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Deltaker

Naun:	Martin Haldorsen
Kandidatnr.:	413
HVL-id:	245821@hvl.no

Informasjon fra deltaker

Antall ord *:	17795
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MASTER'S THESIS

Brand activism in Norway: A study on the effects of mixing politics and business

Martin Haldorsen & Carl Wernhoff

Master of Science in Business

Department of Business Administration

Supervisor: Atanu K. Nath

20.05.2022

I confirm that the work is self-prepared and that references/source references to all sources used in the work are provided, cf. Regulation relating to academic studies and examinations at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL), § 12-1.

Abstract

It has become ever more prevalent for companies to engage in brand activism. Whether it's fighting against racial injustice, protecting the environment, or standing up for freedom of speech – the corporate world is increasingly expected to speak out, or face the music if they do not. However, as taking a stance on divisive political issues necessitates taking a stance against those on the other side of the issue, this too does not come without risks of its own. To better understand brand activism's impact on consumers, we have stated the following research problem within a Norwegian context: “How do consumers respond to brands engaging in brand activism?”

This research proposes a set of hypotheses related to the suggested connections between the constructs brand activism (BA), self-brand connection (SBC), purchase intention (PI) and political reference group (PRG). All constructs are abstracted from literature review. We have conducted a quantitative study and received responses from 326 respondents – all of whom live in Norway. We tested our research models across four separate expressions of BA – two statements affiliated with the political right and two statements affiliated with the political left. Our findings suggest that a consumer's SBC – in response to a given political sentiment associated with a brand (BA) – is dependent on the consumer's PRG. Rightist BA positively influences SBC if the consumer identifies with the right, and negatively influences SBC if the consumer identifies as with the left. Leftist BA positively influences SBC if the consumer identifies with the left, and negatively influences SBC if the consumer identifies with the right. Lastly, we found that SBC positively influences PI in all four model analyses.

Sammendrag

Det har blitt stadig mer utbredt blant bedrifter å engasjere seg i merkevare-aktivisme. Enten formålet er å kjempe mot rasisme, beskytte miljøet, eller å kjempe for ytringsfrihet så forventes det i økende grad at bedrifter skal ta del i debatten. Alternativt må de ta konsekvensene for å stå på sidelinjen. Ettersom det å ta et standpunkt i splittende politiske spørsmål også vil si at man nødvendigvis tar et standpunkt mot de som står på den andre siden av saken, er heller ikke dette uten risiko. For å få en bedre forståelse av merkevare-aktivisme sin innvirkning på forbrukere, har vi valgt følgende problemstilling i en norsk kontekst: “Hvordan reagerer forbrukere på selskaper som engasjerer seg i merkevare-aktivisme?”

For å imøtekomme problemstillingen har vi foreslått et sett med hypoteser knyttet til de foreslåtte sammenhengene mellom konstruktene merkevare-aktivisme (BA), selvmerkevare-forbindelse (SBC), kjøpsintensjon (PI) og politisk referansegruppe (PRG). Konstruktene er abstrahert fra litteraturgjennomgang. Vi har gjennomført en kvantitativ studie og har mottatt svar fra 326 respondenter, hvorav samtlige bor i Norge. Vi testet forskningsmodellen vår på tvers av fire separate uttrykk for BA – to høyrepolitiske utsagn og to venstrepolitiske utsagn. Våre funn tyder på at en forbrukers SBC – som svar på et gitt politisk standpunkt knyttet til en merkevare (BA) – er avhengig av forbrukerens PRG. Høyre-politisk BA påvirker SBC positivt dersom forbrukeren identifiserer seg som høyre-politisk, og påvirker SBC negativt dersom forbrukeren identifiserer seg som venstre-politisk. Venstre-politisk BA påvirker SBC positivt hvis forbrukeren identifiserer seg som venstre-politisk, og påvirker SBC negativt dersom forbrukeren identifiserer seg som høyre-politisk. Til slutt fant vi at SBC positivt påvirker PI i alle fire modellanalysene.

Preface

This thesis is submitted as the final examination of the study program Master of Science in Business at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. First and foremost, we would like to extend our thanks to the 326 respondents who took their time to answer our survey – and without whom there would be no thesis to submit. We would also like to thank our proficient supervisor – Atanu K. Nath – for the discussions, advice, and abundance of patience.

The topic of this thesis was pursued due to personal interests and the interesting work we have conducted throughout the master's program. The following pages are filled with anecdotes, theory, research, statistics, and reflections that are paramount to any scientific endeavor. However, we hope the reader will appreciate an ancillary ingredient that we have sought to add – passion.

Thank you for taking an interest in our work and enjoy the read!

May 20th, 2022

Martin Haldorsen & Carl Wernhoff

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1. Introduction

In the 1980s, the term “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) rose to prominence and launched the concept of a “social contract between business and society” (Association of Corporate Citizenship Professionals, 2021). The purpose was to make corporations take more responsibility for their products and processes and how they impact the environment and society at large (Bailey & Phillips, 2020). Since then, the corporate world has seen a growing demand for companies to grow beyond the civic engagement of CSR by engaging in strictly political issues (Kempton, 1993). According to Barton et al. (2018), as many as 62 percent of consumers believe that companies should take a political stance on social issues. Whereas sentiments like keeping politics out of business used to be the norm, companies are increasingly responding to this trend by engaging in a myriad of political issues (Bailey & Phillips, 2020). This proactive approach is generally called “brand activism,” and is a growing trend for companies of all sizes across the globe (Moorman, 2020).

A well-known example of brand activism is that of the Nike campaign featuring the American football player, Colin Kaepernick. Kaepernick became famed in 2016 after kneeling during the national anthem to protest racial injustice. His actions were met with praise from the political left, and criticism from the political right and eventually cost him his career in the NFL. Following his ousting from football, Nike endorsed Kaepernick’s actions by featuring him in a global campaign with the slogan, “Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything” (Hruby, 2019). Like with Kaepernick’s actions, this too led to controversy. Then-President Trump acknowledged Kaepernick’s right to speak his mind, but criticized the message Nike was sending, emphasizing kneeling during the national anthem as disrespectful to the flag and the military (Guardian sport, 2018). On the one hand, Kaepernick was described as a “symbol of conscience” outside his sport (Hruby, 2019), and on the other hand his movement also faced severe backlash. Shortly after Nike unveiled the campaign, shares of the company fell, the hashtag “#NikeBoycott” trended on twitter (Thomas, 2018), and some even resorted to burning their Nike products in protest (Bostock, 2018). Despite the backlash, Nike saw their online sales jump by 31% only days after the campaign launched (Pengelly, 2018), and the stock proceeded to rise to an all-time high after the initial short dip in share price (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, Is brand activism good for business? para. 5).

Brand activism is not necessarily aimed solely at progression but has also been used for regressive causes. For instance, whilst Dick’s Sporting Goods removed assault rifles from their stores following a school shooting, NRA actively tries to reverse and block gun control legislation (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, Brandshaming, para. 13; Bates, 2019). Whilst Guinness and Chevrolet came out publicly in support of same-sex marriages, Chick-fil-A and Barilla came out in opposition (Goldhill, 2014). Chick-fil-A and Barilla publicly opposed marriage equality between the sexes, whilst Guinness and Chevrolet came out publicly in support (Goldhill, 2014). According to Lemon (2016, p. 17), whether brands should take public stances on social and political issues is one of the most important questions on the horizon of marketing research. Whereas keeping business and politics separate used to be the norm, customers are increasingly expecting brands to support various causes (Korschun, 2021) and brands are sometimes dragged in against their will, as was the case with Chick-fil-A (O’Connor, 2014).

The purpose of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of brand activism in a Norwegian context and to contribute to the literature on the topic, as it is quite sparse. A search on Google Scholar finds no mention of “brand activism” prior to 2015. In large part, the understanding of brand activism is based on the work of Matos et al. (2017), Vredenburg (2020), Bhagwat et al. (2020), Warren (2021) and Sarkar & Kotler (2017; 2020), as well as an examination of various cases of brands engaging in activism. In our study, we also draw on the work of Escalas & Bettman (2003; 2004; 2005) to measure the effect of brand activism on the customer-brand relationship called self-brand connection – and how this influences purchase intention. Furthermore, we will explore how an individual’s political reference group influences the response generated from brands engaging in activism. Our findings could provide insight for academics as well as guidance for business leaders who are looking to navigate the ever more political landscape. With this in mind, we have constructed the following research problem and research questions:

Research problem: How do consumers respond to companies engaging in brand activism?

Research question 1: How does an individual’s political reference group affect the relationship between brand activism and the individual’s self-brand connection?

Research question 2: How does an individual’s self-brand connection influence purchase intention?

2. Literature review

In this chapter, we will explore the literature surrounding brand activism, self-brand connection, brand identification, reference groups, and politics in order to find relevant approaches to answering our research problem and corresponding research questions.

2.1 Brand activism (BA)

Activism is defined as “the use of direct and noticeable action to achieve a result, usually a political or social one” (“activism,” n.d.). Put simply, brand activism is activism carried out through the use of a brand. It is a strategy that seeks to influence consumers by means of campaigns created and sustained by political values (Manfredi-Sanchez, 2019). Korschun (2021) emphasizes two main characteristics of brand activism: (1) a publicly stated position on a social or political issue and (2) the advocacy of the stated position. The public nature of the stance distinguishes brand activism from more secretive approaches like lobbying and behind-the-scenes political influence. Similarly, the active role of advocate distinguishes it from the more traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts. CSR is a result of a marketing and corporate driven approach and entails satisfying requirements to “do one’s part,” brand activism seeks to “proactively change public opinion.” in a value driven approach (Kotler & Sarkar 2017). Vredenburg (2020) uses the closely related term “corporate socio-political activism,” and differentiates it from CSR in that – similarly to that of Korschun’s (2021) definition – it must entail a public stance on an issue that can “both strengthen and sever stakeholder relationships.” In other words, brand activism should pursue a partisan issue that is to some extent polarizing; if there is no perceivable risk associated with taking a stance, it is not truly brand activism.

Kotler & Sarkar (2017) and Shetty et al. (2019) concludes that the millennial generation to a larger degree expects brands to take social responsibility and be voices for change through brand activism. Millennials expect brands to be values driven in the sense that they show concern for community and the environment equally to profits. Moreover, the latter authors even found that consumers with emotional ties to brands as a result of the brand’s support for certain causes, are willing to pay a premium price for their products. This might explain Nike’s financial success with the Kaepernick campaign mentioned in the introduction, given the fact that a substantial majority of Nike's core

customers are under the age of thirty-five, ergo millennials. It is these brands that millennials want to work for, which goes to say that it could be important for brands to take this into account in terms of attracting employees as well. In this sense, brand activism can be a way for brands to position themselves favorably towards millennials. Most studies on brand activism have been conducted in the context of social and environmental activism (Matos et al., 2017; Vredenburg 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020) but as Kotler & Sarkar (2017) explain, brand activism can also encompass topics such as law, business, politics, and economics.

In a global survey conducted by Barton et al. (2018), 62% of consumers wanted companies to take a stand on issues like sustainability, transparency, and fair employment practices. However, when asked what attracts them to buy certain brands over others, only 37% answered in the affirmative about brands taking a political stance on issues close to their heart. Similarly, in a US poll by Strong (2018) on whether brands should involve themselves in politics, 49% were against, 29% were in favor, and the remaining 22% were unsure. In other words, those against seem to represent the largest group. Whilst it seems like there could be a sentiment against brands engaging in activism, it is important to note that these respondents were polled on “political issues” in general, as opposed to specific issues. A problem with this approach is that certain issues may be perceived as political by some and not by others, and that general attitudes may not be congruent with attitudes towards specific stances. This raises the question of how consumers respond to such specific stances.

In the introduction we lightly touched upon risks associated with engaging in brand activism. A major contributor to these risks is that when a brand makes statements that consumers perceive as political, they consequently become associated with the political leanings that the statement represents through the process of “politicization” (Matos et al., 2017). This means that the “riskier” – or more partisan – the statement is, the more you could potentially alienate those on the other side of the political aisle. Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020) found that engaging in brand activism – although an effective way of receiving attention – is a very risky endeavor. In the event that consumers agreed with the brand activism, they found that the potential upside was lower than the potential downside in the case of disagreement. This is consistent with the notion that negative impressions tend to carry more weight than positive impressions – particularly because they receive more attention (Klein & Dawar, 2004). On the other hand, Korschun

(2021) argues that if a brand is seen as genuine and reserved in their activism, it can be accepted even by customers who may disagree with it. The author compares it to how we tend to accept friends and relatives who have political views different from our own. Warren (2021) concludes along the same line that potential backlash in the form of negative reactions and boycotts are comparatively short lived compared to the lasting positive effect it has with those that sympathize with the brand activism. For companies, this requires maintaining a balance between the expectations to engage in activism against the inherent risks in doing so.

In a similar vein, Matos et al. (2017) found that brand political position – a term closely related to brand activism – had a significant effect on the connection between an individual's sense of self and the brand. This connection was coined by Escalas and Bettmann (2003) as the self-brand connection (SBC). Furthermore, Matos et al. (2017) found that whether the effect was positive or negative, depended on the alignment between the political sentiment expressed by the brand and the individual's political affiliation. Likewise, Escalas and Bettmann (2003) found that brand usage by a consumer's reference group had a similar effect on SBC. Building on this, we will take a closer look at how an individual's political group of reference could be relevant to the effect that brand activism has on a consumer's self-brand connection (SBC).

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between Brand Activism (BA) and self-brand connection (SBC).

2.2 Self-brand connection (SBC)

Escalas and Bettmann (2003) define self-brand connection (SBC) as “the extent to which individuals have incorporated brands into their self-concept.” The self-concept refers to the way consumers “think and feel about who, and what they perceive themselves to be” and consumer behavior tends to be directed toward its maintenance or enhancement (van der Westhuizen, 2018). Consequently, consumers may use brands as a way to express themselves and to represent their self-images. This type of brand usage is called symbolic self-completion (Ismail, 2017; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981) and is a large component of postmodern consumption. To elaborate, products are not merely consumed for their practical use, but additionally to create and express one's self and social identity (Belk, 1988; Elliot & Wattanasuwan, 1998). Consumers use brands as

symbols to communicate to others who they are, incorporating brands into their self-concept and creating an emotional connection between the self and the brand. This process takes place as early as middle childhood and early adolescence (Chaplin & John, 2015).

The use of brands as a type of self-extension is called brand attachment (Kleine & Baker, 2004). SBC – in turn – is a dimension of brand attachment (Japutra et al., 2014) and of brand-customer relationships (Swaminathan et al., 2007). Brand attachment is namely divided into emotional connection, self-connection, and importance and is a somewhat broader measure of the customer-brand relationship than SBC (Japutra et al., 2014). However, it could be argued that there is little distinction between the emotional and self-connection dimensions of brand attachment compared to SBC. The only measure that is distinct is the importance dimension, which represents the importance a brand has in a consumer's life.

SBC is a very strong predictor of consumer behavior due to the emotional connection that self-congruence with a brand has. The sort of brand relationship that a strong SBC represents helps consumers define who they are, and strengthens their identity (Fournier, 1998). A strong SBC is proven to increase likelihood of positive word-of-mouth (Kwon & Mattila, 2015), and talking about a brand further links ourselves to the brand (Sicilia et al., 2016). In addition, SBC is a strong predictor of brand loyalty (van der Westhuizen, 2018; Escalas & Bettman, 2003) as brand loyalty cannot be gained merely by having satisfactory products but is a result of social bonding (Oliver, 1999) with the brand, through brand experiences (van der Westhuizen, 2018). Consumers are also more resistant to negative information about a brand when SBC, namely customer-brand attachment, is strong (Swaminathan et al., 2007; Ahluwalia et al., 2000) and are more likely to defend the brand as it reflects on the consumer's identity and decision to use the brand (Japutra et al., 2014). SBC also leads to re-purchasing behavior (Escalas & Bettman 2005). In the same vein, Escalas (2004) found that SBC had a significant effect on consumers' purchase intention.

2.2.1 Purchase intention (PI)

An intention is defined as “a prior conscious decision to perform a behavior” (American Psychological Association, n.d.) – in this case an intention to make a purchase.

According to Ajzen (1991), it is an indication of how much of an effort a consumer is planning to exert in order to perform that behavior. Whether it’s how normative influences affect purchase intention with regard to luxury items or how attitudes influence decision making (Shukla, 2011), purchase intention (PI) has been used as a construct in a myriad of contexts. The purpose is usually to shine a light on what drives consumers’ decision-making process. When push comes to shove, making a sale necessarily involves enticing consumers to act. One way of achieving this is by striving to build strong connections between brands and individuals. This connection is what we discussed previously as SBC.

Escalas (2004) found that positive SBC increases likelihood of purchase – a term closely related to purchase intention. In other words, she found a positive link between the two constructs. Specifically, she found that if SBC was raised by a factor of 1, likelihood of purchase rose with .43 ($\beta = .43$). Chand and Fei (2021) found a similar effect ($\beta = .53-.66$) dependent on a tertiary construct related to ethnic match. Fazli-Salehi et al. (2021) similarly found a positive influence dependent on whether the brand’s products were consumed in public ($\beta = .74$) or private ($\beta = .55$), respectively. Furthermore, Matos et al. (2017), found that SBC acts as a mediator between a brand’s political position and purchase intention, and that SBC positively influenced PI ($\beta = .90$). The authors elaborate that when a brand engages in brand activism then the alignment or misalignment of the political position will strengthen or weaken SBC and in turn positively or negatively influence purchase intention.

Hypothesis 2: Self-brand connection (SBC) has a positive influence on purchase intention (PI)

According to Ferraro et al. (2013), a strong SBC leads to consumers seeing themselves mirrored in the brand, thus contributing to their attachment to the brand. A weak SBC – however – has the opposite effect. The authors elaborate that a strong SBC is more likely to form when there is congruence between the image of the consumer and the image of the brand, and vice versa in the case of a weak SBC. An example of how this congruence is tested is through a central part of the consumer’s image – his or her

groups of reference. In the context of politics, this would be one's political reference group.

2.3 Political reference group (PRG)

A reference group is “a group of people that influences the decisions and opinions of a person or group” (“reference group”, n.d.). From the perspective of the consumer, it is a social group of importance and a group to which he or she compares. To name a few, this can be one's family, community, football team, demographic segment or – as we will examine further – political orientation. According to Escalas and Bettmann (2003), reference groups can be either member groups or aspiration groups. A member group is a group to which – as the name suggests – a consumer is a member of. An aspiration group – on the other hand – is a group to which the consumer *aspires* to be a member of. For instance, this could be an aspiration to be viewed as wealthy, sporty or perhaps an intellectual. There are no set rules, as member- and aspiration groups will necessarily vary depending on who you ask. Whether it's a group to which the consumer is a member of or aspires to be a member of, it is considered the individual's “ingroup” based on the individual's feeling of belonging to the group. In the event that they don't belong, the group is considered an “outgroup” (Escalas & Bettmann, 2005).

In the realm of politics, exactly what one's political reference group is might vary depending on where the question is asked. In the US, politics are divided along party lines with most Americans voting for either The Democratic Party or The Republican Party (O'Neill, 2021). Similarly, the UK is mainly divided between The Labour Party and The Conservative Party (Cracknell & Pilling, 2021). In Norway, the picture is somewhat more diverse. Sure enough, the two largest political parties in Norway are The Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet) and The Conservative Party (Høyre), but with a total of 46,7% of votes cast (NRK, 2022b) they are far from as dominant as the parties of the two-party political systems of the US and the UK. Despite these differences, the common denominator of all three systems is that the political parties can – roughly speaking – be placed in either of two political categories: liberal or conservative, or perhaps more accurately – left or right of centre (Chinoy, 2019). In the US and the UK this context is perhaps clearer than in Norway – Democrats and Labourers being “leftists,” Republicans and Conservatives being “rightists.” With Norway's multitude of political parties not necessarily fitting neatly within this paradigm, most of the smaller

parties nonetheless have an allegiance to either the left or right of center when it comes to forming a government (Berg et al., 2021).

Much like political parties, individuals do not necessarily lean one hundred percent to the left or the right, especially not when asked to assess a myriad of political issues. Despite these complexities, people still seem to lean one way more than the other in terms of how they identify themselves. From an ideological perspective, being on the left or the right seems to be linked to personal characteristics and is integrated in the values and attitudes that people hold and identify with (Jost, 2017). Matos et al. (2017) suggests that due to the strong links between political beliefs and sense of self, SBC may be affected in the event that brands are linked with political positions – for better or worse. Thus, if a brand takes a political stance that is associated with one's political ingroup, SBC should then strengthen and vice versa if the opposite is true.

Bearing this out, Matos et al. (2017) found that a consumer's response to brand activism was affected by the degree of alignment between the political position taken by the brand and the political reference group of the respondent. This effect was measured through the changes in the respondents' SBC when confronted with specific political positions taken by brands. Similarly, Escalas and Bettmann (2003) found that for participants who identified with a group, "whether the group used the brand or not mattered more than for those participants who did not identify with the group." That is to say, member group usage of a brand strengthened SBC. The authors discovered the same effect with groups that the participants aspired to be a member of. In both cases, the reference group construct moderated the effect of the group's brand usage on the consumer's SBC. Furthermore, Escalas and Bettmann (2005) found that congruence between brands and an individual's ingroup leads to more favorable SBC ($M = 63.59$), whereas congruence between brands and an individual's outgroup has the opposite effect ($M = 17.31$). Wei & Yu (2012) similarly found that brands associated with an ingroup resulted in higher SBC ($M = 6.46$), whereas brand associated with outgroups resulted in lower SBC ($M = 2.90$).

An interesting example of this relationship in practice is that of Patagonia – a clothing brand known for its activism surrounding equal rights and environmental protection. As the Patagonia brand gained popularity and became a fashion staple in the corporate world and on Wall Street, the company decided to act. They decided to become somewhat more conservative as to which corporations they would deal with and cited a lack of environmental concern among the current clientele as the official reason. The corporate image of Wall Street simply did not square with the core values that Patagonia's target segment identified with (Bhasin, 2019). This demonstrates the lack of congruence that might lead to weakening SBCs among a brands' customers if left unchecked.

As could be expected, consumers are likely to react positively to brands that are associated with an ingroup and negatively to brands that are associated with an outgroup. In this context, one's political ingroup or reference group is the group with which we identify. This could be anything from a specific political party to a more general sense of ideological belonging to "the left" or "the right" as mentioned earlier. With that in mind, we suggest that an individual's political reference group (PRG) moderates the effect that brand activism has on SBC. If there is political alignment between an act of brand activism and an individual's political reference group (PRG), SBC should strengthen and vice versa.

Hypothesis 3: An individual's political reference group (PRG) moderates the effect of brand activism (BA) on the individual's self-brand connection (SBC).

2.4 Research model

Drawing from the literature, we propose the following interactions in our research model.

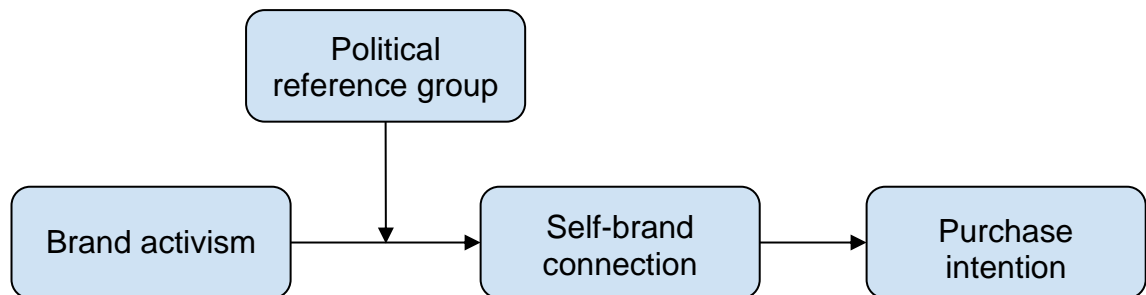


Figure 1. Research model

We suggest that brand activism (BA) has a direct influence on self-brand connection (SBC). The nature of this effect is moderated by the individual's political reference group (PRG). Finally, we suggest that SBC has a positive influence on purchase intention (PI).

2.4.1 Items

In order to manipulate the BA construct, we pulled four political statements from a political party test by NRK (2022a). To measure SBC, PI and PRG, we used items from multiple studies best fitted for our context. We refer to Table 1 on the next page, for the complete list of items and their corresponding sources.

Table 1. Questionnaire items

Construct	Item(s)	Author(s)
Brand Activism Abbreviation: BA	<p>Brand activism is a stimuli variable. The respondents will be asked to evaluate SBC and PI items for each of 4 political statements (2 left-leaning, 2 right-leaning) made by a brand:</p> <p><i>“Imagine that a brand you are familiar with identifies itself with the following statement.”</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Norway needs a more strict immigration policy. 2. Norway has to stop searching for more oil now. 3. Private companies should increasingly be allowed to run kindergartens, schools and nursing homes. 4. Women should have the right to have a self-determined abortion even after week 12 of pregnancy. 	Matos et al. (2017) NRK (2022a)
Self-brand connection Abbreviation: SBC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The brand reflects who I am very well 2. I can identify with the brand 3. I feel a connection to the brand 4. I can use the brand to communicate who I am to other people 5. The brand represents me well 	Escalas & Bettman (2005) Escalas (2004)
Purchase intention Abbreviation: PI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am likely to purchase from and/or use this brand 2. I am more inclined to purchase from this brand 3. I would like to buy products from (this brand) 4. I intend to purchase this brand’s products 5. In the next year, I am more likely to purchase from this brand 	Cronin Jr. & Taylor (1992) Escalas (2004) Shukla (2011) Yoo & Donthu (2001)
Political reference group Abbreviation: PRG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On a scale from the political left (1) to the political right (7), I identify myself as.. 	Escalas & Bettmann (2003) Matos et al. (2017)

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how exposure to brand activism (BA) affects consumers' self-brand connections (SBC), how their political reference group (PRG) moderates this relationship and lastly to which degree SBC influences purchase intention (PI). In this chapter we will present our research design and the choices and considerations we have made in order to best address our research questions. This encompasses choices with regard to the best suited research philosophy, research type, research strategy, time horizon, sampling strategy, data collection method and data collection technique. Moreover, we will discuss the methodological limitations as they relate to our research design choices. Lastly, we will summarize the key takeaways from this chapter before moving on to our findings.

3.1 Research design

The research design is guided by the purpose of our study and our research problem. Our research problem is stated as follows: "How do consumers respond to companies engaging in brand activism?" The accompanying research questions ask more specifically how an individual's politics affect the relationship between brand activism and the individual's self-brand connection, and how this self-brand connection affects purchase intention. These questions are descriptive in the sense that we seek to describe and measure how these concepts are related. We found that a positivist research philosophy was well suited in this context, as we sought to test relationships between variables that are part of an observable social reality (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 144). Consequently, this influences the type of research we conduct. We have applied a deductive approach by presenting established theory in our literature review, which in turn has been used as a fundament for our data collection. Our research design is therefore of a quantitative nature (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 176). As we sought to measure the relationships between our constructs in a timely manner, we chose to pursue a survey strategy. Due to the time constraints inherent in writing a master thesis in one semester, we have chosen a cross-sectional approach and have collected data in a short period of time from April 6th to April 25th. These constraints similarly affected our sampling strategy.

3.1.1 Sampling strategy and data collection

There are approximately 4 million people above the age of 18 in Norway (SSB, 2022), which is our target population. Choosing our target population was merely based on the voting age being 18 in Norway, and that is when people are more likely to begin identifying themselves politically and not to mention no longer are considered minors which could pose a consent issue. However, as we are interested in exploring a particular aspect of marketing theory – brand activism – and effects in a Norwegian context rather than making statistical generalizations about the characteristics of the whole population, non-probability sampling is adequate (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 296, p. 315). The aim was to collect a sample size >385 respondents (Saunders et al, 2019, p. 302). A sample size calculator was used as recommended by Christensen et al. (2014). A total of 326 respondents representing our sample size resulted in a confidence level of 95% and margin of error at 5.32%, which is slightly higher than a preferable 5% which a sample size of over 385 would give us (Saunders et al., 2019 p. 302; Calculator.net, n.d.). We have used a sampling strategy called haphazard sampling, or more specifically convenience sampling (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 324). We distributed an online survey through our social media channels, Facebook groups, and various internet forums. Exactly who decides to respond to a survey is arguably random, but it is likely that most of our respondents are people in our respective social circles. Our choice of using an online survey is also due to the fact that it is an inexpensive and effective way of reaching a large number of respondents (Ilieva et al, 2002). Participating in the survey was completely voluntary and did not present any risk of coercion (Nosek et al., 2002b).

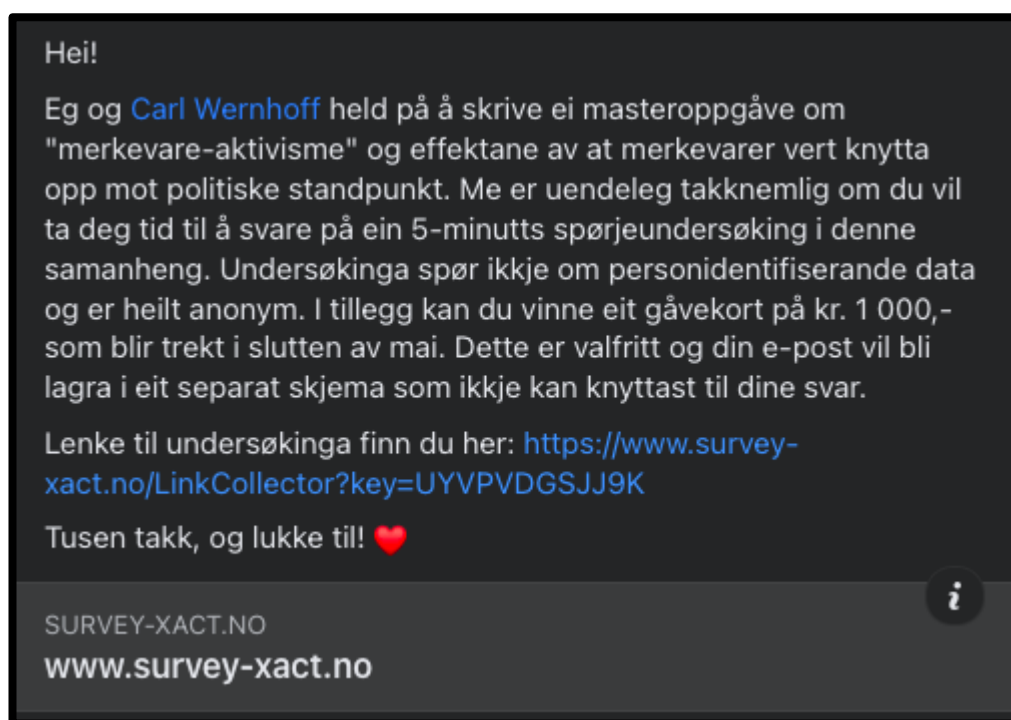


Figure 2. The post shared by the researchers on Facebook.

Translated: Hello! Carl Wernhoff and I are currently writing a master's thesis about "brand activism" and the effects of brands being tied to political statements. We would be eternally grateful if you could take the time to respond to a 5-minute survey in this context. The survey does not ask for identifying data and is completely anonymous. In addition, you can win a gift card with a value of NOK 1000,- in which the winner will be determined towards the end of May. This is optional and your e-mail will be stored in a separate form which cannot be tied to your answers. Here is the link to the survey: <https://www.survey-xact.no/LinkCollector?key=UYVPVDGSJJ9K>. Many thanks, and good luck!

The survey was created using SurveyXact, a Scandinavian survey software that is accessible for anyone employed or enrolled at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. A total of 326 respondents completed the survey. A response rate is not possible to determine as it is not known how many people saw the survey being posted. In order to attract respondents, we added the possibility of winning a gift card with a value of 1000 NOK. Branley et al. (2014) states that a potential reward must be "reasonable and appropriate to the participation involved" as it might otherwise be regarded as coercion. This lottery was completely voluntary and only a possibility after completing the survey in its entirety. The respondents could then choose to follow an external link where they could enter their email address which was stored in a completely separate database in order to preserve anonymity, as recommended by Nosek et al. (2002a). Anonymity has been of the utmost importance due to our asking

the respondents about their political leanings. For the same reason, we elected to omit any demographics in order for our respondents to feel comfortable sharing their political orientation. A total of 149 out of 326 respondents decided to leave their email address and participate in the lottery. Arguably, the fact that most respondents did not participate in the lottery suggests that the gift card was not a particularly coercive element.

We did not measure Brand Activism as its own construct in our study, but rather measured SBC after exposure to Brand Activism. By measuring SBC and PI in the event that a brand identifies with a given statement, we can gauge the differences in responses across four political statements of varying sentiments. The statements were pulled off a political affiliation test, and are listed below in Table 2 (NRK, 2022a). The test showed whether the different political parties were positioned in support or opposition to the political statement in question. Statements that had the clearest distinction between the parties considered left and right (Storthinget, 2022) were chosen for our study. Statements 1 and 3 are linked with the right and statements 2 and 4 with the left. The a priori political leanings of the statements were not shown to respondents, so that this could not have an influence on their answers. This creates a more realistic scenario in the sense that brands take a stand on issues and then consumers react to it.

Table 2. Political statements.

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Norway needs a more strict immigration policy. 2. Norway has to stop searching for more oil now. 3. Private companies should increasingly be allowed to run kindergartens, schools and nursing homes. 4. Women should have the right to have a self-determined abortion even after week 12 of pregnancy. |
|--|

Statements 1 and 3 are affiliated with right leaning politics and statements 2 and 4 with left leaning politics. In addition, they can be sorted into social, economic, and environmental issues. Statements 1 and 4 are social issues, statement 2 is environmental, and statement 3 is economic. A mix of issues was chosen since people's political interests vary. Some are primarily concerned with environmental issues, some

with economic issues, etc. By employing a mix of statements, we test the effect of BA through several political themes such as environmental, economic, and to an extent legal activism whereas previous studies have mostly been focused on social activism.

The items used for the survey were based on previously used and proven item scales from the literature (ref. literature review). The items were forward translated from English to Norwegian by one of the researchers whom is fluent in both languages. No testing of the translation was done. In Norway, many are fluent in English but we found it preferable to translate the survey due to the Norwegian context of the study. It is possible that respondents not living in Norway or being Norwegian could answer the survey as no limitation on geographical location to answer the survey was put in place. However, since the survey was a version translated to Norwegian and distributed on Norwegian speaking forums it is unlikely that any or if so a small percentile of respondents residing outside of Norway responded.

3.1.2 Data analysis

Analysis was conducted by using the statistics software SPSS, in addition to an extension of the software called AMOS. The dataset was exported from SurveyXact in a format compatible with SPSS, controlled for duplicates and filtered to only include the 326 completed data points. We performed tests for reliability and validity, as well as descriptive and inferential statistics for our constructs. Details and results are presented in the next chapter.

3.2 Limitations

In this part we will highlight the limitations associated with our methodological choices. This includes some general disadvantages that come with certain approaches, as well as some observations and thoughts that are particular to our study.

3.2.1 Survey and data collection

In order to assess how an individual's political reference group moderated the relationship between Brand activism and SBC, we had to ask our respondents to identify their political orientation on a scale from left to right. As one's personal politics might be personal to many, we elected to omit any questions related to demographics and other personal identifiers. The purpose was to strengthen the image of anonymity and to facilitate honest answers. When anonymity is upheld, respondents are more likely to answer truthfully (Nosek et al., 2002a; Stanton, 1998). However, this also means that we do not know the demographic composition of our sample and consequently to which degree it mirrors the general population and can therefore not reflect and discuss how demographic characteristics may have an influence on brand activism in Norway. It can be argued that sex, age, and perhaps income could have been included without risk. However, as this is – by our account – the first study on brand activism in a Norwegian context, we prioritized answering the research questions as accurately as possible. Lastly, the items in the survey were forward translated without being tested by a third party for accuracy due to time constraints. The researchers who did the translation is fluent in the original language and the target language. The translation was then checked by the other researcher who is fluent in the original language and has a good understanding for the target language. It is recommended that future researchers who may wish to use the translated items test them according to the recommendations by Gjersing et al., (2010).

3.2.2 Incentives

As mentioned in a review of online surveys by Ilieva et al. (2002), an incentive like a raffle may cause some respondents to answer the survey several times to increase their chances of winning. The authors further referenced an example where a respondent filled out a survey 750 times to increase their chances of winning. Since a separate form was used to collect emails for the raffle, this would be corrected by eliminating any duplicates of emails. Nonetheless, we cannot rule out the possibility that respondents could use multiple email-addresses to circumvent this control. Despite this, we do not have any reasons to suspect that this has happened – especially given the relatively low sum of 1000 NOK as prize money. In sum, we judged the benefits of expedient responses to outweigh the mentioned disadvantages.

3.3 Summary

To summarize, we have chosen to conduct a quantitative study in order to measure the effects between the constructs abstracted from literature review. By distributing a survey online using SurveyXact and social media, we got a total of 326 respondents. We imported the final dataset to SPSS, cleaned it, and performed various analyses to be presented in the following chapter. We refer to Table 3 on the next page for an overview of our methodology.

Table 3. Methodological overview.

Research Design	Sample & sampling strategy	Data analysis	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positivist • Quantitative • Descriptive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-probability • Convenience • Conclusions about theory rather than generalizations • Target population: 4 million • Sample: 326 respondents • 95% confidence, 5.32% margin of error 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPSS • AMOS • Scale reliability • Exploratory factor analysis • Correlation • Regression • ANOVA • Path analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic composition unknown • Risk of duplicates in survey • Convenience sampling

4. Results

In this chapter, we will present the results of the survey we have conducted. For ease of reading, we will present our analyses one statement at a time and provide the political nature of each statement. Each statement represents an iteration of brand activism in action. This means that BA is not a measured construct, but rather reflected in the measurements of the other variables to which it presumably affects. In the following we will test the reliability and validity of our constructs before presenting correlation and regression analyses. Lastly, we will run path analyses for our model across all four political statements. Table 4 shows the total cases in our dataset.

Table 4. Dataset

		N	%
Cases	Valid	326	100,0
	Excluded ^a	0	,0
	Total	326	100,0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

4.1 Reliability

First and foremost, we have conducted a scale reliability analysis on our constructs. To reiterate, self-brand connection (SBC) and purchase intention (PI) have been measured four times within the context of four separate political statements that are said to have been expressed by a brand and acts as the manipulated independent variable, Brand Activism (BA). This means that we are in fact generating four separate constructs of SBC and PI, each contextually dependent on the corresponding statement to which they belong. Put simply, SBC becomes ST1-SBC, ST2-SBC, ST3-SBC and ST4-SBC. PI likewise becomes ST1-PI, ST2-PI, ST3-PI and ST4-PI. In the following, we will present our reliability analysis per statement and provide the corresponding statements for reference. Our requirement for a reliable construct is a Cronbach's Alpha of minimum .80 (Janssens et al., 2008, p. 274).

4.1.1 Statement 1

Statement 1 stems from the political right and is as follows: “Norway needs a more strict immigration policy.” The constructs are ST1-SBC and ST1-PI.

ST1-SBC

Table 5. Scale reliability for ST1-SBC.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,932	5

The five items we have used to measure ST1-SBC have an internal consistency of 0,932 as evidenced by Cronbach’s Alpha. This is a satisfactory result, and the items adequately measure ST1-SBC.

ST1-PI

Table 6. Scale reliability for ST1-PI.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,975	5

The five items used to measure ST1-PI have an internal consistency of 0,975. Whilst this is also above our minimum requirement, such a high Cronbach’s Alpha could also mean that some of the items are too similar and therefore redundant. Ideally, we would achieve an alpha value below 0,95. The item statistics can provide some perspective.

Table 7. Item-Total Statistics for ST1-PI.

	Item-Total Statistics			
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ST1-PI1	8,90	36,734	,913	,971
ST1-PI2	9,14	37,129	,952	,965
ST1-PI3	9,25	37,960	,909	,971
ST1-PI4	9,21	37,595	,952	,965
ST1-PI5	9,04	37,429	,907	,971

If we were to remove the second or fourth item, we would see a somewhat lower value at 0,965. We could repeat the process until we got to the ideal value, but this is usually done to heighten the Cronbach's Alpha rather than lower it (Janssens et al., 2008, p. 274). For this reason, we have elected not to and will rather provide this as an insight for future research. We accept the internal consistency of 0,975 for our five items measuring ST1-PI and conclude that they measure the construct adequately.

4.1.2 Statement 2

Statement 2 stems from the political left and is as follows: "Norway has to stop searching for more oil now." The constructs are ST2-SBC and ST2-PI.

ST2-SBC

Table 8. Scale reliability for ST2-SBC.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,944	5

The five items we have used to measure ST2-SBC have an internal consistency of 0,944. This is a satisfactory result, and the items adequately measure ST2-SBC.

ST2-PI

Table 9. Scale reliability for ST2-PI.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,975	5

Much like ST1-PI, ST2-PI too has a very high Cronbach's Alpha of 0,975 but we accept it and conclude that the internal consistency suggests that the five items measure ST2-PI adequately.

4.1.3 Statement 3

Statement 3 stems from the political right and is as follows: “Private companies should increasingly be allowed to run kindergartens, schools and nursing homes.” The constructs are ST3-SBC and ST3-PI.

ST3-SBC

Table 10. Scale reliability for ST3-SBC.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,965	5

ST3-SBC has a somewhat high alpha value of 0,965 but it is acceptable, and we conclude that the five items measure ST3-SBC adequately.

ST3-PI

Table 11. Scale reliability for ST3-PI.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,985	5

ST3-PI has a somewhat high alpha value of 0,985 but it is acceptable, and we conclude that the five items measure ST3-PI adequately.

4.1.4 Statement 4

Statement 4 stems from the political left and is as follows: “Women should have the right to have a self-determined abortion even after week 12 of pregnancy.” The constructs are ST4-SBC and ST4-PI.

*ST4-SBC***Table 12.** Scale reliability for ST4-SBC

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,961	5

ST4-SBC has a somewhat high alpha value of 0,961 but it is acceptable and we conclude that the five items measure ST4-SBC adequately.

*ST4-PI***Table 13.** Scale reliability for ST4-PI.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,982	5

ST4-PI has a somewhat high alpha value of 0,985 but it is acceptable and we conclude that the five items measure ST3-PI adequately.

4.2 Validity

Thus far, we have tested and confirmed the reliability of our constructs and will now move on to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in order to see how well our constructs measure what they are supposed to measure. As mentioned earlier, we are testing our research model four times across four political statements which represent brand activism. Consequently, an EFA was performed for each of the four statements using a principal component analysis and varimax rotation. The minimum factor loading criteria was set to 0,50. Lastly, a factor analysis is only significant if there is significant correlation between the variables. Thus, the first tests we will run are KMO and Bartlett's test (Janssens et al., 2008, p. 255).

4.2.1 Statement 1

We have run an EFA for the items that form the constructs related to statement 1 – ST1-SBC and ST1-PI.

Table 14. KMO and Bartlett's Test (ST1-SBC and ST1-PI).

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,927
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4296,356
	df	45
	Sig.	,000

Table 15. Communalities table (ST1-SBC and ST1-PI).

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
ST1-SBC1	1,000	,775
ST1-SBC2	1,000	,879
ST1-SBC3	1,000	,870
ST1-SBC4	1,000	,665
ST1-SBC5	1,000	,815
ST1-PI1	1,000	,896
ST1-PI2	1,000	,939
ST1-PI3	1,000	,889
ST1-PI4	1,000	,940
ST1-PI5	1,000	,887

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

A KMO value of 0,927 is above the 0,5 criteria and is satisfactory. Bartlett's test is also significant with a p-value of $\leq .05$. This means that the ten measured items have some correlation with each other. The communalities table shows that all items have factor loadings above our requirement of 0,5.

Table 16. Total Variance Explained (ST1-SBC and ST1-PI).

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7,334	73,344	73,344	7,334	73,344	73,344
2	1,220	12,196	85,540	1,220	12,196	85,540
3	,465	4,648	90,188			
4	,290	2,897	93,085			
5	,196	1,965	95,050			
6	,136	1,360	96,410			
7	,122	1,224	97,634			
8	,111	1,114	98,748			
9	,084	,835	99,583			
10	,042	,417	100,000			

Component	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4,573	45,733	45,733
2	3,981	39,807	85,540
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			

In the total variance table, only two components have Eigenvalues above 1 and together represent 85,54% of the total variance. This corresponds with our two constructs. We look to the rotated component matrix in Table 17 to see how the items have rotated across components.

Table 17. Rotated Component Matrix (ST1-SBC and ST1-PI).

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component	
	1	2
ST1-SBC1		,814
ST1-SBC2		,855
ST1-SBC3		,831
ST1-SBC4		,792
ST1-SBC5		,782
ST1-PI1	,886	
ST1-PI2	,900	
ST1-PI3	,839	
ST1-PI4	,897	
ST1-PI5	,889	

Extraction Method: Principal

Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with

Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

The rotated component matrix shows us how well the items fit together in aforementioned components. As we can see, the ten items are divided as expected between SBC and PI. The EFA concludes that the ten items measure SBC and PI as expected.

4.2.2 Statement 2

We have run an EFA for the items that form the constructs related to statement 2 – ST2-SBC and ST2-PI.

Table 18. KMO and Bartlett's Test (ST2-SBC and ST2-PI).

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,949
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4425,490
	df	45
	Sig.	,000

Table 19. Communalities table (ST2-SBC and ST2-PI).

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
ST2-SBC1	1,000	,667
ST2-SBC2	1,000	,764
ST2-SBC3	1,000	,760
ST2-SBC4	1,000	,682
ST2-SBC5	1,000	,816
ST2-PI1	1,000	,835
ST2-PI2	1,000	,878
ST2-PI3	1,000	,863
ST2-PI4	1,000	,830
ST2-PI5	1,000	,803

Extraction Method: Principal
Component Analysis.

A KMO value of 0,949 is above the 0,5 criteria and is satisfactory. Bartlett's test is also significant with a p-value of $\leq .05$. This means that the ten measured items have some correlation with each other. The communalities table shows that all items have factor loadings above our requirement of 0,5.

Table 20. Total Variance Explained (ST2-SBC and ST2-PI).

Component	Total Variance Explained					
	Total	Initial Eigenvalues		Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7,899	78,991	78,991	7,899	78,991	78,991
2	,795	7,950	86,941			
3	,337	3,371	90,312			
4	,250	2,500	92,813			
5	,185	1,849	94,662			
6	,163	1,635	96,296			
7	,128	1,276	97,572			
8	,104	1,037	98,609			
9	,073	,726	99,335			
10	,067	,665	100,000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

In the total variance table, only one component has an Eigenvalue above 1 and represents 76,99% of the total variance on its own. This suggests that the items correlate strongly, and the statistics program is unable separate the constructs as clearly as in the case of statement 1. Consequently, the items cannot be rotated into two components as we can confirm by looking at the rotated component matrix.

Table 21. Rotated Component Matrix (ST2-SBC and ST2-PI).

**Rotated Component
Matrix^a**

a. Only one component was extracted. The solution cannot be rotated.

In the case of statement 2, the constructs seem too similar. We will see how this plays out in the next parts on correlation and regression and reflect on this result in the discussion.

4.2.3 Statement 3

We have run an EFA for the items that form the constructs related to statement 3 – ST3-SBC and ST3-PI.

Table 22. KMO and Bartlett's Test (ST3-SBC and ST3-PI).

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,951
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5548,006
	df	45
	Sig.	,000

Table 23. Communalities table (ST3-SBC and ST3-PI).

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
ST3-SBC1	1,000	,768
ST3-SBC2	1,000	,821
ST3-SBC3	1,000	,823
ST3-SBC4	1,000	,757
ST3-SBC5	1,000	,878
ST3-PI1	1,000	,877
ST3-PI2	1,000	,903
ST3-PI3	1,000	,894
ST3-PI4	1,000	,873
ST3-PI5	1,000	,842

Extraction Method: Principal
Component Analysis.

A KMO value of 0,951 is above the 0,5 criteria and is satisfactory. Bartlett's test is also significant with a p-value of $\leq .05$. This means that the ten measured items have some correlation with each other. The communalities table shows that all items have factor loadings above our requirement of 0,5.

Table 24. Total Variance Explained (ST3-SBC and ST3-PI).

Component	Total Variance Explained					
	Total	Initial Eigenvalues		Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8,436	84,362	84,362	8,436	84,362	84,362
2	,711	7,113	91,475			
3	,232	2,315	93,790			
4	,151	1,506	95,296			
5	,121	1,208	96,504			
6	,105	1,052	97,556			
7	,080	,803	98,360			
8	,075	,747	99,107			
9	,052	,523	99,630			
10	,037	,370	100,000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

In the total variance table, only one component has an Eigenvalue above 1 and represents 84,36% of the total variance on its own. Much like in the case of statement 2, this suggests that the items correlate strongly, and the statistics program is unable to separate the constructs as clearly as in the case of statement 1. Consequently, the items cannot be rotated into two components as we can confirm by looking at the rotated component matrix.

Table 25. Rotated Component Matrix (ST3-SBC and ST3-PI).

Rotated Component Matrix^a	
---	--

a. Only one component was extracted. The solution cannot be rotated.

In the case of statement 3, the constructs seem too similar. We will see how this plays out in the next parts on correlation and regression and reflect on this result in the discussion.

4.2.4 Statement 4

We have run an EFA for the items that form the constructs related to statement 4 – ST4-SBC and ST4-PI.

Table 26. KMO and Bartlett's Test (ST4-SBC and ST4-PI).

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,946
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5188,725
	df	45
	Sig.	,000

Table 27. Communalities table (ST4-SBC and ST4-PI).

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
ST4-SBC1	1,000	,697
ST4-SBC2	1,000	,785
ST4-SBC3	1,000	,831
ST4-SBC4	1,000	,764
ST4-SBC5	1,000	,853
ST4-PI1	1,000	,866
ST4-PI2	1,000	,868
ST4-PI3	1,000	,875
ST4-PI4	1,000	,828
ST4-PI5	1,000	,853

Extraction Method: Principal
Component Analysis.

A KMO value of 0,946 is above the 0,5 criteria and is satisfactory. Bartlett's test is also significant with a P-value of $\leq .05$. This means that the ten measured items have some correlation with each other. The communalities table shows that all items have factor loadings above our requirement of 0,5.

Table 28. Total Variance Explained (ST4-SBC and ST4-PI).

Component	Total Variance Explained					
	Total	Initial Eigenvalues		Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8,220	82,200	82,200	8,220	82,200	82,200
2	,812	8,119	90,319			
3	,242	2,425	92,744			
4	,183	1,832	94,576			
5	,149	1,489	96,065			
6	,119	1,193	97,259			
7	,097	,972	98,230			
8	,077	,773	99,003			
9	,059	,594	99,597			
10	,040	,403	100,000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

In the total variance table, only one component has an Eigenvalue above 1 and represents 82,2% of the total variance on its own. Much like in the case of statement 2 and 3, this suggests that the items correlate strongly and the statistics program is unable to separate the constructs as clearly as in the case of statement 1. Consequently, the items cannot be rotated into two components as we can confirm by looking at the rotated component matrix.

Table 29. Rotated Component Matrix (ST4-SBC and ST4-PI).

Rotated Component Matrix^a
a. Only one component was extracted. The solution cannot be rotated.

a. Only one component was extracted. The solution cannot be rotated.

In the case of statement 3, the constructs seem too similar. We will see how this plays out in the next parts on correlation and regression and reflect on this result in the discussion.

4.3 Correlation analysis

In order to see which correlational relationships might exist between the constructs in our study, we have carried out a correlation analysis. This will give us an insight into how the variables in question behave in relation to each other. Accordingly, we present our analyses per hypothesis.

4.3.1 Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between Brand Activism (BA) and self-brand connection (SBC)

As briefly mentioned earlier, BA is not a measure variable in our dataset but is represented by four separate statements: two of a right political nature (ST1 & ST3) and two of a left political nature (ST2 & ST4). Consequently, we are unable to run a correlation analysis on the constructs BA and SBC. Rather, we will have to look at how the measurements of the SBC and PI constructs for each statement differ across groups in order to draw any conclusions as to suggest a relationship.

4.3.2 Hypothesis 2: Self-brand connection (SBC) has a positive influence on purchase intention (PI)

H₀: There is no correlation between SBC and PI

H₁: There is correlation between SBC and PI

As we will test our model across four political statements, a set of hypotheses per statement is required. In order to reject the null hypotheses, we require a significance level of 95%, i.e., a p-value of $\leq .05$.

Statement 1

H₀: There is no correlation between ST1_SBC and ST1_PI

H₁: There is correlation between ST1_SBC and ST1_PI

Table 30. Correlation table (ST1_SBC and ST1_PI).

		Correlations	
		ST1_SBC	ST1_PI
ST1_SBC	Pearson Correlation	1	,714**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	326	326
ST1_PI	Pearson Correlation	,714**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	326	326

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

The analysis shows a positive correlation of 71,4% between ST1_SBC and ST1_PI. The result is significant with a p-value of $<.001$ which is within our requirement of $\leq .05$.

Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the two constructs.

Statement 2

H₀: There is no correlation between ST2_SBC and ST2_PI

H₁: There is correlation between ST2_SBC and ST2_PI

Table 31. Correlation table (ST2_SBC and ST2_PI).

		Correlations	
		ST2_SBC	ST2_PI
ST2_SBC	Pearson Correlation	1	,827**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	326	326
ST2_PI	Pearson Correlation	,827**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	326	326

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

The analysis shows a positive correlation of 82,7% between ST2_SBC and ST2_PI. The result is significant with a p-value of <.001 which is within our requirement of $\leq .05$.

Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the two constructs.

Statement 3

H₀: There is no correlation between ST3_SBC and ST3_PI

H₁: There is correlation between ST3_SBC and ST3_PI

Table 32. Correlation table (ST3_SBC and ST3_PI).

		Correlations	
		ST3_SBC	ST3_PI
ST3_SBC	Pearson Correlation	1	,851**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	326	326
ST3_PI	Pearson Correlation	,851**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	326	326

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

The analysis shows a positive correlation of 85,1% between ST3_SBC and ST3_PI. The result is significant with a p-value of $<.001$ which is within our requirement of $\leq .05$. Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the two constructs.

Statement 4

H₀: There is no correlation between ST4_SBC and ST4_PI

H₁: There is correlation between ST4_SBC and ST4_PI

Table 33. Correlation table (ST4_SBC and ST4_PI).

		Correlations	
		ST4_SBC	ST4_PI
ST4_SBC	Pearson Correlation	1	,826**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	326	326
ST4_PI	Pearson Correlation	,826**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	326	326

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

The analysis shows a positive correlation of 82,6% between ST4_SBC and ST4_PI. The result is significant with a p-value of $<.001$ which is within our requirement of $\leq .05$. Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the two constructs.

Summary

In all four cases we see a strong and significant correlation between SBC and PI which leads us to reject the null hypothesis, which leaves us with the alternative hypothesis that posits a correlation between SBC and PI.

4.3.3 Hypothesis 3: An individual's political reference group (PRG) moderates the effect of brand activism (BA) on the individual's self-brand connection (SBC)

H₀: There is no correlation between PRG and SBC

H₁: There is correlation between PRG and SBC

As in part 4.3.2, we present the set of hypotheses ordered per statement. In order to reject our null hypotheses, we require a significance level of 95%, i.e., a P-value of $\leq .05$. Political reference group (PRG) is measured by one item from left (1) to right (7) and remains constant across all statements. For reference, statements 1 and 3 are of a right political nature and statements 2 and 4 are of a left political nature.

Statement 1

H₀: There is no correlation between PRG and ST1_SBC

H₁: There is correlation between PRG and ST1_SBC

Table 34. Correlation table (PRG and ST1_SBC).

		Correlations	
		PRG	ST1_SBC
PRG	Pearson Correlation	1	,399**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	326	326
ST1_SBC	Pearson Correlation	,399**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	326	326

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

The analysis shows a positive correlation of 39,9% between PRG and ST1_SBC. The result is significant with a p-value of $<.001$ which is within our requirement of $\leq .05$. Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the two constructs.

Statement 2

H₀: There is no correlation between PRG and ST2_SBC

H₁: There is correlation between PRG and ST2_SBC

Table 35. Correlation table (PRG and ST2_SBC).

		PRG	ST2_SBC
PRG	Pearson Correlation	1	-,318**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	326	326
ST2_SBC	Pearson Correlation	-,318**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	326	326

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

The analysis shows a negative correlation of -31,8% between PRG and ST2_SBC. The result is significant with a p-value of <.001 which is within our requirement of $\leq .05$. Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant negative correlation between the two constructs.

Statement 3

H₀: There is no correlation between PRG and ST3_SBC

H₁: There is correlation between PRG and ST3_SBC

Table 36. Correlation table (PRG and ST3_SBC).

		PRG	ST3_SBC
PRG	Pearson Correlation	1	,550**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001
	N	326	326
ST3_SBC	Pearson Correlation	,550**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	
	N	326	326

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

The analysis shows a positive correlation of 55% between PRG and ST3_SBC. The result is significant with a p-value of $<.001$ which is within our requirement of $\leq .05$. Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the two constructs.

Statement 4

H₀: There is no correlation between PRG and ST4_SBC

H₁: There is correlation between PRG and ST4_SBC

Table 37. Correlation table (PRG and ST4_SBC).

		Correlations	
		PRG	ST4_SBC
PRG	Pearson Correlation	1	-,108
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,050
	N	326	326
ST4_SBC	Pearson Correlation	-,108	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,050	
	N	326	326

The analysis shows a negative correlation of -10,8% between PRG and ST3_SBC. The result is significant with a p-value of $<.05$ which is within our requirement of $\leq .05$. Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant negative correlation between the two constructs.

Summary

In all four cases we see a significant correlation between PRG and SBC which leads us to reject the null hypothesis, which leaves us with the alternative hypothesis that posits a correlation between PRG and SBC. There seems to be a decent amount of variance in the strength of the correlation across the four statements. In general, there is a stronger correlation between PRG and SBC in the context of the rightist statements (1 & 3) than that of the leftist statements (2 & 4). In fact, the correlation analysis for statement 4 shows the weakest correlation and just narrowly meets our requirement ($p \leq .05$). More on this in the discussion.

4.4 Regression analysis

Whereas the correlation analysis provides us some insight into how our constructs might relate to each other, we will perform a regression analysis in order to estimate the actual effects that exist between our constructs. We require a confidence interval of 95% which entails a requirement of a p-value of $p \leq .05$.

4.4.1 Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between Brand Activism (BA) and self-brand connection (SBC)

As mentioned earlier in 4.3.1, BA is not a measured construct and thus we cannot run regression analysis. We will revisit H1 later in the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

4.4.2 Hypothesis 2: Self-brand connection (SBC) has a positive influence on purchase intention (PI)

In a similar manner to the correlation analysis, we will perform regression analysis on SBC and PI for all four statements.

H₀: SBC does not have a positive influence on PI

H₁: SBC has a positive influence on PI

Statement 1

H₀: ST1_SBC does not have a positive influence on ST1_PI

H₁: ST1_SBC has a positive influence on ST1_PI

Table 38. Variables entered.

Model	Variables Entered/Removed ^a		Method
	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	
1	ST1_SBC ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: ST1_PI

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 39. Model summary (ST1_SBC and ST1_PI).

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	,714 ^a	,509	,508	1,06867	,509	336,458	1	324	<,001

a. Predictors: (Constant), ST1_SBC

We have run a regression analysis with ST1_SBC as the independent variable and ST1_PI as the dependent variable. Adjusted R square shows a value of .508, which means that ST1_SBC is responsible for 50,8% of the variance in ST1_PI. The significance level is <.001 which meets our requirement of $p \leq .05$.

Table 40. Coefficients (ST1_SBC and ST1_PI).

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,605	,109		5,567	<,001
	ST1_SBC	,722	,039	,714	18,343	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: ST1_PI

The unstandardized beta value tells us that in the event that ST1_SBC increases by 1, ST1_PI will increase by 0,722. This is a significant finding ($p \leq .05$). We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that ST1_SBC has a positive influence on ST1_PI.

Statement 2

H₀: ST2_SBC does not have a positive influence on ST2_PI

H₁: ST2_SBC has a positive influence on ST2_PI

Table 41. Variables entered.

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	ST2_SBC ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: ST2_PI

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 42. Model summary (ST2_SBC and ST2_PI).

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	,827 ^a	,683	,682	,94462	,683	698,872	1	324	<,001

a. Predictors: (Constant), ST2_SBC

We have run a regression analysis with ST2_SBC as the independent variable and ST2_PI as the dependent variable. Adjusted R square shows a value of .682, which means that ST2_SBC is responsible for 68,2% of the variance in ST2_PI. The significance level is <.001 which meets our requirement of $p \leq .05$.

Table 43. Coefficients (ST2_SBC and ST2_PI).

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,630	,122		5,182	<,001
	ST2_SBC	,836	,032	,827	26,436	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: ST2_PI

The unstandardized beta value tells us that in the event that ST2_SBC increases by 1, ST2_PI will increase by 0,836. This is a significant finding ($p \leq .05$). We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that ST2_SBC has a positive influence on ST2_PI.

Statement 3

H₀: ST3_SBC does not have a positive influence on ST3_PI

H₁: ST3_SBC has a positive influence on ST3_PI

Table 44. Variables entered.

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	ST3_SBC ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: ST3_PI

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 45. Model summary (ST3_SBC and ST3_PI).

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	,851 ^a	,725	,724	,87309	,725	854,391	1	324	<,001

a. Predictors: (Constant), ST3_SBC

We have run a regression analysis with ST3_SBC as the independent variable and ST3_PI as the dependent variable. Adjusted R square shows a value of .724, which means that ST3_SBC is responsible for 72,4% of the variance in ST3_PI. The significance level is <.001 which meets our requirement of $p \leq .05$.

Table 46. Coefficients (ST3_SBC and ST3_PI).

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,489	,100		4,865	<,001
	ST3_SBC	,852	,029	,851	29,230	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: ST3_PI

The unstandardized beta value tells us that in the event that ST3_SBC increases by 1, ST3_PI will increase by 0,852. This is a significant finding ($p \leq .05$). We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that ST3_SBC has a positive influence on ST3_PI.

Statement 4

H₀: ST4_SBC does not have a positive influence on ST4_PI

H₁: ST4_SBC has a positive influence on ST4_PI

Table 47. Variables entered.

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables	Variables	Method
	Entered	Removed	
1	ST4_SBC ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: ST4_PI

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 48. Model summary (ST4_SBC and ST4_PI).

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	,826 ^a	,683	,682	,97827	,683	697,470	1	324	<,001

a. Predictors: (Constant), ST4_SBC

We have run a regression analysis with ST4_SBC as the independent variable and ST4_PI as the dependent variable. Adjusted R square shows a value of .682, which means that ST4_SBC is responsible for 68,2% of the variance in ST4_PI. The significance level is <.001 which meets our requirement of $p \leq .05$.

Table 49. Coefficients (ST4_SBC and ST4_PI).

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,573	,137		4,184	<,001
	ST4_SBC	,805	,030	,826	26,410	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: ST4_PI

The unstandardized beta value tells us that in the event that ST4_SBC increases by 1, ST4_PI will increase by 0,805. This is a significant finding ($p \leq .05$). We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that ST4_SBC has a positive influence on ST4_PI.

Summary

In all four cases we find that SBC has a significant influence on PI which leads us to reject the null hypothesis, which leaves us with the alternative hypothesis that posits that SBC has a positive influence on PI.

4.4.3 Hypothesis 3: An individual's political reference group (PRG) moderates the effect of brand activism (BA) on the individual's self-brand connection (SBC)

H₀: PRG does not have an influence on SBC

H₁: PRG has an influence on SBC

As mentioned earlier, BA is not a measured variable in our model but is reflected in the measurements of SBC and PI. As PRG is coded from left (1) to right (7), we would therefore posit a positive influence on the rightist statements (1 & 3) and a negative influence on the leftist statements (2 & 4). Such a result would indicate that PRG does in fact moderate the relationship between BA and SBC.

Statement 1

H₀: PRG does not have a positive influence on ST1_SBC

H₁: PRG has a positive influence on ST1_SBC

Table 50. Variables entered.

Model	Variables Entered/Removed ^a		Method
	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	
1	PRG ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: ST1_SBC

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 51. Model summary (PRG and ST1_SBC).

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	,399 ^a	,159	,156	1,38356	,159	61,271	1	324	<,001

a. Predictors: (Constant), PRG

We have run a regression analysis with PRG as the independent variable and ST1_SBC as the dependent variable. Adjusted R square shows a value of .156, which means that PRG is responsible for 15,6% of the variance in ST1_SBC. The significance level is <.001 which meets our requirement of $p \leq .05$.

Table 52. Coefficients (PRG and ST1_SBC).

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1,125	,170		6,601	<,001
	PRG	,339	,043	,399	7,828	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: ST1_SBC

The unstandardized beta value tells us that in the event that PRG increases by 1, ST1_SBC will increase by 0,339. This is a significant finding ($p \leq .05$). We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that PRG has a positive influence on ST1_SBC.

Statement 2

H₀: PRG does not have a negative influence on ST2_SBC

H₁: PRG has a negative influence on ST2_SBC

Table 53. Variables entered.

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	PRG ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: ST2_SBC

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 54. Model summary (PRG and ST2_SBC).

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	,318 ^a	,101	,098	1,57275	,101	36,371	1	324	<,001

a. Predictors: (Constant), PRG

We have run a regression analysis with PRG as the independent variable and ST2_SBC as the dependent variable. Adjusted R square shows a value of .098, which means that PRG is responsible for 9,8% of the variance in ST2_SBC. The significance level is <.001 which meets our requirement of $p \leq .05$.

Table 55. Coefficients (PRG and ST2_SBC).

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4,511	,194		23,289	<,001
	PRG	-,297	,049	-,318	-6,031	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: ST2_SBC

The unstandardized beta value tells us that in the event that PRG increases by 1, ST2_SBC will decrease by 0,297. This is a significant finding ($p \leq .05$). We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that PRG has a negative influence on ST2_SBC.

Statement 3

H₀: PRG does not have a positive influence on ST3_SBC

H₁: PRG has a positive influence on ST3_SBC

Table 56. Variables entered.

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	PRG ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: ST3_SBC

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 57. Model summary (PRG and ST3_SBC).

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	,550 ^a	,303	,300	1,38967	,303	140,585	1	324	<,001

a. Predictors: (Constant), PRG

We have run a regression analysis with PRG as the independent variable and ST3_SBC as the dependent variable. Adjusted R square shows a value of .300, which means that PRG is responsible for 30% of the variance in ST3_SBC. The significance level is <.001 which meets our requirement of $p \leq .05$.

Table 58. Coefficients (PRG and ST3_SBC).

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1,207	,171		7,051	<,001
	PRG	,516	,043	,550	11,857	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: ST3_SBC

The unstandardized beta value tells us that in the event that PRG increases by 1, ST3_SBC will increase by 0,516. This is a significant finding ($p \leq .05$). We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that PRG has a positive influence on ST3_SBC.

Statement 4

H₀: PRG does not have a positive influence on ST4_SBC

H₁: PRG has a negative influence on ST4_SBC

Table 59. Variables entered.

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	PRG ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: ST4_SBC

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 60. Model summary (PRG and ST4_SBC).

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	,108 ^a	,012	,009	1,77190	,012	3,856	1	324	,050

a. Predictors: (Constant), PRG

We have run a regression analysis with PRG as the independent variable and ST4_SBC as the dependent variable. Adjusted R square shows a value of .009, which means that PRG is responsible for 0,9% of the variance in ST4_SBC. The significance level is .050 which meets our requirement of $p \leq .05$.

Table 61. Coefficients (PRG and ST4_SBC).

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4,504	,218		20,642	<,001
	PRG	-,109	,055	-,108	-1,964	,050

a. Dependent Variable: ST4_SBC

The unstandardized beta value tells us that in the event that PRG increases by 1, ST4_SBC will decrease by 0,109. This is a significant finding ($p \leq .05$). We reject the null hypothesis and conclude that PRG has a negative influence on ST4_SBC.

Summary

In all four cases we see that PRG has a significant influence on SBC. In the case of the rightist statements 1 and 3, the influence is positive. In the case of the leftist statements, the influence is negative. Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that PRG has an influence on SBC.

4.5 Path analysis

Lastly, we have performed path analyses in the SPSS extension AMOS for the complete model and for each of the four statements.

4.5.1 Statement 1

We have added our constructs to SPSS AMOS which gives us the following.

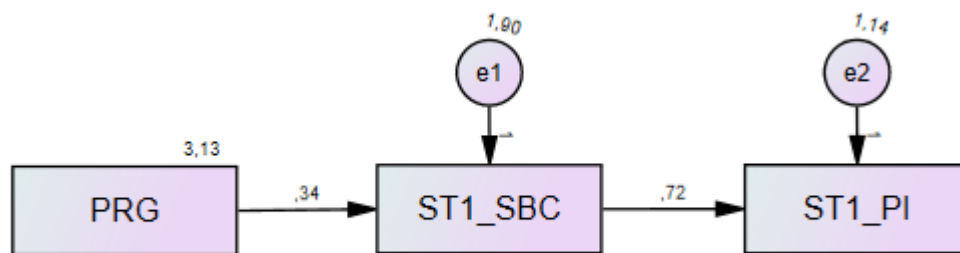


Figure 3. Path analysis for Statement 1.

The path analysis in Figure 3 shows the strength of the relationships between our constructs through their respective beta coefficients. The detailed results in Table 62 indicate that in the case of statement 1, PRG positively influences ST1_SBC whilst ST1_SBC positively influences ST1_PI. If PRG increases by 1, ST1_SBC will increase by .34. This is consistent with the regression analysis in [4.4.3: Statement 1](#). If ST1_SBC increases by 1, ST1_PI will increase by .722. This is consistent with the regression analysis in [4.4.2: Statement 1](#). The results are significant ($p \leq .05$) as indicated by the asterisks (***) in Table 62.

Table 62. Coefficients (Statement 1).

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
ST1_SBC	<--- PRG	,339	,043	7,840	***	
ST1_PI	<--- ST1_SBC	,722	,039	18,371	***	

4.5.2 Statement 2

We have added our constructs to SPSS AMOS which gives us the following.

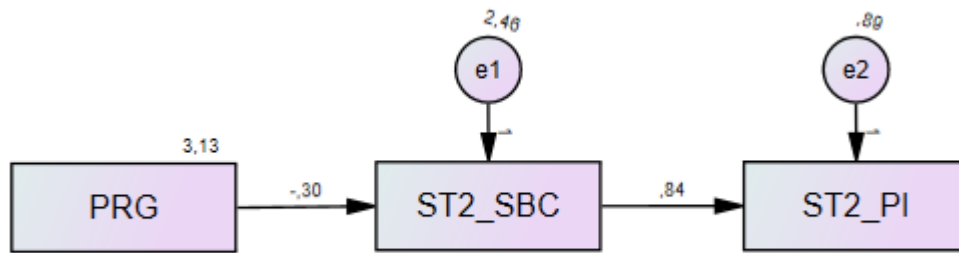


Figure 4. Path analysis for Statement 2.

The path analysis in Figure 4 shows the strength of the relationships between our constructs through their respective beta coefficients. The detailed results in Table 63 indicate that in the case of statement 2, PRG negatively influences ST2_SBC whilst ST2_SBC positively influences ST2_PI. If PRG increases by 1, ST2_SBC will decrease by .297. This is consistent with the regression analysis in [4.4.3: Statement 2](#). If ST2_SBC increases by 1, ST2_PI will increase by .836. This is consistent with the regression analysis in [4.4.2: Statement 2](#). The results are significant ($p \leq .05$) as indicated by the asterisks (***) in Table 63.

Table 63. Coefficients (Statement 2).

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
ST2_SBC	<--- PRG	-.297	,049	-6,040	***	
ST2_PI	<--- ST2_SBC	,836	,032	26,477	***	

4.5.3 Statement 3

We have added our constructs to SPSS AMOS which gives us the following.

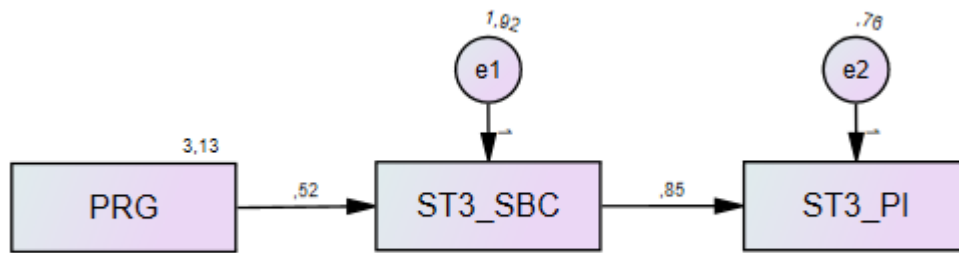


Figure 5. Path analysis for Statement 3.

The path analysis in Figure 5 shows the strength of the relationships between our constructs through their respective beta coefficients. The detailed results in Table 64 indicate that in the case of statement 3, PRG positively influences ST3_SBC whilst ST3_SBC positively influences ST3_PI. If PRG increases by 1, ST1_SBC will increase by .516. This is consistent with the regression analysis in [4.4.3: Statement 3](#). If ST3_SBC increases by 1, ST3_PI will increase by .852. This is consistent with the regression analysis in [4.4.2: Statement 3](#). The results are significant ($p \leq .05$) as indicated by the asterisks (***) in Table 64.

Table 64. Coefficients (Statement 3).

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
ST3_SBC	<--- PRG	,516	,043	11,875	***	
ST3_PI	<--- ST3_SBC	,852	,029	29,275	***	

4.5.4 Statement 4

We have added our constructs to SPSS AMOS which gives us the following.

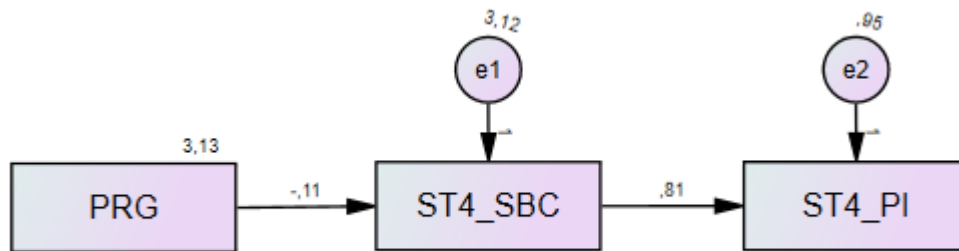


Figure 6. Path analysis for Statement 4.

The path analysis in Figure 6 shows the strength of the relationships between our constructs through their respective beta coefficients. The detailed results in Table 65 indicate that in the case of statement 4, PRG negatively influences ST4_SBC whilst ST4_SBC positively influences ST4_PI. If PRG increases by 1, ST4_SBC will decrease by .109. This is consistent with the regression analysis in [4.4.3: Statement 4](#). If ST4_SBC increases by 1, ST4_PI will increase by .805. This is consistent with the regression analysis in [4.4.2: Statement 4](#). The results are significant ($p \leq .05$) as indicated by the asterisks (***) in Table 65.

Table 65. Coefficients (Statement 4).

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
ST4_SBC	<--- PRG	-,109	,055	-1,967	,049	
ST4_PI	<--- ST4_SBC	,805	,030	26,450	***	

4.6 ANOVA - Differences between groups

SBC and PI were measured four times in response to four political statements acting as BA. Statements 1 and 3 are of a right political nature, and statements 2 and 4 are of a left political nature. SBC and PI are therefore divided into four constructs each and prefixed with the statement in question (ST1, ST2, ST3 and ST4). In order to establish PRG, respondents were asked to place themselves on a scale from 1 (political left) to 7 (political right). If there is in fact a link between BA and SBC, we should be able to identify differences in SBC between the political groups. Consequently, we recoded the scaled variable PRG into a categorical variable with the categories neutral (4 → 0), left (1-3 → 1), right (5-7 → 2). Next, we ran multiple one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) for the SBCs of the four statements with PRG (categorical) as the factor variable. This analysis gives us an insight into how the political groups “left,” “right” and “neutral” differ in their SBC for a given statement. Furthermore, it grants us insight into how these group differences translate depending on the political sentiment expressed in each statement.

4.6.1 Statement 1

Statement 1 is a rightist statement, and the one-way ANOVA with ST1_SBC as the dependent variable and PRG as the factor variable gives us the following.

H₀: There are no differences in SBC between the groups

H₁: There are differences in SBC between the groups

Table 66. Analysis of variance (ST1_SBC).

ANOVA					
ST1_SBC	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	111,908	2	55,954	28,890	<,001
Within Groups	625,589	323	1,937		
Total	737,497	325			

Table 66 shows us that there is a statistically significant ($p \leq .05$) difference between the right, left and neutral groups. This allows us to reject the null hypothesis that posits no differences, and then we will look closer at the differences in detail. By running a post

hoc test – Tukey HSD – we can look at the differences between each group through multiple comparisons.

Table 67. Multiple comparisons (ST1_SBC).

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: ST1_SBC

Tukey HSD

(I) PRG	(J) PRG	Mean		Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
		Difference (I-J)	Std. Error		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
neutral	left	,76005*	,18929	<,001	,3144	1,2057
	right	-,62566*	,21294	,010	-1,1270	-,1243
left	neutral	-,76005*	,18929	<,001	-1,2057	-,3144
	right	-1,38570*	,18575	<,001	-1,8231	-,9483
right	neutral	,62566*	,21294	,010	,1243	1,1270
	left	1,38570*	,18575	<,001	,9483	1,8231

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 67 shows that all group differences are significant ($p \leq .05$). The left and right groups' means differ the most by a margin of 1,3857. The neutral group's mean difference is slightly higher for the left group (.76) than for the right (-.63). Put simply, the neutral group has a mean value for ST1_SBC closer to the right group than to the left group in this case.

Table 68. Descriptives table (ST1_SBC).

Descriptives

ST1_SBC

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
neutral	83	2,5084	1,56277	,17154	2,1672	2,8497	1,00	7,00
left	155	1,7484	1,16348	,09345	1,5638	1,9330	1,00	7,00
right	88	3,1341	1,57880	,16830	2,7996	3,4686	1,00	7,00
Total	326	2,3160	1,50639	,08343	2,1518	2,4801	1,00	7,00

The actual mean values provide some more perspective. Whilst the neutral group is closer to the right than to the left, the mean values of all groups are not particularly high.

4.6.2 Statement 2

Statement 2 is a leftist statement, and the one-way ANOVA with ST2_SBC as the dependent variable and PRG as the factor variable gives us the following.

H₀: There are no differences in SBC between the groups

H₁: There are differences in SBC between the groups

Table 69. Analysis of variance (ST2_SBC).

ANOVA					
ST2_SBC					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	89,863	2	44,932	18,107	<,001
Within Groups	801,532	323	2,482		
Total	891,395	325			

Table 69 shows us that there is a statistically significant ($p \leq .05$) difference between the right, left and neutral groups. This allows us to reject the null hypothesis that posits no differences, and then we will look closer at the differences in detail. By running a post hoc test – Tukey HSD – we can look at the differences between each group through multiple comparisons.

Table 70. Multiple comparisons (ST2_SBC).

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: ST2_SBC						
Tukey HSD						
(I) PRG	(J) PRG	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
neutral	left	-,59726*	,21426	,015	-1,1018	-,0928
	right	,65917*	,24103	,018	,0916	1,2267
left	neutral	,59726*	,21426	,015	,0928	1,1018
	right	1,25644*	,21026	<,001	,7614	1,7515
right	neutral	-,65917*	,24103	,018	-1,2267	-,0916
	left	-1,25644*	,21026	<,001	-1,7515	-,7614

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 70 shows that all group differences are significant ($p \leq .05$). The left and right groups' means differ the most by a margin of 1,25644. As opposed to the case for statement 1, the neutral group's mean difference is slightly lower for the left group (-

.60) than for the right (.66). In other words, the neutral group has a mean value for ST2_SBC closer to the left group than to the right group.

Table 71. Descriptives table (ST2_SBC)

Descriptives								
ST2_SBC								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
neutral	83	3,3614	1,50072	,16473	3,0338	3,6891	1,00	6,20
left	155	3,9587	1,67094	,13421	3,6936	4,2238	1,00	7,00
right	88	2,7023	1,46562	,15624	2,3917	3,0128	1,00	6,00
Total	326	3,4675	1,65613	,09172	3,2870	3,6479	1,00	7,00

The mean values are in general slightly higher for statement 2 than for statement 1.

4.6.3 Statement 3

Statement 3 is a rightist statement, and the one-way ANOVA with ST3_SBC as the dependent variable and PRG as the factor variable gives us the following.

H₀: There are no differences in SBC between the groups

H₁: There are differences in SBC between the groups

Table 72. Analysis of variance (ST3_SBC)

ANOVA					
ST3_SBC					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	248,396	2	124,198	61,831	<,001
Within Groups	648,806	323	2,009		
Total	897,202	325			

Table 72 shows us that there is a statistically significant ($p \leq .05$) difference between the right, left and neutral groups. This allows us to reject the null hypothesis that posits no differences, and then we will look closer at the differences in detail. By running a post hoc test – Tukey HSD – we can look at the differences between each group through multiple comparisons.

Table 73. Multiple comparisons (ST3_SBC)**Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: ST3_SBC

Tukey HSD

(I) PRG	(J) PRG	Mean		Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
		Difference (I-J)	Std. Error		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
neutral	left	1,37071*	,19277	<,001	,9168	1,8246
	right	-,61911*	,21686	,013	-1,1297	-,1085
left	neutral	-1,37071*	,19277	<,001	-1,8246	-,9168
	right	-1,98982*	,18917	<,001	-2,4352	-1,5444
right	neutral	,61911*	,21686	,013	,1085	1,1297
	left	1,98982*	,18917	<,001	1,5444	2,4352

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 73. shows that all group differences are significant ($p \leq .05$). The left and right groups' means differ the most by a margin of 1,37071. Similarly to the results for statement 1, the neutral group is once again closer to the right group. In this case, the neutral group's mean difference is notably higher for the left group (1.37) than for the right group (-.62). In this case, the neutral group has a mean value for ST3_SBC that is closer to the right group than to the left group.

Table 74. Analysis of variance (ST3_SBC)**Descriptives**

ST3_SBC

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
neutral	83	3,5036	1,68649	,18512	3,1354	3,8719	1,00	7,00
left	155	2,1329	1,26702	,10177	1,9319	2,3339	1,00	6,60
right	88	4,1227	1,39108	,14829	3,8280	4,4175	1,00	7,00
Total	326	3,0190	1,66151	,09202	2,8380	3,2001	1,00	7,00

Thus far, ST3_SBC has the highest mean value for both the neutral and right groups.

4.6.4 Statement 4

Statement 4 is a leftist statement, and the one-way ANOVA with ST4_SBC as the dependent variable and PRG as the factor variable gives us the following.

H₀: There are no differences in SBC between the groups

H₁: There are differences in SBC between the groups

Table 75. Analysis of variance (ST4_SBC)

ANOVA					
ST4_SBC					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5,825	2	2,912	,919	,400
Within Groups	1023,525	323	3,169		
Total	1029,350	325			

Table 76. Descriptives table (ST4_SBC)

Descriptives								
ST4_SBC								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
neutral	83	4,1036	1,84902	,20296	3,6999	4,5074	1,00	7,00
left	155	4,2439	1,66168	,13347	3,9802	4,5075	1,00	7,00
right	88	3,9227	1,91171	,20379	3,5177	4,3278	1,00	7,00
Total	326	4,1215	1,77967	,09857	3,9276	4,3154	1,00	7,00

In the case of ST4_SBC, the ANOVA table does not show a statistically significant difference between the groups. Table 76 provides insight into this result. In the case of statement 4, the SBC mean value is quite similar across the groups. Consequently, we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there are no significant differences between the groups.

4.6.5 Summary

After testing four hypotheses on group differences, we rejected three null hypotheses and concluded that there were significant mean differences between the groups for ST1_SBC, ST2_SBC and ST3_SBC. In every instance, the left and right groups differed the most. For the rightist statements – 1 and 3 – the neutral group's mean values were closest to those of the right's mean values both times. For the leftist statement 2, the neutral group's mean value was closest to that of the left's mean value. Regarding the hypothesized link between BA and SBC, our findings show that each group's mean value does change depending on the statement. When all other factors are held constant, the differing political statements (BA) lead to different outcomes in SBC. Hence, there seems to be a clear link between the two.

5. Discussion

In this chapter we will discuss our findings orderly per hypothesis and see how they compare to prior research discussed in chapter 2. Hypothesis 1 reflects our central research problem and Hypotheses 2 and 3 represent the accompanying research questions.

5.1 Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between Brand Activism (BA) and SBC (SBC)

As BA was not a measured variable in our study, we have to look at how the four statement-specific SBC constructs differ from each other when other factors are held constant. In the event that BA has no impact, we would expect the mean values of the four constructs to be indistinguishable. By looking at the mean values of the four constructs ST1_SBC (M = 2.32), ST2_SBC (M = 3.47), ST3_SBC (M = 3.02), and ST4_SBC (M = 4.12), we do see some clear differences. In general, we see that the mean values of the rightist statements 1 and 3 are lower than those of the leftist statements 2 and 4. However, out of our 326 respondents 83 identifies as neutral, 88 as right and 155 as left. Given that 47.5% of our respondents identify on the left, it makes sense that the left leaning statements would measure well for SBC. Consequently, we will hold the group constant and see how SBC differs by statement and per group.

First, we look at the neutral group's mean values for ST1_SBC (M = 2.51), ST2_SBC (M = 3.36), ST3_SBC (M = 3.50), and ST4_SBC (M = 4.10). Second, we look at the left group's mean values for ST1_SBC (M = 1.75), ST2_SBC (M = 3.96), ST3_SBC (M = 2.13), ST4_SBC (M = 4.24) Finally, we look at the right group's mean values for ST1_SBC (M = 3.13), ST2_SBC (M = 2.70), ST3_SBC (M = 4.12), ST4_SBC (M = 3.92). The mean values tell us that when all factors except the stimulus statement are held constant, SBC changes significantly for each group. In other words, BA seems to be the most likely explanation for this change. This suggests that there is a relationship between BA and SBC. Because the statements are categorized as left and right – opposed to being more precisely politically weighted – it is hard to say exactly how strong this relationship is. For instance, if the two leftist statements were equally weighted we would expect any group to have very similar mean values for both leftist SBC constructs. This is not the case. As shown above, none of the groups above have

particularly similar measures for ST2_SBC and ST4_SBC. The same goes for the rightist statements, for that matter.

5.2 Hypothesis 2: SBC (SBC) has a positive influence on purchase intention (PI)

In every case of BA across four political statements of varying sentiment, we found that SBC had a positive influence on PI. The strength of the effect varied from SBC explaining 50,8% of the variance in PI for statement 1 to as much as 72,4% in the case of statement 3. In other words, the politically right leaning statements represented both the strongest and weakest SBC-PI relationships. Interestingly, in the case of the leftist statements 2 and 4 both SBCs explained 68,2% of the variances of their respective PIs. It is important to note that the differences observed – whilst interesting – do not merit drawing any conclusions as we do not know the political weight of each statement. That is, we do not know exactly where on the left-right scale each statement belongs – only that they are associated with either the left or the right.

The beta coefficients for the SBC-PI relationship varied somewhat for statement 1 ($\beta = .722$), statement 2 ($\beta = .836$), statement 3 ($\beta = .852$) and statement 4 ($\beta = .805$) – however all effects were quite strong and statistically significant ($p \leq .05$). Our findings suggest a stronger relationship between SBC and PI when compared to Escalas (2004) with $\beta = .43$, Chand and Fei (2021) and Fazli-Salehi et al. (2021) with a maximum of $\beta = .74$ and $\beta = .55$, respectively. Only Matos et al. (2017) found a stronger effect ($\beta = .90$) than our own. As only the latter authors specifically tested the relationship within a political context similar to our own, it makes sense that they also have results closer to our own. Moreover, this could suggest that the influence of SBC on PI is generally stronger in a political context. Perhaps this is because politics is a more personal matter that elicits stronger emotions as compared to emotions connected to whether a product is consumed in private or public (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2021). Nonetheless, our findings seem to mirror those of Matos et al. (2017), confirming similar effects in a Norwegian context.

5.3 Hypothesis 3: An individual's political reference group (PRG) moderates the effect of brand activism (BA) on the individual's Self-Brand Connection (SBC)

Whereas BA was baked into the measurements of SBC, we did not analyze PRG as a moderating variable in the same vein as Matos et al. (2017) and Escalas and Bettmann (2003). We did nonetheless find that PRG had a significant effect on SBC for all four statements. In the case of statement 1 PRG explained 15.6% of the variance of SBC; statement 2, 9.8%; statement 3, 30%; statement 4, 0.9%. In other words, PRG is a stronger predictor in the case of rightist statements (1 & 3) than for the leftist statements (2 & 4). Furthermore, the beta coefficients varied somewhat in nature between statement 1 ($\beta = .339$), statement 2 ($\beta = -.297$), statement 3 ($\beta = .516$), and statement 4 ($\beta = -.109$). PRG had a positive influence on SBC in the case of the rightist statements (1 & 3) and a negative influence on SBC in the case of the leftist statements (2 & 4). Put simply, this means that when there was alignment between the political nature of a statement and a respondent's political reference group – both left or both right, for instance – SBC was strengthened. In the case of misalignment, the opposite is true. So far this seems to be consistent with the findings of Matos et al. (2017), which similarly show that political alignment strengthens SBC and vice versa. However, in order to make more appropriate comparisons to earlier research we coded PRG into a categorical variable (right, left, neutral) to see group differences on SBC for the different statements.

Firstly, we found statistically significant ($p \leq .05$) differences between all combinations of groups for all statements except statement 4. Incidentally, ST4_SBC was also the SBC that correlated the least with PRG ($r = -.108$), and the construct that PRG had the weakest influence on ($\beta = -.109$). This was an unexpected result. Initially, we suspected that statement 4 about abortion would elicit the most polarizing results. Not only did this not come to fruition, statement 4 was actually so unpolarizing that we did not find significant differences between the groups as mentioned above. Although we do not know the weight of each statement, it can be argued that statement 4 – which argues for legal abortion past 12 weeks of pregnancy – is somewhat more diffuse in the sense that it does not specify whether we are talking about legal abortion after 13 weeks or 8 months. We suspect that because of this, leftists in general did not see any reason to

cheer and rightists saw no reason to be angered. Hence the similar means for the neutral ($M = 4.10$), left ($M = 4.24$), and right group ($M = 3.92$).

For the rightist statement 1 – which argued for stricter immigration policy – we saw clear distinctions between the neutral ($M = 2.51$), left ($M = 1.75$) and right ($M = 3.13$) groups. As the highest possible value is 7, the mean values are in general in the lower half which suggests that this rightist statement did not cause a very high mean value for ST1_SBC – even for the rightists. Nonetheless, it is substantially higher than that of the leftists. The neutral group is in the middle of the two groups, slightly closer to the right. For comparison, Matos et al. (2017) found that for a conservative statement arguing traditional marriage, Republicans displayed stronger SBC ($M = 5.11$) than did the Democrats ($M = 3.30$). In the case of the leftist statement 2 – which argued that Norway must stop searching for oil – we once again saw clear distinctions between the neutral ($M = 3.36$), left (3.96) and right (2.70) groups. As expected, the leftists have a higher SBC than the other groups and the neutral group is slightly closer to the left than to the right in this case. Matos et al. (2017) similarly found that for a liberal statement arguing for same-sex marriage, Democrats displayed stronger SBC ($M = 4.63$) than did the Republicans ($M = 3.43$).

Lastly, for the rightist statement 3 – which argued that private companies should increasingly be allowed to run kindergartens, schools and nursing homes – we yet again saw clear distinctions between the neutral ($M = 3.50$), left ($M = 2.13$), and right ($M = 4.12$) groups. This is the statement that seems to separate the right and the left the most, with a mean difference of 1.99 – compared to 1.39 for ST1_SBC, 1.25 for ST2_SBC, and .32 for ST4_SBC. In other words, privatization – not abortion as we initially suspected – seems to be the most polarizing issue in our study. After some reflection, it does come to mind that the quarrels about the public vs. private sector are somewhat characteristic of the left-right dichotomy. Accordingly, it is perhaps natural that this would be the statement that most clearly divided the leftists from the rightists. The neutral group is quite clearly closer to the right group in this case. As the neutral group comes down right in the middle on this issue ($M = 3.50$), this seems to be a consequence of a relatively low SBC for the right group ($M = 4.12$). If this had been a “perfect” left-right issue, we would expect the right group to have a mean value as far to the right as

the left group measured towards the left. So the left's mean of 2.13 would come to 4.87 for the right.

Our findings are also consistent with research outside the political domain. Wei & Yu (2012) found that brands associated with an ingroup led to higher SBC ($M = 6.46$) than those associated with an outgroup ($M = 2.90$). Similarly, Escalas and Bettmann (2005) found that brands consistent with an ingroup had more positive SBC than brands that did not match the image of the ingroup (match = 63.59, no match = 17.31). Adjusted to our scale this is equivalent to approximately $M = 4.45$ for congruence with ingroup and $M = 1.21$ for lack of congruence. To reiterate, the ingroup in our case is the political reference group that a consumer belongs to. Accordingly, our findings show similar changes in SBC depending on group match – albeit not as strongly as in the examples above.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of brand activism in a Norwegian context. Accordingly, our research problem is “how do consumers respond to companies engaging in brand activism?” The accompanying research questions entails how an individual’s political reference group affects the relationship between brand activism and self-brand connection – and how the self-brand connection influences purchase intention. In this chapter, we will concisely answer these questions in light of our findings – followed by some notable limitations in our study and our suggestions for future research on this topic. For ease of reading, we reintroduce our constructs in full text before reverting to acronyms.

6.1 Conclusions

To answer our research problem, we posited Hypothesis 1, suggesting there was a relationship between brand activism (BA) and self-brand connection (SBC) – the latter representing the consumer’s response. Whilst this was not a measured construct, we manipulated it by testing our research model and hypotheses on four separate political statements. Holding all other variables constant, we found significant changes in SBC ($p \leq .05$) that more likely than not could only be explained by changes in BA – represented by the different statements. Consequently, we reject H1₀.

To answer our first research question on how an individual’s political reference group (PRG) affects the relationship between BA and SBC, we posited Hypothesis 2. H2 suggests that PRG moderated the relationship between BA and SBC. However, we could not use PRG as a moderator in the traditional sense, as BA was not a measured construct. Instead, we investigated how PRG influenced SBC, and how the mean values of each statement-specific SBC varied across the political groups *neutral*, *left* and *right*. We found that when there was alignment between PRG and the political sentiment of a statement, SBC was positively affected. In the event that there was misalignment, SBC was negatively affected. The findings are significant ($p \leq .05$) and we reject H2₀. To answer our second and final research question on how an individual’s SBC influences purchase intention (PI), we posited Hypothesis 3 which suggests that SBC positively

influences PI. In all four cases, we found that SBC positively influences PI. The findings are significant ($p \leq .05$) and we reject $H3_0$.

As the risks and benefits associated with engaging in brand activism is exemplified by our results. Brands can strengthen customer-brand relationship through brand activism potentially more than most other activities. However, companies would do well to understand the composition of their customer base before taking action. If taking a stand is more important than the risk of alienating one's customers – which is not necessarily wrong – then these results are of no importance. However, if nurturing customer relations and attracting new customers is the object, understanding what makes them tick and what makes them sick is very instructive. Engaging in brand activism means maintaining the balance between praise and backlash – one righteous statement at a time.

6.2 Limitations

In the following we will list some of the limitations of our study, shortly followed by suggestions for future research.

6.2.1 Weighted statements and brand stimuli

Matos et al. (2017) conducted a pretest to determine respondents' political associations with certain statements, as well as the familiarity and perceived political affiliation of a set of brands. This allowed them to get a somewhat more accurate gauge of exactly where on a political spectrum a given statement lies, as well as an indication on how people perceived certain brands politically. Due to time constraints we chose to use a political party test to establish the statements (NRK, 2022a). Whilst the statements are arguably correctly placed as left and right respectively, it could have been more insightful to see how the strength of each statement would affect our results. Likewise, by having respondents imagine a brand identifying with a statement – as opposed to creating a fictitious article where a known brand made the statement – we are perhaps missing some nuance that the real brands could have brought. Perhaps reading that a brand you are familiar with took a certain stance on a political position that was deemed as polarizing in the pre-test, could elicit stronger and more real responses. On the other

hand, that would also mean that respondents could have previous associations to our brands of choice that could negatively impact the study. We decided against using real brands due to the time it would take to accurately choose proper stimuli brands, measuring how respondents perceived these brands politically, and out of consideration to the brands that we would necessarily have to connect to polarizing issues.

6.2.2 Depth of political statements

Four political statements were used to represent four expressions of brand activism. These were divided into left and right leaning statements, two of each. These statements had different themes in the social, economic, and environmental domains. Consumers might find certain issues more important than others. For example, one statement was “Norway has to stop searching for more oil now.” This is an environmental concern, and a left leaning statement politically. However, it is not a given that participants who identify as politically left have a strong concern for environmental issues, and therefore the question does not necessarily evoke strong agreement. This demonstrates the complexity that the simple left-right scale does not consider. Consequently, we do not have in-depth statistics across different topics. This could have been an interesting path to take, but as we knew we would test our model on every statement we decided it would be too comprehensive and beyond our scope.

6.2.3 Political reference group

Lastly, the construct Political Reference group in our study was measured with a single item, namely asking the respondents to place themselves on the political spectrum from left (1) to right (7). We suggest that future research that wish to use this construct strengthen and further validate it by adding additional items to measure the construct more accurately. As the construct is built on the ideas of Escalas & Bettman (2003) on self-identification with reference groups, items from their scale can be adapted to the PRG construct. Examples of items in Escalas & Bettman (2003) study is “I like the people in “X” & “I fit in/belong with people in “X.” These could be adapted to “I like/get along better with people who identify politically as X” and “I fit in with people who have X political values.” This could strengthen the connection between political affiliation and reference group.

6.3 Future research

On February 24th, 2022 – quite a way into the writing of this thesis – Russia launched an invasion into its neighboring country, Ukraine. The backlash to this action was immediate, and Russia has since been condemned by a plethora of nations, companies, and individuals alike. Likewise, the same actors have showered support for the Ukrainian people. We watched the Ukrainian flags appear in Facebook profile pictures and brand logos, as well as companies pitching in – both through donations and selling products where the proceeds went to support Ukrainians. We quickly realized we were watching perhaps the largest act of brand activism in history, just as we were exploring this exact topic. Whilst there are undoubtedly some who support Russia in these acts, it is clear that the global sentiment seems to favor Ukraine by quite a margin. This likely makes taking a public stance on the issue – in favor of Ukraine – quite uncontroversial and risk free. Initially this means that the act does not qualify as brand activism according to the definition brought in our thesis.

However, we think that it could be of interest to research how the perceived risk of taking a stance on a myriad of issues can explain which issues are being pursued by organizations. For instance, even if a company happened to agree with Russia in this case, what are the chances that they would go public with this opinion? Earlier in our master's program we discussed this exact concept, primarily focusing on how many international brands seem to carry the LGBTQ pride flag during pride month – only in countries where homosexuality is broadly accepted. Similar to how companies who inflate their environmental efforts are accused of greenwashing, these companies could be accused of “woke-washing” (Pitcher, 2021). We suggest that future research should focus on how risk-benefit calculations fit into the brand activism equation, and to conduct more research on the concept of woke-washing.

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Appendix A – Survey


 **Høgskulen på Vestlandet**

Takk for at du ønsker å delta i vår spørreundersøkelse om merkevare-aktivisme. Vi vil ikke spørre deg om personidentifiserende opplysninger, og spørreundersøkelsen er valgfri og helt anonym. Dersom du ønsker å være med i trekningen av gavekort på kr. 1000,- vil du ha muligheten til å legge igjen e-postadressen din i et helt separat datasett ved fullført undersøkelse. Hensikten med dette er at din e-postadresse ikke skal kunne kobles med dine besvarelser, slik at vi bevarer din anonymitet.

Lykke til!

FORRIGE **NESTE**

12%

 **Høgskulen på Vestlandet**

Denne spørreundersøkelsen handler om merkevare-aktivisme, altså når bedrifter og merkevarer tar politiske standpunkt. I det følgende vil du bli bedt om å vurdere en rekke påstander opp i mot noen konkrete politiske standpunkt. Spørreundersøkelsen vil ta ca. 5 minutter å gjennomføre.

FORRIGE **NESTE**






25%

Se for deg at en merkevare du kjenner til, identifiserer seg med følgende påstand:





"Norge trenger en strengere innvandringspolitikk"

I denne konteksten ønsker vi at du tar stilling til følgende påstander:

Merkevare-tilknytning

						
Merkeveren reflekterer hvem jeg er	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg kan identifisere meg med merkeveren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg føler en tilknytning til merkeveren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg kan bruke merkeveren til å kommunisere hvem jeg er til andre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Merkeveren representerer meg godt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Kjøpsintensjon

						
Det er sannsynlig at jeg kjøper noe fra denne merkeveren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg er mer tilbøyelig til å kjøpe noe fra denne merkeveren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg ønsker å kjøpe noe fra denne merkeveren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg har en intensjon om å kjøpe denne merkeverens produkter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det er sannsynlig at jeg kjøper noe fra denne merkeveren det kommende året	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

FORRIGE

NESTE







37%

Se for deg at en merkevare du kjenner til, identifiserer seg med følgende påstand:



"Norge bør slutte å lete etter olje nå"

I denne konteksten ønsker vi at du tar stilling til følgende påstander:

Merkevare-tilknytning

						
Merkevaren reflekterer hvem jeg er	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg kan identifisere meg med merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg føler en tilknytning til merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg kan bruke merkevaren til å kommunisere hvem jeg er til andre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Merkevaren representerer meg godt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Kjøpsintensjon

						
Det er sannsynlig at jeg kjøper noe fra denne merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg er mer tilbøyelig til å kjøpe noe fra denne merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg ønsker å kjøpe noe fra denne merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg har en intensjon om å kjøpe denne merkevarens produkter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det er sannsynlig at jeg kjøper noe fra denne merkevaren det kommende året	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

FORRIGE

NESTE







50%

Se for deg at en merkevare du kjenner til, identifiserer seg med følgende påstand:




"Flere private bedrifter bør få drive barnehager, skoler og sykehjem."

I denne konteksten ønsker vi at du tar stilling til følgende påstander:

Merkevare-tilknytning

						
Merkevaren reflekterer hvem jeg er	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg kan identifisere meg med merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg føler en tilknytning til merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg kan bruke merkevaren til å kommunisere hvem jeg er til andre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Merkevaren representerer meg godt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Kjøpsintensjon

						
Det er sannsynlig at jeg kjøper noe fra denne merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg er mer tilbøyelig til å kjøpe noe fra denne merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg ønsker å kjøpe noe fra denne merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg har en intensjon om å kjøpe denne merkevarens produkter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det er sannsynlig at jeg kjøper noe fra denne merkevaren det kommende året	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

FORRIGE

NESTE






62%

Se for deg at en merkevare du kjenner til, identifiserer seg med følgende påstand:


"Kvinner bør ha rett til å ta selvbestemt abort også etter uke 12 i svangerskapet."

I denne konteksten ønsker vi at du tar stilling til følgende påstander:

Merkevare-tilknytning

						
Merkevaren reflekterer hvem jeg er	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg kan identifisere meg med merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg føler en tilknytning til merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg kan bruke merkevaren til å kommunisere hvem jeg er til andre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Merkevaren representerer meg godt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Kjøpsintensjon

						
Det er sannsynlig at jeg kjøper noe fra denne merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg er mer tilbøyelig til å kjøpe noe fra denne merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg ønsker å kjøpe noe fra denne merkevaren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeg har en intensjon om å kjøpe denne merkevarens produkter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Det er sannsynlig at jeg kjøper noe fra denne merkevaren det kommende året	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

FORRIGE

NESTE

75%



På en skala fra venstre (1) til høyre (7), hva er ditt politiske ståsted?

Venstre



Høyre



Bor du i Norge?

Ja



Nei



FORRIGE

NESTE

87%



Tusen takk for deltakelsen!

Dersom du ønsker å være med i trekningen av et gavekort til en verdi av kr. 1000,- kan du legge igjen e-posten din i et separat datasett her: <https://forms.gle/JpAAoJBP4E6CbUUv7>

FORRIGE

AVSLUTT

100%

Bli med i trekning av gavekort på kr. 1000,-

For å være med i trekningen, trenger vi din e-post. E-posten din vil bli slettet etter trekningen blir gjennomført i slutten av mai og blir ikke knyttet med dine svar i undersøkelsen. Dersom du ønsker at dine data blir slettet umiddelbart, kan du sende en henvendelse til [redacted]
[redacted]

[redacted] 

*Må fylles ut

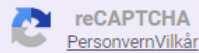
E-postadresse *

E-postadressen din

En kopi av svarene dine blir sendt til e-postadressen du oppga.

Send

Tøm skjemaet



Dette innholdet er ikke laget eller godkjent av Google. [Rapportér uriktig bruk](#) - [Vilkår for bruk](#) - [Retningslinjer for personvern](#)

Google Skjemaer