

# Master Thesis Marketing

## Brand Activism: An Analysis on How Brand Activism could Influence the buying behaviour of Dutch Consumers.

**Name:** Michelle Jamoneau  
**Student number:** 509403  
**Supervisor:** Dr. Arie T. Barendregt  
**Date:** 15 July 2019

Erasmus school of Economics



## Management Summary

The aim of this thesis was to examine whether or not the Dutch population wants brands to endorse their ideas even when those are controversial, so called brand activism. In this thesis, the definition of brand activism by Harzevoort (2019) is used “Brand activism involves leading, promoting or breaking through social, political, economic or environmental issues with the aim of improving society.” There are two general motivations for studying brand activism in the Netherlands. The first is a strategy-based motivation to improve brand image, awareness, and engagement. A second reason to study brand activism arises results a financially based motivation to estimate whether brand activism in the Netherlands can increase profitability for organizations. This thesis demonstrated a answer to the following central research question: **Is there a positive relationship between the buying behaviour of Dutch consumers and brands in the Netherlands that explicitly stand for and communicate their opinions on social issues as part of their brand personalities?**

To answer the central question a mixed methods study was conducted, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods in a multilayered research. This thesis first applied a quantitative research method to examine the extant literature on brand activism. Then, brand activism in the Netherlands was researched through a online survey among 265 Dutch consumers. Simultaneously, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were held with 7 experts in the field of marketing to identify the trends and to learn their experiences and opinions about the topic. The results of these studies were analyzed and interpreted concurrently. To measure if the personal characteristics of consumers will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands, the analysis was carried out by means of the ordinal regression analysis.

This thesis illustrates that there is indeed a positive relationship between the buying behaviour of Dutch consumers and brand activism in the Netherlands. Mainly due to digitization, consumers have become a lot more critical, outspoken and politically conscious over the last years. A vast majority endorses that brands have the power to influence social change and appreciate it when brands use this power and take action to address issues concerning society. It is not that Dutch consumers believe that brands have more influence than the government. However, the research conducted in this thesis illustrates that brands can complement politics well. Furthermore, it is important that brands take responsibility and do not take a passive position and wait for the legislation, but encourage the right choice themselves. It is no longer

enough to just sell products or services since a majority of people appreciates it when brands respond to social issues.

The extant literature study, the surveys, and the interviews identified the most critical factors for the success of brand activism in the Netherlands: First of all, it is important to consider the differences in culture as well as the personal and psychological characteristics of the target audience. When a brand decides to make a statement, it is crucial to know how the target group thinks and feels about this issue. Based on this research, the target audience that will receive a brand's statement most positively are female, aged between 35 and 54 years, actively seeking for brand information, have zero interest in the news, and are political left-oriented. Second, the statement has to be authentic and credible. Furthermore, the company must be prepared for negative responses. When a brand makes a statement, it is possible that somebody will be offended, so a brand should be able to deal with adverse reactions and have a crisis plan ready. Next, social media should be integrated and should cooperate with other marketing methods during campaigns. Finally, the researcher recommends to not make statements that are too controversial in the Netherlands as controversial statements are polarizing in the Netherlands and should only be made when the brand truly believes it and wants to improve society in regards to that specific subject. In conclusion, dare to make the first step in the right direction. When done with consistency, authenticity, and commitment, these first steps will be rewarded. If the target audience shares the point of view, there will be a stronger relationship as the brand and the consumer pursue the same goal. A brand can earn loyalty, ask for 'fair' prices, and gain word-of-mouth and free publicity.

The researcher also recommends that future research should apply a larger data set with more combinations between variables. In addition, this thesis identifies that the majority of the respondents appreciates it when a brand makes a controversial statement. However, the issues a brand could connect with in this study are not controversial in general. That is why future research should be focussed on examining what the consumers define as controversial statements. Third, future research could be used to identify if the popularity of brand activism indeed has increased, for what reason and if the economical recession has an influence on brand activism. Finally, for future research, it would be interesting to examine whether the level of brand activism has an influence on the buying behaviour of the consumer. Is there a difference in the perception of the level of brand activism the consumer has with a specific brand and does this perception has an influence on the consumer's behaviour?

## **Acknowledgment**

After an intensive period of seven months, I can finally write my acknowledgment. By writing this word of thanks I put the finishing touches to my thesis and therefore also to the Master Marketing. It was a period in which I learned a lot, in terms of marketing, but also on a personal level. As expected, writing this thesis has been a process with ups and downs. I would like to thank the people who have supported and helped me in the past period.

First of all, I want to thank my supervisor Dr. Arie Barendregt for the great support. He was always willing to help me and gave me the right tools to choose the right direction during the thesis. With success, because without his help and knowledge, it was not possible to successfully complete my thesis.

Secondly, I would like to thank the experts who helped me with my interviews: Anneke van de Langkruis, Ron Schneider, Jacklynn Gerritsen, Gijsbregt Vijn, Marthe Noordzij, Angela Ursem, and Katelijne Blom. I could not have conducted the research without them. I would like to thank them for their time, knowledge and above all enthusiasm during the interviews.

I would also like to thank my second reader G. J. Prevo for his time.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents and boyfriend for the wise advice and listening ear. I could always spar with you about my problems, findings, but luckily I could also talk to you about something other than just my thesis.

Dear all, thank you very much!

Michelle Jamoneau

Honselersdijk, July 15 2019

## Table of Content

Chapter 1. Introduction .....	7
1.1. Topic of Thesis .....	7
1.2. Relevance of the Study and Objectives .....	9
1.3. Central Research Question and Associated Sub-Questions .....	10
1.4. Thesis Chapters Summary .....	11
Chapter 2. Literature Study .....	12
2.1. Definition of Brand Activism.....	12
2.2. Attitudes toward Advertisements .....	15
2.3. Definitions of Brand Image, Associations, Engagement and Brand Personality .....	16
2.4. Buying Behaviour and Political Consumerism .....	20
2.5. Common results of Brand Activism.....	25
2.6. Key Findings .....	31
Chapter 3. Research Methodology .....	33
3.1. Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods .....	33
3.2. Data Collection Methods.....	35
3.3. Data Analysis .....	40
Chapter 4. Research Results.....	48
4.1. Brand Activism .....	48
4.2. Attitude toward Advertisements.....	54
4.3. Brand Image, Associations, Engagement and Personality .....	58
4.3. Buying Behaviour and Political Consumerism .....	60
4.4. Chance for Successful Brand Activism in the Netherlands .....	63
4.5. Ordinal Regression Analysis – Validity.....	63
4.5. Ordinal Regression Analysis – Research Estimates.....	66
4.6. Ordinal Regression Analysis – Analysis of the results .....	68
Chapter 5. Conclusion and Recommendations .....	73

5.1. Brand Activism – Comparison Literature and Empirical Study .....	73
5.2. Advertisements – Comparison Literature and Empirical Study.....	74
5.3. Brand Characteristics – Comparison Literature and Empirical Study .....	76
5.4. Political Consumerism - Comparison Literature and Empirical Study.....	77
5.5. Consumer Characteristics – Comparison Literature and Empirical Study .....	78
5.7. Central Research Question .....	80
5.8. Recommendations for Brands .....	82
5.9. Recommendations for Future Research .....	83
Chapter 6. Reflection.....	85
6.1. Reflection .....	85
6.2. Research Limitations.....	86
Reference List .....	87
Appendix 1. Case Studies.....	99
1.1. Case Study - Benetton .....	99
1.2. Case Study Nike - Colin Kaepernick .....	109
1.3. Case Study Gillette - The Best a Men can Be .....	114
1.4. Case Study Pepsi - Live for Now Moments Anthem .....	117
Appendix 2. Survey Questions.....	121
Appendix 3. Overview Experts .....	127
Appendix 4. Interview Guide .....	131
Appendix 5. Scoring System.....	134
Appendix 6. Thematic Analysis Interviews .....	137

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Topic of Thesis

Nowadays more international brands are participating in the political debate. Global events like the Brexit and the elections in the U.S. and U.K. brought important topics like immigration, equality, and globalization to the forefront and have provoked a response. The internet makes these political events transparent, which leads to an increase in the political consciousness of people. These developments in the society are triggering brands to involve in social issues, so-called **Brand Activism**.

Brands are trying to stand for something more than just selling a product or service. They want to engage with the consumers and distinguish themselves from their competitors. Brands are trying to convey a message in which they care about the future and society and want to make a change. Brand activism acknowledges the power of brands in society, it is a way for brands to use the market to demonstrate their vision, take responsibility concerning injustices, and as a way of initiating discussions to improve the future of the world. For brands, responding to social and political issues may be risky. Although, brand activism may also lead to increased loyalty among the brand's customers. At the same time, there is a danger that other consumers will not feel heard or wronged, which may, in turn, lead to protests and boycotts (Harzevoort, 2019).

Brand activism consists of three different forms. First of all, brand activism is about brands that activate purpose, offering meaningful or social added value, with strong positions in issues. This element of brand activism can, for example, be recognized in the sexist advertising campaigns of the brand Suitsupply in which they celebrate the love between two men. The advertisements caused much controversy. In the Netherlands, dozens of bus shelters were vandalized, reactions on social media were hateful, and in the first week of the campaign, Suitsupply lost more than 10.000 followers. 'That negativity was factored in and indicates that it is relevant for brands to support homosexuals,' says CEO Fokke de Jong to Dutch newspaper *NRC*. After the first week, the loss in followers was compensated by new followers. Those who remained faithful to the brand through social media seemed to be even more loyal to the brand (Pauwe, 2018).

Second, brand activism is about brands that create or support an activist movement. In 2018, personal hygiene and health company Libresse acknowledged the fact that blood relating to menstruation was a censored taboo in the media. With their campaign *#bloodnormal*, the

brand broke the taboo. The campaign resonated in as many as 17 countries, as well as on social media, where the hashtag is still ongoing, in part because Libresse has long been committed to their activist movement.

Brand activism is also about brands that want to close political leaks. For example, Microsoft wants to force its suppliers to offer paid maternity leave to their employees. In force in 2020, all employees of suppliers with more than 50 FTEs must offer their employees 12 weeks of paid leave at a 1,000 dollars per week. Here, Microsoft illustrates the next step in the social improvement business: Microsoft imposes a law itself. Not just to their employees, but to the entire ecosystem (Harzevoort, 2019).

Nowadays, corporations are thinking about their business in a broader context. They are determining which issues are important for them to engage in, how those issues match their brand identity, and how to position themselves as responsible corporate citizens and desirable employers. A study by Hootkin and Meck (2018) illustrated that the American population believes that companies may succeed in business while also taking a stance on important social and political issues. Around 76 percent of the American population believes that companies should endorse their ideas even when those are controversial. Nearly 8 out of 10 Americans believe that taking a stance on an issue may increase the business results. This study also demonstrates that Americans believe that companies can, and should, affect social change. Furthermore, the research identified that consumers are actively looking for information about the political and social stance of companies. Indeed, 49 percent visits company websites, 40 percent reads news items about the companies, and 31 percent visits social media platforms to get information about the companies. Millennials are the most proactive consumers - 42 percent - when searching for this information (Hootkin & Meck, 2018).

Another study among the American population in 2018 illustrated that 49 percent of the consumers could name a brand that they have become more positive toward at large. Around 30 percent of those said the brand image improved because of the societal stance the brand took, which makes social purpose the third most efficient element to increase brand image. Of those 30 percent, 16 percent mentioned it was because the brand “took a stance on an issue that aligns with products and services they offer”, 13 percent said it was because they “found out they support one of (their) favourite causes”, and 11 percent said it was because the brand “took a stance on a current social issue” (Shelton Group, 2018).



## **1.2. Relevance of the Study and Objectives**

There are two general motivations for studying brand activism in the Netherlands. The first is a strategy-based motivation to improve brand image, awareness, and engagement. A second reason to study brand activism arises results a financially based motivation to estimate whether brand activism in the Netherlands may increase profitability for organizations. Brand activism could play a more essential role in the Netherlands, because society is also changing in the Netherlands.

The estimate is that the Dutch population with a Dutch background will be shrinking from 13.2 million in 2018 to 12.1 million in 2060, whereas the population with a migrant background will continue to grow in the coming decades. In 2060, the Netherlands will have an estimated 6.3 million people with a migrant background, compared to 3.9 million now. Currently, one-third of the babies born in the Netherlands have a foreign mother (Stoeldraijer, Duin, & Huisman, 2017). With the change in demography comes a shift in ideology. Think of #MeToo, the 'Zwarte Piet' discussion and the commotion about the Nashville Declaration. Consequently, this shift in ideology allows ideological activism about topics such as race, gender and sexual orientation to emerge (Harzevoort, 2019).

Quite some research has been conducted among the population of the U.S. and the U.K. These studies have indicated that (controversial) brand activism is becoming more important each year. Furthermore, brand activism could improve brand awareness and engagement, and could be used as an instrument to increase revenue. However, little research has been done when it comes to Dutch consumers. The aim of this thesis was to examine whether or not the Dutch population wants brands to endorse their ideas even when those are controversial. The results of this research will be of value to Dutch brands and marketers providing substantiated recommendations for brand activism in the Netherlands. While making a stance may provide a significant increase in awareness, image and engagement, it may also jeopardize all this. However, not taking a stance when it comes to political or social issues may not be an option either and may bring an even higher number of risks. Whether the Dutch population expects the same of brands as the American population, or if brand activism in the Netherlands may increase an organization's profit, both in terms of finance and image, is uncertain. Because of this existing knowledge gap, the aim of this thesis was to expand on the current literature and to contribute to the concept of brand activism. Furthermore, this study attempted to aid brand managers and marketers in the Netherlands by creating a better understanding of the thoughts of Dutch consumers regarding brand activism. This knowledge could be applied to create a

better brand image and to improve the relationship with Dutch consumers which will lead to higher financial profits.

In conclusion, this research attempted to present substantiated recommendations to brands in the Netherlands. The overall objectives of this thesis were:

1. To analyse the thoughts of Dutch consumers about brand activism.
2. To find out the significant corresponding factors that influence consumer's opinions.
3. To research if brand activism will lead to higher awareness and a better image and brand relationship in the Netherlands.
4. To present which aspects of a brand could increase the successfulness of brand activism.

### **1.3. Central Research Question and Associated Sub-Questions**

The main purpose of this research was to answer the following central research question:

**Is there a positive relationship between the buying behaviour of Dutch consumers and brands in the Netherlands that explicitly stand for and communicate their opinions on social issues as part of their brand personalities?**

Before answering the central question the following theoretical sub-questions were answered with the use of extant literature and four case-studies:

1. What is the definition of brand activism?
2. What are the attitudes toward advertisements?
3. What do brand image, associations, engagement, and personality mean?
4. What are the definitions of consumer buying behaviour and political consumerism?
5. What are common results of brand activism?

In addition to the theoretical questions, this thesis considered the following empirical sub-questions:

1. How widely spread is brand activism supported in the Netherlands?
2. Once a brand moves in a political direction, are there people who may stop consumption completely or will spread contrary word-of-mouth?

3. Which characteristics should a brand have that explicitly stance for something?
4. To what extent do the consumer characteristics have an effect on the successfulness of brand activism?

#### **1.4. Thesis Chapters Summary**

##### **Chapter 1**

This chapter provided the reader with an introduction to brand activism and defined the relevance of this study and purpose of the research. In addition, chapter 1 outlined the research questions that this thesis attempted to provide an answer for.

##### **Chapter 2**

In chapter 2, the researcher described the concept of brand activism based on extant literature and scanned the boundaries of this concept. This chapter also summarized the key findings which identified the research gap within the current literature.

##### **Chapter 3**

Chapter 3 described the research methodology which was used to answer the empirical sub-questions as well as the main research question. This chapter clarified how the data for this study was collected and how it was analyzed.

##### **Chapter 4**

In chapter 4 the empirical sub-questions are answered. In the first part, a general analysis of the online survey and the results of the interviews were given. The second part of this chapter predicted the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands with an ordinal regression analysis on the basis of the personal characteristics of Dutch consumers.

##### **Chapter 5**

The final chapter presents the comparison between the results of the literature study and the empirical study. In addition, the central question is answered and the hypothesis are accepted or rejected. Furthermore, the researcher expressed her thoughts about the outcomes and gave recommendations for brand managers and future research.

##### **Chapter 6**

In chapter 6 the researcher looked back at the entire thesis process and discussed the reflection and limitations of the thesis.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Study**

### **2.1. Definition of Brand Activism**

First of all, it is essential to define the term 'brand' since this definition is the basis of brand activism. The American Marketing Association (1960) defines a brand as “A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors.” Katsanis (1994) argues that brands are the most valuable possession of a company since most of the clientele comes from the positive attitudes and associations customers have toward the company's brands. Negativity around the image of a brand may adversely influence its brand equity and with it the general business performance. Leuthesser (1988) defines brand equity as “The set of associations and behaviour on the part of a brand's customers, channel members and parent corporation that permits the brand to earn greater volume or greater margins than it could without the brand name.”

According to Kotler and Sarkar (2017), most brands traditionally positioned themselves on their performance characteristics. However, in the competitive market of today and with new generations to serve, this is no longer enough. Millennials, generation y, are born between the 1980s and the 2000s (Rich, 2008). This generation expects brands to demonstrate concern; they value companies that care also about the communities they serve instead of only about their business performance (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017). Millennials often purchase products as a form of self-expression; they use brands to communicate or create their beliefs and values (Edelman/StrategyOne, 2010) (Gurau, 2012). A new way of positioning arose which led to brand activism, in the sense that brands take a stance in societal issues and connect with their potential and existing customers on an emotional level. In this thesis, the definition of brand activism by Harzevoort (2019) is used “Brand activism involves leading, promoting or breaking through social, political, economic or environmental issues with the aim of improving society.” Forms of activism range from taking a stance in positioning and campaigns with the intent on impacting people (Dahlen & Rosengren, 2016), creating influential movements to taking actions in the local, national or global interest.

Fan (2005) argues that not only millennials want brands to be more socially responsible. Compared to 20 years ago, society seems to be more ethically conscious and to take brand activism seriously. His research illustrates that the more high-profile a brand is, the more

consumers hold the brand ethically accountable. Harzevoort's research (2019) supports the statement of Fan and he illustrates that 61 percent of people between 18 and 34 years old let the belief in the social purpose of a brand guide them. In comparison with 67 percent of people between 35 and 54 years and 56 percent of people of 55 years and older. Indeed, Harzevoort demonstrates in his rapport that not only the millennials but more than half of the people of every generation are guided by brand activism.

Six subcategories of brand activism can be defined: social, business, legal, economic, environmental, and political activism. The evolution of brand activism in companies is a chance for distinction and purpose-driven engagement (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017). Hilton (2003) argues that brand activism should happen with creativity, innovation, and ambition. He explains that capitalism is the most powerful force to improve the world and that brands should have a dual purpose, namely social as well as commercial. This idea corresponds with the beliefs of Bennett (2004), he emphasizes that linking political messages to brands is a useful way to spread often controversial ideas among different personal lives, as well as in diverse countries and cultures.

### **2.1.1. The Development of Brand Activism out of Corporate Social Responsibility**

Kotler and Sarkar (2017) argue that brand activism is a natural evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and environmental, social, and governance programs. CSR is generally defined as “the organization's status and activities concerning its perceived societal obligations” (Brown & Dacin, 1997). Brand activism is not the same as CSR, because it is not about brands collaborating with charities or good causes for commonly beneficial campaigns. Brand activism is about brands changing consumer behaviour as a way to simultaneously change social behaviour and attitude, thereby improving brand reputation (Hilton, 2003).

Past research intention (Wan, Poon, & Yu, 2016) (Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006) has demonstrated that consumer attitudes toward ethical and socially responsible brands are mainly positive, resulting from a higher purchase. Furthermore, there is a positive relationship between CSR and corporate financial performance (Stanwick & Stanwick, 1998). Previous studies (Brown & Dacin, 1997) (Rodrigues & Borges, 2014) have identified that CSR associations improve the reputation and image of a brand. It is more presumable that consumers will identify themselves with brands associated with CSR because it may meet their needs to preserve a positive self-image. The action of purchasing products or services from CSR brands is regarded as positive and ethical behaviour in the community (Wan, Poon,

& Yu, 2016). CSR brands succeed in attracting and retaining customers and may charge a premium price for their products and services (Barnett, 2007).

Compared to CSR, associating brands with controversial political and social issues carries more risk because the self-brand connection (SBC) may be jeopardized. SBC is based on perceived identification and personal connection with a brand (Escalas and Bettman 2003). If brands are linked to statements that are opposed to a person's political preference, then the SBC may decrease due to the strong links between political beliefs and sense of self (Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009). However, Matos, Vinales, and Sheinin (2017) argue that with brand activism marketers hope to strengthen the SBC instead of weakening it. Linking brands with societal issues targets a psychographic segment and may generate powerful emotional beliefs. The associations help develop brand personalities and build customer relationships.

### **2.1.2. Steps in Brand Activism**

First of all, Hilton (2003) explains that it is necessary to inspire and involve the entire corporation in brand activism, not just a distinct department. He argues that it is about discovering a two-fold purpose, both social and commercial, for core corporate activities.

Harzevoort (2019) introduced a few guiding principles for brand activism:

1. Build around a single-minded brand purpose. Do not start with brand activism if your purpose is not activated and authentic. Determine your goals and the impact they should have (in the world).
2. Choose an important moment in the culture and a suitable type of activism, connect the purpose of the brand with the sentiment of stakeholders.
3. Do not focus on political stance, but focus on a policy or issue that is important.
4. Test the campaign and make an informed decision.
5. Demonstrate your commitment, go beyond traditional marketing, and take action.
6. Accept that taking a stance may make some people feel alienated from the brand. Instead, focus on the increase in brand loyalty.
7. Prepare for the effect of brand activism on social media. Activate the evangelical, positive part of the fan base and react adequately, but steadily, to negativity.
8. Make the message action-oriented and shareable. Increase the scope through smart use of social media, create artefacts with which people may make the campaign their own.

## **2.2. Attitudes toward Advertisements**

With mass media advertising, the attitudes and behaviours of many consumers can be influenced at the same time (Nooh, Shukor, Aziz, Khairi, and Abdullah, 2014). Madni, Hamid, and Rashid (2014) argue that the primary intention of advertising is to persuade the customer to do something, often to buy a product or service. They explain that to achieve this, the advertisers must first understand their consumers: their ways of thinking, their motivators, and the environment in which they live. The attitude toward advertising has an essential consequence of communication effectiveness and consumer behaviour (Lutz, 1985). Research indicates that emotion has a noticeable effect on the reaction people have toward a message (Hamelin, Moujahid & Thaichon, 2017). That is why advertisements are often focused on emotions rather than information, by aligning the communication with what is occurring in the world and issues that people care about (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2016).

Besides the fact that advertisements may change attitude and behaviour, they have also become an essential factor for businesses to stand out because of the increasing competition on the market. Venzina and Paul (1997) argue that to stand out in the competitive environment, controversial advertising has become more common over the last years. Controversial or provocative advertising has been defined as advertisements that intentionally shocks consumers intending to get attention and has three different variations: distinctiveness, ambiguity, and transgression of a social or cultural taboo (De Pelsmacker and Van Den Bergh 1996; Vezina and Paul 1994). Bakht et al., (2013) argue that when advertisements are perceived as controversial, they may create adverse effects on the product and or brand. Some may say that brands use controversial advertisements only because they want to get attention (Sandage & Leckenby, 1980; Rettie, Robinson, & Jenner, 2001). Clow et al., (2006), found that the credibility of the company and brand has a significant effect on customer's attitudes and the success of the advertisement. Controversial advertising may lead to negative purchase levels, contrary word-of-mouth, complaints to advertising regulators, and even boycotts (Madni, Hamid, and Rashid, 2014). Despite the fact that adverse outcomes are sometimes unavoidable, controversial advertisements may also have positive effects. Studies suggest that distinctive advertisements may have positive results; attention, recognition, memory, and retrieval (Childers and Houston 1984) and brand evaluation (Beattie and Mitchell 1985). Furthermore, the results of Pop et al., (2004) and Reichert et al., (2001) found that a provocative advertisement was received more favourable.

### **2.2.1. The relevance of Social Media**

Nowadays, with the increase of users, social media has become an essential communication channel for brands (Solomon et al., 2010). Social media is global, open, transparent, non-hierarchical, interactive, and up-to-date. These traits ensure that consumers have more access to information these days than they had in the past (Husain et al., 2016). Consumers are sharing their opinions, experiences, and knowledge, either positive or negative, with others on the online social networks (Zheng, Li, Huang & Chen, 2006). These recommendations and online interactions between consumers influence the buying behaviours and perceptions of the customers (Senecal and Nantel, 2004).

The unique aspects of social media and its increasing popularity have remodelled marketing practices such as promotions and campaigns (Hanna, Rohn, and Crittenden, 2011). Social media is a new way to engage directly with the end consumers, to hear their opinions, and is a relatively cheap way to promote a brand to the target group (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The number and variety of users are increasing every day. People of different ages, gender, and backgrounds are sharing information and photographs online. Furthermore, it has been perceived to have a meaningful effect on consumer's perceptions and behaviours and may eventually lead to increased sales (Williams and Cothrel, 2000). That is why social media should not be seen as an independent channel. Instead, it should cooperate with other marketing methods during campaigns. However, in most cases, social media still accounts for less than one percent of a moderate marketing budget, according to Husain et al. (2016).

### **2.3. Definitions of Brand Image, Associations, Engagement and Brand Personality**

For branding strategies to be successful and brand equity to be created, consumers must be convinced that there are meaningful distinctions among brands. The successfulness of a brand lies in the minds of consumers and what they have experienced and learned about the brand over time. A brand may build customer-based brand equity both through the initial choice of the brand identities (such as the brand name, logo, or symbol) and through the integration of the brand identities into the supporting marketing program. Marketing programs are designed to increase brand awareness and establish favourable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory. Positive brand knowledge may lead to enhanced revenue, lower costs, and higher profits (Aaker, 1991). Keller (2003) outlined four steps to establish a relationship. First, meaning cannot be established except when the identity has been created, responses cannot arise unless the right essence has been developed, and a relationship cannot be forged if not the appropriate responses have been elicited.



The first step is to create the right **brand identity**, meaning the individual brand components that are in their totality the brand (Keller, 1993). This involves creating **brand awareness**, which refers to the consumer's recall or recognition of the performance of a brand, and is linked to the strength of a brand's existence in the customer's mind (Keller, 2003; Aaker, 1996). Brand recognition relates to consumer's ability to confirm previous exposure to the brand when given the brand as a hint. Brand recall relates to consumer's ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category (Keller, 2003). Raising brand awareness increases the probability that the brand will be a member of the consideration set when buying a product, as well as produce greater consumer loyalty and decrease vulnerability to competitive marketing actions (Baker et al. 1986; Nedungadi 1990). Keller (2003) recognizes that brand awareness involves linking the brand to different associations in memory.

The associations are the **brand image**, defined as the aspects of a brand in the minds of consumers. Brand image is how the consumer thinks about a brand abstractly instead of what they think the brand does; it is personal and formed through the consumer's perception. It is shaped and affected by exposure to marketing communication, experiences, and social influence (Kapferer, 2012; Aaker, 1991; Riezebos, 2003). So besides the features of the product or service, also how the brand tries to meet customer's more psychological or social needs (Kapferer, 2012). As argued by Kapferer (2012), brand image and brand identity are not the same. Brand image has an external focus and is about the customer's perception of a brand. Brand identity, however, has an internal focus and comes from the company (Nandan, 2004). Brand identity is about how the company wants to be received by others and is deliberately created to shape the meaning of the brand (Kapferer, 2012; Nandan, 2004).

According to Aaker (1991), brand associations are making up the brand image and are anything related in memory to a brand. This memory possesses high strength based on experience and exposure to messages of the brand. Consumers remember negative images equally, as well as positive ones (Woodside and Wilson, 1985). Brand associations create value by creating attitudes and feelings toward a brand (Aaker, 1991) (Katsanis, 1994). Brand associations consist of three critical dimensions that provide the key to building brand equity:

1. **Strength:** How firmly is the brand identified with a brand association?
2. **Favourability:** How significant or valuable is the brand association to consumers?
3. **Uniqueness:** How personally is the brand identified with the brand association?

Customers might associate a brand with a particular attribute or feature, usage situation, product spokesperson, or logo. If consumers have incomplete information about a brand, brand associations may be based on prior experience or attributes of competing brands rather than factual information. This suggests that brand association even exist in the absence of brand usage (John, Kim, Loken, & Monga, 2006).

When consumers feel a connection between the brand image and their self-concept, they could develop a meaningful **consumer-brand relationship** (Grohmann & Bodur, 2013). A brand relationship may be divided into two different dimensions: intensity and activity. Intensity assigns to the intensity of the psychological bond that consumers have with the brand and other brand users. Activity assigns to how often the customer purchases and uses the brand, as well as engages in other activities not related to buying and usage (Keller, 2003).

There are two essential factors in a brand relationship, namely self-interest and trust. Self-interest focuses on the level of identification that the customer has with the brand, to what extent consumers feel that they are in sync with the brand and may create their identity with a brand (Richins 1994). Levy (1959) argued that consumers do not just buy products for their functional aspects, but also for emotional aspects, for what the product means. Thus, brands may be symbols whose meaning is used to create a consumer's self-concept.

The other factor is brand trust, which may be explained as the willingness of the customer to rely on the brand's capacity to accomplish its function (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). This may lead to brand loyalty, attachment, or a deep commitment to a brand (Aaker, 1991). Oliver (1999, p.34) defines brand loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour." As reported by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), this definition maintains the two different factors of loyalty: behavioural, repeated purchases of the brand; and attitudinal, commitment. There are four loyalty phases, and consumers may become loyal at each attitudinal stage. The first phase is cognitive loyalty, where consumers prefer one brand based on only brand belief. The second state is affective loyalty, where liking the product and a positive belief toward the brand has matured, based on repeated enjoyable experiences. In the third stage, brand-specific assurance to repurchase is achieved, so the aim of return has been formed. Finally, when the consumer's return aim is converted into readiness to act, they are in the action loyalty stage (Oliver, 1999). When the last phase is reached, the

consumer will possess resistance to change to competitor's offerings, and acts of switching will be at a minimum level. Brand loyalty is positively associated with word-of-mouth communications, market share and relative price, and firm financial performance (Molinillo, Japutra, Nguyen, & Chen, 2016).

Esch et al. (2006) argue that for brand success in the long-term, self-interest and trust play an essential role in the consumers buying behaviour. They believe that it is critical that consumers trust and feel attached to a brand, and that brand should therefore increase their interactions and meaningful emotional connections with their customers.

**Brand Personality** is defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand. For consumers, it is a pivotal way to differentiate a brand in a product category (Halliday, 1996), and it influences their purchase likelihood and brand choice (Gordon et al., 2016). Biel (1993) and Plummer (1985) view brand personality as a central driver of consumer preference and usage, and a way in which brands may market themselves across cultures. As described earlier, consumers may relate brands to themselves (Fournier, 1994). Also, consumers tend to think about brands as if they are famous persons (Rook, 1985), this is partly due to the strategies used by brands to imbue itself with personality traits and the creation of user imagery (Aaker, 1997). Aaker (1997) suggests that there are five distinct dimensions of brand personality: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness.

Although Aaker's model is often used to describe brand personality, it has also been the subject of several critiques: first of all, researchers think that Aaker measures brand identity instead of brand personality (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). Second, the scale is sometimes viewed as too general and simplistic (Austin et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2006). Third, the scale does not comprise negative factors (Bosnjak et al., 2007). Lastly, the scale is non-generalizable and non-replicable cross-culturally (Arora and Stoner, 2009; Geuens et al., 2009). These critics led to construct an alternative to Aaker's model. For example, Geuens et al. (2009) developed a new scale, which includes five other dimensions, namely: responsibility, activity, aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionally.

For this study, two dimensions will be highlighted: responsibility and activity, as these dimensions best fit brand activism. Responsibility consists of the following three personality traits: down to earth, stable, and responsible; whereas activity indicates three different personality characteristics, namely active, dynamic, and innovative. Results from the study of Geuens et al. (2009) indicate that active brands are more likely to build brand awareness

compared to responsible brands. On the other hand, responsible brands are more preferred compared to active brands when considering building brand trust and brand loyalty. These findings are consistent with Eisend and Stokburger-Sauer's (2013) research, which demonstrates weak relationships between excitement on brand attitude and brand commitment. They propose that consumers today prefer more responsible and genuine brands. As Kotler (2011) explains, there has been a shift in marketing where consumers consider more socially responsible and ethical brands. In conclusion, these studies provide essential insights into the effect of a brand personality that is responsible. The studies illustrate that being responsible is important and that active brands gain higher awareness, but being overly active could negatively influence brand trust and brand loyalty. Hence, Molinillo et al. (2016), argue that a brand should not rely on a single personality trait of the brand, but must adopt multiple brand personalities at different stages of the branding process to achieve effective and more recognizable brand activism.

#### **2.4. Buying Behaviour and Political Consumerism**

Consumer buying behaviour is defined as “people's needs, motivations, and thought processes used in choosing one product over another and the patterns of purchasing different goods and services” (Orji et al., p. 8, 2017). The buying behaviour consists of five stages, whose length of every stage varies per consumer. The first stage is problem recognition. Second, information search, which includes internal, memory, and external search. Third, evaluation of alternatives. Fourth, the purchase decision. Finally, post-purchase behaviour, which consists of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Khan, 2007). The consumer may be influenced by internal and external factors and people during the stages. External factors are cultural, social, and demographic factors. Internal factors are comprised of subjective and psychosomatic factors (Auf et al., 2018). The main factors that may influence buying behaviour are:

- 1. Cultural:** Sullivan (1981) defined culture as “a collective system of aptitude between a group of people involving an individual's beliefs, norms, values, and behaviours.” Values, preferences, and common behaviors will influence the consumer's wants and behaviours.
- 2. Social:** social factors such as groups, families, roles, and status are either direct or indirect influences on purchase decisions. For example, reference groups are social groups to which the consumer belongs and which usually have similar values, lifestyles, interests, desires, habits, and behaviours. The consumer may also be influenced by a group to which he or she does not belong yet, but wants to be part of:

an aspirational group. Within social factors, several roles have been identified. First, the initiator, who is the person who suggests buying a product or service. Secondly, the influencer, who is the person whose point of view or advice will affect the buying decision. It could be a person outside the group but on which group members rely on. Third, the decision-maker is the person who will choose which product to buy. Finally, the person who will buy the product: the buyer (Rani, 2014).

3. **Personal factors:** include variables such as age and lifecycle, occupation, economic circumstances, environment, lifestyle (activities, interest, opinions, and demographics), personality, values, and self-concept. The preferences of consumers change over time; they buy not the same products or services, for example, at the age of 20 or 70 years. The consumer's factors evolve throughout life (Rani, 2014).
4. **Psychological factors:** include motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes. Motivation is what will encourage consumers to develop a buying behaviour. It is the expression of a need, which became pressing enough to lead the consumer to want to satisfy it (Anderson et al., 1998). Perception is the process through which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets the received information, to do something that makes sense. Learning changes the behaviour of consumers as they acquire information and experiences (Auf et al., 2018).

Finally, there are four types of consumer buying behaviour (Rani, 2014): The routine with low involvement: a product that is frequently purchased, almost automatically. Another buying behaviour is the limited decision making-buying: this is when the consumer needs to obtain information about the unfamiliar brand in a familiar product category. It requires a moderate amount of time for information gathering. Then, the extensive decision making/complex, which has high involvement, because the consumer is unfamiliar with the product or service. It is infrequently bought and has a high degree of economic/performance or psychological risk. Finally, the impulse buying with no conscious planning.

#### **2.4.1. Political Consumerism**

A study from Shelton Group (2018) illustrates that 86 percent of people are driven by faith in the purpose of a brand. They switch, avoid, and buy brands based on their societal viewpoints. Furthermore, Harzevoort (2019) demonstrates that 66 percent of people avoid brands that have a negative social impact. This is called 'Political Consumerism', which is defined as “the act of selecting among products and producers based on social, political or ethical consideration, political consumerism could provide people with an optional mode to engage

with public issues outside of conventional political and civic behaviours like voting or volunteering” (Shah et al., 2007). Political consumerism is based on the assumption that daily action might be more effective in attaining political ends by using the market to affect public policy (Sapiro 2000).

The consumer himself takes the responsibility to include sustainable, political or ethical factors in their choices alongside aspects such as price, taste, quality, convenience, and luxury (Schyns, 2016). Nowadays, consumer's product choice has been increasingly influenced by a growing concern for transnational and global issues of justice, care for the environment, and human rights. Some consumers fear that government or professional political actors either do not understand or cannot control societal issues that characterize society, and choose to work on these essential issues themselves. These consumers believe that specific issues may only be solved by transboundary or global effort, and thus by international brands (Micheletti, Follesdal, & Stolle, 2004). Political consumerism requires minimum effort but still makes the consumer feel like they are contributing (Micheletti, 2003).

Political consumerism has different forms:

1. Deliberately not buying something: **boycotts**

Aish et al. (2012: 165) define a boycott as “a concerted refusal to do business with a particular person or business to obtain concessions or to express displeasure with certain acts or practice of person or business.” Worldwide, 65 percent of consumers say they do not want to buy products from a brand because a brand does not speak out about a subject that the consumer thinks it should have, a 13 percent increase on the year before. Around 15 percent of Dutch people boycotted products in 2014. The Netherlands scores on the low side, certainly compared with the Nordic countries, France, Germany, and Switzerland (where between 20 percent and 40 percent of the population boycott brands) (Schyns, 2016).

2. Consciously buying something: **buycotts**

Neilson (2010) explains buycotts as “consumers buy certain products because of social arguments. In a sense, it supports companies that demonstrate desirable behaviour.” Worldwide there is a growth in the number of 'buycotts,' organized campaigns in which consumers incite each other to purchase certain brands because of their values. In 2016, around 33 percent of Dutch consumers bought products because of their

societal norms and values. However, the Netherlands is relatively lagging behind the average in Europe, with Sweden as an outlier (49 percent) (Schyns, 2016).

3. Consciously adjusting your lifestyle: **lifestyle politics** (e.g. veganism)

People structurally change their lifestyle to meet their sustainable, political, or ethical convictions (Stolle and Micheletti 2013: 42).

4. Awareness of others: **creative cultural criticism** (turning advertisements of multinationals creatively to make others aware, or culture jamming).

Stolle and Micheletti (2013:41) describe this as “the expression of opinions about corporate policy and practice in communicative efforts directed at a business, the public at large, family and friends, and various political institutions.” Strictly speaking, this appearance does not fit as well under the heading of consumption, because usually, no products or services are consumed (Schyns, 2016).

As mentioned before, there are differences between the European countries in boycott and buycott behaviour. Stolle and Micheletti (2013) explain: the Northern European top countries have a long democratic history, higher economic development, and active citizenship compared with countries in southern and eastern Europe. Also, these countries score higher on post-materialistic values on average, have more green parties, better-developed infrastructure in the area of quality marks and labels, and generally have a predominantly Protestant religion (Stolle and Micheletti 2013: 126).

There are some significant findings of political consumerism. First, research demonstrates that media use, especially news consumption, plays a vital role in forecasting such socially conscious consumption (Keum et al. 2004). Second, extant literature illustrates that political consumerism is generally motivated by personal values, social identification, and social recognition (Gotlieb, 2015). Customer's final brand selection is generally less affected with the basic human wants and requirements or the core value of the products or services, but more with psychological and perceptual factors linked with the brands (Werther and Chandler 2005). Third, the popularity of political consumerism for consumers and companies may be a fair-weather option that loses its attractiveness during an economic recession. If consumers have less or no money to spend and companies start to economize, the market may concentrate again on price and quality rather than the social and ethical standpoints of brands (Micheletti & Follesdal, 2007). Fourth, consumers buycott more often than they boycott companies or brands. Also, collectivist boycott activities are more often sporadic and

concentrated, while boycotting is possible throughout the year. Finally, products from societal brands are often more expensive than ordinary articles. So there is a greater financial sacrifice with boycotts. This is why some consumers do not boycott products from companies or brands, despite thinking it is important. This also applies to consumers with a higher income (Schyns, 2016).

#### **2.4.2. Societal conscious consumers**

In her research, Schyns (2016) identifies that political consumers tend to be more highly educated than non-political consumers. Higher educated citizen-consumers are three times more likely to be political consumers as citizens with only elementary school education. Dutch buy and boycotters are more likely to be women, but the difference in gender is not significant. Contrary to what is often assumed, it is not the youngest Dutch population who mainly consume consciously societal: it is the middle-aged population with age between 30 and 59 years. Young people and the elderly are slightly less involved in political consumerism. For young people, they often have a lower income and perhaps, in their relatively young role as citizen-consumer, are less aware of the possibilities in this area. Furthermore, people with a low income are less likely to boycott and buycott than those with a high income. Still, 1 out of 5 Dutch citizens with low incomes consumes societal products, compared to 1 out of 2 in the highest income deciles.

Political consumerism is more of an urban concept than a rural concept (Yates 2011). Nevertheless, in the Netherlands, a quarter of the people in the less populated areas, compared to one-third of the townspeople, are political consumers. Political consumers are more often left political orientated. Approximately one-quarter of the citizens who are politically right or middle oriented consume consciously, versus half of the left-oriented people. Finally, socially conscious consumers demonstrate a more general interest in politics than non-socially conscious consumers.

Stolle and Micheletti (2013) have researched which attitudes and behavioural statements distinguish conscious consumers from non-conscious consumers. Dutch buy and boycotters have more trust in institutions and fellow human beings and participate more in conventional and innovative forms of politics. Political consumerism is linked to factors such as religiosity and government trust but is also associated with a sense of moral obligation (Bennett 1998).



## **2.5. Common results of Brand Activism**

To answer this question, this thesis will consider four case studies of the following brands: Benetton, Nike, Gillette, and Pepsi (see appendix 1, page 99).

### **2.5.1. Benetton**

This case study explains how some consumers stated that the controversial campaigns of Benetton have discouraged them from buying Benetton clothes, but others praised the socially responsible advertisements. The advertisements succeeded in capturing the attention of people and the world media and challenged people's beliefs and ethical values. However, whether people were discussing the political and social issues or just the campaign of Benetton is uncertain. Many people who have opposed to the advertisements claimed that Benetton used the human tragedy to promote its clothes and to increase brand awareness and profit. However, the company's President, Luciano Benetton, was always politically active. It was not surprising that the personal philosophies of the president were interchangeable with the corporate image.

The perceptions of the consumers are based, in part, on cultural and religious differences, which is why the advertisements were received differently around the world. However, with the mass media around the globe talking about the campaign, the brand received much free publicity. Perhaps as a result of all the conversations about the campaigns, the profit of the Benetton Group increased. Furthermore, Benetton's stock had risen enormously due to increased brand recognition. Many of the advertisements have simultaneously won awards and caused public protest. Most importantly, the advertisements matched the interests of the Benetton target group. Research demonstrates that the target group of Benetton was more socially active and aware than any generation before them.

### **2.5.2. Nike**

In September 2018, social media went in an uproar when Kaepernick posted the Nike advertisement on Twitter of his face and the simple tagline: "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything." People who are firmly against Kaepernick posted their intentions to boycott the brand on social media and filmed themselves burning Nike apparel in protest. In the following days, shares of Nike stock dropped roughly 3.2 percent. However, the campaign also gained positive attention online and offline, among other things, from athletes and celebrities. In the days after the launch, the company's online sales increased with more than 31 percent. Second, the Apex Marketing Group researched that Nike received 163

million dollars worth of media exposure. Around 40 percent of the publicity was positive, 30 percent negative, and 30 percent neutral. Third, 31 percent said they would purchase more Nike products after seeing the advertisement. However, 14 percent would purchase less Nike products. Furthermore, 16 days after the advertisement was released, Nike's stock started climbing reaching 51 percent a record high.

It is not the first time Nike made a social statement in an advertisement. The brand has taken a stance on issues in the past before, and it almost always resulted in a rise in sales. Hence, the company knew what it had to do. Nike did not just embrace Kaepernick for his vision, but because their target audience has the same view about race, age, and politics as in the campaign with Kaepernick. Nike also mentioned the company is always prepared to deal with negative responses because somebody will be offended by their campaigns, no matter what the subject is. The criticism is not holding Nike back because they want to take a chance and learn from it.

### **2.5.3. Gillette**

In January 2019, Gillette launched a new commercial that causes a lot of commotion, named 'We Believe.' In the commercial Gillette opposes 'toxic masculinity,' but not everybody could appreciate the message. The audience found the opposition offensive as it made some men feel generalized. Men reacted with comments that they would never repurchase a Gillette knife and placed pictures of their shaving cream in the trash. A study in the United Kingdom illustrates that the campaign led to an increase in adverse reactions on social media.

Although, the study also indicates that Gillette attained the highest improvement in Advertisement Awareness of any brand in the month the campaign was released. The study also argued that the word-of-mouth increased and that the purchase intent scores, the brand, which is the consumer's first choice to purchase from, went up. Another study in the United Kingdom illustrates that 56 percent of consumers who use products from the competitors of Gillette said that they would be more likely to buy from Gillette after watching the commercial. The research demonstrates that, after watching the spot, 71 percent of consumers agreed that Gillette shares their values, compared with 42 percent before viewing. Maybe this is because, before launching the campaign, Gillette conducted a national among the American men and women to find out how they would define the traits of a man at his best.

#### **2.5.4. Pepsi**

In April 2017, Pepsi launched the commercial 'Live for Now Moments Anthem' featuring supermodel Kendall Jenner. The aim of the commercial for Pepsi was to be received as a global leader of pop-culture around the world. Nonetheless, after the release of the spot, Pepsi became an online target of criticism for being insensitive to the social injustices and the police brutality that is an issue in the United States. After receiving adverse reactions, the company decided to withdraw the commercial and to apologize publicly to its stakeholders and Kendall Jenner.

However, the revenue of Pepsi increased in the period after the release of the spot. A study by Morning Consultant indicates that a much higher percentage of respondents had a favourable view of Pepsi after watching the commercial and were therefore more likely to buy Pepsi. The feeling toward the commercial varied widely by race and politics. Around 75 percent of Latinos and 51 percent of African-Americans indicated that the spot made them more favourable toward Pepsi, versus just 41 percent of white people. The research also illustrates that Republicans were more likely to dislike the spot than Democrats. Most importantly, for Pepsi, 25 percent of the young respondents, the key demographics for Pepsi, indicated that they had a less favourable view of Pepsi after seeing the commercial, and 20 percent indicated they were less likely to buy Pepsi products.

#### **2.5.5. Conclusion Case Studies**

In conclusion, all campaigns described in the four case studies increased their sales and brand awareness. However, the following factors emerged from a comparison of the four cases; these factors are important to take into consideration.

##### **2.5.5.1. Cultural Differences**

First of all, as the case study from Benetton and Pepsi demonstrated, campaigns may be received differently. So considering differences in culture and religion is important when making a statement. In the case of Benetton, the campaigns were praised in some countries and rejected in others. Furthermore, the case from Pepsi illustrates that a campaign may also be received differently by consumers in one country. Consumer's feelings toward the commercial of Pepsi varied widely by race, 75 percent of Latinos and 51 percent of African-Americans indicated that the spot made them more favourable toward Pepsi, versus just 41 percent of white people. Republicans were more likely to dislike the spot than Democrats. These examples help explain that others could reject a campaign that is welcomed by some.

What may be acceptable in one society may not be acceptable in another. So the next important factor is that the statement fits the view of the target group.

### **2.5.5.2. Target Group**

Because the statement may be perceived differently, it is essential that it matches the interest of the brand's target group. As demonstrated in the case study of Pepsi, a negative response of the target group may lead to a withdraw of the campaign. A large part of the key demographic of Pepsi indicated they had a less favourable view of Pepsi after seeing the commercial and were less likely to buy Pepsi.

However, if the campaign matches the interests of the target group, it may lead to an increase in sales. Nike, Benetton, and Gillette all knew its target audience shared the same view. Nike was aware that its target group had the same opinion about race and politics as in the campaign featuring Kaepernick. Gillette surveyed to find out how their consumers would define the characteristics of a man at his best so that the target audience would share the values communicated in the campaign. Also, the target audience of Gillette are the millennials who are more likely to choose and be loyal to a brand that has a strong purpose and social consciousness. The commercial of Gillette speaks to the majority of the millennials who want to support the change that is needed. Finally, the target group of Benetton was more socially active and aware than any generation before them, so the advertisements of Benetton matched their interests. In short, as a company, it is essential to think about if the target audience is concerned about what the company stands for as they are about the price of the products.

### **2.5.5.3. Clarity Message**

The biggest problem with Pepsi was that the story of the advertisement was not clear. It was never the aim of Pepsi to bring up a serious issue. Pepsi wanted to tell a story about unity, peace, and understanding. However, the commercial was perceived as exploitative brand activism. While there were no comparisons made with the 'Black Lives Matter' march during the spot, the commercial was launched at the same time of the marches and protests of the 'Black Lives Matter' and so it was received in a similar context.

On the other hand, the message of Nike, Benetton, and Gillette were clear. However, the big difference between the messages of Nike and Benetton on the one hand and Gillette on the other was that Nike and Benetton did not tell their customers what to believe in. Nike and Benetton were not explicitly supporting a particular behaviour, while Gillette was. The campaigns of Benetton contained no written text, just the remarkable green and white logo of

the United Colours of Benetton. The advertisements did not convey viewers how to view the messages. The advertisements of Nike and Benetton succeeded in capturing the attention of people and the world media and challenged people's beliefs and ethical values, but did not tell them what to think or do. However, Gillette wanted people to stop and think about what it means to be our best selves, so the purpose of the message was successful. Both strategies seem to have worked.

#### **2.5.5.4. Authentic**

The featured statement in the advertisement has to be authentic. As illustrated in the Benetton case, the controversial advertisements fitted the company's president personal philosophies. Also, Nike has a rich history of making social statements in an advertisement and the connection between Nike and Kaepernick was obvious and credible. Authenticity will increase the credibility of the campaign. For example, although it was not the aim of the Pepsi commercial to make a statement, the original story about unity, peace, and understanding does not fit the history of Pepsi either. Pepsi lacked history speaking about community protests and race relations. The brand was always focused on being received as a global leader of pop-culture, so Pepsi was not true to itself. And, although Gillette does not have a rich history of making statements, its company Protector & Gamble does. P&G used advertising as a platform to broadcast their point of view on subjects such as gender equality, gun control, and immigration.

Brands must not only say they want to make a change, but have to take action as well. Gillette and Nike are brands that are committed to driving change that matters. Gillette started to change their behaviour to set a good example and encourages programs that help men taking positive action everywhere. They are committing to donate 1 million dollars annually for the next three years to non-profit organizations with programs in the United States created to inspire, educate and help men of all ages realize their personal 'best' and become role models for the next generation. Nike's purpose is to use the power of sports to move the world forward. The company makes products more sustainable and has a positive impact on communities.

#### **2.5.5.5. Buying Behaviour**

The buying behaviour of consumers changed for all the four brands. First, some consumers have indicated that the controversial photographs of Benetton had discouraged them from buying Benetton clothes, however others praised the socially responsible advertisements.

Despite all the criticism about the advertisements and perhaps as a result of it, the profit of the Benetton Group increased every year. Benetton's stock had risen enormously due to increased brand recognition.

People who are firmly against Kaepernick posted their intentions to boycott Nike on social media and filmed themselves burning Nike apparel as a protest. However, despite the criticism, the percentage of consumers that indicated that they would purchase more Nike products after seeing the advertisement was larger than the percentage that indicated they would purchase less Nike products.

Third, soon after Gillette released the commercial online men reacted with comments that they would never repurchase a Gillette knife and place pictures of their shaving cream in the trash. However, after a few days, the advertisement seemed to trigger positive reactions as well. Since the commercial was released, a third of those who would consider buying Gillette selected the brand as their first choice, 13 percent more than before the launch. Another study in the United Kingdom illustrates that 56 percent of consumers who use products from the competitors of Gillette indicated that they would be more likely to buy from Gillette after they watched the commercial. As only 18 percent indicated they would be less likely to buy a product from Gillette after watching the spot.

Despite all criticism, the revenue of Pepsi increased in the period after the release of the commercial. More people indicated they were likely to buy Pepsi after watching the commercial, versus less likely consumers. However, a large part of the people who were less likely to buy Pepsi belongs to the target audience of Pepsi. In short, brands should take into account that there will always be consumers who will boycott their brand, but unless these people do not belong to the target group, the brands have to focus on the boycotts and attraction of new consumers.

#### **2.5.5.6. Word-of-Mouth**

An essential factor in brand activism is the online and offline attention the brands receive. Despite the fact that brands receive a lot of free publicity, the influence among consumers with word-of-mouth is critical. Nike gained positive attention, among other things, from athletes and celebrities. Furthermore, Nike received 163 million dollars worth of media exposure, about 40 percent of the publicity was positive, 30 percent negative, and 30 percent neutral. Around 36 percent indicated they would recommend Nike to a friend or family member and 15 percent indicated they would not recommend Nike. The YouGov BrandIndex

data also demonstrates that Nike's attention score, whether someone has heard anything negative or positive about a brand in the last two weeks, increased significantly after the release of the advertisement.

The same BrandIndex from YouGov illustrates that Gillette attained the highest improvement in advertisement awareness of any brand in the United Kingdom in the month the campaign was released. The Ad Awareness score went from 13 percent to 25 percent following the launch. However, not all of the responses were positive. A net measure of either people have heard positive or negative things about the brand in the past few days, had dropped from positive +4.4 to negative -1.7. This substantiates that the campaign led to an increase in adverse reactions. Furthermore, YouGov found that the word-of-mouth increased. Two weeks after the release of the campaign, the Word-of-Mouth score was at most; it was at +11.4 compared to +0.9 prior.

Third, the criticism affected the reputation and the perception of Pepsi, where the adverse reactions stood for 53 percent on social media. Activists and protestors from the United States, including Martin Luther King Jr.'s daughter, spoke out against the advertisement under the claim that it was insensitive to the difficulties of those activists seeking justice, particularly for minority communities.

However, it is essential that a brand is prepared for negative responses. As Nike mentioned, with brand activism, somebody will be offended by the campaign, no matter what the subject is. In the case studies, every brand had to deal with adverse reactions. The reactions of the target group and the positive reactions are what count most. Finally, the brands have to be patient. The case studies from Nike and Gillette illustrates that the first reactions were adverse. Nike's stock decreased, but after a few days, the stock price started climbing again. Although Gillette received a lot of adverse reactions at first, a little later, the commercial triggered positive reactions as well.

## **2.6. Key Findings**

Chapter 2.1. illustrated that the competitive market and the expectations of society led to brand activism. Furthermore, some view that capitalism is the most powerful force to improve the world. Section 2.1.1. demonstrated that consumers buy products and services from CSR brands as it will be regarded as positive and ethical behaviour in the community and because consumers may identify themselves with these brands. CSR brands succeed in attracting and retaining customers and may charge a premium price for their products and services.

Chapter 2.2. described that to affect attitudes and behaviours; the advertisers must first understand their consumers. Emotion has a noticeable effect on the reaction people have. Section 2.2. also explained that controversial advertisements may lead to negative consequences, but it may also have a positive effect on attention, recognition, memory, retrieval, and brand evaluation. Credibility is a critical factor in the success of the advertisements. Section 2.2.1. explained that consumers are sharing their opinions, experiences, and knowledge, either positive or negative, with others on social media. These recommendations and online interactions between consumers influence the consumer's buying behaviour and perceptions.

Chapter 2.3. explained that the successfulness of a brand depends on the knowledge of customers about the brand. Raising brand awareness increases the probability that the brand will be a member of the consideration set when buying a product, as well as produce greater consumer loyalty and decrease vulnerability to competitive marketing actions. Consumer loyalty is positively associated with word-of-mouth communications, market share and relative price, and firm financial performance. Also, a sense of connection between the brand image and the consumer's self-concept could, besides trust, develop a meaningful consumer-brand relationship.

Chapter 2.4. illustrated that internal and external factors and people influence the buying behaviour of consumers. Section 2.4.1. also discussed political consumerism, which has four different forms: boycotts, buycotts, lifestyle, and creative cultural criticism. Studies illustrate that media use, particularly news consumption, plays an important role in predicting political consumerism. Consumers boycott more often than they buycott companies or brands. Collectivist boycott activities are more often sporadic and concentrated, while buycotting is possible throughout the year. Furthermore, the research identified that political consumers tend to be more highly educated, are more likely to be women, are middle-aged, and have a higher income. Political consumerism is mainly an urban than a rural phenomenon, and the consumer is mostly left political oriented and demonstrates a more general interest in politics.

Chapter 2.5. explained that brand activism might result in much criticism. However, it may also result in free publicity, a higher stock price, and increased profit, awareness, and recognition. This section explained in more detail the important factors of brand activism.



## **Chapter 3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1. Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods**

To answer the central question and the empirical questions, this thesis could either apply a qualitative or quantitative research method (Golicic and Davis, 2012). Qualitative research is preferred when the subject of the study is new, complex, dynamic, or relevant variables are hard to identify, and when there is little extant literature available to explain the topic. A qualitative research method provides more knowledge about the topic of the study by generating a high level of detail. The questions of qualitative research methods typically start with 'what' or 'how', indicating that the purpose of the study is to describe a process. Interviews, documents, observations, and audiovisual materials are all forms of qualitative data sources (Creswell, 2006). Mello and Flint (2009, p.108) define qualitative research methods as “understanding the nature of personal experiences, providing insights that are difficult to obtain from quantitative research methods, understanding underlying meanings in human interactions and relationships in organizational settings, and in researching areas where there is little previous knowledge.”

Quantitative research is applied when the researcher has access to extant literature about the topic of the study. Through quantitative research it is often easier to identify relevant variables and discover critical knowledge gaps that need to be explored in more detail. The purpose of the research questions is to define relationships among variables by analyzing variation (Creswell, 2006). The research questions commonly start with 'why' or 'to what extent' and focus on numbers rather than words. Quantitative research starts with the study of extant literature to develop and test academic assumptions. Afterwards, the researcher has to build a conceptual framework to clarify the relevant variables and the relationships between those variables (Bickman and Rog, 2009). The theory may be tested with surveys or experiments and is generally gathered from large sample sizes. The quantifiable data collected from these measurement instruments identify the strength of the conceptual framework by measuring the significance and strength of the expected relationships between the variables given in the hypotheses. The outcome of a quantitative study provides more capability to analyze and forecast the research questions (Creswell, 2006).

In this thesis, a mixed methods study is conducted, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods in a multilayered research. The *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* (2009) defines mixed methods as “research in which the investigator collects, analyses, mixes, and

draws inferences from both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a program of inquiry.”

Davis et al. (2010) identify that the use of multiple methods research is somewhat exceptional in marketing, with less than 4 percent of empirical researches published in five leading marketing journals between 1990 and 2008. Only 43 percent of the multiple methods are mixed methods studies, and others apply either multiple qualitative or multiple quantitative research methods. Two of these studies applied mixed methods because the researchers wanted to add more detail and alternative viewpoints to their study (Carter and Ellram, 2003). Furthermore, Davis et al. (2010) argue that multiple methods studies convey a more convincing story due to the robustness of the results.

Mixed methods may be applied for various reasons, some of which will be explained in the following paragraphs. As the purpose of this thesis is to understand the relationship between buying behaviour and brand activism in the Netherlands, a quantitative research method is preferred. However, to be able to provide an in-depth analysis of brand activism in the Netherlands, quantitative research alone will not suffice. Indeed, evaluating the experiences of customers and marketing experts is equally important. Furthermore, this thesis includes a sub-question that will answer the how for which a qualitative research method is preferred. A qualitative research method may add new elements to the study by supporting, negating, or revising the findings of the extant literature and the results of the questionnaire with real practice views and experiences. Hence, the outcome of the thesis appears in a broader context, which may lead to more valid, trustworthy, and realistic inferences (McGrath, 1981).

Relying on one method limits the study to only those questions that may be clarified by that method. Brand activism is a complex concept in which the collection of multiple perspectives is preferred and includes the desire to understand the diverse perspectives. With the interviews, it is easy to inquire about underlying motivations, thoughts, ideas, and to obtain detailed information. Yet, general conclusions cannot be drawn immediately and the interviewer may unconsciously influence the interviewee. There are no such disadvantages to online surveys. This thesis therefore applies both approaches by implementing a statistical analysis of a survey conducted among Dutch consumers, and semi-structured, in-depth interviews with experts in the field of marketing.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) emphasize four variants of research purposes for mixed methods research: development, the use of one study to inform the following study; initiation,

the use of a previous study to launch a significant study; complementarity, simultaneous examination of different aspects of a phenomenon through two or more studies; and interpretation, the simultaneous use of a second study to explain or confirm the results of the significant study. In this study, the complementarity design was applied with equal-weighted methods in a single-phase design. First, this thesis applied a quantitative research method to examine the extant literature on brand activism. Then, brand activism in the Netherlands was researched through a survey among Dutch consumers. Simultaneously, interviews were held with experts to identify the trends and to learn their experiences and opinions about the topic. The results of these studies were analyzed and interpreted concurrently, merging the findings in a single report of results, chapter 4.

### **3.2. Data Collection Methods**

Using a suitable data collection technique will improve the accuracy, validity, and reliability of this study. Quantitative research methods that could be used are surveys, data extraction, as well as secondary data sources. Surveys are defined as fixed sets of questions that can be collected in various ways, for example, on paper or through an online form. Second, extraction is the assemblage of data from records, documents et cetera. For this method, an abstraction process is applied to select the information required from the source. Finally, the secondary data source method includes the analysis and combining of existent data sources to create a new data set (Harrell et al., 2009).

For this thesis, an online survey was conducted; through this method, relevant data may instantly and effortlessly be collected, with more access to respondents. It was decided to distribute the questionnaire online instead of offline. With an online survey, the respondent themselves can determine when they would like to participate in the study. In addition, online research often takes less time, especially for the researcher.

Three commonly used types of qualitative research methodologies are focus groups, observations, and semi-structured interviews. Interviews are characterized by discussions that usually occur one-on-one between an interviewer and an individual. The purpose of the interview is to collect information on a specific set of subjects that may differ per interviewee. It may be conducted over the phone, through e-mail or in person. Generally, focus groups are guided, dynamic group discussions, whereas observations indicate that the researcher is watching how something happens or how someone behaves. With observations, the researcher does not participate in the interactions (Harrell et al., 2009).

The use of focus groups and semi-structured interviews will provide the detail of information that is preferred for this study, whereas observations would not give enough detail about thoughts and feelings of the respondents. Therefore, it was decided to use semi-structured interviews in this thesis, because it is preferred to explore the practices, beliefs, and opinions from experts. Focus groups explore more how things happen or why people feel a certain way. In addition, with focus groups, the respondents might influence the answers of others.

**3.2.1. Quantitative Data Collection Methodology - Online Survey**

The quantitative research focuses on the opinion of the Dutch population about brand activism in the Netherlands. Hence, the sampling for the questionnaire was based on origin, so the respondents had to be Dutch. Because of the large population, the limited time, and the limited network of the researcher, family, and friends, the convenience sampling method was used. Etikan (2016, p.2) defines convenience sampling as “a type of non-probability or non-random sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the study.” The network of the researcher consists of mainly people who live in the province South-Holland, so reaching people in other provinces was expected to be challenging. Furthermore, due to the young age of the researcher, it was expected that reaching people from 55 years and older would be difficult. Though, with the use of LinkedIn and the network of some family members and friends, the researcher was able to reach some people from other provinces and above the age of 55.

Beforehand, the sample was estimated to include over 200 respondents at 95 confidence level and at 5 percent sampling error. The final sample consists of 265 respondents, 121 male, and 144 female respondents. The respondents are aged between 15 and 78. As expected, 89.8 percent of the respondents live in the province of South Holland. No missing values were found. All information for the independent and dependent variables were available for this study.

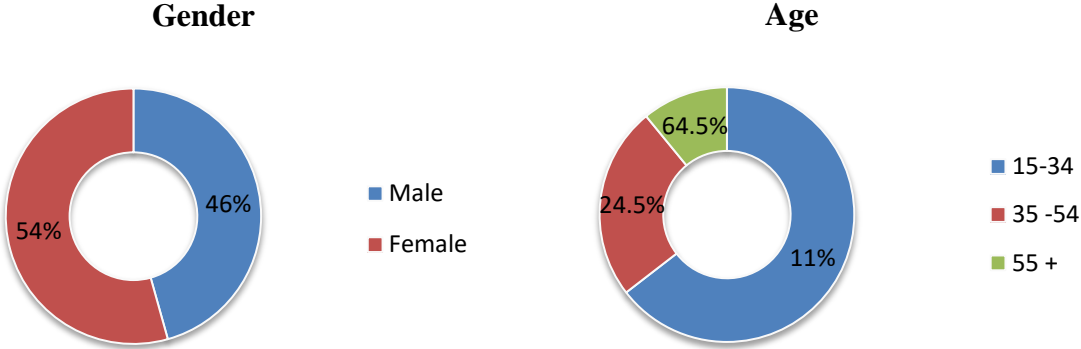


Figure 1 Gender and Age Respondents

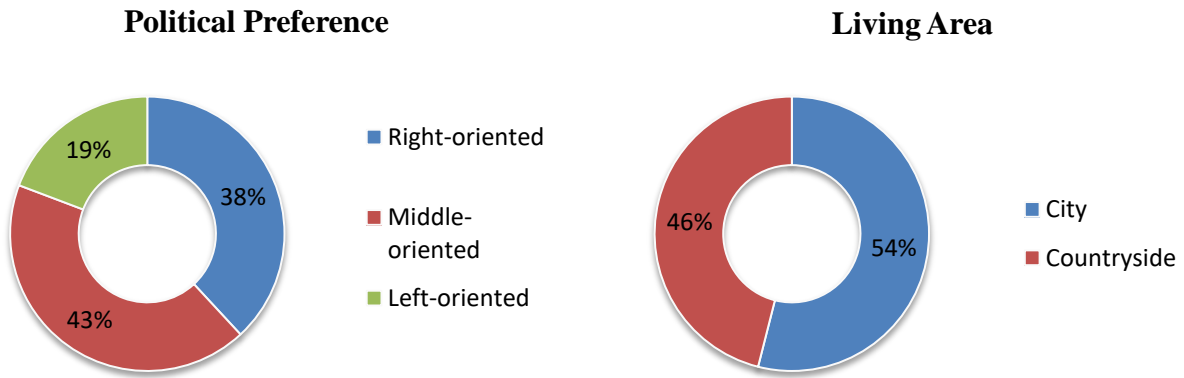


Figure 2 Political Preference and Living Area Respondents

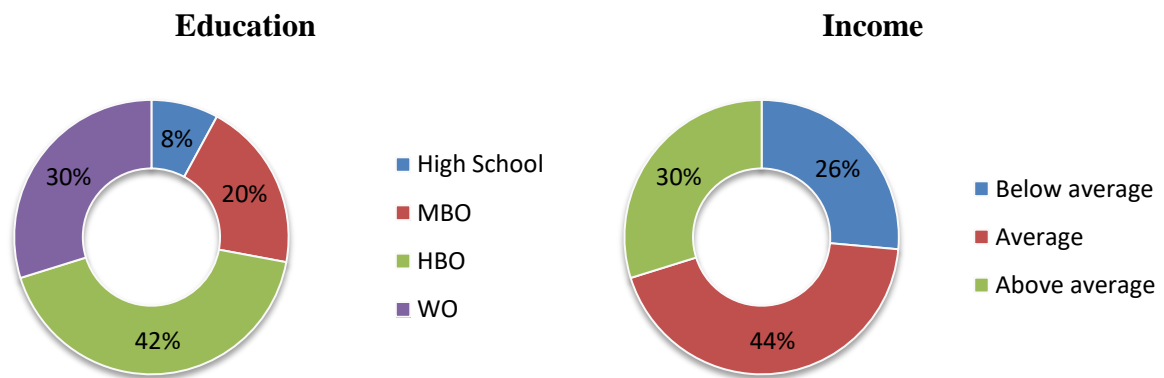


Figure 3 Education and Income Respondents

The questionnaire was made in Qualtrics, which is survey software supported by Erasmus University. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, the survey was spread through WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Facebook. The survey consisted of 20 questions (see Appendix 2, page 121). It started with a short introduction of the researcher, brand activism, and what the respondent could expect from the survey. Furthermore, as an incentive, it was indicated in the introduction that the respondent could leave his or her e-mail address at the end of the survey if they wanted to receive the researcher's complete study in September. It was also indicated that the results of this research would be treated entirely anonymously and that it would be used solely for this study and for no other purposes.

The questionnaire started with a few demographic questions, followed by some questions about purchasing behaviour, advertisements, and questions about brand activism. Finally, the questionnaire concluded with questions about the respondent's lifestyle. A conscious decision was made to ask questions about the respondent's lifestyle at the end of the survey since the

researcher was afraid that personal questions at the start could discourage the respondent from completing the survey.

The respondents were asked to express their opinions about statements on a five-item Likert scale, from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The five-point Likert scale seems to be the most frequently used scale among researchers. The Likert scale is a method that allows researchers to interrogate data that is difficult to quantify, and to provide an ordinal measurement level. The five-point was chosen because, for example, compared with a 3-point scale, the respondent is less inclined to fill in the extremes, especially when it comes to opinions. Furthermore, compared with a 4-point scale, the respondent is not forced to choose either one of the sides but may also choose to have a neutral opinion. This reduces the chance of respondents discontinuing the survey, and makes the answers more realistic as some respondents may have a neutral opinion about the statement. Finally, a 5-point scale may be easier to understand for the respondent, compared with the 7-point scale. With its many options, the 7-point scale may be perceived as confusing (Lantz, 2013).

Before the survey was published, it was first tested for validity. The survey was tested among friends and fellow students five times, and they were asked to express their opinions and ideas on the validity of the survey. After processing their ideas and views, the final survey was created.

To compute the accuracy of the survey, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was measured. The accuracy of the survey is at the desired level as the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all variables is higher than 0.8, and it is 0.862 for the whole survey, which probably indicates ideal reliability.

In its initial form, the overall reliability of the online survey was 0.672. The preferred alpha is above 0.7. The values in the column labeled 'Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted' indicate the value of the overall Cronbach alpha if that particular item is deleted. The alpha of age (0.863) was higher than the overall  $\alpha$ , and so the deletion of the variable age improved reliability. After the deletion, the overall  $\alpha$  became 0.862, and none of the other values would increase the reliability if they would be deleted because all items were less than the overall reliability.

### **3.2.2. Qualitative Data Collection Methodology - Semi-structured Interviews**

Primary data was also collected through seven semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of marketing. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain an accurate picture of the

individual views of the experts and their experiences concerning brand activism in the Netherlands.

It was preferred to obtain an all-around perspective of brand activism in the Netherlands. Therefore, the interviewees were selected based on the company they worked for and their function. All interviewees had to have experiences with the concept to have a clear opinion about brand activism in the Netherlands. The experience of the selected interviewees would provide more accurate and representative results in comparison to experts who had never heard of brand activism before. However, to prevent the answers from the interviews from being biased, it was made sure that the experts differ from each other in their field of competence. See Appendix 3, page 127, for an overview of their expertise and knowledge and why the experts were asked to participate in this study.

<b>M/D/Y</b>	<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Type</b>
<b>05/02/2019</b>	Anneke van de Langkruis	Priva	Head of Customer Experience	De Lier	Face-to-face
<b>05/06/2019</b>	Ron Schneider	Eneco	Marketing Director	Rotterdam	Face-to-face
<b>05/08/2019</b>	Jacklynn Gerritsen	Margriet en Libelle	Brand and communication marketer	Hoofddorp	Face-to-face
<b>05/08/2019</b>	Gijsbregt Vijn	Lemon Scented Tea	Managing Director	Amsterdam	Face-to-face
<b>05/08/2019</b>	Marthe Noordzij	PepsiCo	Jr. Brand Manager	Utrecht	Face-to-face
<b>05/09/2019</b>	Angela Ursem	Tony's Chocolonely	Movement Maker	Amsterdam	E-mail
<b>06/07/2019</b>	Katelijne Blom	LEWIS Global Communications	Senior Account Executive	Amsterdam	E-mail

Table 1 Experts Interviews

The experts were found in various ways, for example, through the company's LinkedIn; others were part of the researcher's network or approached through the network of the researcher's supervisor; finally, some experts were found at an event in Amsterdam about brand activism. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, the researcher went to the 'Beyond Brand Purpose' event of TCO London in the Hoxton, Amsterdam. During this event, the researcher met one expert who was willing to help with the study.

The experts were contacted in March, April and May via e-mail, telephone, in person, or through LinkedIn. They were asked if they were willing to help the researcher and if they

preferred the interview to be conducted by e-mail, telephone, Skype, or face-to-face. With five out of seven interviews, the researcher went to the expert's office. Two interviews were done by e-mail due to the full agenda of the experts. Furthermore, as an incentive, the findings of the study were to be shared with the interviewees in September. Five other experts were contacted with the question if they were willing to make time for an interview. However, for several reasons, they were not available for an interview. One of these 5 had actually accepted the invitation for the interview. This would take place on 6 May. However, due to personal reasons, the expert had to cancel. Subsequently, it was not possible to make a new appointment with the expert. The response rate was 53.9 percent since seven out of thirteen experts were interviewed.

The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions, lasting 35 minutes on average. Before conducting the actual interviews, the interview was tested on two friends for validity; a few adjustments were necessary. The interviews started with a general introduction of the study, the subject, and the relevance and purpose of the interview. Before the interview officially started, it was indicated that the interviewee was not obliged to answer the questions. Furthermore, permission was requested to record the interview. All interviewees gave their permission for the researcher to record the interview for further elaboration.

The interviewees were explained how their answers would be processed in the study. They were also informed that all information would be treated confidentially and the answers would be used for research purposes only. Using quotes by the interviewees in the research would again require permission. In June, the interviewees were e-mailed with the specific quotes which would be referenced in the thesis. Some experts indicated they required an alteration whereas others immediately approved the quotes.

An interview guide was written beforehand with a list of discussion points, to ensure that the interview would run smoothly, see Appendix 4, page 131. The open-questions were based on the literature study and the interviewee's competences, to gather various experiences and perceptions. The open-questions helped to discover new insights, as the interviewees were encouraged to talk freely and add supplementary information. The researcher attempted to not influence the interviewees by asking only objective and unbiased questions.

### **3.3. Data Analysis**

The data analysis of the quantitative and qualitative research in chapter four will first provide a general analysis and present statistical graphics to study the support for brand activism in



the Netherlands. The following research questions will be answered: How widely spread is the support for brand activism in the Netherlands among the consumers and experts; Could boycotts and adverse word-of-mouth occur if a brand makes a statement; Should brands always have a crisis plan; Could brands that want to improve society ask for a premium price; What should the aspects of a brand that wants to make a statement be; and, What are the characteristics of Dutch consumers.

During the general analysis of the quantitative data, the scale will in some cases be collapsed, with the answers 'strongly disagree or disagree' and 'agree or strongly agree'. This will only occur if the extremes scales are chosen less than 10 percent by the respondents. These scales are, in those cases, considered as not worth mentioning and will be collapsed.

### **3.3.1. Data Analysis - Survey**

The quantitative research in this thesis is based on 265 completed surveys. In addition to questions about vital factors of brand activism, it was also researched if the personal traits of Dutch consumers play a significant role in the assessment of brand activism. Therefore, the personal characteristics of the Dutch consumers are the independent variables in this study and the factors of brand activism determine the chance of success of brand activism in the Netherlands.

To measure if the personal characteristics of Dutch consumers play an essential role in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands, an ordinal regression analysis is used, see part 3.3.1.2., page 42. In chapter two, it was concluded that political consumers are commonly highly educated, middle-aged, have a higher-income, live in an urban area, are left political oriented, and are more interested in the news. Furthermore, gender and government trust could also have a significant influence. These personal aspects are the independent variables and are expected to be influential critical factors. In short, an ordinal regression analysis would empower the researcher to forecast the odds of success for brand activism in the Netherlands, based on characteristics of the target group. If for example, brand activism is only appreciated by middle-aged women, a brand that is focused on young men will probably not have a lot of success in the Netherlands. However, if young men do tend to support brand activism, then brands that focus on young men as a target group could make statements with less risk.

For this study, the statistical program SPSS is used: SPSS assists through collecting, entering, reading, editing, and analysing data. The program is also helpful to disseminate results and

make decisions. With SPSS, it is also possible to conduct an ordinal linear regression. After the questionnaire had been open for approximately two weeks, the questionnaire was taken offline. The data was downloaded into Excel to clean and prepare it for SPSS. For example, in the questionnaire, the respondent was sometimes able to provide another answer than the predetermined answers. These answers had to be read in Excel and made ready for statistical analysis in SPSS.

### **3.3.1.1. Independent Variables - Personal Characteristics**

The first independent variable is gender; this is a dummy variable with value 0 when the respondent is a 'Male,' and 1 when the respondent is 'Female.' Second, the generation of the respondent is categorized into three age groups, where category 1 is for respondents between 15 and 34 years, category 2 with an age between 35 and 54 years, and category 3 with an age of 55 years or older. The variable 'Province' consists of the twelve provinces of the Netherlands, where 1 = Brabant, 2 = Drenthe, 3 = Flevoland, 4 = Friesland, 5 = Gelderland, 6 = Groningen, 7 = Limburg, 8 = Noord-Holland, 9 = Overijssel, 10 = Utrecht, 11 = Zeeland, 12 = Zuid-Holland. The variable 'Education' indicates the respondent's education level and is categorized into four types, where 1 = High school, 2 = MBO, 3 = HBO, 4 = WO. Furthermore, 'Information' indicates whether the consumer is actively seeking information about what brands stand for and what contribution they make to society, with value 0 when the respondent does not seek information and 1 when the respondent does. In addition, 'News' indicates how many times the participant engages in the news per day, where 1 = never, 2 = 1 to 2 times, 3 = 3 to 5 times, 4 = 6 to 8 times, and 5 = 9 times or more. 'Income' signifies the income level of the participant, where 1 = below average, 2 = average, and 3 = above average. The variable 'Politics' illustrates the political preference of the respondent, where 1 = right-oriented, 2 = middle-oriented, and 3 = left-oriented. What is more, 'Trust' indicates the participants trust in the Dutch government in general, this is a dummy variable where 0 means 'No' and 1 means 'Yes.' Finally, 'Living' indicates the living area of the respondent, where 1 means the respondent lives in an 'Urban' area and 2 means 'Rural' area.

### **3.3.1.2. Dependent Variables - Success of Brand Activism**

The dependent variable 'success of brand activism' consists of five levels: 1 = terrible chance for successful brand activism in the Netherlands, 2 = bad chance, 3 = neutral chance, 4 = good chance, and 5 = strong chance for successful brand activism in the Netherlands. The successfulness of brand activism in the Netherlands is subjective. Hence, for this study, the

successfulness of brand activism is based on the following factors, see Appendix 5, page 134, for a complete overview.

The first factor is 'Buycott,'. As explained in chapter 2, page 21, people buycott more often than they boycott companies or brands, which is positive. Also, collectivist boycott activities are more often sporadic and concentrated, while buycotting is possible throughout the year. Chapter 2.5.5.5., page 29, identified that the buying behaviour of the consumers changed for all four brands, but that brands have to focus on the buycotts and attraction of new consumers.

The second factor is 'Extra efforts,' which will have a positive influence on the successfulness of brand activism. Extra efforts, like traveling further to a shop where the product is available, is a form of brand loyalty. As illustrated in chapter 2.3, page 16, brand loyalty is positively associated with word-of-mouth, market share, and the financial performance of a company. So, if Dutch consumers are willing to make extra efforts for brands with social views, this will increase the chance of success for brand activism.

The third factor is 'Price,' the willingness to pay a higher price for a brand that makes a useful contribution to society will have a positive effect on the outcome of this study. Part 2.4.1., page 21, emphasizes that products from societal brands are often more expensive than ordinary articles. So, in most cases, there will be a significant financial sacrifice with buycotts. This is why some consumers do not buycott products from companies or brands, despite thinking the purchase is important. Hence, researching the level of willingness of a customer to pay a premium price is essential for the outcome of this study.

Because brand activism is mostly focused on emotions, the fourth factor is 'Influence of emotion.' If the participants indicate that advertisements based on emotion influence their buying behaviour rather than informational advertisements, this will have a positive influence on the outcome of this study.

The fifth influence is word-of-mouth, when people indicate that they will recommend brands to friends and families if a brand takes a position they agree with, this will have a positive influence on brand activism. It is also essential that the consumer will not discourage brands if a brand takes a position that they do not agree with. As illustrated in chapter 2.2.1., page 16, the recommendations and interactions between consumers influence their buying behaviours and perceptions, and may eventually lead to increased sales. Also, the importance of word-of-

mouth is discussed in chapter 2.5.5.6., page 30; the case studies demonstrate that the conversations about a brand could affect the reputation and the perception of the brand.

As demonstrated in chapter 2.5.5.2., page 28, it will be positive for brands that express their stance about issues that the consumer pays attention to when shopping. If the consumer is as concerned with what a brand stands for as it is with the price and quality of the brand's products, it will increase the chances of successful brand activism.

Finally, a (strongly) agreement with the following statements will have a positive influence: Brands have the power to influence social change; I appreciate it when brands openly make statements about controversial social issues; I appreciate it when brands take action to address important issues that society faces. In solving social problems, the role of brands is more important than that of the government.

### 3.3.1.3. Framework

These factors provide the framework by means of which the success of brand activism in the Netherlands can be determined. After the survey was taken, the possibility for successful brand activism was determined per respondent. For each factor, points were given that could be translated into the success brand activism could have for this respondent, see Appendix 5, page 134 for an overview.

These factors lead to the following conceptual research model:

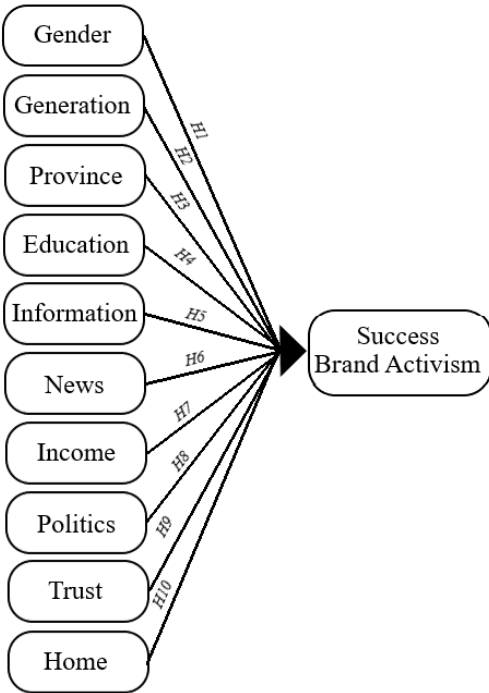


Figure 4 Conceptual Research Model

- H1: The type of 'gender' of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H2: The type of 'generation' of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H3: The type of 'province' where the consumer lives will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H4: The type of 'education' of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H5: The type of 'information' seeking of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H6: The type of 'news' consumption of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H7: The type of 'income' level of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H8: The type of 'politics' orientation of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H9: The type of 'trust' of the consumer in the governance will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H10: The type of 'living' area of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.

### **3.3.1.4. Research Methodology - Ordinal Regression Analysis**

To measure if the personal characteristics of consumers will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands, the analysis will be carried out by means of the ordinal regression analysis (Field, 2013). As described before, the dependent variable has been categorized into five various categories from 1, a terrible chance of success to 5, a strong chance. The lowest value defines the first category. Indeed, the dependent variable is divided into mutually exclusive categories, where there is a ranking, but the differences cannot be expressed in a number. For example, category 4, a good chance, is better than category 2, a bad chance, but it is not twice as good.

Whereas with an interval scale, the distances between the categories are fixed. The data in an interval scale are measured in fixed units of measurement. The scale level of the dependent variable determines the statistic technique that will be used. Because in this case, the dependent variable is ordinal and other statistic techniques can no longer be used, like linear regression, t-test, and ANOVA. With these other statistic techniques, usually, the dependent variable is an interval variable.

In short, the ordinal regression analysis is based on a regular regression analysis, but with the dependent variable that is categorical. When the dependent variable is categorical, the assumption that the relationship between variables is linear is violated. That is why the relationship in an ordinal linear regression is expressed in logarithmic terms; it illustrates non-linear relationships in a linear way and thus the violation has been overcome. With ordinal regression analysis the assumption of linearity expects that there is a linear relationship between any continuous independent variable and the logit of the dependent variable. With a regular linear regression the value of the dependent variable is predicted from several independent variables. While, with an ordinal linear regression, the probability of the dependent variable occurring given known independent variables is predicted. The log-odds indicate the sign of a positive or negative effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. However, crucial to interpreting the ordinal regression analysis is the odds ratio, which is the exponential of the log-odds and is an indicator of the change in odds resulting from a unit change in the independent variable. When the odds ratio is greater than 1 then it indicates that as the independent variable increases, the odds of the dependent variable occurring increases. Vice versa, a value less than 1 indicates that as the independent increases, the odds of the dependent variable occurring decreases. In short, with the personal characteristics of the consumer, the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands may

be predicted. One benefit of using an ordinal linear model is that it may be expanded by as many predictors as necessary (Field, 2013).

### **3.3.2. Data Analysis - Interviews**

As mentioned before, all interviewees gave their permission for the interview to be recorded for further elaboration of the data. To analyze the gathered data of the seven interviews, the most relevant and critical quotes were transcribed in a structured table in Excel, see Appendix 6, page 137. To analyze the transcribed data, a thematic analysis method was applied. Braun and Clarke (2012, p.57) define thematic analysis as “a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set.” It is a way to identify whether what is commonly said during the interviews is relevant for the research topic and helps to make sense of those commonalities. The data was transferred into themes, indicated with codes. These themes helped to identify the relevant information to answer the empirical research questions.

# Chapter 4. Research Results

## 4.1. Brand Activism

### 4.1.1.1. Brand Activism – Online Survey

This thesis examines if the Dutch population wants brands to endorse their ideas even when those are controversial. In the survey, the respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the following statements:

1. *“Brands have the power to influence social change.”*
2. *“I appreciate it when brands make statements about controversial social issues.”*
3. *“I appreciate it when brands take action to address issues concerning society.”*
4. *“In solving social problems, the role of brands is more important than that of the government.”*

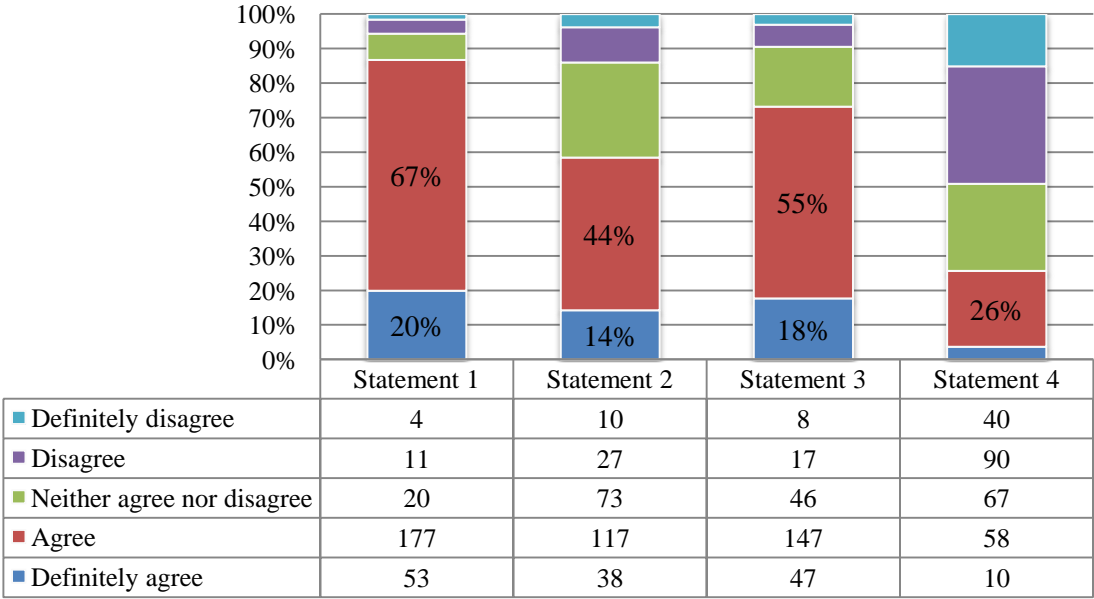


Table 2: Statements Brand Activism Online Survey

Table 2. illustrates that 87 percent acknowledges the idea that brands have the power to influence social change, of which 20 percent chose ‘definitely agree’. However, when considering statement three, only 73 percent appreciates it when brands use this power and take action to address issues concerning society, of which 18 percent chose ‘definitely agree’. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that not everyone who agrees that brands have power also agrees that brands should use that power.

However, it is important to note that the majority of the respondents appreciates it when brands take action, and that the respondents also believe that this action could improve



society. Around 88 percent of the respondents aged between 15 and 34 years agrees that brands have the power to influence society, and 73 percent of those respondents appreciates it when a brand uses this power and takes action accordingly. Furthermore, from the respondents aged between 35 and 54 years, 88 percent agrees that brands have the power to improve society, 80 percent of those appreciates it when brands take action. Around 79 percent of the respondents aged 55 years and older agrees that brands have power, and 59 percent of those appreciates it when brands use that power. There is also a difference to be noted between the opinion of male and female respondents. Around 85 percent of the male respondents agrees with statement 1; for the female respondents this is 88 percent. However, 69 percent of the male respondents appreciates it when brands take action, in comparison to 77 percent of the female respondents.

Only a quarter of the respondents agrees with statement 4. The respondents were also asked if they have faith in the Dutch government: 77 percent indicates they do have faith, while 23 percent of the respondents does not. From the respondents who do trust the Dutch government, 22 percent agrees with statement 4, and from the respondents who do not trust the government, 35 percent agrees with the statement. Hence, a vast majority of the respondents trust the Dutch government and agrees that their role is still more important than that of brands. Of those respondents who do believe the role of brands is more important than that of the government, the majority is aged between 35 and 54 years – 37 percent – since only 23 percent is aged between 15 and 34 years and 14 percent is 55 years or older. In addition, more women – 28 percent – agree with statement four in comparison to men (23 percent).

#### **4.1.2.1. Controversial Statements – Online Survey**

Around 58 percent – almost six out of ten – of the respondents appreciates it when brands make statements about controversial social issues, of which 14 percent chose ‘definitely agree’. Around 56 percent of the respondents between 15 and 34 years agrees with statement two, 71 percent of the respondents between 35 to 54 years, and 45 percent of the respondents of 55 years and older. In addition, more women – 65 percent – than men – 51 percent – appreciate it when brands express their opinion on controversial social issues.

When comparing this outcome with the issues respondents believe brands should associate themselves with, this does not correspond. A closer look at the issues that brands could express their opinion on reveals some essential nuances corporations should keep in mind as

they want to improve society. Figure 5 illustrates to what extent the respondents believe it is appropriate for brands to make statements about specific social issues on a scale from 1 to 10. Generally, only opinions about three of these issues are accepted by the public: environment, human rights, and animal welfare. These issues are usually not very controversial.

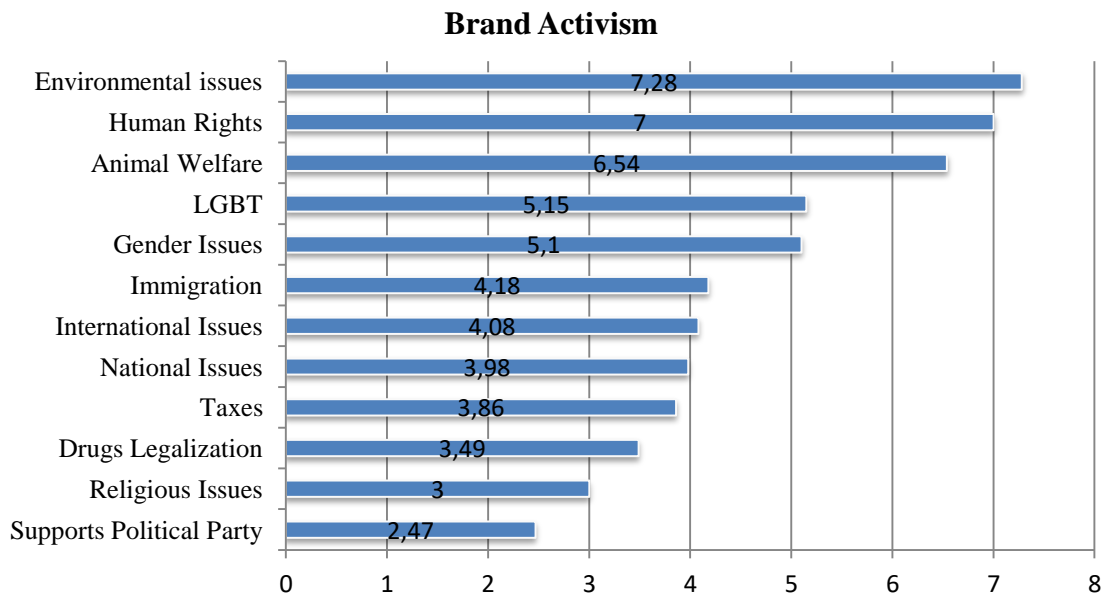


Figure 5 Social issues

#### 4.1.1.2. Brand Activism – Interviews Experts

The experts were asked to express their opinion about the following statement: Brands have better ideas than the government on how to solve social problems. To a certain extent, the experts agree. However, they also indicate that the role of the government and laws is still essential to influence society in a positive manner, though brands can help and support.

Angela Ursem of Tony's Chocolonely argues that brands and politics can complement each other well. She argues: “Politicians are a delegation of the people and are skilled in their profession. Brands can supplement this by, for example, giving the legislation a practical interpretation. However, brands can also put certain issues on the political map.” To support this statement, she provided as an example the recent public support by Tony's Chocolonely for an initiative law for the duty of care for child labour to prevent child labour in the chains.

Katelijne Blom of LEWIS supports Ursem and argues: “I think brands often have a better idea of the interests of consumers. As a result, they may be better aware of the problems that arise in a particular market in which they are active. So in that sense, they could play a role in

identifying problems and respond to this situation. I do think that the real cause of the problems is often deeper and larger than what one brand can solve.”

Ron Schneider of Eneco adds that brands must keep their ideas close to their expertise. He argues that brands can sometimes understand cases better than certain institutions or the government, because of a brand's expertise in a specific domain. This way brands could complement the government as well as interest groups with their expertise and help each other.

Anneke van de Langkruis of Priva argues that brands can have a faster impact on people's awareness and can sometimes change issues faster than the government. She argues: “The political system in the Netherlands is still that we change course every four years and that certain ideas and strategies cannot be fully implemented. There are many things that you as a government have to fight for and that you have to keep in balance. So I believe in the power of companies that can focus more specifically on issues that they have a lot of experience with.”

The experts were also asked if they believe that brands must take action to address issues concerning society. The experts believe that, if possible, brands should not wait for legislation, but should take action themselves to improve the world. Ursem argues: “Good business must become the new normal. It must become normal for everyone to take responsibility for the entire chain. But that is not about marketing, it is about business. Corporate Social Responsibility should not be a goal but a basic condition.”

Blom argues that brands should do their best to contribute with their own business by ensuring that what they do is done in the best possible and responsible way, from the production process to company policy and everything in between. Van de Langkruis supports Blom, she also argues that companies should manage certain social issues themselves and should make good use of the power and impact they can have. So, brands should no longer wait for the government to adjust the regulations but can also push the right choice themselves.

Gijsbregt Vijn of Lemon Scented Tea adds: “I do think that what happens to the environment and the overcrowding is that as a company you have the responsibility to do something about it. The question is, of course, how to do it. It must be close to your product. However, I do not think that you can have a goal that solves something that is caused by the purchase of your

product – it should be that a purchase of the products helps the brand with the goal – the larger the company, the more it can do. Instead of the larger the company, the more clutter you have to clean up”.

#### **4.1.2.2. Controversial Statements – Results Interviews**

None of the experts argue that brands have to mix politically or make controversial statements. In general, they argue that brands should only do this if it corresponds well with their identity and target group.

Marthe Noordzij of Pepsi explains that if a brand wants to make a controversial statement, it must be similar to what the brand does and what it has already done. Furthermore, it must be told firmly if the brand wants to achieve the right thing.

Van de Langkruis adds that it also has to connect well with the values of the target group so that it cannot cause friction in the relationship between the brand and its customers. She also remarks that in some situations, brands are forced to make a choice. She mentions, for example, the 'Sinterklaas' party that is organized for the children of the employees. In this situation, a company is forced to decide on a national issue. However, other than that, if it is an issue that does not connect with the brand or company, the company could decide to stay neutral and do not interact with these issues. She does not want companies to go back to the pillarization of the 1950s, when companies were still forced to take a position.

Schneider argues: “You must make a controversial statement as a brand in a logically integrated way and keep it close to your brand identity. It is also important to choose your target audience well, you must understand what they feel and think about the statement”.

Vijn argues that few brands in the Netherlands will make a controversial statement because it is far too polarizing. He argues that brands will demonstrate more and more colour on topics that everyone agrees on, such as statements about the environment. However, he argues that brands will not become more political in the Netherlands.

As a follow-up question, the experts were asked if they believe that controversial stances can yield extra. In general, the experts agreed, on the condition that it is credible and that it fits the brand well. All experts agree with Ursem that brands should not take a controversial position because it helps the operation result, but because the brand believes in it and stands for it. She does believe that if you share common stances with your customers, and you have the same mission, it makes the relationship stronger.

Schneider argues that as a brand you do not want people against you. However, negative reactions from people demonstrate that the statement has an emotional impact on them. He argues: “The success of advertising is that people talk about your brand. So sometimes, when the statement fits your brand, you also need to scour some groups to be able to shine in width. Then you make a statement that matters.”

Jacklynn Gerritsen of Libelle and Margriet emphasizes that when brands take a stand, they might attract a target group, but then they would also lose a number of customers because they disagree with the brand or believe it is not sincere. She could imagine that if a brand makes a controversial statement it believes in and sticks to it, they might become more prosperous, attract a broader target group and gain more sympathy from people, which could ultimately lead to more loyal customers. Gerritsen adds: “We will never really make a statement. However, a controversial topic could be intertwined in our campaigns. We would never make a campaign on a controversial topic, but it could be part of it just to look for that edge. We do not want to go beyond the edge, because this can lead to the loss of consumers. We can, however, look for the edge because this can bring free publicity and perhaps new consumers.”

Gerritsen's verdict corresponds to the Eneco commercial. Schneider explains: “We wanted to touch the emotion with the commercial and demonstrate that the Netherlands has switched and is quite good at changing. Things that were special 45 years ago are now quite normal. We wanted to demonstrate that change in our commercial and there is always controversy with change. We did not explicitly say that we wanted to make controversial statements, but it clearly illustrates the dynamics that we wanted to illustrate with our commercial. At Eneco, it was about the transition from the Netherlands where energy plays an important role.” Hence, Gerritsen and Schneider suggest that a controversial topic could also reinforce the story that a brand wants to express.

Furthermore, Van de Langkruis argues that a controversial statement can make a brand stand out more. She explains: “I think that the next step, or border, must always be in sight. The world is evolving, so the vision of the company must continue to evolve.” As an example that a brand can distinguish itself with a controversial statement, Schneider mentioned the commercial of the Dutch Railways in which two girls flirt with each other and keep meeting each other while travelling. He explains: “In the script, the advertisement was actually done with a boy and a girl, but in the end, it became a bit like a movie like 100 others. NS is quite

an inclusive company so we knew that it fits the brand identity of NS. To distinguish ourselves, we then decided to do the advertising with two girls. That was quite a hit, but you also get negative reactions to it.”

#### **4.1.3. Brand Activism – Key Research Outcomes**

The majority of the respondents and experts argue that brands could and should improve society. However, most respondents from the survey agree that the role of the government is still more important than the role of brands. The experts confirmed this information as they indicate that the role of the government and laws is still essential to influence society positively, however, brands can help and support the government with to their knowledge and large reach in their expertise. Furthermore, the experts argue that brands should take responsibility whenever possible.

The questionnaire illustrates that a majority of the respondents will appreciate it when brands openly make statements about controversial issues. However, according to the respondents, brands should only speak about issues regarding the environment, human rights, and animal welfare. The experts explain that brands should only make controversial statements when this statement connects with their identity and target audience. The experts also argue that when a brand makes a sincere controversial statement, this could lead to positive results.

### **4.2. Attitude toward Advertisements**

#### **4.2.1.1. Attitude toward Advertisements – Online Survey**

The respondents from the questionnaire agree that advertisements influence what they purchase, hinting at a belief that they are, generally, less susceptible to emotional influences from brands in comparison to informational advertisements. On the statement 'In general, advertisements influence my buying behaviour', 45 percent agrees, 23 percent is neutral, and about a third – 37 percent – of the respondents disagrees. In comparison, on the statement 'Ads based on emotion influence my buying behaviour rather than informational advertisements' only 27 percent agrees, 23 percent is neutral, and 50 percent disagrees.

Well-intentioned advertisements about social issues can create negative chat among consumers and around brands. More than half of the consumers – 52 percent – will advise against a brand from others if that brand takes a position that the respondent does not agree with. Around 29 percent is neutral, and 20 percent will not discourage that brand.

There is not much difference between the positive and negative discussions, but a lower number of respondents – 48 percent – will recommend a brand to others when the brand takes a position that the respondent agrees with. It is important to note, though, that 35 percent is neutral and 17 percent will not recommend a brand. Even though there is little difference, therefore, slightly more respondents advise against a brand than recommend it to family and friends.

#### **4.2.1.2. Attitude toward Advertisements – Interviews Experts**

Noordzij provides a possible explanation for why consumers, in general, do not think advertisements based on emotion influence their buying behaviour more than informational advertisements. She explains: “It depends on the objectives that you have as a brand. If you want to let people know the product and also the aspects of the product, you are much more concerned with the informational aspect. Furthermore, as a new brand or product, you want to transfer the unique selling points more. While if you have already built up a lot of brand awareness, you can create more creative and out of the blue campaigns that respond more to emotion because people are already familiar with your unique selling points.”

Vijn notes that a good advertisement must, in any case, stand out, have an emotional layer or connection, and build the brand or support the company. An advertisement can stand out by discussing topics that are usually not connected. The key word is creativity: making associations that others had not thought of yet, making something exciting or portraying something in a different way.

Gerritsen supports Vijn. She also argues that a campaign must be different to be good. She explains: “We always try to make something people do not expect from us, but ultimately fits us. Also, we try to reach a new audience so we can attract new people. Our campaigns always respond to emotions. We grab something from the society that is close to our target audience, we then enlarge it and creatively shape it in our style.”

#### **4.2.2. Crisis Plan – Interviews Expert**

The researcher asked the experts if they always have a crisis plan ready should the brand get adverse reactions. There were various reactions, some decide to be sure to have a crisis plan ready. Other experts would like to hear the adverse reactions to learn from it or have tested their advertisements so well in advance that they are confident.

Noordzij emphasizes that there are always things that could occur in the world to which a brand must anticipate quickly and maybe need to switch tactics. Schneider supports Noordzij and argues that if a brand makes an impactful statement, they must be ready to make adjustments, either with the social media team or in the means.

Another question was how brands could reduce negative conversations about the brand. Noordzij indicates: “You have to think carefully about whether it is a conversation to which you as a brand or as a company must respond. Brands must also bear in mind that a reaction can sometimes reinforce negativity, while if a brand does not respond, it may decrease.”

#### **4.2.3. The Relevance of Social Media – Interviews Experts**

Although the most recent advertising from Eneco has had many positive consequences for the brand, there were also several adverse reactions in the beginning. Schneider argues: “Shortly after the release of the campaign, there were many negative reactions on Twitter, from which we learned a lesson.” He indicates that it can sometimes be wise not to make the social media platform Twitter unnecessarily large in the campaign. Twitter is a medium where people can have intense discussions. Trying to make yourself trending on Twitter can cause you to fuel discussions. In the end, the advertisement was viewed 3.3 million times on YouTube. So positive results will eventually come if the consumers like the advertisement.” Schneider also suggests that people with a moderate or positive opinion make themselves heard a little less. His hypothesis is that people with a negative opinion are more likely to make their opinion public knowledge in comparison to people on whom the campaign has had a positive impact.

Ursem mentions that the social media channels of Tony's Choclonely are important; through these channels they have direct access to communication with their customers. She admits that sometimes there are tough discussions on social media, but Tony's Choclonely is happy about this as they want their customers to be critical. The company likes it when the consumers are critical, as this can result in new perspectives or programs.

Vijn adds that if a brand decides to make a statement, the brand should be proud of it. Sometimes negative reactions, which will always be there, can prevent brands from daring to take the first steps in the right direction. He explains: “As a brand, you have to say that you cannot change the world in one day, but you work on it and you do your best.” Blom supports him and wrote in her article: “Small steps could lead to an extensive social program. With enough misery in the world, mountains have to be moved. But that doesn't make the cliché any less true: all bits help and you have to start somewhere” (Blom, 2018).



Furthermore, Vijn adds that he prefers to make commercials that can be distributed through various channels. However, he often sees that much attention and a large part of a budget goes to television advertising and that social media is a bit forgotten. He aspires that social media is always fully integrated with every commercial. Noordzij adds to this that in the Netherlands, we are pretty far ahead with the use of social media compared to other countries in Europe. It is an excellent way in the Netherlands to make a connection with the target audience and to respond to the emotional aspect.

#### **4.2.4. Changing Consumer's Thoughts and Behaviour – Results Interviews**

One of the questions was: When trying to improve society, how do you try as a brand to change the consumer's behaviour or thoughts? Schneider argues that Eneco wants to bring the campaign as close to the consumer as possible and find a way that people could agree with the campaign. He argues that people like to take a step in the right direction, but they do not want a hassle in the form of time and money. Hence, as a brand, you have to make it as easy as possible for people to adjust their behaviour.

Vijn supports Schneider by stating that the most important thing is to look at what is currently stopping people from positively changing their behaviour. A brand has to evaluate what makes this difficult and remove those barriers. A brand could also use communication and a kind of way that influences the behaviour, for example, a quality mark, legalization, or certification.

Vijn also suggests that with only communication, you could also change behaviours. As an example, he gives the commercials 'NIX' and 'BOB.' These campaigns are simple, work well, and only give information. Ursem from Tony's Chocolonely supports this. She argues: “We certainly do not try to change the mind of the consumer, but we try to teach the consumer and tell what is going on in the chocolate industry. We want consumers to know the whole story and make a conscious choice for their chocolate.”

#### **4.2.5. Attitude toward Advertisements – Key Research Outcomes**

The respondents from the online survey agree that advertisements influences what they purchase, hinting at a belief that they are, generally, less susceptible to emotional influences from brands compared to informational advertisements. According to the experts, a good advertisement should fit the brand's objectives and must stand out from other advertisements.

The online survey confirms that it can occur that a brand's target audience will discourage others from buying a brand if they do not agree with a statement the brand makes. Some experts indicate they have a crisis plan and while others do not. For example, some brands would like to hear the adverse reactions to learn from them or have tested their advertisements in advance to the extent that they are confident.

**4.3. Brand Image, Associations, Engagement and Personality**

**4.3.1. Brand Characteristics – Online Survey**

The data from the survey illustrates that in addition to the price and quality, the affinity between the consumer's personality and the brand's personality is the most important factor is – with 46 percent – to influence the consumer's preference for a particular brand. Followed by a good brand image, which 42 percent indicates to be an essential factor in influencing their preference for a brand. Only 14 percent argues that the social stance of the brand influences their preference for that brand. Furthermore, 16 percent of the respondents only considers the price and quality when buying products or services. This indicates that not only the informational aspects of the brand are essential, but the respondent also wants to connect on an emotional level and to feel personal affinity with the brand of their preference.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 to 10 how important it is to them if brands act and communicate in one or more of the following ways:

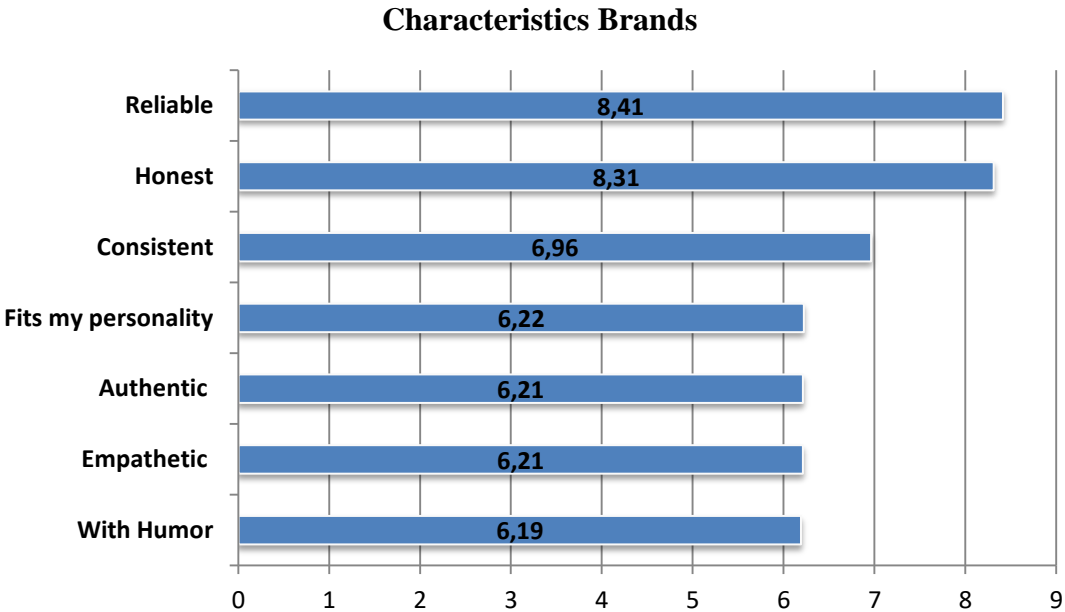


Figure 6 Characteristics Brands

Figure 6 illustrates that the respondents want to trust a brand and that the brand should behave consistently. If brands make a social statement, it seems clear that the respondents believe this statement should be about an issue that fits the brand's image. Above all, respondents want brands to be trustworthy, honest, and consequent. Being authentic, empathetic, humoristic, and reflecting the respondent's values are not seen as necessary. It seems that the respondents would prefer brands to stay true to themselves.

#### **4.3.2. Brand Characteristics – Interviews Experts**

The experts indicate that they believe authenticity to be the most fundamental characteristic of a brand. Several times it emerged that brands should only make a statement if it fits the brand image. In short, authenticity is paramount. The brand has to live it and has to make an effort for it. Blom wrote in her article: “Whether every company has noble intentions or not if you approach it in a credible and reliable way, it is almost certain that it works. Check whether the match feels natural. The closer you stay to the brand and the better an issue fits the core values of your company or product, the more credible and reliable you come across.”

Van de Langkruis argues: “If you have a vision as a company it must by definition be woven into the entire organization. It is not enough if you set this apart as a kind of media device that keeps sending. I do believe that you have to let every employee understand this vision. Vijn supports Van de Langkruis and adds that: “Brand activism must be in the company and everyone must live it. Otherwise, it does not make much sense. Then you just say that you want something to get attention, but it is not at all authentic. Authenticity is critical. You have to do something about it, not just tell a story.”

Furthermore, Ursem argues that: “Brand activism is not OK, it should not become the new hype to push a brand. You are an activist in your bones or not. You cannot and may not use that as a tool for a brand campaign, that is not authentic and fortunately, the consumer can easily see through that.”

As an example, Gerritsen mentions that: “Research has been conducted that illustrated that there are many informal caregivers within Margriet's target group. That is why we contacted the organization MantelzorgNL. It turned out that many caregivers cannot have a week off. We decided to work together and we started a petition to make that week off possible. This promotion is close to Margriet's identity. The purpose of such campaigns is to inspire people and to refresh the image around our brands. Furthermore, of course, another goal is to bring

something about society and to get people thinking. We want to make the problem negotiable in society.”

#### **4.2.3. Brand Characteristics – Key Research Outcomes**

The data from the survey illustrates that other than price and quality, the match between the consumer's personality and the brand's personality is the most important factor to influence the consumer's preference for a particular brand, followed by a good brand image.

Furthermore, if brands make a social statement, it seems clear that the respondents and the experts believe this statement should be about an issue that fits the brand's image and identity. Above all, the respondents and experts want brands to be trustworthy, honest, authentic and consequent. It seems that everybody would prefer brands to stay true to themselves.

### **4.3. Buying Behaviour and Political Consumerism**

#### **4.3.1.1. Buying Behaviour – Online Survey**

When asked if the respondent was willing to make extra efforts, such as travelling further to a store to buy products or services from brands that have social stances that the respondent also finds important, just quarter indicated they would be willing to do this, while 35 percent remains neutral. Around 29 percent of the respondents is not willing to make the extra effort and 10 percent is definitely not making the extra effort for a brand. So, even when a brand makes a statement the consumer agrees with, only 26 percent of the respondents demonstrate a kind of loyalty by being prepared to make extra efforts for that brand.

The survey identified that more than half of the respondents – 61 percent – is willing to pay more for a brand that makes a positive contribution to society, of which 8 percent would absolutely be willing to pay more. Around 22 percent neither agree nor disagree, 13 percent is not willing to pay extra, and only 4 percent is absolutely not prepared to pay more. In conclusion, according to the respondents, a brand that makes a clear positive contribution to society could ask a higher price for their products and services.

#### **4.3.1.2. Premium Price – Interviews Expert**

The researcher also asked the experts if they believe that brands who make social statements may ask for a premium price. According to the experts, it is generally up to the competition, as brands do not want to price themselves out of the market. The price also depends on the extent to which the brand contributes positively to society. As an example, Gerritsen argues that consumers do not want to pay extra for Libelle and Margriet magazines, because they do

not experience it as an improvement for society, but only as a nice product for themselves. In addition, she argues that awareness for a better society has only just begun. According to Gerritsen, people will pay more attention to the contribution of brands in the future and may want to pay more for a brand if a purchase is useful to them and it is also positive for the world.

Noordzij adds that, next to the impact of the brand, it also depends on the competitors. Furthermore, she supports Gerritsen by arguing that: “If the improvement of society is not your first goal, you cannot ask for a higher price because the consumer does not buy the product for that purpose as standard. However, if it is completely intertwined in your company, for example, 100 percent natural clothing brands, then there is a unique selling point and then that company could charge a higher price for those products.”

Blom adds that it depends on the type of brand activism. She explains: “If it is about activism in the form of an advertising campaign/marketing, then I do not think so. I think so if you offer consumers a responsibly produced product with a small ecological footprint. Of course, it would be better if these products were just as expensive as the rest so that consumers would not drop out, but on the other hand, it would also be good if consumers learned what the fair price for something is.”

#### **4.3.2.1. Political Consumerism – Online Survey**

The questionnaire illustrates that for some respondents, a brand making a statement will make them more likely to purchase products or services from that brand, while others can have an adverse reaction. The respondents are generally alike when it comes to saying they will boycott or buycott a brand that makes a statement, about half of both. However, it is more presumable that the respondents will buycott a brand than boycott it. On the one hand, 45 percent of the respondents implies that they have boycotted a brand before because they did not agree with the social stances of that brand. On the other hand, 51 percent indicated they have buycotted a brand before, because of the social stances of that brand.

#### **4.3.2.2. Political Consumerism – Interviews Experts**

Finally, the researcher asked whether the experts think that Dutch consumers have developed in recent years, and in particular whether they think Dutch consumers have become more politically aware. Ursem argues that the consumer is not so much politically aware, but according to her, the consumer has become more outspoken and critical in the last years.

Noordzij argues that younger consumers in particular are more aware of life and the environment. She argues: “Generation Z in particular, I think they are much more concerned with the purpose of the brand. Generation X was still busy with consumption, and the millennials have already become slightly more aware. However, I think generation Z will pay even more attention to the purpose and take care of it. They will look more critically at what they consume and how it is produced and what impact that has on the environment. Furthermore, they can follow politics much more easily via social media than other generations could. Generation Z has more knowledge than young consumers of the past.”

Blom argues that digitization has made every consumer a lot more critical. She explains: “We come into contact with brands, products, and news in more and more different ways, both from the Netherlands and abroad. There is more to choose from and we have to filter more, which may make it harder to get through to the consumer and stand out.”

Vijn argues that Dutch consumers will start paying more attention to brand activism in the coming years, he explains: “I think a small group already has this, say 15 percent, this is growing because it was 10 percent. However, I think that many people in the Netherlands are still not paying attention to this in their daily buying behaviour, but I believe that it is a growing group, a kind of pioneering role, with the rest following in. For example, in 5 years I expect this group to be 20 percent of Dutch consumers.”

#### **4.3.3. Buying Behaviour and Political Consumerism – Key Research Outcomes**

Just a quarter of the respondents is prepared to make extra efforts for a brand that makes a statement the consumer agrees with. However, 6 out of 10 people are prepared to pay more for a brand that makes a positive contribution to society. The experts add to this that it is generally up to the competition as brands do not want to price themselves out of the market. The price also depends on the extent to which the brand contributes positively to society.

Furthermore, the questionnaire illustrated that it is more presumable that the respondents will boycott a brand than buycott it. In addition, the experts believe Dutch consumers have become more critical since they can collect more information through social media and the internet, and this will become even more in the coming years.

#### **4.4. Chance for Successful Brand Activism in the Netherlands**

According to the researcher, the general findings of the online survey led to the following chances for successful brand activism in the Netherlands, see Appendix 5, page 134, for more information.

In short, the category with the least chance for success is the least dominant of all types of chances. The neutral chance is the most dominant category. However, a good chance and a strong chance together make the most prominent group.

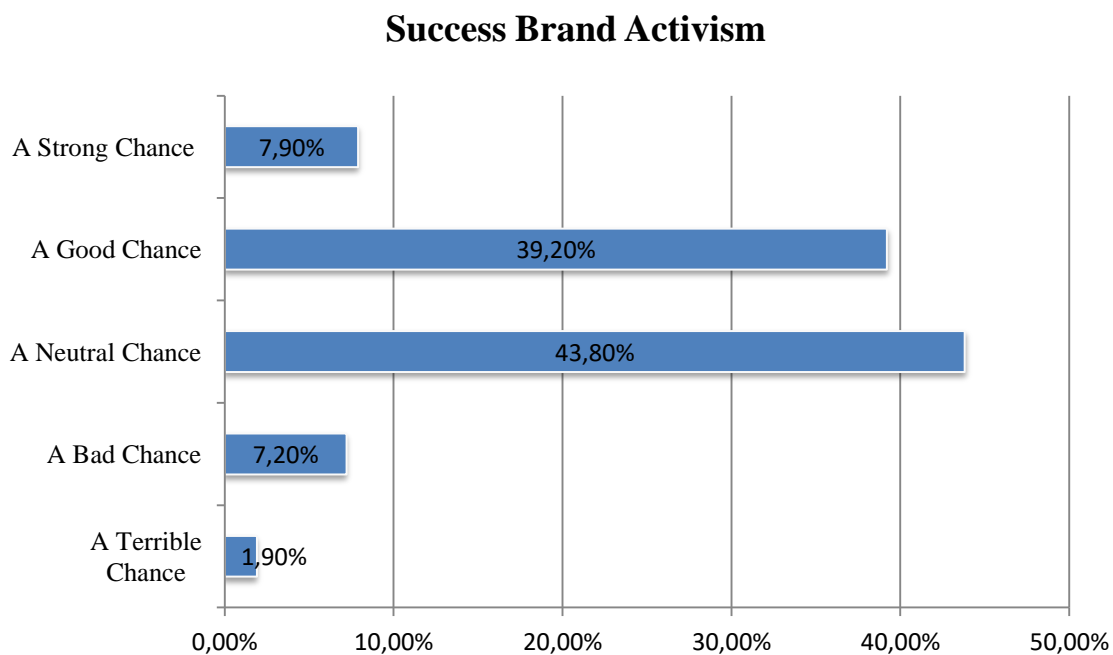


Figure 7 Success Brand Activism

#### **4.5. Ordinal Regression Analysis – Validity**

In this section, the researcher will examine if there is a relationship between the consumer's aspects and the chance for successful brand activism. To ensure success, the researcher will also consider which consumers will receive brand activism very well.

Several tests have been conducted to examine the extent to which the results of the tests and the concept of brand activism match. First, the researcher considered the 'Model Fitting Information', this tests the final model against a model in which all the parameter coefficients are null, the null model. The null hypothesis is that the final model does not do any better than the null model. In other words, none of the factors help to predict the ratings. In this case, the null hypothesis is rejected, since the p-value is 0.000, which is below the significance level of

5 percent. Hence, it can be concluded that the final model is statistically significant and is therefore suitable to use for this research.

**Model Fitting Information**

Model	-2 Lo Likelihood	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Intercept Only	591,933			
Final	524,850	67,083	26	,000

Link function: Logit

Table 3 Model Fitting Information

Next, the researcher conducted the 'Goodness of Fit' test. This is a non-parametric test that is used to analyse how the observed value is significantly different from the expected value. The null hypothesis here is that the final model is adequate relative to the perfect model, which correctly predicts the cell counts. This means that it is essential that the null hypothesis will not be rejected, and therefore that the significance level should be higher than 0.05.

In this research, the deviance significance is 1.000. Deviance is a likelihood ratio test of how well the final model fits the data. In this case, the p-value is higher than 0.05, which means that the model fits the observed data statistically well. However, there is no similarity with the Pearson as Pearson is .000. One answer is that the differences between these statistics can be induced by overdispersion. Incidentally, large dispersion parameters can happen for reasons other than overdispersion, for example, omitted variables or interactions (the researcher could have entered several other variables but chose considerable not to), and predictors that violate the linearity of the logit assumption. Because the researcher wants to analyse only these independent variables, the researcher will therefore focus on the Deviance and discard Pearson.

**Goodness-of-Fit**

	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Pearson	2811,103	874	,000
Deviance	492,049	874	1,000

Link function: Logit

Table 4 Goodness of Fit



### Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	0.225
Nagelkerke	0.248
McFadden	0.107

Link function: Logit

Table 5 Pseudo R-Square

The researcher examined the percentage of the variation in the outcome that can be explained by the final model. This is the so-called R-Square. In a linear regression model, the R-Square represents the amount of variance in the outcome explained by the model, relative to how much variation there was to explain in the first place (Field, 2013). The higher the percentage, the higher the predictive capacity of the model. However, logistic regression analysis gives no proportion explained variance (R<sup>2</sup>), like with interval or ratio variables, is defined in a linear model. There are, however, several pseudo R<sup>2</sup> measures comparable to the R<sup>2</sup> from a linear regression analysis. The researcher has to interpret the outcome with great caution, because the result can be used to compare with various models, but is not meant for standalone results. The SPSS output gives two such measures. The Nagelkerke gives the highest Pseudo R-Square of 0.248. Concluded, with caution, the Nagelkerke explains that this model explains 24.8 percent of the variance of the dependent variable.

The final test is the 'Test of Parallel Lines.' The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories. It tests the proportional odds assumption, and the p-value should be greater than or equal to 0.05. Because the ordered logit model estimates one overall equation levels of the response variable, the test for proportional odds tests whether the final model is valid. If the null hypothesis were to be rejected, this means that ordered logit coefficients are not equal across the levels of the outcome. On the other hand, if the null hypothesis is not rejected, this means that the assumption holds. For this study, the proportional odds assumption appears to have held because the significance of the Chi-Square statistic is .141, which is higher than 0.05.

### Test of Parallel Lines

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	524.850			
General	433,380b	91,470c	78	,141

Table 6 Test of Parallel Lines

a. Link function: Logit. The log-likelihood value cannot be further increased after the maximum number of step-halving

c. The Chi-Square statistic is computed based on the log-likelihood value of the last iteration of the general model. Validity of the test is uncertain.

#### **4.5. Ordinal Regression Analysis – Research Estimates**

Table X illustrates the results from the ordinal regression, and the parameter estimates table summarizes the influence of each predictor. The first part, the threshold coefficients are not usually interpreted individually, since the values do not depend on the values of the independent variables. They are like the intercept in linear regression, but are not used in the interpretation of the results.

The location estimates are interesting to explore. These explain the relationship between the explanatory (independent) variables and the outcome (dependent variable). The location estimates are considering the odds for the chance of one level within the ordinal outcome, while the other variables in the model are held constant. The location estimates indicate if the outcome will change positively or negatively by making an adjustment in the predictor variable. What is important is that the estimate column does not represent the odds but represents the log-odds, so this is why the researcher needs to take the exponents of these values in order to get the odds. When the odds are calculated, this is a better way of interpreting the impact of the individual explanatory variables. First, it is crucial to look at whether each variable is statistically significant ( $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). Because the null hypothesis proposes that the estimate of the predictor regression coefficient is equal to zero, this must be rejected for interpretation of the explanatory variable.

The estimates are compared to the reference level, which is in every case the last option for that specific explanatory variable. If the estimate is positive, this means that the respondent with that specific characteristic is more likely to appreciate brand activism more than the respondent without the reference characteristic. If the estimate is negative, this means this person is less likely to appreciate brand activism. However, that is just the sign of the estimate. When the exponential of the number is taken, this will provide the cumulative odds ratio for a one unit increase, as mentioned above. In other words, that exponential number will provide an idea of how much more or less brand activism is appreciated for that characteristic compared to the reference. If the exponential is less than one, this means that the odds for a higher rating are lower than for the reference variable.

**Parameter Estimates**

		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold	[BrandActivism = 1]	-6,523	1,149	32,257	1	,000	-8,775	-4,272
	[BrandActivism = 2]	-4,800	1,078	19,833	1	,000	-6,913	-2,688
	[BrandActivism = 3]	-2,042	1,054	3,752	1	,053	-4,107	,024
	[BrandActivism = 4]	,793	1,037	,584	1	,445	-1,239	2,825
Location	[Gender=0]	-,879	,273	10,377	1	,001	-1,414	-,344
	[Gender=1]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[Generation=1]	1,337	,457	8,568	1	,003	,442	2,232
	[Generation=2]	1,344	,469	8,212	1	,004	,425	2,263
	[Generation=3]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[Province=1]	,304	1,426	,045	1	,831	-2,492	3,100
	[Province=2]	-,834	1,370	,370	1	,543	-3,520	1,852
	[Province=5]	1,858	1,447	1,647	1	,199	-,979	4,695
	[Province=7]	-,404	1,452	,077	1	,781	-3,249	2,442
	[Province=8]	,496	,668	,551	1	,458	-,814	1,806
	[Province=10]	,627	,729	,741	1	,389	-,801	2,056
	[Province=11]	2,105	2,044	1,060	1	,303	-1,902	6,112
	[Province=12]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[Education=1]	,335	,539	,385	1	,535	-,723	1,392
	[Education=2]	,061	,416	,022	1	,883	-,754	,876
	[Education=3]	,086	,317	,073	1	,787	-,536	,708
	[Education=4]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[Information=0]	-1,775	,442	16,135	1	,000	-2,641	-,909
	[Information=1]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[News=1]	2,249	,931	5,840	1	,016	,425	4,073
	[News=2]	,783	,493	2,520	1	,112	-,184	1,751
	[News=3]	,461	,476	,940	1	,332	-,471	1,394
	[News=4]	,563	,557	1,020	1	,312	-,529	1,655
	[News=5]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[Income=1]	-,653	,387	2,839	1	,092	-1,411	,106
	[Income=2]	-,638	,331	3,723	1	,054	-1,286	,010
	[Income=3]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[Politics=1]	-1,066	,371	8,244	1	,004	-1,793	-,338
	[Politics=2]	-,569	,349	2,656	1	,103	-1,253	,115
	[Politics=3]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.
	[Trust=0]	-,355	,308	1,332	1	,248	-,958	,248
	[Trust=1]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.
[Home=1]	-,304	,259	1,374	1	,241	-,811	,204	
[Home=2]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.	
[Foreign=0]	-,697	,699	,995	1	,319	-2,068	,673	

[Foreign=1]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.
[nationality=0]	-,976	1,051	,862	1	,353	-3,035	1,084
[nationality=1]	0 <sup>a</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.

Link function: Logit.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Table 7 Parameter Estimates Brand Activism

## **4.6. Ordinal Regression Analysis – Analysis of the results**

### **4.6.1. Gender**

The explanatory variable 'Gender,' which states gender=0 for 'Male' and gender=1 for 'Female.' The variable 'Female' is taken as the reference variable. Since the p-value, the significance of the estimate, displays if it is supported to interpret the coefficient of the estimate, it is essential to look at the p-value in the beginning. The p-value for 'Male' illustrates a value of .001, which indicates that the coefficient is significant and may be analysed since the p-value is smaller than the significance level of 5 percent (p-value<0.05).

Considering the estimate of the coefficient, this illustrates a negative relationship of 'Male' on the chance for successful brand activism in the Netherlands, since the estimate is -.879. However, this can only indicate the sign of a positive or negative effect as it is measured in terms of log-odds. For the interpretation, the exponent of the estimate needs to be taken, so the log-odds becomes proportional. When the exponent is taken, this explains that for men, the odds for a strong chance of successful brand activism in the Netherlands is 0.415 times the odds for female respondents. Since this number is less than 1 this means that the odds for a higher chance of successful brand activism among men is 0.585 (1 minus 0,415) times lower than for women. When explained in percentages, this would mean that the chance for successful brand activism is lowered by 58.5% for a male target audience in comparison to a female target audience.

### **4.6.2. Generation**

The generation variable is divided into three categories, in which category three is taken as the reference variable. Category one represents people aged between 15 and 34 years, category two represents people aged between 35 and 54 years, and final category three represents people of 55 years or older. The significance of the estimates of generation one and two both display that it is allowed to interpret the coefficient of the estimates. The p-value for generation one is .003, and for generation two it is .004. Both p-values are smaller than the significance level of 0.05.

The two generations demonstrate a positive relationship on the chance for successful brand activism. When examining the order, it is indicated that generation two is the best, since it is higher than all other estimates in the variable 'Generation'. Followed by generation one and the last is generation 3 because it got the lowest estimate.

The odds ratio for generation one is 3.808, which means that for this generation the odds for having a higher chance of successful brand activism is about four times higher than the odds for generation three.

For generation two, the odds ratio is 3.834, which means that for generation two the odds for having a higher chance of successful brand activism is also about four times higher than the odds for generation three. This confirms the order of positivity.

#### **4.6.3. Information**

Table 7 displays that the p-value of information is significant since the p-value is smaller than the significance level of 0.05:  $p\text{-value} < 0,000$ . Information=0 indicates that the consumer is not actively looking for information about what brands stand for and what contribution they make to society, and information=1 indicates the consumers who are actively looking for information. The estimate of information illustrates a negative relationship between consumers who do not actively seek information and the chance for successful brand activism in the Netherlands since the estimate is -1.775.

The exponent of the estimate identifies that for consumers who do not actively seek information about brands, the odds for a strong chance of successful brand activism in the Netherlands is 0.169 times the odds for consumers who do actively seek for information. In short, in percentages, this would mean that the chance for successful brand activism is lowered by 83.1% for consumers who do not actively seek in comparison to consumers who do actively seek information about brands.

#### **4.6.4. News**

The 'News' variable represents how often the consumers deal with the news per day, so talk, read and hear about it. News=1 indicates that the consumer does not deal with the news at all, two stand for 1 to 2 times a day, three is 3 to 5 times, four is 6 to 8 times, and five stands for 9 times or more. What is remarkable about news is that, generally, the more the consumer deals with the news every day, the smaller the chance for successful brand activism when

considering the order, assuming that everything is significant, only for news=3 and news=4 this does not apply.

However, when examining the p-values, only news=1 is significant. Here, the p-value is .016, which is smaller than 0.05. In short, only when the consumer never deals with news per day there is a relationship with the chance for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.

The estimate is 2.249, which indicates a positive relationship. The odds ratio for consumers who never deal with the news on a day is 9.478. This means that for these consumers the odds of having a higher chance for successful brand activism in the Netherlands is about 9.5 times higher than the odds for consumers who deal 9 times or more with the news per day.

#### **4.6.5. Politics**

The independent variable 'Politics' stands for the political preference of a consumer. In which one stands for 'right-oriented', two stands for 'middle-oriented', and three stands for 'left-oriented'. It can be seen that the p-value for the right-oriented is significant, but the p-value for the middle-oriented consumer is not. The p-value of the right-oriented consumer is .004, which is lower than the significance level of 5 percent.

The estimate of the political right-oriented consumer is -1.066, which means there is a negative relationship between political right-oriented consumers and the chance for successful brand activism. When the exponent of the estimate is taken, this indicates that for political-right oriented consumers, the odds for successful brand activism is 0.344 times the odds for left-oriented consumers. In short, the odds for a higher chance of successful brand activism for right-oriented is 0.656 times lower than for left-oriented. So, the chance of having a strong chance for successful brand activism is lowered by 65.6 percent for right-oriented compared to left-oriented consumers.

When the middle-oriented would be significant, the odds for having a strong chance of successful brand activism would be less low than with right-oriented. However, the chance would still be lower than for left-oriented.

#### **4.6.6. Other values – Not significant**

The other independent values are not significant and may not be interpreted. However, there are some remarkable things when quickly examining these values. First of all, when considering the Dutch provinces, the provinces Limburg, and Drenthe illustrate a negative relationship while the other provinces illustrate a positive relationship. Furthermore, when

considering the order, it is demonstrated that 'Zeeland' is the best, since it is higher than the other estimates. Followed by 'Gelderland' and then 'Utrecht.' So, if the independent variable 'Province' would be significant, the researcher could not say that in a specific region in the Netherlands, the chance for successful brand activism would be the highest.

Second, the independent variable 'Income' is almost significant. However, the researcher is not allowed to interpret the estimates. If this were to be allowed, it would become evident that a lower income would have a negative relationship with the dependent variable. 'Income'=1 represents the lowest income scale, income=2 the middle income, and three the highest income scale. So when it would be allowed to interpret the estimate, the researcher could argue that the higher the income of the consumer, the better the chance for successful brand activism.

Third, 'Trust' represents the consumer's trust in the Dutch Government. If the estimate would be significant, the researcher could argue that when a consumer has no trust in the Dutch government, this would have a negative relationship with the dependent variable. So, the odds would be lower than for when a consumer does have trust in the government.

'Home' indicates if the consumer lives in a rural area or the city. Home=1 stands for the 'Urban' area, living in the city would have a negative relationship with the chance for successful brand activism.

Lastly, 'Foreign' and 'Nationality' stands for the origin of the consumer. Foreign=0 means that the consumer is 100 percent Dutch, when significant, this could have a negative relationship with the dependent variable. Furthermore, nationality=0 stands for consumers that are not of western origin, this would also have a negative relationship. So, having another nationality besides Dutch would mean the odds for successful brand activism would be lower.

#### **4.7. Key Findings**

In conclusion, the aspects of gender, generation, information seeking, news consumption, and political preference have a significant relationship with the chance for successful brand activism in the Netherlands. In short, the gender of the consumer has a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism. Brand activism will be more successful with female consumers since the chance for successful brand activism is lower for men in comparison to women. Second, the variable 'Generation' leads to a significant change in the odds for successful brand activism. The odds-ratio for consumers with an age between 35 and 54 years

is the highest, followed by the consumers with an age between 15 and 34 years. Hence, an age between the 35 and 54 years is the most positive characteristic of a target audience when a brand makes a statement.

The analyse of the variable 'Information' illustrates that the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands is higher with the consumers who do actively seek for information about what brands stand for and what contribution they make to society, than with those who do not. There is also a significant positive relationship for consumers who never deal with the news, compared with consumers who deal 9 times or more with the news per day. The odds for successful brand activism is about 9.5 times higher than the odds for consumers who deal 9 times or more with the news per day. Finally, there is a significant negative relationship between political right-oriented consumer and the chance for successful brand activism. The odds for successful brand activism for right-oriented is 0.656 times lower than for left-oriented consumers.



## **Chapter 5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1. Brand Activism – Comparison Literature and Empirical Study**

Both the literature study and empirical study identified that the majority of Dutch consumers seems to be more ethically conscious and would like brands to be socially responsible. Consumers seem to value companies that take a stance on societal issues, believe that brands have the power to make a difference, and want to connect with brands on an emotional level. This means that these consumers make up an essential part of a brand's clients and are therefore a critical part of the brand's results. Hence, it is interesting for brands to look at brand activism.

#### **5.1.1. Brands and Politics**

For the most part, the results of both studies conducted in this thesis do not agree with the general idea that exists around the relationship between brands and politics. The extant literature emphasizes that capitalism is the most powerful force to improve the world. Brands should have a commercial as well as a social purpose to spread, often controversial, ideas among diverse personal lives, countries, and cultures. This idea does not correspond with the results of the quantitative study. Just a quarter of the respondents indicate that they believe that the role of brands is more important than that of the Dutch government in solving social problems.

The experts support both the literature study and the quantitative study, as they argue that the role of the government is still essential to positively influence society, however, they do believe that brands can help and support the government. Brands may be better aware of the problems that arise in their market, which is why brands may sometimes understand cases better than certain institutions or the government. Furthermore, the experts indicate that in any case, brands should attempt to contribute to society by ensuring that their business is run in an ethical and responsible manner.

The researcher does believe that brands may influence the awareness of the consumers. Brands are important to help to uncover problems concerning society and with their power they can help to solve these issues. However, the researcher also argues that action by public authorities is required to resolve the problem on a larger scale. The main goal of a brand must be to create attention and to take the first steps towards a solution.

### **5.1.2. Controversial Statements**

In chapter two, six subcategories of brand activism were defined: social, business, legal, economic, environmental, and political activism. However, the survey identified that, generally, consumers only accept brands to make expressions of opinion on three of those issues: the environment, human rights, and animal welfare. On the other hand, the respondents also indicated that they appreciate it when a brand makes a statement about a controversial social issue.

The experts explain that brands do not have to mix politically or make controversial statements. In general, they argue that brands should only do this if there is a strong connection with their identity and target audience. Furthermore, all experts argue that brands should only make statements when they want to improve society and not because it could improve the brand's results.

The extant literature and the experts are in line as both studies illustrate that brand activism is an opportunity for differentiation and purpose-driven engagement. According to the experts, statements could reinforce the story, strengthen the relationship with the customer as they strive towards the same goal, attract a broader target group, gain more sympathy from people, and result in free publicity.

To the researcher, it makes sense that controversial statements are not popular, because the Dutch population is politically less divided than, for example, the American population. In the Netherlands, there is more nuance in politics and there are many politically middle-oriented parties. The researcher agrees with the experts and argues that brands should only make controversial statements when they match their identity and target audience. On page 76, this chapter will illustrate why the credibility of a brand and the connection between a brand's image and a consumer's personality is essential. It is therefore not unreasonable to conclude that the respondents indicated that they believe a brand should only make statements about those three issues, because brands can actually influence these issues during their production processes and thus match easily. Other topics – such as the LGBT community – are not issues that a brand comes into contact with often.

### **5.2. Advertisements – Comparison Literature and Empirical Study**

The literature study indicates that advertisements may change attitude and behaviour. Furthermore, the literature also illustrates that emotion has a noticeable effect on the reaction people have towards a message. However, when considering the outcome of the survey, it can

be concluded that these results are not in line. The minority of the respondents agrees that advertisements influence what they purchase. The respondents are hinting at a belief that they are, commonly, less susceptible to emotional influences from brands compared to informational. The experts also note that a good advertisement should, in any case, have an emotional layer or connection, build or support the brand, and stand out.

The researcher argues that the difference in outcomes is because consumers are unknowingly influenced by advertisements. Most consumers will not realize that advertisements influence purchasing behaviour. Which is why the researcher argues that in this case, this study should rely more on the results of the literature study and the interviews with the experts than on the survey conducted among consumers. In other words, an emotional layer in an advertisement is essential.

### **5.2.2. Attitude toward Advertisements**

Controversial advertising may lead to negative purchase levels, contrary word-of-mouth, complaints to advertising regulators, and even boycotts. This means that it is critical how brands communicate their points of view to Dutch consumers, since it may influence the consumer's purchase intentions and those of the consumer's family and friends.

The data of the survey demonstrates that well-intentioned advertisements about social issues may create discussion among consumers. Even though there is little difference, slightly more respondents will advise against a brand rather than recommend it to family and friends when a brand takes a position that the respondent disagrees or agrees with.

The researcher would like to emphasize that it is important to research the thoughts and opinions of the target audience. As the case studies on page 27 suggest, there will always be adverse reactions to brand activism. However, the reactions of the target group and the positive reactions are the most important. Furthermore, as some experts mentioned in the interviews, a brand has to be proud when it decides to take the first steps in the right direction. All bits help and a brand has to start somewhere.

### **5.2.3. The Relevance of Social Media**

The results of the extant literature and the interviews correspond in many ways. Both indicate that the traits of social media ensure that consumers have more access to information these days in comparison to the past. Social media makes the consumer a lot more critical as the consumer can follow news and politics much more easily. The results of the interviews

emphasize that, in general, consumers with a negative opinion will make themselves heard more than those with a positive opinion. However, sometimes the negative opinions may also lead to new perspectives.

The extant literature also illustrates that social media is a new way to engage directly with the consumers and to hear their opinions. Social media is a relatively cheap way to promote a brand to the target group. Which is why social media should cooperate with other marketing methods during campaigns, especially in the Netherlands where the use of social media is further ahead compared with other countries in Europe. However, the literature and the expert Vijn argues that in most cases, social media still accounts for less than one percent of a moderate marketing budget. More attention and a large part of a budget goes to television advertising.

### **5.3. Brand Characteristics – Comparison Literature and Empirical Study**

The literature study identified that brand activism may jeopardize self-brand connection. If brands are linked with statements that are opposed to a person's political preference, then the connection between the brand and the consumer's self-concept may decrease due to the strong links between political beliefs and sense of self. However, when consumers feel a connection between the brand image and their self-concept, they could develop a consumer-brand relationship.

The data from the survey confirms this information and demonstrates that other than price and quality, the connection between the consumer's personality and the brand is the most important factor to influence the consumer's preference, followed by a good brand image. Hence, not only the informational aspects of a brand are essential, but the respondent would also like to connect with a brand on an emotional level as it would like to see personal similarities in a brand.

The literature study illustrates that, in addition to self-interest, trust is an important factor in a brand relationship. The credibility of a brand has a significant effect on customer's attitudes. The experts and the respondents support the extant literature since they believe the most fundamental characteristics are authenticity, trustworthy, honesty, and consistency. A brand should only make a statement if it connects the brand's identity and image, and when the brand is willing to make an effort for it.

The researcher argues it is logical that a brand must substantiate the personality of the consumer. A purchase reflects how the consumer sees himself and to which reference group it wants to belong. Furthermore, credibility is critical since the consumer's will notice when a brand is not sincere in its outings and only speak out for commercial interests. Trust cannot be established with one campaign, but must grow over time and therefore consistency is essential.

#### **5.4. Political Consumerism - Comparison Literature and Empirical Study**

The extant literature and the surveys illustrate that consumers boycott more often than they boycott. Furthermore, the experts believe that Dutch consumers have become more outspoken and critical over the last years. Consumers are more critical toward what they consume, how it is produced and what impact it has on the world. However, it is important to notice that the number of consumers who are consciously consuming is still growing.

Furthermore, the extant literature illustrates that brands who make a positive contribution to society may charge a premium price for their products and services. The survey demonstrates that more than half of the respondents is willing to pay more for a brand that makes a positive contribution to society. However, when asked if the respondent was willing to make extra efforts – such as travelling further to a store to buy products or services from brands that have social views that the respondent finds significant – only a quarter indicated they were willing to do this.

The experts indicate that it is generally up to the competition whether brands that make a social statement may ask a premium price, as brands do not want to praise themselves out of the market. The price also depends on the extent to which the brand contributes positively to society.

The researcher expects that the consumers were not willing to make the extra effort since political consumerism is an easy way for the consumer to contribute to a better world. It requires minimum effort, but still makes the consumer feel like they doing their part through the brand. The researcher predicts that when the consumer has a choice between two products, they will, in general, go for a product that makes a better contribution to society. However, if this choice is not there, the consumer will go for convenience.

## **5.5. Consumer Characteristics – Comparison Literature and Empirical Study**

The literature study illustrates that consumer's buying behaviour may be influenced by internal and external factors as well as people. Furthermore, the literature study demonstrates that certain factors play a vital role in political consumerism. First, media use, and in particular news consumption. Political consumers also tend to have a higher education than non-political consumers, are generally aged between 30 and 59 years, and are more likely to be women. Furthermore, people with a low income are less likely to boycott and buycott in comparison to those with a high income. In addition, political consumerism is more of an urban than a rural concept. Political consumers are also more often politically left-orientated. Finally, Dutch boy and buycotters have more trust in institutions and fellow human beings.

As expected, the ordinal linear regression analysis demonstrates that the aspects of gender, generation, information seeking, news consumption, and political preference are significant influential factors. The most positive aspects of a target audience when making a statement are: female, age between 35 and 54 years, actively seeking for brand information, zero interest in the news, and politically left-oriented.

The female consumer tends to be more guided by brand activism than the male consumer. Also, the generation aged between 35 and 54 years have higher odds of having a higher chance for successful brand activism than consumers outside this age class. Furthermore, the chance for successful brand activism is lowered by 83.1% for consumers who do not actively seek information instead for consumers who do actively seek information about brands. The odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands is about 9.5 times higher for consumers who never deal with the news on a day, than the odds for consumers who deal 9 times or more with the news on a day. Finally, there is a negative relationship between political right-oriented consumers and the chance for successful brand activism. The odds of a higher chance for successful brand activism for right-oriented is 0.656 times lower than for left-oriented.

These results lead to the acceptance of the following hypotheses:

- H1: The type of 'gender' of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H2: The type of 'generation' of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.

- H5: The type of 'information' seeking of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H6: The type of 'news' consumption of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.
- H8: The type of 'politics' orientation of the consumer will have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism and will lead to a change in the odds for successful brand activism in the Netherlands.

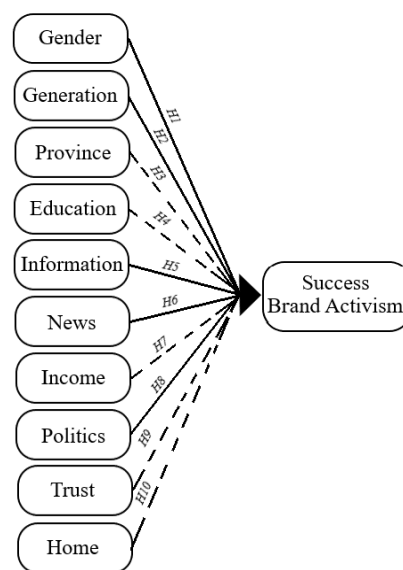


Figure 8 Conceptual Model and hypotheses

The following hypotheses are, against expectation, rejected:

- H3: The type of 'province' where the consumer lives does not have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism.
- H4: The type of 'education' of the consumer does not have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism.
- H7: The type of 'income' level of the consumer does not have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism.
- H9: The type of 'trust' of the consumer in the government does not have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism.
- H10: The type of 'living' area of the consumer does not have a significant effect on the successfulness of brand activism.

### **5.7. Central Research Question**

After analyzing the results of the literature study, case studies, the surveys, and the interviews, the researcher is able to answer the central research question:

**Is there a positive relationship between the buying behaviour of Dutch consumers and brands in the Netherlands that explicitly stand for and communicate their opinions on social issues as part of their brand personalities?**

This thesis illustrates that there is indeed a positive relationship between the buying behaviour of Dutch consumers and brands in the Netherlands that explicitly stand for and communicate their opinions on social issues as part of their brand personalities. Mainly due to digitization, consumers have become a lot more critical, outspoken and politically conscious over the last years. A vast majority endorses that brands have the power to influence social change and appreciate it when brands use this power and take action to address issues concerning society. It is not that Dutch consumers believe that brands have more influence than the government. However, the research conducted in this thesis illustrates that brands can complement politics well. Furthermore, it is important that brands take responsibility and do not take a passive position and wait for the legislation, but encourage the right choice themselves. It is no longer enough to just sell products or services since a majority of people appreciates it when brands respond to social issues.

Figure 7, page 63, demonstrates the chances for successful brand activism in the Netherlands. Despite the fact that the neutral chance for successful brand activism in the Netherlands is the dominant category, a good chance and a strong chance together make the most prominent group.

A brand that wants to contribute to society target a psychographic segment and can generate powerfully emotional beliefs, it helps to develop a stronger relationship since the consumer strives for the same mission. When a brand makes a positive contribution to society, consumer's buying behaviour changes as the consumer is willing to pay more for the products and services of the brand. Furthermore, this thesis also illustrates that it is more presumable that the respondent will boycott a brand than boycott it. However, they are not willing to make extra efforts, like traveling further to a store, to buy products or services from brands that have social views that the consumer also considers important.



When a brand communicates a clear opinion about social issues it has, in any case, to properly fit the brand's identity. The research conducted in this thesis clearly demonstrates that a brand has to be trustworthy, honest, authentic, and has to act consequently. A brand must always stay true to itself as authenticity is paramount. Otherwise, a consumer cannot connect with a brand on an emotional level. This thesis indicates that the consumer wants to make a self-connection with a brand and it is more presumable that consumers will identify themselves with brands associated with societal issues because it can meet the consumer's need to preserve a positive self-image.

According to the research, it is not enough if a brand uses brand activism as a kind of brand campaign, because the consumer will not perceive this as a sincere effort to improve society. To be perceived as an activist brand of which the consumers think that it truly contributes to society, the purpose must be interwoven in the entire company and every employee has to understand the vision. The consumers will easily see through it if the company only makes a statement to receive attention.

Furthermore, it is appreciated when brands make statements about controversial issues. However, as indicated before, the controversial issue has to properly fit the brand and should not be too political since it is far too polarizing. Furthermore, it is important that the brand knows how the target audience feels about this issue. Otherwise consumers will be more likely to advise against a brand than recommend it to family and friends when the consumer does not agree with the social view of the brand.

When a controversial statement is made in a logically integrated way, it could yield extra. A controversial statement could result in free publicity and could make a brand stand out more. A controversial statement could also reinforce the story that a brand wants to express; it could make the relationship with the customer stronger as they strive toward the same goal, attract a broader target group, and could gain more sympathy from people.

The expectation is that brand activism will become more important in the coming years. In the Netherlands, a lot of consumers are still not paying attention to brand activism in their daily buying behaviour, however, it is a growing group. In this research, it seems about half of the consumers have boycotted or boycotted a brand before because of the social view of that brand. The number of consumers that boycott or boycott will increase in the coming years.

Finally, this thesis illustrates that there are some significant consumer aspects that have an influence on the success of brand activism in the Netherlands. The ordinal regression analysis explains that consumers who receive brand activism positively are mainly female consumers, consumers with an age between 35 and 54 years, consumers who are actively seeking for brand information, have zero interest in the news, and are political left-oriented.

### **5.8. Recommendations for Brands**

Since Dutch consumers want brands to demonstrate support for what they believe regardless of whether or not it is controversial, this study supports the idea that brand activism could improve the brand image, awareness, and engagement. Furthermore, it could improve the profitability of a brand. Hence, the concept of brand activism deserves more attention from brands. The extant literature study, the survey, and the interviews identify the most critical factors for the success of brand activism in the Netherlands:

First of all, it is important to consider the differences in culture as well as the personal and psychological characteristics of the target audience. When a brand decides to make a statement, it is crucial to know how the target group thinks and feels about this issue. A statement may be perceived differently, so it is essential that the statement matches the interest of the brand's target group. Based on this research, the target audience that will receive a brand's statement most positively are female, aged between 35 and 54 years, actively seeking for brand information, have zero interest in the news, and are political left-oriented.

Second, the statement has to be authentic. The case studies, interviews, and survey illustrate that credibility and authenticity are important. Authenticity will increase the credibility of the campaign. Furthermore, it is important to not only argue that you want to make a change, but to actively take action as well. The entire company has to be inspired and involved, not just a distinct department. The consumers indicate that they want a brand to have consequent characteristics. In short, the first step has to be made, after that the actions and point of views have to be expressed consistently. Furthermore, look at what is currently stopping the consumer from positively changing their behaviour or thoughts and try take that problem away. However, sometimes using only communication and informing people is enough to change thoughts or behaviour.

The company must also be prepared for negative responses. When a brand makes a statement, it is possible that somebody will be offended, so a brand should be able to deal with adverse

reactions. The reactions of the target group and the positive reactions are the most important. In addition, the brands have to be patient since the first reactions could be adverse, but later on it could also trigger positive reactions as well. Consumers with adverse opinions are more likely to make themselves heard than people with a positive opinion. This leads to the next recommendation: be proud. Dare to make the first steps in the right direction. Small steps could eventually lead to an extensive social program. A brand has to see it as a work in progress.

Next, social media should be integrated and should cooperate with other marketing methods during campaigns. Social media is a way to engage and talk directly with the consumer, to hear their opinions, and it is a relatively cheap way to promote your brand and statement. That is why social media should not be seen as an independent channel.

Furthermore, companies should be prepared and have crisis plan ready. When a corporation decides to connect its brand to an issue, something could occur in the world that could negatively spread to the brand image. Statements include the risk of making people feel unheard or misunderstood, which may, in turn, lead to protests and boycotts. To prevent this, it is important to have a crisis plan ready to be able to anticipate quickly. If there are only negative reactions, the brand could decide to learn from them and to listen to the consumer.

Finally, the researcher recommends to not make statements that are too controversial in the Netherlands. This study illustrates that the consumers would only appreciate it if a brand makes statements about the environment, animal welfare, and human rights. It is essential to admit colour about issues of which everybody agrees. However, controversial issues in the Netherlands are polarizing and should only be made when the brand truly believes it and wants to improve society in regards to that specific subject.

In conclusion, dare to make the first step in the right direction. When done with consistency, authenticity, and commitment, these first steps will be rewarded. If the target audience shares the point of view, there will be a stronger relationship as the brand and the consumer pursue the same goal. A brand can earn loyalty, ask for 'fair' prices, and gain word-of-mouth and free publicity.

### **5.9. Recommendations for Future Research**

First of all, the Pearson of the Model Fit, page 63, section 4.5., indicates that the model does not fit the observed data statistically well. One reason is that the differences between these

statistics can be induced by overdispersion. Because of the Pearson analysis, the researcher recommends that future research should apply a larger data set with more combinations between variables.

This thesis identifies that the majority of the respondents appreciates it when a brand makes a controversial statement. However, the issues a brand could connect with in this study are not controversial in general. That is why future research should be focussed on examining what the consumers define as controversial statements. Furthermore, it would be worth knowing what the different effects are of 'normal' brand activism and controversial brand activism. For example, is there a difference between the attention and loyalty of consumers for controversial statements and 'normal' statements?

Furthermore, the researcher predicts that Dutch consumers will focus more on brand activism in the future. Future research could be used to identify if it indeed has increased, and for what reason. In addition, future research could identify if consumers aged between 35 and 54 years are still the target group that appreciate brand activism most, or if 'generation z' has developed significantly. In addition, it could be interesting to see if and how the development of the Dutch government has any influence on the rise of brand activism. If there will be a prime minister of a populist party, does this then influence brand activism?

The popularity of political consumerism for consumers and companies may be a fair-weather option that loses its attractiveness during an economic recession. If consumers have less or no money to spend and companies start to economize, the market may concentrate again on price and quality rather than the social and ethical standpoints of brands. It could be interesting to research if brands stay with their beliefs should another economic recession occur.

Finally, for future research, it would be interesting to examine whether the level of brand activism has an influence on the buying behaviour of the consumer. Is there a difference in the perception of the level of brand activism the consumer has with a specific brand and does this perception have an influence on the consumer's behaviour? When is a brand seen as an activist brand? Do consumers think that there is grace in activism? Another possible research methodology to study brand activism would be to hold focus groups; the researcher would then be able to identify the underlying thoughts of the consumers.

## **Chapter 6. Reflection**

### **6.1. Reflection**

Looking back, the researcher is satisfied with her research. From the first moment, the researcher thought 'brand activism' was an interesting topic and she is grateful that it was possible to conduct research on this topic. The researcher finds the subject interesting because she thinks it is a good development. The researcher is happy that more and more brands are making a contribution to a better society and, more importantly, a better world. The researcher hopes that the expectation will come true and that brand activism will become increasingly important in the Netherlands. The researcher also hopes that every consumer will start to consume more consciously and that more brands are encouraged to find their purpose and to take action.

The researcher would like to thank the experts for their help. They have given this research even more depth and helped the researcher with additional information. Every interview was interesting and useful. The experts indicated that they found it an interesting topic, this made the interview easier and more enjoyable.

Furthermore, the researcher is also happy with how the entire process of the research went. Although there was limited time and brand activism has been a subject of recent years, the researcher has found sufficient information. At the start of the literature study, it was still a search for the right academic papers in which brand activism was highlighted.

However, the nice thing about such a topical subject is that while carrying out the research, new brand activist advertisements were launched. Gillette, for example, came up with the new campaign 'The best a men can be' while writing the literature study. This allowed the researcher to follow the developments around this brand and see the effects of brand activism in real life.

The required sample size was also achieved fairly quickly and there were ultimately more respondents than expected, despite the fact that the respondents had to come from the network of the researcher and her friends and family.

The researcher has gotten a better idea of brand activism and the thoughts of the Dutch consumer about this concept.

## **6.2. Research Limitations**

The first research limitation that should be taken into account, is the limitation of the availability of the respondents in the researcher's network. Most respondents live in the province South Holland and are aged between 15 and 34 years. As a result, not enough combinations were found in the study and the Pearson model fit was not significant. The outcomes may have been different if more respondents were found who live in other parts of the Netherlands, since there are different cultures and thoughts in every province.

Second, in some cases, it was difficult to reach experts and convince them to participate. In addition, not all experts who had promised to help with the research actually did this. That is why the researcher only interviewed 7 experts. The researcher would have liked to have conducted more interviews for additional substantiation of the research.

Finally, the researcher had to keep the online survey short to make it as attractive as possible for the respondents to complete the survey. Because of this, the researcher had to make choices regarding the questions she asked. The researcher would have liked to investigate a number of things that are recommended for future research.

## Reference List

- Aaker, D. A. (1991). *Managing Brand Equity: Capitalising On the Value of A Brand Name*. Free Press, .
- Aaker, D. A. (1996). *Building Strong Brands*. Free Press, .
- Aish, E. A., McKechnie, S., Abosag, I., & Hassan, S. (2012). The mystique of macro-boycotting behaviour: a conceptual framework. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 37(2), 165–171.
- American Marketing Association. (1960). *Marketing Definitions: A Glossary of Marketing Terms*. Chicago: AMA; Chicago;.
- Anderson, P. M., & He, X. (1998). Price influence and age segments of Beijing consumers. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 15(2), 152–169.
- Arora, R., & Stoner, C. (2009). A mixed method approach to understanding brand personality. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 18(4), 272–228.
- Auf, M. A. A. A., Meddour, H., Saoula, O., & Majid, A. H. A. (2018). Consumer buying behaviour: the roles of price, motivation, perceived culture importance, and religious orientation. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research*, 12(4).
- Austin, A. J., & Mattila, J. A. (2003). A re-examination of the generalizability of the Aaker brand personality measurement framework. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 11(2), 77–92.
- Azoulay, A., & Kapferer, J. (2003). Do brand personality scales really measure brand personality? *Journal of Brand Management*, 11(2), 198–216.
- Baker, W. J., Hutchinson, W., Moore, D., & Nedungadi, P. (1986). Brand Familiarity and Advertising: Effects on the Evoked Set and Brand Preferences. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 13, 637–642.
- Bakht, M. B., Arif, Z., Zafar, S., & Nawaz, M. A. (2013). ORIGINAL ARTICLE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON CONTRACEPTIVE USE: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY IN FOUR ASIAN COUNTRIES. *J Ayub Med Coll Abbottabad*, 25, 3–8.
- Barela, M. J. (2003). United Colors of Benetton: From Sweaters to Success: An Examination of the Triumphs and Controversies of Multinational Clothing Company.. *Journal of International Marketing*, 11(4), 113–128.

- Barnett, M. L. (2007). Stakeholder Influence Capacity And The Variability of Financial Return To Corporate Social Responsibility. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 32(3), 794–816.
- Beattie, A. E., & Andrew, M. A. (1985). The Relationship Between Advertising Recall and Persuasion: An Experimental Investigation. *Psychological Process and Advertising Effects*, .
- Bennett, L. (2004). *Branded Political Communication: Lifestyle Politics, Logo Campaigns, and the Rise of Global Citizenship*. Washington: Transaction Books.
- Bennett, W. L. (1998). Ithiel De Sola Pool Lecture: The UnCivic Culture: Communication, Identity, and the Rise of Lifestyle Politics. *Political Science and Politics*, 31(4), 740–761.
- Bickman, L., & Rog, D. J. (2009). *The SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*. California, America: SAGE Publications.
- Biel, A. (1993). Converting Image Into Equity. *Brand Equity and Advertising*, .
- Blom, K. (2018, 24 Juli). BRAND ACTIVISM: ZO GA JE ALS MERK STRATEGISCH OM MET MAATSCHAPPELIJKE BETROKKENHEID - Team LEWIS NL Retrieved from <https://www.teamlewis.com/nl/magazine/brand-activism-zo-ga-je-als-merk-strategisch-om-met-maatschappelijke-betrokkenheid/>
- Borgerson, J. L., Schroeder, J. E., Escudero Magnusson, M., & Magnusson, F. (2009). Corporate communication, ethics, and operational identity: a case study of Benetton. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 18(3), 209–223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8608.2009.01558.x>
- Bosnjak, M., Bochmann, V., & Hufschmidt, T. (2007). Dimensions of brand personality attributions: a person-centric approach in the German cultural context. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 35(3), 303–316.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis.. *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological.*, , 57–71. <https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004>
- Brophy, A. (2019, 1 februari). Ad of the Month UK - Gillette | YouGov [Dataset]. Geraadpleegd op 4 mei 2019, van <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/media/articles-reports/2019/02/01/ad-month-uk-gillette>
- Brown, T. J., & Dacin, P. A. (1997). The Company and the Product: Corporate Associations and Consumer Product Responses. *American Marketing Association*, 61(1), 68–84.



- Bruell, A. (2019a, 15 January). P&G Challenges Men to Shave Their 'Toxic Masculinity' in Gillette Ad. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/p-g-challenges-men-to-shave-their-toxic-masculinity-in-gillette-ad-11547467200>
- Bruell, A. (2019, 1 January). P&G Challenges Men to Shave Their 'Toxic Masculinity' in Gillette Ad; Spot pegged to #MeToo asks 'Is this the best a man can get?'. *Wall Street Journal (Online)*, pp. 0–1.
- Business Insider Nederland. (2018, 7 September). Nike's Colin Kaepernick ad isn't the first time the brand's commercials have made a social statement. See some of the most memorable campaigns in its history.. Accessed at 29 April 2019, from <https://www.businessinsider.nl/nike-ads-make-social-statements-2018-9/?international=true>
- Carter, C. R., Sanders, N. R., & Dong, Y. (2008). Paradigms, revolutions, and tipping points: The need for using multiple methodologies within the field of supply chain management\*. *Journal of Operations Management*, 26(6), 693–696. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jom.2008.07.002>
- Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001). The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: the role of brand loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, 65(2), 81–93.
- Childers, T. L., & Houston, M. J. (1984). Conditions for a Picture-Superiority Effect on Consumer Memory. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 11, 643–654.
- Clark, M. (2000). Benetton on death row. *New Statesman*, p. 43.
- Clow, K. E., James, K. E., Kranenburg, K. E., & Berry, C. T. (2006). The relationship of the visual element of an advertisement to service quality expectations and source credibility. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 20(6), 404–411. <https://doi.org/10.1108/08876040610691293>
- Crain, R. (2017, 1 mei). Could Coke Still Teach the World to Sing? [Persbericht]. Geraadpleegd op 4 mei 2019, van <https://adage.com/article/rance-crain/coke-teach-world-sing/308859>
- Creswell, J., Maheshwari, S., & Draper, K. (2018, 26 september). Nike's Kaepernick ad draws record likes on social media, sends stock to all-time high amid sales boost. *The New York Times*, p. x. Geraadpleegd van <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/sports/nike-colin-kaepernick.html>
- Creswell, J. W. (2006). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. California, America: SAGE Publications.
- Dahlen, M., & Rosengren, S. (2016). If advertising Won't Die, What Will It Be? Toward a Working Definition of Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 45(3), 334–345.

- Davis, D. F., Golicic, S. L., & Boerstler, C. N. (2010). Benefits and challenges of conducting multiple methods research in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39(3), 467–479. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-010-0204-7>
- De Pelsmacker, P., & Van Den Bergh, J. (1996). The Communication Effects of Provocation in Print Advertising. *International Journal of Advertising*, 15(3), 203–222.
- Edison Trends. (2018). *Nike Online Sales Grew 31% Over Labor Day Weekend & Kaepernick Ad Campaign*. Retrieved from <https://trends.edison.tech/research/nike-labor-day-2018.html>
- Eisend, M., & Stokburger-Sauer, N. E. (2013). Brand personality: A meta-analytic review of antecedents and consequences. *Marketing Letters*, 24(3), 205–216. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-013-9232-7>
- Emerald Group Publishing Limited. (2010). Ethics and sustainability in today's business environments. *Strategic Direction*, 26(3), 12–15. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02580541011022865>
- Escalas, J. E. (2004). Narrative Processing: Building Consumer Connections to Brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(1), 168–179.
- Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2003). You Are What They Eat: The Influence of Reference Groups on Consumers' Connections to Brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13(3), 339–348.
- Esch, F., Langner, T., Schmitt, B. H., & Geus, P. (2006). Are brands forever? How brand knowledge and relationships affect current and future purchases. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 15(2), 98–105. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420610658938>
- Etikan, I. (2016). Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>
- Fan, Y. (2005). Ethical Branding and Corporate Reputation. *Corporate Communications*, 10(4), 341–350.
- Favero, G. (2006). Benetton: Identifying an image, imagining an identity. *Dipartimento Scienze Economiche*, 6.
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics*. London, England: SAGE Publications.
- Filieri, R. (2015). From market-driving to market-driven. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 33(3), 238–257. <https://doi.org/10.1108/mip-02-2014-0037>

- Fournier, S. (1994). A Consumer-Brand Relationship Framework for Strategy Brand Management. *unpublished doctoral dissertation*, (University of Florida).
- Garvey Orji, M., Sabo, B., Abubakar, M. Y., & Usman, A. D. (2017). Impact of Personality Factors on Consumer Buying Behaviour Towards Textile Materials in South Eastern Nigeria. *International Journal of Business and Economics Research*, 6(1), 7–18. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijber.20170601.12>
- Geuens, M., Wijters, B., & De Wulf, K. (2009). A new measure of brand personality. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 26(2), 97–107.
- Gillette. (z.d.). About Gillette | Gillette. Accessed at 4 May 2019, from <https://gillette.com/en-us/about-gillette>
- Giroux, H. A. (1994). Benetton: Buying Social Change. *Routledge Press*, p. 1.
- Golicic, S. L., & Davis, D. F. (2012). Implementing mixed methods research in supply chain management. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, 42(8/9), 726–741. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09600031211269721>
- Gordon, R., Zainuddin, N., & Magee, C. (2016). Unlocking the potential of branding in social marketing services: utilising brand personality and brand personality appeal. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 30(1), 48–62.
- Gotlieb, M. R. (2015). Civic, cooperative or contrived? a functional approach to political consumerism motivations. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 39, 552–563.
- Grohmann, B., & Bodur, H. O. (2014). Brand Social Responsibility: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 131(2), 375–399. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2279-4>
- Gurau, C. (2012). A life-stage analysis of consumer loyalty profile: comparing Generation X and Millennial consumers. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29(2), 103–113.
- Halliday, J. (1996). Chrysler Brings Out Brand Personalities with '97 Ads. *Advertising Age*, 3(September 30).
- Hamelin, N., Moujahid, O. E., & Thaichon, P. (2017). Emotion and advertising effectiveness: A novel facial expression analysis approach. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 36, 103–111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2017.01.001>

- Hanna, R., Rohm, A., & Crittenden, V. L. (2011). We're all connected: The power of the social media ecosystem. *Business Horizons*, 54(3), 265–273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.007>
- Harrell, M. C., Bradley, M., Rand Corporation, & National Defense Research Institute (U.S.). (2009). *Data Collection Methods: Semi-structured Interviews and Focus Groups*. Santa Monica, United States: RAND.
- Harzevoort, S. (2019). *PIM Trendrapport (2019)*. Retrieved from <https://www.pimonline.nl/pim-trendrapport-2019>
- Herrmann, S. (2018). A Cultural and Semiotic Analysis of Pepsi and Coca-Cola Advertising Strategies. *Honors Program of Liberty University*, (Spring).
- Hilton, S. (2003). How Brands can Change the World. *Journal of Brand Management*, 10, 370.
- Hoffman, B., & Minsberg, T. (2018, 4 September). The Deafening Silence of Colin Kaepernick. *New York Times*, p. x. Retrieved from The Deafening Silence of Colin Kaepernick
- Hootkin, J., & Meck, T. (2018). *A Call to Action in the Age of Trump* (Business & Politics: Do They Mix?). Geraadpleegd van [www.globalstrategygroup.com](http://www.globalstrategygroup.com)
- Husain, S., Ghufran, D. R. A., & Chaubey, D. R. D. S. (2016). Relevance of Social Media in Marketing and Advertising. *Splint International Journal of Professionals*, 3(7), 21–28.
- John, D. R., Loken, B., Kim, K., & Monga, A. B. (2006). Brand Concept Maps: A Methodology for Identifying Brand Association Networks. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 43(4), 549–563. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.43.4.549>
- Jones, L. H. (2017, 27 september). After first widespread protest wave, NFL players face critical question: What's next? *USAToday*, p. x. Geraadpleegd van <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/2017/09/27/donald-trump-national-anthem-nfl-players-protest/710734001/>
- Jost, J. T., Federico, C. M., & Napier, J. L. (2009). Political Ideology: Its Structure, Functions, and Elective Affinities. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60(1), 307–337.
- Kapferer, J. N. (2012). *The New Strategic Brand Management: Advanced Insights and Strategic Thinking*. 5th edition: London: Kogan Page, .
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>

- Katsanis, L. P. (1994a). The Ideology of Political Correctness and its effect on brand strategy. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 3(2), 5–14.
- Katsanis, L. P. (1994b). The ideology of political correctness and its effect on brand strategy. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 3(2).
- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring and managing customer based equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57, 1–22.
- Keller, K. L. (2001). Building customer-based brand equity: A blueprint for creating strong brands. *Marketing Management*, 28(1), 35–41.
- Keller, K. L. (2003). Understanding brands, branding and brand equity. *Interactive Marketing*, 5(1), 7–20.
- Keum, H., Devanathan, N., Deshpande, S., Nelson, M. R., & Shah, D. V. (2004). The citizen-consumer: Media effects at the intersection of consumer and civic culture. *Political Communication*, 21(3), 369–391.
- Khan, M. (2007). *Consumer Behaviour*. U.S.: New Age International (P) Limited.
- Kochkodin, B. (2018, 6 september). Buzz From Nike's Kaepernick Campaign Now Worth More Than \$163 Million. *Bloomberg*, p. x. Geraadpleegd van <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-09-06/value-of-nike-s-exposure-from-kaepernick-ad-up-to-163-million>
- Kotler, P. (2011). Reinventing Marketing to Manage the Environmental Imperative. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(July), 132–135.
- Kotler, P., & Sarkar, C. (2017, 9 January). Finally Brand Activism. Accessed at 19 March 2019, from <http://www.marketingjournal.org/finally-brand-activism-philip-kotler-and-christian-sarkar/>
- Kurter, H. L. (z.d.). Pepsi on the Forbes World's Most Valuable Brands List [Dataset]. Geraadpleegd op 4 mei 2019, van <https://www.forbes.com/companies/pepsi/>
- LaFeldt, J. (2019, 16 January). Separating the Men from the Boys: Gillette(R) Campaign Inspires Men to Re-Examine What It Means to Be Their Best. *Dow Jones Institutional News*, pp. 0–1.
- Lantz, B. (2013). Equidistance of Likert-Type Scales and Validation of Inferential Methods Using Experiments and Simulations. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 11(1), 16–28.

- Lauletta, T. (2018, 6 September). Colin Kaepernick has already donated more than \$1 million of his NFL earnings to social justice charities. *Business Insider*, p. x. Retrieved from <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/2017/09/27/donald-trump-national-anthem-nfl-players-protest/710734001/>
- Leuthesser, L. (1988). Defining, measuring and managing brand equity. *Marketing Science Institute Cambridge*, .
- Levy, S. J. (1959). Symbols for Sale. *Harvard Business Review*, 52(April), 663–676.
- Linares, F. (2018, 19 December). Disruptors: A Smooth and Precise Cut of US Shaving | Market Research Blog [Blogpost]. Accessed at 4 May 2019, from <https://blog.euromonitor.com/disruptors-a-smooth-and-precise-cut-of-us-shaving/>
- Lutz, R. (1985). Affective and Cognitive Antecedents of Attitude Towards the Ad: A Conceptual Framework. *Psychological Process and Advertising Effects*, , 45–63.
- Madni, A. R., Hamid, D. R. N. A., & Rashid, D. R. S. M. (2014). Influence of Controversial Advertisement on Consumer Behavior. *The Journal of Commerce*, 8(1), 14–24.
- Matos, G., Vinuales, G., & Sheinin, D. A. (2017). The Power of Politics in Branding. *Journal of Marketing theory and Practice*, 25(2), 125–140.
- McGrath, J. E. (1981). The Study of Research Choices and Dilemmas. *AMERICAN BEHAVIORAL SCIENTIST*, 25(2), 197–210.
- Mello, J., & Flint, D. J. (2009). A REFINED VIEW OF GROUNDED THEORY AND ITS APPLICATION TO LOGISTICS RESEARCH. *Journal of Business Logistics*, 30(1), 107–126.
- Micheletti, M. (2003). Political virtue and shopping: Individuals, consumerism, and collective action. *New York: Palgrave*, .
- Micheletti, M., Follesal, A., & Stolle, D. (2004). *Politics, Products and Markets*. New York, U.S.: Transaction Publishers.
- Micheletti, M., & Follesdal, A. (2007). Shopping for Human Rights. An Introduction to the Special Issue. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 30(3), 167–175. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10603-007-9039-0>
- Molinillo, S., Japutra, A., Nguyen, B., & Chen, C. S. (2017). Responsible brands vs active brands? An examination of brand personality on brand awareness, brand trust, and brand loyalty.

- Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 35(2), 166–179. <https://doi.org/10.1108/mip-04-2016-0064>
- Morning Consultant. (2018). *Nike - Kaepernick*. Retrieved from <https://morningconsult.com/form/nike-kaepernick-report/>
- Nandan, S. (2004). An exploration of the brand identity-brand image linkage: A communications perspective. *Brand Management*, 12(4), 264–278.
- Nedungadi, P. (1990). Recall and Consumer Consideration Sets: Influencing Choice Without Altering Brand Evaluations. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17, 263–276.
- Neilson, L. (2010). Boycott or buycott? Understanding political consumerism. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 9(3), 214–227.
- Nichols, L. (2018, 29 January). Plurality of Americans Actually Like Ad That Pepsi Pulled - Morning Consult [Dataset]. Accessed at 4 May 2019, from <https://morningconsult.com/2017/04/11/plurality-americans-actually-like-ad-pepsi-pulled/>
- Nike. (z.d.). Nike Tech Pack Fall 2018. Accessed at 30 April 2019, from <https://news.nike.com/news/nike-tech-pack-fall-2018>
- Nooh, M. N., Shukor, S. A., Aziz, R. A., Khairi, K., & Abdullah, M. (2014). Relationship between Religiosity and Controversial Products and Offensive Nature of Advertising Appeals. *The Journal of Marketing Management*, 2(2), 113–128.
- O'Leary, N. (1992, 24 augustus). Benetton's True Colors. *ADWEEK FEATURE*, 1992(1), 1–4.
- Oliver, R. L. (1999). Whence consumer loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, 63(special issue), 33–44.
- Pauwe, C. (2018, 21 Februari) Suitsupply verliest duizenden volgers door zoenende mannen. Retrieved from <https://nrc.nl/nieuws/2018/02/21/suitsupply-verliest-duizenden-volgers-door-zoenende-mannen-a1593132>
- Parpis, E. (2000). Consumer republic. *Adweek*, 2000(2), 41.
- Plummer, J. T. (1985). Brand Personality: A strategic Concept For Multinational Advertising. *Marketing Educators Conference*, (New York: Young & Rebcam), 1–31.
- Pope, N. K. L., Voges, K. E., & Brown, M. R. (2004). THE EFFECT OF PROVOCATION IN THE FORM OF MILD EROTICA ON ATTITUDE TO THE AD AND CORPORATE IMAGE. *Journal of Advertising*, 33(1), 69–82.

- Rama, Z., Han, H., & Hessels, E. (2018). When Brands go political: A PepsiCo case. *Corporate Brand Management and Reputation*, 20.
- Rani, P. (2014). Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior. *International Journal of Current Research and Academic Review*, 2(9), 52–61.
- Reichert, T., Heckler, S. E., & Jackson, S. (2001). The Effects of Sexual Social Marketing Appeals on Cognitive Processing and Persuasion. *Journal of Advertising*, 30(1), 13–27.
- Rettie, R., Robinson, H., & Jenner, B. (2001). Does Internet Advertising Alienate Users? *Academy of Marketing*, 52, 1–6.
- Rich, M. (2008). Millennial students and technology choices for information searching. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 6(1), 73–76.
- Rich, T. (1998, april). Toscani and his Critics. *Print*, 1998(52), 174–177.
- Richins, M. L. (1994). Valuing Things: The Public and Private Meanings and Possessions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21, 504–521. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2279-4>
- Riezebos, R. (2003). *Brand Management: a theoretical and practical approach*. Harlow: Pearson Education limited.
- Rodrigues, P., & Borges, A. P. (2014). Corporate social responsibility and its impact in consumer decision-making. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 11(4), 690–701.
- Rook, D. W. (1985). The Ritual Dimension of Consumer Behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12(December), 251–264.
- Sandage, C., & Leckenby, J. (1980). Student Attitudes toward Advertising: Institution vs. Instrument.. *Journal of Advertising*, 9(2), 29–44.
- Sapiro, V. (2000). Economic activity as political activity. *Paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC*, .
- Schyns, P. (2016). *Kiezen bij de kassa* (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau). Geraadpleegd van [https://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle\\_publicaties/Publicaties\\_2016/Kiezen\\_bij\\_de\\_kassa](https://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle_publicaties/Publicaties_2016/Kiezen_bij_de_kassa)
- Sen, S., Bhattacharya, C. B., & Korschun, D. (2006). The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility in Strengthening Multiple Stakeholder Relationships: A Field Experiment. *Academy of Marketing Science*, 34(2), 158–166.



- Senecal, S., & Nantel, J. (2004). The influence of online product recommendations on consumers' online choices. *Journal of Retailing*, 80(2), 159–169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2004.04.001>
- Serwer, A. E. (1987, 31 Augustus). Nike Hits Its Stride. *Fortune*, 1987(1), 1. Retrieved from [http://archive.fortune.com/magazines/fortune/fortune\\_archive/1987/08/31/69463/index.htm](http://archive.fortune.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/1987/08/31/69463/index.htm)
- Shah, D. V., McLeod, D. M., Kim, E., Sun Young Lee, Gotlieb, M. R., Ho, S. S., & Breivik, H. (2007). Political Consumerism: How Communication and Consumption Orientations Drive “Lifestyle Politics”. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 611(1), 217–235. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716206298714>
- Shelton Group. (2018). *Brands & Stands: Social purpose is the new black* (how can your company stand and deliver?). Retrieved from <https://engageforgood.com/7887-2/>
- Smith, A. (2017, 6 April). Pepsi Pulls Controversial Kendall Jenner Ad After Outcry [Persbericht]. Accessed at 4 mei 2019, from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/pepsi-ad-kendall-jenner-echoes-black-lives-matter-sparks-anger-n742811>
- Smith, A. C. T., Graetz, B. R., & Westerbeek, H. M. (2006). Brand personality in a membership-based organisation. *International Journal of Non Profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 11(3), 251–266.
- Solomon, M. R., Bamossy, G., Askegaard, S., & Hogg, M. K. (2010). *Consumer Behaviour: A European Perspective*. Madrid, Spain: Financial Times/Prentice Hall.
- Stanwick, P. A., & Stanwick, S. D. (1998). The Relationship Between Corporate Social Performance, and Organizational Size, Financial Performance, and Environmental Performance: An Empirical Examination. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17(2), 195–204.
- Stoeldraijer, L., Van Duin, C., & Huisman, C. (2017). *Bevolkingsprognose 2017-2060* (CBS). Retrieved from <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/maatwerk/2017/52/bevolkingsprognose-2017-2060>
- Stolle, D., & Micheletti, M. (2005, januari). What motivates Political Consumers. *Forschungsjournal neue soziale Bewegungen*, 2005(4), 1–20.
- Stolle, D., & Micheletti, M. (2013). Political Consumerism. *book*, . <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511844553>
- StrategyOne. (2010). [Edelman]. Geraadpleegd op 19 maart 2019, van <https://www.slideshare.net/EdelmanDigital/8095-white-paper>

- Sullivan, M. (1981). Cultural Anthropology: A Contemporary Perspective. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 54(4), 231–233.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed methodology: combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*. California: Sage.
- The Benetton Group. (2014). Accessed at 2 April 2019, from <http://www.benettongroup.com/the-group/business/worldwide-presence/>
- Thomas, L. (2018, 14 September). Nike's Kaepernick ad draws record likes on social media, sends stock to all-time high amid sales boost. *CNBC*, p. x. Retrieved from <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/09/14/nikes-kaepernick-ad-should-fuel-sales-as-retailer-knows-its-consumer.html>
- Tinic, S. A. (1997). United Colors and United Meanings: Benetton and the Commodification of Social Issues.. *Journal of Communication*, 47.
- Vezina, R., & Olivia, P. (1994). Toward an Understanding of the Role and Effects of Provocation in Advertising. *European Marketing Academy*, , 1117–1134.
- Wan, L. C., Poon, P. S., & Yu, C. (2016). Consumer reactions to corporate social responsibility brands: the role of face concern. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 33(1), 52–60.
- Werther, W., & Chandler, D. (2005). Strategic corporate social responsibility as global brand insurance. *Business Horizons*, 48(4), 317–324.
- Williams, R. L., & Cothrel, J. (2000). Four Smart Ways to Run Online Communities. *Sloan Management Review*, 41(4), 81–91.
- Woodside, A. G., & Wilson, E. J. (1985). Effects of Consumer Awareness of Brand Advertising on Preference. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 25, 41–48.
- Yates, L. S. (2011). Critical consumption. *European Societies*, 13(2), 191–217.
- Zheng, R., Li, J., Chen, H., & Huang, Z. (2006). A framework for authorship identification of online messages: Writing-style features and classification techniques. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 57(3), 378–393. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.20316>

## **Appendix 1. Case Studies**

### **1.1. Case Study - Benetton**

#### **1.1. History**

Benetton was founded in 1965 in a small Italian village in the province Treviso by the four Benetton siblings: Luciano, Gilberto, Giuliana, and Carlo. Treviso was an impoverished province in the 1960s. After the death of his father, Luciano left school and started working in a textile shop to support his family. His little sister, Giuliana, made colourful sweaters and this was received positive because the brightly coloured sweater were attractive but unusual in the 60s. Luciano decided to produce these colourful sweaters for local retailers. In 1965 Luciano asked Gilberto and Carlo to join them, and the 'Benetton Group' was formed. They opened their first shop in Belluno, Italy, and after three years they expanded to Paris (Filieri, 2015). Within eight years, the Benetton group built a factory that had sold more than 20.000 colourful sweaters to trendy shops in Italy, France, Germany, and Belgium (Giroux, 1994).

The success of the Benetton Group has several reasons. First of all, the success is due to the innovative operational management techniques. Benetton postponed the dying of the garment for as long as possible so that the decisions about the colours could reflect the market trends of that period. Second is the extensive network, and this includes the subcontractors that supply the factories of Benetton. The third reason is the network organization for distribution. Benetton sold and distributed its products through regional agents, which were responsible for a particular area. Benetton did not own the stores but sold retail licenses. Lastly, and probably the most compelling reason for their expansion worldwide, was their distinctive marketing approach (Barela, 2003).

Nowadays, the company sells a full range of clothing apparel and has a global commercial network of 5.000 retail stores spread across 120 countries. It is a 2 billion dollars fashion empire producing 80 million pieces of clothing a year (The Benetton Group, 2014). Furthermore, the company still wants to redefine what they call the relationship between business life and life itself. The environment, human dignity and the society in transformation are still fundamental values for the companies vision (Borgerson, Schroeder, Magnusson, & Magnusson, 2009).

## **1.2. Advertising Campaign**

The controversial advertisements started when Benetton hired the award-winning photographer Oliviero Toscani in 1984 to create the advertising campaigns. Toscani had earned his recognition from his edgy photography style. Although Toscani got a free hand with the 80 million dollars advertising budget of Benetton, he decided to only focus on print media. Later on, the company agreed to promote itself on specific networks on television outside of Italy, such as MTV in the United States. The commercials illustrated no more than a series of Benetton posters on the street with the noise of car engines and horns in the background. He also decided to bring the markets of different countries together by using a single advertising campaign that would appeal to many cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles around the world. Because the expenses to make different campaigns for specific national markets would have been enormous (Barela, 2003). Below is a statement of the company about this decision:

*“Benetton's strategy for advertising is to communicate in a consistent way in the almost 100 markets we do business. Different markets respond to different trends from the collection and are experiencing different climates and seasons at any particular time. Therefore it is virtually impossible to represent our 4000-piece yearly product offering in an adequate, seasonally appropriate, representative way throughout the world. Instead, Benetton has chosen to create brand awareness through non-product image advertising that positions the company as a concerned, socially-active, cutting edge and global fashion apparel company. (Benetton, 1992)” (Tinic, 1997).*

With Toscani's first work he focused on young people of different races dressed in coloured Benetton's clothes. He aspired to link the colours of Benetton clothes to the cultural diversity of its customers all over the world. Toscani wanted to illustrate harmony, unification and world peace with this campaign. However, Toscani thought this advertisement seemed almost too comfortable in a world filled with political, economic and cultural conflicts. That is why he decided to transform the advertisements into news items, paying attention to current events in the world. These new advertisements aimed to reach people's souls, to start discussions and to demonstrate the world that many persons share the same concerns (Barela, 2003).

In the 90s Toscani adopted 'United Colours of Benetton' as a trademark for the Benetton ideology. In 1989 he started his first attempt to combine high fashion and politics with a campaign that distinguished Benetton from all other fashion brands. He published

controversial and disturbing photographs in various magazines and on billboards. Toscani personally photographed many of the compelling photographs. The highly charged, journalistic photographs included scenes such as a black woman breastfeeding a white infant, different coloured blown-up condoms, a row of test tubes filled with blood, a nun kissing a priest on the lips, and a newborn baby girl covered in blood and still attached to her umbilical cord. The images contained no written text, just the remarkable green and white logo of the United Colours of Benetton. The advertisements did not convey viewers how to view the messages. The advertisements succeeded in capturing the attention of people and the world media and challenged people's beliefs and ethical values (Rich, 1998). The brand received a lot of free publicity. However, whether people and the media were discussing the political and social issues or just the campaign of Benetton is uncertain (Filiari, 2015).

Toscani was able to merge problems faced by many people around the world into a recognizable advertisement. He could indicate that the sorrows faced by residents in one country also exist in the lives of others. The advertisements did not illustrate carefree, happy and attractive models wearing the brand's clothes, but they illustrated the conflicts in the world. By using this unique approach of marketing, people both praised and rejected the Benetton advertisements (Tinic, 1997).

### **1.3. Redefine the Brand Image**

The shift in advertising strategy to controversial, journalistic photographs reflects Benetton's attempt to redefine its brand image. Benetton wanted to position itself as a brand that is socially responsible and not only wants to sell its clothes (Giroux, 1994).

Benetton was on the one hand convicted for illustrating social issues to sell its clothes and was on the other hand praised for incorporating social issues in its campaigns. One of the most controversial and discussed advertisement of Benetton was that of the illustration of AIDS patient David Kirby, accompanied by his family just before he died. This advertisement became the subject of heated debates in several countries. The photograph of David Kirby first had run as a part of a story in Life magazine, but drew back then little attention. When Benetton ran it, the photograph gained worldwide exposure. The family of David Kirby granted Toscani permission to use the photo because they believed the motives of Benetton were sincere. Since Benetton used this photo in its campaign, the company has quietly supported AIDS hospices near the hometown of Kirby in Stafford, Ohio. The father of David Kirby explained in an interview to ADWEEK: *"I worked for a company for 35 years which*

*had a matching donor program,” says William Kirby, David's father. “They would not match our contributions to AIDS. They would only match cultural donations. Then along came Benetton, a company we'd never even heard of, and they have been very generous in our work. They have helped us get five houses repaired and refurbished so we could expand our housing for the homeless with AIDS, and they continue to give us clothing for them.” (O'Leary, 1992).*

Benetton's response to the critics was threefold. First of all, Benetton and his spokespersons reacted aggressively within some public forums and debates to defend its advertisements. For example, Benetton criticized other brands for producing advertisements that added nothing to society. Benetton also seized the opportunity of the debates to redefine its brand identity as a socially responsible brand. Last, Benetton used the debates as a way to get more free publicity like interviews, talks, and articles (Giroux, 1994). In brief, Benetton explained business is not about selling sweaters but about social responsibility, Benetton sees itself as a brand that represents less a product than a lifestyle and a world view. This is captured partially in a statement of the brand that appeared in the fall/winter 1992 advertisement: *“Among the various means available to achieve the brand recognition that every company must have. We at Benetton believe our strategy for communication to be more effective for the company and more useful to society that would be yet another series of ads showing pretty girls wearing pretty clothes” (O'Leary, 1992).* One of the executives of Benetton explained in a statement *“We are not stupid. We are doing corporate communications. We are sponsoring these images to change people's minds and create compassion around social issues” (Giroux, 1994).*

#### **1.4. Criticism**

Some consumers argued that the controversial photographs had discouraged them from buying Benetton clothes, but others praised the socially responsible advertisements. The advertisements did not make an explicit statement about subjects (Rich, 1998). The photographs were isolated from their social and political context. Using this method, the controversial advertisements provided different perceptions among the consumers about the issues focused on. The perceptions are based, in part, on cultural and religious differences, which is why the advertisements were received differently around the world. Benetton's campaigns were welcomed in some countries and rejected in others. About this method, Toscani explained *“Our advertising is a Rorschach test of what you bring to the images. You can see a news photo of fighting in Sarajevo, and it is in context; it conforms to your*

*expectations. Shocking violence in the news is routine. However, when you take the same photo out of the news and put a Benetton label on it, people pause and reflect their position about that problem. When they do not come to terms with it, they get mad at us” (Rich, 1998).* Benetton's advertisements were rejected by governments and blasted by religious leaders. Some advertising executives claimed that Benetton gave the industry an adverse name. Even publishers, who publish the same reality, often rejected to publish the advertisements of Benetton (O'Leary, 1992).

The photograph of three little children, black, white and Asian, sticking out their tongues were deemed pornographic. This advertisement was rejected in Arab countries, where the depiction of internal organs is forbidden. In America, Child Magazine refused to advertise the newborn. The advertisements were also rejected from billboards in Germany. Even though a German AIDS group welcomed the AIDS photo, they thought the photo would help break down taboos and bring death from AIDS into the public consciousness. Also, the French advertising watchdog organization, BVP, recommended rejecting the advertisements. According to BVP advertisements should not indicate personal distress, disarray or death. Simultaneously, the Advertising Standards Authority of Britain reported a record number of complaints about Benetton's newborn advertisement. Of the 10,000 total complaints received that year, 800 concerned Benetton (Tinic, 1997). Much of the criticism was centered on the question of how Benetton could use an innocent infant for commercial ends. To this Toscani replied: *“Many of these same people would have been delighted by the ad if the baby had been cute, clean and smiling” (Rich, 1998).*

In the United States Benetton lost both stores and customers, which was in the 80s its largest market outside Europe. In 1992 Benetton lost 10 million dollars in the United States. However, Benetton indicated the closure of some stores was a necessary adjustment after an expansion boom in the 80s (O'Leary, 1992).

Other criticism about the advertisements was about the fact that Benetton provided no information other than the company's logo. For example, AIDS organizations accused Benetton of exploiting the illness, not by portraying its capacity for devastation, but by failing to provide information about disease prevention and volunteer programs (Tinic, 1997).

The advertisement even created feelings of bitterness among Benetton's retailers that believed the advertisements had decreased sales and were driving away customers. The retailers accused Benetton of provoking adverse reactions through their advertisements. Some retailers

even sued the company but lost the case (Favero, 2006). The retailers argued that although Benetton had full authority about the advertising decisions, Benetton should have considered the protectable interests of the retailers. Debora Romano, a retailer from Florida, had to close 12 of the 27 Benetton shops she owned by her family. In an interview to ADWEEK, she explained *“We are talking about two different areas here. If Benetton wanted to underwrite some cause, I would be supportive. However, we are trying to sell products. At this point, anybody should know what Benetton is. However, we still find many people who know the name but do not know what we sell”*. Susan Oustalet, a former Benetton licensee in Biloxi, sued one of Benetton's United States distributors. She blamed Benetton's advertisements, in part, for causing the bankruptcy of her store. To the interviewer of ADWEEK, she explained *“People stuck their head in the door and said, 'We are not coming in here. You work for a sick company”* (O'Leary, 1992).

In 1997, a decision by the German High Court addressed the matters of Benetton retailers. Both the district court and the state supreme court denied the retailer's claims and were unwilling to question the advertisements of Benetton. The High Court believed that because of the free market economy, Benetton could not be denied the right to pursue new, unusual and risky advertising strategies. Furthermore, the High Court thought it was reasonable to believe that Benetton's economic interest in selling its clothes was the same as those of its retailers (Barela, 2003).

### **1.5. Toscani**

Oliviero Toscani is born in 1942 in Milan and studied photography at Zurich's Kunstgewerbeschule, founded by a member of Germany's avant-garde Bauhaus art school. After obtaining his diploma in 1965, he moved back to Italy and started working with different magazines like Elle, Vogue and Harper's Bazaar. His work soon gave way his interest in social expression. Toscani took on the Vatican when he produced an advertisement for Jesus Jeans that used the theme line *“Those who love me have to follow me.”* His images for Italian maternity company Prenatal in the '70s contained pregnant nuns. Toscani explained *“Fashion is a fig leaf that covers your insecurity, expresses your politics, conveys your acceptance of norms and convention”* (O'Leary, 1992).

In 1982 he began working as Art Director for the Benetton Group. With his work, Toscani wanted to indicate reality. With his work, Toscani wanted to mix press journalism, which goes for sensationalism because nothing normal sells, and advertisement, which goes for



beauty and unreal reality. According to Toscani advertising is not just about selling products, but it has an equal social obligation to do something more. He always believed in the power of communication and thinks that all commercial images have social reality and impact. *“Nobody has analyzed the harm done by stupid advertising and its twisted value system. The stereotypes in those images cause many insecurities.”* He explained. *“Advertising is influential in the education of our young. A lot of young girls are ugly because they feel ugly for not conforming”* (O’Leary, 1992).

In addition to all the critics, Toscani also received positive reactions. For example, ones he received a letter from a student in Sarajevo about the photograph of the clothes of a dead Bosnian soldier. The student wrote to him *“Your picture is making the world talk about us. We need help here. We are isolated.”* At the time of this photograph, the newspapers were full of stories about the divorce of Prince Charles and Princess Diana. Toscani explained that there was just one page in the newspaper about the war in Bosnia. Toscani's reaction was that we need to understand that journalists are in the selling business too. *“They work to sell the newspaper. That is their responsibility. We think we get a newspaper and get the truth. We don't; we get ice cream... in the end, they are selling a product. The big difference is that journalists do journalism to sell journalism; I am not doing any selling. My product is not sweaters - somebody else sells the sweaters. So, in a way, I know I am more serious and what I do is superior to the product that is sold.”* (Rich, 1998).

### **1.6. The Success**

Despite all the criticism about the advertisements and perhaps as a result of it, the profit of the Benetton Group increased by 25 percent in 1990, 24 percent in 1991 to 132 million dollars, and 12 percent in 1992 (Tinic, 1997). Benetton's stock had risen enormously due to increased brand recognition. David Roberts, an analyst with Nomura International/London, indicated that Benetton's name recognition was approaching that of Coca-Cola (O’Leary, 1992). Many of the advertisements have simultaneously won awards and caused public protest (Tinic, 1997). Furthermore, due to the success of the campaigns, Toscani became a kind of commercial star and was asked by American Express to develop marketing concepts for them (Barela, 2003).

Maybe the most critical success for Benetton was not the profit increase itself, but the way they succeeded to change the advertising industry. The brand had taken a bold stance in attempting to use advertising as a forum to address highly charged social and political issues

— many people who suffered believed that the advertisements of Benetton could help them. With the advertisements, other people had to face the reality of such issues and talk about it (Barela, 2003). Benetton attempted to rewrite the relationship between aesthetics, commerce, and politics. The brand wanted to position itself less as a producer of commodities and market retailers than as coherence and community (Giroux, 1994).

Benetton did not want to copy its competitors, but wanted to be divergent. The brand only spent 4 percent of its annual profits on advertising and communication. In the United States Benetton spent about 8 million dollars, whereas their competitors like The Gap spent about 27 million dollars on advertisements. The controversy of the advertisements of Benetton was a boost in visibility in the media, as they got much free publicity. In 1992 the company explained “*Our critics say negative images will not sell products, and then they turn around and say we are exploiting those images to sell.*” (O’Leary, 1992).

The advertisements matched the interests of the Benetton target group. Research indicated that the target group of Benetton were more socially active and aware than any generation before them. Various studies illustrated that in 1992 consumers were as concerned by what a company stands for as they were about the price/value relationship of the products (Benetton, 1992). According to the Eurokids report published by the European advertising group Alto, were the young people in 1992, who grew up with MTV, not as nationalistic as their parents. This generation had shared tastes in fashion, music, and food, but also by lifestyle, attitudes, and values, and national boundaries did not tie this. In the United States, reports illustrated that young people in the 90s shared a specific world outlook: they worry about time, money, school, unemployment, the threat of war, the environment and more. For these reasons, they were more concerned about the rain forests than clothes. That is why a commercial advertisements had little power for the young people at that time, compared with advertisements with ethical beliefs in it (Giroux, 1994).

The success of Benetton was also, in part, enhanced by the successful sponsorships of the company. In 1984 Benetton acquired a Formula 1 stable, which in 1994 and 1995 won the World Championship. The company also owned a basket, rugby, volley, and water-polo teams. In 1992 Luciano Benetton stood as a candidate for and was elected to Parliament, with a move allowing his insider knowledge of economic policy decisions in those troubled years for Italy, and putting his company in the spotlights again (Favero, 2006).

When Toscani left Benetton in 2001 the company's sales were 20 times greater than they were when he arrived (Barela, 2003).

### **1.7. Corporate Identity**

Although people thought that the advertisements were not sincere, the company's President, Luciano Benetton, was always politically active. It was not surprising that the personal philosophies of the president were interchangeable with the corporate image. Benetton claimed that he was only interested in the world and people. *“I have always been sympathetic to people's problems, to minority rights, birth control, disease, wars, racism, religious intolerance. I cannot offer solutions to these problems, but if I can make people more aware than that is all I offer.”* (Tinic, 1997).

Despite the fact that the ethics and values correspond to those of the Luciano Benetton, the company's operations often resemble those of traditional clothing retailers (Borgerson, Schroeder, Magnusson, & Magnusson, 2009). In an interview, published in Business Ethics, a manager of a store of Benetton explained she started working for Benetton because she connected with the ethics of the company. She also indicated that she was aware of the gap between Benetton's corporate strategy and its retail operations. The corporate communication of Benetton was not aligning with all aspects of the organizational identity. The only connection to the firm's values and the stores were posters the employees received from Benetton to display in the company's stores (Emerald, 2010).

Benetton lacked in using communicative tools of store design to connect with its visual identity, including the way values are expressed by their employees. Benetton missed significant opportunities to use retail space and employees as brand-builders connected to a consistently communicated corporate identity. Not only the executives of Benetton needed to represent the corporate identity, but also the retail managers (Borgerson, Schroeder, Magnusson, & Magnusson, 2009). Attracting employees in the center of the corporation's ethics is also known to increase job satisfaction, increase customer satisfaction, all of which may contribute to the profitability of a company. If Benetton has done this, it might also be known for the motivation of its employees just as much as for its campaigns, and many lawsuits could have been avoided (Emerald, 2010).

### **1.8. We, on Death Row**

Benetton went too far with its advertisements when they started the 'We, on Death Row' campaign in January 2000. The campaign cost 20 million dollars and portrayed American

murderers awaiting execution in a 100-page U.S. magazine *Talk* with photographs and interviews. The campaign challenges the right of the state to execute citizens. Around 25 death row inmates were photographed by Toscani and interviewed by freelance journalist Ken Schulman and appeared on billboards, posters and print advertisements. Some photos of prisoners were not so far from the communities where they killed, or where they were imprisoned. No account was taken of the terrible acts that they had committed. The photos were demonstrated on billboards in Europe, but the focus was on America. Around 38 states carried out executions by lethal injection, electrocution, gas chamber or hanging in 2000. In America people did not want to talk about the death penalty; it remained unchallenged and mostly unmentioned (Clark, 2000). Toscani explained he intended to encourage discussion about the human costs of executing criminals (Parpis, 2000).

Benetton was criticized by the families of the inmates' victims and was sued by Missouri Attorney General Jeremiah W. Nixon, for glorifying convicted murders and misleading prison officials regarding the true nature of a request to interview Missouri inmates on death row. To gain access to death row inmates in order to obtain editorials from them, Toscani and Shulman submitted interview requests to the U.S. prisons, stating that inmate pictures and interviews would be used in a "photo essay" and that no profits would be generated. Toscani's replied that the photographs were not an advertisement, because no clothing of Benetton appeared in this issue of *Colours*. Instead, it was a legitimate piece of journalism designed to spark debate on capital punishment. To determine whether Toscani illegally misrepresented himself to prison officials, the court needed to define further the already fine line between journalism and marketing, two distinct forms of media, but ones that are often separately protected by national constitutions (Barela, 2003).

Owing to the lawsuit, the department store chain Sears, Roebuck & Co. to cancel a multimillion-dollar contract to sell Benetton's clothes in 800 of the department stores it had into in 1998. This lead to Toscani resigning in 2002 (Filiari, 2015).

### **1.9. After Toscani Left**

When Toscani left Benetton, the visual expression of ethical values and views went with him. Benetton struggled with image issues, and the turnover decreased. However, the ethical values linked to the United Colours of Benetton continued. For example, in 2001 Benetton did a Volunteer campaign, produced in conjunction with a United Nations assistance program (Borgerson, Schroeder, Magnusson, & Magnusson, 2009)

In 2008 Benetton left the company with an asset of 155 million euros. In 2016, Benetton recorded a loss of 81 million euros. That is why Benetton returned as executive director in 2014 with a reorganization plan. In 2018 he brought along Oliviero Toscani.

Toscani's first campaign was a photograph of 28 schoolchildren of 13 different countries in an Italian primary school, all from different ethnicities, all wearing Benetton clothes. The photograph was his comment on multiculturalism and immigration. All these children from different cultures studied together were educated together, and they will shape the future society together.

## **1.2. Case Study Nike - Colin Kaepernick**

### **2.1. History**

Nike, first named as Blue Ribbon Sports, is an American company founded in 1964. The company sells sneakers, sports clothing, sports accessories, and sports equipment. In 1955, athlete Philip Knight and coach Bill Bowerman met for the first time at the University of Oregon. Bowerman, himself a former Olympian, was then involved as an athletics coach in the development of better sports equipment and better training methods for his students. He came up with the waffle soles: soles that are not entirely closed but have a waffle structure that makes them feel lighter and have a better wearing comfort. Bowerman tested his shoes on his students and concluded that the shoes contributed to better performance. Phil Knight, one of his athletes, came up with the idea of importing new, cheap shoes from Japan to America. These shoes could compete with German brands such as Adidas, which dominated the sports market in the United States at that time. Knight managed to make a deal with Onitsuka Tiger Shoes, a company that nowadays bears the ASICS name. In the early 1970s, Onitsuka Tiger Shoes dissolved the agreement and Knight, and Bowerman decided to continue independently. With over six years of experience in their pocket, they dared to design and produce their brand of sports shoes. Graphic designer Carolyn Davidson was commissioned to make a logo. For 35 dollars she created the Swoosh, now one of the most famous brand logos in the world. In 1978, Blue Ribbon Sports was renamed Nike, after the Greek goddess of victory.

In the 1980s Nike reached the position of the market leader. The company developed new shoes, such as Nike Air Max. Sporting successes were achieved in the 1980s: wearers of Nike shoes won Olympic titles, world championships and set world records. Also, a sponsorship

contract was concluded in 1985 with the world-famous basketball player Michael Jordan. At the end of the 1980s, the world-famous slogan "Just do it" was born. In the 90s Nike had expansion in the number of sponsor contracts, distribution centers, offices and in the field of products. In 1999 Nike produced its first golf balls and the American athletics team, and Tiger Woods were contracted by Nike.

Nowadays, Nike is one of the world's most prominent and most influential companies and brands. The company is now worth about 128 billion dollars and has more than 40.000 employees. In 2018 the company had revenue of 36 billion dollars and the brand value was approximately 32 billion dollars, at place 18 of the world's most valuable brands (Forbes, 2018).

## **2.2. Mission and Vision of Nike**

According to Nike, since 2000 the company has been dominated by "leading the new generation." Innovation still plays an important role in the company. More money is spent on marketing than ever. Nike wants to radiate that it is a brand for everyone. Quoted from Nike's webpage: "If you have a body, you are an athlete" is one of the last slogans. On their website, they mention: *"We create innovative, must-have products. We build deep, personal connections with consumers. Furthermore, we deliver an integrated marketplace with compelling retail experiences."* Their aim is to use the power of sport to move the world forward. Nike believes in a fair, sustainable future, one where everyone thrives on a healthy planet and level playing field. They want to do that by creating groundbreaking sport innovations, by making the products more sustainable, by making a creative and distinct worldwide team and by building a positive impact in communities (about.nike.com).

## **2.3. Colin Kaepernick**

In September 2018, Nike launched an advertisement featuring Colin Kaepernick. Photographs of Kaepernick's face and a simple tagline: "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything." Colin Kaepernick is known for starting a movement within the NFL after he knelt at a 2016 game during the national anthem to protest suppression and police brutality in America. After the game, Kaepernick spoke to the media announcing he refused to stand up to honor a flag for a nation that suppresses black people and people of colour (Hoffman and Minsberg, 2018). President Trump made the movement about patriotism and wanted Kaepernick off the field. At one point in 2017, about 200 NFL players knelt, sat or raised their fists during the anthem to protest black oppression (Jones, 2017). Kaepernick stopped his

contract with the San Francisco 49ers in 2017. Nonetheless, since becoming a free agent, Kaepernick has not been signed by another team. He claims that the NFL owners colluded against him to ruin his career. Since he has been working as an activist, reportedly donating over one million dollars to charity (Lauletta, 2018).

Social media went in an uproar when Kaepernick posted the Nike advertisement on Twitter. People who are firmly against Kaepernick posted their intentions to boycott the brand on social media and filmed themselves burning Nike apparel as a protest. Research from Morning Consultant in 2018 among 8000 American adults, indicated that the purchase considerations would go down. Morning Consultant argued that before the advertisement 49 percent of the American consumers indicated they were sure or very likely to buy Nike products after this decreased to 39 percent. Furthermore, they suggest that favourability among younger generations, Nike users, African Americans, and other vital demographics would decline rather than improve. The next days following shares of Nike stock dropped roughly 3.2 percent. President Trump posted his displeasure for the campaign. Quoting his Tweet: *“Just like the NFL, whose ratings have gone WAY DOWN, Nike is getting absolutely killed with anger and boycotts. I wonder if they had any idea that it would be this way? As far as the NFL is concerned, I just find it hard to watch, and always will, until they stand for the FLAG!”* And later he tweeted: *“What was Nike thinking?”*

However, the campaign also gained positive attention online and offline, among other things from athletes and celebrities. In the days after the launch, the company's online sales increased more than 31 percent (Edison Trends, 2018). That is because supporters of Kaepernick and Nike's statement worked together to buy more Nike apparel. Celebrities like Nick Cannon used their money and platform to purchase Nike gear and give it to the homeless. Furthermore, the Apex Marketing Group researched that Nike received 163 million dollars worth of media exposure. Apex characterized about 40 percent of the publicity as positive, 30 percent negative and 30 percent neutral (Bloomberg, 2018). Also, the advertisement has attracted an additional 170,000 followers to Nike's Instagram account (Thomas, 2018). Camilo Lyon, an analyst at the financial services firm Canaccord Genuity, illustrated that 51 percent supported the advertisement. Around 64 percent of men and 47 percent of women support the advertisement. Around 31 percent indicated they would absolutely purchase more Nike products after seeing the advertisement. Yet, 14 percent would purchase less Nike products. Around 36 percent indicated they would recommend Nike to a friend or family member and 15 percent indicated they would not recommend Nike.

Furthermore, 38 percent indicated they were neutral in their future purchase intent (Creswell et al., 2018). After the initial drop of three percent, Nike's stock started climbing reaching 51 percent a record high, 16 days after the advertisement was launched. Reportedly, Nike's market value increased by 6 billion dollars in the weeks following the launch of the campaign. Furthermore, the YouGov BrandIndex data indicated that Nike's attention score, whether someone has heard anything negative or positive about a brand in the last two weeks, increased significantly after the release of the advertisement. The score increased from +29 to +58 in the United States, and +10 to +23 in the United Kingdom.

There was a risk of Nike upsetting its relationship with the NFL. Still, the league approved a new 10-year contract, which means Nike and Fanatics Inc. become the most important suppliers of apparel to teams and fans. From 2020, Nike will continue to make all NFL apparel for on the field, while all adult fans will wear the Nike logo, but are made and distributed by Fanatics. Nike had made everything before this deal.

#### **2.4. History of Advertisements**

This is not the first time Nike made a social statement in an advertisement. The brand has historically taken a stance on issues, and it almost always resulted in a rise in sales. In July 1988, Nike released its first 'Just Do It' campaign when it addressed ageism featuring the 80-year old runner, Alter Stack, who ran approximately 62,000 miles in his lifetime. The campaign wanted to inspire everyone to get active. The campaign completely transformed Nike's revenue. Increasing from 877 million dollars in the fiscal year 1987 to 1.2 billion in 1988 (Serwer, 1987). Profits almost tripled from the year before, from 35.8 million dollars in 1987 to 101.69 million dollars in 1988, and they were up another 139% by 1990. In 1993 Nike aired a commercial starring Charles Barkley. This caused controversy about whether celebrities should be held at a higher standard. Nike contrasted this commercial in the same year with the great image of their biggest star, Michael Jordan. That fiscal year revenue increased by 15.4 percent.

In August 1995 Nike launched its 'If You Let Me Play Sports' commercial that brought up the issue of gender equality. The commercial encouraged both female athletes and others to get in the game. Earlier that year in February, Nike featured openly gay HIV positive runner Rick Munoz in its 'Just Do It' campaign. International sales rose 36 percent in the fiscal year 1996.

In December 2007, Nike released a commercial featuring Paralympics medallist Matt Scott of the U.S. men's wheelchair Basketball Association. With this commercial, the company



touched on disabilities. Revenue grew 14 percent in fiscal 2008 year from 16.3 billion dollars in 2007, to 18.6 billion dollars. Revenue went down a bit in 2010, but 2012 went up again when Nike newly highlighted the importance of gender equality with its 'Voices' campaign. Revenue increased by 3.2 billion dollars in 2012, over the previous year. Since then, revenue is steadily growing, while the company continues to increase social awareness with advertisements like 'What Will They Say About You,' 'Find Your Greatness and Equality.'

It is also important to note that Nike was under heat for various controversial advertisements that had little to do with social justice. In April 2010, the brand released the commercial featuring Tiger Woods with the voiceover of his late father. This was during the news about his extra-marital affairs. The company also continued to stand by Kobe Bryant in this 2006 campaign, through his sexual assault case and settlement. The criminal charges were ultimately dropped. Although, Nike dropped its endorsement deal with boxer Manny Pacquiao after he made a homophobic comment that was not in line with the values and beliefs of Nike. Furthermore, Baltimore Ravens' Ray Rice, Adrian Peterson, and Lance Armstrong also famously lost their deals.

Nike has also demonstrated its willingness to go against president Trump. A few weeks after Trump became president of America, Nike released a high-profile "Equality" campaign featuring LeBron James and Serena Williams. The campaign's ambassadors included Ibtihaj Muhammad, a Muslim American fencer who wears a hijab when competing, and transgender triathlete Chris Mosier (Business Insider Nederland, 2018).

## **2.5. Consumers**

Nike's target group is young, wealthy, and urban; they are active, who can or will spend more than 100 dollars for a pair of sneakers. In 2017, Nike announced that they planned on targeting consumers in twelve big cities around the globe: New York, London, Shanghai, Los Angeles, Beijing, Berlin, Barcelona, Tokyo, Seoul, Paris, Mexico City, and Milan. On their website, Nike mentioned: *"These key cities and countries are expected to represent over 80 percent of Nike's projected growth through 2020"*(News.Nike, 2018).

Studies suggest that people living in these big cities are generally more racially and ethnically diverse. More importantly, they are supportive of Kaepernick's protest efforts and are generally opposed to Trump. They are more left-oriented when it comes to politics. So, Nike did not just embrace Kaepernick for his vision, but because their target audience has the same view about race, age, and politics as in the campaign with Kaepernick. Research indicates that

18 percent of Nike's buyers are black, 19 percent are Hispanics, 5 percent are Asian, and 67 percent are white. Compared with the population in America, where 13 percent is black, 16 percent is Hispanic, 3 percent is Asian, and 75 percent is white. Nike believes that the white population, especially young whites, support Kaepernick.

In an interview in 1992 to the Harvard Business Review Knight indicated that marketing was the key to Nike's strength. He explained “*We have always believed that to succeed with the consumer, you have to wake him up. He is not going to walk in and buy the same stuff he always has or listen to the same thing he always heard.*” Furthermore, he argued that they did not focus on the negative responses. He mentioned that Nike is always prepared for negative responses because somebody will be offended by their campaigns, no matter what the subject is. However, the criticism is not holding Nike back because they want to take a chance and learn from it.

### **1.3. Case Study Gillette - The Best a Men can Be**

#### **3.1. The History of Gillette**

Gillette is an American razor brand that sells products for shaving and personal hygiene. In 1900, King C. Gillette had the revolutionary idea of making disposable blades that are very thin and strong. King Gillette developed his first safety razor specifically to match the quality of a barber's shave at home in 1901. He obtained the patent for the safety razor in November 1904. In 2005 the parent company The Gillette Company was taken over by Procter & Gamble. Nowadays, the leading target group for Gillette is the young men who make frequent use of razor blades. Gillette uses TV commercials with sometimes various well-known athletes, to reach its target group. Gillette is also a sponsor of various sports events, such as the Champions League soccer and the World Cup for Soccer.

The brand has a rich sports history, as Gillette wants to have the reputation of a performance brand. In the early 1900s, Gillette produced an advertisement with images of baseball greats of that time. Through the years, the brand has maintained to connect with top sports. In 2004, Gillette launched worldwide consumer advertisements and promotional campaigns featuring football star, David Beckham. Furthermore, in 2007 the brand released the Gillette Champions program that highlighted the athletic and personal accomplishments including Roger Federer, Tiger Woods and Thierry Henry. This program was the most significant sports-

marketing action for Gillette and was released in more than 150 markets through different marketing actions.

According to Euromonitor, Gillette is used by 750 million men in more than 200 million countries. However, the last few years sales went down because large competitors like Dollar Shave Club made an online subscription service. Gillette also got an online subscription service in 2014. However, the market share in the United States went down six straight years from 54 percent in 2016 versus 70 percent in 2010. Sales dropped another 3 percent in 2017 (Linares, 2018). The brand is ranked number 32 in the world's most valuable brands. Gillette has a brand value of 17.1 billion dollars and had a revenue of 6.6 billion dollars in 2018. Furthermore, about 30.000 people work for Gillette (About.Gillette, z.d.).

### **3.2. The Campaign**

In January 2019 Gillette comes with a new commercial that causes a lot of commotion, named "We Believe". In the commercial Gillette opposes toxic masculinity, but not everybody appreciates this. The audience finds the opposition offensive; some men feel generalized.

In the commercial Gillette questions its slogan: 'The Best a Man Can Get' and bad behaviour, such as bullying, fighting, discrimination, and sexual harassment is rejected. Gillette asks itself: 'Is this the best a man can get?'. The commercial challenges the stereotypical alpha man to improve his life. At the end of the commercial a few men set a good example: they speak to each other on whistling to women on the street and stop fighting parties between children. Gillette thinks the modern man should not be guilty of macho behaviour and has to set a good example for the next generation. Quoted from the Gillette webpage: *"We want to promote a positive, accessible, inclusive and healthy version of what it means to be a man. From today we will actively challenge the expectations and the stereotypical image of the man. In the advertisements we make, the words we choose and the images we share on social media."*

Soon after Gillette released the commercial online, criticism start flowing, on YouTube the video received 760.000 likes and 1.4 million dislikes. Men reacted with comments that they will never repurchase a Gillette knife and place pictures of their shaving cream in the trash. Procter & Gamble reacted that they had no plans to stop with the commercial, because of the adverse reactions. Mister Bhalla, Gillette brand director of North America, explained *"We recognize it is sparking much passionate dialogue, at the same time, it is getting people to stop and think about what it means to be our best selves, which is the point of the commercial."* (Bruell, 2019).

A study in the United Kingdom, by YouGov BrandIndex, indicated that Gillette attained the highest improvement in Advertisement Awareness of any brand in the United Kingdom in the month the campaign was released. The Ad Awareness score went from 13 percent to 25 percent following the launch. However, not all of the responses were positive, as mentioned before, the Buzz score, a net measure of either people, have heard positive or negative things about the brand in the past few days, had dropped from positive +4.4 to negative -1.7. This substantiates that the campaign led to an increase in adverse reactions. Furthermore, YouGov illustrated that the word-of-mouth increased. Two weeks after the release of the campaign the Word of Mouth score was at at most, it was at +11.4 compared to +0.9 prior (Brophy, 2019).

After a few days past, the advertisement seems to trigger positive reactions as well. The purchase intent scores, the brand which is the consumer's first choice to purchase from, went up. Seven percent of the population in the United Kingdom named Gillette as their first choice for future health and beauty purchases. Since the commercial was released, a third of those who would consider buying Gillette selected the brand as their first choice, 13 percent more than before the launch. Another study in the United Kingdom illustrated that 56 percent of consumers who use products from the competitors of Gillette indicated that they would be more likely to buy from Gillette after they watched the commercial. As only 18 percent indicated, they would be less likely to buy a product from Gillette after watching the commercial. In addition, the research illustrated that after watching the commercial, 71 percent of consumers agreed that Gillette shares their values, compared with 42 percent before viewing. Also, 72 percent agreed that Gillette is socially responsible, compared with 45 percent before viewing the commercial (Brophy, 2019).

Before launching the commercial, Gillette conducted a national study, under the U.S. men and women, to find out how they would define the traits of a man that is at his best. The results highlighted the outsized importance of 'soft' skills, and most particularly the application of those skills to the role of fatherhood. The respondents defined the characteristics of a man at his mast as 'Honesty' (64%), 'Moral integrity' (51%), 'Hard-working' (43%) and 'Respectful to others' (41%). Furthermore, the respondents all agreed that the most important characteristics of a 'great' man are, being a good father (95%). In addition, important actions a 'great' man should take are: setting a good example for others (96%), and stepping in and taking action when he sees someone in need (95%) (LaFeldt, 2019).

### **3.3. Target Group**

By positioning itself as a socially responsible brand, Gillette may attract their key target group, the millennials, and it has lost most due to the competition on the market. A study illustrated that millennials are more likely to choose and be loyal to a brand that has a strong purpose and social consciousness. The commercial of Gillette speaks to the majority of the millennials who want to support the change that is needed (Bruell, 2019).

### **3.4. Authenticity**

Gillette mentions on the front page of their website that it is time that we acknowledge that brands play a role in changing the culture. So, Gillette is committed to driving change that matters, starting with their behaviour and encourage programs that help men taking positive action everywhere. They are committing to donate 1 million dollars annually for the next three years to non-profit organizations with programs in the United States created to inspire, educate and help men of all ages realize their personal 'best' and become role models. This donation aims to help create a new standard for boys to admire and for men to achieve.

Thirty years ago, Gillette launched their 'The Best A Man Can Get' tagline. According to the brand it has been an aspiration statement, reflecting standards that many men strive to achieve. With the commercial, the brand wants to change the era of masculinity together with its customers. According to Gillette changes are needed. Gillette explains *“As a company that encourages men to be their best, we have a responsibility to make sure we are promoting positive, attainable, inclusive and healthy versions of what it means to be a man.”*

Most importantly, the commitment of Gillette fits the vision and values of Procter & Gamble. In recent years P&G used advertising as a platform to demonstrate their point of view on subjects such as gender equality, gun control, and immigration. For example, other brands of P&G like Always, launched the campaign 'Like a Girl' to start a movement to improve the confidence of young women (Bruell, 2019).

## **1.4. Case Study Pepsi - Live for Now Moments Anthem**

### **4.1. History**

Pepsi is a carbonated cola drink originating in the United States and produced by PepsiCo. Their largest competitor is another American Cola brand, Coca-Cola.

In August 1898, pharmacist Caleb D. Bradham started selling a syrup under the name Pepsi-Cola in his drug-store. In 1902 the first advertisements appeared in which the stimulating invigorating and otherwise beneficial qualities of Pepsi-Cola were promoted, and in December of the same year, Bradman founded the Pepsi-Cola Company. In 1903 Bradham had trademarked the name and was selling Pepsi-Cola to drug-stores and other vendors in North Carolina. In 1910 Pepsi was sold in 24 states. Around 1913 the company switched marketing tactics and decided to use the power of celebrities to sell Pepsi. In that year, Pepsi hired Barney Oldfield, a famous racer of the era, as head of their campaign. He became famous for his slogan 'Drink Pepsi-Cola. It will satisfy you'. The Pepsi company would continue to use celebrities to promote their drink.

After the World-War I and II the company decided to target the Baby Boomers. The first advertisements focused on young people, the so-called Pepsi Generation. The company launched a campaign entitled “Now it is Pepsi - for those who think young.” “Come alive! You are in the Pepsi generation!” was the theme of the campaigns in 1963 and onwards.

Throughout the late 70s and early 80s, the Pepsi Generation advertisement continued to appeal to young consumers while also targeting older consumers with a series of 'Pepsi Challenge' commercials and in-store tastings. In 1984 Pepsi worked together with King of Pop Michael Jackson, who was amid his Thriller success back then. The TV commercials featuring Michael Jackson were such a hit that Pepsi would hire several celebrities throughout the decade, among others Tina Turner, Joe Montana, Michael J. Fox, and Geraldine Ferraro (Pepsistore, accessed at 4-5-2019).

Nowadays, Pepsi is a well-known brand and is placed number 29 at the rank of World's Most Valuable Brands in 2018. Pepsi has a brand value of 18.4 billion dollars and had a revenue of 9.7 billion dollars. The PepsiCo Company had revenue of 64 billion dollars in 2018 (Kurter, accessed at 4-5-2019).

#### **4.2. The Commercial**

In April 2017, PepsiCo launched the commercial 'Live for Now Moments Anthem' featuring supermodel, Kendall Jenner. The video illustrates how a protest march is going on in the street where Kendall happens to have a photo shoot that day. The march features blue signs that have words like peace and phrases such as “join the conversation” written onto them. Kendall then decides to throw her wig away, wipe off her lipstick and join the demonstration. That ends when she gives a policeman a can of coke and is hugely welcomed for that.

The demonstration in the commercial featured people from all races and backgrounds. In the commercial, Jenner is encouraged by a Middle-Eastern woman, wearing a hijab, and an Asian-American man to join the march, and Jenner agrees. After various shots of people dancing and playing instruments in the streets, the crowd approaches the police. Out of the crowd, Jenner approaches a police officer, who is also white, with a Pepsi canakin in her hand. She hands the police officer the can, and he drinks it. As a response, the crowd begins to cheer and dance again. The police officer looks at a fellow officer and smiles. After this scene, the final scene of the advertisement is of the crowd walking forward, and the words come across the screen “Live Louder.” The Pepsi advertisement uses Pepsi in a way that is a vehicle to make a statement that may impact culture (Hermann, 2018).

The aim of the commercial for Pepsi was to be received as a global leader of pop-culture around the world. Nonetheless, after the release of the commercial, Pepsi became an online target of criticism for being insensitive to the social injustices and the police brutality that is a large issue in the United States. After receiving adverse reactions, the company decided to withdraw the commercial and to apologize publicly to its stakeholders and Kendall Jenner. The company emphasized that they wanted to create “a global message of unity, peace, and understanding.” PepsiCo explained “*Pepsi was trying to project a global message of unity, peace and understanding. Clearly we missed the mark, and we apologize. We did not intend to make light of any serious issue. We are removing the content and halting any further rollout. We also apologize for putting Kendall Jenner in this position.*” However, Rama et al. (2018) think the message was received wrong as it was perceived as exploitative brand social activism. While there were no comparisons made with the 'Black Lives Matter' march during the commercial, the commercial was launched at the same time of the marches and protests of the 'Black Lives Matter,' and so was received as a similar context.

The criticism affected the reputation and the perception of Pepsi, where the adverse reactions stood for 53 percent on social media like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Activists and protestors from the United States, including Martin Luther King Jr.’s daughter, spoke out against the advertisement under the claim that it was insensitive to the difficulties of those activists seeking justice particularly for minority communities (Smith, 2017).

The revenue of PepsiCo increased in the period after the release of the commercial (Crain, 2017). The Morning Consult conducted a survey among 2200 people and illustrated that 44 percent of the respondents had a higher favourable view of Pepsi after watching the

commercial, while 25 percent thought more negatively of the brand. Around 28 percent did not seem to care. The feeling towards the commercial varied widely by race, 75 percent of Latinos and 51 percent of African-Americans indicated the commercial made them more favourable toward Pepsi, versus just 41 percent of white people. Furthermore, 32 percent of the respondents indicated they are more likely to buy Pepsi after watching the commercial, versus 20 percent who were less likely.

The research illustrated that Republicans were more likely to dislike the commercial than Democrats. Twenty-nine percent said the video gave them a less favourable view of Pepsi, versus 23 percent of Democrats. At the moment when Jenner handed a police officer the canakin of Pepsi where Democrat and Republican reactions are most different: Democrat's favorability decreased, while Republican's increased (Nichols, 2018).

When watching the target group of Pepsi, the young consumers between ages 18 to 29, 17 percent ranked the commercial as 'not favourable at all' after watching it. Eighteen percent of the respondents are white, 14 percent of African-Americans and 12 percent of Hispanic respondents. Twenty-five percent of the young respondents indicated they had a less favourable view of Pepsi after seeing the commercial, and 20 percent indicated they were less likely to buy Pepsi products (Hermann, 2018).

The commercial did not pay much for the celebrity, Kendall Jenner. Just 28 percent of the respondents indicated it made them see Jenner more favourable.

The withdrawing of the commercial and the publicly apologizing were short term solutions of PepsiCo. On the long term, PepsiCo decided to create a Super Bowl commercial called "This is the Pepsi", that celebrates the iconic commercials throughout the years. This was another step into the direction of rebuilding the brand's reputation, with the help of the consisting brand identity and image (Rama et al., 2018).



## **Appendix 2. Survey Questions**

### **Introduction**

Dear respondent,

Thank you for participating in my graduation research in the context of the Masters in Marketing at Erasmus University. My name is Michelle Jamoneau and I am researching the influence of brand activism on the buying behavior of Dutch consumers.

Brand activism is understood by brands as taking a (controversial) position on social, political, economic or environmental issues. The purpose of this is to make such issues open to discussion or to break taboos in order to improve society.

The survey will take no more than 5 minutes of your time. The results of this research are completely anonymous and I only use for my research.

If you are interested in the results of the survey, you can leave your email address at the end of this survey. The results will then be shared with you in August. If you have any further questions, you can reach me via the following email address: 509403mj@student.eur.nl.

Sincerely,

Michelle Jamoneau

### **Question 1:**

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

### **Question 2:**

What is your age?

....

### **Question 3:**

In which province do you live?

- Brabant
- Drenthe

- Flevoland
- Friesland
- Gelderland
- Groningen
- Limburg
- Noord-Holland
- Overijssel
- Utrecht
- Zeeland
- Zuid-Holland

**Question 4:**

What is your highest level of education?

- High School
- MBO
- HBO
- WO

**Question 5:**

Which factors, other than price and quality, influence your preference for a certain brand when buying products that you do not often buy and compare with each other (such as clothing)?

*Multiple answers possible*

- This brand fits well with my personality.
- This brand has a good image.
- The brand has good social views.
- My environment often buys this brand.
- Buying the products or services of this brand has become automatic.
- There are no other factors for me.
- Otherwise, namely.....

**Question 6:**

In the past, have you intentionally NOT purchased products or services from a certain brand because you did not agree with the social views of the brand?

- No
- Yes

**Question 7:**

In the past, did you intentionally purchase products or services from a certain brand because you agreed with the social views of the brand?

- No
- Yes

**Question 8:**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

1. I will make extra efforts, such as traveling further to a store, to buy products or services from brands that have social views that I also find important.
  2. I am willing to pay more for a brand that makes a positive contribution to society.
- Totally disagree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
  - Agree
  - Totally agree

**Question 9:**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

1. In general, advertisements influence my buying behavior.
  2. Ads based on emotion influence my buying behavior rather than informational advertisements.
  3. If a brand takes a position that I agree with, I will recommend this brand to friends and family.
  4. If a brand takes a position that I DO NOT agree with, I will discourage this brand from friends and family.
- Totally disagree

- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Totally agree

**Question 10:**

How important do you think brands act and communicate on a scale of 1 to 10 in the following way?

- Honest
- Reliable
- Authentic
- Consistent
- Empathic
- With humor
- Reflects my personal views

**Question 11:**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

1. Brands have the power to influence social change.
2. I appreciate it when brands openly make statements about controversial social issues.
3. I appreciate it when brands take action to address important issues that society faces.
4. In solving social problems, the role of brands is more important than that of the government.

**Question 12:**

To what extent do you appreciate it when brands speak about the following issues on a scale of 1 to 10:

- Human rights
- Environment
- Animal welfare
- Gender issues (Metoo, feminism)
- LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender)
- National issues (Nashville Declaration, Black Pete Discussion)

- International issues (Brexit, President Trump)
- Immigration
- Taxes
- Drugs legalisation
- Religious issues
- support for a political party

*For the research it is essential that I can link the results to personal characteristics. That is why a few short personal questions follow. Your anonymity is of course fully guaranteed.*

**Question 13:**

Are you actively looking for information about what brands stand for and what contribution they make to society?

- No
- Yes

**Question 14:**

How often do you deal with the news per day? (Watch, read and talk)

- Never
- 1 to 2 times a day
- 3 to 5 times a day
- 6 to 8 times a day
- 9 times or more

**Question 15:**

What is your income?

- Under modal
- Modal
- Above modal

**Question 16:**

What is your political preference in general?

- Right oriented
- Middle
- Left oriented

**Question 17:**

Do you have general confidence in the Dutch government?

- No
- Yes

**Question 18:**

Do you live in the city or in the countryside?

- City
- Countryside

**Question 19:**

Do you or one of your parents (also) have a nationality other than the Dutch nationality?

- No
- Yes

**Question 19.B:**

What nationality do you or one of your parents (apart from) the Dutch have?

.....

**Question 21:**

Thanks for your time. If you would like to receive the results of my research, please leave your e-mail address below.

....

## **Appendix 3. Overview Experts**

### **1. Anneke van de Langkruis - Priva**

Priva develops and produces technology for the optimization of environmental conditions and process management. The company offers solutions for horticulture, building automation, and everything in between with a combination of software, hardware, and services.

In 2014 the CEO of Priva, Meiny Prins, came with an initiation called 'Sustainable Urban Delta.' The Sustainable Urban Delta is about creating an activist movement. According to Meiny Prins, efficient energy and water flows, sustainable food production, green and clean city districts, decentralized and short chains make cities the drivers of sustainability and radical innovations: Sustainable Urban Deltas.

Meiny Prins believes that the Netherlands can make an international statement, but only if companies develop a vision together. She says the Netherlands is also one big sustainable urban delta, and possibly 'the greenest city' in the world. She wants to stimulate Dutch companies to take the lead, to make other cities aware of the possibilities. The companies in the Netherlands can play a significant role in global changes towards a more sustainable world.

Anneke van de Langkruis works since 2012 at Priva. The researcher wanted to know from her how the initiative of Sustainable Urban Delta's relates to Priva and what kind of effects the initiative has on the company and its results. As Head of Customer Experience, Anneke van de Langkruis knows the target audience of Priva, and she knows what they want from the company, and what their reactions are to the initiative.

### **2. Ron Schneider - Eneco**

Eneco is a Dutch energy company that would like to be seen as a sustainable brand. Their mission is to help everyone to switch to clean, smart, and sustainably generated energy.

On Christmas 2018 Eneco released its newest campaign: 'The whole of the Netherlands is switching.' A Dutch song called 'The village' of Wim Sonneveld forms the guideline in this new commercial where 'old' and 'new' meet. About every sentence from the song is translated into the current situation. The commercial illustrates what has positively changed in the Netherlands.

However, the commercial also featured controversial images. Wim Sonneveld sings in the song 'It is where I was born.' During this sentence, you see a woman with a headscarf and a baby sitting in front of the hospital in Rotterdam. This picture raises the immigration issue in the Netherlands. Moreover, with the sentence: "Along my father's garden path," you see a gay couple walking with an Afro-American child, which is also a controversial scene.

Moreover, Schneider has also worked at the Dutch Railways (NS) during the launch of a new advertisement called 'taste the freedom.' In this commercial, two women flirt with each other. With this commercial, it seemed that the NS wanted to take lesbian love out of the taboo mood.

In short, Ron Schneider was asked because the researcher thought he could tell the reasons behind the use of controversial issues in a brand's campaign, and what the effect of these statements are. He knows how the consumers in the Netherlands react to such campaigns, and if there are positive results.

### **3. Jacklynn Gerritsen - Libelle en Margriet**

The 'Libelle' and 'Margriet' are Dutch women's magazines. These magazines often make campaigns in which issues are discussed. A few examples are 'I care about you,' 'Just tough,' 'Time for each other,' and 'A week for the caregiver.'

With 'I care about you,' the magazine wanted to emphasize the importance of attention and recognition for each other. The campaign is a call to take action for someone else. To make life in the Netherlands warmer and friendlier together and to offer a counter-opinion in a time in which society seems to harden more and more.

With the 'Simply tough' campaign, Margriet celebrated her 80th birthday. The campaign illustrated personal portraits of 80 women, who are in their way tough.

Moreover, Margriet started a campaign that advocated that caregivers can be caregiver-free for at least one week a year. Margriet called on everyone to sign a petition, which was established in collaboration with MantelzorgNL. The national association for caregivers has been arguing for some time for better provisions for caregivers to transfer care temporarily.

Finally, Libelle did a campaign called 'Time for each other.' No less than 41 percent of Dutch couples think that they spend too little on each other, according to research from Libelle.



Together with content marketing agency LifeHunters, the women's magazine challenged people to pay attention to each other.

The magazines are socially involved positively and pay attention to developments that concern their readers. The researcher wanted to hear from Jacklynn Gerritsen why the brands create these campaigns and what the effects are. The researcher wanted to know if the brands receive much free publicity and if they reach a new target audience with the campaigns. Moreover, the researcher wanted to hear how the target audience reacts to these campaigns.

#### **4. Gijsbregt Vijn - Lemon Scented Tea**

The Storytelling Agency Lemon Scented Tea believes that every strong brand has a great story to tell. Lemon Scented Tea develops strategic brand positioning, creative concepts for internal and external campaigns, activations, and narratives for content, PR, and social campaigns. They help companies to connect and engage with people worldwide. They work for brands like Nuon, Plastic Whale, WasteBoars, and Veloretti. The company wants to create stories that touch the heart and is easy to remember. They believe it is vital to be authentic and consistent while still grabbing the available business opportunities.

As Managing Director has Gijsbregt Vijn the knowledge about successful campaigns. According to him, successful brands need an authentic and positive story that has a great opponent in it, a story that the consumer wants to participate in. The researcher wanted to know from Gijsbregt Vijn what his opinion is about Brand Activism and if he expects that brands in the Netherlands would take stand in controversial issues. Moreover, the researcher wanted to know which elements a good campaign should have.

#### **5. Marthe Noordzij - Pepsi**

As the researcher wrote in the case study in chapter 2, Pepsi launched the commercial 'Live for Now Moments Anthem' in 2017 featuring supermodel Kendall Jenner. After the release of the spot, Pepsi became an online target of criticism for being insensitive to the social injustices and the police brutality that is a big issue in the United States. After a while of receiving adverse reactions, the company decided to withdraw the commercial and to apologize publicly to its stakeholders and Kendall Jenner.

The researcher wanted to know from Marthe Noordzij, Junior Brand Manager Beverages at Pepsi, if the consumers in the Netherlands had responded to the commercial, and if Pepsi Netherlands had noticed any differences in sales results. Moreover, the researcher was curious

about what the differences are between the Pepsi brand in the United States and the Netherlands.

## **6. Angela Ursem - Tony's Chokolonely**

Tony's Chokolonely is 'the Dutch activist brand' originated from activism because presenter Teun van de Keuken of 'De Keuringsdienst van Waarde' uncovered the abuses in the cocoa industry. He reported himself to the authorities as a chocolate criminal, for eating chocolate contaminated with slavery. The case was declared inadmissible, but the creation of Tony's Chokolonely was a fact.

Tony's Chokolonely has a clear goal, a clear mission, and a sharp strategy. They want to make the entire chocolate industry 100% slave-free. The company is determined to change chocolate and inspire others to take their responsibility. The brand knows collaboration is needed to achieve success, and so they do not consider competitors as a threat, but as a partner in their mission to get more people to buy slave-free chocolate.

As 'Movement Maker' at the Dutch activist brand Tony's Chokolonely, Angela Ursem is an expert in brand activism. The researcher wanted to hear her opinion about brand activism and if she expects other brands to take action as well.

## **7. Katelijne Blom - LEWIS**

Katelijne Blom works for the international agency LEWIS. LEWIS has 29 offices worldwide and develops detailed analyzes and SEO campaigns. They also work on creative digital and design projects. On August 2, 2018, Blom published an article called "Brand Activism: This is How You Cope Strategically With Social Involvement."

The researcher wanted to interview Katelijne Blom after reading the article. The researcher wanted to hear Blom's opinion about brand activism in the Netherlands and what brands should pay attention to.

## **Appendix 4. Interview Guide**

### **A. Explanation purpose of the interview**

### **B. Permission to record the conversation**

### **C. Background information Marketer**

- Date interview:
- Naam brand:
- Adress company:
- Name interviewee:
- Function interviewee:
- Age interviewee:

#### **1. General information :**

1. When did the company start?
2. What is the size of the company in € revenue?
3. How many employees does the company have?
4. How would you describe the intensity of competition in your market in absolute terms? (very low / low / medium / high / very high).
5. In how many and which countries do you sell?
6. What does your brand stand for, which values are important?

#### **2. Dutch Consumers**

**B1:**        Do you investigate the target group? If so, what do you investigate?

- No research is done for new information about the target group.
- Research should actually be done, or that happens at most sporadically.
- Research is being done, but this is unstructured and unplanned.
- Proactive, thorough and intensive research is being done on consumers.

**B2:**        How has the target group developed over the past 5 years?

- The target group has not changed because ...
- The target group has hardly changed, because ...
- The target group has changed very much because ..

**B3:**        Do you think that Dutch Consumer Policy has become more aware?

### 3. Advertisements

C1: What do you think are the characteristics of a good advertisement?

- Information about the products or services are very important.
- Emotion is important in an advertisement.
- A combination of both.
- Otherwise, namely..

C2: Before the launch of each new campaign, is research being carried out into market developments and the target group? If so, what is specifically investigated?

C3: What is the purpose of the campaigns

C4: Are the ads different per country? If so, how does the Netherlands relate to other countries?

C5: Were the ads for launch always tested with the target group? If so, what will the advertisement be tested on?

C6: Do you have a crisis plan ready, should the campaign not be well received?

C7: Has the social media influenced the advertisements? If so, in what way?

- We pay more attention to the shareability of the campaign.
- The campaigns have a faster effect than before.
- There is always or more negativity about Eneco.
- The effect of the campaigns is much greater than before (more awareness than before).

### 3. Political Awareness

D1: Edelman: 46% of people believe that brands have better ideas than the government to solve social problems in the country in which they live. What do you think about this?

D2: Research indicates that the majority of people in America and England expect brands to mix politically, what do you think about this?

D3: What does it do for a company if a company stays neutral?

#### **4. Brand Activism**

E1: Do you agree with the following statement: It is no longer enough to do corporate social responsibility or define an inspiring purpose. Marketers must work hard for socially improving business.

E2: How do you try to change the thoughts and / or behavior of the consumer?

E3: What do you think of brands that do brand activism for a short period, for example in the form of 1 campaign?

- I absolutely do not agree with this. Brand activism must be part of your business.
- The campaign must last at least one year.
- If this campaign makes a positive contribution to society, I agree.

E4: Do you think that controversial views can lead to better operating results and why do you think so?

E5: In what way would brand activism be different in the Netherlands than in the rest of the world?

E6: In what way does Dutch politics influence brand activism? Would brand activism, for example, be different if FVD became the largest party instead of VVD?

E7: Do you think that companies that engage in brand activism can charge a higher price? If so, why?

E8: Do you think brand activism can lead to more loyal customers?

## Appendix 5. Scoring System

### 1. Factors that influence the preference for a brand.

- If the social statement of a brand influences the preference - 1 point
- If only quality and price influence the preference - -1 point

### 2. Boycotts and Buycotss

- If the consumer buycotts instead of boycotts a brand - 2 points
- If the consumer buycotts and boycotts a brand - 1 point
- If the consumer does not buycott or boycott a brand - 0 points
- If the consumer boycotts instead of buycotts a brand - -1 point

3. The extra effort the consumer is willing to buy products of a brand; - 1 to 5 points

4. The higher price the consumer is willing to pay for the brand - 1 to 5 points

5. Emotional aspects will influence the buying behavior - 1 to 5 points

### 6. Word-of-Mouth because of the social statements a brand makes.

- If the consumer will recommend a brand instead of discouraging it - 2 points
- If the consumer will recommend and discourage a brand - 1 point
- If the consumer will neither recommend or discourage a brand - 0 points
- If the consumer will discourage a brand instead of recommending it - -1 point

7. Agree or disagree with the four statements about brand activism - 1 to 5 points

Success brand activism	Factors	Points
<b>5. A strong chance for brand activism</b>	More boycotts than buycotts.	2
	Consumers are confident that they are willing to make extra efforts to buy products of a brand.	5
	Consumers are confident that they are willing to pay a higher price.	5
	The social statement of a brand influences the preference for a brand.	1
	Emotional aspects will strongly influence buying behavior more than informational aspects.	5
	The chance that the consumer will recommend that the brand is higher than the chance that the consumer will discourage the brand.	2
	The consumers strongly agree with the statement that brands have the power to influence social change.	5
	The consumers strongly appreciate it when brands openly make statements about controversial social issues.	5
	The consumers strongly appreciate it when a brand takes action to address critical issues that society faces.	5
	The consumers strongly agree with the statement that the role of brands is more important than that of the government.	5
<b>Minimum 32 points; Maximum 40 points</b>		
<b>4. A good chance for brand activism</b>	The consumer buycotts or boycotts a brand.	1
	Consumers are willing to make extra efforts to buy products of a brand.	4
	Consumers are willing to pay a higher price.	4
	The social statement of a brand influences the preference for a brand	1
	Emotional aspects will influence buying behavior more than informational aspects.	4
	The chance that the consumer will recommend that the brand is higher than the chance that the consumer will discourage the brand.	1
	Consumers agree with the statement that brands have the power to influence social change.	4
	The consumers appreciate it when brands openly make statements about controversial social issues.	4
	The consumers appreciate it when a brand takes action to address critical issues that society faces.	4
	The consumers agree with the statement that the role of brands is more important than that of the government.	4
<b>Minimum 25 points; Maximum 31 points</b>		
<b>3. A neutral chance for brand activism</b>	Consumers are neutral in willing to make extra efforts to buy products of a brand.	3
	Consumers are neutral in willing to pay a higher price.	3
	Emotional aspects will not influence buying behavior more than informational aspects.	3
	Consumers are neutral with the statement that brands have the power to influence social change.	3

	The consumers are neutral when brands openly make statements about controversial social issues.	3
	The consumers are neutral when a brand takes action to address critical issues that society faces.	3
	The consumers are neutral with the statement that the role of brands is more important than that of the government.	3
	<b>Minimum 18 points; Maximum 24 points</b>	
<b>2. A bad chance for brand activism</b>	Fewer buycotts than boycotts.	-1
	Consumers are not willing to make extra effort to buy products of a brand.	2
	Consumers are not willing to pay a higher price.	2
	The consumer only focuses on price and quality when buying a product.	-1
	Emotional aspects will not influence buying behavior more than informational aspects.	2
	The chance that the consumer will recommend that the brand is lower than the chance that the consumer will discourage the brand.	-1
	Consumers do not agree with the statement that brands have the power to influence social change.	2
	The consumers do not appreciate it when brands openly make statements about controversial social issues.	2
	The consumer does not appreciate it when a brand takes action to address critical issues that society faces.	2
	The consumers do not agree with the statement that the role of brands is more important than that of the government.	2
	<b>Minimum 11 points; Maximum 17 points</b>	
<b>1. A terrible chance for brand activism</b>	Fewer buycotts than boycotts	-1
	Consumers are confident that they are not willing to make extra efforts to buy the products of the brand.	1
	Consumers are confident that they are not willing to pay a higher price.	1
	The consumer only focuses on price and quality when buying a product.	-1
	Emotional aspects will not influence buying behavior more than informational aspects.	1
	The chance that the consumer will discourage the brand is higher than the chance that the consumer will recommend the brand.	-2
	The consumers strongly disagree with the statement that brands have the power to influence social change.	1
	The consumers certainly do not appreciate it when brands openly make statements about controversial social issues.	1
	The consumers certainly do not appreciate it when a brand takes action to address critical issues that society faces.	1
	The consumers strongly disagree with the statement that the role of brands is more important than that of the government.	1
	<b>Minimum 2 points; Maximum 10 points</b>	



## Appendix 6. Thematic Analysis Interviews

	B1	B2	B3	C1	D1	D2	D3	E1
Expert 1	Naar mijn idee nooit genoeg. We krijgen	Het ligt er heel erg aan. We zien nu wel echt een	Ik kan natuurlijk niet voor heel Nederland		Ik geloof niet dat merken perse betere ideeën	Nee, op dit moment nog niet. Ik denk	Ja, sommige zaken worden een beetje	Ik vind dat bedrijven in bepaalde
Expert 2	Ja dit doen we eigenlijk continue er	Duurzaamheid staat steeds meer op de agenda	Klimaat werd steeds meer een onderwerp	Er zijn sales gedreven campagnes	Als het dicht bij huis is wel. Merken overleggen heel	Ik vind dat je het altijd heel dicht bij je	Mensen niet tegen de borst stoten	
Expert 3	We hebben af een toe een bunch met	Ik denk dat onze doelgroep heel erg mee gaat met	We hebben de nieuwscafe waar we altijd politicus	Een goede campagne moet	Ik denk wel dat dit waar is. Uiteindelijk maakt	Ik vind dat absoluut niet. Merken zijn	Je denkt wel overna hoe je het randje op	Alleen roepen en niets doen
Expert 4		Een merk dat een purpose heeft, of in ieder geval een	Ik denk dat een kleine groep dit heeft. zeg 15%	De reclame moet in ieder geval	Ik denk dat dit absoluut zo is. Merken hebben	Ik denk dat elk merk een duidelijke	Bad press is wat ik het	Het moet gedragen worden. er
Expert 5	We doen verschillende	Ik denk wel dat je kijkt naar de	Ja denk ik ook wel. Politiek is ook wel een	Dat is heel erg	Ja dat denk ik wel. Het ligt natuurlijk heel erg aan welke	Merken moeten het elke keer doen	Het ligt heel erg aan de branche	Verschil tussen
Expert 6	In Nederland meten we al jaren of het	De doelgroep is veranderd, omdat de totale	Niet zo zeer politiek bewust, maar	Wij hebben en no paid media beleid	Merken en politiek kunnen elkaar ongelofelijk goed	Mijn persoonlijke mening is dat	Dit hangt echt af van het type bedrijf	Good business moet de
Expert 7		Ik denk dat we door de digitalisering een	Dit vind ik lastig om te zeggen. Ik denk dat we		Ik denk dat merken vaak wel een beter idee	De manier af en de		denk dat maatschapp