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**When Disney Took a Stand: A Case-Based Study on the Impact of Brand Activism and Authenticity on Consumers' Purchase Intention in Portugal**

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Master's in Business Administration

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Co-Supervisor:
PhD, Alexandra de Matos Miguel, Invited Assistant Professor,
ESCS – Escola Superior de Comunicação Social, Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa

October, 2025

Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management

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# Resumo

Numa era de crescente atenção a questões sociais, as marcas enfrentam maiores pressões para se posicionarem sobre temas sociopolíticos polarizadores. Este estudo analisa o impacto do ativismo de marca na intenção de compra dos consumidores portugueses, tendo como caso de estudo a campanha "ABCLGBTQIA+" da Disney Portugal, desenvolvida em 2022 em parceria com a ILGA. A tese segue uma abordagem quantitativa, baseada num inquérito online com 350 respostas válidas recolhidas em Portugal em 2025. Com base na literatura existente, o modelo conceptual propôs duas hipóteses: (H1) o envolvimento em ativismo de marca influencia positivamente a intenção de compra dos consumidores; e (H2) esse efeito é mediado pela autenticidade percecionada da marca Disney Portugal. Os resultados confirmaram ambas as hipóteses: o ativismo da Disney Portugal teve um impacto positivo e significativo na disposição dos consumidores para comprar e recomendar os seus produtos, sendo a autenticidade percecionada uma mediadora essencial que amplifica este efeito. Por outras palavras, o impacto da campanha na intenção de compra foi mais forte quando os consumidores entenderam a posição da marca como genuína. Estes resultados evidenciam o papel determinante da autenticidade no sucesso do ativismo de marca. O estudo conclui que as marcas que abordam temas sociopolíticos controversos podem gerar respostas favoráveis dos consumidores e aumentar a intenção de compra, desde que os seus esforços de ativismo sejam percecionados como sinceros. São ainda discutidas contribuições teóricas e para a prática da gestão decorrentes destes resultados.

**Palavras-chave:** Ativismo de Marca; Autenticidade Percecionada da Marca; Intenção de Compra; LGBTQ+; Portugal

# Abstract

In an era of increasing attention to social issues, brands face growing pressure to take positions on polarising socio-political topics. This study examines the impact of brand activism on Portuguese consumers' purchase intention, using Disney Portugal's 2022 "ABCLGBTQIA+" campaign, developed in partnership with ILGA, as its case-study. The thesis follows a quantitative approach based on an online survey comprising 350 valid responses collected in Portugal in 2025. Drawing on existing literature, the conceptual model proposed two hypotheses: (H1) that engagement in brand activism positively influences consumers' purchase intention; and (H2) that this effect is mediated by the perceived authenticity of the Disney Portugal brand. The results confirmed both hypotheses: Disney Portugal's activism had a significant positive impact on consumers' willingness to purchase and recommend its products, with perceived authenticity emerging as a crucial mediator that amplifies this effect. In other words, the campaign's impact on purchase intention was stronger when consumers perceived the brand's stance as genuine. These findings highlight the decisive role of authenticity in the success of brand activism. The study concludes that brands addressing controversial socio-political issues can elicit favourable consumer responses and enhance purchase intention, provided their activism efforts are perceived as sincere. Theoretical contributions and managerial implications arising from these results are also discussed.



**Keywords:** Brand Activism; Perceived Brand Authenticity; Purchase Intention; LGBTQ+; Portugal

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# List of Acronyms

BA – Brand Activism

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

CSA – Corporate Social Advocacy

CPA – Corporate Political Activity

CFSC – Communication for Social Change

PBA – Perceived Brand Authenticity

PI – (Consumer) Purchase Intention

LGBT+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and other sexual and gender identities

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

TPB – Theory of Planned Behaviour

IBS – Iscte Business School

# 1. Introduction

In today's marketplace, traditional approaches such as Cause-related Marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), once considered sufficient to demonstrate a company's societal engagement, are increasingly viewed as insufficient (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018). Consumers, especially younger generations, expect brands to take explicit stances on divisive sociopolitical issues and to actively contribute to addressing urgent challenges, a shift which has elevated Brand Activism (BA) to a central role in corporate strategy, positioning it as a societally driven practice that goes beyond conventional philanthropy or corporate reporting (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018; Vredenburg et al., 2020; Moorman, 2020).

At the same time, governments are often perceived as either unwilling or unable to act effectively on pressing social and environmental matters (Cammarota et al., 2023), with expectations shifting towards brands, which are increasingly required to assume responsibilities once attributed to political actors and institutions. This reconfiguration of roles has pushed companies to become not only market players but also educators (Moorman, 2020), arbiters of controversy (Koch, 2020), and even activists themselves (Vredenburg et al., 2020). As Cammarota et al. (2023:12) summarised this development, *"If at first, companies tried to ignore and resist activist attacks, nowadays they have become the major players in developing solutions to address such social and environmental issues."*

Academic research confirms that Millennials (individuals born approximately between 1981 and 1996) and Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012) (Dimock, 2019), in particular, value activism as a driver of brand preference, and they are more likely to boycott brands they perceive as unethical or opportunistic (Kotler & Sarkar, 2018; Shetty et al., 2019). However, while the growing body of literature has demonstrated the potential of BA to influence consumer attitudes and behaviours (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Mirzaei et al., 2022), important gaps remain. Specifically, there is limited empirical evidence on how activism is received in European contexts, namely in Portugal, and the question of authenticity continues to emerge as a decisive factor in determining whether activism is positively or negatively evaluated (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Cammarota et al., 2023).

This dissertation addresses these gaps by examining how Portuguese consumers perceived Disney Portugal's 2022 campaign in partnership with ILGA Portugal, which focused on LGBT+ representation. More specifically, the study explores the effect of Brand Activism (BA) on Purchase Intention (PI), while testing the mediating role of Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA).

Accordingly, the research was guided by two research questions:

1. To what extent does Brand Activism influence Consumer Purchase Intention in the context of Disney Portugal's 2022 campaign in partnership with ILGA?
2. To what extent does Perceived Brand Authenticity mediate the relationship between Brand Activism and Consumer Purchase Intention in the context of that campaign?

To answer these questions, the study pursued four main objectives: (1) to analyse consumer evaluations of Disney Portugal's campaign, with a particular focus on how authenticity influences behavioural responses; (2) to examine whether BA correlates with PI; (3) to assess the mediating role of PBA in the relationship between BA and PI; and (4) to determine whether socially engaged and authentic brand strategies can generate favourable consumer outcomes. By addressing these aims, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how activism is evaluated in a cultural and societal context where empirical evidence remains scarce.

To achieve these objectives, a quantitative survey was conducted using validated measurement scales. A total of 350 valid responses were collected, providing a robust empirical basis for the analyses. The methodological approach included descriptive statistics, reliability tests, correlation analysis, regression models, and mediation testing using bootstrapping techniques.

The study follows a conventional academic structure, and the following section provides an overview of its organisation.

## 1.1 Structure of the Thesis

This dissertation is structured into six chapters, in addition to the present introductory chapter. Each chapter is further divided into sections and subsections, allowing for a clear and logical organization of the content. Each chapter was designed to build on the previous one, ensuring a coherent progression from the conceptual foundations of the research to the empirical findings and their implications.

- Chapter 2 – Literature Review provides the theoretical background of the study. It introduces the concepts of Cause-related Marketing, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Brand Activism, before examining Perceived Brand Authenticity and Purchase Intention. The chapter also discusses relevant empirical contributions, identifies existing research gaps, and develops the conceptual framework and hypotheses that guide this dissertation.
- Chapter 3 – Methodology outlines the research design. It details the quantitative approach employed, the process of questionnaire development and data collection, and the characteristics of the sample. It further explains the statistical procedures used to test the reliability of the measurement scales and to assess the relationships between the variables.
- Chapter 4 – Results and Analysis presents the findings of the empirical study. It reports the internal consistency of the scales, the descriptive statistics of the sample, and the results of the regression and mediation analyses. These findings are discussed in light of the proposed hypotheses.
- Chapter 5 – Discussion interprets and critically reflects upon the empirical findings, relating them to the conceptual framework and the existing literature. It examines the confirmation of

the proposed hypotheses and analyses the contextual and demographic factors influencing the relationship between Brand Activism, Perceived Brand Authenticity, and Purchase Intention, particularly within the Portuguese market. The chapter highlights authenticity as a central mediating mechanism linking activism to consumer behaviour.

- Chapter 6 – Conclusions synthesises the overall contribution of the dissertation. It summarises the main findings, discusses their theoretical and managerial implications, and acknowledges the study's limitations. Finally, it outlines directions for future research, indicating how subsequent work can further explore and extend the relationships among Brand Activism, Perceived Brand Authenticity, and Purchase Intention.

Together, the chapters provide a comprehensive account of the research, from the theoretical foundations to the practical conclusions, thereby addressing the central research question of this dissertation.

In addition to the six chapters, a series of appendices complement the main text. These include the full research questionnaire (Appendix A), detailed descriptive and inferential statistics (Appendices B to F), and supporting conceptual materials. Appendix G, in particular, presents the conceptual clarifications and summary tables of the key constructs discussed throughout the dissertation, providing definitional coherence and theoretical transparency.

# 2. Literature Review

Chapter 2 reviews the key theoretical foundations and empirical studies relevant to the topic of this dissertation. It begins by examining the concept of Brand Activism (BA), situating it within the broader evolution from Cause-related Marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It then explores the role of Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) as a mediating construct and its influence on Consumer Purchase Intention (PI). By critically analysing existing research and identifying conceptual and empirical gaps, this chapter establishes the framework and hypotheses that guide the empirical analysis presented in the subsequent chapters.

## 2.1 Brand Activism

In academic literature, Brand Activism (BA) remains a relatively new and fragmented field of study (Cammarota et al., 2023). First introduced by Sarkar and Kotler (2017), scholars have only recently begun to explore its foundations (Andersen & Johansen, 2024; Gulbrandsen et al., 2022; Schmidt et al., 2022; Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020) and research has been primarily focused on theoretical frameworks and conceptual discussions, with limited empirical studies examining its real-world applications (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Moorman, 2020; Mirzaei et al., 2022).

As a nascent and evolving field, BA has yet to establish a fully defined framework, highlighting the need for further research and empirical validation (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Nassar et al., 2021; Schmidt et al., 2022). Despite increasing academic interest, BA scholars are yet to reach a consensus on its theoretical foundations (Cammarota et al., 2023), with some researchers interpreting it as an extension of corporate strategy, and others viewing it primarily as a communication strategy (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019). This study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature by deepening the understanding of BA and its broader implications.

BA is widely regarded as an evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – a concept dating back to the 1950s that emphasizes businesses' ethical obligations and contributions to sustainable development (Miguel & Miranda, 2022a; Pimentel et al., 2023). As companies increasingly recognized the importance of social and environmental engagement (Pimentel et al., 2023), many moved beyond traditional CSR initiatives to take explicit stances on societal and political matters (Laaksonen & Pöyry, 2022). This shift marked the rise of BA (Steel, 2024).

Manfredi-Sánchez (2019:348) defines BA as "*a communication strategy aimed at influencing the citizen-consumer by means of messages and campaigns created and sustained by political values*". Over time, the concept of BA has evolved to focus on sociopolitical causes, which Nalick et al. (2016:386) described as "*salient unresolved social matters on which societal and institutional opinion is split, thus potentially engendering acrimonious debate among groups*."

From this newest perspective, Vredenburg et al. (2020:446) define BA as "*a purpose- and values-driven strategy in which a brand adopts a non-neutral stance on institutionally contested sociopolitical issues to create social change and marketing success,"* a definition that underscores the deliberate nature of BA, emphasizing the focus on divisive societal issues while balancing the dual objectives of driving social impact and achieving business success. Similarly, Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020:2) describe BA as "*the act of publicly taking a stand on divisive social or political issues by a brand or an individual associated with a brand,* while Moorman (2020:2) specifies it as "*public speech or actions focused on partisan issues made by or on behalf of a company using its corporate or individual brand name,*" complementing the previous definitions by emphasising the broader role brands can play in society as political actors who contribute responsibly to their environment.

Sarkar and Kotler (2018:463) offer a broader definition, characterising BA as "*branding efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to make improvements in society,"* categorizing the concept of BA into three forms for evaluating a brand's position: regressive, neutral, and progressive. For example, the authors illustrate regressive activism through the case of tobacco companies, which deliberately denied the health risks of smoking – despite possessing evidence to the contrary – while simultaneously promoting the supposed benefits of smoking. This example demonstrates the important point that BA is not inherently progressive or even socially beneficial to society. Companies that engage in lobbying or support policies that maintain the *status quo* can also be classified as brand activists (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018).

Additionally, Sarkar and Kotler (2018) categorize BA into six domains that reflect the major sociopolitical and economic challenges: social, workplace, environmental, economic, political, and legal activism. This framework was later restructured by Pimentel et al. (2023) into five dimensions, consolidating legal activism within the broader economic and political categories.

- Social activism: issues of equality (e.g., gender, sex, LGBTQ+, race, age, immigration), social movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter, #MeToo), and broader societal concerns such as education, healthcare, immigration, culture, social security, privacy, and consumer protection.
- Workplace/Business activism: involves corporate governance, CEO pay, worker compensation, labour relations (support or opposition), supply chain management, and occupational safety.
- Environmental activism: addresses environmental policies, conservation, ecocide, land use, and pollution control (e.g., air and water pollution, emission control).
- Economic activism: includes wage and tax policies that influence income inequality, wealth redistribution, and worker and corporate financial policies.
- Political activism: encompasses partisanship, campaign finance, lobbying, and voting rights.

- Legal activism (included in Sarkar & Kotler, 2018): concerns laws and policies affecting businesses, such as taxation, employment laws, and corporate regulations.

Both frameworks highlight the multidimensional nature of BA, illustrating how brands engage with sociopolitical discourse across various domains. Furthermore, the restructuring by Pimentel et al. (2023) aligns closely with Sarkar and Kotler's (2018) original categorization, demonstrating the evolving nature of BA as scholars continue to refine its conceptual boundaries.

This dissertation will specifically focus on Social Brand Activism, analysing how Disney Portugal's brand engages with the social cause of LGBTQ+, and shapes consumer perceptions and behaviours.

### 2.1.1 The Rise of Brand Activism

Historically, companies have not viewed taking stances on controversial sociopolitical issues as a primary objective (Hydock et al., 2019) because such actions were perceived detrimental to core business goals (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2016). For this reason, this dissertation examines the origins and evolution of the concepts that ultimately led to Brand Activism (BA).

Scholarly interest in the topic emerged in 2018, when Sarkar and Kotler formally classified the phenomenon as Brand Activism (BA). Since then, academic discussion has expanded considerably, particularly after 2021 (Cammarota et al., 2023). This surge of interest originated largely in the United States, where BA became intertwined with an increasingly polarised political environment (Klein, 2020; Cammarota et al., 2023), with researchers linking this trend to widening sociopolitical divisions, rising consumer expectations for corporate accountability, and brands' strategic reactions to shifting federal policies, coinciding with mass activist movements such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Hydock et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, the intellectual roots of BA reach back to the 1970s and 1980s, when marketing principles first began expanding beyond purely business, through the rise of Social Marketing. Kotler et al. (1971) defined this approach as "*the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas*" (1971: 5), incorporating elements such as product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and research. Decades later, Shoreibah (2009) refined this understanding by emphasising *the voluntary behaviour of target audiences*, highlighting a shift from coercion to voluntary behavioural change.

At the same time as the rise of Social Marketing, Communication for Social Change (CFSC) emerged as a framework centred on empowering communities to drive their own development. Unlike early top-down, behaviourist models of Social Marketing, CFSC is rooted in participatory dialogue and collective agency, promoting *horizontal communication* (Valdés, 2017) that supports co-identifying problems and co-creating solutions. This reflected an ideological shift from influencing audiences to

engaging them as active participants in social transformation. The move from CSR to BA mirrors this shift, aligning with how progressive brands now approach their societal role.

During this early phase, academic research also began to explore themes such as *the activist's point of view* (Moore, 1973), *corporate political activism* (Prakash Sethi, 1982), and *the strategies corporations used to manage their relationships with activist groups* (Pattakos, 1989). As corporations evolved into dominant societal actors (Pattakos, 1989), activist groups refined their tactics – employing boycotts, protests, and media campaigns (Hiatt et al., 2009; King, 2008; Bartley & Child, 2011; Carberry et al., 2018) – to hold companies accountable for social and environmental neglect (Cammarota et al., 2023) –, and over time growing stakeholder pressure from consumers, employees, and investors reinforced expectations for brands to take public stances on social issues (Cammarota et al., 2023).

A key driver in the rise of BA has been shifts in consumer behaviour, particularly the emergence of socially conscious consumerism with Millennials and Gen Z increasingly expecting brands to address issues such as inequality, corruption, and climate change (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018). Shetty et al. (2019) note that Millennials prefer brands aligned with their values and supporting relevant causes, while also disengaging from brands that fail to uphold ethical standards. Increased transparency via digital platforms allows closer scrutiny of corporate actions, making inaction on social issues a reputational risk. In this context, activism helps preserve consumer trust and loyalty, with purpose-driven brands viewing BA as a strategic evolution (Miguel & Miranda, 2022b).

However, scepticism about corporate motives persists. Hemonnet-Goujot et al. (2024) found that some consumers view BA as a marketing tactic aimed at preserving favour or avoiding backlash, rather than a sincere effort to drive social progress. Steel (2024) adds that corporate stances on sociopolitical issues also reflect internal changes: in the U.S., senior managers have shifted from a slight conservative lean in the early 2000s to a more liberal or left-wing orientation by 2022. This evolution is partly driven by increased gender and racial diversity in leadership, as women and people of colour – who tend to hold more politically progressive views – gain influence in corporate America.

Beyond consumer expectations, the rise of BA is also shaped by broader strategic and contextual factors. Externally, unresolved societal challenges and the absence of government leadership have created space for brands to assume activist roles, reinforcing their relevance to engaged audiences (Nalick et al., 2016; Cammarota et al., 2023). Internally, many companies have adopted purpose-led strategies that make activism a natural expression of brand identity and a tool for market differentiation (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Moorman, 2020). When aligned with corporate values and actions, strategic activism can enhance reputation and foster emotional connections that build long-term brand equity (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Social media have further amplified BA, providing powerful platforms for brands to express sociopolitical stances, engage consumers, and shape public perception (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Miguel

& Miranda, 2022b). Its real-time nature enables brands to monitor sentiment, adapt strategies, and respond to emerging issues, as viral trends and online activism demand timely action. In this sense, social platforms operate as dialogical spaces aligned with the participatory ethos of CFSC. As Valdés (2017) observes, meaningful change arises through communication that amplifies marginalised voices and fosters democratic dialogue. Tools such as hashtags, comments, and live Q&As allow stakeholders to actively influence brand narratives, echoing Figueroa et al.'s (2002) concept of community-led identity formation and priority-setting.

Yet these same platforms expose brands to backlash if activism is perceived as opportunistic or performative. The threat of *cancel culture* underscores the growing premium placed on authenticity. As Valdés (2017) cautions, communication loses its transformative potential when it reinforces existing power imbalances or excludes the very communities it claims to represent. Likewise, BA risks becoming *woke-washing* when it appropriates causes without genuine and sustained commitment.

Ultimately, digital platforms have transformed BA from niche strategy to mainstream responsibility. Brands that navigate these spaces authentically can build credibility, trust, and long-term equity (Miguel & Miranda, 2022a, 2022b). In this light, the rise of BA reflects not just a strategic shift but a deeper alignment with participatory models of communication such as CFSC, positioning brands as facilitators of collective agency and advocates of social justice (Figueroa et al., 2002; Valdés, 2017).

Following this overview of how Brand Activism emerged and evolved, the next subsection examines its conceptual foundations by contrasting it with its closest predecessor, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

### 2.1.2 From Corporate Social Responsibility to Brand Activism

Brand Activism (BA), while grounded in the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), diverges markedly in scope, intent, and execution (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018; Vredenburg et al., 2020; Miguel & Miranda, 2022a). Whereas traditional CSR has typically focused on philanthropy, compliance, and reputational management, its limitations in addressing systemic social and political challenges have become increasingly apparent. In response, many companies throughout the 2010s began adopting more explicit and assertive positions on sociopolitical issues (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Herzberg et al., 2022). Within this shift, BA emerged as a distinct strategic orientation, separate not only from CSR but also from related frameworks such as Corporate Political Advocacy (CPA) and Corporate Social Advocacy (CSA) (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Sarkar & Kotler, 2018; Herzberg et al., 2022).

The key distinctions between CSR and BA lie in the nature of the issues addressed and the motivations behind corporate engagement (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Miguel & Miranda, 2022a, 2022b; Pöyry & Laaksonen, 2022; Cammarota et al., 2023). CSR typically reflects a company's effort to *do well by doing good*, focusing on widely accepted, low-risk causes such as education, sustainability, or

disaster relief (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Hydock et al., 2021; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). In contrast, BA is purpose-driven and often confrontational, tackling divisive topics such as racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, or immigration, and aims to reshape societal norms and drive systemic change (Eilert & Cherup, 2020; Miguel & Miranda, 2022a). Because of this inherently polarising nature, BA frequently elicits strong and divided stakeholder reactions (Hydock et al., 2021; Mirzaei et al., 2022). These contrasts play out across six broader dimensions that further distinguish CSR from BA.

First, in terms of the nature of the issues addressed, CSR engages with low-risk, widely accepted causes (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Miguel & Miranda, 2022a), whereas BA tackles polarizing sociopolitical topics, posing higher reputational and strategic risks by challenging dominant societal norms (Hydock et al., 2021; Eilert & Cherup, 2020; Miguel & Miranda, 2022a, 2022b; Mirzaei et al., 2022). These risks extend beyond controversy itself. For instance, one major challenge is audience alienation: while CSR tends to garner broad support, BA can deepen loyalty among some consumers while alienating others (Moorman, 2020). This characteristic makes alignment between brand values and stakeholder expectations critical, as misalignment may damage consumer attitudes (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Moreover, perceived opportunism (*woke-washing*) can erode trust and credibility (Vredenburg et al., 2020), as authenticity and consistency are essential of its success; BA only builds emotional resonance when grounded in sustained, meaningful commitment (Schmidt et al., 2022).

Secondly, CSR and BA diverge in strategic commitment and risk exposure. CSR initiatives are typically instrumental, aimed at enhancing legitimacy and building reputational capital in support of economic goals, an approach aligned with Matten and Crane's (2005) *limited view of corporate citizenship* (Laaksonen & Pöyry, 2022). These actions often reinforce brand reputation and consumer loyalty, especially if causes align with corporate values (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Cammarota et al., 2023). In contrast, BA requires deeper alignment between a brand's values, messaging, and practices. Misalignment can, again, lead to accusations of *woke-washing*, damaging brand trust and credibility (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Beyond consumer backlash, activism also entails commercial risks, potentially alienating investors or partners and negatively affecting firm value (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Moorman, 2020; Cammarota et al., 2023). In summary, BA can foster strong emotional bonds and, unlike with CSR, this impact depends on perceived sincerity (Schmidt et al., 2022), which requires authenticity, long-term commitment and strategic coherence to mitigate reputational and financial risk.

Thirdly, CSR initiatives are typically top-down, corporate-driven, strategic efforts aligned with business goals, stakeholder expectations, and institutional norms, and aims at enhancing legitimacy and social capital (Miguel & Miranda, 2022a; Cammarota et al., 2023). These programs tend to reinforce the brand's role as a responsible corporate citizen within the existing socio-economic framework. By contrast, BA stems from a brand's core identity and purpose-driven values rather than

institutional pressure. It reflects a proactive commitment to urgent sociopolitical issues, integrating advocacy into the brand's mission (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018; Miguel & Miranda, 2022a, 2022b). BA, thus, bridges the marketplace and civil society through sustained, value-led action, positioning brands not only as economic agents but as participants in social transformation (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Villagra et al., 2021; Korschun, 2021; Nassar et al., 2021; Cammarota et al., 2023; Pimentel et al., 2023).

Fourthly, CSR initiatives are typically integrated into an organization's long-term strategy, aligning with sustainability objectives, stakeholder expectations, and broader corporate goals (Miguel & Miranda, 2022a; Cammarota et al., 2023). In contrast, BA is often issue-specific and not necessarily tied to a company's core business activities, meaning brands may take radical or unconventional stances that do not conform to their broader corporate agenda (King & Pearce, 2010; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Cammarota et al., 2023; Miguel & Miranda, 2022a).

A fifth distinction lies in resource allocation. CSR initiatives often require sustained financial investment, as they are typically embedded in long-term strategies aimed at achieving measurable social or environmental outcomes (Cammarota et al., 2023; Miguel & Miranda, 2022a). Because these programs are frequently aligned with core business functions, they may benefit from shared infrastructures and integrated operational budgets (Herzberg & Rudeloff, 2022). In contrast, BA varies widely in cost. Some campaigns rely on low-cost symbolic gestures (e.g., statements or social media posts), while others – such as partnerships with activist groups, lobbying, or large-scale marketing efforts like Nike's Kaepernick campaign – require substantial investment (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Herzberg & Rudeloff, 2022). Because BA is often less integrated into core operations, it may need separate budgets and additional resources to ensure authenticity and manage reputational risk (Miguel & Miranda, 2022a, 2022b). Thus, while both CSR and BA require strategic investment, their financial demands differ by scope, purpose, and operational integration.

Sixth, and finally, CSR communication often expresses support for social causes but does not necessarily involve direct advocacy. Companies engaging in CSR may highlight their contributions without openly challenging political institutions, social structures, or public policies. In contrast, BA employs stronger, more explicit messaging, often adopting a confrontational stance on sociopolitical issues, serving the broader goal of influencing public opinion, behaviour, and even citizen engagement with political leaders (Miguel & Miranda, 2022a; Cammarota et al., 2023).

In essence, while both CSR and BA reflect corporate engagement with societal issues, they differ markedly in risk, scope, and intent. CSR operates within existing frameworks, supporting broadly accepted causes with minimal controversy, and BA involves purpose-driven engagement with divisive issues, requiring sustained advocacy and exposing brands to reputational and political risk. For BA to succeed, coherence is essential: brands must align their mission, values, messaging, and practices,

within a sociocultural context that legitimizes such engagement (Vredenburg et al., 2020). This internal and external alignment ensures both social credibility and strategic relevance (Nassar et al., 2021).

From a political perspective, companies may also engage in what is called Corporate Political Activity (CPA), which involves strategic efforts to influence public policy and regulatory outcomes in ways that serve organizational interests (Hillman et al., 2004). Unlike BA, CPA typically avoids polarizing social issues and operates through discreet channels such as lobbying and campaign contributions, often without public visibility (Lux et al., 2011). In contrast, BA is inherently public and overtly sociopolitical, exposing brands to reputational risk by taking explicit stances on contentious issues (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Corporate Social Advocacy (CSA), by comparison, involves public statements on partisan issues, often via CEO communications (Bhagwat et al., 2020). While CSA overlaps thematically with BA, it is generally a top-down, communicative strategy shaped by internal stakeholders (Dodd & Supa, 2014). BA, in contrast, is embedded in the brand's identity, aligning messaging with operations and consumer values (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Though both can affect public perception, BA requires more commitment and consistency, whereas CSA often centres on symbolic expression. Still, consumer reactions to CSA tend to be positive when its stance aligns with their beliefs (Dodd & Supa, 2014).

In short, the shift from CSR to BA marks a move from responsibility to advocacy, from supporting safe causes to confronting divisive social issues. The next subsection explores Social Brand Activism, where brands engage directly with social justice debates and public causes.

### 2.1.3 Social Brand Activism

As consumers grow more attuned to social issues and increasingly evaluate companies by their sociopolitical positions (Cammarota et al., 2023), brands have integrated activism into the very fabric of their ideology and marketing strategies. In this evolving landscape, brands no longer act merely as market participants but as educators (Moorman, 2020), arbiters of public controversy (Koch, 2020), and even as activists in their own right (Vredenburg et al., 2020), whether through partnerships with advocacy groups (Yaziji & Doh, 2009) or the sponsorship of activist campaigns (McDonnell & Werner, 2016).

The themes that are publicly debated and contested encompass a wide range of topics. However, in the context of Brand Activism, academic scholars have highlighted several predominant social issues, including LGBTQIA+ rights, racism, environmental concerns, police violence, gun control, abortion, and responses to the Covid-19 pandemic (Bhagwat et al., 2020).

Given the focus of this dissertation, the following subsection examines how brands engage with and represent LGBTQ+ issues through activism.

#### 2.1.3.1 LGBT+ Representation in Brand Activism (case studies)

Brands have increasingly taken public stances on social issues, namely related to LGBT+ rights, as part of Brand Activism (BA) efforts. For example, Sender (2012:14) notes that by the 1970s *"brands began to align explicitly with LGBTQ+ communities*," with Absolut Vodka as a famous pioneer, and recent surveys rank Nike, Levi's and Disney among top LGBT+ inclusive brands in consumer perception (Proppeller Insights, 2023). However, scholarship notes that inauthentic or late allyship can provoke backlash (Preuss & van Schie, 2024). In this subsection, examples of studies of LGBT+ related campaigns are reviewed, highlighting both positive brand outcomes and cases of controversy.

Many global brands have launched Pride campaigns that won praise. For instance, Levi's, which has a long history of LGBT+ support, in 2021 launched a "Tailor Profile" video series featuring LGBT+ employees' stories (Grilo, 2024). In France, Absolut also long embraced LGBT+ media, advertising in the gay press since 1981, and has spent millions sponsoring LGBT+ events, building a pro-LGBT+ reputation over decades (Sender, 2012). Examples like these where brands act as pioneers generally create better positive outcomes than latecomers. Nonetheless, brands such as Nike that have aligned multiple initiatives with LGBT+ causes – marketing, donations, workplace inclusion – have also managed to create a holistic system of activism that consumers deem authentic. Finally, Ben & Jerry's similarly pairs its social messaging with corporate practices, for example, refusing to sell same-flavour double scoops in Australia until same-sex marriage was legalized (Purdy, 2017; Kotler & Sarkar, 2017).

By contrast, some campaigns have provoked negative reactions. In 2023 Bud Light's partnership with transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney resulted in widespread boycotts and billions in lost sales for Anheuser-Busch (Preuss & van Schie, 2024). Researchers attribute this type of backlash to *pinkwashing concerns*, meaning the appropriation of LGBTQ+ rights or symbols by organizations, companies, or states to appear progressive and inclusive, often as a marketing strategy, while their actual practices may not support LGBTQ+ rights or may even undermine them (Puar, 2013). This can create a dual backlash when even progressive or liberal customers reduce patronage if they suspect a brand's LGBT stance is opportunistic (Preuss & van Schie, 2024). Indeed, one study found that LGBTQ+ activism by a firm decreased short-term store visits across both conservative and liberal areas, reflecting that some consumers (on both sides) reacted negatively to the controversy (Preuss & van Schie, 2024). The Guardian (2024) also reported that inclusive ads can boost profits on average, but that missteps like the ill-fated "*rainbow sandwich*" by a UK retailer can draw reputational ridicule and economic losses.

As of 2025, academic case studies of LGBT+ representation in BA specific to Portugal are scarce. Some multinationals in Portugal have launched Pride initiatives such as IKEA Portugal's 2021 campaign supporting a local LGBT+ non-governmental organization (Ingka, 2022), and Portuguese LGBT+ festivals

like Queer Lisboa have produced popular ads (e.g. a 2018 spot featuring drag queens and their mothers). However, peer-reviewed analyses of these campaigns are not yet available. One thesis notes that a range of global brands (Ikea, Danone, C&A) produce Pride-themed collections in the Portuguese market, but it offers no outcome data (Grilo, 2024).

In lieu of formal studies, qualitative evidence further explained in section 2.3 suggests that authenticity remains key: Portuguese pro-LGBT+ consumers, like others, respond best to brands that "show up" consistently and integrate LGBT+ inclusion into their culture, not just their Pride ads.

As the examples from 2.1.3.1 show, consumer responses to Brand Activism depend greatly on perceived authenticity and value alignment. The next section therefore turns to the concept of Purchase Intention, which helps explain how these perceptions translate into behavioural outcomes.

## 2.2 Consumer's Purchase Intention

The concept of Purchase Intention (PI) has long held a central place in marketing literature as a key predictor of actual consumer behaviour. It refers to a consumer's conscious plan or inclination to buy a specific product or service, shaped by psychological, situational, and contextual factors (Ajzen, 1991). Wu et al. (2011) define PI as the combination of interest in acquiring a product and the likelihood that the purchase will occur. As such, it marks the point in the decision-making process when the consumer begins mentally preparing to make a purchase (Porter et al., 1974).

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), intention is the immediate antecedent of behaviour and is shaped by three determinants: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). Attitudes are informed by behavioural beliefs (i.e., expected outcomes of the purchase); subjective norms by normative beliefs (i.e., perceived expectations of others); and perceived control by one's internal abilities and external constraints. PI thus reflects a rational evaluation of whether a purchase is desirable, socially acceptable, and feasible.

Kotler and Keller (2012) add that consumers rarely act impulsively. Rather, they assess options, compare alternatives, and form intentions based on perceived value and brand differentiation, underscoring the cognitive foundation of intention. Research suggests that brands actively engaging in BA or CSR may strengthen PI by triggering motivational alignment and value-based appeal (Mantovani et al., 2017).

Expanding this framework, Sproles and Kendall (1986) introduced consumer decision-making styles – habitual mental orientations such as brand loyalty, price sensitivity, and quality focus – that shape how individuals form PI. Among the typological, psychographic, and trait-based approaches, the latter is seen as most explanatory, as it accounts for both cognitive and affective influences.

Emotional factors also play a crucial role. Affective responses such as admiration, pride, or guilt influence how consumers process brand messages, particularly in activism-related contexts (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006), and these emotions can mediate cognitive evaluations and foster commitment.

Finally, value congruence – the alignment between brand and consumer values – is critical in BA contexts. When this alignment is strong, PI tends to increase (Du et al., 2007; Kam & Deichert, 2020). However, misalignment or *woke-washing* – a practice in which brands symbolically endorse social causes without genuine commitment or substantive action (Vredenburg et al., 2020) – may prompt backlash, brand boycotts, and reduced PI (Farah & Newman, 2020). This phenomenon will be discussed in greater depth in section 2.3.2.

In sum, PI is a pivotal stage in the consumer journey, bridging internal evaluation and behavioural execution. It is shaped by rational judgment, emotional engagement, value alignment, and perceived social influence. The following subsection explores specific variables and contextual factors that influence PI in greater detail.

### 2.2.1 Factors that Affect Purchase Intention

While Consumer's Purchase Intention (PI) is rooted in cognitive and motivational theories of decision-making, its formation is shaped by a constellation of interrelated psychological, social, and brand-related factors, and understanding these drivers is essential for brands aiming to translate consumer awareness and engagement into actual purchase behaviour in the context of Brand Activism (BA).

Within this literature, it is helpful to distinguish between mediators, which explain *how* or *why* BA influences PI, and moderators, which determine *when* or *for whom* this effect is stronger or weaker. Mediators reveal the underlying mechanisms linking activism to behavioural outcomes, while moderators reflect contextual or individual differences that can enhance or diminish those effects.

A first and consistent predictor of PI is attitude towards the brand. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), favourable attitudes increase the likelihood of strong PI, especially when reinforced by subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). Such attitudes often stem from emotional bonds, past experiences, and brand associations (Keller, 2001).

Equally important are brand image – consumers' perceptions and associations with the brand – and corporate image, which encompasses broader perceptions of ethics, environmental responsibility, and quality, are also influential. Strong, positive brand images support PI, especially if linked to leadership, innovation, or relatability (Aaker, 1991; Martínez & de Chernatony, 2004). These constructs act as mediators between BA and PI, particularly when the activism aligns with the brand's identity or history (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Mantovani et al., 2017; Kam & Deichert, 2020). A weak fit can have the effect of harming the image and reducing consumer PI.

Brand reputation further shapes consumer response. A strong reputation enhances perceived authenticity and reinforces PI in the context of BA (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2016; Zhou & Dong, 2022), and it can also moderate activism's effects, buffering against potential backlash when favourable.

Another central factor is perceived value, or the consumer's evaluation of what is gained relative to what is given (Zeithaml, 1988). This assessment spans functional aspects such as quality and price, emotional aspects like attachment and satisfaction, and symbolic aspects related to self-expression and identity. High perceived value not only increases the likelihood of purchase but also strengthens the impact of activism when it aligns with consumers' lifestyles or ethical priorities (Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991).

Closely related is brand trust, which remains a key mediator and a direct driver of PI. In complex or risk-averse environments, trust simplifies decisions and reduces uncertainty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001). Consumers are more likely to support brands they perceive as transparent, consistent, and dependable. Conversely, perceived risk – such as fear of social judgement – can moderate PI, weakening it unless offset by trust-enhancing mechanisms like transparency and third-party validation (Pelaez et al., 2019; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Hajli et al., 2017).

Social influence, including endorsements from peers, influencers, or thought leaders, also plays a significant role. These signals function as moderators, with stronger effects when the source is credible and aligned with the consumer's values (De Veirman et al., 2017; Kim & Song, 2020). Within brand communities, collective norms further shape the PI response to BA (Bian & Forsythe, 2012).

The construct of consumer-brand identification, or the extent to which individuals see a brand as reflecting their identity, mediates the link between BA and PI (Hydock et al., 2021) as consumers who align with a brand's stance are more likely to express support through purchase (Althuizen & Mukherjee, 2022).

Lastly, perceived authenticity is a powerful moderator. Brands seen as sincere, value-driven, and consistent elicit stronger PI (Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014; Vredenburg et al., 2020). Conversely, when activism is viewed as opportunistic (*woke-washing*) it may backfire, triggering scepticism and reducing PI (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Miguel & Miranda, 2022a).

In summary, PI is shaped by a dynamic interaction between internal beliefs (e.g., trust, value, attitude), external influences (e.g., social norms, influencers), and brand-related constructs (e.g., image, authenticity, identification). Among the key mediators are brand trust, brand image, corporate image, and consumer-brand identification, which help explain how BA enhances PI. Moderators, including perceived risk, brand reputation, perceived authenticity, and social influence, determine when and for whom these effects are most pronounced. For brands engaging in BA, managing both categories are critical to converting values-based messaging into sustained consumer action.

Ultimately, understanding the drivers of Purchase Intention offers only part of the picture. To fully comprehend how Brand Activism influences consumer behaviour, it is necessary to examine the role of authenticity, a central construct in this dissertation.

## 2.3 Brand Authenticity

As discussed in the previous sections, the growing prominence of Brand Activism (BA) has redefined the relationship between brands and society, shifting it from transactional engagement to value-driven advocacy. Within this evolution, authenticity has emerged as a central condition for credibility and consumer trust (Moorman, 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020; Schmidt et al., 2022; Mirzaei et al., 2022; Miguel & Miranda, 2023a, 2023b) and as brands increasingly act as cultural agents in sociopolitical discourse, the authentic and consistent alignment between values, messaging, and behaviour becomes essential to their perceived legitimacy and impact (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Brand Authenticity refers to the extent to which stakeholders perceive a brand as genuine, trustworthy, and true to its core values. Bruhn et al. (2012) identify four foundational dimensions: continuity (faithfulness to heritage), originality (innovation grounded in values), reliability (trustworthiness and truthfulness in communication), and naturalness (perceived sincerity and absence of artificiality). Building on this, Lehman et al. (2019) offer a dynamic "3C" framework: consistency (alignment of values and actions), conformity (adherence to social norms), and connection (emotional and cultural resonance with consumers). Similarly, Napoli et al. (2013) highlight sincerity, heritage, and commitment to quality as core markers of authenticity.

These frameworks provide a basis for evaluating authenticity in the context of BA. As brands engage more directly in sociopolitical arenas, the perception of authenticity becomes central to determining the effectiveness and reception of activist initiatives (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Cammarota et al., 2023).

Having outlined the conceptual dimensions of Brand Authenticity, it is now time to examine how this construct operates within Brand Activism, where perceived brand authenticity shapes consumer trust and behavioural responses.

### 2.3.1 Perceived Brand Authenticity in Brand Activism

The integration of Brand Activism (BA) into corporate strategy presents new challenges for preserving brand authenticity. Vredenburg et al. (2020) define Authentic Brand Activism as the alignment of a brand's stated purpose and values with its activist messaging and prosocial corporate practices. Their framework highlights four interrelated elements: (1) brand purpose and values, (2) the sociopolitical issue addressed, (3) the stance adopted (progressive or conservative), and (4) the alignment between

messaging and practice. Inauthenticity arises when these elements are misaligned, undermining credibility and consumer trust.

Perceived Authenticity in BA is the degree to which consumers believe a brand's activism is sincere, value-consistent, and integrated into its operations. This perception is strengthened when activism reflects long-term commitment and alignment across values, messaging, and corporate behaviour – as exemplified by Patagonia's sustained environmental advocacy (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Mirzaei et al., 2022).

Multiple factors shape Perceived Authenticity. Positive brand reputation enhances authenticity judgments (Weinzimmer & Esken, 2016), while consumer-brand identification fosters support for activism aligned with shared values (Hydock et al., 2021). Strategic communication – particularly tone, timing, channels, and spokesperson credibility – must align with stakeholder expectations to prevent backlash (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Cammarota et al., 2023). Likewise, value alignment and active brand communities reinforce perceptions of authenticity (Zhou & Dong, 2022; Jain et al., 2021). It is also critical to distinguish authenticity from credibility: while credibility reflects trust and expertise, authenticity is grounded in value congruence and behavioural consistency (Suchman, 1995). Measurement tools such as Morhart et al.'s (2015) Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) scale link authenticity to ethical behaviour and consumer empowerment, suggesting that authenticity requires credibility, integrity, and symbolic value.

Far from being merely a communication strategy, authenticity is a key driver of consumer response. Brands with a history of activism and strong identity-cause fit are more likely to be perceived as genuine (Joo et al., 2019; Mirzaei et al., 2022) and research confirms that perceived authenticity is key to effective BA. Clemente-Mediavilla et al. (2023) emphasize that sustained, credible action drives favourable consumer responses. Similarly, Althuizen & Mukherjee (2022) show that authenticity enhances consumer-brand identification, mediating the effect of activism on attitudes and behaviour.

However, as Hydock et al. (2021) note, authenticity does not mitigate negative reactions among those who disagree with a brand's stance. Moreover, while moderate incongruence may stimulate engagement, excessive misalignment, particularly in brands without a prior prosocial track record, provokes scepticism and erodes trust (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

In sum, authenticity is central to consumer evaluation of BA. When perceived as genuine and consistent with core values, activism improves brand attitudes and strengthens PI, turning consumer support into an extension of personal values (Althuizen & Mukherjee, 2022; Clemente-Mediavilla et al., 2023).

As such, authenticity is not only a reputational asset but a behavioural driver critical to the success of BA. However, when authenticity is lacking or perceived as superficial, Brand Activism risks losing its

credibility and even harming the very causes it seeks to support. This tension between genuine and performative activism is explored in the next subsection.

### 2.3.2 Authenticity vs *Woke-Washing*

Authentic Brand Activism (BA) is grounded in the alignment between a brand's values, internal practices, and external messaging. In contrast, *woke-washing* occurs when brands adopt activist language without demonstrating genuine, sustained commitment to the cause (Sobande, 2020). This often reflects a marketing-first logic, where social justice rhetoric is used strategically but superficially. Originally coined in African-American English to signify "social awareness", the term *woke* has since become politicised, frequently used in a pejorative sense (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

Vredenburg et al. (2018, 2020) emphasise that *woke-washing* involves a misalignment between activist messaging and corporate behaviour. Brands engaging in this form of inauthentic activism may appear opportunistic or inconsistent, leading to consumer scepticism, backlash, and reputational harm, which may undermine the cause being advocated (Pöyry et al., 2019; Miguel & Miranda, 2023b).

To conceptualise this distinction, Vredenburg et al. (2020) propose a four-part typology: Absence of Activism, Silent Activism, Inauthentic Activism, and Authentic Activism. Only the last reflects both high activist messaging and substantive prosocial action. *Woke-washing* – classified as Inauthentic Activism – is typically marked by surface-level storytelling, over-branded campaigns, and poorly timed interventions that lack structural or long-term engagement (Vredenburg et al., 2018, 2020).

*Woke-washing* also belongs to a broader spectrum of performative behaviours, including *greenwashing* (environmental issues), *rainbow washing* (LGBTQ+), and *blue washing* (human rights), as well as more general *purpose washing* (Manrai et al., 1997; Ad Age, 2019, 2020). For a concise conceptual contrast between Authentic Brand Activism and *Woke-Washing*, see Appendix G (Table G.5).

The rise of social media has amplified scrutiny of such inconsistencies, transforming BA into a highly visible and rapidly disseminated phenomenon subject to real-time public critique. When a brand's activist messaging diverges from its internal realities, such as limited diversity in leadership or environmentally unsustainable practices, it becomes particularly vulnerable to digital backlash, consumer boycotts, and reputational decline (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Miguel & Miranda, 2021, 2022a, 2022b; Klostermann et al., 2022). In these hyperconnected environments, vague or performative statements often backfire, amplifying perceptions of insincerity and eroding consumer trust (Klostermann et al., 2022).

To mitigate these risks, brands must ensure that activism is underpinned by credibility and coherence. Vredenburg et al. (2020) advocate for strong internal alignment, transparent communication, and collaborations with credible third parties to substantiate activist claims. Similarly,

Yang and Shim (2016) argue that for companies with contested reputations and problematic histories, only sustained, high-effort, demonstrable engagement can gradually restore trust and legitimacy.

Authenticity, both perceived and actual, remains indispensable to effective BA. When a brand's purpose, messaging, and behaviour are coherently aligned, activism can foster trust and generate tangible social impact (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Cammarota et al., 2023). Conversely, misalignment risks perceptions of opportunism and ethical inconsistency.

Building on this foundation, the next section shifts from conceptual discussion to behavioural analysis, examining how the authenticity of BA influences consumer responses, particularly Purchase Intention.

## 2.4 Brand Activism's Impact in Purchase Intention

As previously introduced, the relationship between Brand Activism (BA) and Purchase Intention (PI) has gained prominence in contemporary marketing as consumers, particularly younger generations, expect brands to adopt explicit stances on sociopolitical issues (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018; Shetty et al., 2019; Vredenburg et al., 2020). A growing body of research indicates that BA can positively influence PI, although this relationship is shaped by key moderating and mediating factors such as perceived authenticity, value congruence, and consumer-brand alignment (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Shukla et al., 2025). These dynamics are notably salient in an era marked by rising social consciousness and ethical consumerism (Mantovani et al., 2017; Du et al., 2007; Miguel & Miranda, 2022a).

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that BA positively affects PI, especially when perceived as authentic and aligned with the brand's core values and identity. For example, Mantovani et al. (2017) found that activism and CSR efforts increase consumers' willingness to purchase. Similarly, Becker-Olsen et al. (2006) and Du et al. (2007) conclude that activism initiatives can enhance brand image and product perception, both of which are positively correlated with PI.

Beyond authenticity and value congruence, BA may influence PI by capturing consumer attention and engagement in early decision-making stages (Phipps et al., 2010; Eyada, 2020). As a salient stimulus, activism can enhance brand awareness and emotional arousal, prompting deeper evaluation. This is consistent with research on brand associations: when activism fosters positive associations, it elevates perceived value and strengthens behavioural intention (Aaker, 1991).

Political statements issued by brands can also shape consumer evaluations and, consequently, PI, particularly when such messaging is consistent with the brand's identity (Dodd & Supa, 2014). Moreover, social issue engagement may trigger psychological mechanisms such as heightened awareness and value attribution, reinforcing consumer motivation to act (Du et al., 2007; Eyada, 2020).

These effects suggest that BA operates through both affective alignment and cognitive attention processes that support intention formation.

However, the effectiveness of activism depends heavily on brand-cause fit. Misalignment between a brand's identity and the cause it supports can provoke consumer scepticism and even boycotts (Deichert & Kam, 2019). This is echoed by Farah and Newman (2020), who found that perceived inauthenticity (*woke-washing*) can erode brand trust and image, ultimately weakening PI.

Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) provide further nuance by showing that BA often produces a polarising effect: BA increases PI among those who agree with the stance and decreases it among those who do not. Importantly, neutrality is not necessarily safer, as silence on contentious issues may also trigger backlash. Their findings highlight the mediating role of consumer-brand identification, and the moderating roles of authenticity and brand-cause fit. When activism aligns with brand purpose and history, it strengthens identification and persuasive impact; when misaligned, it undermines both.

Further support comes from Shukla et al. (2025), who demonstrate that global brands engaging in activism tend to increase PI, particularly when the effect is mediated by self-brand connection. Global brands, due to their aspirational and transnational appeal, can use activism to reinforce identity-based motivations. Their study also reveals that brands with negative country-of-origin perceptions benefit more from activism, as it enables schema change by signalling adherence to global ethical standards. Across multiple contexts (e.g., social media, ads, and PR), the data consistently show that emotional and symbolic identification with the brand mediates the positive relationship between BA and PI.

In contrast, Guan and Chen (2023) found no direct effect of BA on PI in their study of Chinese consumers assessing H&M. Using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, they showed that while BA negatively affected brand image (BI), BI positively influenced PI – indicating a full mediation effect. This suggests that BA may operate indirectly, shaping PI through perceptual and cognitive variables rather than through immediate behavioural triggers.

These findings highlight a critical insight: BA can serve as a powerful tool to drive consumer purchase intentions, especially when the brand's actions are perceived as authentic, value-aligned, and culturally sensitive. Yet, this effect is not universal. Activism that lacks credibility, alignment, or emotional resonance may backfire resulting in negative attitudes, brand rejection, or public backlash.

Consequently, the effectiveness of BA depends less on the act of taking a stance and more on how authentically that stance is perceive. In this light, authenticity emerges not merely as a desirable quality but as the very mechanism through which activism influences consumer behaviour. The next subsection therefore investigates authenticity's mediating role between BA and PI.

### 2.4.1 Authenticity's Role as a Mediating Variable

Although earlier literature noted a lack of empirical models exploring authenticity as a mediator (Cammarota et al., 2023), a growing body of evidence supports the view that perceived authenticity mediates the relationship between Brand Activism (BA) and consumer Purchase Intention (PI). Rather than exerting a uniform direct effect, BA typically influences behaviour through the lens of perceived authenticity – that is, activist messaging drives PI when it is perceived as authentic.

While authenticity can also function as a moderator (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020), this subsection focuses on its mediating role – explaining how and why BA translates into PI. Several recent studies have tested this pathway using surveys, experiments, and structural equation modelling (Afzali & Kim, 2021; Gerdemann et al., 2023; O'Donnell et al., 2023; Karikari et al., 2024).

Gerdemann et al. (2023), in their experimental study *When Brands Get Political*, manipulate motivational framing of BA (intrinsic vs. extrinsic) and find that PI only increases when activism is perceived as authentic. Mediation analysis confirmed that authenticity fully mediates the relationship between message framing and PI. Similarly, O'Donnell et al. (2023) examine various activist brand promises in relation to leadership congruence and consumer values, and their findings show that among consumers with high social justice orientation, all congruent promises increased perceived authenticity and thus PI. For those with low orientation, only symbolic or explicit promises had this mediated effect – indicating the conditional nature of authenticity's influence.

These findings align with Vredenburg et al.'s (2020) theoretical framework. As previously discussed in subsection 2.3.1, alignment between values, messaging, and practices enhances perceived authenticity and, in turn, PI. Authenticity thus acts not merely as a reputational benefit, but as a psychological mechanism that translates activism into behavioural response. Without it, even well-intentioned activism may fail or provoke backlash (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Supporting this, Afzali and Kim (2021) found in the CSR context that authenticity partially mediates the effect of perceived CSR on PI – confirming that other mechanisms also contribute. Their survey of 417 consumers confirms that authenticity is a key, though not exclusive, driver of behavioural intention.

Research also highlights conditional mediation. O'Donnell et al. (2023) show that social justice orientation moderates the mediation path. Likewise, Karikari et al. (2024) demonstrate that both authenticity and justice perceptions mediate the effect of brand-issue congruence on PI, contingent on consumer empathy with the cause. In other words, authenticity is most impactful when consumers already identify with the brand's values or trust its intentions; among sceptical or ideologically misaligned consumers, its effect is diminished.

As discussed earlier (see 2.3), drivers of perceived authenticity include brand-cause fit, visible sacrifice, and consistent action on activist claims (Mirzaei et al., 2022). These factors must be present for authenticity to act as an effective mediator between BA and PI.

In conclusion, authenticity typically functions as a partial and conditional mediator. Its influence depends on message framing, value congruence, empathy with the cause, and consumer orientation (Afzali & Kim, 2021; O'Donnell et al., 2023; Karikari et al., 2024). For brands, this means authenticity is not an optional attribute but a strategic necessity as without it, activist efforts may not only fall flat but risk backlash and reduced purchase intention.

Overall, the reviewed literature establishes a clear theoretical link between Brand Activism, Perceived Authenticity, and Purchase Intention. However, the extent and nature of this relationship remain context-dependent, shaped by value congruence, message framing, and cultural factors. Building on these insights, the following section consolidates the theoretical foundations into a conceptual framework that guides the empirical investigation of this study.

## 2.5 Conceptual Framework

Building upon the literature reviewed in the preceding sections, this conceptual framework outlines the theoretical basis of the present study and introduces the proposed research hypotheses. It draws on existing models that examine the relationship between Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity, and Consumer Purchase Intention (PI), while adapting them to the specific sociocultural context of the Portuguese market.

As explored in sections 2.3 and 2.4, BA has been shown to influence PI, particularly when the brand's actions are perceived as authentic (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Shukla et al., 2025). Perceived authenticity functions as a key mediating variable in this relationship, translating activist messaging into consumer behavioural intention (Clemente-Mediavilla et al., 2023; Gerdemann et al., 2023; Karikari et al., 2024). Moreover, while traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives may enhance brand image, they typically do not provoke the same level of affective or identity-based responses as BA, particularly when dealing with polarising sociopolitical issues (Miguel & Miranda, 2022a, 2022b; Cammarota et al., 2023).

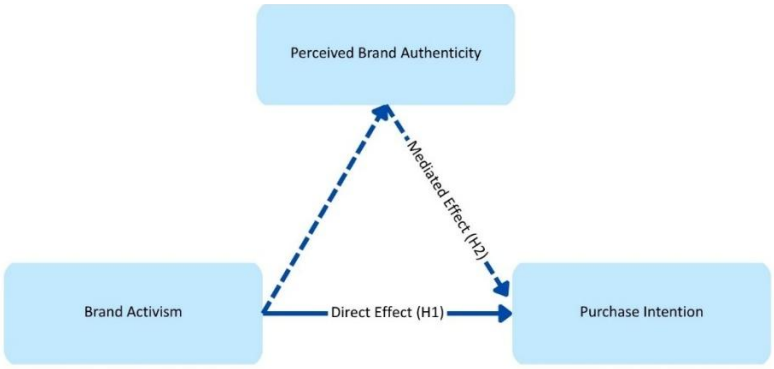
The theoretical model used as the basis for this study builds particularly on the framework proposed by Gerdemann et al. (2023), which conceptualises PBA as a central mechanism – a mediator – that either reinforces or undermines the effectiveness of BA and, in turn, affects PI.

In this research, the novelty lies in applying and adapting this theoretical framework to a specific case: Disney Portugal's 2022 Brand Activism campaign in collaboration with ILGA Portugal, aimed at raising awareness for LGBTQ+ rights. While most existing studies are based on global brands in Anglo-

American contexts, this case study explores whether similar dynamics are observable in Portugal, where cultural, social, and political variables may shape different consumer responses to activism.

In summary, the conceptual framework proposes that Brand Activism (BA) has a direct positive effect on Purchase Intention (PI) – H1. Additionally, Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) positively mediates this relationship, such that higher PBA strengthens the positive association between BA and PI – H2. This model is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1 – Conceptual framework (BA, PBA, PI)**




### 2.5.1 Hypotheses

Accordingly, this research proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1: Brand Activism (BA) has a positive correlation with consumer Purchase Intention (PI).
- H2: The relationship between Brand Activism (BA) and Purchase Intention (PI) is positively mediated by Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), such that higher perceived authenticity strengthens the positive association between BA and PI.

This conceptual model serves as the foundation for the empirical component of the dissertation, guiding both data collection and analysis. The subsequent chapter outlines the methodology employed to test these hypotheses within the chosen case study.

# 3. Methodology

Based on the conceptual framework from chapter 2, chapter 3 explains the method used to study the connections between Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), and Purchase Intention (PI) in the context of Disney Portugal's 2022 campaign with ILGA.

Chapter 3 covers the research questions, objectives, it details the case study, the overall plan for the research, how data was gathered, the strategy for choosing participants, and the methods used to analyse the results. A quantitative, cross-sectional approach was used to test the hypotheses through a structured survey.

## 3.1 Research Question

1. To what extent does Brand Activism influence Consumer Purchase Intention in the context of Disney Portugal's 2022 campaign in partnership with ILGA?
2. To what extent does Perceived Brand Authenticity mediate the relationship between Brand Activism and Consumer Purchase Intention in the context of that campaign?

## 3.2 Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Analyse consumer evaluations of Disney Portugal's 2022 Brand Activism campaign in partnership with ILGA, with a particular focus on how authenticity influences behavioural responses.
2. Examine whether Brand Activism correlates with Consumer Purchase Intention, using Disney Portugal's 2022 campaign as a case study.
3. Assess the mediating role of Perceived Brand Authenticity in the relationship between Brand Activism and Purchase Intention.
4. Determine whether socially engaged and authentic brand strategies can yield positive corporate outcomes.

These objectives directly operationalise the relationships proposed in the conceptual framework (Figure 2.1).

## 3.3 Case Study Presentation (Disney Portugal + ILGA)

This section presents the case study of Disney Portugal's collaboration with ILGA for the ABCLGBTQIA+ campaign, which serves as the foundation for this research.

Before diving into the specifics, it is important to understand Disney's global commitment to innovation, diversity, quality, and integrity, particularly in relation to LGBTQIA+ issues. Disney's dedication to inclusivity is evident through initiatives such as sponsoring Pride events, launching LGBTQIA+ merchandise, and hosting themed experiences like Disneyland Paris Pride. Additionally, Disney supports LGBTQIA+ associations through corporate partnerships, including its collaboration with the Point Foundation to provide scholarships for self-identified LGBTQIA+ students (Weaver, 2025; Business Insider, 2023; Disney, 2023).

The campaign's inclusive nature illustrates how brands can navigate contentious issues while fostering meaningful engagement with diverse audiences, and it offers a rich case for examining the interplay between brand activism, authenticity, and consumer response.

Launched in June 2022, the ABCLGBTQIA+ campaign aimed to promote inclusivity and educate the Portuguese public on LGBTQIA+ terminology. Tied to the FOX Life series Sort Of, which features a non-binary protagonist – person whose gender identity does not fit exclusively within the categories of male or female (Monro, 2019) –, the initiative sought to reinforce gender diversity and representation. Central to the campaign was a free online glossary (www.abclgbtqia.com), offering text, audio, and video explanations of LGBTQIA+ terms. Designed to increase gender literacy and combat prejudice on LGBT+ issues, the open-source resource allowed individuals, brands, and institutions to freely use and share its materials. To enhance impact and emotional resonance, FOX Life complemented this initiative with a series of short films featuring real people explaining LGBTQIA+ terms, thereby humanising the message and fostering empathy. Additionally, the campaign was replicated by ILGA as a pilot programme across senior universities in Portugal, engaging participants aged 65–85 years old (Briefing, 2022; SATG, 2022; Disney Newsroom, 2022). Finally, the campaign also carried out advertising in public spaces, displaying posters with definitions taken from the free online glossary and, unlike many initiatives confined to Pride Month (the month of June), the campaign remained active year-round, sparking public debate and driving awareness of LGBTQIA+ debates in Portugal (ILGA-Europe, 2023; Raposo, 2022; Araújo Pereira, 2022; Pacheco Pereira, 2022; Roldão, 2022; Expresso da Manhã, 2022; Meios & Publicidade, 2022).

The selection of the ABCLGBTQIA+ campaign by Disney Portugal, in collaboration with ILGA and FOX Life, was driven by its innovative approach to BA in a Portuguese social and market context. BA has been increasingly recognised in the literature as a form of corporate engagement with sociopolitical issues that can both strengthen and endanger consumer relationships (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018; Vredenburg et al., 2020). The campaign's direct engagement with LGBTQIA+ advocacy, a critical and often polarising issue in Portugal, makes it particularly relevant for studying BA.

Additionally, its educational approach and open-source resources underscore an apparently genuine commitment to inclusivity, enhancing its PBA. As a widely publicised initiative – with acclaims

for its creativity and impact (ECO, 2023; One Club, 2023) – it provides valuable data for analysing how activism influences consumer behaviour, particularly in terms of purchase intention.

The campaign also illustrates a key tension identified in the literature: while progressive activism can generate visibility and engagement, it may simultaneously divide audiences. This dynamic aligns with broader academic debates on how BA can provoke mixed or polarised consumer responses in contexts marked by cultural and political diversity (Moorman, 2020). In Portugal, this dynamic was evident in the vigorous public debate that followed the campaign, reflected in opinion pieces published in national newspapers on gender and sexual diversity (ILGA-Europe, 2023; Raposo, 2022; Araújo Pereira, 2022; Pacheco Pereira, 2022; Roldão, 2022; Expresso da Manhã, 2022; Meios & Publicidade, 2022)

In terms of impact, Disney and the Clube de Criatividade de Portugal (CCP) Festival 2023 reported that the campaign generated 15 million media impressions globally, with a media value of €5 million. It also achieved 18,000 downloads of glossary materials across 34 countries, 30,000 registered sessions, 118 opinion articles published, and garnered spontaneous support from global figures, including Brazilian pop singer Anitta (ECO, 2023; Clube de Criatividade de Portugal, 2023; Bhagwat et al., 2020).

Building on this case, the following section outlines the research design developed to analyse how consumers perceived this campaign and how such perceptions shaped PBA and PI.

## 3.4 Research Design

This research follows a quantitative, cross-sectional research design aimed at testing the relationships between the defined variables – Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), and consumer Purchase Intention (PI). A deductive approach was adopted, as the study is driven by existing theory and hypotheses formulated from the literature.

The quantitative design allows for objective measurement and statistical analysis of data, which is appropriate for examining the impact of Brand Activism on consumer attitudes (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014). The study was conducted at a single point in time, with all data collected through a one-time survey. This approach is consistent with prior research on Brand Activism effects, which has also employed survey-based experiments to gather data on consumer responses (Shukla et al., 2025).

To operationalise the proposed relationships, the study employed a structured questionnaire (see Appendix A) and a controlled stimulus (see subsection 3.4.3.2), allowing for the examination of causal inferences within a realistic yet controlled environment.

### 3.4.1 Quantitative Method

Given the objectives and hypotheses, a survey-based quantitative research method was deemed the most suitable as it allows the measurement of perceptions, attitudes, and intentions of consumers in a structured and comparable manner. The survey was written in the Portuguese language (Portugal).

Quantitative research focuses on quantifiable data and statistical techniques, allowing the researcher to measure variables and analyse relationships numerically (Bryman, 2012). This method provides the ability to test predefined hypotheses and generalise findings from the sample to a broader population. In this study, a structured questionnaire was used to collect numerical data on participants' attitudes.

The quantitative approach offers advantages in terms of objectivity and reliability because data are collected in a standardised manner and can be analysed using statistical software to determine significance and strength of effects (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014). A qualitative approach was not chosen because the research aim is to measure the degree of attitudinal change and test specific effects, rather than to explore personal interpretations in depth (Creswell, 2014).

Overall, the quantitative method aligns with the positivist paradigm of this research, emphasising measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables (Creswell, 2014). It also facilitates collecting data from a larger number of respondents, which improves the statistical power and robustness of the conclusions.

### 3.4.2 Measurement Scales for Variables

The questionnaire employed validated measurement scales adapted from existing literature to ensure reliability and comparability and all key variables in this study were operationalised using multi-item measurement scales. The independent variable, Brand Activism (BA), was measured using a set of items from prior literature. The dependent variables were Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) and consumer Purchase Intention (PI).

Each construct was measured with multiple items rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("*Strongly Disagree*") to 5 ("*Strongly Agree*"). The use of a Likert scale allows respondents to indicate the strength of their agreement, producing data suitable for parametric analysis (Likert, 1932).

- Brand Activism: Measured using nine items adapted from Bruder & Lübeck (2019), and Eilert & Cherup (2020) which assess the extent to which respondents perceive Disney Portugal as addressing social issues, supporting marginalised groups, and whether the LGBT+ cause aligns logically with Disney Portugal's brand and audience.
- Perceived Authenticity: Assessed using five items inspired by Glavas & Kelley (2014) and Turker (2009b), exploring the perceived genuineness of Disney Portugal's motives in supporting the LGBT+ cause.

- Purchase Intention: Measured through three items derived from Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal (1991), evaluating the likelihood of respondents purchasing and recommending Disney Portugal products or services following the campaign.

All scale items were adapted to fit the context of Disney Portugal's ABCLGBTQIA+ campaign.

### 3.4.3 Data Collection

Data were collected using an online self-administered questionnaire made with Google Forms. The survey was hosted electronically and distributed via a web link to potential participants.

The target population for this research was adult consumers (over 18). A convenience sampling technique was employed to recruit respondents, as will be discussed in section 3.5 The survey link was shared through social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), and accompanied by a brief invitation explaining the purpose of the study. Participants could complete the questionnaire anonymously at a time and place of their choosing, using any internet-enabled device.

Prior to full deployment, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with 17 participants (5-6 July 2025) to ensure clarity, logical flow, and technical functionality. The pre-test evaluated question wording, response options, and overall survey navigation and it also included a concluding feedback section, which invited participants to comment on the clarity of questions, the appropriateness of response options, the estimated completion time, and any items they found unclear or uncomfortable. Open-ended comments were also solicited to capture additional suggestions.

Feedback from the pre-test indicated high levels of clarity and content validity, with participants reporting an average completion time of approximately 6 to 8 minutes. Minor adjustments were subsequently made to improve the flow and wording of certain items, in consultation with the co-supervisor. The final version of the questionnaire was confirmed to be user-friendly, concise, and suitable for full-scale deployment.

After validation through the pre-test, the final questionnaire was made available for data collection over a period of five days (July 9$^{th}$ to July 14$^{th}$, 2025). On accessing the survey, participants first saw an introduction page that provided information about the study, assured them of confidentiality, and obtained informed consent. Only those who consented could proceed to the questions.

To maintain data quality, several measures were implemented. The questionnaire enforced that the stimulus material (subsection 3.4.3.2) was displayed in full before participants could answer related questions, ensuring that respondents were exposed to the experimental manipulation.

Upon closure of the survey, the raw data were screened for completeness. The final dataset was then exported to the statistical software R for analysis.

#### 3.4.3.1 Survey Design

The survey was designed with a logical structure and flow. It was divided into two main sections: the first one introduction and consent, and the second one with a stimulus exposure, questions, and demographic information.

In the introductory section, participants read a brief overview of the study's topic (without revealing the exact hypothesis to avoid bias) and were informed of their rights as participants. They then provided consent by confirming that they understood the instructions and agreed to participate voluntarily.

To ensure coherence and progression, the questionnaire was organised into six thematic groups, guiding participants from eligibility screening to attitudinal measures and sociodemographic data. The structure was as follows:

- Group I – Screening Questions: To ensure eligibility, respondents were asked if they were aged 18 or older, resided in Portugal, and had consumed Disney products or services in the past 12 months. Those who answered negatively to at least 1 question were screened out.
- Group II – Campaign Description: Respondents were provided with a detailed textual description of the ABCLGBTQIA+ campaign, including its objectives, materials, and channels, supplemented by visual stimuli (posters and a link to a video about the campaign).
- Group III – Brand Activism: Questions assessing perceptions of Disney Portugal's engagement in social activism, specifically the LGBT+ cause.
- Group IV – Brand Authenticity: Items measuring the extent to which the campaign was perceived as authentic and aligned with Disney Portugal's values.
- Group V – Purchase Intention: Questions aimed at capturing the respondents' willingness to purchase and recommend Disney Portugal's products or services.
- Group VI – Sociodemographic Information: Respondents were asked about their age, sex, nationality, district of residence, and educational attainment.

As stated previously, the questionnaire was pre-tested with 17 participants on 5-6 July 2025 to identify and correct ambiguities in question wording, response options, and survey flow. The pre-test results and feedback were discussed with the co-supervisor, resulting in minor adjustments before launching the final version.

The full version of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix A of this dissertation, allowing readers to consult the wording, sequence, and structure of all items used in the study (Bryman, 2012).

#### 3.4.3.2 Stimulus Material

To ensure informed responses, the questionnaire incorporated stimulus materials representative of the ABCLGBTQIA+ campaign. This included a concise description of the initiative, illustrative posters, a hyperlink to the glossary website, and one embedded video link, which can be consulted in Appendix A. The inclusion of stimulus material is crucial for evoking realistic perceptions of the campaign and its components.

Having defined the research design, data collection procedures, and measurement tools, the next step is to describe how participants were selected and characterised. Section 3.5, therefore, outlines the sampling strategy adopted for this study, as well as the demographic composition of the final sample.

## 3.5 Sampling Strategy

The target population for this research consisted of individuals aged 18 years or older, residing in Portugal, who had consumed Disney Portugal products or services within the previous 12 months. Given the exploratory nature of the study and the limitations of resources and time, a non-probability convenience sampling strategy was adopted. Convenience sampling involves collecting data from members of the population who are easily accessible to the researcher (Saunders et al., 2016). While this approach limits generalisability, it is acceptable in exploratory studies (Bryman, 2012).

Data collection took place between 9-14 July 2025 using a Google Forms survey distributed through multiple channels to maximise reach and diversity. The researcher disseminated the survey link and QR code via personal and professional networks on LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Additional efforts included distribution at Jazzy Dance School in Lisbon (Santos) and requests for further sharing within respondents' own networks. These methods reflect the snowball sampling technique in practice.

In total, 352 responses were collected, of which 350 were valid, as they met the screening criteria and completed all sections of the questionnaire.

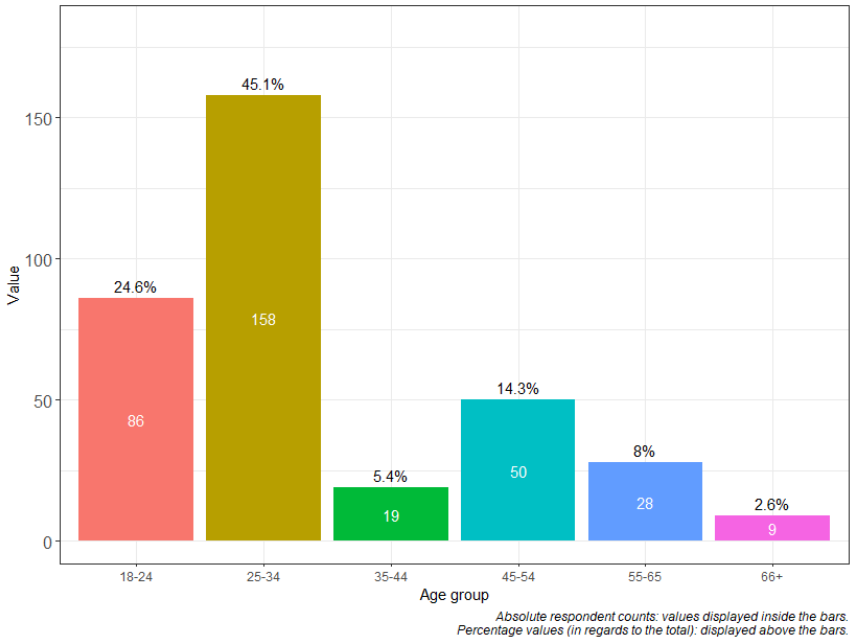
### 3.5.1 Sample Characteristics

The final sample of 350 valid respondents provides a representative overview of the target audience reached through the survey. Table 3.1 and Figures 3.1 to 3.4 summarise the main demographic characteristics, showing that the sample was predominantly young, highly educated, slightly female-majority, and with nearly half of respondents residing in the Lisbon district.

In terms of age, most respondents fell into the 25-34 year bracket (45.1%, n = 158), followed by the 18-24 group (24.6%, n = 86). Respondents aged 45-54 accounted for 14.3% (n = 50), those aged

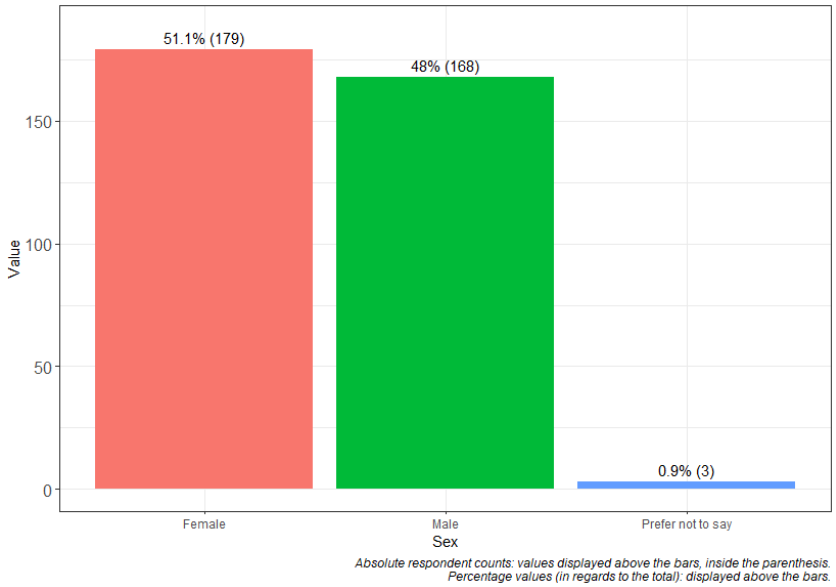
55-65 comprised 8% (n = 28), and only 2.6% (n = 9) were aged 66 or older. The smallest group was the 35-44 category, representing 5.4% of the sample (n = 19). This distribution is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1 – Age distribution of the respondents to the Campaign Questionnaire**




Regarding sex, the sample was fairly balanced, with 51.1% female (n = 179), 48% male (n = 168), and a small proportion (0.9%, n = 3) preferring not to disclose their sex, as shown in Figure 3.2.

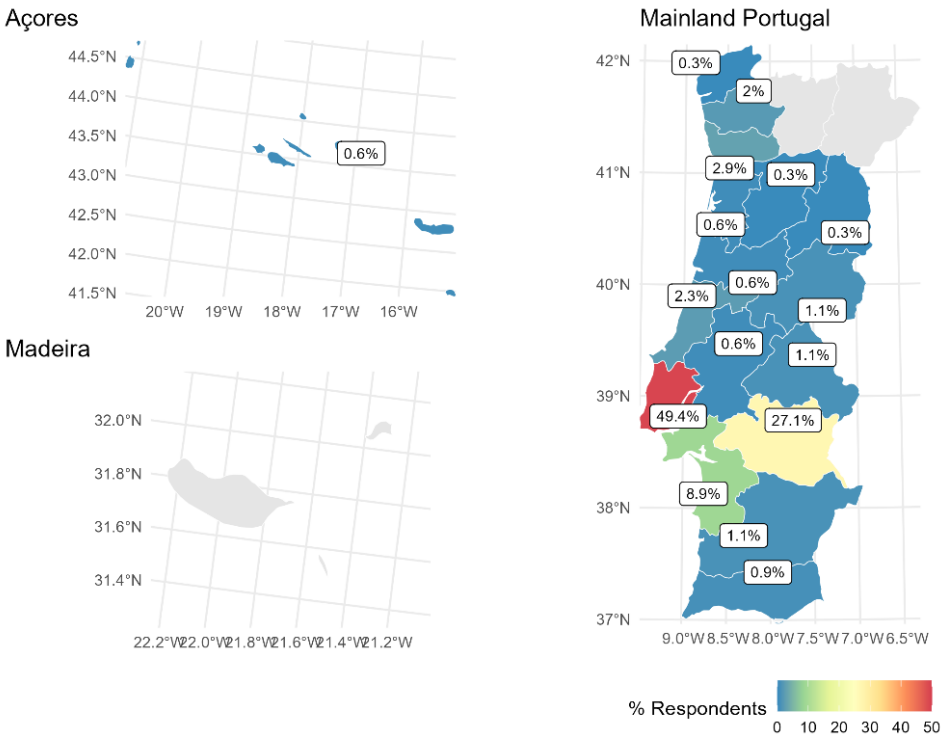
**Figure 3.2 – Sex distribution of the respondents to the Campaign Questionnaire**




In terms of residence, nearly half of respondents lived in the Lisbon district (49.4%, n = 173). Other notable districts of residence included Évora (n = 95), Setúbal (n = 31), Porto (n = 10), and smaller

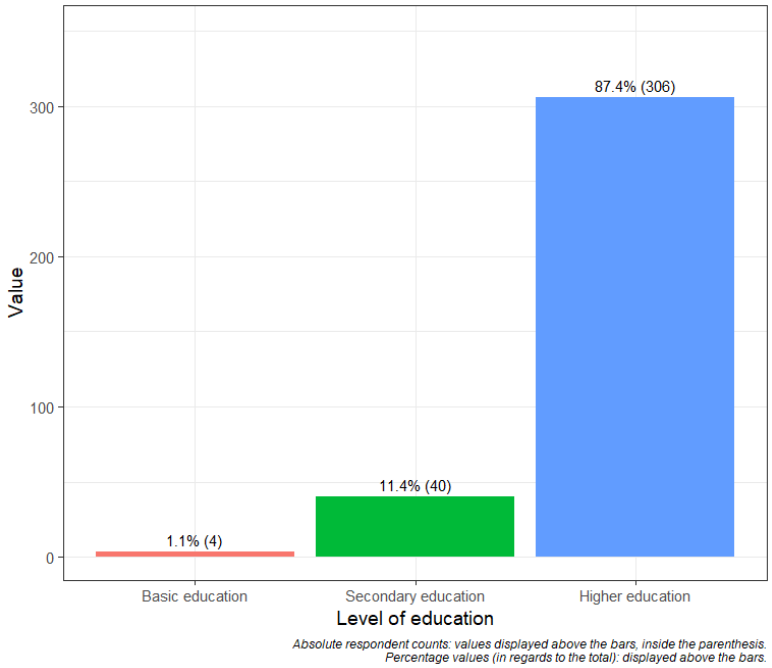
numbers spread across other districts such as Faro, Braga, Coimbra, and the Azores. A graphical breakdown is provided in Figure 3.3.

**Figure 3.3 – Residence distribution of the respondents to the Campaign Questionnaire**




The sample was also highly educated, with 87.4% (n = 306) holding a higher education degree (undergraduate, master's, or doctoral). An additional 11.4% (n = 40) had completed secondary education, and a small minority (1.1%, n = 4) reported only basic education. A detailed distribution is provided in Figure 3.4.

**Figure 3.4 – Distribution of the level of education of the respondents to the Campaign Questionnaire**




Lastly, the majority of respondents reported Portuguese nationality (97.4%), with a few indicating dual nationality, including Brazilian (2.1%, combining answers of "*Brazilian*", "*Brasil*"), German, Angolan, or British (each at approximately 0.3%).

Overall, the sample can be described as predominantly young-to-middle-aged, slightly female-majority, overwhelmingly Portuguese, urban (especially from Lisbon), and highly educated – characteristics that reflect the social networks and online platforms through which the survey was disseminated. This demographic profile is consistent with typical samples recruited through convenience and snowball sampling in online settings (Saunders et al., 2016).

Having characterised the sample, section 3.6 introduces the procedures applied to analyse the data and evaluate the proposed relationships between the study variables.

## 3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

This section details the analytical procedures employed to examine consumer perceptions of Disney Portugal's 2022 Brand Activism campaign in partnership with ILGA.

The data were exported from Google Forms into the statistical software R, using the RStudio environment for all analyses. Data visualisation was carried out with the ggplot2 package, selected for its ability to produce high-quality and customisable outputs (Wickham, 2016).

The dataset was derived from a structured questionnaire designed to evaluate consumer evaluations of Disney Portugal's ABCLGBTQIA+ campaign. To guarantee the relevance of the sample, a triage filter was used: only participants aged 18 and over living in Portugal were included for analysis.

The analysis followed a structured sequence. First, descriptive statistics were computed to characterise the socio-demographic profile of respondents and their patterns of consumption of Disney products and services. For categorical variables, absolute and relative frequencies were calculated, while for continuous variables, measures of central tendency and dispersion were reported (Field, 2018).

Next, the internal consistency of the multi-item measurement scales for Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), and Purchase Intention (PI) was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with reliability coefficients above 0.70 considered acceptable, as recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

To prepare for hypothesis testing, the distributional properties of the constructs were examined. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to evaluate normality, and correlation analyses were employed to explore associations between the variables (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012).

The hypotheses were tested in two stages. First, a linear regression analysis was performed to assess the direct effect of BA on PI. Regression coefficients were evaluated for statistical significance, and diagnostic procedures (including Cook's distance) were applied to identify potentially influential observations and assess the robustness of the models (Field, 2018).

Second, a mediation analysis was conducted to test the indirect effect of BA on PI through PBA. Following recommendations by Preacher and Hayes (2008), bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples were applied to generate bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effects. This approach avoids the limitations of normality assumptions and provides a more robust assessment of mediation effects.

The detailed outputs and supplementary statistical results are provided in Appendices B to F, while the main findings are presented and discussed in chapter 4, supported by tables and figures for clarity and interpretation.

# 4. Results and analysis

Chapter 4 presents the results of the empirical investigation, organised to systematically address the study's research questions and test the proposed hypotheses.

It begins with an evaluation of the internal consistency of the measurement instruments using Cronbach's alpha. Subsequently, it provides a descriptive analysis of the main variables – Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), and Purchase Intention (PI) – including measures of central tendency, dispersion, and distribution. A bivariate correlation analysis is then conducted to explore the associations among these constructs. Following this, a simple linear regression is used to assess the direct effect of BA on PI. Finally, a mediation analysis, employing bootstrapping procedures, is performed to determine whether PBA mediates the relationship between BA and PI.

Together, these steps enable the empirical testing of the conceptual model depicted in Figure 2.1, providing a comprehensive understanding of the statistical relationships among the study's variables. Additional descriptive and statistical materials supporting the analyses presented in this chapter are available in the Appendices (see Appendices C to F).

## 4.1 Consumption Habits of Disney Products and Services

Building upon the sociodemographic profile described in subsection 3.5.1, this section examines participants' engagement with the Disney brand, focusing on the products and services they reported consuming in the prior 12 months to data collection. The results are summarised in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 – Consumption of Disney products and services of respondents** (n = 350)

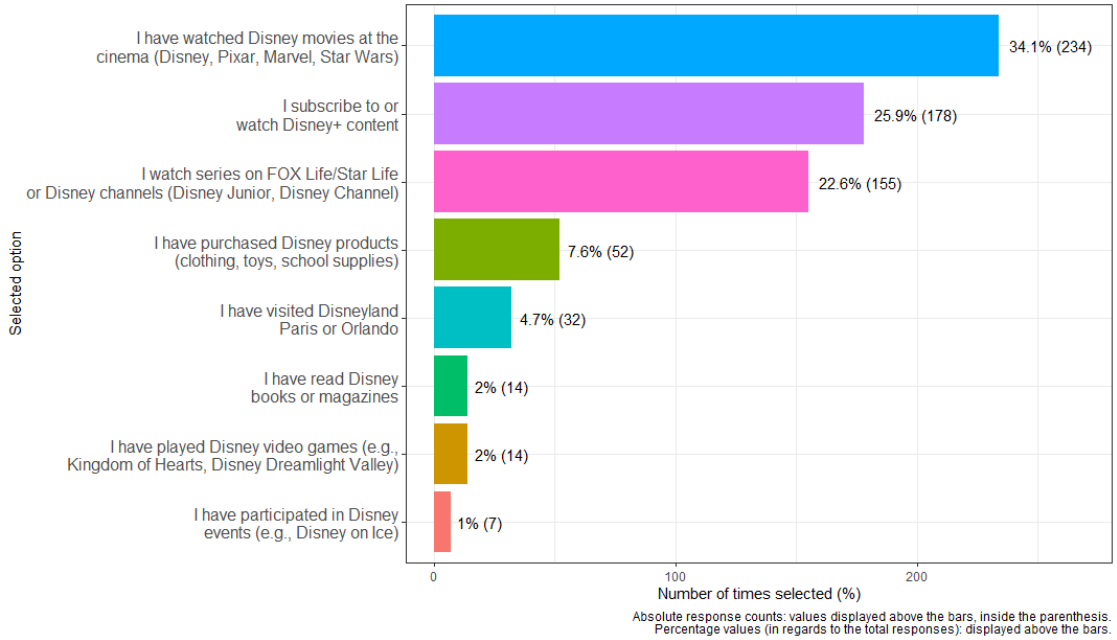
Source: Survey Data (see survey in Appendix A)

| Selected answer | Absolute Freq. (n) | Relative Freq.(%) |
|---|---|---|
| **"I subscribe to or watch Disney+ content"** | 178 | 25.9 |
| **"I have watched Disney movies at the cinema (Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars)"** | 234 | 34.1 |
| **"I watch series on FOX Life/Star Life or Disney channels (Disney Junior, Disney Channel)"** | 52 | 7.58 |
| **"I have purchased Disney products (clothing, toys, school supplies)"** | 14 | 2.04 |
| **"I have read Disney books or magazines"** | 14 | 2.04 |
| **"I have played Disney video games (e.g., Kingdom of Hearts, Disney Dreamlight Valley)"** | 7 | 1.02 |
| **"I have visited Disneyland Paris or Orlando"** | 155 | 22.6 |
| **"I have participated in Disney events (e.g., Disney on Ice)"** | 32 | 4.66 |

As shown in Table 4.1, entertainment-based experiences clearly dominate over the purchase of tangible Disney products: 25.9% of respondents reported consuming Disney+ content and 34.1% attended Disney films in the cinema, while fewer than 5% purchased physical products.

To provide a clearer visual representation of this pattern, the data are also displayed in Figure 4.1, which illustrates the predominance of entertainment-based consumption compared to physical product purchases.

**Figure 4.1 – Distribution of Disney consumption of respondents (2024)**




This pattern suggests that entertainment-based experiences remain the dominant form of engagement with the Disney brand, while consumption of tangible products is considerably less common. Such insights help contextualise participants' familiarity and connection with the brand, which may influence their perceptions of its social initiatives and authenticity. Collectively, these descriptive statistics serve as a foundational characterisation of the sample's connection with the brand and offer a meaningful backdrop for understanding the results that follow. Further details regarding the sample's demographic and behavioural characteristics are provided in Appendix B.

After establishing the demographic profile and the sample's relationship with the Disney brand, the next step involved assessing the internal consistency of the measurement instruments used in the study. This ensures that the items employed to measure the core constructs – Brand Activism, Perceived Brand Authenticity, and Purchase Intention – are statistically reliable and theoretically coherent.

## 4.2 Scales' Internal Consistency

To assess the internal consistency of the measurement instruments, Cronbach's alpha (α) was calculated for each of the three main constructs: Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), and Purchase Intention (PI). This coefficient estimates the proportion of total variance attributable to the true score, reflecting how consistently the items measure the same underlying construct (Cronbach, 1951). Values above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable, with scores above 0.80 or 0.90 indicating very good to excellent reliability (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

The Brand Activism scale, composed of 11 items, exhibited excellent reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 (Table 4.2). Similarly, the Perceived Brand Authenticity scale (5 items) yielded an alpha of 0.91, and the Purchase Intention scale (3 items) produced an alpha of 0.92 (Table 4.2). These results confirm the strong internal consistency of the instruments, justifying their inclusion in further statistical procedures.

Item-deletion statistics (Appendix C) revealed that excluding any individual item would not lead to a substantial increase in the overall reliability coefficients, which indicates that all items contributed meaningfully to their respective scales and were therefore retained in the study.

**Table 4.2 – Reliability of measurement scales**

**(Cronbach's Alpha, Standardised Alpha, and Average Inter-Item Correlation)**

| Construct | No. of Items | Cronbach's Alpha | Standardised Alpha | Average Inter-Item Correlation | 95% CI (Feldt) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Brand Activism (BA)** | 11 | 0.90 | 0.90 | 0.46 | [0.89-0.92] |
| **Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA)** | 5 | 0.91 | 0.91 | 0.66 | [0.89-0.92] |
| **Purchase Intention (PI)** | 3 | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.78 | [0.90-0.93] |

## 4.3 Descriptive Statistics

This section provides a descriptive analysis of the three key constructs: Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), and Purchase Intention (PI). For each construct, measures of central tendency (mean, median), dispersion (standard deviation), and response distribution are reported. Overall results for the three constructs are reported in Table 4.3. Item-level descriptive results for each construct are provided in Appendix D (Tables D1 to D3).

**Table 4.3 – Descriptive statistics of main constructs**

| Construct | Mean (M) | Std. Deviation (SD) | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Brand Activism (BA)** | 3.18 | 1.25 | 1 | 5 |
| **Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA)** | 2.99 | 1.20 | 1 | 5 |
| **Purchase Intention (PI)** | 3.55 | 1.22 | 1 | 5 |

### 4.3.1 Brand Activism

The BA scale consists of 11 items designed to capture respondents' perceptions of Disney's engagement in social causes, particularly its support for the LGBT+ community. The overall mean score for BA was 3.18 on a 5-point Likert scale, suggesting a moderate level of agreement regarding Disney's brand activism (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, & Pal, 2015), as reported in Table 4.3.

The highest-rated item was "*Disney takes social issues into consideration*" (M = 3.57, SD = 1.10), suggesting a relatively strong belief in Disney's general social engagement. Conversely, the lowest-rated item was "*The LGBT+ cause is logically related to Disney*" (M = 2.51, SD = 1.27), which may reflect scepticism about the alignment between the cause and the brand. Detailed descriptive results for all items of BA are available in the Appendix D (Table D1), while summary statistics for the three constructs are shown in Table 4.3.

The item "I *believe that Disney's genuine desire to promote improvements in society was what motivated the brand's decision to support the LGBT+ social cause*" received a moderate mean of 2.87 (SD = 1.28), indicating some doubt about the brand's motives. Standard deviations across items ranged from 1.07 to 1.44, indicating substantial variation in perceptions, likely due to respondents' diverse social and ideological backgrounds.

### 4.3.2 Perceived Brand Authenticity

Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) was measured using 5 items evaluating the extent to which Disney's actions align with its values and brand identity. The mean score for this construct was 2.99, reflecting a generally neutral perception among respondents (Table 4.3).

The item "*Disney's actions in this LGBT+ campaign are in line with its values*" had the highest mean (M = 3.13, SD = 1.21), while "*Disney's actions and communications are consistent over time*" had a lower mean (M = 2.88, SD = 1.06), suggesting some doubt regarding the coherence of Disney's messaging.

The item regarding brand symbolism ("*The way Disney communicates its messages regarding LGBT+ issues preserves what the brand means to me*") received a moderate mean of 2.95 (SD = 1.30), possibly indicating a clash with traditional brand perceptions. The average standard deviation for this

scale was approximately 1.20. Detailed descriptive results for all items of PBA are available in the Appendix D (Table D2).

### 4.3.3 Purchase Intention

The PI construct was measured with 3 items assessing participants' willingness to purchase or recommend Disney products. The overall mean score was 3.55, reflecting a moderately favourable attitude toward Disney following the campaign (Table 4.3).

Respondents showed stronger agreement with items such as "*I would consider purchasing Disney products or services*" (M = 3.67, SD = 1.20) and "*I would recommend Disney products or services to others*" (M = 3.65, SD = 1.18). The slightly lower score for "*I intend to purchase Disney products or services*" (M = 3.33, SD = 1.29) may reflect a gap between favourable attitudes and actual behavioural intention. Detailed descriptive results for all items of PI are available in the Appendix D (Table D3.1).

### 4.3.4 Bivariate Correlation Analysis

To evaluate whether the data met the assumption of normality, and given the large sample size (n=350), the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was applied to the three constructs of Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), and Purchase Intention (PI). This test compares the empirical cumulative distribution of the sample data with the cumulative distribution of a specified theoretical distribution – in this case, the normal distribution – to determine whether the sample deviates significantly from it. It is particularly suitable for continuous variables and is frequently used in psychological and social science research to evaluate normality (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012).

As shown in Table 4.4, for all three constructs the K-S test returned statistically significant results ($p < .001$), indicating clear deviations from the normal distribution. Consequently, non-parametric methods were adopted for the subsequent analyses. Spearman's rank-order correlation was employed to explore the associations among variables, as it does not assume normality and is suitable for detecting monotonic relationships (Hauke & Kossowski, 2011).

**Table 4.4 – Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test results**

| Construct | KS statistic | *p*-value |
|---|---|---|
| **Brand Activism (BA)** | 0.889 | < .001 |
| **Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA)** | 0.848 | < .001 |
| **Purchase Intention (PI)** | 0.889 | < .001 |

The correlation results are summarised in Table 4.5. BA and PBA showed a strong positive association (ρ = 0.83, $p < .001$), suggesting that respondents who evaluate Disney's activism positively are also likely to perceive it as authentic. This strong association is reflected in the Spearman correlations reported in Table 4.5. The correlation between BA and PI was moderate (ρ = 0.50, $p < .001$), indicating that brand activism may positively influence consumers' willingness to buy, although less strongly than its effect on perceived authenticity. Similarly, PBA and PI were moderately correlated (ρ = 0.48, $p < .001$), supporting the notion that authenticity plays a role in shaping consumer behaviour. The full Spearman correlation matrix and the detailed normality test outputs are presented in Appendix D.

**Table 4.5 – Spearman correlations among constructs**

| Variables | BA | PBA | PI |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Brand Activism (BA)** | 1 | 0.83*** | 0.50*** |
| **Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA)** | – | 1 | 0.48*** |
| **Purchase Intention (PI)** | – | – | 1 |

****p < .001*

## 4.4 Hypothesis Testing

To examine direct effects between Brand Activism and Purchase Intention (H1), a simple linear regression analysis was conducted using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method. This approach models the relationship between predictor and outcome variables while assuming linearity, homoscedasticity, normality of residuals, and independence of observations (Fox, J., 2016).

**Table 4.6 – Simple linear regression (BA → PI)**

| Model | β | Std. error | t | p | $R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BA → PI** | 0.672 | 0.05 | 8.40 | < .001 | 0.279 |

As shown in Table 4.6, BA significantly predicted PI (β = 0.672, $p < .001$), with the model accounting for 28% of the variance in PI ($R^2 = 0.279$), which reflects moderate explanatory power.

To evaluate the influence of potential outliers, Cook's distance was calculated. A total of 22 cases exceeded the conservative threshold of 4/(n-k-1). However, the average leverage was low (0.0029), and excluding these cases had minimal impact on the regression coefficients and model fit (β = 0.705; $R^2 = 0.296$). This confirms the robustness of the findings and corroborates H1, indicating that

Brand Activism has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention (see Table 4.6). Complete regression outputs, including model diagnostics and residual statistics, are available in Appendix E.

## 4.5 Mediating Analysis

To evaluate the mediating role of Perceived Brand Authenticity in the relationship between Brand Activism and Purchase Intention (H2), mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS macro with 5,000 bootstrap samples. This technique estimates direct and indirect effects without assuming normality of the sampling distribution, providing bias-corrected confidence intervals for greater robustness (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

**Table 4.7 – Mediation analysis (BA → PBA → PI, bootstrap 5,000)**

| Effect | β | 95% CI | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Direct (BA → PI)** | 0.452 | [0.221, 0.669] | < .001 |
| **Indirect (BA → PBA → PI)** | 0.220 | [0.044, 0.403] | .014 |
| **Total** | 0.672 | [0.552, 0.786] | < .001 |

As shown in Table 4.7, the results indicated a significant direct effect of BA on PI (β = 0.452, 95% CI [0.221, 0.669], $p < .001$) and a significant indirect effect through PBA (β = 0.220, 95% CI [0.044, 0.403], $p = .014$). The total effect remained significant (β = 0.672, 95% CI [0.552, 0.786], $p < .001$). Approximately 32.7% of the total effect was mediated through PBA, confirming its partial role in the BA → PI relationship.

To provide a clearer representation of these findings, Figure 4.2 illustrates the mediation model, highlighting both the direct and indirect effects of BA on PI through PBA.

**Figure 4.2 – Mediation model (BA → PBA → PI)**



These findings provide empirical support for both hypotheses. Brand Activism positively influences Purchase Intention (H1), and this relationship is partially mediated by Perceived Brand Authenticity (H2), highlighting the importance of perceived authenticity in consumer responses to brand-led social initiatives. Detailed mediation results are provided in Appendix F.

# 5. Discussion

Chapter 5 aims to interpret and critically reflect upon the empirical findings of this dissertation, situating them within the broader body of academic literature on Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), and Purchase Intention (PI). While the previous chapter presented the statistical outcomes of the analysis, the goal here is not merely to restate results but to discuss their significance in light of existing theoretical frameworks and empirical studies. In doing so, the discussion serves as a bridge between the empirical evidence and the conceptual foundations established in the literature review.

As outlined in chapter 2, this research was guided by two central hypotheses. The first (H1) proposed that brand activism (BA) would exert a positive effect on consumer purchase intention (PI), suggesting that activist stances taken by brands can encourage consumers to engage with and support them commercially. The second hypothesis (H2) proposed that this relationship is mediated by perceived brand authenticity (PBA), such that when activism is perceived as genuine, its effect on purchase intention is strengthened. Together, these hypotheses sought to test whether Disney Portugal's 2022 campaign in partnership with ILGA achieved not only visibility but also measurable influence on consumer behaviour, as captured in Table 4.7 and Figure 4.2 (mediation model).

The discussion is structured to move beyond the presentation of statistical outcomes and to interpret them in relation to the conceptual framework. Accordingly, it begins by examining whether the findings support the hypothesised direct effect of BA on PI, followed by an assessment of the mediating role of PBA. Building on these results, the present chapter then considers the overall validity of the proposed model, with a particular emphasis is placed on the Portuguese context which has received little attention in prior research and presents distinctive cultural dynamics (Miguel & Miranda, 2022a; Cammarota et al, 2023). By systematically reflecting on the evidence, this chapter therefore lays the groundwork for understanding how activism campaigns can be received in the Portuguese market.

As stated previously, the first hypothesis (H1) proposed that Brand Activism (BA) would have a positive correlation with consumer Purchase Intention (PI). The statistical analysis confirmed this assumption: as shown in Table 4.6, the regression results demonstrated a significant and positive association between respondents' perceptions of Disney Portugal's ABCLGBTQIA+ campaign and their reported willingness to purchase or recommend Disney products and services. In essence, this means that consumers who evaluated the campaign more favourably in terms of activism also expressed stronger intentions to engage in economic exchange with the brand.

This finding corroborates a stream of scholarship that positions BA as a driver of consumer behaviour. As seen in chapter 2, Vredenburg et al. (2020) argued that activism differs from traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) by directly addressing contentious sociopolitical issues and

eliciting affective responses from stakeholders. In similar fashion, Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) observed that activism-oriented campaigns are more likely than cause-related marketing to influence behavioural outcomes because they appeal to consumer identities and values. The present results reinforce these perspectives by suggesting that in the Portuguese market context, where LGBTQ+ issues may be more politically sensitive than in Anglo-American markets (Gato et al, 2020; Cammarota et al., 2023), activism can nonetheless stimulate purchase intention.

At the same time, the evidence challenges earlier concerns that activism inevitably entails reputational risks. Bhagwat et al. (2020) contended that brands which take sides on polarising topics risk alienating segments of the consumer base, thereby harming long-term performance. While this possibility cannot be dismissed outright, the present results suggest that positive responses outweighed negative ones within the studied sample. It is plausible that the campaign's educational framing, which centred on inclusivity and literacy rather than overt political confrontation, mitigated potential backlash, aligning with Shukla et al. (2025) who emphasised that activism perceived as constructive and socially valuable is more likely to be welcomed by consumers.

The Portuguese case thus adds nuance to the international debate. Whereas prior studies conducted in the United States have highlighted sharp partisan divides in consumer responses to activism (Eilert & Cherup, 2020), the present findings suggest that in Portugal, younger and more academically educated consumers may be comparatively open to brands engaging with LGBTQ+ causes. The demographic profile of the sample supports such interpretation: nearly 70 per cent of respondents were aged between 18 and 34, almost 90 per cent reported holding higher education qualifications (see Figures 3.1 and 3.4, and Appendix B Tables B2 and B6). These characteristics are associated in the literature with more politically progressive and liberal attitudes towards diversity and social change (Vredenburg et al., 2020), indicating a likely receptiveness to the LGBT+ campaign analysed here. As such, the positive effect observed may be partly attributable to generational and educational factors rather than to a universally shared approval of activism.

Another relevant aspect is consumers' pre-existing relationship with Disney. As the descriptive analysis indicated, a large proportion of participants reported prior consumption of Disney products and services, including Disney+ subscriptions and attendance at Disney films (see Table 4.1; Figure 4.1). Since brand familiarity and affinity are factors known to reinforce the effectiveness of activist campaigns (Bhagwat et al., 2020), it is plausible that the favourable reception of the ABCLGBTQIA+ initiative was amplified by pre-existing brand attachment, which may have functioned as a buffer against scepticism. This suggests that Disney's established presence in Portuguese consumers' lives may have strengthened the impact of BA on PI.

Nevertheless, the positive effect identified here should not be interpreted as unconditional. Media coverage of the campaign revealed polarised reactions in the wider Portuguese society, with some

columnists and commentators welcoming Disney's intervention and others criticising it as excessive or politically motivated (Pacheco Pereira, 2022a; Pacheco Pereira, 2022b; Ricardo Araújo Pereira, 2022; Oliveira, 2022; Sanches, 2022; Expresso, 2022a; Expresso, 2022b; Expresso da Manhã, 2022; Contra-Corrente, 2022; Meios & Publicidade, 2022). Such divergence reflects the contested nature of LGBTQ+ issues in Portugal, where legislative and cultural debates remain ongoing. This indicates that while H1 is supported at the empirical level, the generalisability of the finding is contingent on both demographic composition and sociopolitical climate (Eilert & Cherup, 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020).

In summary, the evidence substantiates H1: BA has a positive direct effect on PI. This confirms much of the existing literature on the commercial potential of activism, while also demonstrating that these dynamics extend beyond the Anglo-American settings where they are most often studied. However, the Portuguese case also highlights the importance of contextual and demographic variables, suggesting that activism's effectiveness is neither universal nor automatic but contingent on how campaigns are framed and by whom they are received.

The second hypothesis (H2) proposed that the relationship between BA and PI would be positively mediated by PBA. The mediation analysis confirmed this proposition: PBA emerged as a significant pathway through which BA exerted influence on PI. In other words, this means that while BA itself demonstrated a direct positive effect on PI, the strength of this effect increased substantially when respondents also perceived the campaign as authentic.

This finding is consistent with the argument advanced in recent scholarship that PBA is not a peripheral consideration but rather a pivotal mechanism in translating activist communication into consumer behaviour (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Clemente-Mediavilla et al., 2023). In particular, Gerdemann et al. (2023) conceptualised PBA as the core mediator that either amplifies or undermines the effectiveness of activism, and the results of this dissertation lend empirical support to such frameworks by showing that, in the Portuguese context, the positive association between BA and PI was significantly strengthened when PBA was high.

A crucial implication is that while BA has a direct positive impact on PI, its effect becomes markedly stronger when it is perceived as authentic. The present data suggest that consumers do not merely evaluate whether a brand engages in activism, but whether that activism appears genuine, consistent, and value-driven, aligning with the notion of *woke-washing*, where activism that is perceived as opportunistic can provoke scepticism or backlash (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Furthermore, the absence of strong negative responses in this study suggests that Disney Portugal's campaign successfully avoided such perceptions, largely due to its alignment with Disney's broader track record of supporting LGBTQ+ initiatives globally, as in partnerships with organisations such as the Point Foundation and Out in Tech U, as well as sponsoring Pride events in its theme parks including Disneyland Paris Pride and Disneyland After Dark: Pride Nite, and the launch of Pride merchandise

collections with associated donations (The Walt Disney Company, 2023a; The Walt Disney Company, 2023b; Business Insider, 2023).

The results also extend the literature by demonstrating that PBA mediates BA's influence on PI in the Portuguese consumer market. As stated before, much of the empirical work to date has examined Anglo-American contexts (Cammarota et al, 2023), and by confirming the mediating role of PBA in Portugal, this study contributes to the cross-cultural validation of theoretical models in this field. Moreover, the case study demonstrates that even when the issue at hand is politically sensitive, as LGBTQ+ activism continues to be in Portugal, the presence of authenticity can transform BA into a source of consumer support.

Descriptive evidence further supports the salience of PBA as respondents who evaluated the campaign as authentic also reported the highest intentions to purchase Disney products or services (see Table 4.5). Conversely, when authenticity was rated lower, PI was still positively influenced by BA, but the effect was noticeably weaker (see Table 4.7 and Figure 4.2). This pattern reinforces the mediating role statistically identified and underscores that while BA exerts a direct positive influence on purchase intention, perceptions of authenticity significantly amplify this effect.

Comparisons with prior studies strengthen this conclusion. Clemente-Mediavilla et al. (2023) found that PBA plays a central mediating role in translating BA into favourable consumer evaluations, while Gerdemann et al. (2023) conceptualised authenticity as the decisive mechanism that determines whether BA has a positive or negative impact on consumer outcomes. Similarly, Karikari et al. (2024) demonstrated that authenticity enhances consumer-brand relationships, which in turn shape behavioural responses such as loyalty and advocacy. The present study adds to this body of evidence by focusing explicitly on PI, confirming that PBA plays a decisive role not only in attitudinal but also in behavioural outcomes.

The strength of the mediation observed raises important theoretical considerations. While the conceptual framework positioned PBA as a mediator, the empirical results demonstrate that its role is substantial. Specifically, the direct effect of BA on PI ($\beta = 0.452$, $p < .001$) increased markedly when the indirect pathway through PBA was included, raising the total effect to $\beta = 0.672$ ($p < .001$), indicating that authenticity not only mediates but also amplifies the influence of activism on purchase intention. To put it differently, BA has a stronger effect on PI when it is perceived as authentic, highlighting PBA as a pivotal mechanism in this relationship. Accordingly, future research could investigate whether authenticity functions more broadly as a conditioning factor that shapes the extent to which activism can influence consumer behaviour.

In sum, the results strongly support H2: the positive relationship between BA and PI is significantly mediated by PBA. This mediation confirms existing theoretical models, extends them to a new cultural

setting, and underscores authenticity as a critical mechanism through which activism translates into purchase intention.

Taken together with the confirmation of H1, these findings provide robust validation of the conceptual framework proposed in this dissertation. The empirical evidence confirms the hypothesised pathways from Figure 2.1, showing that BA directly influences PI and that this effect is significantly strengthened when mediated by PBA. Additional robustness checks further support the model's stability: reliability analyses (Table 4.2), descriptive statistics (Table 4.3), and regression and mediation tests (Tables 4.6 and 4.7; Figure 4.2) collectively reinforce confidence in the validity of the framework.

Although H1 and H2 focused on the direct effect of BA on PI and the mediating role of PBA, the data also revealed several complementary insights that add nuance to these relationships. These insights concern the characteristics of the sample, the participants' prior relationship with Disney, and the broader sociocultural context in which the campaign was received.

To begin with, the demographic profile of the sample offers a relevant interpretative lens. As discussed in chapter 3, respondents were predominantly young and highly educated, with almost 70 per cent were between 18 and 34 years old, and over 87 per cent held a higher education degree (see Table 3.1; Figures 3.1 and 3.4), characteristics that have been consistently associated in the literature with greater receptivity to progressive causes and Brand Activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020). It is therefore plausible that such demographic traits partly explain the positive effect of BA on PI observed in this study. At the same time, this composition limits the generalisability of the findings, as the Portuguese population as a whole includes a larger proportion of older and less formally educated citizens (Pordata, 2024a, 2024b). Consequently, the strength of BA's effect on PI may vary substantially across different population segments.

In addition to demographic factors, consumers' pre-existing relationship with Disney's brand appears to have played a reinforcing role. A large share of participants reported prior engagement with Disney products and services, particularly through Disney+ and film attendance (Table 4.1; Figure 4.1). Previous research has shown that when consumers already identify with a brand or feel emotionally connected to it, they are more likely to respond positively to its activist initiatives (Bhagwat et al., 2020). Such familiarity may have heightened perceptions of authenticity and increased willingness to support the brand commercially. This interpretation aligns with studies framing authenticity as a relational construct – built on accumulated brand experiences over time (Hydock et al., 2021; Althuizen & Mukherjee, 2022; Morhart et al., 2015). Accordingly, BA may prove more effective for brands with well-established reputations and consumer attachment, such as Disney Portugal, while smaller or lesser-known brands might struggle to elicit similar responses.

The interplay between activism, authenticity, and behavioural intention also reveals important nuances. Although BA was generally evaluated positively (see Table 4.3), the highest levels of purchase

intention were found among respondents who also perceived the campaign as authentic. This finding reinforces the mediation effect: while BA alone was positively associated with PI (Table 4.6), the relationship strengthened considerably when authenticity was high (Table 4.7; Figure 4.2). Conversely, participants who recognised Disney's activism but doubted its authenticity reported notably lower purchase intentions, sometimes even below those who were neutral toward the campaign (see Appendix D, Tables D2, D3.1 and D3.2). This suggests that perceived inauthenticity may not simply weaken the positive impact of BA but actively undermine consumer willingness to buy.

Finally, these results must be interpreted against the backdrop of Portugal's sociocultural landscape. Much of the existing empirical work on BA focuses on Anglo-American contexts, where partisan divides shape consumer reactions to activism (Eilert & Cherup, 2020; Bhagwat et al., 2020). In Portugal, however, activism intersects with different dynamics. Although LGBTQ+ rights are legally recognised, topics such as inclusive language and gender representation remain contested. This tension was reflected in the polarised media coverage of Disney's campaign, with opinion pieces alternating between praise for its inclusivity and criticism of its perceived ideological agenda (Pacheco Pereira, 2022a, 2022b; Ricardo Araújo Pereira, 2022; Oliveira, 2022; Sanches, 2022; Expresso, 2022a, 2022b; *Expresso da Manhã*, 2022; *Contra-Corrente*, 2022; *Meios & Publicidade*, 2022).

Within this context, survey data indicate that respondents generally evaluated the initiative favourably, as shown by the overall positive ratings of the main constructs (see Table 4.3 and Appendix D, Tables D1–D3). These responses were largely concentrated among younger, urban, and highly educated participants, groups particularly well represented in the sample (Table 3.1; Figures 3.1 to 3.3). While the surveyed sample tended to evaluate BA positively, this divergence highlights the contextual fragility of the BA-PBA-PI relationship, as favourable reactions among these demographic groups may coexist with broader societal resistance and contestation. As prior research highlights, activism on divisive issues can simultaneously foster support and backlash depending on cultural and political orientations (Eilert & Cherup, 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020).

The evidence discussed above indicates that the BA-PBA-PI relationship is shaped by a combination of demographic, relational, and contextual influences as factors such as age, education, and prior brand engagement appear to strengthen the positive pathway observed in this study, whereas broader societal polarisation may impose boundaries on its effectiveness. These observations should therefore be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive, underscoring the need to situate quantitative results within both sample characteristics and the wider cultural context in which the campaign was received (see Table 3.1; Figures 3.1 to 3.3; Table 4.1; Figure 4.1).

In light of these findings, this chapter has interpreted the empirical results through the lens of the conceptual framework and the broader literature on BA, PBA, and PI. The analysis confirms both proposed hypotheses and reinforces the theoretical foundations established in chapter 2. As shown in

Table 4.6, Brand Activism exerts a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention, while Table 4.7 and Figure 4.2 demonstrate that this relationship is further strengthened through Perceived Brand Authenticity. These results validate the conceptual model depicted in Figure 2.1 and extend it to the Portuguese context, thereby broadening current understanding of consumer responses to brand activism.

Overall, the findings highlight authenticity as a decisive mechanism linking activism and behavioural intention (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Gerdemann et al., 2023). By confirming the robustness of the model and clarifying the contextual factors that shape its effects, the discussion underscores the importance of authenticity in translating activist messaging into consumer action.

These insights provide the foundation for the concluding chapter, which synthesises the main contributions, discusses theoretical and managerial implications, recognises the study's limitations, and outlines directions for future research.

# 6. Conclusion

Building on the preceding discussion, chapter 6 – the final chapter – integrates the study's core insights and clarifies their significance. Section 6.1 revisits the research questions to synthesize the main empirical findings, articulating the theoretical and managerial contributions that emerge from the relationships among Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), and Purchase Intention (PI) in the Portuguese context. Section 6.2 then adopts a reflexive stance to acknowledge the study's limitations and to consider their implications for interpretation and generalization. Finally, Section 6.3 outlines concrete avenues for future research that logically extend from the evidence presented, indicating how subsequent work can deepen, test, and broaden the claims advanced here.

## 6.1 Conclusions

This dissertation set out to examine how BA influences consumer behaviour, specifically whether its effect on PI is mediated by PBA. The study contributes to marketing and consumer behaviour scholarship by extending empirical knowledge to the Portuguese context, a setting that remains largely underexplored in the literature (Cammarota et al., 2023). Through quantitative analysis of consumer responses to Disney Portugal's 2022 LGBTQIA+ initiative, the research provides novel insights into how activism is received in a market where sociopolitical debates remain contested (Pacheco Pereira, 2022a, 2022b; Ricardo Araújo Pereira, 2022; Miguel & Miranda, 2022a), thereby addressing a recognised gap in existing work that has focused predominantly on Anglo-American environments (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Cammarota et al., 2023).

The findings indicate that BA exerts a positive influence on PI. This result corroborates prior studies that have demonstrated that activism can go beyond the traditional outcomes of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), directly stimulating consumer behaviour (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). The present dissertation adds to this body of knowledge by showing that such effects extend to Portugal, where activism surrounding issues of diversity and inclusion remains polarising in public discourse (Expresso, 2022a; Contra-Corrente, 2022). This also suggests that the theoretical scope of the relationship between activism and behavioural intention is broader than previously assumed and that activism can be commercially effective even under conditions of controversy.

The results also highlight the central mediating role of PBA. Prior scholarship has suggested that authenticity shapes the outcomes of activism (Clemente-Mediavilla et al., 2023; Gerdemann et al., 2023), but empirical tests have remained scarce (Cammarota et al., 2023). The evidence presented here demonstrates that activism significantly influences PI through authenticity, meaning that consumers are more likely to translate activist initiatives into willingness to purchase when they perceive such initiatives as genuine. This finding underscores the importance of credibility in marketing

strategies that involve sociopolitical positioning and contributes to debates on *woke-washing* by showing that perceptions of authenticity are decisive in determining whether activism produces favourable outcomes (Glavas & Kelley, 2014; Karikari et al., 2024).

In addition, the results point to the potential influence of demographic and relational characteristics on the pathway linking activism, authenticity, and purchase intention (BA-PBA-PI). The sample was predominantly young, urban, and highly educated, groups that have been associated with greater receptivity to progressive causes (Vredenburg et al., 2020), consisting of a demographic profile which may help explain the positive responses observed. At the same time, descriptive evidence indicated that many participants had prior engagement with Disney products, suggesting that brand familiarity may have facilitated perceptions of authenticity and willingness to purchase (Glavas & Kelley, 2014; Karikari et al., 2024). Although these factors were not directly modelled as moderating variables, they indicate that responses to activism are likely to vary across consumer groups and in relation to brand-consumer relationships, an aspect that warrants further investigation.

Overall, the theoretical contributions of this dissertation can be summarised as follows. The study extends empirical research on BA to the Portuguese market, thereby enriching a literature that has so far concentrated predominantly on Anglo-American contexts. It also reinforces the mediating role of PBA, demonstrating that authenticity is a pivotal mechanism through which activism translates into consumer behaviour. Furthermore, by identifying demographic characteristics and prior brand engagement as potential explanatory factors for variations in consumer responses, the research adds nuance to existing theoretical models. Together, these insights advance the conceptual understanding of activism as a marketing strategy and underscore authenticity as a necessary condition for its effectiveness.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, the study also offers practical insights for managers and practitioners. The evidence suggests that activism can yield commercial benefits, provided it is grounded in authenticity. Managers should, therefore, avoid treating activism as a superficial or opportunistic tactic and instead embed it as a strategic, value-driven commitment. Authenticity requires alignment between internal practices, such as workplace policies and diversity initiatives, and external actions, such as transparent communication and partnerships with credible organisations (Glavas & Kelley, 2014), with campaigns being more likely to generate consumer support when they offer tangible social value, extend beyond symbolic gestures, and are sustained over time. Moreover, as the results suggest that receptivity varies across demographic groups, managers should adopt segmentation strategies, tailoring communication to receptive audiences while anticipating and preparing for critical responses from more sceptical segments (Turker, 2009a). Finally, by embedding activism into long-term brand strategy rather than treating it as an isolated campaign, firms can

strengthen consumer trust and make activist initiatives more likely to be perceived as authentic, thereby enhancing their impact on Purchase Intention (Karikari et al., 2024).

In sum, this dissertation demonstrates that BA, when executed authentically, is capable of generating meaningful behavioural outcomes in the Portuguese market. It contributes to theory by broadening the empirical base of activism research, reinforcing the role of authenticity as a key mechanism, and pointing to demographic and relational factors that shape responses. At the same time, it offers practical guidance for managers, underlining authenticity, credibility, and strategic integration as the conditions under which activism can strengthen Purchase Intention in sustainable and credible ways.

## 6.2 Limitations

As with any empirical research, this dissertation is subject to limitations that must be acknowledged in order to contextualise the findings and to delimit the claims that can be made. These limitations do not undermine the contribution of the study; rather, they provide an opportunity to identify avenues for further investigation.

A first limitation concerns the questionnaire's sample. As stated, the respondents were predominantly young, urban, and highly educated, reflecting the demographic profile that is typically more receptive to progressive causes (Vredenburg et al., 2020). While this composition is theoretically informative, it also constrains the generalisability of the findings to the wider Portuguese population, where attitudes towards issues of diversity and inclusion may be more heterogeneous (Pacheco Pereira, 2022a; Oliveira, 2022). The possible overrepresentation of progressive segments in the sample may therefore have amplified the positive effect of Brand Activism on Purchase Intention. Future studies should aim for more balanced samples that include a wider socio-demographic spectrum in order to capture potential divergences across population groups.

A second limitation relates to the methodological approach, as this study employed a cross-sectional, quantitative survey design. While this design is appropriate for testing hypothesised relationships between Brand Activism, Perceived Brand Authenticity, and Purchase Intention, it does not capture how these perceptions and behaviours may evolve over time (Bryman, 2016). As such, causal claims must be treated with caution. A longitudinal or experimental design would allow for stronger inferences about the temporal dynamics of activism, authenticity, and consumer behaviour.

Third, the empirical focus on a single brand and campaign – Disney Portugal's 2022 LGBTQIA+ initiative – provides valuable contextual specificity but also narrows the scope of inference. Disney is a global brand with an established reputation and strong consumer-brand relationships, which may have facilitated perceptions of authenticity. The effects observed in this study may therefore differ in the

case of less familiar or less trusted brands (Gerdemann et al., 2023). Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as illustrative of how activism operates in one brand context rather than as universally applicable across all brands.

Finally, the operationalisation of constructs also presents limitations because, while validated measurement scales were employed, authenticity and activism are complex, multidimensional constructs that may not be fully captured by survey items alone (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews could have provided richer insights into how consumers make sense of activism and authenticity in their own words. This limitation highlights the importance of methodological pluralism in advancing research on sociopolitical marketing strategies.

In sum, the limitations of this study primarily concern the demographic profile of the sample, the cross-sectional nature of the design, the focus on a single brand, and the operationalisation of key constructs. Acknowledging these boundaries enhances the transparency of the research and provides a foundation for future work to build upon and extend the insights presented here.

## 6.3 Directions for Future Research

The limitations outlined above open several promising avenues for future research. By addressing these, subsequent studies can further refine theoretical understanding of the interplay between Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), and Purchase Intention (PI), while also generating insights with broader managerial relevance.

First, future work should employ more diverse and representative samples. Given that this study's respondents were primarily young, urban, and highly educated, extending the analysis to include older, consumers from more rural national districts and/or less educated populations, would provide a more complete picture of how activism resonates across Portuguese society. Comparative studies between progressive and conservative segments would be particularly valuable for examining the conditions under which activism leads to divergent consumer responses (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Second, longitudinal and experimental designs should be pursued to strengthen causal inferences. While the cross-sectional survey employed here captured relationships at a single point in time, activism campaigns often evolve, and consumer responses may shift as they encounter sustained initiatives or counter-narratives (Bryman, 2016). Experimental designs could manipulate different features of activism, such as message framing, type of cause, or level of brand-cause fit to assess their impact on perceptions of authenticity and purchase intention.

Third, broadening the empirical focus to multiple brands and sectors would enable greater external validity. Disney's established reputation – namely in Portugal – and global reach may have facilitated perceptions of authenticity, whereas smaller or less trusted brands may face different challenges

(Gerdemann et al., 2023). As so, cross-brand or cross-sector studies could test whether the mediating role of authenticity is consistent across contexts or whether its strength varies according to brand familiarity, industry characteristics, or cause sensitivity.

Fourth, the complexity of authenticity and activism warrants methodological pluralism. Qualitative research, such as interviews or focus groups, could capture the nuances of how consumers interpret activist initiatives in their own terms (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). For example, mixed-method designs, combining quantitative rigour with qualitative depth, would be especially valuable in disentangling the mechanisms through which activism translates into consumer support or resistance.

Finally, there is scope for extending the conceptual framework to include moderating variables. For example, individual-level factors such as political ideology, moral values, or prior brand engagement may condition the effect of activism on behavioural outcomes (Glavas & Kelley, 2014; Karikari et al., 2024), and exploring such moderators would enrich theoretical understanding by clarifying when and for whom activism is most effective.

In conclusion, while this dissertation has provided evidence that Brand Activism, when perceived as authentic, can positively influence Purchase Intention in the Portuguese market, the avenues identified above offer fertile ground for deepening and broadening this knowledge. Pursuing these directions will not only refine academic theory but also equip managers with the insights necessary to design activist initiatives that are credible, strategically integrated, and socially impactful.

Ultimately, continued investigation into the interplay between activism, authenticity, and consumer purchase intention can contribute to a more comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of how brands engage with their expanding role in contemporary sociopolitical life.

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# 8. Appendices

## Appendix A – Survey Questionnaire

**Survey questionnaire used in the data collection (full version)**

# Questionário - Campanha ABCLGBTQIA+ da Disney Portugal

* Indica uma pergunta obrigatória

### Introdução e Consentimento Informado

Bem-vindo e obrigado por participar neste questionário.

Este estudo faz parte de uma dissertação de Mestrado em Gestão de Empresas da **ISCTE Business School**, e é desenvolvido pelo aluno **Miguel Saraiva Mateus**.

O **objectivo** é perceber de que forma o apoio da marca Disney à inclusão LGBT+, através da campanha realizada em 2022 pela Disney Portugal em parceria com a ILGA, influencia a opinião dos consumidores e a sua intenção de comprar produtos ou serviços da marca Disney.

A participação é **voluntária, anónima e confidencial**. Os dados recolhidos serão utilizados exclusivamente para fins académicos e analisados de forma agregada, nunca individual.

O questionário demora **10 minutos** a preencher.

Pedimos que responda de forma sincera, com base na sua **opinião e experiência pessoal**.

**Quem pode participar?**

- **Pessoas com 18 anos ou mais.**
- **Residentes em Portugal.**
- **Que tenham consumido produtos ou serviços da Disney nos últimos 12 meses.**

Ao continuar, está a autorizar a utilização das suas respostas para este estudo.

Em caso de dúvidas, pode contactar: mjssm@iscte-iul.pt

Muito obrigado pelo seu tempo e colaboração.

## Grupo I – Seleção Inicial

1. Tem **18 anos ou mais**? *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
- Sim
- Não

2. Reside actualmente em **Portugal**? *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
- Sim
- Não

3. Consumiu alguns destes **produtos ou serviços Disney** nos últimos **12 meses**? (Selecione todos os que se aplicam)
*Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.*
- Assino ou vejo conteúdos Disney+
- Assisti a filmes da Disney no cinema (Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars)
- Vejo séries no canal FOX Life/Star Life ou nos canais Disney (Disney Junior, Disney Channel)
- Comprei produtos Disney (roupa, brinquedos, material escolar)
- Li livros ou revistas da Disney
- Joguei videojogos da Disney (ex: Kingdom of Hearts, Disney Dreamlight Valley)
- Visitei a Disneyland Paris ou Orlando
- Participei em eventos Disney (ex: Disney on Ice)

## Grupo II – Descrição da Campanha ABCLGBTQIA+ (Disney Portugal x ILGA, 2022)

Em junho de **2022**, a **Disney Portugal** lançou, em parceria com a **ILGA Portugal** e o canal **FOX Life**, a **campanha ABCLGBTQIA+**.

A ILGA Portugal é uma associação portuguesa sem fins lucrativos promotora dos direitos das pessoas LGBT+ em Portugal (Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Trans e Outros).
ILGA significa International Lesbian, Gay, Bissexual, Trans and Intersex Association.

O **objectivo** foi promover a inclusão e ajudar as pessoas a compreenderem melhor os termos e conceitos ligados ao género e orientação sexual.

A campanha foi inspirada na série Sort Of, transmitida na FOX Life, que tem como protagonista uma personagem não binária (não se identifica exclusivamente como homem ou mulher).

A campanha criou um **glossário online gratuito** - www.abclgbtqia.com - com explicações em texto, áudio e vídeo sobre termos LGBT+.

Foram também transmitidos vídeos na televisão com testemunhos reais de pessoas a explicarem os termos com base na sua experiência.

A campanha esteve activa em 2022, foi replicada em universidades sénior, e gerou grande impacto em Portugal - com milhares de visualizações e partilhas, bem como debate na imprensa nacional sobre as escolhas das definições no glossário.

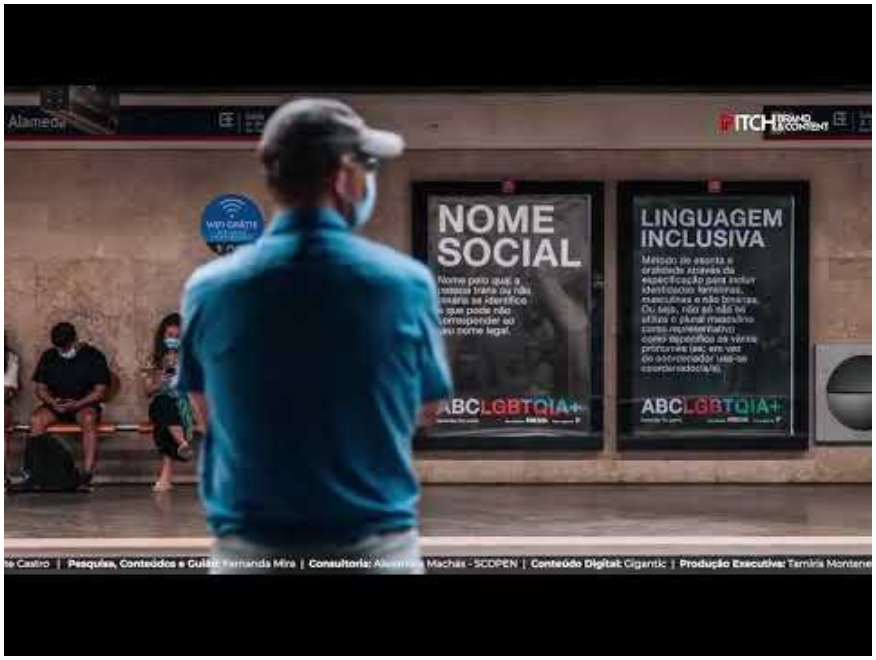
Se pretender, pode ver de seguida exemplos visuais - cartazes e vídeo - para recordar ou conhecer a campanha.

## Elementos Visuais da Campanha ABCLGBTQIA+




## Vídeo sobre a Campanha ABCLGBTQIA+

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piAUARFVkgQ



## Grupo III – Activismo de Marca

As próximas questões têm o objectivo de conhecer a sua **opinião sobre a campanha ABCLGBTQIA+** da Disney com a ILGA.

As respostas vão de 1 (Discordo totalmente) a 5 (Concordo totalmente).

4. A Disney tem em consideração problemas sociais. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

5. A Disney visa contribuir para a mudança social. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

6. A Disney procura apoiar grupos marginalizados e/ou oprimidos. *
Marcar apenas uma oval.
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

7. A Disney age tendo em conta os interesses da sociedade, procurando ter impacto além da própria marca/empresa. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

8. A Disney defende causas sociais, exercendo pressão em actores institucionais (como governos, assembleia da república, reguladores, comunicação social, escolas ou universidades). *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

9. A causa LGBT+ está logicamente relacionada com a Disney. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

10. A mensagem defendida sobre LGBT+ é relevante para os consumidores da Disney. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

11. É aceitável que a Disney defenda causas como a LGBT+. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

12. A mensagem LGBT+ alinha-se com os atributos dos produtos/serviços da Disney. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

13. Acredito que o desejo genuíno da Disney em promover melhorias na sociedade foi o que motivou a decisão da marca de apoiar a causa social LGBT+. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

14. Indique o seu nível de concordância com a posição adoptada pela Disney sobre a causa LGBT+. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

## Grupo IV – Autenticidade da Marca

As próximas questões têm como objetivo conhecer a sua opinião sobre a **autenticidade da Disney** na defesa do tema LGBT+.

As respostas vão de 1 (Discordo totalmente) a 5 (Concordo totalmente).

15. A Disney está a ser fiel a si própria com a posição assumida na campanha LGBT+. *

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

16. A actuação da Disney nesta campanha LGBT+ está alinhada com os seus valores. *

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

17. A Disney está a defender aquilo em que acredita. *

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

18. As ações e comunicações da Disney relativamente à campanha LGBT+ são consistentes ao longo do tempo. *

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

19. A forma como a Disney comunica as suas mensagens em relação ao tema LGBT+ preserva o que a marca significa para mim. *

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

## Grupo V – Intenção de Compra

As próximas questões têm como objetivo compreender as suas **intenções de compra** de produtos ou serviços da Disney.

As respostas vão de 1 (Discordo totalmente) a 5 (Concordo totalmente).

20. Consideraria comprar produtos ou serviços da Disney. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

21. Tenciono comprar produtos ou serviços da Disney. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

22. Recomendaria produtos ou serviços da Disney a outras pessoas. *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
Discordo totalmente
1 2 3 4 5
Concordo totalmente

## Grupo VI – Dados Sociodemográficos

Para finalizar, pedimos algumas informações gerais sobre si.

Estas informações serão usadas exclusivamente para fins estatísticos, e tratadas de forma anónima e confidencial.

23. Idade *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-65
- 66+

24. Sexo *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
- Masculino
- Feminino
- Prefiro não responder

25. Nacionalidade(s) *

Outra:
*Marcar tudo o que for aplicável.*
Portuguesa

26. Distrito de Residência *
*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
- Aveiro
- Beja
- Braga
- Bragança
- Castelo Branco
- Coimbra
- Évora
- Faro
- Guarda
- Leiria
- Lisboa
- Portalegre
- Porto
- Santarém
- Setúbal
- Viana do Castelo
- Vila Real
- Viseu
- Açores
- Madeira

27. Nível de Escolaridade *

*Marcar apenas uma oval.*
- Ensino Básico (até 9º ano)
- Ensino Secundário (até 12º ano)
- Ensino Superior (Licenciatura, Mestrado, Doutoramento)

## Fim
**Muito obrigado pela sua participação!**
Caso tenha dúvidas ou comentários sobre o questionário, utilize o e-mail: mjssm@iscte-iul.pt

# Appendix B – Descriptive Statistics (Full Tables and Figures)

**Table B1 – Screening questions and responses to the Questionnaire**

| Question | Answer | Absolute frequency (n) | Relative frequency (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Tem 18 anos ou mais?** | Não | 1 | 0.3 |
| | Sim | 349 | 99.7% |
| **Reside actualmente em Portugal?** | Não | 0 | 0 |
| | Sim | 350 | 100 |

**Figure B1 – Screening questions and responses (to the ABCLGBTQIA+ Campaign Questionnaire)**

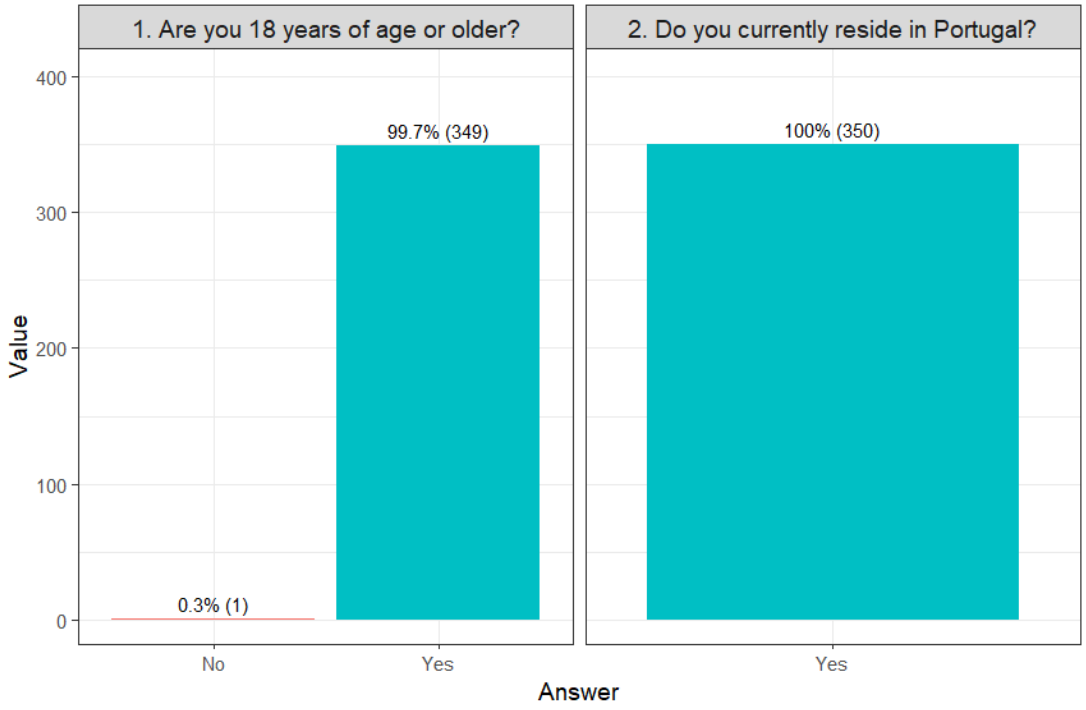


**Figure B2 – Disney products/services consumption habits of respondents (to the ABCLGBTQIA+ Campaign Questionnaire)**

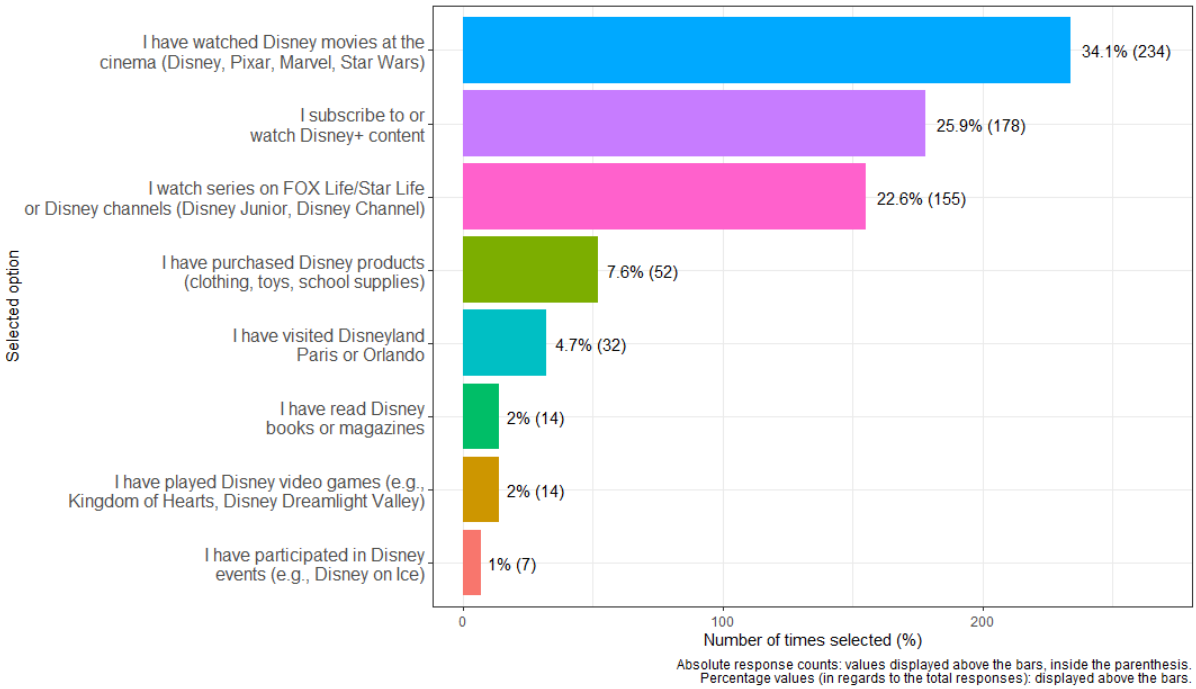



**Table B2 – Age distribution of respondents (to the ABCLGBTQIA+ Campaign Questionnaire)**

| Age | Absolute frequency (n) | Relative frequency (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **18-24** | 86 | 24.6 |
| **25-34** | 158 | 45.1 |
| **35-44** | 19 | 5.4 |
| **45-54** | 50 | 14.3 |
| **55-65** | 28 | 8 |
| **66+** | 9 | 2.6 |
| **Total** | 350 | 100 |

**Table B3 – Sex distribution of respondents (to the ABCLGBTQIA+ Campaign Questionnaire)**

| Sex | Absolute frequency (n) | Relative frequency (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Female** | 179 | 51.1 |
| **Male** | 168 | 48 |
| **Prefer not to answer** | 3 | 0.9 |
| **Total** | 350 | 100 |

**Table B4 – Nationality of respondents (to the ABCLGBTQIA+ Campaign Questionnaire)**

| Nationality | Absolute frequency (n) | Relative frequency (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **German** | 1 | 0.3 |
| **Angolan** | 1 | 0.3 |
| **Brazilian** | 7 | 2 |
| **Portuguese** | 340 | 97.1 |
| **Portuguese & British** | 1 | 0.3 |
| **Total** | 350 | 100 |

**Figure B3 – Nationality of respondents (to the ABCLGBTQIA+ Campaign Questionnaire)**

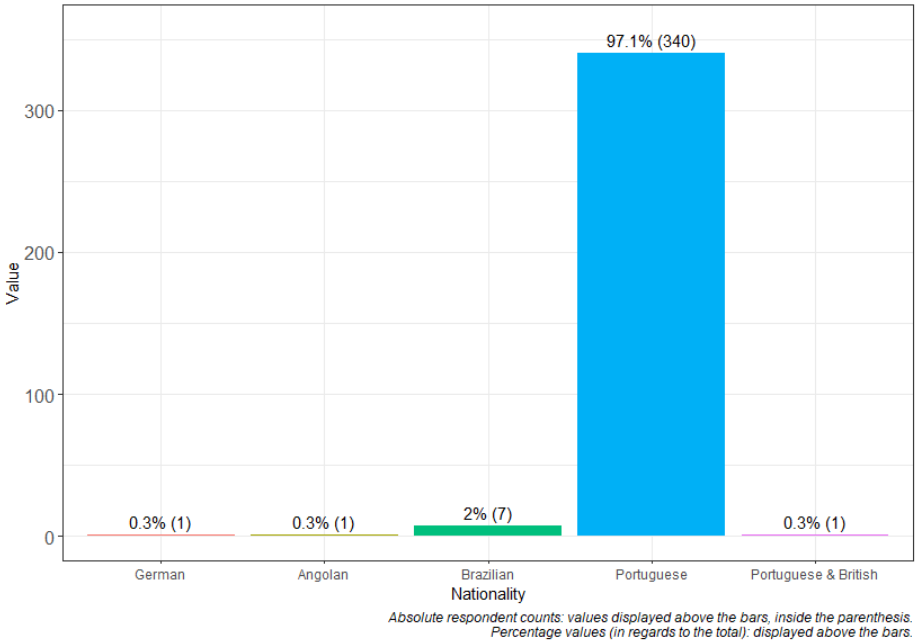


**Table B5 – District of residence of respondents (to the ABCLGBTQIA+ Campaign Questionnaire)**

| District | Absolute frequency (n) | Relative frequency (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Açores** | 2 | 0.6 |
| **Aveiro** | 2 | 0.6 |
| **Beja** | 4 | 1.1 |
| **Braga** | 7 | 2 |
| **Castelo Branco** | 4 | 1.1 |
| **Coimbra** | 2 | 0.6 |
| **Évora** | 95 | 27.1 |
| **Faro** | 3 | 0.9 |
| **Guarda** | 1 | 0.3 |
| **Leiria** | 8 | 2.3 |
| **Lisboa** | 173 | 49.4 |
| **Portalegre** | 4 | 1.1 |
| **Porto** | 10 | 2.9 |
| **Santarém** | 2 | 0.6 |
| **Setúbal** | 31 | 8.9 |
| **Viana do Castelo** | 1 | 0.3 |
| **Viseu** | 1 | 0.3 |
| **Total** | 350 | 100 |

**Table B6 – Level of education of respondents (to the ABCLGBTQIA+ Campaign Questionnaire)**

| Level of education | Absolute Frequency (n) | Relative Frequency (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Basic education** | 4 | 1.1 |
| **Secondary education** | 40 | 11.4 |
| **Higher education** | 306 | 87.4 |
| **Total** | 350 | 100 |

# Appendix C – Internal Consistency Tests (Cronbach's Alpha)

**Table C1.1 – Reliability analysis for Brand Activism scale**

| Statistic | Value | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| **Cronbach's Alpha** | 0.90 | Excellent internal consistency |
| **Standardized Alpha** | 0.90 | Reliability when controlling for item variance |
| **Average Inter-Item Correlation** | 0.46 | Moderate positive association between items |

**Table C1.2 – 95% Confidence Intervals for Alpha (BA)**

| Method | Lower Bound | Alpha | Upper Bound |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Feldt** | 0.89 | 0.90 | 0.92 |
| **Duhachek** | 0.89 | 0.90 | 0.92 |

**Table C1.3 – Average inter-item correlation for Brand Activism (and each item's contribution to total scale reliability if they were individually eliminated)**

| Item | Alpha if Dropped | Avg. r | Variance of r |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Disney considers social problems.** | 0.89 | 0.45 | 0.028 |
| **2. Disney aims to contribute to social change.** | 0.89 | 0.46 | 0.025 |
| **3. Disney supports marginalized/oppressed groups.** | 0.89 | 0.45 | 0.027 |
| **4. Disney acts considering societal interests beyond itself.** | 0.89 | 0.45 | 0.027 |
| **5. Disney defends social causes, pressuring institutions (government, media, schools, etc.).** | 0.90 | 0.47 | 0.025 |
| **6. The LGBT+ cause is logically related to Disney.** | 0.90 | 0.47 | 0.030 |
| **7. The LGBT+ message is relevant for Disney consumers.** | 0.89 | 0.46 | 0.025 |
| **8. It is acceptable for Disney to defend causes like LGBT+.** | 0.90 | 0.47 | 0.020 |
| **9. The LGBT+ message aligns with Disney's products/services.** | 0.89 | 0.45 | 0.025 |
| **10. Disney's genuine desire to promote social improvements motivated its support of LGBT+.** | 0.89 | 0.45 | 0.031 |
| **11. Agreement with Disney's stance on the LGBT+ cause.** | 0.89 | 0.45 | 0.025 |

**Table C2.1 – Reliability analysis for Perceived Brand Authenticity scale**

| Statistic | Value | Description |
|---|---|---|
| **Cronbach's Alpha** | 0.91 | Overall internal consistency of the five items |
| **Standardized Alpha** | 0.91 | Alpha using standardized item variances |
| **Average Inter-Item Correlation** | 0.66 | Mean correlation across item pairs |

**Table C2.2 – Confidence Intervals for Alpha (PBA)**

| Method | Lower Bound | Alpha | Upper Bound |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Feldt** | 0.89 | 0.91 | 0.92 |
| **Duhachek** | 0.89 | 0.91 | 0.92 |

**Table C2.3– Average inter-item correlations for Perceived Brand Authenticity (and each item's contribution to total scale reliability if they were individually eliminated)**

| Item | Alpha if Dropped | Avg. r | Variance of r |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Disney is being true to itself with the position it has taken in the LGBT+ campaign.** | 0.86 | 0.62 | 0.0062 |
| **2. Disney's actions in this LGBT+ campaign are aligned with its values.** | 0.87 | 0.62 | 0.0057 |
| **3. Disney is standing up for what it believes in.** | 0.89 | 0.66 | 0.0140 |
| **4. Disney's actions and communications regarding the LGBT+ campaign are consistent over time.** | 0.91 | 0.71 | 0.0066 |
| **5. The way Disney communicates its LGBT+ messages preserves what the brand means to me.** | 0.89 | 0.68 | 0.0101 |

**Table C3.1 – Reliability analysis for Purchase Intention scale**

| Statistic | Value | Description |
|---|---|---|
| **Cronbach's Alpha** | 0.92 | Overall internal consistency using raw scores |
| **Standardized Alpha** | 0.92 | Alpha using standardized item variances |
| **Average Inter-Item Correlation** | 0.78 | Mean correlation across item pairs |

**Table C3.2 – Confidence Intervals for Alpha (PI)**

| Method | Lower Bound | Alpha | Upper Bound |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Feldt** | 0.90 | 0.92 | 0.93 |
| **Duhachek** | 0.90 | 0.92 | 0.93 |

**Table C3.3 – Average inter-item correlations for Purchase Intention (and each item's contribution to total scale reliability if they were individually eliminated)**

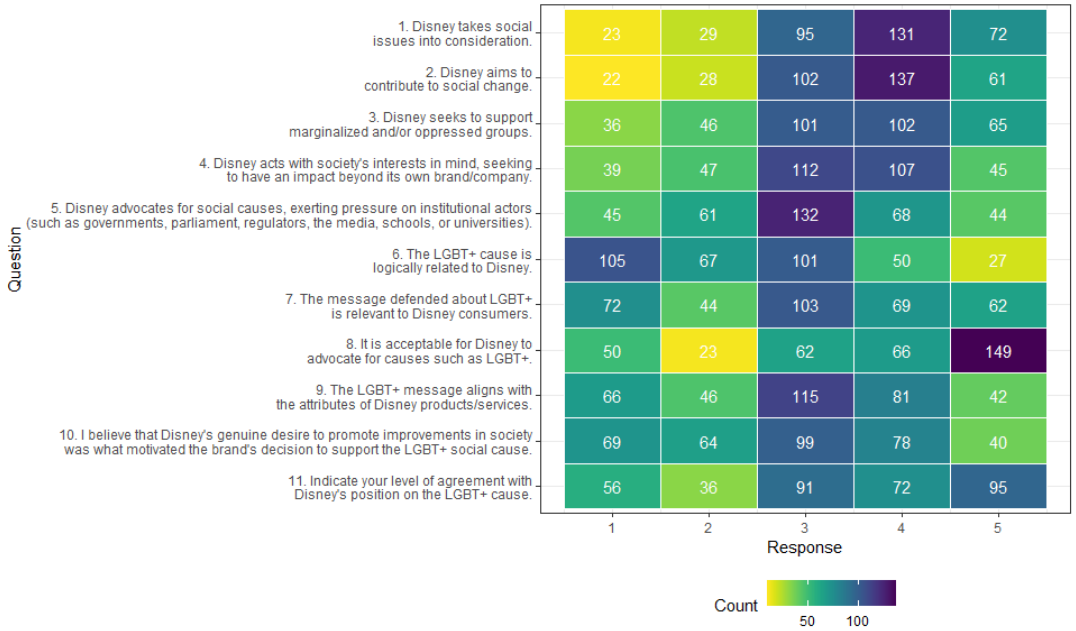
| Item Statement | Alpha if Dropped | Avg. r |
|---|---|---|
| **1. I would consider buying Disney products or services.** | 0.85 | 0.74 |
| **2. I intend to buy Disney products or services.** | 0.88 | 0.78 |
| **3. I would recommend Disney products or services to others.** | 0.91 | 0.83 |

# Appendix D – Answers for Brand Activism, Perceived Brand Authenticity and Purchase Intention (Full Tables and Figures)

**Table D1 – Distribution of Brand Activism scores**

| Question | Answer distribution | | | | | Mean | Stand. Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| 1. Disney takes social issues into consideration. | 6.57 | 8.29 | 27.14 | 37.43 | 20.57 | 3.57 | 1.10 |
| 2. Disney aims to contribute to social change. | 6.29 | 8.00 | 29.14 | 39.14 | 17.43 | 3.53 | 1.07 |
| 3. Disney seeks to support marginalized and/or oppressed groups.\ | 10.29 | 13.14 | 28.86 | 29.14 | 18.57 | 3.33 | 1.21 |
| 4. Disney acts with society's interests in mind, seeking to have an impact beyond its own brand/company. | 11.14 | 13.43 | 32.00 | 30.57 | 12.86 | 3.21 | 1.17 |
| 5. Disney advocates for social causes, exerting pressure on institutional actors (such as governments, parliament, regulators, the media, schools, or universities). | 12.86 | 17.43 | 37.71 | 19.43 | 12.57 | 3.01 | 1.18 |
| 6. The LGBT+ cause is logically related to Disney. | 30.00 | 19.14 | 28.86 | 14.29 | 7.71 | 2.51 | 1.27 |
| 7. The message defended about LGBT+ is relevant to Disney consumers. | 20.57 | 12.57 | 29.43 | 19.71 | 17.71 | 3.01 | 1.36 |
| 8. It is acceptable for Disney to advocate for causes such as LGBT+. | 14.29 | 6.57 | 17.71 | 18.86 | 42.57 | 3.69 | 1.44 |
| 9. The LGBT+ message aligns with the attributes of Disney products/services. | 18.86 | 13.14 | 32.86 | 23.14 | 12.00 | 2.96 | 1.27 |
| 10. I believe that Disney's genuine desire to promote improvements in society was what motivated the brand's decision to support the LGBT+ social cause. | 19.71 | 18.29 | 28.29 | 22.29 | 11.43 | 2.87 | 1.28 |
| 11. Indicate your level of agreement with Disney's position on the LGBT+ cause. | 16.00 | 10.29 | 26.00 | 20.57 | 27.14 | 3.33 | 1.39 |
| **Mean** | 15.64 | 12.87 | 29.11 | 25.68 | 18.68 | 3.18 | 1.25 |

## Figure D1.1 – Distribution of Brand Activism answers from respondents




## Figure D1.2 – Distribution of Brand Activism answers from respondents



**Table D2 – Distribution of Perceived Brand Authenticity scores**

| Question | Answer distribution | | | | | Mean | Stand. Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| **1. Disney is staying true to itself with its stance on the LGBT+ campaign** | 16.86 | 15.14 | 33.71 | 22.86 | 11.43 | 2.97 | 1.23 |
| **2. Disney's actions in this LGBT+ campaign are in line with its values** | 14.57 | 10.57 | 35.14 | 26.29 | 13.43 | 3.13 | 1.21 |
| **3. Disney is standing up for what it believes in.** | 14.00 | 16.29 | 36.00 | 21.14 | 12.57 | 3.02 | 1.20 |
| **4. Disney's actions and communications regarding the LGBT+ campaign are consistent over time.** | 12.86 | 19.14 | 40.57 | 22.00 | 5.43 | 2.88 | 1.06 |
| **5. The way Disney communicates its messages regarding LGBT+ issues preserves what the brand means to me.** | 19.43 | 15.14 | 30.29 | 21.14 | 14.00 | 2.95 | 1.30 |
| **Mean** | 15.94 | 15.26 | 35.14 | 22.69 | 11.77 | 2.99 | 1.20 |

**Figure D2.1 – Distribution of Perceived Brand Authenticity answers from respondents**

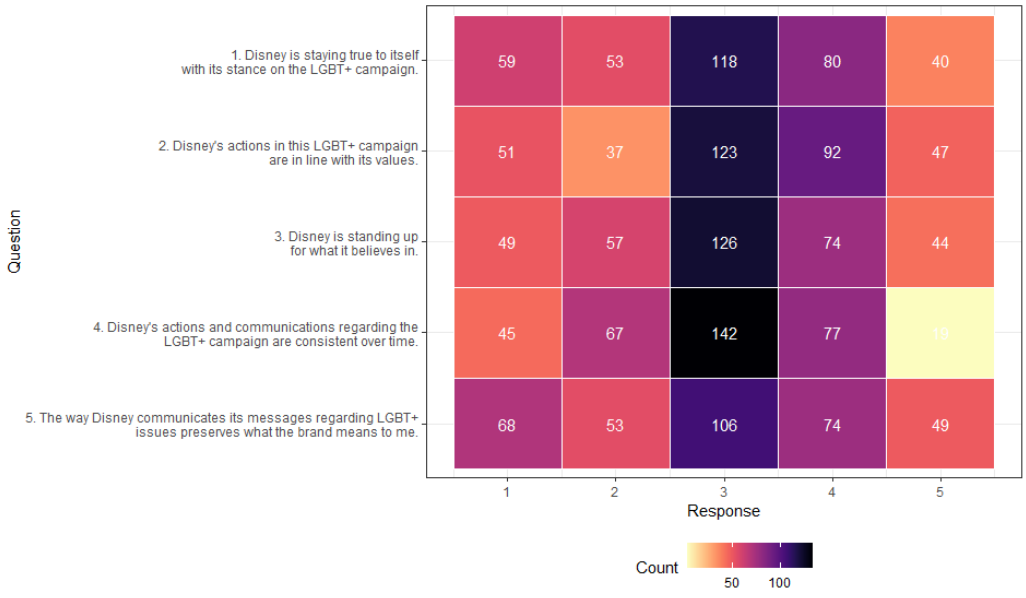
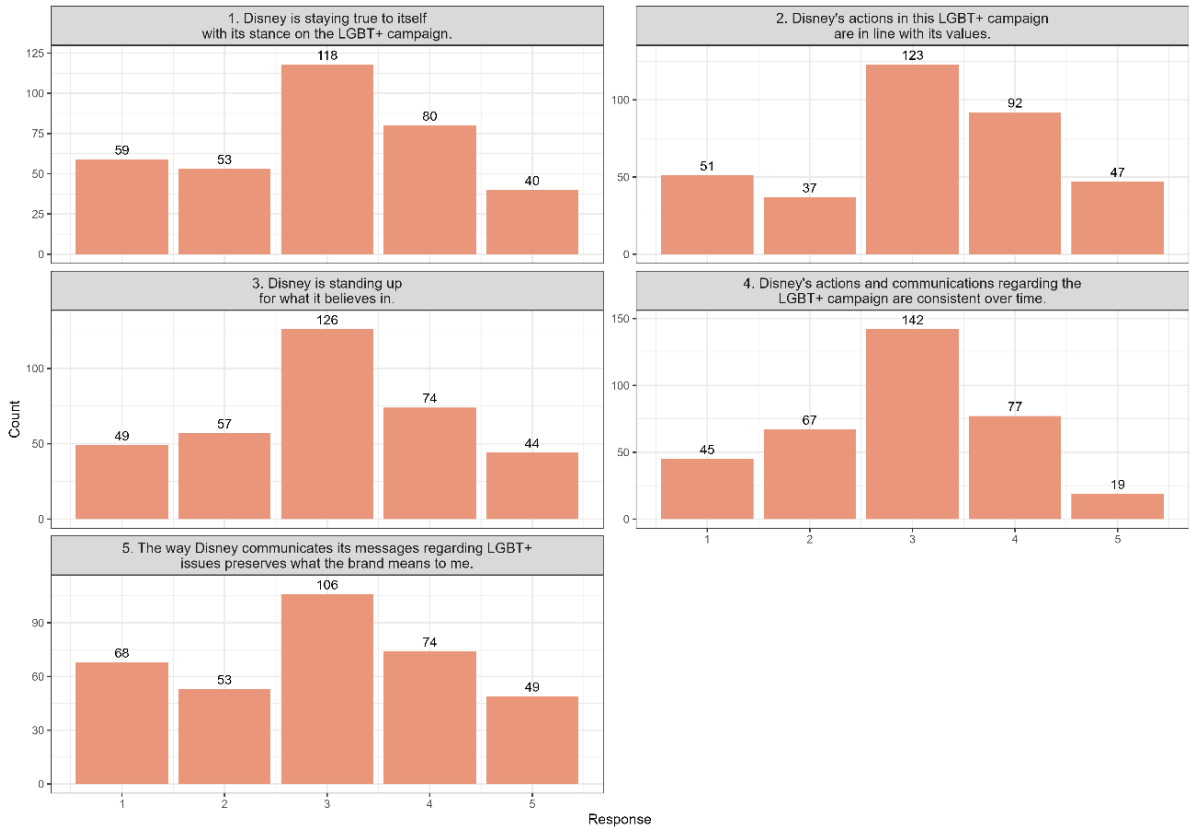


**Figure D2.2 – Distribution of Perceived Brand Authenticity answers from respondents**




*Absolute respondent counts: values displayed above the bars.*

**Table D3.1 – Distribution of Purchase Intention scores for Disney products/services**

| Question | Answer distribtion | | | | | Mean | Stand. Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | |
| **1. Consideraria comprar produtos ou serviços da Disney** | 8.29 | 7.71 | 20.9 | 34.6 | 28.6 | 3.67 | 1.20 |
| **2. Tenciono comprar produtos ou serviços da Disney.** | 11.7 | 12.9 | 29.1 | 22.9 | 23.4 | 3.33 | 1.29 |
| **3. Recomendaria produtos ou serviços da Disney a outras pessoas.** | 7.43 | 8 | 23.7 | 33.4 | 27.4 | 3.65 | 1.18 |
| **Mean** | 9.14 | 9.54 | 24.57 | 30.30 | 26.47 | 3.55 | 1.22 |

**Table D3.2 – Distribution of Purchase Intention answers from respondents for Disney products/services**

| Question | Answer (1-5) | Absolute frequency (n) | Relative frequency (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Consideraria comprar produtos ou serviços da Disney.** | 1 | 29 | 8.3 |
| | 2 | 27 | 7.7 |
| | 3 | 73 | 20.9 |
| | 4 | 121 | 34.6 |
| | 5 | 100 | 28.6 |
| **2. Tenciono comprar produtos ou serviços da Disney.** | 1 | 41 | 11.7 |
| | 2 | 45 | 12.9 |
| | 3 | 102 | 29.1 |
| | 4 | 80 | 22.9 |
| | 5 | 82 | 23.4 |
| **3. Recomendaria produtos ou serviços da Disney a outras pessoas.** | 1 | 26 | 7.4 |
| | 2 | 28 | 8 |
| | 3 | 83 | 23.7 |
| | 4 | 117 | 33.4 |
| | 5 | 96 | 27.4 |

**Figure D3.1 – Distribution of Purchase Intention answers from respondents for Disney products/services**

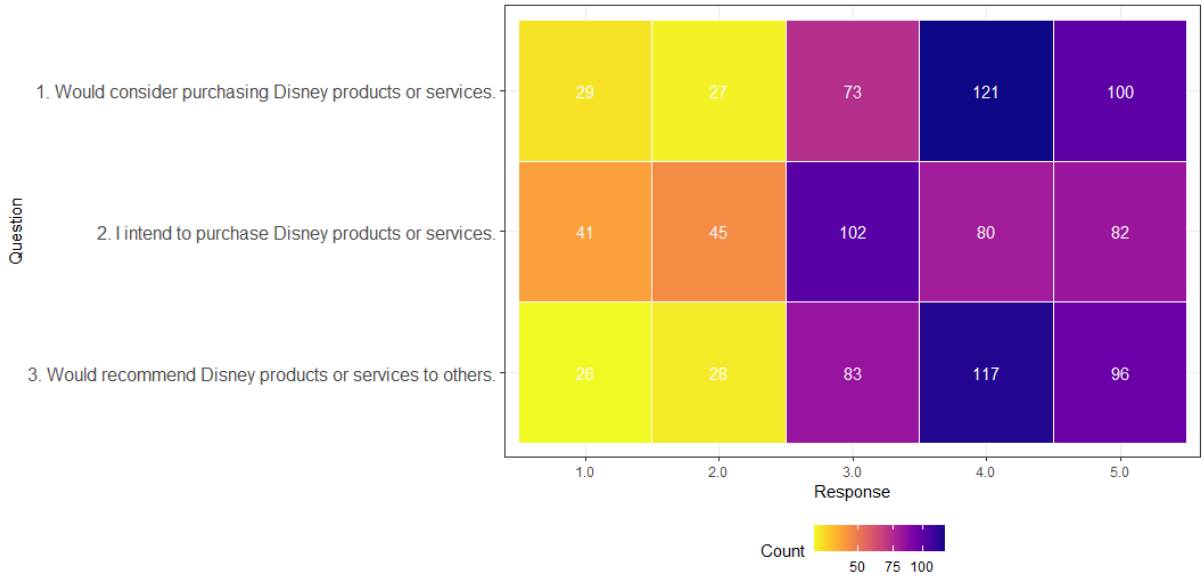
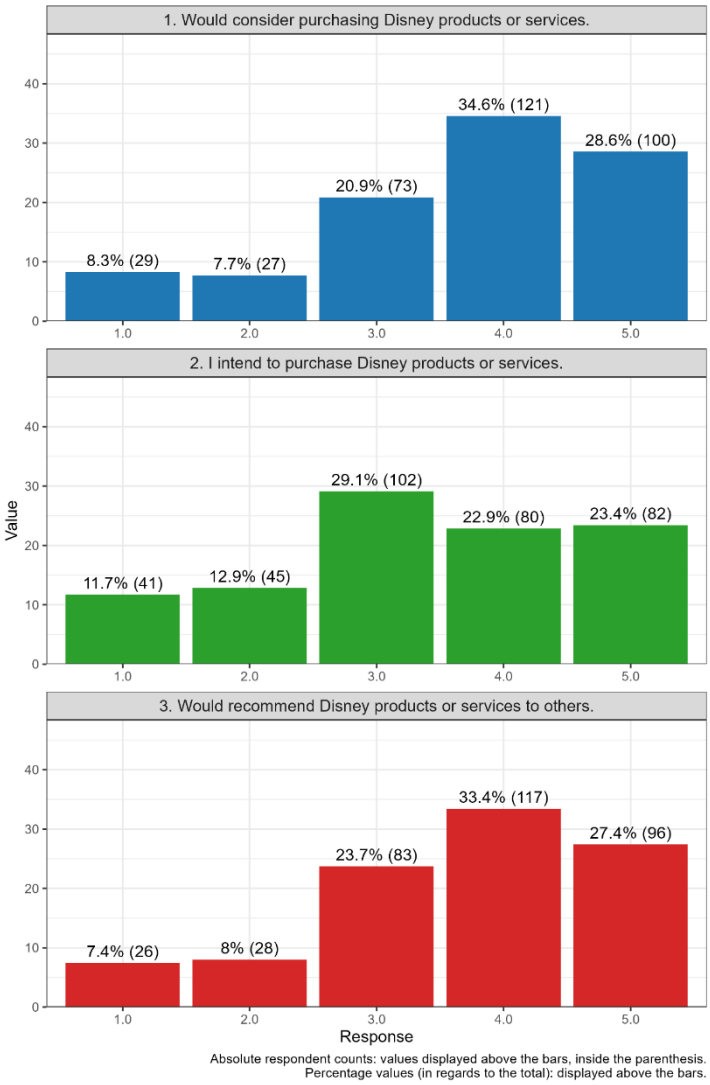


**Figure D3.2 – Distribution of Purchase Intention scores for Disney products/services**

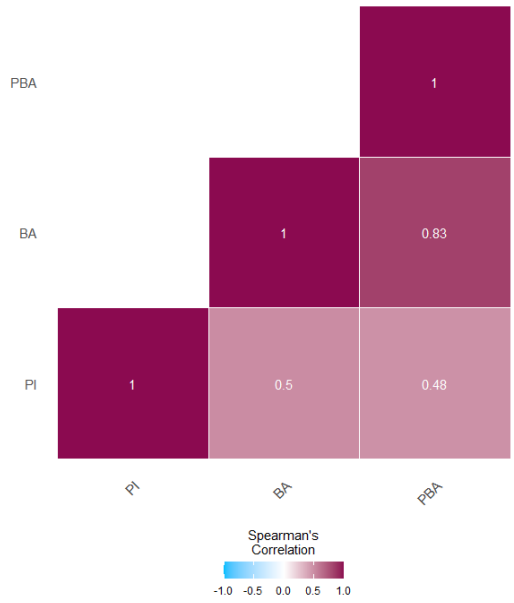


# Appendix E – Normality Tests (Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Shapiro-Wilk)

**Table E1 – Shapiro-Wilk normality test results**

| Variable | Observed value from the test statistic | P-value |
|---|---|---|
| **Brand Activism** | 0.98396 | 0.0006202 |
| **Perceived Brand Authenticity** | 0.97553 | 0.00001175 |
| **Purchase Intention** | 0.92675 | 0.000000000004517 |

**Figure E1 – Spearman's Correlation matrix regarding Brand Activism (BA), Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) and Purchase Intention (PI)**




# Appendix F – Regression and Mediation Analyses (Hypothesis Testing and Robustness Checks)

**Table F1 – Simple Regression Model examining the effect of Brand Activism on Purchase Intention**

| Predictor | Estimate | Std. Error | t value | p value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Intercept** | 1.414 | 0.191 | 7.392 | < .001 |
| **BA** | 0.672 | 0.058 | 11.611 | < .001 |

Note: Dependent variable = Purchase Intention. $R^2 = 0.279$. ***p < .001.***

**Table F2 – Mediation analysis using non-parametric bootstrapping (5,000 resamples)**

| Path | Effect Type | Estimate | 95% CI Lower | 95% CI Upper | p value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BA → PI** | Direct | 0.452 | 0.221 | 0.669 | < .001 |
| **BA → PBA → PI** | Indirect | 0.220 | 0.044 | 0.403 | .014 |
| **BA → PBA + Direct PI** | Total | 0.672 | 0.552 | 0.786 | < .001 |

Note: Mediation model with Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) as mediator, using non-parametric bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

**Graph F1 – Cook's distance analysis (outlier check for regression model)**

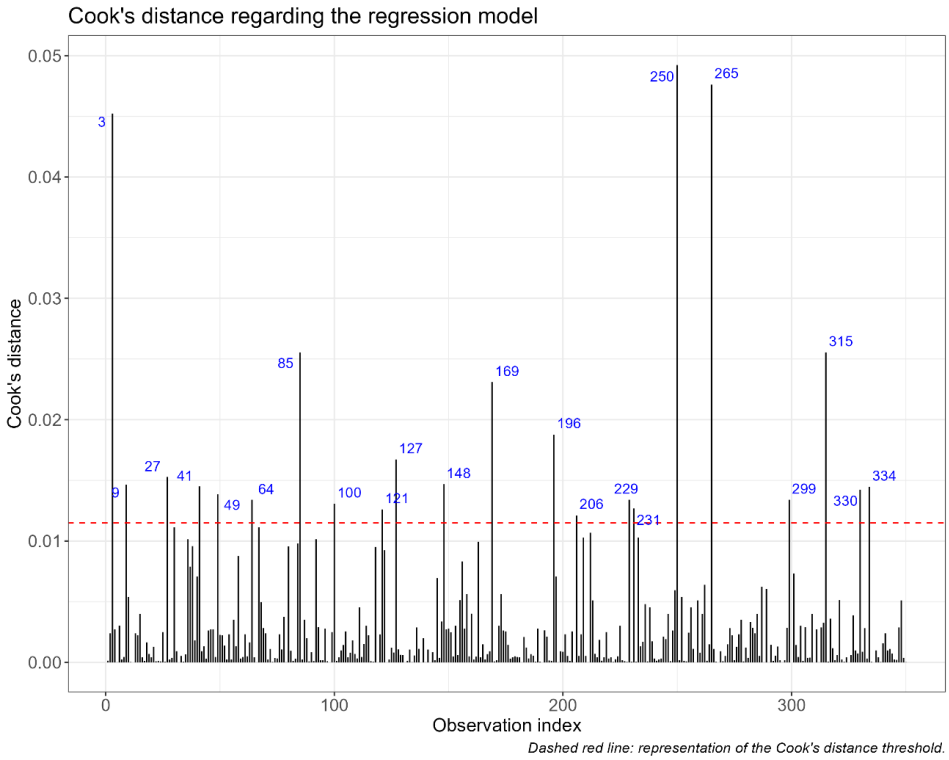



**Table F3 – Comparison between full and reduced regression models after removing high-leverage observations**

| Model | Intercept | BA Estimate | $R^2$ | Adj. $R^2$ | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Full sample** | 1.414 | 0.672 | 0.279 | 0.277 | 350 |
| **Reduced sample** | 1.336 | 0.705 | 0.296 | 0.294 | 328 |

Note: The reduced model excludes 22 observations exceeding the leverage threshold $4/(n - k - 1) = 0.0115$. Minor changes in β (0.672 → 0.705) and $R^2$ (0.279 → 0.296) indicate the robustness of the main regression results.

# Appendix G – Main Constructs

Table G.1 summarises the main constructs examined in this dissertation, presenting a single authoritative definition for each based on the academic sources cited in the literature review.

**Table G.1 – Summary of Core Constructs and Operational Definitions**

| Concept | Definition (shortened for clarity) | Key Author(s) Referenced |
|---|---|---|
| **Brand Activism (BA)** | A purpose- and values-driven strategy in which a brand adopts a non-neutral stance on institutionally contested sociopolitical issues to create social change and marketing success. | Vredenburg et al. (2020) |
| **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** | The ethical obligation of businesses to contribute to sustainable development and social welfare through responsible practices. | Miguel & Miranda (2022a) |
| **Cause-Related Marketing (CRM)** | Marketing initiatives that link the purchase of a product to support for a social cause. | Sarkar & Kotler (2018) |
| **Corporate Political Activism (CPA)** | Corporate involvement in political issues through advocacy or public stances supporting or opposing policy. | Moorman (2020) |
| **Corporate Social Advocacy (CSA)** | Firms' public communication of support for specific social issues aligned with organisational values. | Dodd & Supa (2014) |
| **Consumer's Purchase Intention (PI)** | The conscious plan of an individual to buy a particular product or service, determined by attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. | Ajzen (1991) |
| **Brand Authenticity / Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA)** | The extent to which consumers perceive a brand as genuine, true to its values, and consistent across communication and behaviour. | Morhart et al. (2015) |

**Table G.2 – Conceptual Distinction between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Brand Activism (BA)**

| Dimension | Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) | Brand Activism (BA) | Key References |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Primary Orientation** | Ethical and philanthropic responsibility focused on sustainability and stakeholder welfare. | Sociopolitical and value-driven engagement aimed at influencing societal change. | Miguel & Miranda (2022a, 2023a, 2023b); Sarkar & Kotler (2018) |
| **Objective** | Promote ethical conduct, compliance, and sustainable development. | Combine moral purpose with marketing strategy to achieve both social impact and brand differentiation. | Miguel & Miranda (2023a); Vredenburg et al. (2020) |
| **Nature of Engagement** | Typically risk-averse, institutional, and compliance-based. | Public, issue-driven, and sometimes divisive; involves political or ideological positioning. | Miguel & Miranda (2022a, 2023b); Moorman (2020) |
| **Communication Style** | Formal, report-based, often through sustainability disclosures. | Expressive and advocacy-oriented, often through campaigns and social media. | Miguel & Miranda (2023b); Manfredi-Sánchez (2019) |
| **Stakeholder Perception** | Evaluated by ethics, responsibility, and transparency. | Judged by authenticity, courage, and value alignment. | Miguel & Miranda (2023a); Vredenburg et al. (2020) |
| **Temporal Scope** | Continuous, long-term corporate policy. | Often campaign-based or event-driven, but can evolve into sustained advocacy. | Pimentel et al. (2023); Miguel & Miranda (2022a) |

Tables G.3 to G.5 provide concise overviews of the main mediating, moderating, and authenticity-related factors discussed in the literature, as well as the conceptual contrast between Authentic Brand Activism and *Woke-Washing*.

**Table G.3 – Mediating and Moderating Factors Influencing Consumer's Purchase Intention (PI)**

| Category | Factor | Key References |
|---|---|---|
| **Mediators** | Brand Attitude | Ajzen (1991); Keller (2001) |
| | Brand Image / Corporate Image | Aaker (1991); Brown & Dacin (1997); Mantovani et al. (2017); Kam & Deichert (2020) |
| | Brand Trust | Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001); Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán (2001) |
| | Consumer-Brand Identification | Hydock et al. (2021); Althuizen & Mukherjee (2022) |
| **Moderators** | Perceived Authenticity | Morhart et al. (2015); Vredenburg et al. (2020); Miguel & Miranda (2022a) |
| | Brand Reputation | Weinzimmer & Esken (2016); Zhou & Dong (2022) |
| | Perceived Value | Zeithaml (1988); Dodds et al. (1991) |
| | Social Influence | De Veirman et al. (2017); Kim & Song (2020) |
| | Perceived Risk | Kotler & Keller (2012); Hajli et al. (2017); Pelaez et al. (2019) |

**Table G.4 – Factors Influencing Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA)**

| Factor | Key References |
|---|---|
| **Value Consistency** | Vredenburg et al. (2020); Mirzaei et al. (2022) |
| **Brand Reputation** | Weinzimmer & Esken (2016) |
| **Consumer-Brand Identification** | Hydock et al. (2021); Althuizen & Mukherjee (2022) |
| **Communication Tone and Credibility** | Cammarota et al. (2023); Vredenburg et al. (2020) |
| **Community Engagement** | Zhou & Dong (2022); Jain et al. (2021) |
| **Heritage and Continuity** | Bruhn et al. (2012); Napoli et al. (2013) |

**Table G.5 – Conceptual Contrast between Authenticity and *Woke-Washing***

| Dimension | Authentic Brand Activism | Woke-Washing | Key References |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Definition** | Alignment between brand values, internal practices, and external activist messaging. | Adoption of activist language without genuine or sustained commitment. | Vredenburg et al. (2018, 2020); Sobande (2020) |
| **Intent** | Driven by long-term purpose and moral conviction. | Driven by marketing opportunism and image management. | Miguel & Miranda (2023b); Pöyry et al. (2019) |
| **Behavioural Consistency** | High congruence between stated purpose and actions. | Misalignment between communication and corporate reality. | Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020); Vredenburg et al. (2020) |
| **Consumer Perception** | Generates trust, admiration, and loyalty. | Triggers scepticism, backlash, and boycotts. | Farah & Newman (2020); Klostermann et al. (2022) |
| **Examples** | Patagonia's sustained environmental activism. | Tokenistic campaigns lacking structural change or inclusion. | Vredenburg et al. (2020); Miguel & Miranda (2022b) |