

Effect of Brand Activism on Customer Purchase Intention for Multinational Companies Products in South-West Nigeria

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Abstract: The study examined the effect of brand activism on customer purchase intention for multinational companies' products in South-West Nigeria. The selected research design for this study was the cross-sectional survey research. The study's population was limited to customers of multinational companies in South-West Nigeria. The sample size of 384 individuals was calculated using the Cochran formula, given the population size of the study was not known. The study employed the judgmental sampling technique. The data for this study were obtained from the primary source through the use of a structured questionnaire. The study employed internal consistency reliability. The acquired data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods in order to arrive at a conclusion. Findings indicated that value-driven communications ($\beta = 0.139, p < 0.05$) and brand authenticity ($\beta = 0.721, p < 0.05$) has a positive effect on customer purchase intention, while woke washing has a negative effect on customer purchase intention ($\beta = -0.080, p < 0.05$). The study concluded that brands that engage in activism can differentiate themselves from competitors, making their products more appealing to customers who share similar values. The study recommended amongst others that multinational companies should avoid woke-washing by ensuring their activism efforts are rooted in genuine commitment rather than superficial marketing campaigns.

Keywords: Brand Activism, Customer Purchase Intention, Multinational Company Products

1. Introduction

There is a growing focus on the issue that firms face when considering whether to adopt a sociopolitical stance to promote social change. A brand has the capacity to sway consumers into making purchasing choices that are in line with their values and convictions (Edelman, 2018). Brand activism has gained popularity as it allows brands to openly express their position on controversial sociopolitical issues. Moorman (2020) posits that brands might be considered political agents that actively and conscientiously contribute to their environment. Brand activism seeks to influence a company's performance, namely by increasing profits, improving brand reputation, and cultivating customer loyalty. Furthermore, it attempts to facilitate social transformation (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Studies have shown that successful brand activism methods can lead to many favourable results (Berestova et al., 2022; Herzberg & Rudelof, 2022). The outcomes encompass augmented market and firm value, amplified sales volume, improved brand image, heightened online exposure, increased social media engagement, elevated purchase intention, customer loyalty, enhanced consumer willingness to pay a higher price, and heightened consumer gratitude, admiration, and advocacy. Furthermore, these acts can lead to an expanded pool of potential hires (Miguel & Miranda, 2023). Herzberg and Rudelof (2022) found that decision-makers who demonstrate courage by participating in brand activism are more likely to receive rewards. Analyse the repercussions that Nike encountered following their association with Colin Kaepernick: Following the collaboration with a prominent civil rights activist and American football star, the brand initiated the BLM campaign. Despite some incongruity between the brand and the cause, as well as limited expertise in pro-social corporate practices, messaging, purpose, and values, the brand received a favourable response from consumers (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Although the corporation faced negative feedback from consumers and experienced the loss of previously bought goods, its campaign ultimately achieved significant commercial success. The company experienced a significant increase in online sales, specifically 31%. Additionally, it gained considerable earned media and free publicity, estimated to be worth approximately 43 million dollars (Sterling, 2018).

The relationship between customers and brands is increasingly dependent on the congruence between the brand's stated purpose and the consumer's core values (Williams, Escalas, & Morningstar 2022). A brand activism advertising strategy recognises that consumers are more likely to be drawn to brands that align with their important life objectives, providing brands with a chance to engage with consumers on controversial issues and debates (Fletcher-Brown, Middleton, Thompson-Whiteside, Turnbull, Tuan, & Hollebeek, 2024). Research has demonstrated that actively participating in social or political causes can provide unique advantages, such as differentiating oneself in the market (Middleton & Turnbull 2021), increasing the probability of making a purchase (Moorman 2020; Sarkar 2018), and bolstering support for a brand (Stokburger-Sauer, 2010).

As consumer faith in governments declines, brands are anticipated to assume greater societal responsibilities (Edelman, 2019) by actively engaging with social concerns (Cone, 2017; Schmidt et al., 2021) rather than solely prioritising profit maximisation.

Presently, consumers determine their purchasing choices not solely based on the goods and price but also on the values and principles that the brand represents (Barton et al., 2018). The younger generations of consumers, specifically Generation Z and Millennials, who were born between 1981 and 2012, expect businesses to actively listen to their concerns and publicly take a position on contentious issues (Edelman, 2021; Title, 2020). Given the inherent mistrust of young consumers towards corporate ethics (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2020), brand activism emerges as a crucial business approach to attaining this significant objective. Nevertheless, there are inherent hazards associated with this corporate approach, as consumers closely examine brands for their underlying motives (Barton et al., 2018). Customers' confidence may erode if they perceive a product or brand as lacking authenticity and primarily driven by profit-seeking motives. Nike faced public criticism for its support of the "Black Lives Movement" because it lacked consistency in its actions, as the company did not have any Black Board members (Ritson, 2020). Therefore, by comprehending the repercussions of this situation, brands will choose the causes that are best suited for them. The study's general objective is to investigate the effect of brand activism on customer purchase intention for multinational companies' products. The specific objectives of the study are to determine the impact of value-driven communications, brand authenticity, and woke-washing on customer purchase intention for products from multinational companies. The findings will help multinational companies develop more effective and authentic activism strategies that resonate with consumers and foster long-term brand loyalty. Understanding the nuances between genuine brand activism and woke-washing can guide companies in creating meaningful and impactful campaigns that drive positive consumer behavior.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Concept of Brand Activism

Brand activism refers to a company's efforts to promote or support social, environmental, economic, or political causes. Advertising campaigns that focus on key social and ecological issues that consumers care about have become more prominent in marketing tactics (Dahlen & Rosengren 2016). Moorman (2020) defines corporate political expressions as public speeches or acts, centered around partisan matters, made by a firm or on its behalf, using its corporate or individual brand name. Typically, a social movement of citizen-consumers creates these expressions. Brand activism has undergone a transformation in its definition, now emphasising sociopolitical causes. Nalick et al. (2016) characterize these causes as significant social issues that remain unresolved and spark contentious debates among various groups in society and institutions. According to Vredenburg et al. (2020), brand activism can be defined as a strategic approach where a brand takes a non-neutral position on socially and politically disputed issues in order to bring about social change and achieve marketing success. In order for brand activism to be effective, it is crucial that its various elements—including its aim, values, sociopolitical message, and business practice—are in alignment. This alignment should take into account the appropriate context, since some causes may be more contentious than others (Mirzaei et al., 2022). Brand activism serves as a connection between the marketplace and society by integrating beliefs and activities as a strategic approach (Nassar et al., 2021).

Brand activism refers to the public expression of support or opposition to controversial social or political matters by a brand or an individual connected to a brand (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017). Brand activism occurs when a corporation or brand openly supports a social, economic, environmental, cultural, or political cause that is in line with its fundamental principles and long-term goals (Shetty et al., 2019). Brand activism is a widely adopted corporate strategy where brands publicly express their opinions on what they believe is beneficial for society (Cian et al., 2018). According to Schmidt et al. (2022), companies and brands may have various motivations for taking a position on an issue. These motivations can include alignment with their core values and the founder's vision, seeking positive publicity, improving their financial performance, or other factors (Hodge, 2020). Brand activism encompasses many actions, such as publicly expressing a stance, advocating for a cause, contributing financial resources, and using cause-related messaging in marketing and advertising efforts. This type of activism not only captures the attention of their intended consumer base but also generates a significant amount of notoriety or attention for the business (Shetty et al., 2019). In addition, activism benefits firms and brands by positively influencing their financial gains, strengthening consumer allegiance, and aligning with customers who hold similar values and beliefs. Sarkar and Kotler (2018) argue that brand activism is a progression beyond values-based corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) initiatives. Furthermore, they argue that CSR and ESG, which primarily focus on corporations and markets, lack the necessary urgency and audacity to question the prevailing status quo, including established value systems and conventions, within most firms. Brand activism, in contrast to corporate social responsibility (CSR), centers on addressing the most critical and pressing challenges society confronts. It entails taking a stance on difficult social or political issues that have not yet reached a consensus in society.

Brand activism can provide businesses with significant opportunities. Moorman (2020) presents viewpoints that provide a rationale for implementing brand activism as a strategic approach, allowing brands to assert themselves as political entities. Implementing a brand activism approach can enhance brand equity over an extended period of time (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Additionally, it can set the brand apart from competitors who choose to maintain a neutral stance (Moorman, 2020). Wettstein and Baur (2016) state that there are three criteria for effectively advocating for a cause: consistency, plausibility, and authenticity. Consistency means that the issue aligns with the company's values. Plausibility means that the chosen causes are part of a long-term commitment. Authenticity

means that supporting a cause involves taking concrete actions rather than just using words. The concept of "walking the talk" refers to the essential requirements for genuine brand activism practices (Sibai, Mimoun, & Boukis, 2021). Figure 1 is an illustration of how the dimensions of brand activism such as value-driven communications, brand authenticity, and woke-washing influence customer purchase intention.

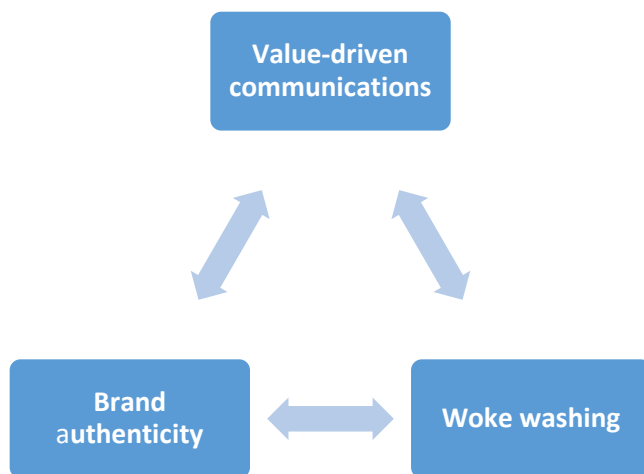


Figure 1: Dimensions of Brand Activism

2.1.2 Value-driven communications

Value-driven communications are marketing messages and campaigns that reflect the core values and beliefs of a company. These communications go beyond promoting products and services to advocate for causes that align with the company's values and resonate with its audience. Brands that successfully engage with their intended audience can strengthen brand loyalty and elicit positive customer responses by building trust and credibility through social media, advertising, public relations, and cause-related marketing. Companies can use product labels, displays, or posters at the point of sale to effectively communicate with consumers and attempt to inform and persuade them (Omodafe & Onobrakpeya, 2020). Brand activism use a communication approach for the brand to take a clear position on socially and politically controversial issues, such as same-sex marriage or gun regulation, based on its values and purpose (Bhagwat et al., 2020). Brand activism is distinct from corporate social responsibility, as the latter is perceived as less contentious and mostly focused on non-polarizing, beneficial matters such as providing aid during disasters or engaging in community initiatives (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Brand activism primarily takes the form of communication efforts, such as cause-related advertising and campaigns (Eyada, 2020). Currently, social media plays a significant role in enhancing communication and facilitating action (Murthy, 2018). These channels serve as platforms for political and social discourse, allowing users to openly express their personal viewpoints. This fosters the formation of a shared collective identity, which in turn facilitates the recruitment and mobilisation of individuals who support the same cause (Chon & Park, 2020). Prior to selling a product, companies recognise that consumers require information not only on product usage, but also on the advantages of buying a certain product and what they represent (Omodafe & Onobrakpeya, 2022). Social media platforms provide opportunities for engagement that allow activist brands to showcase the genuineness of their purpose (Sibai, Mimoun, & Boukis, 2021). By actively engaging with the community and addressing their issues, the brand may enhance the genuineness of its mission. This can be achieved by fostering relationships and encouraging social participation in a tangible manner (Kampf, 2018). In addition, by utilising various social media platforms, the activist brand can effectively tailor its communication to fulfil the transparency criteria needed to demonstrate its work (Korschun, 2021). For instance, through corporate blogs and websites, the activist brand can offer tangible proof of its actions and emphasise the articulation of its principles and values, while also providing verifiable evidence of its work.

Exhibiting genuine dedication can prove to be rather challenging. Merely advocating for a cause in public is insufficient and impractical. Brands that adopt a firm position on certain issues often face increased scrutiny of their behaviour (Carlos, & Lewis, 2018). An activist brand must undertake prominent and maybe more assertive efforts that have the potential to bring about swift change (Eilert & Cherup, 2020). Additionally, it should actively strive for the collective welfare (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018). Hence, if a company advocates for diversity and racial equality, it is imperative that these principles are evident in the demographic makeup of its employees. In a corporate setting, when the brand activism focuses on altering attitudes and behaviours to address a problem, corporations can introduce many initiatives targeting various institutional stakeholders. The objective is to exert pressure and induce change by influencing these stakeholders. Consumers often form an emotional bond with brands that advocate for causes they believe in, making them more likely to choose these brands over others. Value-driven communications help brands stand out in a crowded market by showcasing their commitment to meaningful causes, attracting customers who prioritize these values in their purchasing decisions.

2.1.3 Brand Authenticity

Brand authenticity refers to the perception that a brand is genuine, transparent, and true to its stated values and mission. Authenticity is crucial in building trust and emotional connections with consumers. Consumers are more likely to support brands that they believe are genuinely committed to the causes they promote. Recognising the genuineness of brand activism results in a more significant beneficial effect on brand equity and a higher capacity to contribute to fundamental social transformation. Authentic brand activism is widely regarded as the most impactful kind of brand activism due to its ability to generate optimal outcomes in terms of brand value while simultaneously reducing costs and issues associated with brand selection (Vredenburg et al., 2020). In order to maintain authenticity, it is essential for brand statements and company strategy to align with each other (Lyon et al., 2018). According to the findings of Schmidt et al. (2021), brand activism may only foster emotional ties when it is viewed as something beyond mere communication. However, although the alignment requirement between the practice and the message holds significance, it is insufficient by itself to guarantee authenticity (Schmidt et al., 2021). Vredenburg et al. (2020) contend that in order to establish a comprehensive system, it is essential to align four key elements: purpose, values, message, and practice.

Several authors in the literature have examined the concept of brand authenticity, connecting it to elements such as a brand's history, origin, production processes, credibility, and moral considerations (Bruhn et al., 2012; Morhart et al., 2015). Six factors are considered authentic in brand activism, according to Mirzaei et al. (2022): social context independency (campaigns that are not impacted by contemporary social issues); inclusion (messages that are unbiased with regard to gender, race, age, and political matters); sacrifice (a brand's willingness to forgo profit in support of a cause); practice (the extent to which brands act in accordance with their stated beliefs); and fit (the alignment between the brand: In order to be considered authentic in their efforts to bring about social change, companies must continuously ensure that their publicly declared aims are in harmony with their actual behaviours. Prior to integrating social concerns into their positioning strategy, it is important for them to have a deep and thorough understanding of how to effectively and thoroughly tackle these challenges (Champlin et al., 2019). In the realm of activism, the concept of authenticity relies heavily on the personal dedication of CEOs towards the social concerns being addressed. To effectively engage employees and other stakeholders in advocating for a cause, it is important to maintain consistency in addressing social concerns and ensure that all company procedures and choices are aligned with these social objectives (Chatterji & Toffel, 2019). Authentic brands foster loyalty because consumers feel assured that the brand's actions and promises are genuine. Authenticity enhances the overall perception of the brand, making customers more likely to support it. Consumers often value authenticity so highly that they are willing to pay more for products from brands they perceive as genuine and honest.

2.1.4 Woke-washing

Woke-washing is a term used to describe companies that engage in superficial or insincere activism solely for the purpose of marketing and public relations, without a genuine commitment to the causes they claim to support. When consumers perceive a company's activism as inauthentic or manipulative, it can lead to distrust and a decline in purchase intention. In contrast, brand activism is seen as lacking genuineness when firms do not have a well-defined brand mission and values, deliberately conceal their lack of ethical practices, or fail to demonstrate adequate prosocial corporate behaviour. Hence, the presence of insincere brand activism has the potential to erode consumers' confidence and establish unfavourable brand connections. Brands in this situation are engaging in "woke washing," which refers to the mismatch between a brand's activism statement and its actual principles, purpose, and practices (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Mirzaei et al. (2022) cite two instances as examples: the ads of Gillette and Nike. Both incidents include brands being accused of opportunism as they pursue corporate advantage by addressing societal concerns, typically for the aim of gaining profit. When brand activist messages in the media do not align with their actual actions, when brands fail to engage in meaningful pro-social corporate practices, or when they deliberately conceal the lack of such practices, it can be said that brands are engaging in an inauthentic form of brand activism known as "woke washing" (Sobande, 2019). The term "woke" originates from African American culture and is a synonym for social awareness. Woke washing refers to brands that have ambiguous or unclear behaviour when it comes to social practices, but actively promote themselves as being socially and politically engaged, often without a proper understanding of the issues at hand. Oftentimes, these brands participate in socio-political movements only because they feel pressured or compelled to meet market demands. As a result, their communications become disconnected from their genuine purpose, values, and corporate practices (Campbell, 2007). This opportunistic involvement can lead to the perception of brand activism as insincere, inauthentic, or even deceptive (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Therefore, it can be anticipated that a brand activism strategy that exhibits a strong alignment between the brand and the cause, as well as a high level of authenticity (referred to as Authentic Brand Activism), will have a greater likelihood of being successful compared to an activist strategy that lacks alignment between the brand and the cause, and has a low level of authenticity (known as woke washing). However, even if brand activism is a genuine component of an organization's overall strategic goals, if consumers perceive the virtue-signaling efforts as lacking authenticity, the brand activism strategies may have adverse effects on the brand, such as backlash or boycotts (Mirzaei, Wilkie, & Siuki 2022). Nike faced criticism from consumers for their support of the 2020 Black Lives Matter rallies due to the lack of diversity on the company's board, as pointed out by critics (Ritson 2020). The brand faced allegations of "woke washing" and was criticised for engaging in inauthentic brand activism. Brands that are revealed to be

insincere in their commitment to brand activism are often accused of using deceptive marketing strategies (Eccles & Serafeim 2013), which can shatter previously harmonious brand-consumer interactions (Ozanne & Murray 1995). For example, sceptical consumers may unite to question marketing strategies (Minocher 2019). Disillusioned customers are likely to share their negative experiences with others, amplifying the damage to the brand's reputation. Consumers are less likely to buy from brands they perceive as dishonest or manipulative, leading to a decline in sales and customer loyalty.

2.1.5 Empirical Review

Guha and Korschun (2024) examined the influence of peer activism on a brand's inclination to participate in social media activism. By examining tweets from 177 brands over a span of five years, we have discovered compelling evidence that brands not only observe and respond to social media activism by their peers, but that these influences extend across all industries. The analysis focused on three significant sociopolitical topics: Black Lives Matter, LGBTQIA rights, and COVID-19 regulations. Moreover, the results substantiate the idea that brands also track customer responses to peer social media activity to assess the potential consequences of expressing a position as well as the potential consequences of remaining silent. The results indicate that while considering the advantages and disadvantages of participating in social media activism, brand managers should closely observe not just the activism of other companies, but also the immediate public responses to those efforts.

Moumade, Hemonnet-Goujot, and Valette-Florence (2024) investigated the impact of brand legitimacy and psychological distance on the consumer-brand relationship in France, specifically focusing on brand activism. This study examined two brand activism initiatives, one focused on social issues and the other on environmental concerns. The study protocol is qualitative and involves 36 participants. The online Album On-Line (AOL) technique was used with 24 respondents, and an additional 12 semi-structured interviews are conducted. This study uncovers two mechanisms: an emotional process called psychological distance, and a cognitive mechanism known as brand validity. This study emphasises the three fundamental aspects of legitimacy, namely moral, cognitive, and pragmatic. In addition, when consumers perceive a brand as being too distant from the cause, they feel disconnected from the brand and doubt its credibility.

Confetto, Palazzo, Ferri, and Normando (2023) conducted a comparative analysis on brand activism for sustainable development goals in the beauty and personal care industry. This study seeks to analyse and compare the inclusive brands Dove and L'Oréal in order to understand how they approach brand activism through their corporate strategies, including their stated principles, initiatives, and digital communication. The study highlighted that many activist strategies can achieve success, as long as they maintain strong and unwavering principles. The results indicate that despite employing distinct activist strategies, with one being more communicative and the other less so, both companies achieve success by embodying genuine and unwavering ideals that are favourably seen by consumers.

Rivaroli, Spadoni, and Bregoli (2022) examined the impact of customers' assessments of a brand's reputation, competence, credibility, and compassion on their levels of brand trust and brand loyalty. This study centres on the Italian brand "Libera Terra" ("Free Land"). The study used a sample of 366 randomly selected supermarket consumers, indicate that consumers' views of brand performance have a significant impact on their levels of brand trust. Brand trust has a subsequent effect on consumers' loyalty to the brand. This study validates the need of aligning an organization's values, business practices, and marketing strategies to achieve effective and genuine brand activism. It emphasises the necessity for businesses to deliberately embrace brand activism and refrain from engaging in deceptive "woke washing" practices.

Shetty, Venkataramaiah, and Anand (2019) conducted an empirical study on the perception of millennials in India towards brand activism. The methodology utilised is HTAB (Hypothesise, Test, Action, Business). A total of 286 respondents were included in the sample. The ultimate dataset consisted of 286 observations and 45 attributes distributed across seven categories. Research has revealed that millennials have a preference for purchasing products from brands that align with a cause or purpose. Conversely, they tend to discontinue their support for brands that engage in unethical behaviour. Furthermore, it was noted that millennials do not exhibit any gender disparity in their attitudes on brand advocacy. Furthermore, those belonging to the millennial generation, regardless of their financial levels, share comparable views towards brand activism. Furthermore, it has been confirmed that the emotional connection of millennials with a company that supports a cause extends beyond changes in price and brands adopting a political position. Selectively choosing topics and engaging in disruptive behaviour not only prompts a strong negative reaction towards the brand, but also generates significant backlash.

3. Methodology

Research Design

The selected research design for this study is the cross-sectional survey research design. Utilising cross-sectional surveys allowed the researchers to ascertain the real happenings within the organisation, rather than merely depending on reported data. Having a full awareness of the difficulties that companies are confronting is advantageous for developing a foundation or conducting a preliminary research.

Population and Sample Size

The study's population was limited to customers of multinational companies in the South-West Nigeria. The study achieved a thorough understanding of the particular difficulties and opportunities in executing brand activism in South-West Nigeria by only concentrating on this region. The researchers have uncertain knowledge on the precise overall population of customers in the region. The sample size of 384 individuals was calculated using the Cochran (1977) formula, given the population size of the study is not known. Onobrakpeya and Bayagbon (2024) asserted that it involves creating assumptions about the required level of precision, the desired level of confidence, and an anticipated proportion of the population displaying a particular attribute. The formula for the Cochran sample size calculation is as follows:

$$n = z^2(PQ) / e^2 \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

The study employed the judgmental sampling technique. The study utilised judgmental sampling to intentionally choose specific groups for inclusion in the sample, based on the researchers' knowledge of the community and the specific characteristics they were looking for. The researchers utilised their expertise to identify individuals who are most likely to provide relevant and significant data for the study.

Sources of Data

The data for this study were obtained from the primary source through the use of a structured questionnaire that employed a response format based on the five-point Likert scale. The use of a structured questionnaire enables researchers to assess public opinion at ease. The reason for choosing this approach was that surveys are the most effective method for conducting scientific research. Participants were given validated questionnaires directly during face-to-face interactions. A pilot study was conducted to thoroughly scrutinise the research instrument and identify any possible difficulties before its complete implementation. The objective was to administer a preliminary test of the questionnaire and do assessments of its validity and reliability.

The study employed internal consistency reliability as a means of assessing the efficacy of the questionnaire items. If there is a significant connection between these objects, then there is a noticeable degree of internal coherence. The Cronbach alpha coefficients were computed to assess internal consistency. A construct's criterion can be considered reliable if it has a minimum composite reliability value of 0.7 and is additionally supported by a Cronbach's alpha value higher than 0.6 (Ghozali, 2015)

Table 1. Reliability coefficients of study constructs

Dimension of study constructs	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Value-Driven Communications	5	0.754
Brand Authenticity	5	0.742
Woke-Washing	5	0.754
Customer Purchase Intention	5	0.755

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

From the data shown in Table 1, it can be deduced that the Cronbach's alpha for each variable exceeds 0.7. These results indicate that each variable has met the required criteria, suggesting that the indicators used to measure the variables are considered reliable.

Methods of Data Analysis

The acquired data were evaluated utilising descriptive and inferential statistical methods in order to arrive at a result. The demographic features of the respondents were analysed using basic percentages as descriptive statistics. The statistical techniques employed were correlation and multiple regression analysis, both of which are inferential in nature. Multiple regression was employed to assess the statistical significance of the associations among variables. The analysis was performed using the SPSS for Windows programme, namely version 25.

Model Specification

The following model specification was developed for the study:

$$Y = F(X) \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

$$CPI = F(VDC, BA, WW) \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

$$CPI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 VDC + \beta_2 BA + \beta_3 WW + \varepsilon \dots \dots \dots (4)$$

Where:

β_0 = Constant Coefficient

β_1 - β_3 = Coefficients

CPI = Customer Purchase Intention

VDC = Value-Driven Communications

BA = Brand Authenticity

WW = Woke Washing

4. Results of Data Analysis

This section is dedicated to the analysis of the data obtained from the participants.

Table 2. Response rate

S/N	Description of Response	Number	Ratio (%)
1	Total questionnaires administered	384	100
2	Questionnaires retrieved	373	97
3	Questionnaires rejected	6	2
4	Questionnaires analyzed	367	96

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table 2 had a response rate of 96%. The researchers deemed a 96% response rate satisfactory to proceed with the analysis.

Table 3. Sample demographics (N=367).

Variable	Category	Number	Ratio (%)
Gender	Male	183	50
	Female	184	50
Age	18-25	40	11
	26-32	84	23
	33-39	99	27
	40-46	106	29
	47-53	38	10
Marital status	Single	125	34
	Married	224	61
	Divorced	18	5
Education level	SSCE	55	15
	OND	84	23
	HND/ B.Sc.	180	49
	Postgraduate degree	48	13

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 indicates that the samples were evenly split between males and females, with each gender accounting for 50% of the total. The poll revealed that 11% of the participants fell within the age range of 18 to 25, 23% were aged between 26 and 32, 27% were aged between 33 and 39, 29% were aged between 40 and 46, and 10% were aged between 47 and 53. The poll revealed that 34% of the respondents were not married, while 61% were in a marital union, and 5% had gone through a divorce. 49% of the participants have an educational background that includes either a Higher National Diploma (HND) or a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree.

Table 4 Brand Activism and Customer Purchase Intention

Predictors	Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics		ANOVA ^a		Model Summary	
	Beta	T	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF	F	Sig.	R Square	Adjusted R Square
		-.058	.954			117.945	.000 ^b	.494	.489

Value-Driven Communications	.139	3.678	.000	.978	1.023
Brand Authenticity	.721	13.928	.000	.521	1.920
Woke Washing	-.080	-1.549	.122	.527	1.898

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Purchase Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Value-Driven Communications, Brand Authenticity, Woke Washing

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table 4 indicates that value-driven communications have a positive effect on customer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.139$, $p < 0.05$). Brand authenticity has a positive effect on customer purchase intention, as indicated by a significant beta coefficient of 0.721 ($p < 0.05$). Woke washing has a negative effect on customer purchase intention ($\beta = -0.080$, $p < 0.05$). The analysis revealed that there is no multicollinearity, since the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) for value-driven communications (1.023), brand authenticity (1.920), and woke washing (1.898) in relation to Customer Purchase Intention are all below the threshold of 10. In addition, the tolerance level exceeds 0.1, whereas value-driven communications have a tolerance level of 0.978, brand authenticity have a tolerance level of 0.521, and woke washing have a tolerance level of 0.527.

Nevertheless, the independent variables served as reliable indicators of brand activism. This was corroborated by the F measurement of 117.945 and the p value (0.000), which was below the significance level of 0.05. Hence, the model exhibited statistical significance. Moreover, the dimensions of brand activism were considered to be significant factors in explaining the variances in customer purchase intention, as indicated by the adjusted R square value of 0.489. Brand activism components accounted for 49% of the variations in customer purchase intention.

Table 5 Relationship between the variables N=367

S/N	Predictors	VDC	BA	WW	CPI
1	Value-Driven Communications	1			
2	Brand Authenticity	0.149**	1		
3	Woke Washing	0.105*	0.688**	1	
4	Customer Purchase Intention	0.238**	0.687**	0.431**	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 indicated that value-driven communications has a positive correlation with customer purchase intention ($r=0.238$). However, brand authenticity has a strong positive correlation with customer purchase intention ($r=0.687$). Furthermore, the result indicated that woke washing has a positive correlation with customer purchase intention ($r=0.431$).

4.1 Discussion of results

The study examined the effect of brand activism on customer purchase intention for multinationals company products. The selected research design for this study is the cross-sectional survey research design. Findings indicated that value-driven communications have a positive effect on Customer Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.139$, $p < 0.05$). The result aligned with Guha and Korschun (2024), study findings that brand managers carefully assess the potential dangers and benefits of participating in social media activism. This includes not only keeping an eye on the activism efforts of other companies, but also closely monitoring the immediate public responses to those initiatives. By leveraging the potential of utilising various social media channels, the activist brand may effectively tailor its message to fulfil the transparency criteria essential for demonstrating its efforts (Korschun, 2021). This implied that value-driven communications significantly impact customer purchase intention by aligning the brand's values with those of the consumers. When customers perceive that a brand genuinely supports causes they care about, it can lead to a stronger emotional connection and loyalty towards the brand.

However, findings indicated that brand authenticity has a positive effect on customer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.721$, $p < 0.05$). The research conducted by Rivaroli et al. (2022) validates that when an organization's beliefs, business practices, and marketing strategies are in sync, it leads to the effectiveness of genuine brand activism. This emphasises the importance for businesses to deliberately embrace brand activism and refrain from engaging in "woke washing" techniques. Confetto, et al. (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of the inclusive brands Dove and L'Oréal. Their findings indicate that despite employing different activist strategies, with one brand being more communicative than the other, both brands achieve success by embodying genuine and consistent values that

are well-received by consumers. This implied that brand authenticity is a crucial factor in influencing customer purchase intention. When consumers perceive a brand as authentic, they are more likely to trust its messages and feel confident in their purchase decisions.

Furthermore, findings indicated that woke washing has a negative effect on customer purchase intention ($\beta = -0.080$, $p < 0.05$). Brand activism can be a legitimate component of an organization's overall strategic goals. However, if customers view the organization's efforts to signal its virtues as insincere, brand activism methods may have adverse impacts on the brand, such as backlash or boycotts (Mirzaei et al., 2022). Brands that are seen to lack genuine commitment to the brand activism they claim to support are often accused of using deceptive marketing strategies (Eccles & Serafeim 2013), which can disturb previously stable brand-consumer relationships (Ozanne & Murray 1995). This implied that woke-washing, or insincere brand activism, can have a detrimental effect on customer purchase intention. When consumers detect that a brand's activism is merely a marketing ploy rather than a genuine commitment, it can lead to negative consequences. Inauthentic activism can lead to a significant loss of trust in the brand, making consumers skeptical of its motives.

5. Conclusion

Brands that engage in activism can differentiate themselves from competitors, making their products more appealing to customers who share similar values. When brands take a stand on social issues, customers are more likely to develop an emotional connection, leading to increased loyalty and repeat business. Value-driven communications and brand authenticity positively influence customer purchase intention by building trust, fostering emotional connections, and enhancing brand differentiation. In contrast, woke-washing has a negative impact, eroding trust, damaging the brand's reputation, and reducing customer purchase intention. Multinational companies need to ensure their activism efforts are genuine and aligned with their values to effectively enhance customer purchase intentions.

6. Recommendations

- i. Multinational companies should develop and implement value-driven communications that genuinely reflect their core values and beliefs. This involves identifying and supporting causes that align with both the company's mission and the values of its target audience.
- ii. Multinational companies should prioritize authenticity in all their brand activism efforts. This means being transparent, consistent, and genuine in their support of social, environmental, or political causes.
- iii. Multinational companies should avoid woke-washing by ensuring their activism efforts are rooted in genuine commitment rather than superficial marketing tactics. This involves being honest about the company's motivations and the extent of its support for various causes.

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