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## Contemporary Consumption of Brand Activism

Natasha Lewis and Jessica Vredenburg

### Introduction

When brands are consumed, consumers access the meaning contained within them, co-creating that meaning through their consumption of, and relationships with, the brand in question. As consumers form relationships with brands, they continue to extract the meanings embedded within them, and to use them in their own lives. Thus, brands are important building blocks of the self, serving as relational partners that enable consumers to relate aspects of brands to their own self-concept (Avery & Keinan, 2015). Relatedly, brands today are continuing to face unprecedented challenges when trying to connect and engage with their consumers, operating in a fragmented and cluttered marketplace with many channels and messages competing for consumer attention (Sprout Social, 2020). This challenge is heightened with the socially and politically charged movements dominating social media, news headlines and

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N. Lewis • J. Vredenburg (✉)

Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

e-mail: [jessica.vredenburg@aut.ac.nz](mailto:jessica.vredenburg@aut.ac.nz)

consumer conversation, for example, marriage equality, Black Lives Matter, gun reform and climate change. From retail and FMCG to travel and luxury, brands in every sector are increasingly communicating their social purpose in a bid to connect with consumers. Consumers want brands to participate in social and political conversations, with surveys such as Sprout Social (2020) suggesting that 70% of respondents agree that it is important for brands to take a stand on issues like race relations, human rights, and immigration. But speaking out on social and political issues is something that brands have traditionally avoided due to the risk of losing favour with consumers (Hydock et al., 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Brands' hesitation to engage in social and political activism is not without reason: There is clear evidence of consumer backlash and even 'cancellation' when campaigns go wrong, for example, the Pepsi advertisement depicting Kendall Jenner appearing to bring together protesters and police by offering a police officer a can of it. However, brands such as Nike and Heineken have seen their brand metrics regarding target consumers increase beyond expectations (Sprout Social, 2020). After featuring Colin Kaepernick, the Black Lives Matter activist, as their spokesperson in 2018, Nike enjoyed increased retail sales and share prices. Similarly, when Heineken brought together strangers with opposing controversial views to talk about their similarities and differences in their 'Worlds Apart' video campaign, it delighted customers, achieving 40 million views and a 91% positive sentiment (Sprout Social, 2020). On taking an activist stand on values-driven issues, which are often politically, socially, and emotionally charged, brands are entering controversial territory and running the risk of alienating certain consumer groups (Moorman, 2020). However, as Hydock et al. (2020) explain, this once-feared alienation is now both considered to be, and pursued as, a calculated risk, creating emotional and cognitive attachment through having self-congruence and shared morality with one consumer group at the potential expense of others. This chapter will open with a brief discussion of the potential effects of brand activism consumption on consumer wellbeing as per theories of consumer-brand identification and consumer-brand alignment. It will then introduce an exploratory investigation into the consumption of brand activism through focus-groups' interpretations of various brand responses to the Black Lives

Matter movement following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. The main themes identified as important in the contemporary consumption of brand activism, including authenticity, negativity bias and “best practices”, will then be discussed and further supplemented by related academic research and real world examples.

## **An Opportunity to Match Values and Bolster Consumer Wellbeing**

As Schmidt et al. (2021) explain, brands deliver value to consumers through emotional and self-expression benefits that can impact consumer wellbeing. Further, brands help consumers to construct both their identities and their sense of self through the consumption of brands and the broader values these are aligned with. Brand activism conveys the values and morals that a brand prioritises, affording consumers the opportunity to evaluate the degree of self-brand connection and similarity based on their values and morals (Graeff, 1996). As brand activism continues to grow in prominence, consumers can experience the self-brand connection that brand activism presents as an opportunity to build wellbeing through self-definition and to improve their sense of self. As consumers often use brands to build their identity and express their self-concept, consumers who perceive their own values as similar will be attracted to the brand as a source of self-definition (Tuškej et al., 2013). When a brand aligns with a cause, consumers may infer that this brand has certain desirable traits that not only resonate with their sense of self, but also provide the opportunity for self enhancement by promoting an identity associated with responsiveness to society (Mirzaei et al., 2021).

Thus, as per consumer brand identification theory, higher self-brand alignment should result in more positive attitudes toward the brand and other brand benefits, such as increased levels of brand advocacy and retail purchase intentions (Graeff, 1996). Reciprocally, perceiving self-brand alignment can help consumers with self-identification and realization, optimizing their perceptions of self through matching with the brand (Oh et al., 2019). This begs the question: What will be important to the

consumers of the future? How consumers interpret, evaluate, and react to brand activism needs to be better understood.

## **Consumers of Brand Activism: An Exploratory Investigation**

The consumers of the future are likely to continue to consume brand activism as a part of their brand experience. As such, this study seeks to understand how brand activism is consumed, how consumers use the information gleaned from the consumption of brand activism to shape their own behaviours (towards the brand, the cause, or within themselves), and the potential impact of consuming brand activism on consumer wellbeing. This study has explored these consumer interpretations, evaluations and reactions to brand activism across three semi-structured focus-groups (n=18, eight male/10 female, aged 22–33 with a mean age of 28.8). This research sought consumers aged 18–38 who identified as either supporting or opposing at least one brand activism activity in order to ensure that each participant had some interest in, or knowledge of, brand activism activities in order to contribute to the focus group. Millennial or Gen Z generations were purposefully targeted as brand activism has been shown to be particularly relevant to these generations due to their awareness of and interest in social and political issues. Due to the Black Lives Matter context of the focus-group discussion, each of the focus-groups consisted of at least 50% non-white participants. As such, consumer responses to brand activism were evaluated in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. In response to this event, the activist responses of brands took very different approaches ranging from subtle messaging, confronting messaging, vague promises, and internal targets to donations and seemingly tokenistic brand activism behaviours, for example, Nike's 'For Once, Don't Do It' campaign, the social media statements of companies that included TikTok, EA sports, and CBS, and the anti-white supremacy position of Ben & Jerry's.

Using a combination of focusing exercises (to concentrate group attention), as well as group discussion to explore various viewpoints, and

activity-based projective exercises (to capture more nuanced perspectives), the focus-group participants explored their consumption of brand activism activities. The participants first indicated how important they thought it was for brands to take a socio-political stand, followed by self-generated lists of; (1) brands that they know of that have taken a stand on a social/political issue, (2) causes that they know of that have seen brand support/opposition, and (3) words that come to mind when thinking about brands taking a stand on social/political issues. The participants were then asked to consider the Black Lives Matter movement following the death of George Floyd as a specific context for reflecting on which brands had taken a stand following this incident, and their perceptions of these stances. Finally, the participants worked together on a projection exercise, proposing a Black Lives Matter brand activism campaign. Together, these activities led to insights into how the participants understood and related to (or consumed) the brand activism identified, evaluations of the brands engaging in brand activism ‘well’, and what that means, along with how brand activism activities had influenced participants thoughts and behaviours. In the next section, the main themes identified as important in the contemporary consumption of brand activism, including authenticity, negativity bias and “best practices”, will be discussed and further insight will be presented through the supplementation of related academic research and real-world examples.

## **Consumers of Brand Activism: Findings and Additional Insights**

### **Consumption of Brand Activism through Evaluations of Authenticity**

Through our series of focus-groups, this research suggests that consumers evaluate activism authenticity as part of their consumption process. Consumers who are both complimentary towards and critical of brands taking a socio-political stand used authenticity (or inauthenticity) as the primary determinant of their position. The consumers in our study

suggested a number of markers to indicate authentic brand activism, including alignment between messaging and practice, alignment between messaging and internal values and culture, and alignment between messaging and brand history. In contrast, the consumers also reported looking for markers of inauthentic brand activism, which include jumping on the 'bandwagon' in supporting trendy causes and using brand activism for purely profit-driven motives.

When consuming and evaluating the authenticity of brand activism, consumers can be sceptical of brand intentions. For example, one 24-year-old non-white male in our study said: "I feel like sometimes it's [just] marketing. They don't care about social [impact] that much, but they just do it to give some sort of excuse to do things more expensive." (P12). But, consumers also acknowledge that there is value in authentic brand activism and that the absence of brand activism is a statement in itself. For example, a 33-year-old white female said, "I think if they don't take a position, it's kind of like a cop-out in my mind." (P11). The consumers of the future may thus expect brands to take a socio-political stand, but they could be unforgiving if brands get this 'wrong'. For example, a 26-year-old non-white female commented: "I wouldn't purchase the brand necessarily just because they stand for something, but I would stop purchasing that product if I knew, for example, that things were not quite right internally, they weren't ethical, they were racist, or they weren't diverse." (P6). Our research suggests that, when consumers evaluate activism authenticity as part of their consumption process, they form opinions about whether or not brands are taking a socio-political stand in the 'right' (authentic) or 'wrong' (inauthentic) way.

Related research suggests consumers evaluate the authenticity of brand activism efforts using an assessment and matching process, and that authentic brands can help consumers "to convey their authentic self, thus appropriating authenticity to construct true self-identity" (Oh et al., 2019, p. 234). Brands that are perceived as authentic, by clearly showing who they are and what they stand for, are thus important for consumer identity as they become symbolic resources for self-expression (Tuškej et al., 2013). According to self-consistency theory, consumers behave in ways consistent with how they see themselves so that they feel motivated to be loyal to brands that construct and reinforce their own

self-perceptions (Tuškej et al., 2013). As consumers can construct and reinforce their self-perception through their alignment with their favourite brands, they may feel disappointed or let down, or may even question their self-perception if a brand they perceive alignment with behaves in a way that is incongruent with their values. In this case, their consumption of brand activism may negatively affect their self-perceptions, and by extension also their wellbeing.

## Negativity Bias in the Consumption of Brand Activism

Our research suggests that the satisfaction judgement for brands that get it right is weaker than the outrage judgement for brands that get it wrong. For example, one 32-year-old non-white female in our study said, “If they’re taking a stand and not doing it well, I’m more likely to not use them. And I would follow cancel culture. Because they did it wrong once, so I’d go nah, not interested” (P1). Our findings suggest that consumer outrage has stronger behavioural outcomes than consumer satisfaction. For example, a 28-year-old non-white male reported, “I’m not inherently swayed by a brand doing something positive. I’m more swayed by the fact that they’re doing it terribly wrong” (P2).

This bias could be explained by the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, which highlights the fact that the confirmation or disconfirmation of consumer expectation drives consumer satisfaction (Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2015). Consumers are delighted if performance exceeds expectations and they are satisfied if performance meets expectations, but if performance fails to meet expectations, then consumers are outraged (Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2015). Similarly, Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) found that brand attitudes decreased significantly when consumers disagree with a brand’s controversial stance, but support for a brand’s controversial stance leads to no significant impact on attitude towards that brand. This is evidence of the societal shift towards expectations that brands will take a socio-political stand.

Brand activism, once a novel point of difference, has arguably become, in recent years, a point of parity. Thus, if brands take a socio-political stand in a way that consumers consider authentic, then they will be satisfied but not delighted. For example, one 33-year-old white female taking

part in our study suggested: “It can solidify your opinion, depending on the brand, to show that you’re supporting the right thing to a certain degree” (P11). Research suggests that consumers reward or punish brands based on perceived social responsibility or irresponsibility (Hydock et al., 2020). However, scholars agree that a negativity bias exists whereby the punishment response of consumers is stronger than their reward response (Hydock et al., 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Our research further reinforces evidence of a negativity bias when consumers respond with satisfaction to brands that get brand activism efforts ‘right’, but outrage when they get it ‘wrong’.

This highlights a shift in the market. In 2018, Nike was able to delight consumers with brand activism messaging (but not necessarily corresponding authentic practice): However, consumers are increasingly looking for authentic activism as a bare minimum for satisfaction, as Ritson (2020) aptly commented: “If ‘Black Lives Matter’ to brands, where are your black board members?” This consumer expectation puts more social pressure on brands to participate, but does not necessarily reward them with consumer delight if they do it right (Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2015). This highlights how important it is for brands to avoid consumer outrage and to participate authentically in their socio-political stand, even if this only means meeting consumer expectations and achieving base level satisfaction. Conversely, however, the resultant feelings of outrage from opposing consumer groups due to brand activism stances can foster issues of divisiveness in society today; arguably a negative outcome of brand activism on consumer and wider societal wellbeing.

## **What Is Important to Contemporary Consumers of Brand Activism?**

As brand activism continues to evolve, practitioners can learn from previous examples of brand activism executions and consider consumer trends to predict what the future of brand activism consumption may look like. From this study, we can see a rise in the importance of committing to a cause, focusing on internal education, moving from campaigning to communication, leading with transparency, setting targets,



acknowledging mistakes, and amplifying the voices of others. These findings suggest that internal commitment through long-term practice, and explicit prosocial values and education should be considered a crucial part of any brand's socio-political stance going forward. To neglect internal commitment would be deemed inauthentic, and brands would likely face consumer scrutiny and outrage, as substantiated by previous scholars (Mirzaei et al., 2022; Schmidt et al., 2021). The following sections describe the types of internal commitment our research suggests consumers are looking for when consuming brand activism.

**Committing to a cause:** In this research, consumer responses focused on forgiving misaligned previous practice and position, provided there was clear commitment to the cause going forward. For example, one 28-year-old white female in our study suggested, "If people can grow and change their views and they can be educated to change, so can brands. Yeah, they may be late to the party, but maybe this has had enough of an impact on them to show that we need to change what we are doing. And then it comes down to the follow-through" (P18). Thus, consumers now expect long-term commitment to the cause beyond that cause's popular or trendy period, as further substantiated by Schmidt et al. (2021), who suggest that short-term commitment may be criticised by consumers and considered inauthentic. We are beginning to see evidence of companies engraining support into their core purpose and resultant product offerings, for example, service review company Yelp, which launched a new feature that allows users to flag businesses that use racist language. Many brands such as Pinterest and Pizza Hut are appointing senior roles that focus on inclusion, diversity or representation, while brands such as Band-Aid are expanding their product range to include more skin tones and steering away from a light tone as the only 'nude' option (Ad Age, 2021). According to our findings, decision-makers may want to consider what long-term practices they will put in place in order to take a socio-political stand, and how these practices reflect the updated purpose and values of a company (Mirzaei et al., 2022; Schmidt et al., 2021).

**Education and reflection:** Our research suggests consumers expect brands to be educated about their socio-political stance prior to any external advocacy. In addition, the consumers in our study communicated the need for brands to educate their staff on socio-political issues

and to build a level of understanding within their organisation. For example, one 33-year-old white male in our study said, “For me, it was more about educating myself. You know, I, I couldn’t really comprehend or fathom what people go through [on a] daily [basis]. And it was about educating” (P4). Following the death of George Floyd, some brands set up black education programmes for their staff, for example, fast-food chain Chipotle allowing their staff debt-free education at one of the USA’s oldest historically black colleges and universities, Paul Quinn College, while a collective of Midwestern advertising agencies under the BrandLab umbrella pledged to take staff through anti-racism education programmes (Ad Age, 2021). Based on the results of this study, we suggest that, before taking a socio-political stand, decision-makers should educate themselves on both issues and brand positions, and also consider how to educate staff within their organisations.

**External communication, not campaigning:** According to our research, internal commitment is a priority for consumers, who expect brands to ‘walk the talk’ when it comes to taking a socio-political stand. Our study suggests that consumers now favour an external communication style, with more parallels with public relations than with a traditional marketing campaign. This means that previously successful campaign styles, for example, Nike’s ‘Dream Crazy’ campaign, which was praised for featuring a credible spokesperson and an important message, may no longer meet consumer expectations. Instead, consumers appear to be favouring PR-style campaigns that communicate details of company actions. For example, one 24-year-old non-white male in our study commented: “Instead of just showing support through slogans and campaigns but to actually have a view to be like, this is what we’re doing” (P13). Consumers can be critical of brands that use brand activism as a marketing ploy, merely seeing it as a way of making sales, virtue signalling or jumping on the bandwagon when causes are trendy. This was evident in the Gillette campaign ‘The Best a Man Can Be’, which was criticised for being overly produced, preachy, and inauthentic in its portrayal of toxic masculinity (Hickman, 2019). Other research echoes our findings in suggesting consumers are no longer looking for marketing slogans, or donating a portion of sales revenues (e.g. Mirzaei et al., 2022).

**Transparency and targets:** Our research suggests consumers are now increasingly expecting brands to be transparent about their past and intentions and to provide clear and measurable targets. For example, one 32-year-old non-white male in our study said: “I want you to tell me how much you are doing by this date” (P14). Our findings suggest consumers are now less likely to accept vague support statements. This expectation regarding transparency and targets is relatively new in the brand activism space and demonstrates how quickly consumer expectations are changing. In 2018, as previously mentioned, Nike’s ‘Dream Crazy’ campaign was praised by consumers for taking a socio-political stand on a controversial topic (Hickman, 2019). Now, our research suggests that consumers are looking beyond advocacy and seeking company action that aligns with the cause. For example, one 33-year-old white female in our study commented: “If you imagine if Nike listed the pay equality across the different races, across their business and show that there’s no inequality” (P11).

Since George Floyd’s death in 2020, brands have increased their transparency and have publicly announced targets: Television broadcaster CBS has committed to at least 50% non-white casting on reality TV shows; snack company Mondelez has committed to doubling the representation of black employees in senior US management roles by 2024; and coffee company Starbucks has committed to donating \$100 million to community projects that help black and indigenous people of colour by 2025 (Ad Age, 2021). This shift in the transparency and expectations of brands highlights a shift in consumer behaviour. Consumers are continuing to become more educated about socio-political causes and they are harder to impress. Our research suggests that brands will need to focus more on their own internal practices, and the transparency of these practices, in order to please the consumers of the future.

**Acknowledgement of mistakes and commitment to change:** Most consumers are willing to forgive a brand if its practices were not always well aligned with a cause, especially as social norms have evolved over time (Schmidt et al., 2021). However, in line with other work in this area, our research suggests consumers would like brands to disclose any past transgressions or misjudgements and to communicate what they are doing to move forward with transparency. For example, one 31-year-old

white female in our study suggested, “It’s even more endearing if the brands are kind of like, ‘you know what, we’ve been neglecting gender, equality or something and we’re going rectify it by doing these things and taking a stand at the same time’” (P9). Similar to the consumer preference for transparency and targets, an acknowledgement of past mistakes is not a marketing campaign-driven activity but an internal commitment to change that the brand chooses to disclose to the public. The critique, acknowledgement, and disclosure by Stuff, a New Zealand news outlet, in its project ‘Our Truth’ (*Tā Mātou Pono*), regarding its own past racist actions is an example of a brand acknowledging its mistakes and committing to change (Stevens, 2020). This internal-first approach appears to have been well received by consumers.

**Amplifying the voices of others:** Another form of external communication that consumers appear to be in favour of in our study is drawing attention to the voices of those more educated in, or relevant to a cause as an impactful use of brand platforms. Once again, this is not a marketing-driven activity, instead being about using the platform, reach and influence of a brand to stand with experts, or with those impacted by or uniquely knowledgeable about, a socio-political issue. For example, one 32-year-old non-white female in our study said, “If I was in charge of a campaign, I would just create a platform that enables them to have a voice rather than me having my own. I’ve got the platform I’ve got the reach. I’ve got the influence. And I just let the ones that have the voice but don’t have the platform, reach, and influence have a say” (P1). Illustrating this, Target opted to centre its support, during 2022 Black History Month, on honouring historic black leaders and on amplifying, celebrating, and lifting the voices of the present black community (Ad Age, 2021). In addition, Target also committed to spending an additional \$2 billion with black-owned businesses. Similarly, since 2020, Canadian lifestyle brand-owner Jillian Harris regularly turns to the amplification of important voices on her blog, for example, ‘Honouring Indigenous Lives’, by Shayla Stonechild, and ‘How to Be a Better Ally and Why It’s Important to Do So’, by Raia ‘Coach’ Carey, in addition to highlighting and profiling brands championed by marginalized groups (see, e.g. Harris, 2023).

It is worth noting that, if brands only choose to draw attention to others’ voices, they may not fully meet consumer expectations regarding

internal commitment. Moreover, by drawing attention to others' voices, brands may still be scrutinised by consumers and considered inauthentic for not enacting what they share externally. However, if a brand were to draw attention to the voices of others that are more educated about or pertinent to a cause, in addition to an internal commitment to it, it would likely meet consumer expectations regarding brands.

## Insights into Brand activism's Effects on Consumers

Our study suggests that brand activism efforts tend to be more positively received by consumers when brands use their external channels to be transparent about their internal actions. Findings from this research suggest consumers now expect a brand to have internal commitment: This means aligning messaging with practice and values, committing to a cause beyond its trendy/popular period, educating staff, and amplifying the voices of others. Without this internal commitment, brands are likely to experience consumer outrage, which could lead to boycotts, negative word-of-mouth, and other kinds of negative impact on the brand (Mukherjee & Althuisen, 2020), as well as the consumer, as evidenced by the rise in 'cancel culture' and the resultant increase in cultural divisiveness (Hydock et al., 2020).

Encouragingly, consumers appear to accept incongruity between a brand's history and their own socio-political stance—with one caveat—that brands should acknowledge any wrongdoing and commit to change going forward. This action would reflect the internal commitment and external communication that consumers seek. Our research highlights the fact that many consumers recognise that true authentic brand activism (including historical alignment with prosocial behaviour) is not always possible, that it may take time to develop and that brands need to start somewhere. Some consumers are open to the idea of 'jumping on the bandwagon' with brand activism messaging in the absence of aligned purpose and prosocial behaviour (in other words, engaging in

inauthentic brand activism), as a first step towards implementing aligned prosocial behaviour and purpose going forward.

Although consumers appear to hold brands to a high standard in terms of evaluations of brand activism, our research suggests that they can also be forgiving. When consuming brand activism, many consumers equally consider their own personal responses to socio-political issues, and are aware of the pressure to participate. For example, one 30-year-old white female in our study said, “There’s judgement from people going if you don’t do it, you’re against it. If you do it, you’re jumping on the bandwagon” (P5). In addition, there is also uncertainty around how to participate appropriately. For example, a 26-year-old non-white female wondered, “If you’re white can you not, like, you know ... Can I talk about it? Should I have a stand on this? Or should I not? Should I sit back and let everyone else?” (P6).

This personal uncertainty and pressure, as well as the negativity bias illustrated previously, shed some interesting light on the potential effects of brand activism on consumers. Through the consumption of brand activism efforts, consumers compare their own values to those espoused by a brand, resulting in agreement or disagreement with the stance taken. This is potentially concerning for two reasons. First, if consumers disagree with a stance taken by a brand which they perceive themselves to have an alignment/fit with, this misalignment can be damaging to consumer wellbeing and some research even suggests that “the more distant an individual feels politically from the average voter in their state, the worse health outcomes he or she reports” (Fraser et al., 2022; p 1). Thus, consumers who find themselves the ‘odd ones out’, in terms of their views, may experience negative physical and psychological effects. Second, brand activism inherently creates polarization and divisiveness. This can potentially lead to further fractures in society between those who hold disparate views, further perpetuating cultural divides when opposing consumers boycott and spread negative word-of-mouth while supporting consumers react by amplifying the brand message, increasing their loyalty, and spreading positive word-of-mouth (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020).

## Concluding Remarks

According to this research, when consumers consume brand activism, they process several interrelated aspects: The identification of an act as activist in nature, the evaluation or assessment of this act as a function of alignment with their own values and, finally, their resultant feelings and actions as a result of brand activism consumption—towards the brand, the cause, and within themselves. As brand activism continues to grow, the consumers of the future may experience the self-brand connection that brand activism presents as an opportunity to create wellbeing through self-definition and improving their sense of self. However, as consumers can construct and reinforce their own self-perception through alignment with their favourite brands, they may feel disappointed or let down, and they may even question their self-perception if a brand they perceive alignment with behaves in a way that is incongruent with their values, with consumer consumption of brand activism negatively affecting their self-perceptions and, by extension, their wellbeing.

Scholars have highlighted the importance of the authenticity of brand activism (Schmidt et al., 2021; Vredenburg et al., 2020): However, in this research, we have examined the consumption of brand activism and consumer interpretations of the authenticity of brand activism as part of the consumption process, with our findings suggesting that brand activism plays a role in impacting consumer choices and decisions, including the encouragement of value-based purchasing. Consumers appear to interpret and understand the authenticity of brand activism initiatives based on an array of criteria, including alignment with practice, alignment with history, and internal commitment to the cause. This consumer assessment and evaluation of brand activism highlights the shift in consumer expectations in recent years: In the consumer's eyes, it is no longer acceptable to merely advocate for a position or raise awareness. Retailers, in particular, have a substantial impact on consumer behaviour through the types of products they offer that communicate their brand values. Using these distinctive retail capabilities, as Walmart and Dick's Sporting Goods did when they implemented new restrictions on the sale of guns, to advocate for social change through product offerings, ranges and access, as

well as messaging, is a unique way that retailers can help to shape the consumption process through brand activism. Customers are continuing to expect retailers to do the right thing, pushing brands into becoming authentic activists who “walk the talk”: However, when consumers’ own sense of self-worth is tied up in matching their values and ideals to those of others, the consumption of brand activism can have unintended consequences.

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