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CAN BRAND ACTIVISM, WHEN MEDIATED BY BRAND AUTHENTICITY, GENERATE BRAND LOVE AND BRAND ADVOCACY?

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September, 2023



**BUSINESS
SCHOOL**

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Abstract

My two years journey at ISCTE has been an incredible ride that has allowed me to deepen my knowledge in the area I love the most, making me a better professional and a better person due to the challenges and joys I have faced.

Firstly, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Professor Ricardo Godinho Bilro, for helping me close this chapter of my academic life. His dedication, insights and guidance have made this path much clearer, as well as fun and meaningful.

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Mariana Gonzaga Guiomar

Abstract

Traditionally, brands were positioned based on their performance characteristics. However, in competitive markets such as today's and with the characteristics of new consumers, this positioning is insufficient. The new generations have expectations of brands and businesses. They expect them to show concern and serve the community rather than focusing solely on the performance of their business. However, there is little literature validating the best way for brands to position themselves in this field and what effects it will have. This dissertation aims to fill this gap by examining the impact of brands becoming activists, mediated by authenticity and, in turn, how this relationship affects brand love and the creation of brand advocates.

Based on an online survey grounded on articles by different authors, quantitative methodology was used to collect and analyse the data. The results indicate that although brand's identity and the clarity of its communication do not influence its authenticity, brands that have the ability to develop a commitment to social and political issues, and ensure that they do so authentically, will have a positive influence on their relationship with the consumer. This relationship can generate brand love, brand advocacy and brand recommendation, but also positively influence brand value and overall brand success.

Key words: brand, social commitment, authenticity, brand love, advocates

JEL: M31, M39

Resumo

Tradicionalmente, as marcas posicionavam-se tendo em conta as suas características de desempenho. No entanto, em mercados competitivos como os da atualidade, e com as características dos novos consumidores, este posicionamento é insuficiente. As novas gerações têm expectativas para as marcas e negócios. Esperam que estas demonstrem preocupação e sirvam a comunidade, em vez de se focarem apenas no desempenho do seu negócio. No entanto, existe pouca literatura que valide qual a melhor forma para as marcas se posicionarem neste campo e que efeitos gerarão. Esta dissertação pretende colmatar esta lacuna, examinando o impacto das marcas ao se tornarem ativistas, mediadas pela autenticidade e, por sua vez, como é que esta relação afeta o amor à marca e a criação de defensores da marca.

Com base num inquérito online fundamentado em artigos de diferentes autores, recorreu-se à metodologia quantitativa para a recolha e análise de dados. Os resultados indicam que, apesar de a identidade da marca e a clareza da sua comunicação não influenciarem a sua autenticidade, as marcas que têm a capacidade de desenvolver um comprometimento com questões sociais e políticas, e que garantem que o fazem de forma autêntica, terão uma influência positiva na sua relação com o consumidor. Esta relação poderá gerar amor à marca, defesa e recomendação da marca, mas também influenciar positivamente o valor da marca e o seu sucesso em geral.

Palavras-chave: marca, comprometimento social, autenticidade, amor à marca, defensores da marca

JEL: M31, M39

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1. Introduction

It is becoming more and more obvious that the future of brands is also intimately related to the future of society (Clifton 2009) and that brands may serve as catalysts for social change. Brands like Nike, Harley Davidson, Mountain Dew, and Corona have gained market dominance, institution-like status, and legitimacy through tapping into a broader cultural zeitgeist (Holt, 2005). Instead of having an economic goal, it is believed that the owners of such companies are motivated by integrity, devotion to excellence, a sense of moral virtue and an inherent love of the product (Beverland, 2005; Beverland et al., 2005, 2009).

Several developments over the last decade appear to be amplifying the impact of brand activism. First, consider social media's influence as a political and social force (Carty, 2015; Milan 2013). Second, the number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Internet-based shaming campaigns that are on the rise (Dauvergne, 2017). Third, brands are gradually incorporating an image of "sustainability" into brand value (Chrun, Dolsak, & Prakash, 2016; Prakash, 2000), and fourth, an increasing number of consumer activists are urging multinational corporations to take greater responsibility for environmental and social consequences (Bartley, Koos, Samel, Setrini, & Summers, 2015; Stolle & Micheletti, 2015).

Hence, corporations are now thinking about their businesses in a broader context, determining which issues are important for them to engage in, how those issues match their brand identity, and how to position themselves as responsible corporate citizens and desirable employers (Jamoneau, 2019). Taking a stand on significant social problems is appealing for brands that want to stay current, especially in the eyes of millennial and generation-z, who are ethical and belief-driven consumers, more committed than any other generation, to societal and environmental issues (Ahmad, 2019; Title, 2020). In order to stay suitable in today's society, brands cannot remain silent (Ahmad, 2019). But, engaging in activism could lead to significant risks, most specifically in the cases where brands struggle to be perceived as authentic (Mirzaei et al., 2022; Shetty et al., 2019).

There is a growing trend towards using authenticity as a positioning tool (Beverland, 2005a, 2005b; Bruhn et al., 2012; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Authentic brands have a defined integrity as they put their organisational values at the core of their practices and actions (Eggers et al., 2013), are clear about their identity and also transparent in their communication style (Schallen et al., 2014), try to stay original to distinguish from their competitors (Kotler et al., 1996; Nunes et al., 2021), engage in social commitment to demonstrate its moral excellence

(Fritz, 2017) and finally forge stronger bonds by making activist social stances (Koch, 2020) that can evolve to brand love (Ahmad et al., 2022) and brand advocacy (Morhart, 2015). Concluding, brand authenticity is a crucial factor for the success of brand's activist messages (Bernardino, 2022). The previous literature denotes a gap when examining brand activism effectiveness (Vredenburg et al., 2020), including its impacts on brand love and brand advocacy.

Given the growing number of consumers who demand businesses to act with purpose (Hunt, 2019; Swaminathan et al., 2020), this work explores the under-research area of the importance of aligning sociopolitical strategy with authenticity. It will be focused on understanding the complex challenges that brands face in this era to stay authentic and to contribute to larger solutions, acting as advocates and change agents.

The motivation to dive into this topic is to contribute to the literature that sees brands evolving to be more than just selling products or services, but also catalysts for social change, as well as to develop practical recommendations to maintain brand authenticity when aligning with sociopolitical causes. Considering that there is not enough research on this issue, the purpose of this thesis is to push the boundaries of knowledge on a topic that can help our society's future. However, in order to fulfil this ambition and conduct the greatest study possible, several tangible goals must be reached. The following are the key dissertation objectives:

1. Understand in which ways brands can benefit from authentic brand activism and commitment to social causes;
2. Determine and comprehend the factors that impact consumers' perceptions of authentic brands;
3. Ensure this study offers useful and valuable insight for business and other researchers;
4. Add to the little literature in this fledgling topic by presenting results that are critical to its future growth.

Given the topic's novelty, there are many unresolved questions and unanswered research issues to be addressed, such as: understanding if it is beneficial for brands to take stands on social issues, what is the most effective way to do it, and consequently being regarded as authentic and not backlashing, and what influence it has on the customer connection, like brand love and brand advocacy. To obtain such findings, the following issues must be addressed in this thesis:

1. To what extent does brand activism, when mediated by brand authenticity, impacts the development of brand love?
2. To what extent does brand activism, when mediated by brand authenticity, impacts the development of brand advocacy?

This dissertation is structured into six main sections, which are described in Figure 1, in order to accomplish its objectives and address the research problematics. In the first section, the purpose of the introduction is to present the theme research problem, its significance, as well as the goals and research questions. In the second section, by recognizing the fundamental concepts, the literature review creates the foundation and framework for the research problem. The third section, "Research Hypotheses and Conceptual Model," introduces the research hypotheses that emerged from the literature and were utilised to construct the conceptual model. The methodology, questionnaire design, and data collecting approach are all detailed in the fourth section. The results are then presented in the fifth section, where the gathered data is evaluated and discussed. Finally, in the sixth and last section, conclusions are given, summarising theoretical and managerial contributions while also emphasising limitations that will serve as a starting point for future research.

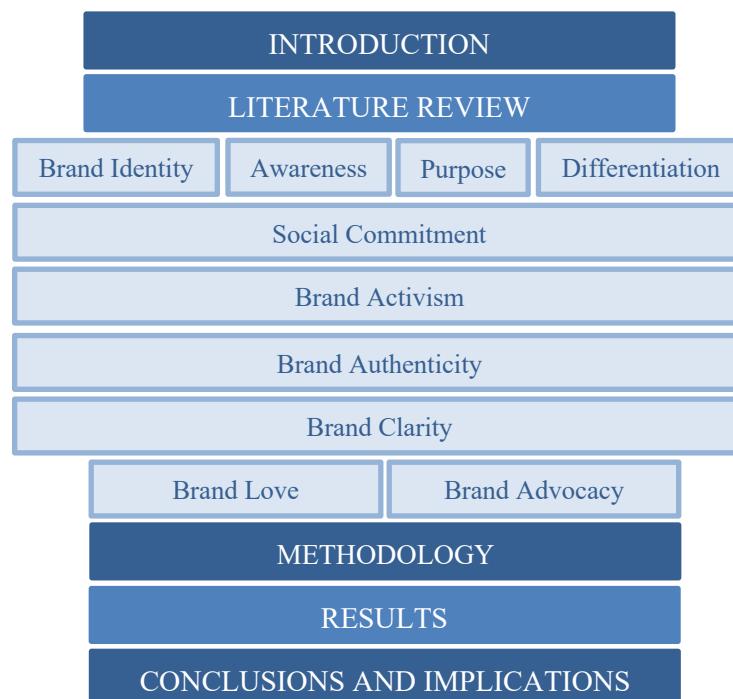


Figure 1.1 Structure of the dissertation

Source: own elaboration

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand Identity

Brand identity embodies how businesses want to be viewed. This concept is described as a particular set of brand connections that businesses seek to establish or retain, such as brand awareness, purpose and differentiation (De Chernatony, 1999; Keller, 2003). According to Aaker (1996), the goal of brand identity is to forge a connection between a client and a brand that, in turn, conveys the brand's ambitions. Therefore, businesses must bring to consumers the brand's advantages and its qualities, in order to develop a unique positioning for the brand (McEnally & De Chernatony, 1999). When the brand identity it's created from inside out, being clear about what it stands for, this increases the perceived brand authenticity (Schallehn et al., 2014). A brand identity must be memorable to consumers, stand out from rival brands, and represent what an organisation can and will do throughout time, in order to be successful (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). To establish a relationship, we need to create meaning, and meaning can't be established unless the identity has been created (Keller, 2003).

2.1.1 Brand awareness

The creation of an identity is probably more crucial during the introduction stage (Degeratu et al., 2000), when customers are less familiar with a brand and its products (Park et al., 1986). Brand awareness refers to the consumer's ability to recall or recognise a brand's performance and is associated with how strongly a brand is perceived by the consumer (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2003). When a brand is suggested, brand recognition refers to the consumer's ability to validate previous exposure to the brand (Jamoneau, 2019). Brand recall is the consumer's ability to remember the brand when presented with the product category and the needs that category satisfies (Keller, 2003). As well as producing greater consumer loyalty and reducing vulnerability to competitors' marketing actions, the greater brand awareness is, the greater is the likelihood of the brand being included in the set of considerations when purchasing a product (Baker et al. 1986; Nedungadi 1990). According to Keller (2003), building brand awareness involves associating the brand with various links in the mind. Hence, the successfulness of a brand lies in the minds of consumers and in what they have experienced and learned about the brand over time (Jamoneau, 2019).

2.1.2 Brand Purpose

According to a survey conducted by Havas Group (2019) with 300,000 participants from 33 countries, the majority of people would not even notice if three-quarters of the brands currently in use disappeared. As was previously mentioned, modern consumers' expectations for brands extend beyond purely utilitarian or symbolic considerations to include social, ethical and environmental considerations (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2016). But one can ask, why is brand purpose becoming more and more significant?

A brand is an asset that enables differentiation in a homogenised market and is essential for companies to make themselves known (Tait, 2013). Therefore, brands today are placing increasing importance on being seen as pioneers of a better future (Mainwaring, 2019). Therefore, a company's ethos, positioning, goals and identity in pursuit of the stated perspective are together referred to as the brand purpose (Shaw, 2015).

As said by Narayanan and Das (2021, p. 13) "branding as an innovative tool of marketing that the companies can use to achieve their purpose and cater to the consumers' and society's needs at large". Building a brand's purpose entails developing a bigger cause that extends beyond making money. It may be viewed as a "humanization" of the company because brands that go by this path acquire a purpose beyond profitability and symbolic qualities, just as humans have purposes beyond survival and reproduction (Narayanan & Das, 2021). These characteristics resemble the integrity dimension of brand authenticity (Morhart, 2015), which refers to the moral integrity and accountability of the brand.

Brand purpose provides guidelines for how companies should conduct their business to benefit society (Brophy, 2017). Through brand purpose, companies have an opportunity to create strong brands and, last but not least, to contribute to a better tomorrow. Purpose-driven companies were not only good for society, but they also brought profits to Unilever, for example, increasing 50% faster than non-purpose-driven brands and accounting for more than 60% of the company's growth (Barton et al., 2018).

Brands with a distinct brand purpose stand out from their competition, by integrating their goal with doing good, they strengthen links with their stakeholders and, as a result, amplify the value of the firm in their stakeholders' lives (O'Brien et al., 2019). Brand purpose can result in increased brand equity and buying intent (Bulgarella, 2018).

2.1.3 Brand Differentiation

The brand identity should emphasize aspects of differentiation that provide the business with a durable competitive advantage (Ghodeswar, 2008b). Brand differentiation, according to Kolter et al. (1996), is “the act of designing a set of meaningful differences to distinguish the company’s offer from competitors’ offers” (p. 365). As said by Nunes et al. (2021) being original is one of the most crucial elements of brand authenticity, so brands that distinguishes themselves from competitors are perceived as more authentic. In certain ways, the brand serves as a trustworthy guarantee for that product or service, allowing the customer to clearly identify and describe items that provide extra value (Murphy, 1998).

A strong brand identity that is widely understood and experienced by clients aids in the development of trust, which leads in the brand being distinguished from the competitors (Ghodeswar, 2008). Undifferentiated new entrants are expected to fail, since no customers should be compelled to purchase them (Davidson, 1976).

2.2 Social Commitment

The role of socially responsible and environmentally conscious brand behaviour has been increasingly emphasised by marketing scholars in its potential to exchange emotional connections with its customers and to achieve competitive advantage (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). A brand’s virtuousness, which means its integrity, moral excellence and goodness, can also serve as a potential cue for its authenticity (Berthon et al., 2023; Fritz, 2017). The research specifically emphasises the detrimental impact on brand authenticity that the subordination of values and norms to economic interests has (Beverland, 2006; Kates, 2004; Leigh et al., 2006).

A brand’s commitment to social engagement ascribes high moral values, thus, it is associated with authentic characteristics, like uniqueness and genuineness (Fritz, 2017).

2.3 Brand Activism

In a social environment of rising public scepticism for institutions and where we can see a boom of many forms of social movements, one of the most significant issues in contemporary academic research is corporate political action (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019). With the increasing importance of subjects such as corporate ethics, sustainability and the organisations fine-tuned business management tools, we are witnessing a corporate political shift, whose goal is "not to increase direct sales of products or services, but to take a stance on political issues” (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019).

The primary source of change in companies can be focused in the consumers, because they have the ability to disseminate favourable or bad word-of-mouth (Hsu, 2017). In research by Kotler et al (2010) businesses have progressed from Marketing 1.0, when they believe people picked brands based on utility, to Marketing 2.0, which emphasised on emotional factors, and now to Marketing 3.0, which underlines on firm's social responsibilities.

Brand activism can be defined as the act of publicly taking a stand on divisive social or political issues by a brand or an individual associated with a brand (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017). This is an emerging field that has evolved from the concepts of Cause Related Marketing (CrM) and Corporate Social Responsibility (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017).

CrM can be defined as "the firm's contribution to a designated cause being linked to customer's engaging in revenue-producing transactions with the firm (exchange of goods and services for money)" (Varadarajan & Menon, 1998, p. 60). Kotler & Lee (2005) disclosed CSR as a multidimensional domain: "Corporate Social Responsibility is a commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources" (p. 3). While CrM and CSR are classified as marketing-driven or corporate-driven ideas, Kotler and Sarkar (2017) define brand activism as a value-driven agenda for businesses concerned about the prospects for our society and the welfare of the hearth.

Thus, activist messaging clearly positions companies in society (Champlin et al., 2019). Brand activism offers companies a chance to demonstrate their cultural relevance (Schleier, 2021).

2.3.1 New generations as ethically minded consumers

Over the past few decades there has been a significant rise in press attention to environmental and social concerns (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). Due to the prevalence of these challenges, ethically conscious consumers are now worried about the environmental repercussions and social ethics in dominant society (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018).

Consumption has always been a form of self-expression, but unlike previous generations who bought to belong, gen z and millennials not only desire more personalised products, but they are also willing to pay more for brands that address the causes they identify with (Francis & Hoefel, 2022). In research from Francis and Hoefel (2022) the root of all generation z's behaviour is the search for truth, uniqueness, and ethical and unlimited consumption. In a study conducted by Accenture in 2019, 73% of millennials and 70% of generation z customers are prepared to pay more for businesses that share their values and interact with brands that make

a difference (Schmidt et al., 2021). Their upbringing and education were built in a world with a huge amount of technology and, therefore, they are hyper aware of what is going on in the world (Cheung et al., 2021; Prakash Yadav & Rai, 2017). They have been exposed to a boom of social issues, such as LGBTQI+, Black Lives Matter, terrorism, among others (Bitterman & Hess, 2020). This environment has made this generations socially aware and with a keen sense of justice, which makes them *avant-garde* in changing society (Johnston, 2018; Pacific standard, 2019). It is therefore not surprising that they expect organisations to generate benefits for society and look for brands that have positive effects on the environment (Schroth, 2019).

Brands that adopt sociopolitical positions affect customer perceptions by establishing strong bonds between companies and consumers who share the firm's viewpoint (Koch, 2020; Stoeckl, 2014). A purposeful organisation inspires, stimulates and empowers its employees, clients, other stakeholders and gains their trust (Hsu, 2017). When brands conduct their activities with purpose, they foster consumer loyalty and relevancy (Mishra, 2020). According to the findings, customers are four to six times more inclined to buy, support, trust and promote a brand that serves an important purpose (Aziz, 2020).

2.4 Brand Clarity

Erdem and Swait (1998) define brand clarity as the conveyed comprehensibility of a brand's communication style. Company's communications should be consistent, straightforward, and establish the idea that the company follows its promises, which fulfils the idea of brand reliability and credibility, dimensions of brand authenticity (Fritz, 2017). Brands with a clear look that reflects them as a transparent and unambiguous entity will be seen as authentic (Brunh et al., 2012). "An authentic brand is clear about what it stands for" write Schallehn et al. (2014, p. 193). To these authors it is a brand that establishes itself from inside, rather than one that panders to the newest fad (2014, p. 193). If brands communicate a consistent image, this increases the perceived reliability, another authenticity dimension (Park et al., 1986). Message credibility should enhance customer attitudes, boost brand trust, and build emotional attachment to the brand (Grayson & Martinec 2004; Morhart et al. 2015). Furthermore, trustworthiness may aid in overcoming marketing-savvy consumers' growing skepticism about commercial advertisements (Calfee & Ringold, 1994). Consumers, on the other hand, may have gotten accustomed to exaggerated messaging (Calfee & Ringold 1994), so they can either expect some type of overstatement or fail to recognise the exaggeration.

2.5 Brand Authenticity

Beverland (2009) shows us that when marketers researched authenticity, historically, they meant the genuine as opposed to counterfeits. Marketers effectively ascribed legitimacy to the goods, often through branding, trademark protection, legal force, and, more recently, DNA identifiers. However, in today's market, the customer judges what is genuine. As a result, authenticity is perceptual, that is, what is real or genuine in the consumer's feelings.

The conceptualisations of brand authenticity in earlier literature reflect a diversity of proposed scale items and various features, with writers highlighting and proclaiming some aspects of the construct without giving the whole picture.

For Nunes et al. (2021) to achieve authenticity requires having strong brand integrity. This measures how much the brand is seen to be driven by factors other than its own financial self-interest, while still operating independently and consistently across time. Another important aspect discussed in authenticity literature and mentioned by this author is to consider a brand's legitimacy, or how closely it complies with the norms, regulations, guidelines, or customs prevalent in the industry.

If we look to the early studies of authenticity, we find Holt's (2002, p. 83) work on branding. This paper is focused on congruence and honesty aspects, saying that in order to be authentic, brands must "be disinterested; they must be perceived as invented and disseminated by parties without an instrumental economic agenda, by people who are intrinsically motivated by their inherent value". This approach to authenticity focuses on the point of view that brands will be more valuable if they are portrayed as cultural resources, rather than cultural blueprints and practical components to create the self however one wishes.

This perspective goes hand in hand with the vision of Morhart et al. (2015, p. 203), that describes brand authenticity as a multidimensional construct with four different dimensions, including the degree to which a brand is "true to its consumers" and the degree to which "consumers consider a brand to be faithful towards itself" as another dimension (Schallehn, et al., 2014).

Nunes et al. (2021) state that one of the most crucial elements of brand authenticity is originality, because it distinguishes the service or product from the similarity of the competition without including extraneous features. But other authors believe that originality is also a true/false paradigm. For instance, Beverland & Farrelly (2010, p. 839) summarise the term "despite the multiplicity of terms and interpretations applied to authenticity, ultimately authenticity encapsulates what is genuine, real, and/or true". Newman & Dhar (2014, p. 372)

consider “the act and not the outcome, stating that “authenticity describes a verification process—the evaluation of some truth or fact” and, at last, Moulard, Raggio and Folse (2021, p. 99) define authenticity as “the degree to which an entity in one’s environment is perceived to be true or to match up with something else”.

For Nunes et al., (2021), accuracy can be defined as the degree to which the brand is viewed as transparent in the way it portrays itself and is trustworthy in terms of what it communicates. Starting from this point of view it seems that when a brand is seen as having the necessary qualifications, demonstrating workmanship and competence, is commonly labelled as accurate. We can observe this perspective in other authors when they point out the commitment of quality of the products used (Napoli et al., 2014), the uniqueness in craft (Beverland, 2005) and the commitment to tradition and place (Newman & Dar, 2014). The commitment to tradition and strong brand heritage can also be considered an important key aspect in authenticity, as Bruhn et al (2012, p. 7) defined: “brands which symbolically embody the image of consumer’s national identity benefit from epithets such as rich in culture and tradition, and are thereby attributed with authenticity”, or as Morhart et al (2015, p. 202) affirm in one of their dimensions defined as continuity: “the ability to transcend trends”.

Since there are several definitions of authenticity in the literature, this study will focus on authenticity as a four-dimensional concept (Morhart et al., 2015), that comprises: continuity (which refers to the brand’s ability to transcend trends), credibility (which refers to the honesty and sincerity of a brand), integrity (which refers to the moral purity and responsibility of the brand) and symbolism (which refers to the brand’s capacity to reflect important values). This perspective goes in parallel with being genuine and the “real” thing (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2020), having a unique identity (Manthiou et al., 2018), having self-congruency (Moulard et al., 2021) and, at last, what Campagna et al (2022, p. 10) affirm: “brand authenticity can be transmitted by a genuine brand with a unique style that cares about being open and honest with consumers and will survive times and trends”.

2.5.1 Relevancy of authenticity nowadays

The necessity of authenticity in modern life has risen (Lehman et al., 2019). Throughout the years the concept of authenticity has evolved as a synonym for quality to a more powerful statement where the brand can express its intrinsic values. Postmodern consumers desire memorable and authentic experiences, as “quality no longer differentiates; authenticity does” (Gilmore and Pine, 2007, p. 23). It is evident that now the demand for the "real thing" also

permeates many of our social institutions, from iconic mainstream marketing strategies, such as Coca-Cola's It's Real Thing slogan, Porsche's Roots in Racing, Not Posing advertisement, and Wrangler's Born Authentic tagline (Beverland, 2009). They value authenticity as a human ideal not just in their everyday lives, but also in the businesses and goods they buy (Bruhn et al., 2012). This is significant because businesses that exhibit brand authenticity have strong reasons to be perceived as truthful, which enhances customer perceptions of economic value (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019).

Furthermore, findings from the literature demonstrate how important authenticity is for establishing brand value and relevant outcomes such as: brand trust, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and cultural iconicity (Södergren, 2019). Portal et al., (2019, p. 718) explains that because they are genuine to themselves and the clients they serve, brands that are viewed as authentic, may have a significant influence on their brand trust. Furthermore, authenticity has been shown to decrease this customer mistrust (Bruhn et al., 2012) and to be the optimal strategy for firms looking to regain consumer confidence (Eggers et al., 2013). Consumers are more likely to trust genuine companies because they are dedicated to delivering on their promises (Bruhn et al., 2012; Eggers et al., 2013; Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014).

To summarise, research on the consequences of brand authenticity shows that consumers' authenticity attributions benefit both psychological consumer outcomes and consumer behaviour (Fritz, 2017). Consumers establish more attached bonds with authentic brands (Beverland & Farelly, 2010).

2.6 Brand Love

According to Fournier (1998), people create several ties with the brands they use. Typically, these brands are of high quality, one-of-a-kind, inventive, credible, symbolic, hedonic, and identity expressive (Bairrada et al., 2018; Bıçakcıoğlu-Peynirci et al., 2016; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), which are characteristics related to brand authenticity.

Consumers commonly experience profound emotional bonds with brands, similar to sentiments of interpersonal love (Batra et al. 2012; Fournier 1998). Brand love is described as the degree of passionate emotional attachment a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Such strong consumer-brand bonds impact consumer behaviour in a variety of ways, and may even go to extremes, as when Harley-Davidson enthusiasts demonstrate their lifetime loyalty to the brand by getting the company's insignia tattooed on their body (Rahman et al., 2021).

Brand love has been associated with several benefits and positive outcomes such as brand loyalty, willingness to pay premium price and positive WOM (Rossiter, 2012). Brand loyalty is a consumer commitment that encompasses a persistent desire to keep a valuable relationship (Moorman et al., 1992) with a certain brand (Assael, 1987). It is an essential behavioural result for brand managers since a loyal client base may serve as strong protection against competition and ensure higher sales and revenues (Chaudhuri & Holbrook 2001; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán 2001). Willingness to pay a premium price implies the extra amount of money customers are prepared to spend for a product linked to a specific brand rather than a product without that brand link, where both brands offer equivalent performance (Netemeyer et al. 2004). Furthermore, loyal consumers can participate in positive WOM (Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), which is defined as “informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, product, an organization or a service” (Anderson 1998; Arndt 1968; Buttle 1998; as adapted by Harrison-Walker, 2001). As an influential communication channel, positive WOM may help brands succeed (Keller, 2007). According to Rossiter (2012), positive WOM occurs nearly twice as frequently among customers who adore a brand as it does among those who just like it.

Furthermore, because sociopolitical problems are extremely emotive, brands may anticipate having higher levels of customer love for the brand if their implementation of activist themes connects effectively with consumers (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

2.7 Brand Advocacy

Advocacy is poorly defined in the marketing literature, which may be due to weak differences between advocacy, PWOM, and willingness to recommend (Sweeney et al., 2020). Marketing researchers frequently use both concepts interchangeably. For example, Keller (2007) defines advocacy as PWOM that promotes recommendations, but Reichheld (2003) defines it as eagerness to recommend. Wilder (2015) proposes brand advocacy has a “combination of customer-motivated behaviours, including proactively recommending the brand and defending the brand against detractors, intended to maintain the customer’s relationship with the brand and promote it to others”. This perspective goes along with the position of Sweeney et al. (2020) which defined brand advocacy as “a distinctive, granular form of PWOM, distinguished by the strength of the message and its influence on an audience” (p.140).

Bendaupi and Berry (1997) claimed that the ultimate test of a company's customer connections is advocacy. Positive word-of-mouth is usually related with brand advocacy, which

is the positive, informal communication amongst consumers about their experiences with certain services, goods, or providers (Westbrook, 1987). However, advocacy practises appear to go beyond POWM (Matzler et al., 2007). Advocates want to provide brand knowledge, not only are willing to, but they desire to (Wilder, 2015).

As brand advocates see value in the connection, they feel obligated to «return the favour» by investing in the relationship or referring the brand to other customers (Palmatier et al., 2006). These relationships are frequently formed when a customer discovers a brand that gives significance to his or her life (Merz et al., 2009), which is in accordance with brand authenticity dimension of symbolism. Authentic brands reflect important values that customers care about and may thus help construct who they are and who they are not (Morhart, 2015).

By creating these bonds with consumers, that are strengthen over time and through prolonged interactions, brands are able to develop feelings of interconnectedness with consumers (Aron et al., 1992), and consequently consumers engage in a wide range of advocacy behaviours such as spreading positive word of mouth, forgiving the company even when something goes wrong (Romani et al., 2013a), defending the brand to others (Jonhson & Rusbult, 1989) and paying premium prices (Thomson et al., 2005). Because the awe that is created by admirable and authentic business behaviour, that is uplifting and encouraging, it can be anticipated that consumers will feel compelled to identify themselves with the brand, to support PWOM and create resistance to unfavorable information (Xie et al., 2019).

Finally, because positive emotions have a tendency to broaden one's perspective, open one's mind, and change one's orientations toward others (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005), positive reactions to the brand may expand to other emotions such as praising it, and consequently investing in it.

3. Conceptual Model and Research Hypothesis

For the empirical section of the research, a conceptual model was developed. This conceptual model is crucial to synthesize the research problem's essence and systematize the variables that affect the impact of brands taking social stances. Conceptual models previously created by other studies on brand authenticity served as inspiration and were adjusted to fit the context of the study, forming a new one.

In the proposed model, Brand Identity, Social Commitment, Brand Activism and Brand Clarity were the independent variables considered to represent the essential elements for engaging in brand activism activities. Additionally, Brand Identity is assumed to be composed by three dimensions Brand awareness, Brand Purpose, and Brand Differentiation. The mediating variable is Brand Authenticity. The dependent variables chosen to assess the impact of brand activism when mediated by brand authenticity were Brand Love and Brand Advocacy.

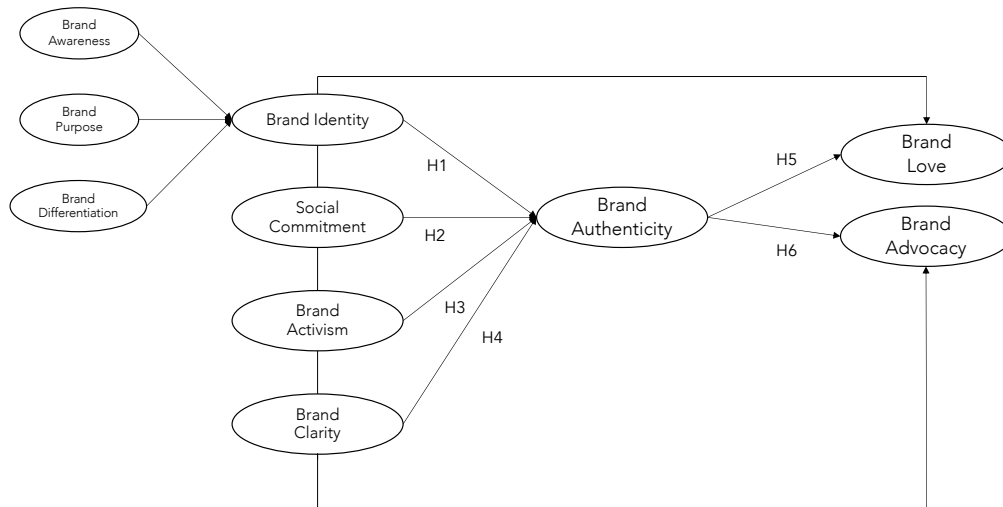


Figure 3.1 Conceptual Model

Source: Own elaboration

When a brand positions itself from the inside out, being clear about what it stands for this can enhance the perceived brand authenticity (Schallehn et al., 2014). In contrast, a low degree of brand authenticity implies a brand positioning that does not fit with the brand's identity and the brand promise is attributed to external forces. Thus, the following hypothesis emerged:

H1: Brand Identity positively influences Brand Authenticity

Adopting a social responsibility approach is linked to real, distinctive and credible qualities (Sichtmann, 2007; Van Dorn & Verhoef, 2011), aspects that are related to some of the elements

of brand authenticity, such as naturalness, sincerity and reliability. As a result, a firm that makes a social commitment is perceived as having higher moral standards, which boosts its perceived authenticity. Thus, the following theory was put forth:

H2: Social Commitment positively influences Brand Authenticity

As brands become more activists about sociopolitical questions, they also become increasingly scrutinised about their motives (Holt, 2002). Consumers may discredit brands activist stances (Alhouti, Johnson, and Holloway 2016; Du et al., 2010b; Vredenburg et al. 2018). Brand activism increases the level of risk and uncertainty (Bhagwat et al, 2020) and emphasises the importance of an authentic alignment between the company and the cause (Lawton et al, 2014). Despite previous studies assuming that authenticity is non-commercial (Napoli et al., 2014), consumers are more and more found to embrace the cohabitation of profit and purpose when the brand is genuine to itself and helps customers in being true to themselves (Morhart et al., 2015). As a result, the following hypothesis emerged:

H3: Brand Activism positively influences Brand Authenticity

Consistency of marketing strategy and communications helps to improve brand clarity and the perception that a company meets its promises. On the other hand, discrepancies in a brand's look provides contradictory signals that damages the brand's image by diminishing qualities such as originality or naturalness, lowering the sense of brand authenticity (Sichtmann, 2007). Furthermore, Bruhn et al. (2012) discovered that consumers want authentic brands to have a clear brand look that reflects the brand as a transparent and unambiguous entity. As a result, the following hypothesis emerged:

H4: Brand Clarity positively influences Brand Authenticity

According to Batra et al. (2012), "by endowing the brand with a sense of authenticity from its origin and history, the vision of its founders, and its corporate culture, so that the brand buyer feels a sense of kinship about it", positive emotional relationships with the brand and brand love can be achieved. Brand authenticity had a major impact on brand love, according to Govarchin (2019). People develop loyalty and affection for a brand when they believe its behaviour and traits to be genuine and believe it delivers on its promises to meet their needs. According to Rodrigues et al. (2019), consumers' need for genuine brand experiences demonstrated the

importance of brand authenticity for attracting more loyal customers. As a result, the following hypothesis emerged:

H5: Brand authenticity positively influences Brand Love

Brand authenticity strengthens a consumer's identification (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). A customer who favourably identifies itself with a brand is more likely to engage with it, so as to demonstrate its identification through additional role behaviours such as: give product feedback, proactive communication, word of mouth, and so on (Ahearne et al., 2005). Consumers desire authenticity in their brand consumption, therefore they respond predominantly to perceived authentic brands (Rose & Wood, 2005). As a result, the following hypothesis emerged:

H6: Brand Authenticity positively influences Brand Advocacy

4. Methodology

4.1 Questionnaire design & data collection

To conduct this study, gather information and analyse the necessary data, an anonymous online questionnaire was developed on the Qualtrics platform.

Concerning the survey structure, the questionnaire was separated in 4 blocks and a total of 51 questions. In the first one, respondents were introduced to the questionnaire and given assurances regarding the privacy of their data. Here the purpose of the research was explained. The second block was composed by a short question to assess the respondent's impressions about authentic brands. The third and fourth blocks were composed by the 7-Point Likert scale questions about the variables under study. The last block comprised demographic data requests: gender, age and education level. The full survey can be seen in Appendix B. Furthermore, the questionnaire was written both in English and Portuguese to reach a broader target audience.

Brand Identity was measured using the 3 items proposed by Sääksjärvi & Samiee (2011), Brand Clarity was measured using the 2 items proposed Erdem and Swait (1998), as adapted by Fritz (2017), Brand Activism using the 6 items created by Valerie & Hariandja (2022), Social Commitment using the 3 items proposed by Valentine and Fleischman (2008), as adapted by Fritz (2017), Brand Authenticity using the 15 items proposed by Morhart (2015), Brand Love using the 13 items proposed by Bagozzi et al. (2017) and Brand Advocacy using the 9 items proposed by Wilder (2015). All of those were assessed based on a Likert Scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree and 7 = Strongly Agree. The measurement of Brand Love, which was done using the scale proposed by Bagozzi et al. (2017) was divided into two groups, where the first 12 items were rated on a Likert Scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree and 7 = Strongly Agree and the last item was rated on a Likert Scale with 1 = Negative and 7 = Positive.

Table 4.1 Literature of Constructs

Source: Own elaboration

Construct	Source
Brand Identity	Sääksjärvi & Samiee (2011)
Brand Clarity	Erdem and Swait (1998) as adapted by Fritz (2017)
Brand Activism	Valerie & Hariandja (2022)

Social Commitment	Valentine & Fleischman (2008) as adapted by Fritz (2017)
Brand Authenticity	Morhart et al. (2015)
Brand Love	Bagozzi et al. (2017)
Brand Advocacy	Wilder (2015)

4.2 Data treatment

Because the initial stage of data processing is to analyse the questionnaire findings, sample data had to be exported from Qualtrics to an Excel file. Then, 208 replies were considered in order to evaluate just what was valid. One response is considered valid when the respondent completes all questions.

The data was then imported into IBM SPSS Statistics 28, which was used to run the appropriate analyses, including descriptive statistics, reliability and validity analysis, and single and multiple regression. However, before commencing the analysis, it was critical to establish the right kind of each variable. Gender and education were labelled as nominal variables, age and the remaining variables that employed a 7-Point Likert Scale were labelled as scale variables.

4.3 Respondent Profile

For this study there were no restrictions regarding the gender, age group and education level of the respondents.

The variable Gender analysis yields a sample with a female majority, with 150 female respondents (72,12%), 57 male participants (27,40%) and 1 non-binary participant (0,48%).

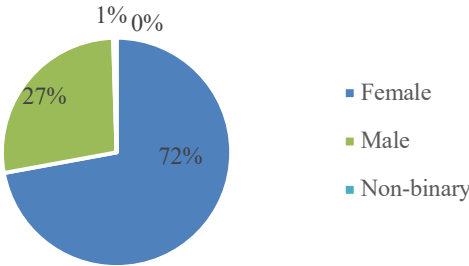


Figure 4.2 Gender Distribution Chart

Source: SPSS data

To get a better overview, six different age groups were created for the survey: 18 to 24 years old; 25 to 34 years old; 35 to 44 years old; 45 to 54 years old; 55 to 64 years old; and more than 65 years old. Analysing this variable leads to a majority of 88 respondents (42,31%)

of the ages of 18 to 24 years old. The age groups 25-34 and 55-64 are the second most relevant ones with, respectively, 74 (35,58%) and 18 (8,65%) respondents. Additionally, there are 13 respondents (6,25%) in the 45 to 54 years old group, 12 respondents (5,77%) in the 35-44 years old group, and 3 respondents (1,44%) are more than 65 years old (Figure 4.2).

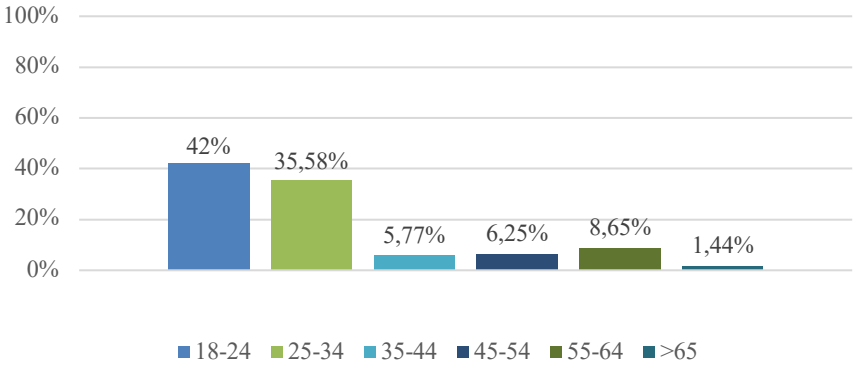


Figure 4.3 Age Groups Distribution Chart

Source: SPSS data

Regarding education level, four different options were created: High school, Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree and PHD. Almost half of the respondents, and thus 102 (49,04%) people, have a Bachelor degree and 75 (36,06%) of the participants count to the group of Master graduates, leading to a very well-educated sample (Figure 4.3). The third best classification High School graduate accounts for 23 (11,06%) and, at last, 8 of the respondents (3,85%) have a PHD. Reasons for the good education among the respondents could be the participation in various thesis portals, where one student is answering other thesis surveys, in order to receive more answers for their surveys, and thus help each other out.

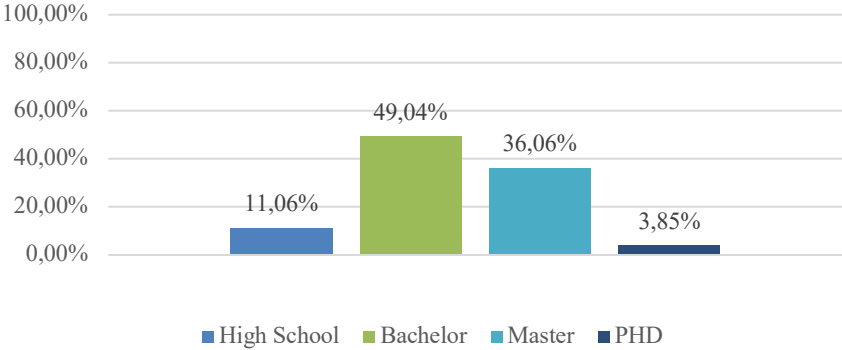


Figure 4.3 Education Level Distribution Chart

Source: SPSS data

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Brands that are aligned with authenticity

It is possible to determine which brands respondents believe are more frequently linked to authenticity by looking at their responses to the survey's first question "Please name two brands you know that fit the profile described above". From the 506 brands mentioned by the respondents the most often stated brand was Dove, which was mentioned 29 times, equivalent to 6% of the total of brands mentioned. This is followed by Patagonia, which was mentioned 23 times, equivalent to 5% of the brands mentioned. Finally, Nike ($x = 4\%$), Apple ($x = 3\%$) and Ikea ($x = 3\%$) were also brands that stand out from the responses.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

The following section focus on the results of the Descriptive Analysis calculated through SPSS Statistics 28.

The Mean, the Standard Deviation and the Maximum and Minimum values were computed for each item as well as the previously specified subscales represented as Constructs. Appendix A has a list of the whole analysis.

Brand Identity (BI)

The analysis of the descriptive statistics begins with the construct Brand Identity (BI), that was measured in 3 different items, which correspond to the three dimensions assumed before: Brand Awareness, Brand Purpose, and Brand Differentiation. The values for the Minimum, the Maximum, the Mean and the Standard Deviation are presented in the Table 5.1. The construct Brand Awareness was obtained from the item BI.1, the construct Brand Purpose was obtained from the item BI.2 and the construct Brand Differentiation was obtained from the item BI.3.

Within the study, the value with the highest mean of 6.2212 was BI.1 "I am familiar with this brand" followed by BI.2 "This brand has a well-defined use/purpose" with 6.1683.

Globally, the mean for Brand Identity is equal to 5,84 with a Standard Deviation of 0,7613. With the mean value being over the average of the 7-point Likert scale, the Brand Identity construct is a positive result that implies that the respondents believe that the brands they have chosen, display a well-defined identity, comprised by a strong purpose, good awareness and strong differentiation from its competitors.

Table 5.1 Descriptive Statistics for Brand Identity

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
BI.1	2	7	6,2212	0,91638
BI.2	2	7	6,1683	0,81386
BI.3	1	7	5,1442	1,38256
Brand Identity			5,8446	0,76130

Social Commitment (SC)

Social Commitment was composed by 3 items. The Minimum, the Maximum, the Mean and the Standard Deviation values are displayed in the Table 5.2.

The construct SC representing Social Commitment was obtained by computing the mean of the items SC.1, SC.2 and SC.3. The item with higher mean value, 5.73, was SC.3 – *Brand is socially engaged*. Social Commitment has mean value of 5,65 and Standard Deviation of 1,085. The mean value is higher than the middle value in the Likert Scale from 1 to 7, indicating that the respondents believe that the brands chosen by them, tend to assume social responsibility and invest in the community.

Table 5.2 Descriptive Statistics for Social Commitment

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
SC.1	1	7	5,7260	1,27287
SC.2	1	7	5,5096	1,25875
SC.3	2	7	5,7308	1,13129
Social Commitment			5,6554	1,08589

Brand Activism (BAC)

Brand activism was composed by 6 items. The Minimum, the Maximum, the Mean and the Standard Deviation values are displayed in the Table 5.3.

The construct BAC representing Brand Activism was obtained by computing the mean of the items BAC.1, BAC.2, BAC.3, BAC.4, BAC.5 and BAC.6. The item with higher mean value, was BAC.2 ($\bar{x} = 5,586$) – *I feel like this brand is giving something back to society*, followed by the item BAC.1 ($\bar{x} = 5,5337$) – *I feel that this brand is socially aware*. Brand Activism has mean value of 5,29 and Standard Deviation of 0,917. The mean value is higher than the middle value in the Likert Scale from 1 to 7, indicating that according to the respondents' answers brands are

trying to make a difference facing today's problems and that they tend to support this kind of stands and, consequently, do not support the ones that do not contribute.

Table 5.3 Descriptive Statistics for Social Commitment

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
BAC.1	1	7	5,5337	1,21139
BAC.2	1	7	5,5865	1,15144
BAC.3	1	7	5,1058	1,42047
BAC.4	2	7	5,4183	1,39116
BAC.5	1	7	5,1971	1,51150
BAC.6	1	7	4,9375	1,53256
Brand Activism			5,2965	0,91799

Brand Clarity (BC)

Brand clarity was composed by 2 items. The Minimum, the Maximum, the Mean and the Standard Deviation values are displayed in the Table 5.4.

The construct BC representing Brand Clarity was obtained by computing the mean of the items BC.1 and BC.2. The item with higher mean value, 6.019, was BC.2 – *It is obvious what this brand is trying to communicate*. Brand Clarity has mean value of 5,89 and Standard Deviation of 0,886. The mean value is higher than the middle value in the Likert Scale from 1 to 7, indicating that the respondents believe that brands they have chosen, have a clear image and good communication of what they stand for.

Table 5.4 Descriptive Statistics for Brand Clarity

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
BC.1	1	7	5,7740	1,09540
BC.2	2	7	6,0192	0,94261
Brand Clarity			5,8966	0,88609

Brand Authenticity (BAUT)

Brand authenticity was composed by 15 items. The Minimum, the Maximum, the Mean and the Standard Deviation values are displayed in the Table 5.5.

The construct BAUT representing Brand authenticity was obtained by computing the mean of the items BAUT.1, BAUT.2, BAUT.3, BAUT.4, BAUT.5, BAUT.6, BAUT.7, BAUT.8,

BAUT.9, BAUT.10, BAUT.11, BAUT.12, BAUT.13, BAUT.14 and BAUT.15. The item with higher mean value, 5.7596, was BAUT.4 – *A brand that survive trends*, and item BAUT.3 – *A brand that survives times* – with mean of 5.7067. Brand Authenticity has mean value of 5,34 and Standard Deviation of 0,846. The mean value is higher than the middle value in the Likert Scale from 1 to 7, indicating that respondents believe that these brands are authentic and honest, thus surviving time and trends.

Table 5.5 Descriptive Statistics for Brand Authenticity

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
BAUT.1	1	7	5,6779	1,15766
BAUT.2	1	7	5,3462	1,42963
BAUT.3	1	7	5,7067	1,22988
BAUT.4	1	7	5,7596	1,11637
BAUT.5	1	7	4,8510	1,34843
BAUT.6	1	7	5,5529	1,00101
BAUT.7	1	7	5,2933	1,21008
BAUT.8	1	7	5,1635	1,27109
BAUT.9	1	7	5,3413	1,37747
BAUT.10	1	7	5,2740	1,35736
BAUT.11	1	7	5,4375	1,13186
BAUT.12	1	7	5,3750	1,21335
BAUT.13	1	7	5,4471	1,18651
BAUT.14	1	7	4,9375	1,43824
BAUT.15	1	7	4,9567	1,42207
Brand Authenticity			5,3413	0,84635

Brand love (BL)

Brand love was composed by 13 variables. The Minimum, the Maximum, the Mean and the Standard Deviation values are displayed in the Table 5.6

The construct BL representing Brand Love was obtained by computing the mean of the items BL.1, BL.2, BL.3, BL.4, BL.5, BL.6, BL.7, BL.8, BL.9, BL._10, BL._11, BL.12 and BL.13. The item with higher mean value, 5.605, was BL.13 – *Please express your overall feelings and evaluations towards these brands* - followed by the item BL.7 - “*To what extent have you interacted with these brands in the past*” with mean of 5.533. Brand Love has mean value of 4,524 and Standard Deviation of 0,9507. The mean value is higher than the middle value in the Likert Scale from 1 to 7, indicating that the respondents believe they will be buying

these brands for a long time, as they have created emotional attachment to them.

Table 5.6 Descriptive Statistics for Brand Love

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
BL.1	1	7	3,8269	1,56002
BL.2	1	7	4,3702	1,57654
BL.3	1	7	4,3413	1,61629
BL.4	1	7	3,9231	1,71491
BL.5	1	7	3,1111	1,70727
BL.6	1	7	5,3990	1,23531
BL.7	1	7	5,5337	1,40352
BL.8	1	7	4,9519	1,31421
BL.9	1	7	4,2356	1,70458
BL.10	1	7	4,9135	1,45536
BL.11	1	7	5,3702	1,34505
BL.12	1	7	3,2308	1,84800
BL.13	1	7	5,6058	1,02546
Brand Love			4,5247	0,95073

Brand Advocacy (BADV)

Brand advocacy was composed by 9 variables. The Minimum, the Maximum, the Mean and the Standard Deviation values are displayed in the Table 5.7.

The construct BDADV representing Brand Advocacy was obtained by computing the mean of the items BADV.1, BADV.2, BADV.3, BADV.4, BADV.5, BADV.6, BADV.7, BADV.8 and BADV.9. The item with higher mean value, 5.168, was BADV.4 – *If a friend or acquaintance questioned the quality of this brand, I would try to set them straight*. Brand Advocacy has mean value of 4,641 and Standard Deviation of 1,069. The mean value is higher than the middle value in the Likert Scale from 1 to 7, indicating that the respondents would recommend, defend and influence others to buy these brands.

Table 5.7 Descriptive Statistics for Brand Advocacy

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
BADV.1	1	7	4,9519	1,29197
BADV.2	1	7	4,9423	1,22239
BADV.3	1	7	4,8173	1,39886
BADV.4	1	7	5,1683	1,22988

BADV.5	1	7	4,9519	1,31421
BADV.6	1	7	4,6779	1,58407
BADV.7	1	7	4,6731	1,65323
BADV.8	1	7	4,2788	1,59077
BADV.9	1	7	3,3077	1,84195
Brand Advocacy			4,6410	1,06906

5.3 Exploratory Analysis

SPSS 28 was used in this section to carry out exploratory data analysis, which includes reliability and validity analysis, as well as single and multiple regression analysis. Following that, the output was examined to establish statistical ground for conclusions.

5.3.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis

In this section, a reliability and validity analysis will be performed to ensure that the data collected is consistent, trustworthy, and capable of accurately represent the underlying constructs under research. In other words, reliability analysis helps to determine whether a measurement instrument yields consistent results over time and across different situations, in addition, it refers to the consistency of measurement and helps to measure how accurate a measurement instrument actually measures what it is intended to measure.

The Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each construct. This measurement assesses how closely the items within a measurement instrument correlate with each other. To obtain a reliable scale, a high level of inter-item correlation must be assumed ($>0,6$). The higher the value of the alpha, the higher is the reliability. Additionally, alpha values below 0,5 are not acceptable.

In table 5.8, we can see the outcomes of this analysis. The majority of constructs demonstrate a Cronbach's Alpha higher than 0,7 indicating good to excellent values with high reliabilities and internal consistencies. The construct with the highest value is Brand Authenticity (0,912) followed by Brand Advocacy (0,888). Brand Clarity is the construct with the lowest value (0,675), however is near the threshold of 0,6 so it is also acceptable.

Table 5.8 Reliability analysis for all constructs

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

Main Construct	Sub-construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand identity	Brand awareness	*
	Brand purpose	
	Brand differentiation	
Social commitment		0,866
Brand activism		0,757
Brand clarity		0,675
Brand authenticity		0,912
Brand advocacy		0,888
Brand love		0,873

*The sub-constructs of Brand Identity couldn't be tested because all of them only have one question each, and the Cronbach's alpha test has at least 2 items.

5.3.2 Linear regression analysis

It is important to comprehend the connections between the various constructs and effectively assessing the conceptual model previously established. For this matter, single and multiple regression analyses were performed. These tests are made to find the percentage of the dependent variable's variance that can be accounted for by changes in the independent variable or variables. Single regression was used whenever there was only one independent variable, whereas multiple regression was used to examine the impact of four independent variables.

5.3.2.1 Assumption of the Multiple Regression

To proceed with the multiple regression analysis, it is important to assess assumptions of a linear regression analysis. Three separate analyses using the identical presumptions were used to study the research conceptual model under examination. This is possible, because the mediators and independent variables of the conceptual model are present in each configuration and are valid in each model. The confidence level is 95.000 for all intervals. Basic presumptions need to be verified before the multiple regression analysis may continue. The next paragraphs will go into further depth about these. The model is only applicable for this sample if all the conditions are met; otherwise, it may be used for statistical inference.

Assumption 1: Linearity of the model

The relationship between the independent and dependent variables should be linear. This means that changes in the independent variables are associated with constant changes in the dependent variable. Since, by construction, the theoretical model assumes linearity between independent and dependent variables, the linearity assumption holds.

Assumption 2: Random sample

So, as to get more feasible results, it is critical that the sample is randomly selected. This assumption is valid because data was collected at random.

Assumption 3: Linear independence (no multicollinearity) for the independents

If there are multiple independent variables in the model, they should not be highly correlated with each other. High multicollinearity can make it difficult to assess the individual effects of the variables. As a way of validating this independence, an inquiry using the tolerance and VIF values through the collinearity statistics can be executed. If one of the tolerance values is below 0.1 or one of VIF values is above 10 there is a clear sign of multicollinearity. As shown in the table 5.9, all tolerance values are above 0.1 and all VIF values are below 10, meaning no multicollinearity. Therefore, the assumption holds, meaning there is no correlation among the explanatory variables.

Table 5.9 Collinearity Statistics

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

	Tolerance	VIF
BI	0,576	1,737
BC	0,560	1,787
BAC	0,649	1,541
SC	0,603	1,659

Assumption 4: Exogeneity of the independent variables and Residual Terms

There should be no correlation between independent variables and the residuals. This assumption ensures that the model is correctly specifying the cause-and-effect relationship. Every construct displays a person correlation value of 0.000 with the residuals, as shown in the table 5.10, indicating that they are not correlated, therefore the assumption holds.

Table 5.10 Correlation between Independent Variables and Residual Terms

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

	BC	SC	BI	BAC
BC	1	-	-	-
SC	-	1	-	-
BI	-	-	1	-
BAC	-	-	-	1
Residual	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000

Assumption 5: Constancy of the residual variance across predicted values (homoscedasticity)

The residuals should have a constant variance across all levels of the independent variables. This assumption ensures that the spread of residuals is consistent across the range of predicted values. The scatterplot's points must be distributed uniformly over the horizontal axis as mean as to equality of variance to exist. The residuals from the scatterplots observed in Appendix D do not appear to be evenly scattered, therefore this assumption fails.

Assumption 6: Normally distributed error component

For making valid statistical inferences and for accurate hypothesis testing, it is important that the residuals are approximately normally distributed. Histograms should be used to visually verify the distribution's normality. Appendix E shows that the residuals in this study do not correspond to the normal distribution curve, meaning they are not normally distributed.

Furthermore, the Normal P-Plots, which display the expected versus the observed cumulative probability, were employed for each residual variable. Data with a perfectly normal distribution falls exactly on the sketched diagonal. As a result, the data gets less regularly distributed as one advances away from the diagonal. Apart from Brand Authenticity, which seems to be nearly perfectly normally distributed, the majority of the residuals' data do not fall exactly on the sketched diagonal. Therefore, looking at all the figures in Appendix F, it is reasonable to conclude that this assumption fails.

Assumption 7: Correlation of the Residual Terms

To properly continue the multiple regression, the residuals should not be correlated with each other in a time series analysis. To test the residuals' independence the Durbin-Watson measurement can be used. Varying from 0 to 4, values close to 2 indicate that that there is no significant correlation between the residuals. Values under 2 indicate that the residuals are

positively correlated, while a value greater than 2 indicates that the residuals are negatively correlated.

As shown in the table 5.11, the dependent variables Brand Authenticity, Brand Love and Brand Advocacy assume values of 2,155, 1,883, and 1,886 respectively. There are no correlated residuals since all values are close to and can be rounded to 2. Therefore, this assumption holds.

Table 5.11 Durbin-Watson Statistic for the Dependent Variables

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

	Durbin-Watson
BAUT	2,155
BL	1,883
BADV	1,886

Evaluation of the Model

The appropriateness of the model, including how well it can forecast the observed values, can be determined once all the multiple regression prerequisites have been satisfied. The multiple correlation coefficients in the table below result in 0,726, 0,523 and 0,526, suggesting there is a significant correlation between predicted and actual values. The overall model's adjusted R^2 was 0,518; 0,270; and 0,273, indicating a high degree of goodness-of-fit according to Cohen (1988).

Table 5.12 Model Summary of the Dependent Variables

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

	R	R²	Adjusted R²
BAUT	0,726	0,527	0,518
BL	0,523	0,273	0,270
BADV	0,526	0,276	0,273

To determine whether the predictors significantly predict the criterion, the ANOVA test was applied (Table 5.13). Statistically, Brand Authenticity, Brand Love and Brand Advocacy can be predicted, $F(4,203) = 19,530$, $p < 0,001$, $F(1,206) = 77,478$, $p < 0,001$, $F(1,206) = 78,650$, $p < 0,001$. Because all of the p-values for all the constructs are less than 0.05, we may conclude that the predictors of the created model can predict the criterion, that is, the dependent variables.

Table 5.13 Significance of the Model via ANOVA

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

		<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
BAUT	Regression	4	19,530	<0,001 ^{<i>b</i>}
	Residual	203	-	-
	Total	207	-	-
BL	Regression	1	77,478	<0,001 ^{<i>b</i>}
	Residual	206	-	-
	Total	207	-	-
BADV	Regression	1	78,650	<0,001 ^{<i>b</i>}
	Residual	206	-	-
	Total	207	-	-

Because two out of seven assumptions are not fulfilled, only a characterisation of the sample can be provided by the multiple regression analysis. The population cannot be generalised, and no inferences can be drawn using the model.

5.3.2.2 Multiple Regression – BAUT as the dependent variable; BI, SC, BAC and BC as independent variables

Bearing in mind the conceptual model, it is now possible to determine the role played by each variable. The first regression analysis was used to evaluate the hypothesis that the independent variables Brand Identity, Brand Clarity, Brand Activism and Social Commitment positively affect the dependent variable Brand Authenticity (H1, H2, H3, H4). From the regression coefficients it is now possible to calculate the adjusted regression equation (Table 5.14):

$$BAUT = 0,886 + 0,098 x BI + 0,387 x SC + 0,305 x BAC + 0,110 x BC + \varepsilon$$

In this model we have three predictors BI, SC, BAC and BC with the criterion E. The independent variable with the largest standardized coefficient is Social Commitment thus this variable is the most important predictor of the dependent variable Brand Authenticity. The variable Social Commitment has a Standardized Coefficient of 0,387, meaning that for every increase in SC, Brand Authenticity rises by 0,387. Followed by Social Commitment is the variable Brand Activism with a Standardized Coefficient of 0,305, and next Brand Clarity with a Standardized Coefficient of 0,110. This means that for every increase in Brand Activism and Brand Clarity, Brand Authenticity rises by 0,305 and 0,110 respectively. The variable Brand Identity is the one with the lowest regression coefficient (0,098) thus every increase on BI leads to a 0,098 rise in Brand Authenticity.

In terms of statistical significance, if the p-value is less than 0,05, the results are statistically significant. This signifies that the coefficient is considerably different from zero, showing that the independent variable has a considerable influence on the dependent variable. With

significance levels of 0,001, Social Commitment and Brand Activism show a strong and very significant result, implying that the p-values are substantially less than the normal limit of 0,05 for statistical significance (sig = <0,001 <0,05). However, the variables Brand Identity and Brand Clarity have p-values substantially higher than 0,05 (0,124 and 0,078 respectively), indicating that the finding is not statistically significant.

In brief, the effects of SC and BAC are always positive, while effects of BI and BC couldn't be considered statistically significant. Hence, while hypothesis number 2 and 4 are supported by the results, hypothesis number 1 and 3 are not:

- *H1: Brand Identity positively influences Brand Authenticity*
- *H2: Social Commitment positively influences Brand Authenticity*
- *H3: Brand Activism positively influences Brand Authenticity*
- *H4: Brand Clarity positively influences Brand Authenticity*

Table 5.14 Coefficients of the Multiple Regression, BAUT as Dependent Variable

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient			95% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Dependent Variable BAUT	(Constant)	0,886	0,357		2,481	0,14	,182	1,591
	BI	0,109	0,071	0,098	1,544	0,124	-,030	,249
	SC	0,302	0,050	0,387	5,996	<0,001	,202	,401
	BAC	0,281	0,055	0,305	5,092	<0,001	,172	,390
	BC	0,105	0,059	0,110	1,772	0,078	-,012	,222

5.3.2.3 Single Regression – BL as the dependent variable; BAUT as the independent variable

The second regression analysis was used to evaluate the hypothesis H5 that states that the independent variable Brand Authenticity positively affects the dependent variable Brand Love. From the regression coefficients it is now possible to calculate the adjusted regression equation (Table 5.15):

$$BL = 1,388 + 0,523 \times BAUT + \varepsilon$$

In this model there is the predictor BL and the criterion BAUT. The variable Brand Authenticity (BAUT) has a standardized regression coefficient of 0,523 meaning that for every increase in BAUT, BL increases by 0,523. Furthermore, Brand Authenticity exhibits a p-value of <0,001, which indicates that it is much smaller than the standard limit of 0,05 for statistical

significance (sig = <0,001 <0,05). It can be concluded that Brand Authenticity has a significant positive effect on Brand Love, therefore this result supports hypothesis number 5:

- H5: Brand Authenticity positively influences Brand Love.

Table 5.15 Coefficients of the Multiple Regression, BL as Dependent Variable

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS.

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient			95% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Dependent Variable BL	(Constant)	1,388	0,361		3,847	<0,001	,677	2,099
	BAUT	0,587	0,067	,523	8,802	<0,001	,456	,719

5.3.2.4 Single Regression – BADV as the dependent variable; BAUT as the independent variable

The last regression analysis was used to evaluate the hypothesis H6, stating that the independent variable Brand Authenticity positively affects the dependent variable Brand Love. From the regression coefficients it is now possible to calculate the adjusted regression equation (Table 5.16):

$$BADV = 1,095 + 0,526 \times BAUT + \varepsilon$$

In this model there is the predictor BADV and the criterion BAUT. The variable Brand Authenticity (BAUT) has a standardized coefficient of 0,526, which means that for every increasement in Brand Authenticity, Brand Advocacy (BADV) increases by 0,526. Furthermore, Brand Authenticity exhibits a p-value of <0,001 which indicates that it is much smaller than the standard limit of 0,05 for statistical significance (sig = <0,001 <0,05). It can be concluded that Brand Authenticity has a significant positive effect on Brand Advocacy, therefore this result supports hypothesis number 6:

- H6: Brand Authenticity positively influences Brand Advocacy

Table 5.16 Coefficients of the Multiple Regression, BADV as Dependent Variable

Source: own elaboration; data obtained using SPSS.

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient			95% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Dependent Variable BADV	(Constant)	1,095	0,405		2,703	0,007	0,296	1,893
	BAUT	,664	0,075	0,526	8,868	<0,001	0,516	0,812

An overview of the research hypotheses and the degree to which the present study contributed to validate them can be found in the table below.

Table 5.17 List of the hypothesis and validation

Source: own elaboration

Hypothesis	Validated
H1: Brand Identity positively influences Brand Authenticity	No
H2: Social Commitment positively influences Brand Authenticity	Yes
H3: Brand Activism positively influences Brand Authenticity	Yes
H4: Brand Clarity positively influences Brand Authenticity	No
H5: Brand Authenticity positively influences Brand Love	Yes
H6: Brand Authenticity positively influences Brand Advocacy	Yes

6. Conclusion

Brand authenticity is the key factor when brands want to become more activists and socially responsible, thus generating credibility perceptions and emotional connections. Given the growing importance of this topic in the field of marketing, most studies address the importance of authenticity in general for brands, exposing a lack of more specific research, such as that which explores the relationship between brand activism and the ability to generate brand love and brand advocacy. This thesis seeks to contribute to filling this gap by investigating how the role of authenticity mediates this relationship and impacts the variables of brand love and brand advocacy.

The research objectives of the dissertation will be reviewed in this chapter by summarising the results from the literature review and the empirical section. This will lead to conclusions about the hypotheses and research questions under consideration, as well as the theoretical and managerial implications brought about by the current study. The limits encountered while developing the thesis and potential strategies for expanding the research fields will also be highlighted here.

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

Regarding the theoretical contributions provided by this research, it is essential to consider the research question initially presented.

Our first research question is “To what extent does brand activism, when mediated by brand authenticity, impacts the development of brand love?”. The findings provide evidence that both social commitment and brand activism have a positive effect in predicting brand authenticity and consequently brand love. These results are in line with prior literature (Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014; Spiggle et al., 2012), which demonstrate both potential and hazards of adopting a sociopolitical stance and highlight the value of authenticity in these situations. To overcome mistrust toward socially responsible activities as more and more businesses participate in this activist area, brand activism must be seen as authentic and truthful (Ellen et al., 2006; Skarmeas and Leonidou, 2013). These kinds of socially conscious practices are known as value-creating CSR, which resembles measures of social commitment and brand activism, generate higher levels of perceived brand authenticity (Chen et al., 2018).

On the other hand, a positive relationship has not been validated for brand clarity and brand identity so, they are not found to be predictors of brand authenticity (and consequently of brand love).

Given that brand authenticity is a subjective concept, determining whether a brand is authentic requires the consumer to exert mental effort (Fritz, 2017). Although a high degree of brand authenticity denotes a brand positioning that matches customers' identities (Manthiou et al., 2018), there is a wide range of interpretations of what authenticity means to different people (Kovács, 2014). It is debatable whether all brand authenticity antecedents apply to all customers (Ilicic & Webster, 2014). Brand identity includes the concept of brand differentiation and, for instance, it can be challenging to have a high level of perceived uniqueness for fast moving consumer goods that have all the same features (Schallehn et al., 2014).

According to Erdem & Swait (1998), brand clarity illustrates how easily a brand's communication style may be understood. According to Ahmad et al. (2022, p. 620) "it is not clear the kind of involvement and message brands need to generate a positive consumer evaluation". In this paper, the author argues that message expressing hope is more effective when the message is about either financial or non-financial commitment to a sociopolitical issue whereas message expressing frustration is more effective in generating brand authenticity and brand love when the message is about rhetorical commitment. Therefore, brand clarity will once again be correlated with each consumer's comprehension of the brand's communication clarity.

Regarding brand authenticity, it was proven to have a positive effect in predicting brand love. Therefore, it can be concluded that brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and brand love (Ahmad et al., 2022). Customers can develop strong emotional bonds with brands that take a stand on significant sociopolitical topics, but only if it is perceived as more than just communication (Schmidt et al., 2021).

Our second research question is "To what extent does brand activism, when mediated by brand authenticity, impacts the development of brand advocacy?"

Based on this study's hypothesis, brand identity, brand clarity, social commitment and brand activism are predictors of brand authenticity and, in turn, brand authenticity predicts brand advocacy. As mentioned above both social commitment and brand activism have a positive effect in predicting brand authenticity, while brand identity and brand clarity cannot be considered to influence it.

Furthermore, brand authenticity was established as having a positive effect in predicting brand advocacy. These findings are consistent with previous research, which found that brand

authenticity generates perceived quality, which in turn positively affects consumer satisfaction, brand attitude (purchase intention and willingness to pay a premium price), and brand awareness because consumers are more likely to recommend the brand, for example, through word of mouth (Morhart et al., 2015). Hence, it can be referred that authentic brands that engage in activism actions subsequently improve their results of brand advocacy. Exposure to socially responsible behaviours or activism stances produces favourable moral sentiments and attitudes such as gratitude and admiration in consumers (Cuddy et al, 2007). As a result, the reaction to these actions includes a desire to reward the good-behaving company and respond to feelings of elevation by desiring to show their affiliation with the company, such as spreading positive word of mouth and engaging in a wide range of advocacy behaviours towards the brand (e.g., forgiving the company regardless of whether something goes wrong) (Romani et al., 2013a).

6.2 Managerial Implications

Considering the growing society perception that brands may serve as catalysts for social change, this study has come up with some useful and relevant insights for marketing managers to understand the complex challenges that may come with this positioning and the importance of aligning it with authenticity, to achieve strong connections with their customers, hence good advocators of their brands.

The speed with which our society evolves these days and the homogenisation of the market with growing the number of brands with very similar characteristics, can translate into a concern for brands to keep up and a challenge for them to stand out to consumers. Thus, there are many brands that engage in activism, solely for profit or to take advantage of a trending issue. Nowadays, consumers can easily detect insincerity, so brands should avoid making empty claims or exaggerating their contributions to a cause. Based on this study, the first insight to be drawn is that brand activism should come from a genuine desire to make a positive difference. Brands that demonstrate their commitment to social causes manage to make an impression as “do-gooders”, that is linked to some authenticity characteristics such as: being truthful, real, and genuine.

Second, brand managers should understand that being authentic is quite a controversial concept, which follows the present research, that demonstrated that brand identity and brand clarity could not be considered to influence brand authenticity. Since consumption is also a form of self-expression, determining whether a brand is clear in its communication and its

identity is differentiated from the others, is inherently correlated with each one's perceptions. What is authentic for one is not necessarily authentic for another. However, when and if a brand action is considered as authentic, this can positively affect the perceived quality, brand trust, brand loyalty, cultural iconicity and encourages emotional connections with consumers.

Finally, given the increased importance of customer-brand relationships in today's market environment, it is important for brand managers to understand that it is vital to be authentic. Bearing in mind the characteristics of genuineness and truth of these brands, and since they strongly defend their principles and honour their word, they build enduring bonds and boost trust with their clients. Because they create this trust and satisfaction, developed by their authenticity, they manage to create long term relationships that make consumers love the brand and even act as their advocates. By achieving this status, they can notice such benefits as willingness to pay a premium price, positive word of mouth and willingness to forgive.

To sum up, brands that want to stay relevant should find a way to contribute to society that is aligned with their values and perceptions. If they do it in a successful way, they can attract loyal customers who love their brand and are their advocates.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

Findings of this study must be considered while taking account some limitations. Despite efforts to avoid bias whenever possible, there can be limitations whether to research design, methodology, time and cost constraints.

Bearing in mind these boundaries and shortcomings, in the case of this research, the first limitations to arise was the struggle to gather questionnaire responses. This occurred to the restrictions of survey completion requirements, which conditioned respondents to complete all answers as means to be considered a valid participation. The difficulty of gathering a minimum required number of 200 responses caused a delay in the research as it took roughly two months to achieve this number.

Since most respondents were female and Portuguese, there was a lack of a diverse range of nationalities and genders in the sample, which could have affected the variables and the findings. Another limitation of the methodology was the fact that the study was only conducted at one point in time. With the intention of determine whether age and nationality have an impact on the results obtained, future research could examine the effects of brands taking activist

stances, while only considering the perceptions of millennials and generation-z in other countries and to see if the results hold over time.

Only quantitative research is included in this study, which is focused on numerical responses and so provides limited insights into behaviours and thoughts and may result in a lack of context. Additionally, employing pre-made Likert scale questions that have been adapted from earlier study, may conceal participants' true behaviours or thoughts. The degree of accuracy and sincerity among respondents is further lowered when the questionnaire is administered online because no one is watching which responses are chosen.

To produce more diverse and all-encompassing data, there were no limitations on the participants' ages, genders or nationalities. The methods to be employed to address this issue may change, taking into consideration each target customer, because not all brands have the same target market. Future investigations ought to employ additional research methodologies, such as qualitative methodology made up of data gathered through interviews with various consumer generations, wherein their perceptions of brands that align their purpose with social causes, maintaining authenticity, and brands that do the opposite are addressed. Second, data collecting with brand managers through surveys, to ascertain their opinions on the most effective methods for being genuine and socially responsible.

Finally, it would be also important to understand different types of brand activism activities and how they might influence consumers perceptions.

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Appendix A: List of scales and sources used

Author	Construct	Code	Scales
Sääksjärvi & Samiee (2011)	Brand Identity	Brand Awareness	
		BI.1	I am familiar with this brand
		Brand Purpose	
		BI.2	This brand has a well-defined use/purpose
		Brand Differentiation	
Valentine & Fleischman (2008) as adapted by Fritz (2017)	Social Commitment	SC.1	Brand assumes social responsibility
		SC.2	Brand invests in the greater community
		SC.3	Brand is socially engaged
Valerie & Hariandja (2022)	Brand Activism	BAC.1	I feel like the X brand is socially aware
		BAC.2	I feel like the X brand is giving something back to society
		BAC.3	I will be more inclined to buy from the X brand when they have taken a stand against activism that I agree with
		BAC.4	I tend not to buy from the X brand when they take a stand against activism I don't agree with
		BAC.5	I would be more loyal to the X brand if they took a public position on hotly debated issues
Erdem and Swait (1998) as adapted by Fritz (2017)	Brand Clarity	BC.1	I know what this brand stands for
		BC.2	It is obvious what image this brand is trying to communicate
Morhart <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Brand Authenticity	BAUT.1	A brand with history
		BAUT.2	A timeless brand
		BAUT.3	A brand that survives times
		BAUT.4	A brand that survives trends
		BAUT.5	A brand that will not betray you
		BAUT.6	A brand that accomplishes its value promise
		BAUT.7	An honest brand
		BAUT.8	A brand that gives back to its costumers
		BAUT.9	A brand with moral principles
		BAUT.10	A brand true to a set of moral values
		BAUT.11	A brand that cares about its consumers
		BAUT.12	A brand that adds meanings to people's lives
		BAUT.13	A brand that reflects important values people care about
		BAUT.14	A brand that connects people with their real selves
		BAUT.15	A brand that connects people with what is really important
Bagozzi <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Brand Love	BL.1	To what extent do you feel that... Buying X brand says something "true" and "deep" about whom you are as a person?
		BL.2	To what extent is X brand is able to... Make you look like you want to look?
		BL.3	To what extent is X brand is able to... Do something that makes your life more meaningful?
		BL.4	To what extent do you...Find yourself thinking about X brand?
		BL.5	To what extent... Are you willing to spend a lot of money improving and fine-tuning a product from X brand after you buy it?
		BL.6	Using the products: To what extent do you feel yourself... Desiring to buy from X brand?
		BL.7	To what extent have you... Interacted with X brand in the past?
		BL.8	Please express the extent to which... You feel there is a natural "fit" between you and X brand?

		BL.9	Please express the extent to which... You feel emotionally connected to X brand?
		BL.10	To what extent do you feel that X brand...Is fun?
		BL.11	Please express the extent to which you...Believe that you will be buying X brand for a long time?
		BL.12	Suppose X brand were to go out of existence, to what extent would you feel... Anxiety?
		BL.13	On the following scales, please express your overall feelings and evaluations towards X brand; 7-point negative-positive
Wilder (2015)	Brand Advocacy	BADV.1	If a friend or acquaintance said something negative about X brand, I would speak up to defend it.
		BADV.2	If a friend or acquaintance said that a competing brand was superior to X brand, I would tell them why I disagree.
		BADV.3	If a friend or acquaintance made fun of X brand, I would stick up for it.
		BADV.4	If a friend or acquaintance questioned the quality of X brand, I would try to set them straight.
		BADV.5	If a friend or acquaintance said they disliked X brand, I would try to prove to them why it is a good brand.
		BADV.6	If I think you should be using X brand, I will actively work to get you to try it.
		BADV.7	I have convinced others to try my favorite brand.
		BADV.8	I would be an excellent salesperson for my favorite brand.
		BADV.9	I have actively worked to get someone to try my favorite brand.

Appendix B: Online Survey



Language

English (United Kingdom) ▾

*Dear participant,

Thank you for taking part in this study. My name is Mariana Gonzaga Guiomar and I am attending the second year of the Master in Marketing at ISCTE Business School. This questionnaire is part of my Master's dissertation, whose main objective is to understand the effect of brand activism when mediated by brand authenticity and brand purpose.

I ask you to read the questions carefully and to mark only the option(s) that best corresponds to your opinion. The questionnaire will last approximately 7 minutes and there are no right or wrong answers, so please answer as honestly as possible. The study respects all the requirements of ethical research, guaranteeing the anonymity and confidentiality of the data obtained, which are reserved for academic and scientific purposes.

Thank you very much for your collaboration.

Mariana Gonzaga Guiomar
mgeng@iscte-iul.pt

Prof. Ricardo Godinho Bilro

I have read and understood the above information and I agree to participate in this study.

Yes

No

Language

English (United Kingdom) ▾

*We live in an age of a hurry, in a fast-paced world, where we are always being bombarded with information from everywhere. In such a world, the real question is, do we really need more brands? And shouldn't the big brands contribute to the future of our society?

Over the last years we have seen a steady improvement of the communication and marketing developed by the brands, increasingly aligned to authenticity. According to the findings, customers are four to six times more inclined to buy, support, trust and promote a brand that serves an important purpose (Aziz, 2020).

Please name two brands you know that fit the profile described above.

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*Bearing in mind the brands you mentioned above, please indicate, on a scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7) what your level of agreement is with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am familiar with these brands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Bearing in mind the brands you mentioned above, please indicate, on a scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7) what your level of agreement is with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
These brands have a well-defined use/purpose	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Bearing in mind the brands you mentioned above, please indicate, on a scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7) what your level of agreement is with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
These brands are uniquely different from they're competitors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Bearing in mind the brands you mentioned above, please indicate, on a scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7) what your level of agreement is with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I know what these brands stand for	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is obvious what image these brands are trying to communicate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Bearing in mind the brands you mentioned above, please indicate, on a scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7) what your level of agreement is with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Brand assumes social responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Brand invests in the greater community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Brand is socially engaged	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Bearing in mind the brands you mentioned above, please indicate, on a scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7) what your level of agreement is with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel these brands are socially aware	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like these brands are giving something back to society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I feel with their advertising, these brands are making a difference in the problems facing society today	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will be more inclined to buy from these brands when they have taken a stand against an activism that I agree with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I tend not to buy from these brands when they have take a stand against an activism I don't agree with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be more loyal to these brands if they took a public position on hotly debated issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Language

*Bearing in mind the brands you mentioned above, please indicate, on a scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7) what your level of agreement is with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
A brand with history	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A timeless brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A brand that survives times	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A brand that survives trends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A brand that will not betray you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A brand that accomplishes its value promise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An honest brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A brand that gives back to its costumers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A brand with moral principles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A brand true to a set of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

moral values	~	~	~	~	~	~	~
A brand that cares about its consumers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A brand that adds meanings to people's lives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A brand that reflects important values people care about	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A brand that connects people with their real selves	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A brand that connects people with what is really important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Bearing in mind the brands you mentioned above, please indicate on a scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
If a friend or acquaintance said something negative about these brands, I would speak up to defend them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a friend or acquaintance said that a competing brand was superior to these brands, I would tell them why I disagree.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a friend or acquaintance made fun of these brands, I would stick up for them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a friend or acquaintance questioned the quality of these brands, I would try to set them straight.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If a friend or acquaintance said they disliked these brands, I would try to prove to them why they are good brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I think you should be using these brands, I will actively work to get you to try them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have convinced others to try these brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be an excellent salesperson for these brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have actively worked to get someone to try these brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Bearing in mind the brands you mentioned above, please indicate, on a scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7) what your level of agreement is with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Buying something of these brands says something "true" and "deep" about whom you are as a person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
These brands make you feel the way you want to look	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
These brands are able to do something that makes your life more meaningful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you find yourself thinking about these brands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you willing to spend a lot of money improving and fine-tuning a product from these brands after you buy it	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you desire to buy from these brands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you interacted with these brands in the past	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a natural "fit" between you and these brands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You feel emotionally connected to these brands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You feel that the brand is fun?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You believe you will be	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

buying this brand for a long time

Suppose these brands was to go out of existence, would you feel anxiety?

*Bearing in mind the brands you mentioned above, please indicate on a scale from Negative (1) to Positive (7) what your feelings are.

Please express your overall feelings and evaluations towards these brands 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

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*What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

*What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- +65

*What is your level of education (completed)?

- Elementary school
- High school
- Bachelor
- Master's degree
- PHD

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We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

Appendix C: Descriptive Statistics for all variables (SPSS Output)

Descriptive Statistics for Brand Identity

	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
B.awareness	208	2,00	7,00	6,2212	,91638
B.Purpose	208	2,00	7,00	6,1683	,81386
B.Differentiation	208	1,00	7,00	5,1442	1,38256
N válido (de lista)	208				

	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
B.Identity	208	2,00	7,00	5,8446	,76130
N válido (de lista)	208				

Descriptive Statistics for Social Commitment

	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
SC_1	208	1,00	7,00	5,7260	1,27287
SC_2	208	1,00	7,00	5,5096	1,25875
SC_3	208	2,00	7,00	5,7308	1,13129
N válido (de lista)	208				

	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
SocialCommitment	208	1,33	7,00	5,6554	1,08589
N válido (de lista)	208				

Descriptive Statistics for Brand Activism

	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
ACT.1	208	1,00	7,00	5,5337	1,21139
ACT.2	208	1,00	7,00	5,5865	1,15144
ACT.3	208	1,00	7,00	5,1058	1,42047
ACT.4	208	2,00	7,00	5,4183	1,39116
ACT.5	208	1,00	7,00	5,1971	1,51150
ACT.6	208	1,00	7,00	4,9375	1,53256
N válido (de lista)	208				

	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
BrandActivism	208	2,33	7,00	5,2965	,91799
N válido (de lista)	208				

Descriptive Statistics for Brand Clarity

	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
CLA.1	208	1,00	7,00	5,7740	1,09540
CLA.2	208	2,00	7,00	6,0192	,94261
N válido (de lista)	208				

	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
B.Clarity	208	2,00	7,00	5,8966	,88609
N válido (de lista)	208				

Descriptive Statistics for Brand Authenticity

	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
AUT.1	208	1,00	7,00	5,6779	1,15766
AUT.2	208	1,00	7,00	5,3462	1,42963
AUT.3	208	1,00	7,00	5,7067	1,22988
AUT.4	208	1,00	7,00	5,7596	1,11637
AUT.5	208	1,00	7,00	4,8510	1,34843
AUT.6	208	1,00	7,00	5,5529	1,00101
AUT.7	208	1,00	7,00	5,2933	1,21008
AUT.8	208	1,00	7,00	5,1635	1,27109
AUT.9	208	1,00	7,00	5,3413	1,37747
AUT.10	208	1,00	7,00	5,2740	1,35736
AUT.11	208	1,00	7,00	5,4375	1,13186
AUT.12	208	1,00	7,00	5,3750	1,21335
AUT.13	208	1,00	7,00	5,4471	1,18651
AUT.14	208	1,00	7,00	4,9375	1,43824
AUT.15	208	1,00	7,00	4,9567	1,42207
N válido (de lista)	208				

	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
B.Authenticity	208	1,13	7,00	5,3413	,84635
N válido (de lista)	208				

Descriptive Statistics for Brand Love

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
LOV.1	208	1,00	7,00	3,8269	1,56002
LOV.2	208	1,00	7,00	4,3702	1,57654
LOV.3	208	1,00	7,00	4,3413	1,61629
LOV.4	208	1,00	7,00	3,9231	1,71491
LOV.5	207	1,00	7,00	3,1111	1,70727
LOV.6	208	1,00	7,00	5,3990	1,23531
LOV.7	208	1,00	7,00	5,5337	1,40352
LOV.8	208	1,00	7,00	4,9519	1,31421
LOV.9	208	1,00	7,00	4,2356	1,70458
LOV.10	208	1,00	7,00	4,9135	1,45536
LOV.11	208	1,00	7,00	5,3702	1,34505
LOV.12	208	1,00	7,00	3,2308	1,84800
LOV.13	208	2,00	7,00	5,6058	1,02546
Valid N (listwise)	207				

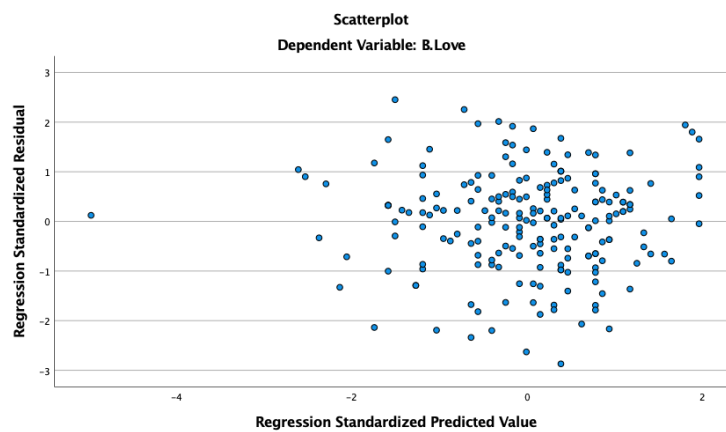
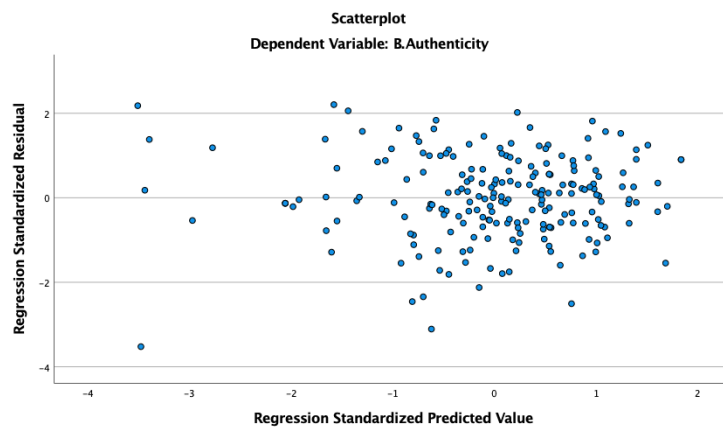
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
B.Love	208	1,92	7,00	4,5247	,95073
Valid N (listwise)	208				

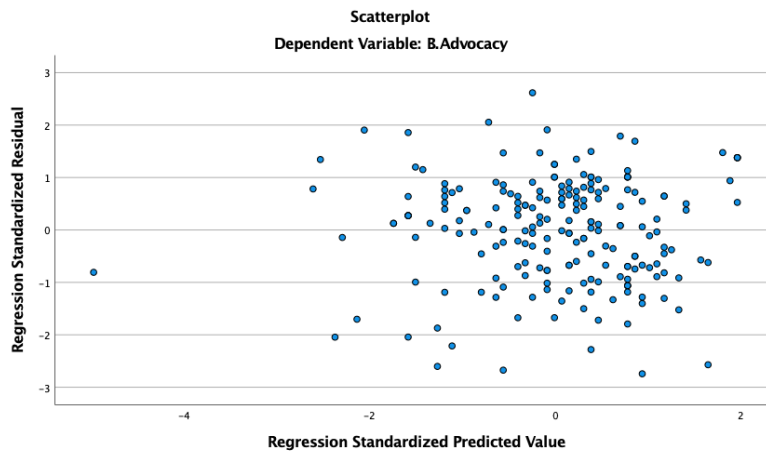
Descriptive Statistics for Brand Advocacy

	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
ADV.1	208	1,00	7,00	4,9519	1,29197
ADV.2	208	1,00	7,00	4,9423	1,22239
ADV.3	208	1,00	7,00	4,8173	1,39886
ADV.4	208	1,00	7,00	5,1683	1,22988
ADV.5	208	1,00	7,00	4,9519	1,31421
ADV.6	208	1,00	7,00	4,6779	1,58407
ADV.7	208	1,00	7,00	4,6731	1,65323
ADV.8	208	1,00	7,00	4,2788	1,59077
ADV.9	208	1,00	7,00	3,3077	1,84195
N válido (de lista)	208				

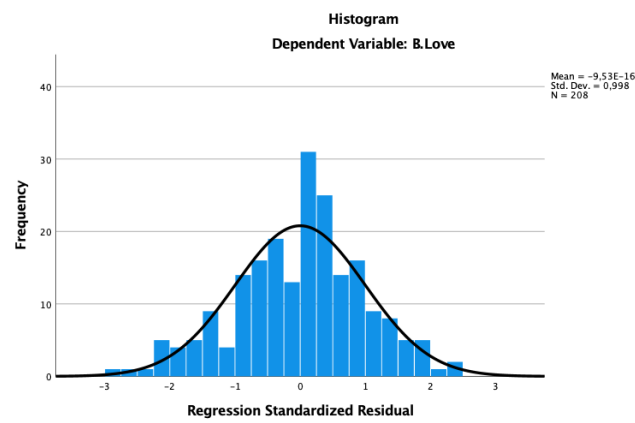
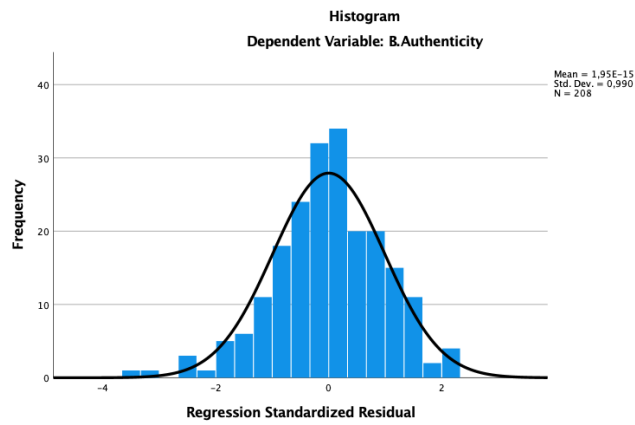
	N	Mínimo	Máximo	Média	Desvio padrão
B.Advocacy	208	1,11	7,00	4,6410	1,06906
N válido (de lista)	208				

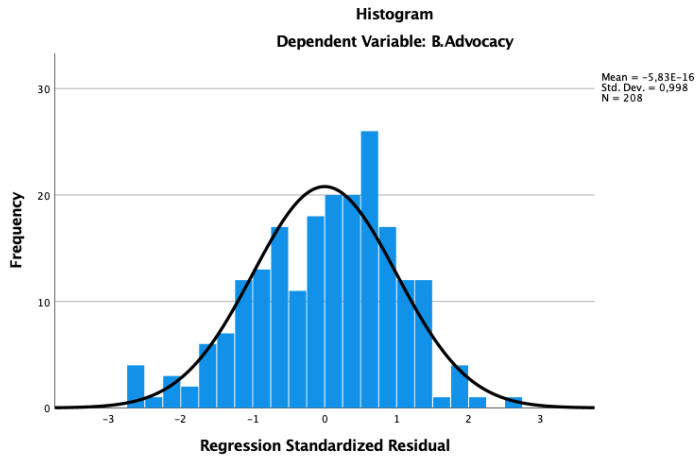
Appendix D: Scatterplots for the Distribution of the Residuals (SPSS Outputs)





Appendix E: Histograms of the Distribution of the Residuals (SPSS Outputs)





Appendix F: Normal P-Plots of the Distribution of the Residuals (SPSS Outputs)

