledge, and/or confusion and uncertainty (Shaw and Clarke 1999), and the 'postmodern view' which highlights the complexity

of consumer 'attitudes' and the nature of their concerns and how and if they are enacted (Cherrier 2005; Newholm 2005; Shaw and Newholm 2002). Therefore, we hypothesize:

***H5 (a): Brand Perception has a significantly positive effect on Purchase Intention***

Latif & Abideen (2012) talk about the effects of advertising on purchase intention. In addition, it can also amplify consumers' preferences towards a brand and ultimately their intention to purchase (Kamins, 1989; McCracken, 1989). Increasingly, consumers have expectations of brands and their leaders to take clear stands on social and political issues because consumers prefer purchasing from brands whose values align with their own (Nakache, 2018). Hence, we expect purchase intention to also be dependent on consumer expectations from brands, or in other words, whether they consider CSA efforts during purchase. Therefore, we hypothesise the following:

***H5 (b): Consumer's consideration of CSA efforts during purchase evaluation moderates the effect brand perception has on purchase intention***

Previous research suggests that advertising messages that align with the receiver's self-identity receive greater cognitive elaboration because of their increased relevance (Wheeler et al., 2005). In-line with our efforts to determine the effect of communication type on purchase intention, we hypothesise that:

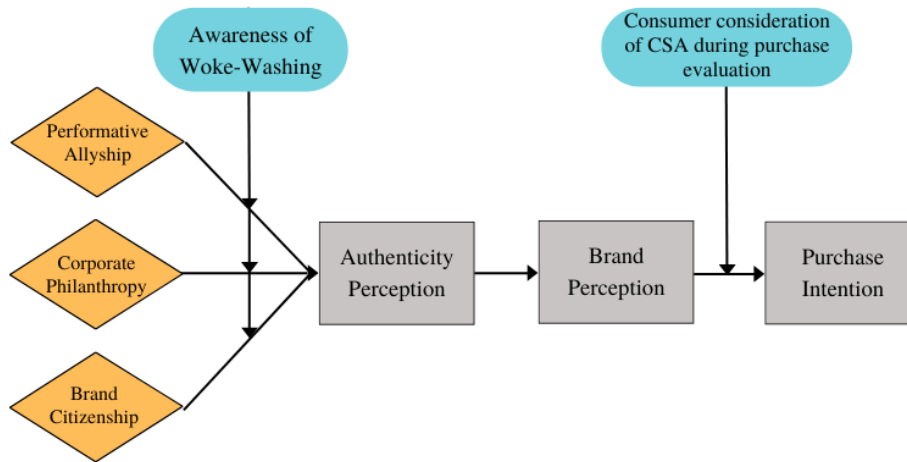
***H6: Purchase Intention of 'PA' ad is significantly lower than that CP and BC, for the consumers who consider CSA efforts in their purchase evaluation***

## Chapter 3. Methodology

We start this chapter by describing our research design and the experimental studies conducted before presenting the main study. We end by describing the data collection and statistical methods to determine the reliability and validity of our survey.

### 3.1 Research Design

This thesis aims to study the relationship between types of activism ads and authenticity. Further, it examines the factors influencing consumer's brand perception and purchase intention. This study follows a cross-sectional quantitative method for the purpose of primary data collection through survey to find and examine relationships between several variables (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018).






The thesis takes a deductive approach as it is more relevant to answer our previously discussed research questions and hypotheses as the theories and models that have been used have formed the foundation for further collection of data (Bell et al., 2018).

### 3.2 Pilot Studies

#### 3.2.1 Study of ad categories

In order to categorise the types of activism communications into three broad categories as well as to showcase ads that mimic the key characteristics of these categories in a real-life setting, 90 real-life brand activism ads were analysed and the most representative ads in each category were showcased to interviewees in pre-study 1 (see [Appendix](#)). The ads and feedback were then used to create new ads for a fantasy brand, named 'Ace'. The ads used in the main study are as follows:

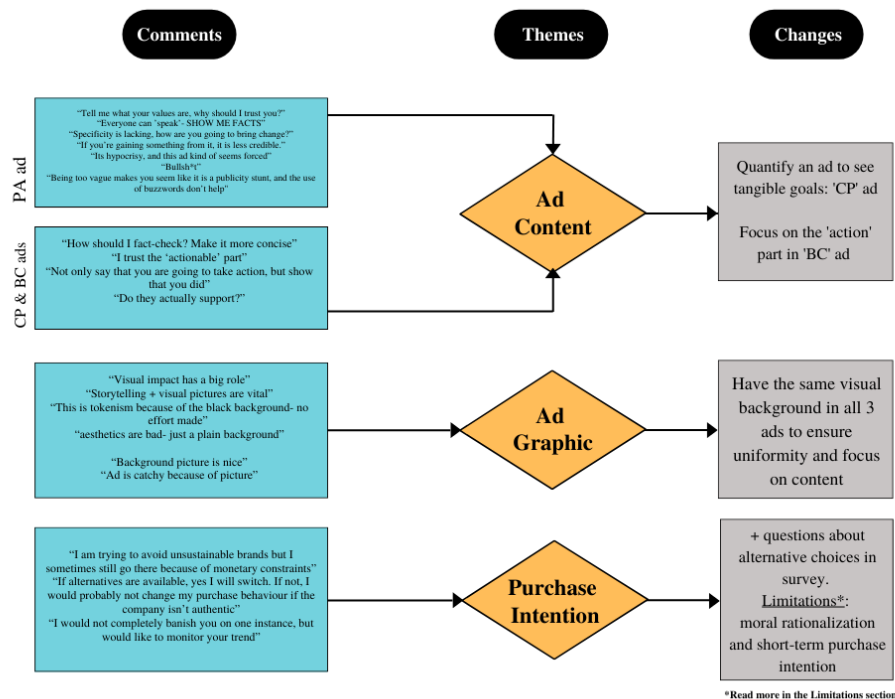
Category	Characteristic	Advertisement
<p><b>Performative Allyship</b> <i>henceforth referred to as 'PA'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Only 'speaks'</li> <li>● Lack of actionable promise</li> <li>● Greater perception of opportunism and woke-washing</li> </ul> <p>(<a href="#">Holiday Phillips, Forge</a>)</p>	
<p><b>Corporate Philanthropy</b> <i>henceforth referred to as CP</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commitment</li> <li>● Quantifies action</li> <li>● Reliability through accountability</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Brand Citizenship</b> <i>henceforth referred to as BC</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commitment</li> <li>● Actionable</li> <li>● Inward-looking (clear motive)</li> </ul>	

The question of whether to use already existing advertisements or create new, fantasy brand ads was also considered. However, since the advertisements that are 'truly representative' of our ad distinction are limited, we decided to develop simulated ads. From this decision, manipulation of the appropriate elements could be determined (like marketing content variation), and thus the risk of traditional marketing effects decreased (Dahlén, Granlund & Grenros 2009). A fantasy brand name 'Ace' was introduced to not bias respondents with prior brand knowledge or preferences (van

Grinsven & Das, 2016). To avoid other stimulants affecting the results, the ads were, except for the difference in activism content, as alike as possible. An interview with social marketer [Katie Martell](#) was conducted, which gave insights into the brand and consumer perspective and contributed to the structure of the survey. Further, a test interview with one interviewee was conducted to ensure that the interview questions for pre-study 1 were formulated in an understandable and concise manner for respondents.

### 3.2.2 Pre-Studies (1 & 2)

Referring to [Connelly \(2008\)](#), a pre-study is a suitable tool to gain insight into usability and gain new outlooks on the research design. The first pre-study conducted had a sample of N = 10 respondents who were physically interviewed individually. (for the interview guide, see [Appendix](#)). Each interview lasted for approximately thirty minutes and focused on individual perceptions and attitudes regarding importance and relevance of social marketing. Qualitative interviews were also meant to guide discussions concerning different types of advertisements and how authenticity perception is affected by awareness of woke-washing (via a newspaper article adopting a sceptical view of CSA efforts). This helped decide which independent and dependent variables were most significant for the consumers and relevant for the research, which guided us in designing our main study. Based on suggestions, the following additional themes were identified and modified:



Further, the qualitative insights were used to design the second pre-study, a test questionnaire for the main study. The pre-study 2 was a model test, conducted with 15 respondents to review whether the questions and themes were understood well by consumers with little to no knowledge about the topic. Consequently, a 'back' button was included in the survey based on the feedback. No other changes were made before publishing the survey for the main study.

One's own beliefs and values can influence research, otherwise known as axiological assumptions. We have done our best to apply as much objectivity as possible following our study, steering away from our personal opinions (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018), to not bias our study.

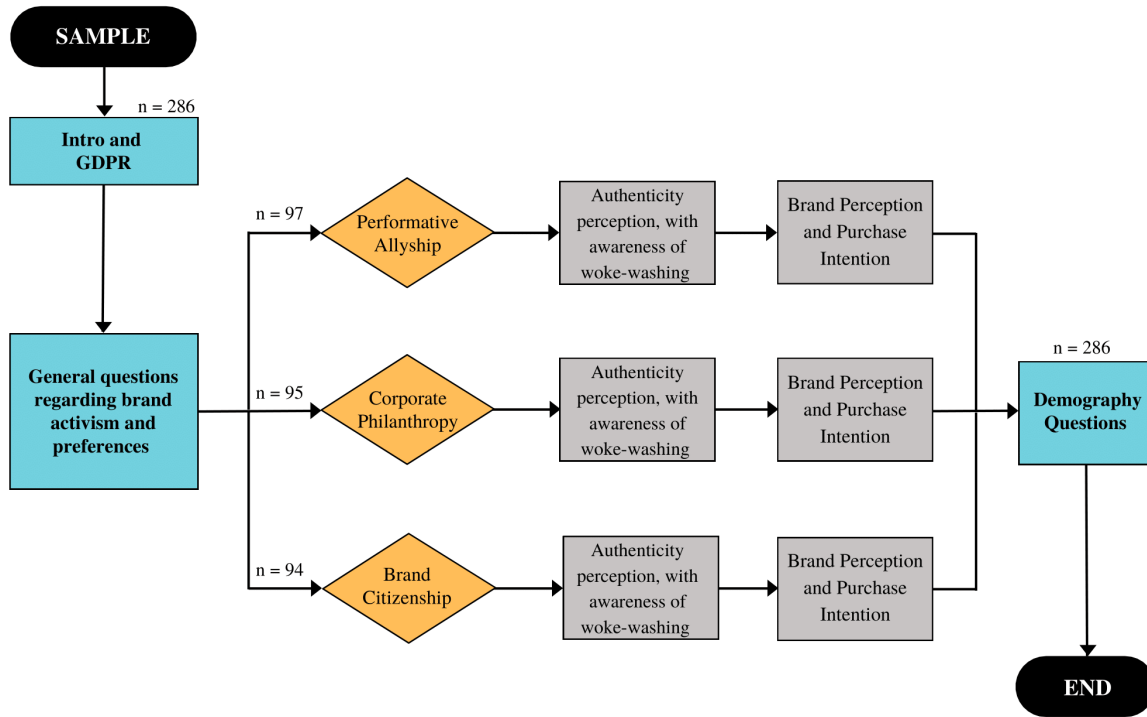
### **3.3 Main Study**

#### **3.3.1 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was constructed as an anonymous survey in the program Qualtrics. In total, the survey consisted of 25 questions of different length and structure in seven different blocks with the following focus areas: 1) General perceptions on Racism, 2) Initial authenticity perceptions of shown ad, 3) Change in authenticity perceptions after woke-washing awareness, 4) Brand perceptions, 5) Purchase Intentions, 6) Demographics, 7) End of survey. The survey questions attached in the [Appendix](#).

In the introduction of the survey the purpose of the questionnaire, estimated time to complete the survey, contact information to the authors of the thesis as well as GDPR terms were presented. Participants had to agree to the terms and give their consent to participate in the study, if they did not agree to the terms, they were not able to continue, and the respondent was automatically transferred to a closure of the questionnaire.

### 3.3.2 Flow of Survey



### 3.3.3 Variables

Variable and Scales	Measures
<b>Independent Variable</b>	
Awareness of Woke Washing (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	Showcasing the ad ( <a href="#">Appendix</a> )
Consumer-brand alignment (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	"I agree that brands should take a stand on racial discrimination"
Type of CSA Communication (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	Randomized distribution of the 3 ads
<b>Dependent Variable</b>	
Authenticity (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ace practices what it preaches in this ad</li> <li>• Ace makes reliable promises in this ad</li> <li>• Ace makes a genuine impression</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ace’s message is original (i.e. it is not trying to copy another brand’s message)</li> </ul>
Brand Perception (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on your previous answers, how do you feel about then brand of Ace?</li> <li>• How likely are you to recommend Ace to others?</li> </ul>
Purchase Intention (Extremely Unlikely-Extremely Likely)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How likely are you to buy products from Ace?</li> <li>• How likely are you to switch to Ace’s alternative brands, if their price points were similar?</li> </ul>

### 3.4 Data Collection and Statistical Methods

#### 3.4.1 Data collection and Quality

The online survey was distributed through different channels through an online link, (shared through email, social media and flyers put across Stockholm) between October 27, 2022 and November 6, 2022. Our distribution channels were divided into two forms, direct and indirect outreach. The direct outreach involved e-mailing, and the contacts were obtained through university directories of students and professors (Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm University, Royal Institute of Technology, Lund University). The aim for this was to increase response-rate, however distributing the survey to mainly academic-related individuals, i.e. students, researchers and teachers can lead to a convenience sample. The main drawback of a convenience sample is the inability to generalise the findings since it is not a representative sample (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018). To combat this limitation, an indirect method of survey distribution was employed through personal social media channels as well as putting up flyers at public concourses in Stockholm.

In total 286 respondents participated in the main study. There was an agreement to GDPR terms included in the beginning of the survey. A captcha verification question was used at the end of the survey as a control. The set of respondents who had not finished the questionnaire were not recorded. Further, due to inaccurately answering personal data questions (using fake age, or answering numeric questions in text), 3 responses were excluded, and 1 response was excluded for GDPR concerns (the age was said to be 15). In total, 282 individual responses were correctly collected and accepted to be used in the sample. Information on demographics of our survey takers is presented in the [Appendix](#).

**A Note on GDPR:** The aim and purpose of the study was defined for the processing of personal data. Information about age, and gender was collected, for division of demography. An option to not answer was also provided. No other sensitive personal data was collected. The collection was in line with the requirements of our institution and data protection regulations.

### 3.4.2 Data Analysis

The software used in executing the questionnaire was the online tool Qualtrics, provided by Stockholm School of Economics. Subsequently, the collected data was imported to R Studio version 4.1.1 where all statistical analyses were conducted. Except descriptive statistics such as standard deviations and mean values, reliability tests were used to test for significance of results, according to the context of the tests. The tests conducted are specified while describing test results.

Linear regressions were made for the whole sample as well as some segmented groups. A segmentation of consumer groups, also called market segmentation, is defined as a process where those with similar traits are identified and grouped together (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2020). Due to randomised survey distribution, our data was segmented according to the three types of ads. Other segmentation criteria were derived from theoretical frameworks, such as consumer-brand alignment and consumer importance to CSA. For all the statistical tests a significance level of ( $p = 0.05$ ) has been used as a measure of an acceptable level of significance.

### 3.4.3 Reliability

Reliability is defined by the consistency of a measure of a concept, and if repeated research would result in the same findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The internal reliability should be ensured on multi-item measures in which the respondents' answers are summarised to form an overall score. These items must be coherent to ensure internal consistency which is measured by Cronbach's alpha. The measure varies between 0 (no internal reliability) and 1 (perfect internal reliability). A Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 has been suggested to be efficient (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Since the randomizer function in Qualtrics was used, the alphas our multi-item measures. All variables had an  $\alpha > 0.7$  establishing the reliability of the questions. (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Summary of the variables' Cronbach's alpha

Ad Type	Variable	Cronbach's alpha	N of Items
	Authenticity Perception (pre-awareness)	0.863	4
	Authenticity Perception (post-awareness)	0.852	4
	Brand Perception	0.835	2
	Purchase Intention	0.865	2

### 3.4.4 Validity

The validity of a study determines whether the research measures what is set out to be measured, i.e., its ability to answer the research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To ensure internal validity of the study, several measures were taken such as using well-established measuring scales and pilot testing. As the definitions of the variables, as well as the questions related to the variables, have a strong theoretical connection, the authors argue that the construct and content validity is sufficient. Further, the external validity of a study defines whether the results can be generalised beyond the specific context (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The study chose to use a fantasy brand to prevent the answers being correlated to brand perception. Since the issue of anti-racism was chosen, all possible personal involvements of participants with the social issue were also measured. The theory behind the study's independent variables has been applied to several contexts, including research on consumer perception of business communication and advertising (Mohr, Eroglu, & Ellen, 1998; Bonini, Graffeo, & Polonio, 2015) strengthening external validity. However, a convenience sample was used, whereby the possibility to make generalisations from the results can be questioned.

## Chapter 4. Results

In this chapter, the results from the main study are presented, the hypotheses are accepted or rejected, and additional findings are presented.

### 4.1 Authenticity Perception of Activism ads

Pre-awareness to woke-washing, the mean of authenticity perception of ad CP was found to be the highest ( $M=4.02$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ), followed by ad BC ( $M=3.84$ ,  $SD=1.41$ ) lowest ad PA ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SD=1.28$ ), as seen in Table 2a. In order to gauge the significance of the mean difference across ads (independent, unpaired samples assuming non-parametric groups), we conducted a Kruskal-Wallis test (Hollander, Wolfe, & Chicken, 2013) and saw significant results ( $H(2)=9.67$ ,  $p=0.008$ ). To gain more clarification on which differences between groups are significant, we incorporated the post hoc test called Dunn Test (Dinno, 2015) and discovered that there existed a significant mean difference between ad PA and CP ( $p=0.002$ ) and between PA and BC ( $p=0.049$ ). These results are reported in Table 2b. We can, thus we find empirical support for our first hypothesis that authenticity perception of PA ad is significantly lower than B and C without any induced moderation.

**Table 2a.** Authenticity perception across ads pre-news article

Ad type	Sample size	Mean Authenticity	SD
PA	96	3.44	1.28
CP	93	4.02	1.13
BC	93	3.84	1.41

**Table 2b.** Difference in authenticity perception across ads pre-news article

Ad Type	Ad Type	Authenticity Difference	p value	Significance
PA	CP	1.28	0.002	**
PA	BC	1.13	0.049	*
CP	BC	1.41	0.273	ns

Post awareness to woke-washing, we can see a fall in the mean for all three ads (table 3a). To check the magnitude and significance of this fall, we conducted a paired t-Test (Ross & Willson, 2017) and reported the results in Table 3b. For PA ( $M=3.25$ ,  $SD=1.29$ ), we saw a significant fall in perceived authenticity post exposure,  $t(95)=-2.51$ ,  $p=0.014$ . Similarly for CP ( $M=3.77$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ), we saw a significant fall in perceived authenticity post exposure,  $t(92)=-3.66$ ,  $p<0.001$ . Thus, we find empirical support for our hypothesis H2(a) and H2(b) that awareness of woke-washing has a significant negative effect on authenticity perception of ad PA and CP. For BC ( $M=3.67$ ,  $SD=1.29$ ) however, the fall was not found to be significant,  $t(92)=-1.82$ ,  $p=0.07$ . Thus, we fail to find empirical support for our hypothesis H2(c) that the awareness of woke-washing has

a significant negative effect ad BC. The magnitude of mean difference (*MD*) was found to be significantly highest for CP (*MD*=-0.24) followed by PA (*MD*=-0.19) and lowest, but also not significant for BC (*MD*=-0.16). Thus, we reject our hypothesis H2(d) that the magnitude of negative effect was realized highest for ad PA as the magnitude of negative effect in CP was higher.

**Table 3a.** Authenticity perception pre and post exposure to newspaper article

Ad type	PA		CP		BC	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Mean Authenticity	3.44	3.25	4.02	3.77	3.84	3.67
Standard Deviation	1.28	1.29	1.13	1.22	1.41	1.29

**Table 3b.** Difference in authenticity perception pre and post exposure to newspaper article

Ad type	Mean Difference In Authenticity	Confidence Interval		t statistic	p value	Significance
		Lower	Upper			
PA	-0.19	-0.35	-0.04	-2.51	0.014	*
CP	-0.24	-0.38	-0.11	-3.66	<0.001	***
BC	-0.16	-0.34	0.02	-1.82	0.07	ns

## 4.2 Brand Perception of Activism ads

We observed that for ad PA, authenticity significantly predicts brand perception,  $R^2 = 0.52$ ,  $F(1,94)=103.5$ ,  $p<0.001$  with  $\beta_0=1.39$ ,  $\beta_1=0.69$ . Similarly for ad CP, authenticity significantly predicts brand perception,  $R^2 = 0.34$ ,  $F(1,91)=47.98$ ,  $p<0.001$  with  $\beta_0=2.05$ ,  $\beta_1=0.51$ . Lastly, for ad BC authenticity significantly predicts brand perception,  $R^2 = 0.42$ ,  $F(1,91)=68.69$ ,  $p<0.001$  with  $\beta_0=1.67$ ,  $\beta_1=0.62$ . Thus, we find empirical support for hypothesis H3 that authenticity has a significant positive effect on the brand perception of all three ads. From Table 4, we can see that brand perception for CP ( $M=3.98$ ,  $SD=0.98$ ) is highest followed by BC ( $M=3.96$ ,  $SD=1.21$ ) and then PA ( $M=3.63$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ). Additionally, we conducted the Kruskal-Wallis test to see the significance of mean difference of brand perception between ads and found no significant difference,  $H(2)=4.61$ ,  $p=0.099$ .

**Table 4.** Brand Perception across ad types

Ad type	Sample size	Mean Brand Perception	SD
PA	96	3.63	1.22
CP	93	3.98	0.98
BC	93	3.96	1.21

We conducted a multiple linear regression by regressing brand perception on authenticity and consumer alignment (a dummy variable) and found significant effect of consumer alignment on brand perception  $R^2 = 0.47$ ,  $F(2,279)=125.5$ ,  $p(\text{consumer alignment})<0.001$ . Further, we saw the

slope of the dummy variable of alignment was positive (0.39) implying that brand perception is higher among consumers who agree that brands should take a stand on racism compared to those who disagree. Thus, we find empirical support for our hypothesis that consumer brand alignment has a significantly positive effect on brand perception.

To explore further the explanatory variable of alignment causing the difference in brand perception with authenticity perception, we split our responses into two categories, people who agree that brands should take a stand ( $n=199$ ) and people who do not agree ( $n=83$ ) (refer Table 5a). We coded this variable as a dummy, assigning the value 0 to people who do not agree and the value 1 to those who did. We observed the brand perception of the group of people who agree that brands should take a stand on racism ( $M=4.05$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ) was higher than the group of people who don't agree ( $M=3.28$ ,  $SD=1.12$ ). In order to appropriately gauge the brand perception difference across the types of ads, we again conducted a Kruskal-Wallis test of brand perception across all three types of ads, however, this time only among the group that agreed that brands should take a stand on racism  $H(2)=9.97$ ,  $p=0.007$ . On a further explanatory Dunn Test, we saw a significant mean difference between ad PA and CP ( $p=0.019$ ) and between PA and BC ( $p=0.016$ ) as reported in Table 5b. There wasn't any significant difference observed between ads BC and CP. Thus we find empirical support for our hypothesis of PA ad having the lowest brand perception among the aligned consumers.

**Table 5a.** Consumer agreement on brands taking a stand

Consumer alignment	Sample size (n)	Mean Brand Perception	SD
"I agree that brands should take a stand on racism"	199	4.09	1.09
"I do not agree that brands should take a stand on racism"	83	3.28	1.12

**Table 5b.** Difference in brand perception across ads for aligned group

Ad Type	Ad Type	Brand Perception Difference	p value	Significance
PA	CP	2.59	0.019	*
PA	BC	2.78	0.016	*
CP	BC	0.18	0.853	ns

### 4.3 Purchase Intention

We observed that for ad PA, brand perception significantly predicts purchase intention,  $R^2 = 0.22$ ,  $F(1,94)=27.02$ ,  $p<0.001$  with  $\beta_0=2.48$ ,  $\beta_1=0.4$ . Similarly for CP, brand perception significantly predicts purchase intention,  $R^2 = 0.32$ ,  $F(1,91)=44.4$ ,  $p<0.001$  with  $\beta_0=1.65$ ,  $\beta_1=0.6$ . Lastly, for BC brand perception significantly predicts purchase intention,  $R^2 = 0.39$ ,  $F(1,91)=58.96$ ,  $p<0.001$  with

$\beta_0=1.74$ ,  $\beta_1=0.56$ . Thus, we find empirical support for hypothesis H5 that brand perception has a significant positive effect on the purchase intention of all three ads.

We tried to compare the means of purchase intention across ad types (Table 6). Additionally, we conducted the Kruskal-Wallis test to see the significance of mean difference of purchase intention between ads and found no significant difference,  $H(2)=1.91$ ,  $p=0.385$ .

**Table 6.** Purchase Intention across ad types

Ad type	Sample size	Mean Purchase Intention	SD
PA	96	3.93	1.03
CP	93	4.04	1.03
BC	93	3.93	1.07

As an effort to explore this relationship more, we investigated consumer’s consideration of CSA efforts during brand evaluation as a possible moderator between brand perception and purchase intention. (Refer Table 7a) This moderator was coded as a dummy, assigning the value 0 to people who said they don’t consider CSA efforts during purchase evaluation and the value 1 for those who did. We found significant moderation,  $R^2 = 0.33$ ,  $F(3,278)=45.96$ ,  $p<0.001$ , thus confirming our hypothesis H6 that consumer’s consideration of CSA efforts during purchase evaluation moderates the effect of brand perception on purchase intention. We further investigated the difference in purchase intentions with ad type only for the consumers who consider CSA efforts during purchase evaluations and found no significant difference (Table 7b).

**Table 7a.** Consumer agreement on brands taking a stand

Consumer alignment	Sample size (n)	Mean Brand Perception	SD
“I consider activism efforts in evaluating a purchase”	149	4.09	1.04
“I do not consider activism efforts in evaluating a purchase”	133	3.83	1.03

**Table 7b.** Purchase Intention across ad types for consumers who consider brand activism while evaluating brands

Ad type	Sample size	Mean Purchase Intention	SD
PA	96	3.94	1.13
CP	93	4.19	0.84
BC	93	4.15	1.14

## 4.4 Summary of Findings

H1	Pre-awareness of woke-washing, the effect of PA on authenticity will be the smallest.	Supported
H2(a)	Awareness of woke-washing will have a negative effect on authenticity on PA ad	Supported
H2(b)	Awareness of woke-washing will have a negative effect on authenticity on CP ad	Supported
H2(c)	Awareness of woke-washing will have a negative effect on authenticity on BC ad	Not supported
H2(d)	The magnitude of the negative effect of perceived authenticity from the newspaper article is displayed highest for 'PA' ad	Not supported
H3(a)	Authenticity has a significantly positive effect on Brand Perception for PA ad	Supported
H3(b)	Authenticity has a significantly positive effect on Brand Perception for CP ad	Supported
H3(c)	Authenticity has a significantly positive effect on Brand Perception for BC ad	Supported
H4(a)	Consumer-brand alignment of activism has a significantly positive effect on brand perception	Supported
H4(b)	Brand perception of 'PA' ad is significantly lower than that CP and BC, for the 'aligned group'	Supported
H5(a)	Brand Perception has a significantly positive effect on Purchase Intention	Supported
H5(b)	Consumer's consideration of CSA efforts during purchase evaluation moderates the effect brand perception on purchase intention	Supported
H6	Purchase Intention of 'PA' ad is significantly lower than that CP and BC, for the consumers who consider CSA efforts in their purchase evaluation	Not supported

---

## Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter analyses and expands upon the results found in the previous section and addresses its implications. The chapter is organised broadly under three subheadings, which address our three formulated research questions.

### 5.1 Discussion

#### 5.1.1 Effect of CSA advertising on Authenticity

*Authenticity perception of 'PA' ad is significantly lower than CP and BC without awareness of woke-washing.*

We see that the highest authenticity perception, pre-exposure, has been for the CP advertisement. Circling back to the characteristics of the CP ad, these are the main aspect that set this ad apart from 'PA' is 'action' rather than a statement. The company promises to commit financial resources to combat the cause they are supporting. It showcases that the company is willing to let go of monetary gains to work for the betterment of society and the cause they allegedly believe in. There is also quantification of action- this ad talks about donating a specific amount (\$1 million) through the 'Colour of Change' Foundation. This leads to reliability through a third party, but also makes the consumer believe in the commitment of the brand. There is also a significantly different authenticity perception between 'PA' and BC ads, because of the same reasons stated above. The PA ad is more the 'talk' and BC is the 'walk'. BC ad is more actionable, and hence has a degree of trust and commitment that 'PA' does not.

We, therefore, conclude that consumers perceive the Performative Allyship ad to be a significantly less authentic form of brand activism, as compared to the other two forms- without any induced moderation.

*Awareness of woke-washing has a negative effect on authenticity for ads PA and CP.*

Post-exposure to the newspaper article, the means of all three ads have a downfall. This means that the authenticity perception of all three ads falls due to the induced form of scepticism. The implications of this are many, and this is related to prior research in the field. Referring to [Voinow & Kropinova \(2021\)](#), the level of trust for the activist ad/brand affects the perceived authenticity of the ad/brand. Therefore, in line with previous research ([Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998](#)), we extrapolate that a consumer's high perception of an ad's authenticity (meaning, low scepticism) leads to high brand confidence.

Furthermore, we witness a substantial decline in perceived authenticity post-exposure to the newspaper for the PA ad. The reason for this attribute to the pre-existent low authenticity

perception of the PA ad, given that a significant part of the sample does not believe that PA is credible or deemed 'true' brand activism.

Interestingly for CP, we also see a significant fall in perceived authenticity post-exposure. This ad was the most in line with Bhagwat et al.'s (2020) description of 'genuine brand activism'. The explanations for this decline could be many: this ad was the most 'trusted one' among consumers. Since it quantified objectives and motivations, consumers were quick to judge it. When faced with scepticism regarding woke-washing, consumers' perception of the ad dropped due to distrust in the activism effort. (Orazi & Chan, 2020; Kim & Lee, 2009). This is exactly why we reject our hypothesis H2(b) that the magnitude of the negative effect was realised highest for ad PA as the magnitude of the negative effect in CP was higher. The ad 'PA' was considered the least 'authentic' to begin with. Additionally, the fall in the perception of the ad BC was not significant. This means that the characteristics of ad BC withstand scepticism more than the other two ads.

### 5.1.2 Factors affecting brand perception

***Authenticity has a significantly positive effect on Brand Perception for all ads.***

For all three ads, authenticity significantly predicts brand perception. This result builds upon prior research but also unfurls the arena up with its implications. The role of authenticity in the brand activism context has been understudied, prior research in CSR advertising has demonstrated its importance. According to our knowledge, no research has been conducted on what kind of ads lead to difference in authenticity, and how this authenticity leads to a difference in brand perception. We see that brand perception for ad CP is highest followed by ad BC and then PA. This is in line with the results of authenticity, pre-exposure to awareness of woke-washing. This result also implies that even the awareness of woke-washing or being sceptical about woke-washing leads to a decrease in perceived authenticity- ad CP still translates to the highest brand perception and ad 'PA' for the least brand perception. However, there is no significant difference in means of all three ads.

***Consumer-brand alignment of activism has a significantly positive effect on brand perception. Brand perception of PA ad is significantly lower than that of CP and BC, for the 'aligned group'.***

Building on previous research of consumer's moral reasoning strategies that consumers' affective moral judgement of the stand will be incorporated in one's attitude towards the brand (Haidt 2003; Mukherjee and Althuisen, 2020), consumer-brand alignment was seen to have a positive effect on brand perception. Thus, the brand perception of aligned consumers was higher in comparison to those who did not agree with the stance taken by the brand, proving that consumer alignment is beneficial to a brand engaging in CSA. However, we further determined the effects of ad type within this aligned group. Within the group of consumers who agree that brands should take a stand, the only factor influencing the difference of brand perception across ad types is the form in

which the stand has been taken. We found PA to have the least brand perception, which fits our previous study of authenticity, where the PA ad also had the least authenticity perception. Thus, we can prove that the way in which a message is conveyed not only has significant effects of authenticity perception, but also extends to consequences for the brand in terms of brand perception.

### 5.1.3 Impact of authenticity and brand perception on purchase intention

#### ***Brand Perception has a significantly positive effect on Purchase Intention.***

We found brand perception to be a significant predictor of Purchase Intention for all three ads, extending the significance of effects of CSA on sales of a brand. This finding not only is consistent with previous research, but also helps us substantiate the importance of perception of activism communication on purchasing behaviour.

#### ***Consumer's consideration of CSA authenticity during purchase evaluation moderates the effect brand perception on purchase intention.***

A vital contribution our study makes is identifying a variable with a significant moderating effect on purchase intention, which is consumer's consideration of CSA efforts during purchase evaluations. Previous research has talked about the attitude-behaviour gap which prevents buyer perceptions to translate to buying behaviour. We also observe this gap in this paper, where we find the consumers who do not consider CSA efforts during evaluation to expectedly have a lower purchase intention than those who do, creating a segregation to better understand the motivations of both groups of consumers.

#### ***Difference in Purchase Intention between consumers remain statistically insignificant.***

Despite analysing various factors affecting purchase intention of consumers, we still failed to find any difference in purchase intentions across ad types with or without the moderator of consumer expectation. This finding can be explained by a previous study which suggested that woke advertisements have enhanced consumers' behaviour, however, they are not enough for them to continue making a purchase from the brands. This means that although they fully support the advocacy and show a high level of agreement towards the key social issues being addressed, they do not gain higher purchase intentions from brands that use woke advertising even when they share the same opinion with them, making them 'passive' woke consumers (Cristobal, Del Prado, Cagampan, & Dimaculangan, 2022). Another possible explanation comes from research which suggests that woke advertising is effective to boost loyalty and establish a connection with the consumers (Cristobal et al, 2022), which have a more indirect and long-term effect on purchase intention than direct. Thus, despite no observable short-term differences, we might expect a difference in purchasing behaviour in the long-term.

## 5.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Being one of the first empirical studies on CSA advertising, we have identified a few limitations in our thesis further expanding the scope for future research in the field. Firstly, our study is based on consumers wanting brands to take a stand. However, this phenomenon itself comes with a paradox. Brønn and Vrioni (2001), explain that corporations often encounter a dichotomy when considering marketing their CSR involvement. If corporations do not say enough about their charity, consumers may think that they are hiding something, however, if they market it too much, consumers may think they are exploiting the charity (Brønn et al., 2001). Since our research takes into consideration the consumer perspective on brand activism communication, future research could unravel the brand's perspective. Secondly, context matters. Supporting ongoing causes may create scepticism regarding possible alternative motives (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore & Hill, 2006). Because of our study is exploratory, the ads designed contain few individually unique characteristics, which presents a third limitation of increasing the possibility of introducing confounding factors that could influence consumer responses.

A fourth limitation is the use of a fantasy brand. Bae and Cameron (2006) state that if a company has a good prior reputation, its messages and social initiatives are seen as beneficial activities where consumers have low suspicion. Our fantasy brand has no prior brand image- which also extends to the purchase intention. Therefore, the purchase intention results might be skewed because there are other factors determining it- especially moral rationalisation. Future research could test for effects on a real-life brand. This brings us to our fifth limitation; the purchase intention we test for can only be considered short-term, since there are other factors such as continuity, brand congruence and implementation of the socio-political stance taken contribute to long term consumer loyalty indirectly and significantly impacting long-term purchasing behaviour.

Sixth, our research is cross-sectional in nature and thus can only provide a snapshot of consumer attitudes at a given point in time. Effects of advertising are cumulative and thus may provide more insights when studied over time. Further, given the exploratory nature of this study, the ads were not presented in the context of the social networking site they were designed for. Presented in a more realistic online environment, the study may have garnered different results; thus, future research should replicate this study by presenting the ads in the appropriate online context rather than as isolated images. Another limitation can be brought forth by the observed means in our sample being close to the midpoints of the scale, which may suggest an indifference to stimuli of respondents, on average. Lastly, our empirical evidence is limited in scope- it only applies in a limited geographic market. Our survey also only pertains to Sweden's population, aged 18-55. Even though it is an interesting country to conduct this survey in, it is also developed and progressive. The use of samples from more collectivistic cultures, like China, South Korea or Vietnam, could lead to different results (Hofstede, 1984).

### 5.3 Conclusion

We attempt to examine the effect of different CSA ad types on authenticity perception and brand perception. We study this through a series of linear and multiple regressions with different independent and dependent variables. Ultimately, our aim was to not only segregate the types of communications of CSA, but to see what works and especially what does not. The three different types of CSA activism ads have a significantly different effect on authenticity perception. We see that the authenticity perception for the Performative Allyship (PA) ad is the least, followed by Brand Citizenship (BC) and then the highest for Corporate Philanthropy (CP). Brand activism ads or 'promises' do not always lead to a favourable brand perception because consumers become more sceptical of the claims made by brands, in general (Orazi & Chan, 2020). Our research proves this fact in terms of different types of CSA ads. The fall in authenticity is highest for the CP ad, and the lowest for BC ad due to the (dis)trust consumers put in these ads. This paper further studies that authenticity perception has a significant effect on brand perception and purchase intention. We pivot our study to find the difference in brand perception for consumer groups who are aligned with the stand taken by the brand (previously talked about by Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020)). Within the group of consumers who agree that brands should take a stand, brand perception is the least for PA. Subsequently, we can further our argument of a clear disadvantage that the PA ad faces when it comes to gaining the trust of consumers. It is with such communication, that brands may face the backlash of CSA (Vredenburg et al 2020). But at the same time, it also points to the advantages that brands can reap through authentic communication of CSA.

The final piece in our research design linking brand perception to purchase intention is proven to not only be significant, but also influenced by consumer's consideration of CSA efforts in purchase evaluation. Although we failed to attribute the differences in purchase intention to the ad types, we attribute it to the short term setting of our survey, previous theory nudges us to believe that the long term impact the type of ad will have on purchase intention is inevitable. Our results are generalisable because the study is not about a particular industry or brand. Even though the CSA being discussed is racism, we do not find any reason why it cannot be extended to other brand activism (for example: LGBTQ+, feminism and likewise). We presented some suggestions for how this arena might better be studied in the previous section and invite researchers to try and explore it. We are convinced that the type of CSA ad influences the way that ad is perceived, leading to a difference in authenticity. The one with least authenticity is more prone to be considered 'woke-washing'. We further see positive relations between these types of ads and brand perception, leading to difference in purchase intention. This study is not about whether brand should take a stand, there is plethora of previous research proving that they should. But this research takes a practical perspective on how brands should take this stand, and what value this adds to the brand itself.

## References

- #BrandsGetReal: *Championing change in the age of social media*. (2017). (). Retrieved from <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/data/championing-change-in-the-age-of-social-media/#about-the-data>
- Aaker, D. A. (1996). Measuring brand equity across products and markets. *California Management Review*, 38(3)
- Adams, J., Khan, H. T., Raeside, R., & White, D. I. (2007). *Research methods for graduate business and social science students* SAGE publications India.
- Aertsens, J., Mondelaers, K., Verbeke, W., Buysse, J., & Van Huylenbroeck, G. (2011). The influence of subjective and objective knowledge on attitude, motivations and consumption of organic food. *British Food Journal*,
- Afego, P. N., & Alagidede, I. P. (2021a). What does corporate social advocacy signal? evidence from boycott participation decisions. *Journal of Capital Markets Studies*,
- Ajzen, I. (2011). The theory of planned behaviour: Reactions and reflections. *Psychology & Health*, 26(9), 1113-1127.
- Alba, J. W., & Hutchinson, J. W. (1987). Dimensions of consumer expertise. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(4), 411-454.
- Albert, S., & Whetten, D. A. (1985). Organizational identity. *Research in Organizational Behavior*,
- American Marketing Association. (2019). *Ama (2013). Definition of Marketing*,
- Andrews, M., Luo, X., Fang, Z., & Aspara, J. (2014). Cause marketing effectiveness and the moderating role of price discounts. *Journal of Marketing*, 78(6), 120-142.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. A. (1996). Organizational identity and strategy as a context for the individual. *Advances in Strategic Management*, 13, 19-64.
- Baek, T. H., Kim, J., & Yu, J. H. (2010). The differential roles of brand credibility and brand prestige in consumer brand choice. *Psychology & Marketing*, 27(7), 662-678.
- Baines, P., Fill, C., & Rosengren, S. (2017). *Marketing* Oxford University Press.
- Balázs Kovács. (2019). Authenticity is in the eye of the beholder: The exploration of audiences' lay associations to authenticity across five domains. *Review of General Psychology*, 23(1), 32-59. doi:10.1177/1089268019829469
- Baron, J. N. (2004). Employing identities in organizational ecology. *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 13(1), 3-32.
- Baron, J. (1999). Consumer attitudes about personal and political action. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 8(3), 261-275.
- Barone, M. J., Miyazaki, A. D., & Taylor, K. A. (2000). The influence of cause-related marketing on consumer choice: Does one good turn deserve another? *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(2), 248-262.
- Basil, D. Z., & Herr, P. M. (2006). Attitudinal balance and cause-related marketing: An empirical application of balance theory. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 16(4), 391-403.

- Becker, M., Wiegand, N., & Reinartz, W. J. (2019). Does it pay to be real? understanding authenticity in TV advertising. *Journal of Marketing*, 83(1), 24-50.
- Becker-Olsen, K. L., Cudmore, B. A., & Hill, R. P. (2006a). The impact of perceived corporate social responsibility on consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(1), 46-53.
- Bell, E. Bryman,., & harley,.(2018). *Business Research Methods*,
- Ben & jerry's. Retrieved from <https://www.benjerry.com/about-us/media-center/dismantle-white-supremacy>
- Benhardy, K., Hardiyansyah, H., Putranto, A., & Ronadi, M. (2020). Brand image and price perceptions impact on purchase intentions: Mediating brand trust. *Management Science Letters*, , 3425-3432.
- Berkman, H. W., & Gilson, C. C. (1974). Consumer life styles and market segmentation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 2(1-4), 189-200.
- Bettman, J. R., & Park, C. W. (1980). Effects of prior knowledge and experience and phase of the choice process on consumer decision processes: A protocol analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 7(3), 234-248. doi:10.1086/208812
- Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. J. (2010). The quest for authenticity in consumption: Consumers' purposive choice of authentic cues to shape experienced outcomes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36(5), 838-856.
- Bhagwat, Y., Warren, N. L., Beck, J. T., & Watson, G. F. (2020). Corporate sociopolitical activism and firm value. *Journal of Marketing*, 84(5), 1-21. doi:10.1177/0022242920937000
- Bravo, O. S. C., & Lee, J. (2020). The mediating effects of message agreement on millennials' response to advocacy advertising. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 26(8), 856-873. doi:10.1080/13527266.2019.1596969
- Brønn, P. S., & Vrioni, A. B. (2001). Corporate social responsibility and cause-related marketing: An overview. *International Journal of Advertising*, 20(2), 207-222.
- Brucks, M. (1985). The effects of product class knowledge on information search behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12(1), 1-16.
- Bruhn, M., Schoenmüller, V., Schäfer, D., & Heinrich, D. (Jan 01, 2012a). Brand authenticity: Towards a deeper understanding of its conceptualization and measurement. Paper presented at the , 40 567. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1810853306>
- Cai, Y., Jo, H., & Pan, C. (2012). Doing well while doing bad? CSR in controversial industry sectors. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 108(4), 467-480. doi:10.1007/s10551-011-1103-7
- Carrigan, M., & Attalla, A. (2001a). The myth of the ethical consumer—do ethics matter in purchase behaviour? *Journal of Consumer Marketing*,
- Chandan, A. (2019). Factors affecting consumer buying behaviour. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 7
- Chatterji, A. K., & Toffel, M. W. (2018). The new CEO activists. *Hbr's 10 Must*, 47
- Chernev, A., & Blair, S. (2015). Doing well by doing good: The benevolent halo of corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(6), 1412-1425. doi:10.1086/680089
- Cherrier, H. (2005). Becoming sensitive to ethical consumption behavior: Narratives of survival in an uncertain and unpredictable world. *ACR North American Advances*,

- Chiu, B. (2019, ). Addressing the ad industry's sticky problem with race. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bonniechiu/2019/07/16/addressing-the-ad-industrys-sticky-problem-with-race/?sh=1c7ec61228d0>
- Chu, S., Kim, H., & Kim, Y. (2022). When brands get real: The role of authenticity and electronic word-of-mouth in shaping consumer response to brands taking a stand. *International Journal of Advertising*, , 1-28. doi:10.1080/02650487.2022.2138057
- Connelly, L. M. (2008). Pilot studies. *Medsurg Nursing*, 17(6), 411.
- Cristobal, C., Del Prado, A. R., Cagampan, A., & Dimaculangan, E. (2022). Brand activism: Impact of woke advertising on the consumers' attitude and brand perceptions towards purchase intention. *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 4(2), 1.
- Crockett, D. (2008). Marketing blackness: How advertisers use race to sell products. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 8(2), 245-268.
- Crockett, D., & Wallendorf, M. (2004). The role of normative political ideology in consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(3), 511-528.
- Dahlén, M., Granlund, A., & Grenros, M. (2009). The consumer-perceived value of non-traditional media: Effects of brand reputation, appropriateness and expense. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*,
- Davies, I. A., Lee, Z., & Ahonkhai, I. (2012a). Do consumers care about ethical-luxury? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 106(1), 37-51.
- Davis, J. F. (2018). Selling whiteness?—A critical review of the literature on marketing and racism. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 34(1-2), 134-177.
- DeMarree, K. G., Wheeler, S. C., & Petty, R. E. (2005). Priming a new identity: Self-monitoring moderates the effects of nonself primes on self-judgments and behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89(5), 657.
- Dinno, A. (2015). Nonparametric pairwise multiple comparisons in independent groups using dunn's test. *The Stata Journal*, 15(1), 292-300.
- Dodd, M. D., & Supa, D. (2015). Testing the viability of corporate social advocacy as a predictor of purchase intention. *Communication Research Reports*, 32(4), 287-293.
- Drumwright, M. E. (1996). Company advertising with a social dimension: The role of noneconomic criteria. *Journal of Marketing*, 60(4), 71-87. doi:10.1177/002224299606000407
- Du, S., Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2010). Maximizing business returns to corporate social responsibility (CSR): The role of CSR communication. *International Journal of Management Reviews : IJMR*, 12(1), 8-19. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2370.2009.00276.x
- Edelman trust barometer* . (2020). (). Retrieved from <https://www.edelman.com/trust/2020-trust-barometer>
- Fleming, P., Roberts, J., & Garsten, C. (2013). In search of corporate social responsibility: Introduction to special issue. *Organization*, 20(3), 337-348.
- Flynn, L. R., & Goldsmith, R. E. (1999). A short, reliable measure of subjective knowledge. *Journal of Business Research*, 46(1), 57-66.
- Friedman, B. (1996). Value-sensitive design. *Interactions*, 3(6), 16-23.
- Friedman, M. (1996). A positive approach to organized consumer action: The “boycott” as an alternative to the boycott. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 19(4), 439-451.

- Friestad, M., & Wright, P. (1994). The persuasion knowledge model: How people cope with persuasion attempts. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(1), 1-31.
- FTC annual highlights. (2019). (). Retrieved from <https://www.ftc.gov/reports/annual-highlights-2019>
- Giantari, I., Zain, D., Rahayu, M., & Solimun, M. (2013). The role of perceived behavioral control and trust as mediator of experience on online purchasing intentions relationship a study on youths in denpasar city (indonesia). *International Journal of Business and Management Invention*, 2(1), 30-38.
- Gillespie, K., & Swan, K. S. (2021). *Global marketing* Routledge.
- Graffeo, M., Polonio, L., & Bonini, N. (2015). Individual differences in competent consumer choice: The role of cognitive reflection and numeracy skills. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 844.
- Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(5), 1029.
- Graham, K. W., & Wilder, K. M. (2020). Consumer-brand identity and online advertising message elaboration: Effect on attitudes, purchase intent and willingness to share. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*.
- Gupta, R., & Sen, S. (2013). The effect of evolving resource synergy beliefs on the intentions–behavior discrepancy in ethical consumption. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 23(1), 114-121.
- Haidt, J. (2003). The moral emotions.
- Harari, H. (1965). *An experimental evaluation of heider's balance theory with respect to situational and predispositional factors*. University of Miami.
- Harrison, R., Shaw, D., & Newholm, T. (2005). The ethical consumer. *The Ethical Consumer*, , 1-280.
- Heider, F. (1946). Attitudes and cognitive organization. *The Journal of Psychology*, 21(1), 107-112.
- Hoewe, J., & Hatemi, P. K. (2017). Brand loyalty is influenced by the activation of political orientations. *Media Psychology*, 20(3), 428-449.
- Hoffmann, S., Balderjahn, I., Seegebarth, B., Mai, R., & Peyer, M. (2018). Under which conditions are consumers ready to boycott or buycott? the roles of hedonism and simplicity. *Ecological Economics*, 147, 167-178.
- Hoffmann, S., & Hutter, K. (2012). Carrotmob as a new form of ethical consumption. the nature of the concept and avenues for future research. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 35(2), 215-236.
- Hollander, M., Wolfe, D. A., & Chicken, E. (2013a). *Nonparametric statistical methods* John Wiley & Sons.
- Hydock, C., Paharia, N., & Blair, S. (2020). Should your brand pick a side? how market share determines the impact of corporate political advocacy. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 57(6), 1135-1151. doi:10.1177/0022243720947682
- Hydock, C., Paharia, N., & Weber, T. J. (2019a). The consumer response to corporate political advocacy: A review and future directions. *Customer Needs and Solutions*, 6(3), 76-83.
- Inoue, Y., & Kent, A. (2014). A conceptual framework for understanding the effects of corporate social marketing on consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 121(4), 621-633.
- Ipsos Connect. (2017). *When trust falls down*. (). Retrieved from <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/when-trust-falls-down>

- Jobber, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *EBOOK: Principles and Practice of Marketing, 9e*. McGraw Hill.
- Jones, R., & Murrell, A. J. (2001). Signaling positive corporate social performance: An event study of family friendly firms. *Business & Society, 40*(1), 59-78.
- Joo, S., Miller, E. G., & Fink, J. S. (2019). Consumer evaluations of CSR authenticity: Development and validation of a multidimensional CSR authenticity scale. *Journal of Business Research, 98*, 236-249.
- Jungblut, M., & Johnen, M. (2022). When brands (don't) take my stance: The ambiguous effectiveness of political brand communication. *Communication Research, 49*(8), 1092-1117. doi:10.1177/00936502211001622
- JungleScout consumer trends report Q3 2021*. (). Retrieved from <https://www.junglescout.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Jungle-Scout-Consumer-Trends-Report-Q3-2021.pdf>
- Kamins, M. A. (1989). Celebrity and noncelebrity advertising in a two-sided context. *Journal of Advertising Research, 15*(4), 30-37.
- Kane, P., & Zollman, K. J. (2015). An evolutionary comparison of the handicap principle and hybrid equilibrium theories of signaling. *PloS One, 10*(9), e0137271.
- Kang, C., Germann, F., & Grewal, R. (2016). Washing away your sins? corporate social responsibility, corporate social irresponsibility, and firm performance. *Journal of Marketing, 80*(2), 59-79. doi:10.1509/jm.15.0324
- Katie martell. Retrieved from <https://www.katie-martell.com>
- Keller, K. L., Sternthal, B., & Tybout, A. (2002). Three questions you need to ask about your brand. *Harvard Business Review, 80*(9), 80-89.
- Key, T. M., Keel, A. L., Czapski, A. J., & Olson, E. M. (2021). Brand activism change agents: Strategic storytelling for impact and authenticity. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, ahead-of-print*(ahead-of-print), 1-17. doi:10.1080/0965254X.2021.1904435
- Kim, M., & McAlister, L. M. (2011). Stock market reaction to unexpected growth in marketing expenditure: Negative for sales force, contingent on spending level for advertising. *Journal of Marketing, 75*(4), 68-85.
- Kim, Y. J., & Lee, W. (2009). Overcoming consumer skepticism in cause-related marketing: The effects of corporate social responsibility and donation size claim objectivity. *Journal of Promotion Management, 15*(4), 465-483.
- Klein, J. G., Smith, N. C., & John, A. (2004). Why we boycott: Consumer motivations for boycott participation. *Journal of Marketing, 68*(3), 92-109.
- Klein, J., & Dawar, N. (2004). Corporate social responsibility and consumers' attributions and brand evaluations in a product-harm crisis. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 21*(3), 203-217.
- Koleva, S. P., Graham, J., Iyer, R., Ditto, P. H., & Haidt, J. (2012). Tracing the threads: How five moral concerns (especially purity) help explain culture war attitudes. *Journal of Research in Personality, 46*(2), 184-194. doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2012.01.006
- Korschun, D., Rafieian, H., Aggarwal, A., & Swain, S. D. (2019). Taking a stand: Consumer responses when companies get (or don't get) political. Available at SSRN 2806476,
- Kotler, P., & Lee, N. (2004). Best of breed. *Stanford Social Innovation Review, 1*, 14-23.

- Kotler, P., & Zaltman, G. (1971). Social marketing: An approach to planned social change. *Journal of Marketing*, 35(3), 3-12. doi:10.1177/002224297103500302
- Krol, M. W., de Boer, D., Delnoij, D. M., & Rademakers, J. J. (2015). The net promoter score—an asset to patient experience surveys? *Health Expectations*, 18(6), 3099-3109.
- Lafferty, B. A., Goldsmith, R. E., & Newell, S. J. (2002). The dual credibility model: The influence of corporate and endorser credibility on attitudes and purchase intentions. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 10(3), 1-11.
- Latané, B. (1981). The psychology of social impact. *American Psychologist*, 36(4), 343.
- Latif, A., & Abideen, Z. U. (2011). Effects of television advertising on children: A pakistani perspective. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, 30(4), 38.
- Laufer, W. S. (2003). Social accountability and corporate greenwashing. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 43(3), 253-261.
- Lawton, T. C., Doh, J. P., & Rajwani, T. (2014). *Aligning for advantage: Competitive strategies for the political and social arenas* Oxford University Press.
- Lim, Y., & Van Der Heide, B. (2015). Evaluating the wisdom of strangers: The perceived credibility of online consumer reviews on yelp. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 20(1), 67-82.
- Lux, S., Russell Crook, T., & Woehr, D. J. (2011). Mixing business with politics: A meta-analysis of the antecedents and outcomes of corporate political activity. *Journal of Management*, 37(1), 223-247. doi:10.1177/0149206310392233
- Manfredi-Sánchez, J. L. (2019). Brand activism.
- Matos, G., Vinuales, G., & Sheinin, D. A. (2017). The power of politics in branding. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 25(2), 125-140.
- McCracken, G. (1989). Who is the celebrity endorser? cultural foundations of the endorsement process. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(3), 310-321.
- Menon, S., & Kahn, B. E. (2003). Corporate sponsorships of philanthropic activities: When do they impact perception of sponsor brand? *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13(3), 316-327.
- Merriam-webster. (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/woke>
- Miller, K. E., & Sturdivant, F. D. (1977a). Consumer responses to socially questionable corporate behavior: An empirical test. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 4(1), 1-7.
- Mirzaei, A., Wilkie, D. C., & Siuki, H. (2022c). Woke brand activism authenticity or the lack of it. *Journal of Business Research*, 139, 1-12.
- Mitchell, A. A., & Dacin, P. A. (1996). The assessment of alternative measures of consumer expertise. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23(3), 219-239. doi:10.1086/209479
- Mohr, L. A., Eroğlu, D., & Ellen, P. S. (1998). The development and testing of a measure of skepticism toward environmental claims in marketers' communications. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 32(1), 30-55.
- Moorman, C. (2020). Commentary: Brand activism in a political world. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 39(4), 388-392. doi:10.1177/0743915620945260
- Morhart, F., Malär, L., Guèvremont, A., Girardin, F., & Grohmann, B. (2015). Brand authenticity: An integrative framework and measurement scale. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 25(2), 200-218.

- Mukherjee, S., & Althuizen, N. (2020). Brand activism: Does courting controversy help or hurt a brand? *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 37(4), 772-788. doi:10.1016/j.ijresmar.2020.02.008
- Nail, P. R., McGregor, I., Drinkwater, A. E., Steele, G. M., & Thompson, A. W. (2009). Threat causes liberals to think like conservatives. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45(4), 901-907.
- Nakache, P. (2018). Polarization is an opportunity for mission-driven brands. *Fast Company*, Available at: [www.Fastcompany.Com/90264170/Polarization-is-an-Opportunity-for-Mission-Drivenbrands](http://www.fastcompany.com/90264170/Polarization-is-an-Opportunity-for-Mission-Driven-brands) (Accessed 15 December 2019),
- Nalick, M., Josefy, M., Zardkoohi, A., & Bierman, L. (2016). Corporate sociopolitical involvement: A reflection of whose preferences? *Amp*, 30(4), 384-403. doi:10.5465/amp.2015.0033
- Napoli, J., Dickinson, S. J., Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. (2014). Measuring consumer-based brand authenticity. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(6), 1090-1098.
- Neilson, L. A. (2010a). Boycott or buycott? understanding political consumerism. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 9(3), 214-227.
- Nowak, A., Szamrej, J., & Latané, B. (1990). From private attitude to public opinion: A dynamic theory of social impact. *Psychological Review*, 97(3), 362.
- Obermiller, C., & Spangenberg, E. R. (1998). Development of a scale to measure consumer skepticism toward advertising. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 7(2), 159-186.
- Orazi, D. C., & Chan, E. Y. (2020). "They did not walk the green talk!:" How information specificity influences consumer evaluations of disconfirmed environmental claims. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 163(1), 107-123.
- O'Rourke, D., & Ringer, A. (2016). The impact of sustainability information on consumer decision making. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 20(4), 882-892.
- Oxford dictionary. (2022). Retrieved from <https://www.oed.com>
- Park, K., & Jiang, H. (2020). Signaling, verification, and identification: The way corporate social advocacy generates brand loyalty on social media. *International Journal of Business Communication*, , 2329488420907121.
- Phillips, H. (2020, ). Performative allyship. Retrieved from <https://forge.medium.com/performative-allyship-is-deadly-c900645d9f1f>
- Pittman, M., Oeldorf-Hirsch, A., & Brannan, A. (2022). Green advertising on social media: Brand authenticity mediates the effect of different appeals on purchase intent and digital engagement. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 43(1), 106-121.
- Rao, A. R., & Monroe, K. B. (1988). The moderating effect of prior knowledge on cue utilization in product evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 253-264.
- Reed II, A., Forehand, M. R., Puntoni, S., & Warlop, L. (2012). Identity-based consumer behavior. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 29(4), 310-321.
- Rim, H., Lee, Y., & Yoo, S. (2020). Polarized public opinion responding to corporate social advocacy: Social network analysis of boycotters and advocates. *Public Relations Review*, 46(2), 101869. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.101869
- Ross, A., & Willson, V. L. (2017a). Paired samples T-test. *Basic and advanced statistical tests* (pp. 17-19) Springer.

- Rozin, P., & Royzman, E. B. (2001a). Negativity bias, negativity dominance, and contagion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(4), 296-320.
- Rozin, P., & Royzman, E. B. (2001b). Negativity bias, negativity dominance, and contagion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(4), 296-320.
- Sarkar, C. (2019, December 9). "From CSR to corporate responsibility" – an interview with stephen hahn-griffiths . *Marketing Journal* Retrieved from <https://www.marketingjournal.org/from-csr-to-corporate-responsibility-an-interview-with-stephen-hahn-griffiths/>
- Sarkar, C., & Kotler, P. (2020). *Brand activism: From purpose to action* Idea Bite Press.
- Schlegel, R. J., Hicks, J. A., Arndt, J., & King, L. A. (2009). Thine own self: True self-concept accessibility and meaning in life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(2), 473.
- Schmidt, H. J., Ind, N., Guzmán, F., & Kennedy, E. (2022). Sociopolitical activist brands. *The Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 31(1), 40-55. doi:10.1108/JPBM-03-2020-2805
- Shaw, D., & Clarke, I. (1999). Belief formation in ethical consumer groups: An exploratory study. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*,
- Shaw, D., McMaster, R., & Newholm, T. (2016b). Care and commitment in ethical consumption: An exploration of the 'attitude-behaviour gap'. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 136(2), 251-265.
- Shaw, D., & Newholm, T. (2002). Voluntary simplicity and the ethics of consumption. *Psychology & Marketing*, 19(2), 167-185.
- Simmonds, R. (2018). No title. *The Rise of the Woke Brands*,
- Sobande, F. (2017). Watching me watching you: Black women in Britain on YouTube. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 20(6), 655-671.
- Sobande, F. (2019a). Woke-washing: "intersectional" femvertising and branding "woke" bravery. *European Journal of Marketing*, 54(11), 2723-2745. doi:10.1108/EJM-02-2019-0134
- Stokburger-Sauer, N., Ratneshwar, S., & Sen, S. (2012). Drivers of consumer-brand identification. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 29(4), 406-418.
- Strength of purpose*. (2020). (). Retrieved from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ni3dl4jAEWn7d0KxD\\_rB05p2ZoBJJIC/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ni3dl4jAEWn7d0KxD_rB05p2ZoBJJIC/view)
- Sujan, M. (1985). Consumer knowledge: Effects on evaluation strategies mediating consumer judgments. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12(1), 31-46.
- Swaminathan, V., Sorescu, A., Steenkamp, J. E., O'Guinn, T. C. G., & Schmitt, B. (2020). Branding in a hyperconnected world: Refocusing theories and rethinking boundaries. *Journal of Marketing*, 84(2), 24-46.
- Taking a stand*. (2017). (). Retrieved from [https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus\\_uploads/document/ur242bgmos/Holmes%20Report-YouGov-Brands,%20Social%20Good%20&%20Consumer%20Expectations%20.pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/ur242bgmos/Holmes%20Report-YouGov-Brands,%20Social%20Good%20&%20Consumer%20Expectations%20.pdf)
- TAKING A STAND brands, social good & consumer expectations*
- Terenggana, C. A., Supit, H., & Utami, C. W. (2013b). Effect of value, consumer trust and attitudes towards intention buy environmentally friendly air conditioners product in south Sumatera.
- Thompson Anne Bahr. (2017). *Do good*

- Tsang, J. (2002). Moral rationalization and the integration of situational factors and psychological processes in immoral behavior. *Review of General Psychology*, 6(1), 25-50.
- Tuškej, U., Golob, U., & Podnar, K. (2013). The role of consumer–brand identification in building brand relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 53-59.
- Unstereotype alliance*. (2021). (). Retrieved from <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/unsta/resources/ua%20annual%20report%202021.pdf?la=en&vs=736>
- van Grinsven, B., & Das, E. (2016). Logo design in marketing communications: Brand logo complexity moderates exposure effects on brand recognition and brand attitude. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 22(3), 256-270. doi:10.1080/13527266.2013.866593
- Varga, S., & Guignon, C. (2014). Authenticity.
- Villagra, N., Monfort, A., & Méndez-Suárez, M. (2021). Firm value impact of corporate activism: Facebook and the stop hate for profit campaign. *Journal of Business Research*, 137, 319-326.
- Voinow, A. V., & Kropinova, A. (2021). Tone deaf marketing or genuine activism?
- Vredenburg, J., Kapitan, S., Spry, A., & Kemper, J. A. (2020). Brands taking a stand: Authentic brand activism or woke washing? *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 39(4), 444-460.
- Walumbwa, F. O., Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Wernsing, T. S., & Peterson, S. J. (2008). Authentic leadership: Development and validation of a theory-based measure. *Journal of Management*, 34(1), 89-126.
- Webb, D. J., & Mohr, L. A. (1998). A typology of consumer responses to cause-related marketing: From skeptics to socially concerned. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 17(2), 226-238.
- Weber, K., Heinze, K. L., & DeSoucey, M. (2008). Forage for thought: Mobilizing codes in the movement for grass-fed meat and dairy products. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 53(3), 529-567.
- Weinzimmer, L. G., & Esken, C. A. (2016). Risky business: Taking a stand on social issues. *Business Horizons*, 59(3), 331-337.
- Wernerfelt, B. (1988). Umbrella branding as a signal of new product quality: An example of signalling by posting a bond. *The Rand Journal of Economics*, , 458-466.
- Woodside, A. G., & Chebat, J. (2001). Updating heider's balance theory in consumer behavior: A jewish couple buys a german car and additional buying–consuming transformation stories. *Psychology & Marketing*, 18(5), 475-495.
- Yates, C. (2021, ). ‘Regardless of how woke a brand is, portraying intersectionality is tricky’. Retrieved from <https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2021/12/07/regardless-how-woke-brand-portraying-intersectionality-tricky>
- Ziady, H. (). CNN - ben & jerry's. Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/03/business/ben--jerrys-george-floyd/index.html>
- Zillman, C., & Hinchliffe, E. (2020, ). ‘Enough is enough:’ 3 corporate leaders on how to respond to the george floyd protests. Retrieved from <https://fortune.com/2020/06/02/corporate-leaders-how-to-respond-to-the-george-floyd-protests/>

# Appendix

## 1. Ad types (Pre Study)

**WE SEE YOU, WE HEAR YOU,  
AND WE STAND WITH YOU  
IN SOLIDARITY.**

**BRAND X**

**OUR ACTIONS SPEAK  
LOUDER THAN OUR WORDS.**  
BRAND X STANDS IN SOLIDARITY  
WITH THE BLACK COMMUNITY.

LAST WEEK WE SPOKE TO YOU,  
THIS WEEK WE TAKE ACTION.

**1 MILLION DOLLARS**  
in donations for community resources and activism,  
awareness campaigns, and other initiatives to help in  
the fight for racial equality and opportunity.

We start today with making donations to  
**Black Lives Matter, Know Your Rights Camp and the  
NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund.**

WE SUPPORT YOU  
AS YOU HAVE SUPPORTED US.

**#BLACKLIVESMATTER**

**BRAND X**

POWER UP and PRS Foundation condemn anti-Black racism and we are committed to addressing racial disparities and making good on our promise to work towards a fairer and more equitable industry for all.

Among the values we hold most dear is anti-racism. There should be zero tolerance for racial slurs and racism which hurts the Black community, including musicians, creators, industry professionals, consumers and employees.

As a result of our strength of feeling, POWER UP and PRS Foundation will not partner with or accept financial support from partners whose actions do not match our expectations and values.

**BRAND X**

## 2. Interview Guide

### 25-30 minutes

- Age
- Gender

- I. What does racial discrimination mean to you?
- II. Should a brand conduct a campaign on racial discrimination?
- III. What would make a brand activism ad genuine?
  - A. PA/CP/BC differentiation?
- IV. Do you think brands feel pressured to follow social trends?
- V. Do you have any previous experience with brand activism that has changed your opinions about a brand? How?
  - A. Would your answers be different if we talk about different types of brands?
    1. Small companies/ Bigger brands
    2. Personal preference of brands
    3. Prior knowledge about industries (for example real estate being inherently unsustainable etc)

### *Post-ad (shows 3)*

- VI. Do you think your personal values align with this brand's message?
- VII. What is your impression of this activist ad?
  - A. Do you think it is credible?
  - B. To make this ad more credible, what would you add/subtract?
- VIII. Would your answer change if there were alternatives available for this brand?

### *Post-Newspaper*

- IX. To what extent do you think this article is related to the ad?
- X. What is your perception of the activist ad shown before?
  - A. Does your previous perception of credibility change after seeing this news article?  
How?
- XI. Would your answer change if there were alternatives available for this brand?
- XII. If a brand were to lie to you regarding its social activism, would you trust them in the future? Would you purchase a product from that brand?

### 3. Newspaper (Main Study)



## **WOKE-WASHING: HOW BRANDS ARE CASHING IN ON THE CULTURE WARS**



There is no shortage of examples today of profit-driven companies deploying good causes for advertising.

But surely no company will launch an advertising campaign if it thinks it will lose money; therefore, by definition, any social justice-orientated marketing is driven primarily by money, not advancing the cause of human progress.

Woke-washing will not change the world, if anything, it's only going to make issues trendy and capitalize on them.



### 4. Survey Questions (References)

<b>SURVEY QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS</b>	<b>REFERENCE</b>	<b>REASONS</b>
"I feel strongly about racial bias"	(Mukherjee & Althuisen, 2020)	Consumer-brand alignment with stance taken (Racism, in this case)
"I expect brands to take a stand on racial discrimination"	(Mukherjee et al., 2020)	Consumer-brand alignment with stance taken
"I agree that brands should take a stand on racial discrimination"	(Mukherjee et al., 2020)	Consumer-brand alignment with stance taken

"Brands feel pressured to follow social trends"	(Becker-Olsen, Cudmore & Hill, 2006)	Supporting 'trendy' causes may create scepticism regarding possible alternative motives
<b>POST-AD</b>		
Do you agree with Ace's message?	(Mukherjee et al., 2020)	Consumer-brand alignment with stance taken
Do you think Ace's ad is authentic?		Check for authenticity, and to compare with average of the next (4) statements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ace practices what it preaches in this ad</li> <li>•Ace makes reliable promises in this ad</li> <li>•Ace makes a genuine impression</li> <li>•Ace's message is original (i.e. it is not trying to copy another brand's message)</li> </ul>	(Bruhn, Schoenmüller, Schäfer, & Heinrich, 2012)	Originality, Reliability and Naturalness of advertisement
<b>POST-NEWSPAPER (starting with same authenticity questions as above)</b>		
Do you think Ace is trying to capitalize on current social trends?	(Becker-Olsen, Cudmore & Hill, 2006)	Supporting 'trendy' causes may create scepticism regarding possible alternative motives
"I consider brand authenticity to be important while evaluating my purchase"	(Pittman, Oeldorf-Hirsch, & Brannan, 2022)	Purchase Intention
Based on your previous answers, how do you feel about then brand of Ace?	(Bruhn et al., 2012)	Brand Perception
How likely are you to recommend Ace to others?	(Krol, de Boer, Delnoij, & Rademakers, 2015)	Brand Perception and Purchase Intention
How likely are you to buy products from Ace?	(Baines, Fill & Rosengren: Marketing)	Purchase Intention
How likely are you to switch to Ace's alternative brands, if their price points were similar?	(Baines, Fill & Rosengren: Marketing)	Purchase Intention based on competition and price point

## 5. Main survey



Hello there! We are so happy you took out the time to fill our survey.

This is an opportunity for us to gather consumer opinion for our Bachelors Thesis in the Department of Marketing.

It should take less than 5 minutes to complete this survey.

A quick note on confidentiality: All of the answers you give in this survey will be completely confidential, in compliance with the GDPR regulations.





To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

"I feel strongly about racial bias"

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

"I expect brands to take a stand on racial discrimination"

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

"I agree that brands should take a stand on racial discrimination"

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

"Brands feel pressured to follow social trends"

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



A brand, named 'Ace', recently conducted a campaign on racial discrimination, we will now present you with their campaign ad.



Do you agree with Ace's message?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you think Ace's ad is authentic?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
"I think Ace practices what it preaches in this ad"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"I think Ace makes reliable promises in this ad"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"I think Ace make a genuine impression"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"I think Ace's message is original? (i.e. Ace is not pretending to copy another brand's message)"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Now refer to this article published in the reputed newspaper 'All About Business' regarding the general trends of "Woke-washing"

**NEWSPAPER** | ALL ABOUT BUSINESS | PAGE 1

## **WOKE-WASHING: HOW BRANDS ARE CASHING IN ON THE CULTURE WARS**

**DISCRIMINATION**

There is no shortage of examples today of profit-driven companies deploying good causes for advertising.

But surely no company will launch an advertising campaign if it thinks it will lose money; therefore, by definition, any social justice-orientated marketing is driven primarily by money, not advancing the cause of human progress.

Woke-washing will not change the world, if anything, it's only going to make issues trendy and capitalize on them.

**New anti-racism ad campaign**

Do you think Ace's ad is authentic?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Read the statements below and answer accordingly

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Do you think Ace practices what it preaches in the ad?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you think Ace makes reliable promises in the ad?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does Ace make a genuine impression?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you think Ace's message is original? (i.e. Ace is not pretending to copy another brand's message)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you think Ace is trying to capitalize on current social trends?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you agree with the statement:

"I consider brand authenticity to be important while evaluating a brand"

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Based on your previous answers, how do you feel about then brand of Ace?

	Extremely bad	Moderately bad	Slightly bad	Neither good nor bad	Slightly good	Moderately good	Extremely good
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How likely are you to recommend Ace to others?

	Extremely unlikely	Moderately unlikely	Slightly unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Slightly likely	Moderately likely	Extremely likely
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How likely are you to buy products from Ace?

	Extremely unlikely	Moderately unlikely	Slightly unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Slightly likely	Moderately likely	Extremely likely
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How likely are you to switch to Ace's alternative brands, if their price points were similar?

	Extremely unlikely	Moderately unlikely	Slightly unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Slightly likely	Moderately likely	Extremely likely
Your Answer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Just tell us a little bit about yourself before you submit

Age

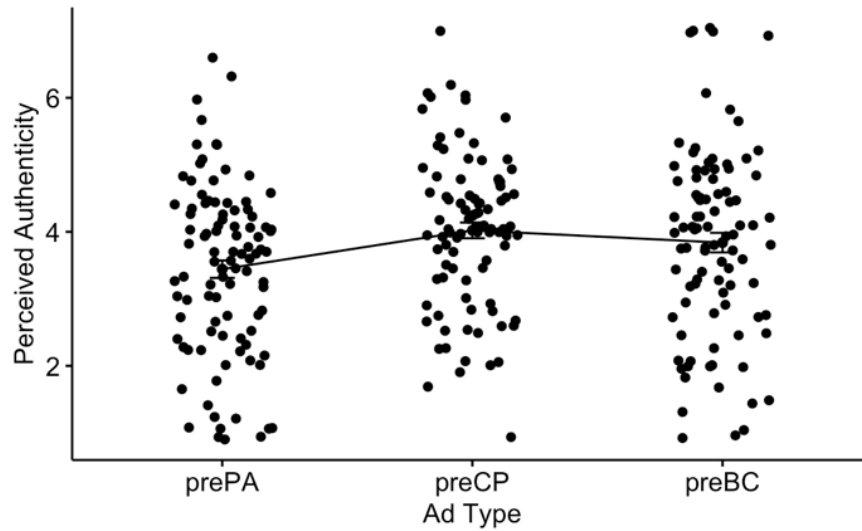
Gender

- Prefer not to say
- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender

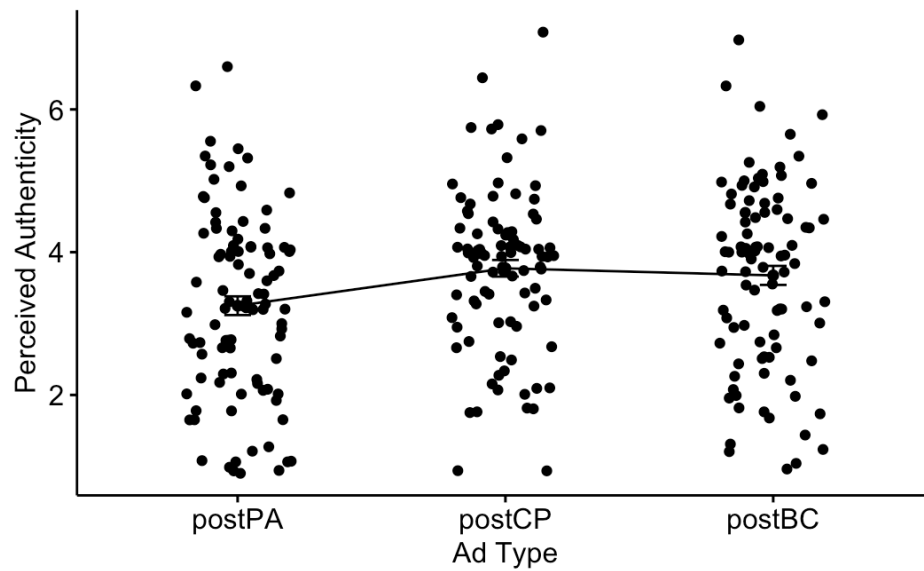
Note: The same questions were used for the other two types of ads

## 6. Data Depictions (Graphical Depictions of Results)

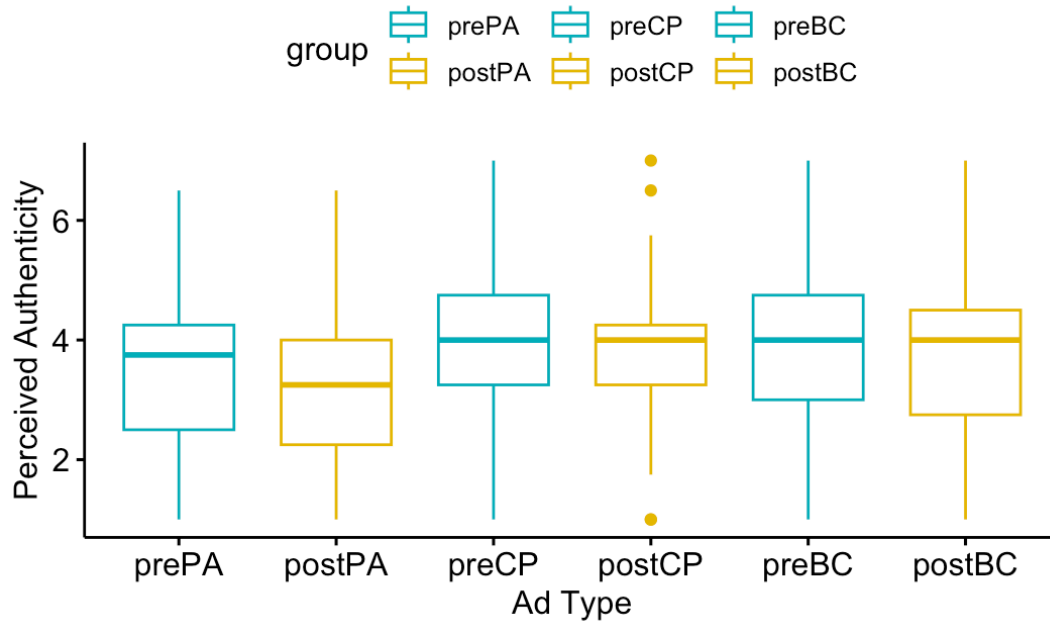
**Figure 3.** The difference of perceived authenticity across ad types pre awareness of woke washing



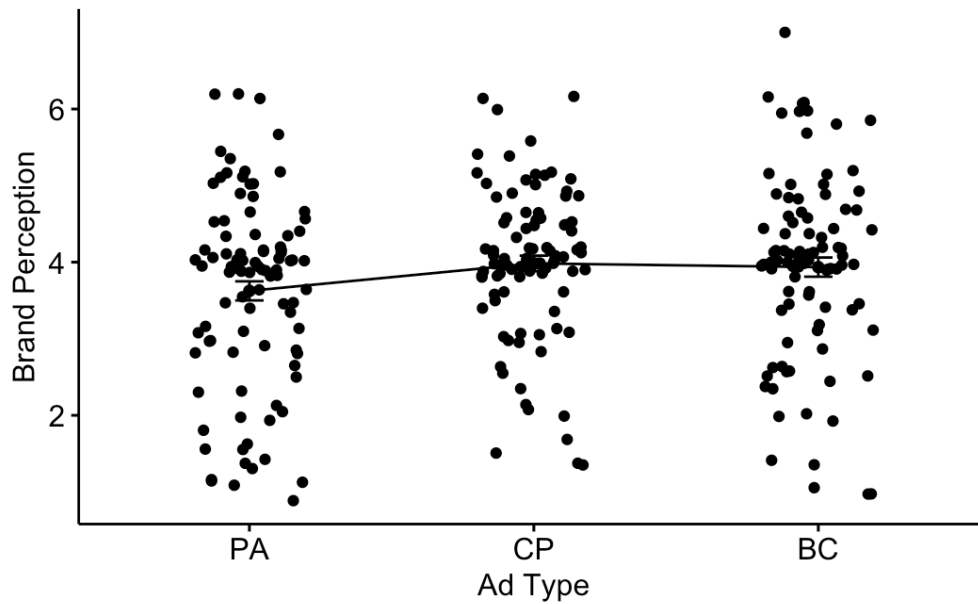
**Figure 2.** The difference of perceived authenticity across ad types pre awareness of woke washing



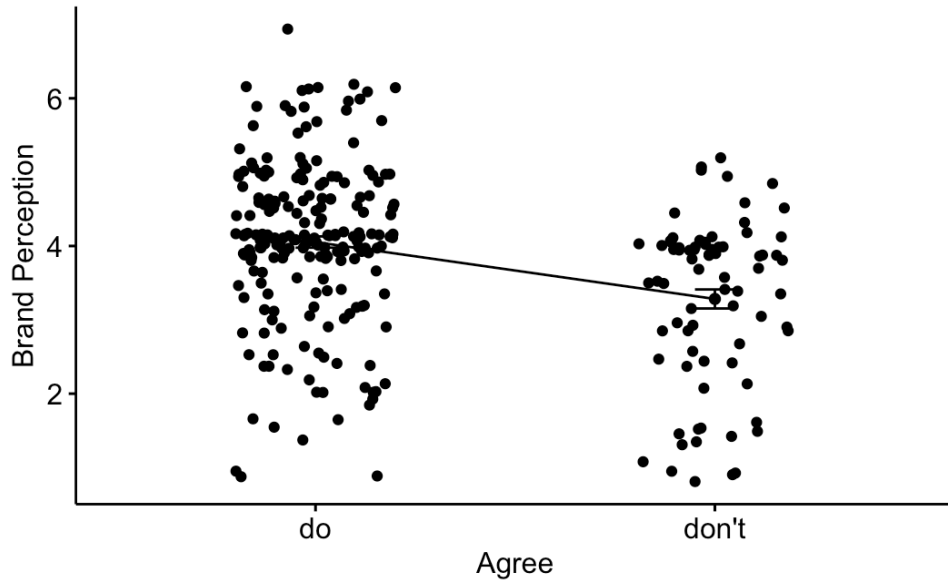
**Figure 3.** Comparison of authenticity pre and post awareness of woke washing across ad types



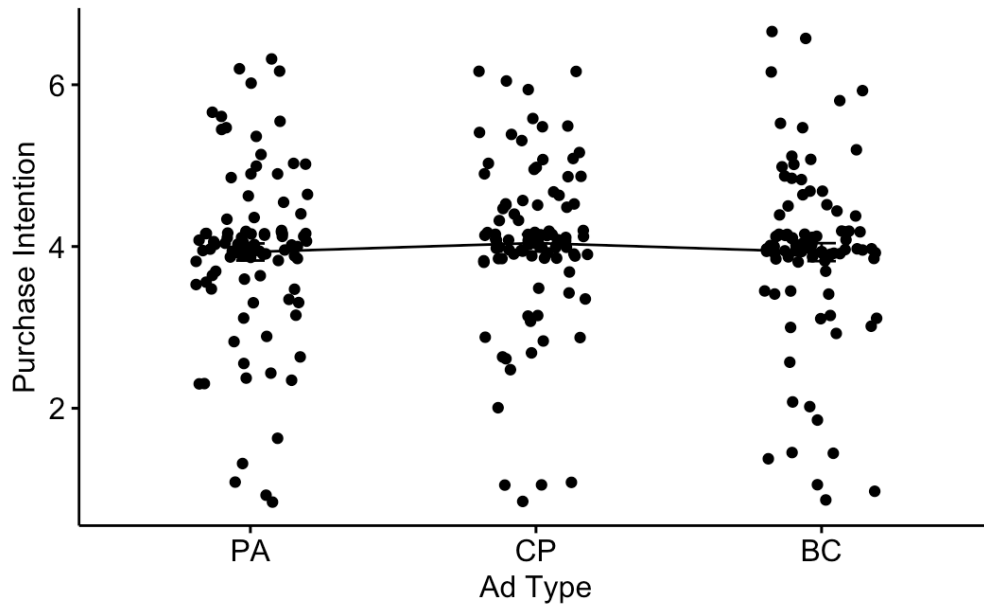
**Figure 4.** The difference of brand perception across ad types



**Figure 5.** Brand Perception difference across consumer alignment

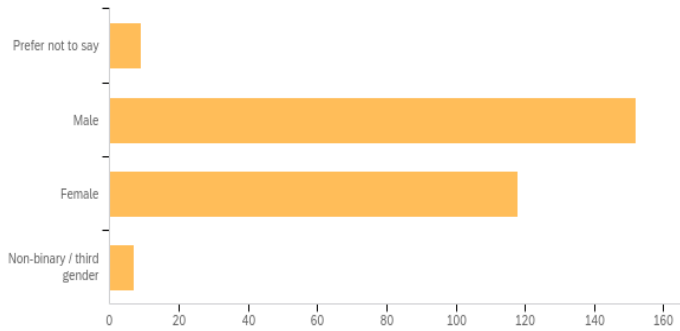


**Figure 6.** The difference of purchase intention across ad types



## 7. Demographics Description

**Graph 1: Gender distribution of sample**



**Graph 2: Age distribution of sample**

