

Brand Activism and Cultural Transformation: A Sociological Study of Public Meaning, Identity Expression, and Value Alignment in Consumer Society

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Abstract: *This article explores the intersections of brand activism and cultural change through the lens of public meaning, consumer identity expression, and value alignment in consumer society, examining the public meaning of corporate involvement in social and political issues in the final section. Rooted in cultural sociology, social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), and consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005), the study conceptualizes brand activism as a cultural agent that goes beyond commercial strategy to engage in public discourse and meaning production. A structured questionnaire based on a Likert scale was distributed among 350 responses of Visakhapatnam City, India. The data were analysed using a linear reliability testing (Cronbach's alpha), Pearson correlation, and predictor regression model. The results reveal that brand activism is a strong of both identity expression ($\beta = 0.941$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.885$) and public meaning and cultural change ($\beta = 0.935$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.875$). In addition, significant relationship was observed between brand a moderate, positively activism, trust, and consumer reaction ($\beta = 0.617$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.380$). H2 were supported, suggesting that brand activism also serves as an Both H1 and important cultural theme influencing how consumers construct identities, negotiate values, and understand the social significance of market paper extends sociological accounts of the market as a participation. The cultural field with brands serving as symbolic vehicles that connect individual subjectivity to shared cultural meaning. Theoretical and practical are provided along with limitations and suggestions for future implications research.*

Keywords: Brand Activism, Cultural Transformation, Identity Expression, Public Meaning, Consumer Culture Theory, Social Identity, Value Alignment, Cultural Sociology

I. INTRODUCTION

The current market has been drastically reshaped, one or in which brands no longer serve as simple indications of product quality commercial worth, but increasingly function as sources of social meaning, cultural commentary, and political expression. Brand activism, which refers to a corporate approach when brands take public positions on societal, political, has become a key trend affecting the environmental, or cultural matters, interaction of market economies and civil society (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018; Vredenburg et al., 2020). From global campaigns on racial justice to environmental sustainability pledges and gender equality drives, brands now greater visibility and heft. compete in the arena of public discourse with

the These are big questions of sociology – what is consumer society in today's world? If brands are cultural producers, as well as the relationship between c products of culture, how does that affectconsumption and identity? In what ways, if any, does brand activism reshape public social issues, justice, and collective values? And what should understanding



of we make of corporations occupying spaces typically reserved for civil society sphere? Such questions require organizations, social movements, and the public a strong sociological imagination that goes beyond the instrumentalist this topic. marketing lens that has informed the literature to date on

While brand activism continues to receive increasing base is still overly focused on scholarly attention, the current research marketing outcomes—brand equity, purchase intention, consumer loyalty—and less attuned to the wider cultural and sociological implications of this phenomenon (Moorman, 2020; Mukherjee & is a significant lack Althuisen, 2020). There of research that investigates brand activism from the perspective of cultural sociology, particularly in its capacity to (re)produce public meaning, enable identity expression, and mediate value congruence between individuals and the collective social order. Further, the overwhelming majority of studies are from contexts, so the cultural implications of brand activism in Western fast-growing economies like India are very much an emerging area of enquiry.

In doing so, it contributes to a lacuna in literature both how that considers brand activism as a cultural practice impacting individuals understand themselves and construct shared interpretations in a consumer society. Influenced by cultural sociology (Alexander, 2004; Bourdieu, 1984), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Stets & 2000) and consumer culture theory (Arnould Burke, & Thompson, 2005), this paper develops a conceptual framework where brand activism as an independent variable has a direct impact on three interconnected aspects of consumer life: identity cultural change, and trust and consumer expression, public meaning and response. The research is based in India in the urban hub of Visakhapatnam data was gathered from 350 respondents using a structured City, and the primary questionnaire.

study has a twofold objective. To what extent does The brand activism change culture and public meaning within the cultural sphere of consumer society? Second, to investigate the effects of brand activism on the consumers' value congruencies. In doing so, the expression of identity and paper aspires to add to an enhanced, theoretically informed understanding of in the modern world from the cultural implications of market-mediated activism a sociological perspective.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Cultural Sociology and the Symbolic Field of the Market

The theoretical California examination of brand activism, therefore, demands some engagement with the cultural intellectual tradition, which cultural sociologists have argued is sociological predicated on a focus on the symbolic underpinning of social life. Pierre and field dynamics (1984) offers an ideal Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital starting point to interrogate how brands gain and exert cultural power. In Bourdieu's terms, the market is a cultural field, the social space where of distinction – brands, consumers, activists, institutions – different agents are engaged in struggles to assert their own vision of taste as the dominant one, in other words, to assert the authority over what is and what is not socially acceptable in terms of daily practices of consumption. Brand activism is, in this sense, a calculated investment of cultural capital through which companies attempt to position themselves as the defenders of dominant emerging societal moral principles, in order to boost their symbolic standing or in the field.

performance Jeffrey Alexander's cultural sociology of and meaning (2004) can also provide some insight into the operation of brand contends that cultural meanings are not simply structural activism. Alexander or handed down, but actively enacted and negotiated through symbolic practices. activism campaigns—whether they come in the form of advertisements, Brand social-media narratives, or public statements—are cultural performances that offer particular stances on justice, equality, and social progress to the their world. The success or failure of these performances is contingent upon perceived authenticity and coherence as well as their fit with the cultural codes and expectations of the audience (Alexander, 2004).



2.2 Social Identity Theory and Brand-Mediated Identity

Social identity theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979) and later refined by Stets and Burke (2000), is a social psychological theory that has also been identified as the crucial theoretical lens to analyze the convergence between brand activism and the consumer's identity. SIT claims individuals have a motivation to maintain and enhance their self-esteem, which partly stems from their social groups and that actively engage in positive social comparisons between the in-group and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In consumer culture, brands serve as social identity symbols, and the decision to purchase or reject a brand is a form of identity work (Reed et al., 2012).

When brands become political, they open up avenues for among other things. A buyer who shoppers to make specific identity statements, brands that advocates for environmental sustainability is making more than a practical choice: they are participating in a socially significant activity that announces 'whose side' they are on in an ongoing cultural debate as a person who belongs to a community of concerned citizens. This capacity for and shape identity is especially strong among younger brand activism to express audiences who are increasingly seeing consumption as a vehicle for ethical expression and social distinction (Holt, 2002; Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

2.3 Consumer Culture Theory and Market-Mediated Morality

Consumer culture theory (CCT), as articulated by Arnould and Thompson (2005), offers the most developed theoretical lens through culture. CCT challenges the idea of which to view marketplace behaviour as consumers as passive hearers of marketing messages and instead frames consumption as an active practice that is "a constellation of activities that (e.g., consumer culture as identity projects), social involved identity work relation work (e.g., purchasing, peer sharing), and cultural engagement (e.g., this matrix, brand activism is cultural imagination, cultural fitness)". Within an especially momentous episode as it converts consumption into a form of cultural participation and civic engagement.

A recent stream of research within CCT has focused on the notion of "market-mediated morality" (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014), which relates to the increasingly prominent role market actors – including brands – of moral narratives. Brand activism assume in the definition and dissemination can be theorized as a specific form of this market-mediated morality in which companies claim the role of moral agents, and consumers are invited to take products they purchase. This lens part in collective moral projects through the speaks to the two sides of brand activism, which is driven by corporate of strategy but also embedded within broader cultural production and the construction values.

2.4 Empirical Landscape and Research Gap

studies on brand activism has An expanding body of emerged lately, albeit it is still predominantly based in Western contexts. Vredenburg et al. (2020) developed a 2 × 2 typology of authentic/inauthentic brand's communication and brand activism, which is based on the congruence of a its actual corporate actions as a key predictor of the response of consumers. Sarkar and Kotler (2018) presented "brand activism" as a new strategic orientation, separate from corporate social responsibility (CSR), by focusing political and values-driven its clearly political and value-based nature nature. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) found that responses to brand activism strongly influenced by the perceived fit between the brand among consumers were and cause and the political orientation of consumers.

Nonetheless, this dominant empirical attention towards marketing-related constructs such as brand attitude, purchase intention, and brand equity has led to a rather thin examination of the consequences of brand activism. Little research has explored how sociocultural brand activism participates in regional forms of public meaning-making, how it influences the cultural terrain of values and norms, or how it operates as a to fill vehicle for identity construction outside the West. This study attempts this void by employing a sociological perspective that treats cultural meaning, identity, and value congruence as key outcomes of brand activism.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

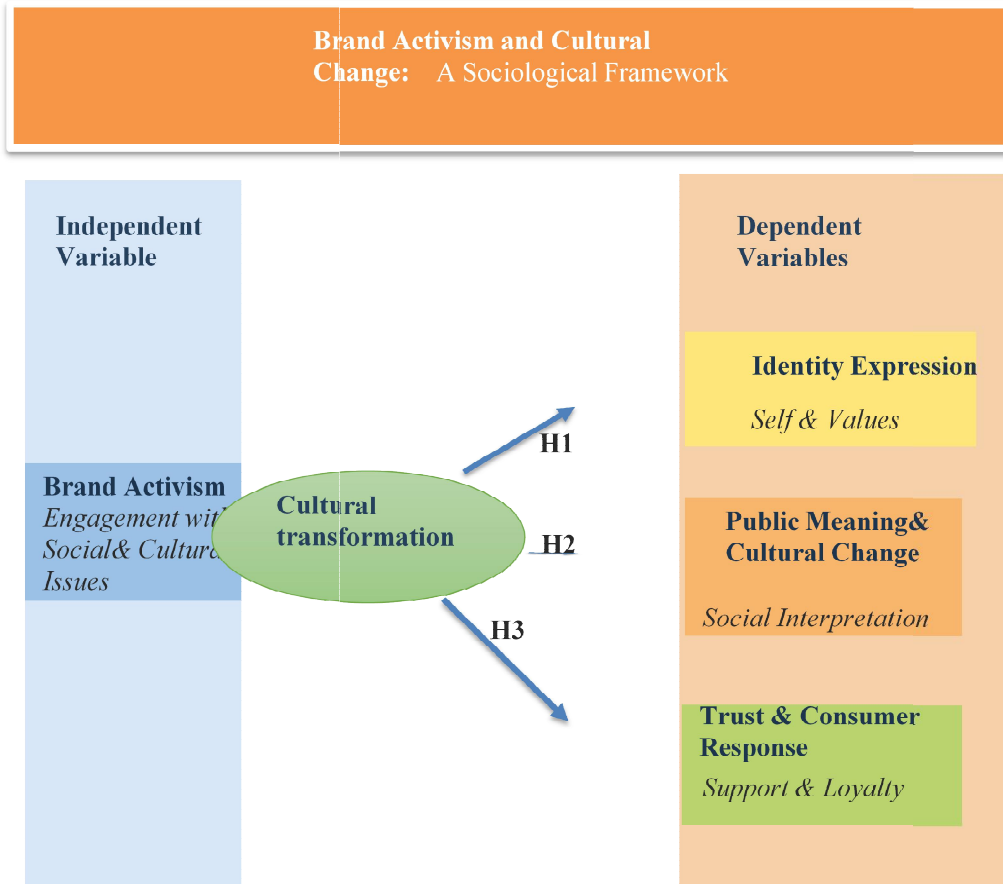
From a theoretical perspective, this study treats brand its direct influences on activism as the independent variable and analyses three dependent variables (identity expression, public meaning and cultural transformation, and trust and



consumer response). It is based on the theoretical approaches elaborated in the previous sections—cultural sociology, social identity theory, consumer culture theory—and aims to conceptualize how activism alters the culture of consumer society. and to what extent brand

Brand activism is operationalised through consumers’ social meaning-makers, contributors to cultural views of brands as conversations, and value communicators. This is a six-pronged concept, including the view that brand activism is more than commerce, contributes to break down stereotypes, cultural discussions, impacts public values, can evolves with consumer expectations, and brands in cultural roles.

Expression of identity is the extent to which consumers rely on brand activism to express their own values, personal and emotional consumption of individual brands. connections, and social identity through the from social identity theory and represents the This construct comes self-referential aspect of consumer response to activist branding. Public meaning and cultural change include how consumers perceive the overall societal issues, effect of brand activism, such as changing public narratives on social contributing to normalising progressive values in society, and facilitating dependent mediating variables cultural change. Trust and consumer responses are that assess behavioural and attitudinal effects of brand activism in terms of brand trust, intention to purchase, loyalty, and recommending behaviour. On the the theoretical discourses and the conceptual framework, the following basis of hypotheses are propounded:



H1: Brand activism significantly influences identity expression and value-based brand preference.

H2: Brand activism significantly influences public meaning and perceptions of cultural change.



IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design and Sampling

This paper follows the quantitative method, by the use of cross-sectional survey specifically to study the connection of brand activism to its cultural effects within the consumers of Visakhapatnam City, India. The selection of the quantitative method is befitting of the study's aim to test theoretically based hypotheses and to gauge the strength and the significance of the study variables. of the relationships

The study population consists of consumers (male and activism products in the city of female in the age group of 17-50) of brand Visakhapatnam, who have been influenced by brand activism advertisements. The purposive criteria were that respondents must have at least moderate knowledge, and convenience sampling was used. A total of 350 valid of brand activism larger than the minimum sample size required responses were gathered, which is for the statistical analyses. For structural analyses of two or more prior constructs, a minimum sample of 200 participants is recommended based on research (Hair et al., 2019), and the current sample maintains an appropriate respondent-to-item ratio of about 7:1, considering the 49 Likert-scale items listed in the questionnaire.

4.2 Questionnaire Design and Variables

nine sections was used. A structured questionnaire with the respondents' as the instrument for data collection. Section A included demographic details such as age group, gender, educational qualification, profession, monthly family income, living location, and time spent on social exposure media. Four screening questions were used to examine brand activism a 5-point Likert scale and knowledge in part B. The main measure parts were on from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5). Part C: Brand Activism (8 items). Part D: measures the independent Awareness and Comprehension (6 items). Perceived Authenticity was measured by variable brand activism (6 items). Identity Expression (7 items) was evaluated in Section Section E1 items). Part E2. Public Meaning and Cultural Change was gauged by Section E3 (6 Trust and Consumer Response (7 items). Further sections captured E4 captures items), Personal Values and Social Consciousness (8 Critical Evaluation (7 items), and open-ended qualitative responses.

All multi-item scales were based on established scales the literature on brand activism, consumer culture, and social identity. from face validity by Through contextualisation for the Indian consumer context and academic experts in the field of sociology and consumer behaviour. The questionnaire was pretested on a pilot sample of 30 to check for clarity, understanding, and relevance of the scales.

4.3 Statistical Tools and Data Analysis Procedures

by a quantitative statistical The data were analysed major types of analyses procedure similar to those performed in SPSS. Three α to were used. First, we conducted a reliability analysis (Cronbach's evaluate the internal consistency of all multi-item scales (Nunnally, 1978), with $\alpha \geq 0.70$ indicating acceptable consistency. The bivariate relationships main constructs were tested using Pearson correlations. between all of the Simple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine the predicted direct effects of brand activism on identity expression as well as public meaning and cultural change, reporting standardized beta coefficients (β), R^2 levels (p-values) by model Third, simple linear values, and significance regression analysis was employed to test the hypothesized direct effects of brand activism on identity expression and public meaning and cultural change, with standardized beta coefficients (β), R^2 values, and significance levels to check (p-values) reported for each model. Skewness and Kurtosis were used the normality of the data, which were all within permissible limits (-1 to +1 for Skewness; -2 to +3 for Kurtosis).

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section presents the results of the quantitative data analysis, proceeding through demographic profiling, reliability testing, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression modelling.



5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

are shown in Demographic characteristics of the sample Table 1. Most of the respondents were young adults (18-25 years) (62.0%), male postgraduate-educated (70.6%), and students (69.7%). Household income. (68.6%), ₹25,000 monthly Among the participants, the majority belonged to the below family income group (40.6%), which is indicative of the student-dominated sample. These demographics are important contextually as they constitute a highly digitally connected section of the Indian urban population that is brand communication. sensitized to cultural signifiers in

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 350)

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|---------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Age Group | 18–25 | 217 | 62.0 |
| | 26–35 | 116 | 33.1 |
| | 36–45 | 15 | 4.3 |
| | 46–55 | 2 | 0.6 |
| Gender | Male | 240 | 68.6 |
| | Female | 110 | 31.4 |
| Education | SSC | 1 | 0.3 |
| | Intermediate | 5 | 1.4 |
| | Graduate | 78 | 22.3 |
| | Postgraduate | 247 | 70.6 |
| | Professional | 19 | 5.4 |
| Occupation | Student | 244 | 69.7 |
| | Private Employee | 27 | 7.7 |
| | Government Employee | 4 | 1.1 |
| | Business | 53 | 15.1 |
| | Homemaker | 20 | 5.7 |
| | Other | 2 | 0.6 |
| Monthly Income | Below ₹25,000 | 142 | 40.6 |
| | ₹25,001–50,000 | 82 | 23.4 |
| | ₹50,001–75,000 | 61 | 17.4 |
| | ₹75,001–1,00,000 | 34 | 9.7 |
| | Above ₹1,00,000 | 31 | 8.9 |

5.2 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the The internal consistency of all the multi-item scales. Table 2 shows that all values being between 0.850 and constructs had high reliability with all α 0.925, which is well above the recommended value of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978)for Expression scale was most reliable (α = the social sciences. The Identity 0.913), followed by Personal Values and Social Consciousness (α = 0.925). These used measurement scales have a good internal findings indicate that the consistency and can be used for subsequent analysis."



Table 2: Reliability Analysis – Cronbach's Alpha

| Construct | Items | Cronbach's α |
|--|-------|---------------------|
| Brand Activism (BA) | 6 | 0.894 |
| Perceived Authenticity (PA) | 6 | 0.901 |
| Identity Expression (IE) | 7 | 0.913 |
| Public Meaning & Cultural Change (PM) | 6 | 0.912 |
| Trust & Consumer Response (TC) | 7 | 0.850 |
| Brand Activism Awareness | 8 | 0.874 |
| Personal Values & Social Consciousness | 8 | 0.925 |

5.3 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics of the composite scale are shown in Table 3. On a five-point scale with 1 indicating Strongly means score Agree and 5 indicating Strongly Disagree, all constructs had a mean between 2.054 and 2.205, which suggests respondents were in agreement with the constructs. Skewness was in the range of 0.643–0.911, and kurtosis was in the of 1.389–2.117; all values are considered acceptable to the assumption of range normality of data distribution.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs

| Construct | Mean | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|----------|----------|
| Brand Activism (BA) | 2.054 | 0.687 | 0.881 | 2.117 |
| Perceived Authenticity (PA) | 2.054 | 0.677 | 0.911 | 1.896 |
| Identity Expression (IE) | 2.077 | 0.669 | 0.791 | 1.389 |
| Public Meaning & Cultural Change (PM) | 2.085 | 0.689 | 0.850 | 1.846 |
| Trust & Consumer Response (TC) | 2.205 | 0.634 | 0.643 | 2.001 |

5.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analyses were performed to test the can be seen in Table 4, all bivariate relationships of the main constructs. As correlations were positive and significant at the level of $p < 0.001$. The were found between brand activism and identity expression highest correlations ($r = 0.941$), brand activism and public meaning ($r = 0.935$), and brand activism and perceived authenticity ($r = 0.936$). Trust and consumer response were ($r = 0.604$ to 0.617), suggesting moderately correlated with all other variables a conceptually similar but unique construct. The increasing correlations between brand activism, identity expression, public meaning, and perceived authenticity indicate a tightly woven cultural fabric where each of these in the whole. constructs plays its role

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Matrix

| | BA | IE | PM | TC | PA |
|----|-------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| BA | 1.000 | 0.941*** | 0.935*** | 0.617*** | 0.936*** |
| IE | | 1.000 | 0.919*** | 0.616*** | 0.907*** |
| PM | | | 1.000 | 0.604*** | 0.907*** |
| TC | | | | 1.000 | 0.614*** |



| | | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|-------|
| PA | | | | | 1.000 |
|----|--|--|--|--|-------|

Note: *** $p < 0.001$

5.5 Regression Analysis

Simple linear regression analysis was conducted to test the two hypotheses. The results of all three regression models are summarised in Table 5.

Model 1 (H1): Brand Activism \rightarrow Identity Expression. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 348) = 2682.87$, $p < 0.001$. Brand activism explained 88.5% of the variance in identity expression ($R^2 = 0.885$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.885$). The standardised beta coefficient was 0.941 ($B = 0.916$, $SE = 0.018$, $t = 51.80$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a very strong positive effect. Hypothesis H1 is therefore strongly supported: brand activism significantly influences identity expression and value-based brand preference.

Model 2 (H2): Brand Activism \rightarrow Public Meaning & Cultural Change. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 348) = 2426.60$, $p < 0.001$. Brand activism explained 87.5% of the variance in public meaning and cultural change ($R^2 = 0.875$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.874$). The standardised beta coefficient was 0.935 ($B = 0.937$, $SE = 0.019$, $t = 49.26$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a very strong positive effect. Hypothesis H2 is therefore strongly supported: brand activism significantly influences public meaning and perceptions of cultural change.

Model 3 (Supporting): Brand Activism \rightarrow Trust & Consumer Response. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 348) = 213.40$, $p < 0.001$. Brand activism explained 38.0% of the variance in trust and consumer response ($R^2 = 0.380$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.378$). The standardised beta coefficient was 0.617 ($B = 0.569$, $SE = 0.039$, $t = 14.61$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a moderate positive effect. While not part of the formal hypotheses, this result indicates that brand activism has a significant but more limited direct influence on trust and behavioural consumer outcomes.

Table 5: Regression Analysis Summary

| Model | Path | β | B | SE | t | p | R^2 |
|--------|---------------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1 (H1) | BA \rightarrow IE | 0.941 | 0.916 | 0.018 | 51.80 | <0.001 | 0.885 |
| 2 (H2) | BA \rightarrow PM | 0.935 | 0.937 | 0.019 | 49.26 | <0.001 | 0.875 |
| 3 | BA \rightarrow TC | 0.617 | 0.569 | 0.039 | 14.61 | <0.001 | 0.380 |

Note: β = Standardised Beta; B = Unstandardised Coefficient; SE = Standard Error

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing Summary

| Hyp. | Statement | β (p-value) | R^2 | Result |
|------|---|-----------------------|-------|-----------|
| H1 | Brand activism significantly influences identity expression and value-based brand preference. | 0.941 ($p < 0.001$) | 0.885 | Supported |
| H2 | Brand activism significantly influences public meaning and perceptions of cultural change. | 0.935 ($p < 0.001$) | 0.875 | Supported |

VI. DISCUSSION

The results of this study contribute to the argument that brand activism is, in fact, a powerful cultural vehicle in contemporary consumer society that influences how we express our identities, what we do in terms of public meaning-making, and offers new ways of understanding how culture might change. The results are discussed in terms of cultural sociology, social identity the tripartite theoretical framework theory, and consumer culture theory that guides this study.

The most striking result is the very strong predictive relationship between brand activism and identity expression positive ($\beta = 0.941$, $R^2 = 0.885$). Indeed, this result goes beyond a simple marketing of view of brand preference and speaks straight to the sociological processes identity formation in contemporary consumer culture. Based on Tajfel and



that brand Turner's (1979) social identity theory, this finding indicates activism is now a key means by which consumers negotiate, perform, and express their social identities. Traditional anchors of identity—religion, community, increasingly unstable and contested in our time, and yet class—have become brands that take activist stances seem to provide consumers with a fairly stable and publicly legible means of identity articulation. The performance of aligning with an activist brand becomes a kind of what Giddens (1991) described as “life politics”—a strategy for interweaving political and commitments with the routines of daily life. The comparably strong ethical influence ($\beta = 0.935$, $R^2 = 0.875$) of brand activism on public meaning and with Alexander's (2004) cultural change draws a clear parallel sociology of performance. It turns out that brand activism is a performance that consumers do not just receive as a commercial message; rather, it is a about, and cultural performance that shapes the way people talk about, think feel about social issues, justice, and collective values. This finding lends credence to the view that brands are now important players in what Habermas the public sphere – albeit their involvement complicates (1989) theorised as the question of its democratic legitimacy, given the inequalities baked into large R^2 value means brand activism market-deliberated public discourse. A explains far more of the variation in cultural meaning and change for consumers, which may imply that corporate cultural performances have more symbolic importance in the Indian urban context.

significant yet moderate effect ($\beta = 0.617$, $R^2 = 0.380$) of brand activism on trust and consumer response adds an important nuance to the findings. Although brand activism has a profound impact on cultural meaning-making and identity expression, its behavioral trust and loyalty implications are more ambiguous and conditional. This finding aligns with Vredenburg et al.'s (2020) contention that the genuineness of brand responses. The somewhat less activism is a key predictor of downstream consumer pronounced explanatory impact of brand activism on trust and consumer response implies that consumers are more critically evaluating and sceptical applying the translation from cultural closeness to behavioural closeness. when In addition, this reading is supported through the critical questions of the respondents are indeed critical of the risk that survey, which showed that brands apply social causes to their benefit.

At a consumer culture theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) level of analysis, the general pattern of findings supports the as a cultural system in which theoretical framing of the marketplace consumption is intricately linked to meaning, identity, and moral work. Brand activism is, in this sense, a particularly powerful expression of what Giesler and Veresiu (2014) termed market-mediated morality, a process by which market players narratives that shape cultural imaginaries. co-produce and proliferate moral Implications for practice: These results point to the fact that Indian consumers, especially young, educated urban dwellers, are turning to brand activism not only as a shopping filter but as a cultural tool through which to and their position in it. The make sense of their social surroundings demographic characteristics of the sample (young: 62% aged 18–25, male: 68.6%, highly educated: 70.6% postgraduate) correspond to a subpopulation that is of the cultural aspects of consumption. This likely to be more aware demographic profile aligns with prior research indicating that younger and more-educated individuals tend to be most responsive to brand activism (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018) and that these individuals are consuming in the realm of ever before. The Indian urban setting brings a ethics and politics more than specific angle to the results, as the surge in digital media and consumer culture in this context has made it possible for global brand activism narratives to co-exist with local identity politics, caste- and aspirations. Lastly, the high intercorrelations among all class-based constructs ($r > 0.90$ in the discourse of brand activism, identity expression, and public meaning) indicate that active brand engagement, identity work, and sense-making are probably not separate experiences but rather a similar cultural context. This experiences that feed off each other within has implications for sociological theorizing, as it may be that the distinction culture, and identity is becoming increasingly unclear in between the market, consumer society today - a claim which has been central to the consumer culture theory tradition but one that has been grounded empirically in few non-Western contexts.



VII. CONCLUSION

7.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

This article has interrogated the connection between brand activism and cultural change in the consumer society, focusing on the specific ways in which corporate activism influences the expression of reaction of consumers. The results offer identities, public meaning, and the strong support for discriminant validity testing and, as such, provide clear evidence that brand activism is a substantial cultural issue ($\beta = 0.941$), with a strong impact on consumers' self-identity perceptions and on consumers' perceptions the societal implications of corporate involvement in social issues ($\beta =$ of 0.935).

this There are three main theoretical contributions of research. First, it develops the insights of cultural sociology, and in particular the work of Bourdieu (1984) and Alexander (2004), to the field of brand activism, by showing that corporate cultural performances do matter meaning. Second, it substantiates, symbolically for the construction of public on an empirical basis, the identity-expressive nature of brand activism posited brands by social identity theory, indicating that consumers consider activist as belongings through which they express their identities and articulate their values. Third, and finally, it contributes to the consumer culture theory tradition by illustrating, in a non-Western setting, that market place is a cultural system where commercial and moral, individual and strategic and symbolic interests are intricately related. The collective, important. For brand practical consequences of the work are no less are that authentic, long-term engagement in strategists, the implications social issues matters, and consumers have a highly evolved ability to assess the trustworthiness and consistency of activist messaging. Since brand activism and consumer response in has a relatively low predictive power on trust comparison to identity expression and public meaning, this implies that simply performing activism would not be sufficient to create stable consumer have to commitment. Brands that want to take advantage of the activism, then, commit to a real congruence between their words and their deeds.

policymakers The findings also have implications for and civil society actors regarding the participation of corporate actors in shaping public discourse and cultural values. The fact that brand activism has a stronger effect on public meaning and cultural change may further indicate that brands have become important agents in the social construction of reality—this is a development that has both democratic potential, as well as and the risk for ideological capture through commercial interests. Transparent accountable policy regimes for corporate activism are thus critical to protecting the integrity of public discourse.

VIII. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

study should be Several limitations of the present mentioned, which also guide future research. First, the cross-sectional nature does not allow a conclusion about causal relations to be drawn; of the study although the regression analyses are in accordance with the direction of effects implied by the hypotheses, stronger evidence for causality would be provided by longitudinal or experimental studies. Second, convenience sampling applicability of the results to and focusing on Visakhapatnam City restrict the studies should use probability other regional and cultural settings. Future sampling and comparative cross-cultural designs.

towards younger, male, and Third, the sample is biased highly educated respondents, which is representative of the demographics of the study context, but restricts the generalizability of the findings to wider research might explore the extent to which the population groups. Future impacts of brand activism differ by age, gender, class, and caste categories—particularly salient sociological dimensions in the Indian context. Fourth, the research depends on self-reported perceptual data, which is desirability bias and may not fully unravel the intricacy vulnerable to social qualitative of consumer-brand relationships. Mixed-methods incorporating interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, and experimental designs would further advance knowledge on the cultural formations under investigation.

Fifth, the very high correlations among constructs ($r > 0.90$) deserve to be paid attention to in future research, as this might bias. Further research should suggest conceptual redundancy or common method apply procedures such as confirmatory use more discriminant instruments and factor analysis and structural equation modeling to test for



discriminant the validity of the constructs. In addition, the research does not investigate influence of particular forms of activism (social, environmental, political, or research could separate economic) on differing consumer reactions. Subsequent out brand activism into different types and explore how each connects to identity expression, public meaning, and cultural change across varying consumer markets.

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