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Abstract

With consumers increasingly demanding that brands enter the sociopolitical domain and take stands on social issues, marketers are embracing brand activism to increase competitive advantage. At the same time, these efforts are being constantly overanalyzed and questioned, as consumers grow skeptical of brands' authenticity and commitment to these causes beyond profit. This study explores how brand activism can shape generation Z's attitudes toward brands, and if perceived brand authenticity plays a mediating role in this relationship. For this exploratory study, a survey with 157 participants is created, in which an activist and a non-activist fictitious brand are compared. Partial least squares structural equation modeling is used to reach conclusions. 13 in-depth interviews were also conducted to strengthen and clarify the results from the questionnaire. The findings suggest that brand activism does not have a direct positive impact on the brand attitude of Gen Z, but this relationship is mediated by some perceived authenticity dimensions: integrity and symbolism. Therefore, it is suggested that managers and brands embrace activism that is truly authentic, giving back to their customers, showing moral values, and adding meaning to people's lives.

Resumo

A crescente exigência dos consumidores para que as marcas entrem no domínio sociopolítico e se posicionem acerca de problemas sociais faz com que os marketers adotem o ativismo para terem vantagem competitiva. Além disso, os esforços das marcas são constantemente questionados e analisados, com os consumidores a revelarem-se céticos sobre a autenticidade e compromisso das marcas com causas para além do lucro. Esta investigação explora como o ativismo de marca pode influenciar a atitude da geração Z em relação às marcas e se a autenticidade de marca percebida é um mediador desta relação. Para este estudo exploratório, é criado um questionário com 157 participantes, onde são comparadas duas marcas fictícias: uma ativista e uma não-ativista. É usado o método Partial Least Squares para chegar a conclusões. São, também, conduzidas 13 entrevistas em profundidade, para sustentar e clarificar os resultados do questionário. As conclusões sugerem que o ativismo de marca não tem um impacto positivo direto na atitude da Geração Z, mas esta relação é mediada por algumas das dimensões da autenticidade percebida: integridade e simbolismo. Recomenda-se, portanto, que gestores e marcas adotem um ativismo verdadeiramente autentico, retribuindo o apoio dos consumidores, evidenciando valores morais e acrescentando significado à vida das pessoas.

Palavras-chave: gestão de marcas; ativismo de marca; autenticidade de marca percebida; atitude de marca; woke washing; geração Z.

JEL Sistema de Classificação: Marketing (M31); Advertising (M37); Social Responsibility (M14)

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1. Introduction

In the era of abundant choices we live in today, consumers are getting more demanding with their purchases, seeking to connect with brands on a personal level (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Holt, 2004; Fournier & Alvarez, 2019). They increasingly require brands to show who they are and what they believe in, asking them to be vocal and take stances on social and political issues (Koch, 2020; Young, 2018). This is leading to brands trying to stand out through the practice of brand activism (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017).

In the last years, brand activism has gained a lot of interest in the marketing field (Hoppner & Vadakkepatt, 2019). The concept is about brands embracing causes and taking public stands on controversial socio-political issues through their marketing and advertising efforts (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Sarkar & Kotler, 2021; Moorman, 2020). The problem with brands using activism to stand out is that it might not always seem authentic: since there is a constant pressure to take public stands on certain issues, whether they are aligned with the brand's values or not, there might be, at times, an incoherence between the brand's words and actions (Vredenburg et al., 2018). This might be negative in the eyes of the consumer.

Because of that, the purpose of this study is to understand how brand activism might affect consumers' attitude towards the brand. Brand attitude refers to an individual's evaluation of a specific brand (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). Moreover, since consumers are getting increasingly skeptical of brands, the study also considers how perceived brand authenticity (PBA) might play a role in mediating this relation. PBA refers to the perception consumers have that brands behave according to their values (Fritz et al., 2017). It is expected to understand this impact from the perspective of generation Z. To test the relationship between brand activism and brand attitude, a survey in which two different brands are introduced – one that engages in activism, known as "Graham's" and other that doesn't, known as "Duncan's" – will be presented and analyzed.

The research questions, thus, are:

- *What is the impact of brand activism on the brand attitude of gen Z?*
- *What is the impact of brand activism on the perceived brand authenticity of gen Z?*
- *What is the impact of perceived brand authenticity on the brand attitude of gen Z?*
- *How is the relationship between brand activism and brand attitude mediated by perceived brand authenticity?*
- *Will there be significant differences in the influence of activism according to the brands' characteristics?*

This study encourages future research on brand activism and its impact on companies and the society. In a time where consumers want brands to speak out on social issues, but also value genuineness, the goal is to understand if the practice of brand activism can be separated from the concept of authenticity on forming attitudes.

The reason for this study lays with the notion that brand activism is growing in importance for consumers and brands, but there is still lack of academic marketing literature on the topic. While some studies have covered brand activism, there is not a clear relation between that practice and the consumer's attitude towards brands, when putting the role of perceived brand authenticity in the picture. This becomes especially important to study in the Generation Z, since they are the next consumer group to integrate a great portion of the marketplace.

With 75% of Generation Z consumers stating they favor brands that stand for something (Kantar, 2021), Gen Z has been pointed out as the biggest target group for brand activism. Then again, despite being a segment with much potential for brands, there is still a lot to be explored about them in terms of scientific research.

By linking relatively new and attention-grabbing topics, this study aims to extend the literature and marketing discourse on topics that have been understudied and grasp how they relate to each other. This study contributes to the theory by showing that Generation Z does want brands to be vocal about social issues, but brand activism only influences brand attitude when it is perceived to be authentic. It also contributes to understand consumer behaviour in the modern world and how to respond to the requirements of this next generation of consumers – which is where lays one of the most pressing and current challenges of brands and marketing.

This thesis will be structured as follows: first, to contextualize and make the concepts more familiar, it will include a literature review on the different ideas, topics, and corresponding relationships. Then, the conceptual model and the hypothesis will be presented. After that, the methodology, which consists of the data collection, will be explained, and explored. The obtained results will be discussed, and conclusions will be drawn. Finally, to conclude, the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings will be stated, and limitations of the study and suggestions for future research will be presented.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand management

The definition of brand remains difficult and generates a lot of debate (Beverland, 2018). In the classic definition by the American Marketing Association, in 1960, the brand is associated with the identification of a good or service and its differentiation from the competitors by using a specific name, design, logo, and a combination of signs and symbols (Heding et al., 2015).

Some authors viewed brands as a company's knowledge about its stakeholders and customers, used to create value (Keller, 2021; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Merz et al., 2009). Kotler et al. (2006) argue that a brand is an intangible concept: a promise to the customer, based on their perceptions from past experiences, associations, and expectations. These attributes or beliefs differentiate the brand, reduce complexity, and simplify decision-making (Kotler et al., 2006).

Keller (2021) considers tangible and intangible, rational and emotional and symbolic elements to differentiate and identify a brand. "A brand is therefore more than a product, because it can have dimensions that differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same needs" (Keller, 2021). Additionally, for Kapferer (2008), a brand is a source of influence; a set of interconnected mental associations and relationships.

Only more recently, brands have been seen as social processes that result from interactions with all the stakeholders. (Merz et al., 2009). Stakeholders are no longer targets of a one-way communication, but active participants and co-creators of the brand (Merz et al., 2009; Iglesias et al,, 2013, Ind & Coates, 2013).

De Chernatony and McDonald (2003) identified eight brand functions: the brand as a sign of ownership; a differentiating device; a functional device; a symbolic device that buyers use to express themselves; a risk-reducer; a shorthand device for consumers to recall information and make decisions easily; a legal device; and a strategic device. Then, De Chernatony (2010) categorized them into three perspectives: input-based perspective (branding as a way of influencing customers); output-based perspective (consumers' interpretation of how brands allow them to achieve more); and time-based perspective (viewing brands as dynamic and evolutionary).

Branding has become a top priority for management in the last decades (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Brand management can be defined as the process of developing, sustaining,

and improving the performance of a brand (Keller, 2021). It systematically manages the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of the brand strategy.

Brand management was first seen as goods-focus, progressing then to value-focus (Park et al., 1986). Then, it became relationship-focus, including the firm's relationships with customers (Aaker, 1992; Kapferer, 1992; Keller, 1993), and, finally, stakeholder-focus. The last one comprises the firm's relationships with all stakeholders (Iglesias et al., 2013; Ind and Coates, 2013; Ind et al., 2012; Merz et al. 2009).

The role of branding and brand management is mainly to build differentiation and preference for a good or service (Knox & Bickerton, 2003). Branding strategies aim to position the product and identify the brand with positive attributes and benefits (Kapferer, 2008) to attract customers, generate brand awareness and associations, build trust, and raise profits (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003).

Brand management is composed of two internally focused processes – internal branding (De Chernatony & Cottom, 2009; Lee et al., 2008; Santos-Vijande et al., 2013; Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2010) and strategic brand management (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Santos-Vijande et al., 2013) – and one that is external – market information processes (Moorman, 1995; Sinkula, 1994).

Internal branding is the set of processes inside of a company to enhance the efficiency of brand building activities. Strategic brand management comprises all the actions that aim to develop the brand as a strategic resource and promote its maintenance (Santos-Vijande et al., 2013). Lastly, market information processes include processes that gather, theorize, and use market/brand related information (Moorman, 1995; Sinkula, 1994). More than ever, the success of brands depends on stakeholders' expectations, so firms must be aware of the external environment that surrounds them (De Chernatony & Cottom, 2009; Low & Fullerton, 1994; Shocker et al, 1994). Now, the value of brands is co-created by stakeholders (Iglesias et al., 2013; Merz et al., 2009), so brands constantly need to collect and use market information to understand their expectations (Merz et al., 2009; Santos-Vijande et al., 2013).

The end goal of brand management is building and sustaining successful brands (Keller & Lehmann, 2006) in an increasingly changing environment. Therefore, brand management is one of the most important functions of a firm (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Low & Fullerton, 1994; Merz et al., 2009). Kotler et al. (2006) believe successful branding depends on five branding principles: consistency (firms must be consistent in every single contact point with the stakeholders); clarity (the vision, mission, and values should be easy to communicate and understand); continuity (the brand should deliver what it promises continuously so that

stakeholders know what to expect and trust it based on past experience); visibility (firms should increase brand exposure and brand awareness); and authenticity (the intentions of the behaviour of the brand should be unquestionable).

Brands are increasingly important for firms, due to the outburst of choices that exists nowadays. When used as a holistic marketing strategy communication tool, brands differentiate themselves by offering value in competitive markets (Kotler et al., 2006). That way, brand management has become imperative to improve competitiveness (Abid et al., 2019; Ahmed et al., 2017). It is impacted by the advancing technologies, globalization, and hyper-competition and, because of that, it is becoming increasingly challenging. (Babčanová et al., 2019).

2.2 Brand activism

Recently, brand activism has gained considerable academic interest. Consumers are increasingly demanding activism to be a point of parity for global brands and expecting that they enter the sociopolitical domain (Hoppner & Vadakkepatt, 2019): 65% of people value that companies and CEOs take stands on social issues (Edelman, 2018). Because of that, marketers are embracing brand activism rapidly (Moorman, 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Brand activism emerged as an evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and of environmental, social, and governance programs (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the commitment to enhance the well-being of the society by engaging in voluntary business practices (Kotler & Lee, 2004). However, brand activism differs from CSR, since it is more radical (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020), and society-driven, instead of corporate-driven (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018). Brand activism aims to change consumer behavior and, consequently, social behavior and attitude, improving brand reputation (Hilton, 2003).

In comparison to CSR, when brands are associated with political and social issues there is more risk because the self-brand connection may be affected. Self-brand connection is related to perceived identification and personal connection with a brand (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). By engaging in activism, brands with the same political views as their consumers strengthen the self-brand connection (Matos et al., 2017) if there are strong links between consumers' political beliefs and sense of self (Jost et al., 2009). On the other hand, if the brand is linked to political views that are opposed to the consumers, the self-brand connection and consequent relationship with the brand can be weakened (Jost et al., 2009).

Brand activism is sometimes seen as the next stage of marketing (Kotler, 2017) and it happens when brands publicly take a stand on divisive social or political issues (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017). Brand activism consists of "business efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to promote or impede improvements in society" (Sarkar & Kotler, 2021, p.32). More recently, it is seen as a growing marketing strategy in which brands take a public stance to gain competitive advantage and contribute to the demands of the consumers (Moorman, 2020; Sarkar & Kotler, 2021).

An activist brand is characterized by being a moral subject that reforms moral judgments to promote benefits for society (Sibai et al., 2021). They are purpose and values driven (Vredenburg et al., 2020) and have a moral conscience (Sarkar & Kotler, 2021) used for influencing others' morality (Hoppner & Vadakkepatt, 2019); they challenge and reform existing ethical judgments, which is seen as a main condition to be considered an authentic activist brand (Moorman, 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020); and lastly, they encourage markets to promote justice, freedom, and happiness (Westermann-Behaylo et al., 2015).

There are six subcategories of brand activism: social, legal, business, economic, political, and environmental, depending on which issue brands want to express their beliefs on (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017) Within these subcategories, brands can express activism through intangible messaging and tangible, prosocial practices (Vredenburg et al., 2020). But to be perceived as an authentic activist brand, there needs to be a combination of both (Sarkar & Kotler, 2021).

Brand activism is an opportunity for distinction and purpose-driven engagement (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017). Since consumers now expect brands to take steps toward improving the state of society, brand activism can be profitable too (Sibai et al., 2021).

2.3 Perceived Brand Authenticity

Over the last decades, the notion of perceived brand authenticity (PBA) has gained a lot of interest and attention from marketers (Safeer et al., 2020). Different authors have slightly different views on the exact definition and the components of brand authenticity. Holt (2002: p. 83), states that brands need to be "perceived as invented and disseminated by parties without an instrumental economic agenda, by people who are intrinsically motivated by their inherent value.". Other authors believe the evaluation of brand authenticity by consumers requires indexical or iconic cues (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010): the former refers to characteristics that show consumers what a brand claims to be (Morhart et

al., 2015), while the latter is about marketing and promotional cues, like a showing work that conveys the brand's essence (Brown et al., 2003).

Bruhn et al. (2012) split the concept of brand authenticity into four dimensions: continuity (how consistent is the concept and offering), originality (how the brand stands out from others), reliability (how its consumers find it credible and trustable) and naturalness (how genuine and sincere it is perceived). As such, not only the brands and products should be authentic, but they also need to be perceived as so by their target consumers (Castaldo et al., 2008).

For Napoli et al. (2014), perceived brand authenticity is the consumer perception that a brand is real and genuine. The author thought consumers perceived authenticity based on specific brand cues: heritage (supporting traditions), quality commitment (having quality standards); and sincerity (staying true to their values).

Brand authenticity was further defined by Morhart et al. (2015, p. 202) as "the extent to which consumers perceive a brand to be faithful and true toward itself and its consumers, and to support consumers being true to themselves"; reflecting what brands really are (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2019). Morhart et al. (2015, p. 202-203) agreed on the importance of continuity ("the brand's historicity, timeliness, and its ability to transcend trends."), but proposed other dimensions: credibility ("the transparency and honesty of a brand towards its consumers, as well as its ability and willingness to fulfill its claims."), integrity ("the responsibility and moral purity of the brand") and symbolism ("a brand's potential to serve as a resource for identity construction by providing self-referential cues representing values, roles, and relationships.").

Later, Akbar and Wymer (2017, p. 16) defined PBA as "the degree to which a brand is considered original and genuine, meaning it is unique and not derivative, and truthful to what it claims to be." and redefined the scale to originality and genuineness only.

As a response to the homogenization of the marketplace (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2014), nowadays, consumers are craving and expecting authenticity in the marketplace, searching for authentic brands (Beverland, 2005; Holt, 2002), and seeking authentic content (Shoenberger et al., 2020). To estimate the authenticity of a brand, consumers are also paying attention to the degree to which the brand seems to be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated in its decisions. When a brand appears to be extrinsically motivated, for example, only being motivated by profit, consumers perceive the brand as less authentic (Beverland, 2009; Holt, 2002; Morhart et al., 2015; Moulard et al., 2016). In contrast, intrinsic motivation, or "love of doing" (Beverland, 2009) increases authenticity perceptions. Perceived authenticity is key to

consumers' evaluations of firms and brands (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2019), so this one is a vital concept in consumer research (Joo et al., 2019).

Previous literature review showed that consumers answer positively to brands that they perceive as authentic (Rose & Wood, 2005). When they perceive a brand as authentic, consumers might feel like it is keeping its claims to satisfy their needs, and this might lead to positive feelings and affection toward the brand (Safeer et al., 2020). It is shown that PBA is a central factor in determining brand status, reputation (Beverland, 2005), word of mouth and emotional brand attachment (Morhart et al., 2015), purchase intentions (Napoli et al., 2014), greater trust and expected quality (Moulard et al., 2016) and brand attitude (Sheinin & Biehal, 1999); Spiggle et al., 2012; Ewing et al., 2012; Fritz et al., 2017; Ilicic & Webster, 2014; Morhart et al., 2015).

2.4 Brand Attitude

"An attitude is a degree to which a person has favourable or unfavourable evaluations" (Ajzen, 1991, as cited in Patel et al., 2016). Eagly and Chaiken (1973), however, talked about attitude as an enduring state that guides behavior.

Mitchell and Olson (1981, p. 318) defined an attitude towards the brand as an "individual's internal evaluation of the brand.", in which the attitude is centered or directed at a brand, evaluative in nature (good/bad) and an internal state. In turn, Spears and Singh (2004, p. 55), conceptualized brand attitude as "a relatively enduring, unidimensional summary evaluation of the brand that presumably energizes behavior".

Brand attitude emerges from the attributes – and associated benefits – of a brand (Keller, 2003; Park et al., 2010), but it should not be confused with the feelings provoked by the brand, since those are transitory (Spears & Singh, 2004). After consumers engage with the brand's attributes and benefits, they make their evaluation and judgment (Keller, 2003), making brand attitudes mirror the combination of all the relevant elements that consumers took out and remember of their experience with the brand.

A lot of researchers are interested in brand attitudes as a way of behavior change (Shoenberger et al., 2020), since it is asserted that it predicts consumer behavior (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). This makes it an important indicator on its own (Dotson et al., 2017). Having high levels of attitude toward a brand is connected to behaviors like higher purchase intent (Spears & Singh, 2004), brand attachment and brand loyalty (Kim et al., 2019; Yu, 2019). It has also been studied that the attitude consumers have toward a single advertising can shape

the attitude they have toward a brand (Mackenzie & Lutz, 1989) and these associations are stronger for novel than familiar brands (Phelps & Thorson 1991). This means that brands need to carefully think about every advertising piece they produce.

2.5 Brand Activism and Authenticity

When brands position themselves as activists, their underpinning motives are increasingly examined (Holt, 2002), and some consumers are skeptical of them (Alhouti et al., 2016; Du et al., 2010; Vredenburg et al., 2018). This is because brand activism is strongly linked to authenticity: some authors (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017; Moorman, 2020) emphasize how important the authenticity is in brand activism and how not backing up words with actions can be harmful: 56% of consumers say many brands now use social issues mainly as a marketing ploy to increase sales (Edelman, 2019).

Consumers' request for authenticity has become higher in response to the increased uncertainty in society, due to political instability, climate change, financial crisis, and globalization (Bruhn et al., 2012; Fritz et al., 2017) and it is the same uncertainty that causes brands to invest in activism and take stands on social issues (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Since "in a highly polarized world, it's no longer good enough to be neutral" (Sarkar & Kotler (2021, p. 7), to achieve marketing success and the social change that brand activism aims for, it is critically important to achieve and communicate its authenticity.

The authenticity of brand activism can be defined by the brand's core values and purpose reflecting its employees, stakeholders' needs and wants and brand promise; the type of message and content that circulates among channels; and the brand's practices and the way key stakeholders react to and convey them. Authentic brand activism aims to promote social and environmental benefits (Bocken et al., 2014) beyond the brand's economic interests (Sarkar & Kotler, 2021; Wettstein & Baur, 2015), and it is more than mere advocacy/messaging (Nalick et al., 2016; Wettstein & Baur, 2015).

Perceptions of authenticity are key to the success of authentic brand activism, since if consumers are skeptical, it is less likely to promote social change (Vredenburg et al., 2020). In a time when brand activism has become more widespread (Edelman, 2019), consumers will also evaluate it in a more sophisticated manner, and the way brands practice activism will need to evolve accordingly (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

2.5.1 Woke washing

In contrast with authentic brand activism, "woke washing" (Sobande, 2019; Vredenburg et al., 2018), refers to when a brand's marketing message about sociopolitical issues does not align with its purpose, values, and practices. This usually happens when brands lack the expertise to address social causes but still try "to market themselves as being concerned with issues of inequality and social injustice" (Sobande, 2019, p. 2740), accentuating the gap or inconsistencies between their words and actions (Vredenburg et al., 2018).

"Woke" is an African American term for being socially aware that is growing in the US media and marketing (Gray & Leonard, 2018). It is related to resistance and solidarity in the fight against systemic racism, capitalism, and structural oppression (Gray & Leonard, 2018). With the growing consumer demand for companies to speak up on social issues, brands are trying to create an image of "wokeness", but without stating or denying where they stand on significant socio-political issues like racism, sexism, homophobia (Sobande, 2019)

Short commercials, experiential brand activations (Browning et al., 2018) and the urgency for brands to engage with sociopolitical movements (Campbell, 2007; Georgallis, 2016) allow companies to rapidly spread simple, feel-good messages that associate the brand with social causes (Browning et al., 2018) "at least in terms of verbal pledges" (Moorman, 2020, p. 392). Yet sometimes consumers are asking if these brands that engage and are praised for their activist advertising are backing up their messages with meaningful action. Consumers may question the reason for and the impact of brand activism when they believe brands are using societal issues as a marketing ploy to increase sales (Edelman, 2019). Besides misleading consumers and threatening their trust, woke washing does not allow brand activism to grow into social change (Vrendenburg et al., 2020, p.444).

2.6 Perceived Brand Authenticity and Brand Attitude

As stated before, earlier literature review on this topic studied that perceived brand authenticity results in better brand attitudes and intention to buy (Sheinin & Biehal, 1999). Other authors have agreed that increasing the perceived brand authenticity can improve consumer-brand bonding, which can lead to more positive brand attitudes (Spiggle et al., 2012; Ewing et al., 2012;), higher purchase intentions and recommendation behaviors (Lu, et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014; Morhart et al., 2015; Spiggle, et al., 2012). More recent studies have also reached these conclusions, tying PBA to better attitudes (Fritz et al., 2017) and

strong behavioural intent (Yang et al., 2021; Cornelis & Peter, 2017). Ilicic & Webster (2014) further demonstrated brand authenticity is positively related to not only brand attitudes and purchase intentions, but also brand trust and brand commitment (Moulard et al., 2016; Portal et al., 2018).

Moulard et al. (2016, p. 426) states that "consumers are likely to rely on perceptions of a brand's authenticity in assessing the expected quality they will receive" and shows the relationship between intrinsic motivation and perceived quality. The author also found that perceived quality positively impacts consumer satisfaction, brand attitude, brand awareness, and word of mouth recommendation.

When brands disclose more information, they are perceived as being more authentic, which leads to more positive consumer attitudes, trust, and purchase intentions (Yang & Battocchio, 2020). This is in line with previous studies that proposed that consumer responses were positively impacted by transparent brand communication and brand authenticity (Hyllegard et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014; Yan et al., 2010).

2.7 Brand Activism and Brand Attitude

Past research intention (Wan et al., 2016) has shown that there are mostly positive attitudes toward ethical and socially responsible brands. It was already studied that when brands present themselves as socially responsible, they profit in bottom-line sales (Nan & Heo, 2007), have more positive brand attitudes, and there is a positive reaction to their messages (Castaldo et al., 2008). Furthermore, Lafferty and Goldsmith (2005) found that when a brand was associated with a cause, it had more positive attitudes than if it was not. Different types of cause-related marketing are proven to impact the brand image, brand awareness, brand attitude and purchase intention of cause-related products (Van den Brink et al., 2006; Chang, 2011; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012; Woisetschläger et al., 2017; Henderson et al., 2019).

As for activism, when used as a brand management strategy, it differentiates brands and impacts consumer decision making (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Madrigal & Boush, 2008). While Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020) found that attitudes can decrease in activist brands when the consumers do not agree with the brand's stand, but these attitudes do not differ when consumers agree, other authors reached different conclusions. Koch (2020) and Schmidt et al. (2021) noticed that since they build solid brand-consumer bonds, activist brands can shape attitudes when consumers agree with the brand's position.

2.8 Generation Z

A Generation can be defined as a group of people with common birth years, who share similar life events and who grew up in a similar environment, with the same resources, opportunities, and challenges. (Krbová & Pavelek, 2015; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Seemiller & Grace, 2017).

It is agreed that the Generation Z begins in the group of people born in the mid-to late-1990s (Priporas et al., 2017), more specifically, between 1995 and 2012 (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). They are the generation that has a lower tolerance for inequality, since they have experienced more diversity of cultural perspectives (Parker et al., 2019; Twenge, 2017). Gen Z shares many characteristics with Generation Y: They are both environmentally and politically conscious (McCrindle et al., 2014), have comparable views on social issues (Parker et al., 2019); and can use web and mobile media proficiently. Yet, each generation has its specific traits (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Gen Z lived through disruptive changes in the political, economic, social, and especially technological landscape (Ernst & Young, 2016) and this rapid technological growth played an important role in shaping their values and behaviour. It is important to note that millennials adapted to social media, the connectivity and instantaneity of the internet, but Gen Z grew up with all of that (Parker et al., 2019).

According to Generational Cohort Theory (GCT), people from each generation experience similar major life events that make them similar to each other (Schewe & Meredith, 2004). These major events impact people's knowledge and skills, how they communicate, socialize, and all the other aspects of their lives (Howe, 1992; Srinivasan, 2012), including buying behaviors and expectations (Jackson et al., 2011).

Generation Z buys products through their mobile devices more than any other generation, and their number one purchase is food (Seemiller & Grace, 2018). Due to the constant socio-economic and technological changes they went through, Gen Z has consumer values that differ from the other generations (Thangavel et al., 2019). Gen Z consumers are characterized by choosing products that are more convenient and cheaper over well-known expensive brands, and their shopping behavior tends to be driven by value consciousness (Thangavel et al., 2019).

Gen Z genuinely wants to make a difference and change the world (Fromm & Read, 2018) and they are using their wallets as a voice for social change (Seemiller & Grace, 2018). This generation aligns only with brands that reflect their values (Fromm & Read, 2018) and 85% of them believe that firms should take action to solve social problems (Seemiller &

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Grace, 2018). Gen Z wants brands to not only talk about causes, but truly show how they are committed to them (Fromm & Read, 2018).

With the number of advertising promising perfection, Gen Z is hungry for authentic and meaningful content, and they expect brands to deliver that. Thus, brands should be transparent in all their decisions and be prepared to answer the difficult questions honestly. More than just buying what brands do, Gen Z is also buying why they do it (Fromm & Read, 2018).

Consumers are becoming more critical of advertisements, and they lack trust in brands' intentions – and if they are unhappy with what they got, they will share it on social media (Taylor, 2018). Therefore "understanding Gen Zers is critical to the business success and gaining competitive advantage" (Pichler et al., 2021, p. 600). However, despite being a segment with a lot of potential, there is still a lot to be explored about Gen Z (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Haddouche & Salomone, 2018), and there is still a lack of research on the opportunities and challenges this generation has for businesses (Pichler et al., 2021).

3. Conceptual Model

As mentioned in the literature review, Gen Z consumers are now using their shopping behaviours as a voice for social change (Seemiller & Grace, 2018) and they want brands to talk about and commit to causes (Fromm & Read, 2018). Brands that are associated with causes generate more positive attitudes than if they were not (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 2005) and brand activism also increases positive brand attitudes (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Since understanding Generation Z is very important for business success nowadays (Pichler et al., 2021), but there is still a lot to be explored about them (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Haddouche & Salomone, 2018), this study will focus on the impact that brand activism has on the brand attitudes of this generation and in two different brands.

Thus, the following question arises: "What is the impact of brand activism on the brand attitude of gen Z?". In order to answer the question, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1A: Brand activism positively impacts the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.
H1B: Brand activism positively impacts the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.

Brand activism has been linked to authenticity, and there are known consequences for brands that don't back up their words with actions (Edelman, 2019; Kotler & Sarkar, 2017; Moorman, 2020). Consumers are demanding more and more authenticity, carefully analyzing the true motives of brands that engage in activism (Holt, 2002). Right now, it's almost as important to communicate activism as showing its authenticity (Sarkar & Kotler, 2021; Vredenburg et al., 2020) There are many brands that are not educated on certain social causes but try to seem concerned with them anyway (Sobande, 2019). This might make consumers think brands are only using social issues to increase sales (Edelman, 2019), which cancels completely the purpose of brand activism. (Vrendenburg et al., 2020, p.444).

Thus, it is not only important to study if for the skeptical and demanding group of people that is generation Z (Taylor, 2018) activism influences the perceived authenticity of brands for each of Morhart's (2015) suggested dimensions. The following hypotheses are proposed, based on the question "What is the impact of brand activism on the perceived brand authenticity of gen Z?"

H2A: Brand activism positively impacts the PBA of Gen Z in Duncan's
H2Aii: Brand activism positively impacts the Integrity (PBA) of Gen Z in Duncan's.

H2Aiii: Brand activism positively impacts the Symbolism (PBA) of Gen Z in Duncan's.

H2B: Brand activism positively impacts the PBA of Gen Z in Graham's.

H2Bi: Brand activism positively impacts the Credibility (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.

H2Bii: Brand activism positively impacts the Integrity (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.

H2Biii: Brand activism positively impacts the Symbolism (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.

It is also known that authentic and meaningful content is very important for Generation Z (Fromm & Read, 2018). Because of the increased uncertainty in society, consumers are increasingly valuing brand authenticity. As mentioned before, Morhart et al. (2015, p. 202-203) split brand authenticity into four dimensions that will be used in this study: continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. It has been studied by several authors that perceived brand authenticity results in better brand attitudes and consumer responses (Hyllegard et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014; Sheinin & Biehal, 1999; Yan et al., 2010); Yang & Battocchio, 2020), but this relationship was not studied for each of Morthart's dimensions yet, nor for the specific case of Generation Z. Thus, this study will analyze what the experience is for Gen Z in each of the four dimensions and for each brand.

H3A: Perceived brand authenticity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's.

H3Ai: Credibility is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's.

H3Aii: Integrity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's

H3Aiii: Symbolism is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's.

H3B: Perceived brand authenticity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's.

H3Bi: Credibility is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's.

H3Bii: Integrity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's

H3Biii: Symbolism is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's.

By formulating these hypotheses, the following question is intended to be answered: "What is the impact of perceived brand authenticity on the brand attitude of gen Z?"

On another hand, to be successful, brand activism must be perceived as authentic (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Because of the increase in the demand for brands to participate in

sociopolitical movements (Campbell, 2007; Georgallis, 2016), more brands are associating themselves with causes, but not taking meaningful action (Moorman, 2020). This is making consumers more skeptical that brands are only using social issues as a way to increase sales (Edelman, 2019). In particular, Generation Z not only wants brands to talk about the causes, but they also want them to show their commitment to them. They want to know why brands are doing what they are doing (Fromm & Read, 2018), and since they don't completely trust brands' intentions. Once again, each of Morhart's (2015) proposed dimensions for Perceived Brand Authenticity will be taken into consideration and studied individually.

Thus, there is another question to be answered: "How is the relationship between brand activism and brand attitude mediated by perceived brand authenticity?", followed by the hypotheses:

H4A: Perceived brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.

H4Ai: Credibility mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.

H4Aii: Integrity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.

H4Aiii: Symbolism mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.

H4B: Perceived brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.

H4Bi: Credibility mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.

H4Bii: Integrity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.

H4Biii: Symbolism mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.

Lastly, this study aims to understand what differs between a brand that practices activism and one that doesn't for all the previous hypotheses, and how it differs. That way, it is expected that the studied relationships among brand activism, perceived brand authenticity and brand attitude follow different behaviors for Duncan's and for Graham's. Another

question arises: "Will there be significant differences in the influence of activism according to the brands' characteristics?" The following hypothesis was proposed:

H5: Duncan's and Graham's follow different behaviors.

Table 3.1 – Suggested Hypothesis

Suggested Hypotheses
H1A: Brand activism positively impacts the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.
H1B: Brand activism positively impacts the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.
H2A: Brand activism positively impacts the PBA of Gen Z in Duncan's
H2Ai: Brand activism positively impacts the Credibility (PBA) of Gen Z in Duncan's.
H2Aii: Brand activism positively impacts the Integrity (PBA) of Gen Z in Duncan's.
H2Aiii: Brand activism positively impacts the Symbolism (PBA) of Gen Z in Duncan's.
H2B: Brand activism positively impacts the PBA of Gen Z in Graham's.
H2Bi: Brand activism positively impacts the Credibility (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.
H2Bii: Brand activism positively impacts the Integrity (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.
H2Biii: Brand activism positively impacts the Symbolism (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.
H3A: Perceived brand authenticity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's.
H3Ai: Credibility is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's.
H3Aii: Integrity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's
H3Aiii: Symbolism is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's.
H3B: Perceived brand authenticity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's.
H3Bi: Credibility is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's.

H3Bii: Integrity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's
H3Biii: Symbolism is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's.
H4A: Perceived brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.
H4Ai: Credibility mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.
H4Aii: Integrity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.
H4Aiii: Symbolism mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.
H4B: Perceived brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.
H4Bi: Credibility mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.
H4Bii: Integrity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.
H4Biii: Symbolism mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.
H5: Duncan's and Graham's follow different behaviors.

In conclusion, the aim of this study is to explore the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z, while understanding if perceived brand authenticity influences this relationship. The idea is to:

a) Explore the influence that Brand Activism has on the Brand Attitude of Gen Z

b) Explore the influence that Brand Activism has on the Perceived Brand Authenticity of Gen Z

c) Explore the influence that Perceived Brand Authenticity has on the Brand Attitude of Gen Z

d) Understand in what ways Perceived Brand Authenticity influences the relationship between Brand Activism and Brand Attitude of Gen Z.

e) Explore the differences in these relationships between two brands with distinct characteristics

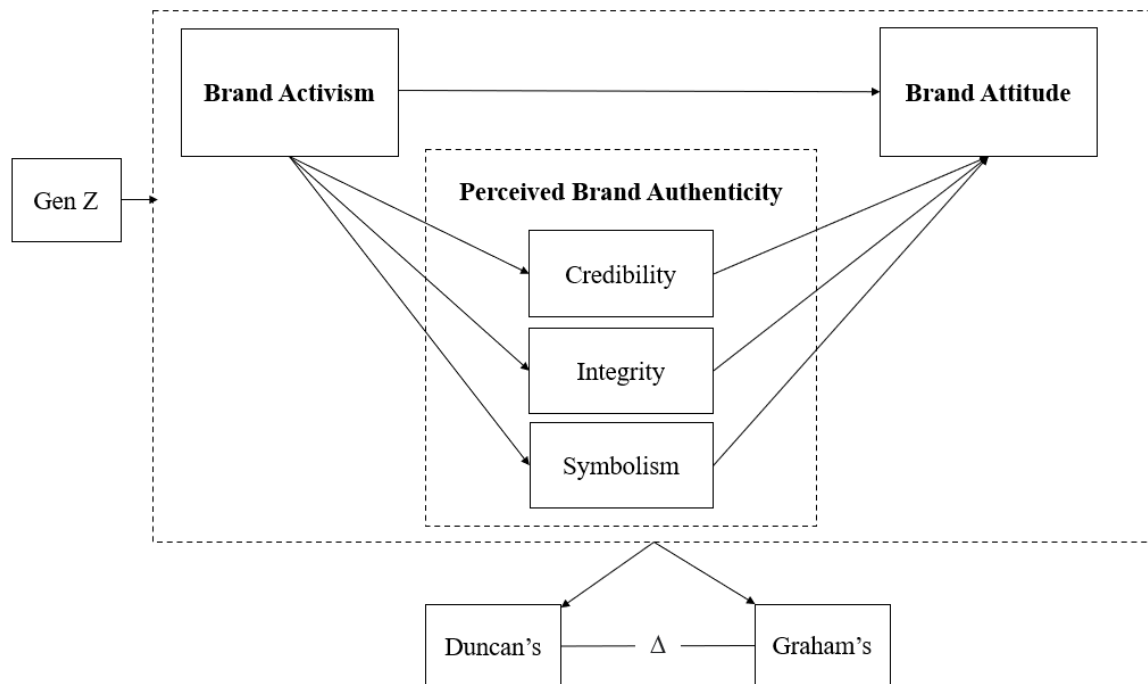The previous hypotheses will be tested and validated based on the following model:

Figure 3.1 – Proposed Conceptual Model

4. Methodology

To evaluate how Brand Activism impacts Gen Z's Brand Attitude and answer the research questions, this exploratory study involved a quantitative methodological approach. However, to complement it, and since the obtained results lead to some questions that needed to be understood more in depth, a qualitative methodological approach was also adopted. By using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, it is possible to verify the data from two different sources and gather complementary and more substantial findings about the studied phenomenon (Mingers & Brocklesby, 1997).

4.1 Study 1: Quantitative Method

A quantitative method was chosen to define a clearer relationship among the studied variables: by having a larger number of respondents, it is possible to generalize the answers and analyze patterns, getting an overall picture of Gen Z's attitudes towards brands that practice activism.

4.1.1 Survey development

Primary data was gathered through online questionnaires, using Google Forms and made available to a sample of people belonging to Gen Z. The survey was shared on social media channels, a convenience snowball sample was used. To obtain accurate results, scientific scales from different authors were used to measure different variables.

First, a brief definition of Generation Z and who it included was presented to guarantee that the right people answered the questionnaire. There was a question after that asking if the respondent was a part of Gen Z and the questionnaire ended there for those who were not. To avoid bias caused by the existence of prior attitudes towards certain brands, at the beginning of the questionnaire, two fictitious ice cream brands were presented – one that engages in activism and another that does not – along with a small description of a similar line of business, price, and quality but different examples of advertising, and actions. To exemplify this, a fictitious ad and Instagram feed was shown for each brand, as it is seen below.

Duncan's and Graham's

Duncan's and Graham's are two fictional competitor ice cream brands. They both have a good quality-price ratio and are very popular among consumers. In addition to the several physical shops both brands possess around the country, they also have a website for online shopping and home delivery.

About Duncan's:

Duncan's advertises their ice cream on social media and often post about the different types of flavors and combinations they offer, also sharing reviews that their followers make. In TV commercials, they advertise mostly the qualities and points of difference of their ice cream. Duncan's CEO constantly publicizes food events that the brand is participating in and the awards it receives.
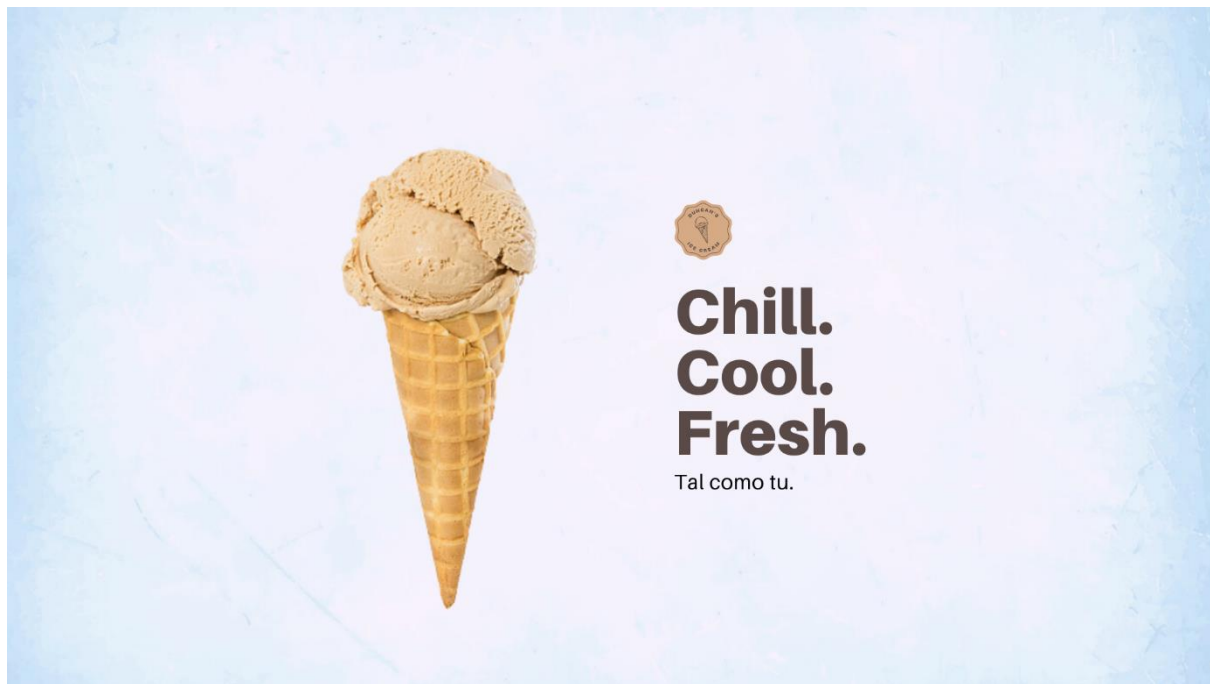

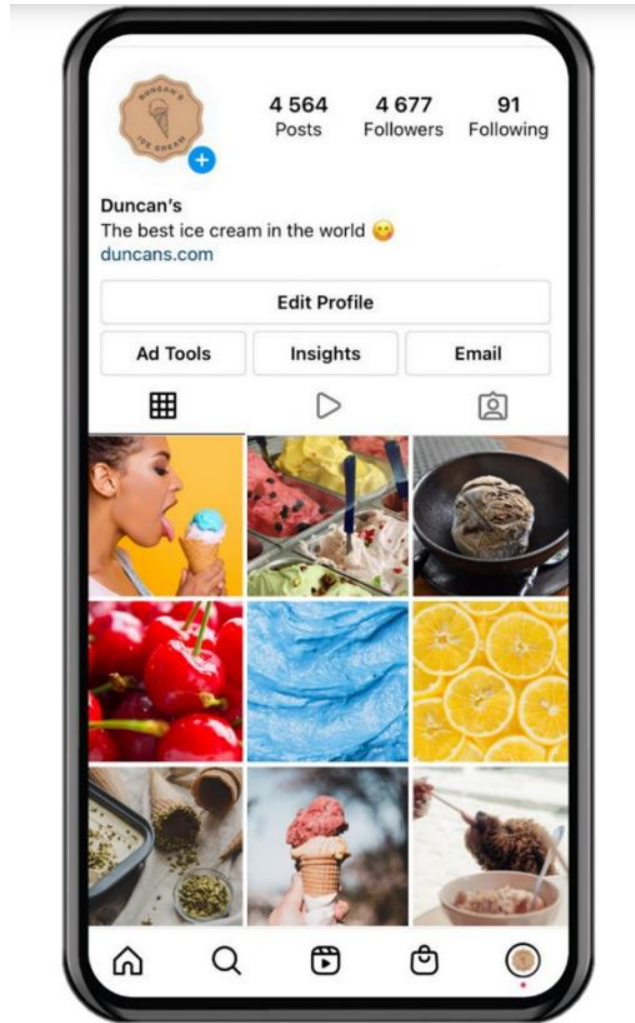*Figure 4.1 – Ad for the fictional brand Duncan's*

Figure 4.2 – Instagram feed of the fictional brand Duncan's

About Graham's:

Graham's advertises their products on social media and often posts about the need for action towards a more feminist and anti-racist society, also showing their view on issues like climate change and poverty. In TV commercials, they mention societal concerns, and their CEO constantly voices their stand on several social issues - talking about reforming moral judgments to benefit the society.

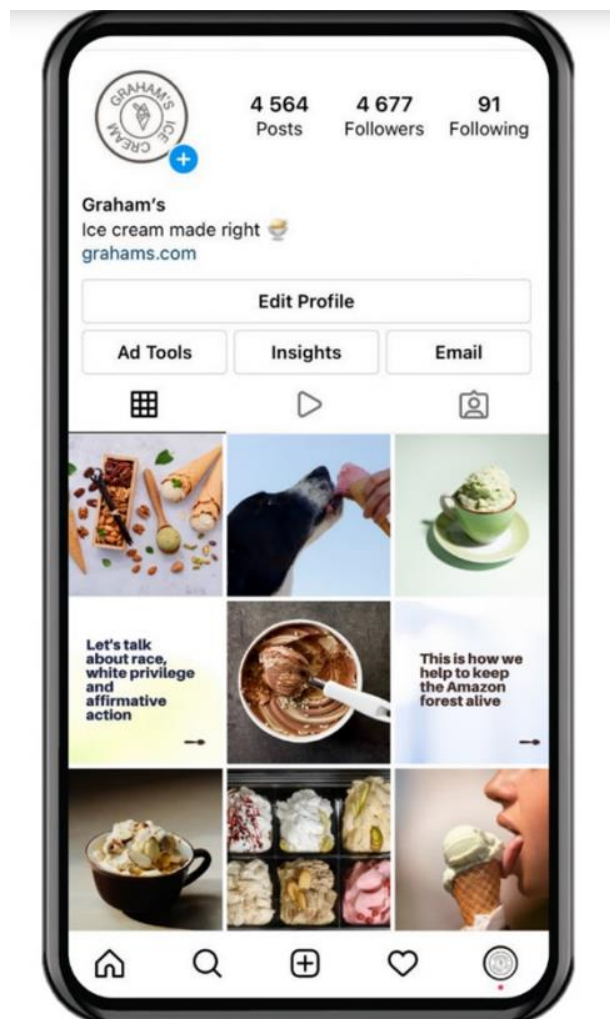*Figure 4.3 – Ad for the fictional brand Graham's*

Figure 4.4 – Instagram feed of the fictional brand Graham's

A definition of activism was also given at the beginning of the survey, so that respondents understood the concept mentioned in the questions. The first question aimed to understand how much activism the respondents thought that each brand was performing. Then, for each brand, questions about their attitude and their perceived brand authenticity were presented. This allowed to test the level of activism perceived for the brands, as well as the attitudes consumers had towards each brand after learning about their specificities. The level of perceived brand authenticity was also measured. The goal was to measure if the relationships were significantly different for the two brands.

4.1.2 Data measurements and scales

To evaluate Brand Activism, as mentioned before, a brand that engages in activism and one that does not were presented. Then, the respondents were asked on a scale from 1 to 7 if they thought each brand was practicing activism.

For the dependent variable, which is Brand Attitude, the 5-item scale from Spears and Singh (2004) was adopted and was measured on a scale from 1 to 7. For Perceived Brand Authenticity, the scale from Morhart et al. (2015), using several items on a scale from 1 to 7 and considering the PBA's dimensions studied by the author (continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism) was adopted. The continuity dimension was eliminated: since the presented brands were fictitious, they had no prior history, so it was not included in the model. The last part was focused on demographics and the profile of the respondents: the gender, age, occupation, and degree of education.

Table 4.1 – Scales' authors and number of items

Variable	Scale's Author	Number of items
Brand Activism		
Brand Attitude	Spears & Singh (2004)	5
Perceived brand authenticity	Morhart et al. (2015)	11

4.1.3 Pre-test

Before the survey was made available, a pre-test was conducted. A first version of the questionnaire was made available to a group of 13 people from Generation Z, who reported their feedback and suggestions. This allowed to understand if there needed to be made any changes and some modifications were made to the questionnaire. In the end, it was verified that the concepts and questions were well-understood, that the examples were clear and that the survey was overall coherent and cohesive.

4.1.3 Sample

The research object of this research concentrates on Gen Z consumers. This study's sample is composed by 157 participants between 18 and 27 years old, in which the ages between 18 and 21 years old are predominant with 87 respondents (55,4%). The participants are mostly women, with 96 out of 157 respondents (61,2%), and mostly students (59,9%), followed by working students (21%), and employees (17,8%). Regarding the highest level of education completed, most of the participants have completed high school (50,3%), 35% have a bachelor's degree, 10,8% have completed a master's degree, having only 3,8% of the participants only completed middle school.

Table 4.2 – Demographic information (Gender).

Gender		
	Frequency	Percent
Female	96	61,2%
Male	61	38,8%

Table 4.3 – Demographic information (Age).

Age		
	Frequency	Percent
18-21 years old	87	55,4%
22-24 years old	42	26,8%
25-27 years old	28	17,8%

Table 4.4 – Demographic information (Employment status).

Employment Status		
	Frequency	Percent
Employed	28	17,8%
Working Student	33	21%
Student	94	59,9%
Unemployed	2	1,3%

Table 4.5 – Demographic information (Highest degree of education completed).

Highest degree of education completed		
	Frequency	Percent
Master's Degree	17	10,8%
Bachelor's Degree	55	35%
High School	79	50,3%
Middle School	6	3,8%

4.2 Study 2: Qualitative Method

After the survey, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to better understand the results of the questionnaire and to have more insights into the opinions of the respondents. According to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interviewing requires recruiting a small number of respondents who are subjected to intensive one-on-one interviews to fully comprehend their perspectives on certain concepts or situations. This is especially important because brand activism is a subjective and complex matter, so it is crucial to have more personal and in-depth inputs on the study.

Some people from Generation Z were chosen through a convenience snowball sample and the interview took place via Zoom, which allowed the interviewees to be in an environment of their choosing, possibly more familiar and comfortable for them.

4.2.1 Interview Development

First, the two brands included in the survey were presented, as well as an ad and Instagram feed for each one. Once again, the definition of brand activism was presented to contextualize the participants, and then, 7 open-ended questions were asked. The first questions were about the importance that the respondents gave to activism and the importance of activism specifically in brands, and the other questions aimed to clarify the results of the survey regarding the relationship between brand activism and perceived brand authenticity, brand activism and brand attitude, and perceived brand authenticity and brand attitude. Each interview lasted for 20-40 minutes.

4.2.2 Sample

For the interviews, the research object was also Gen Z consumers: in total, there were 13 interviewees between 18 and 27 years old. There was not a pre-defined number of participants, interviewees were recruited until data saturation was reached. Glaser and Strauss (2017) defined data saturation as the point at which new interviews no longer provided new data or insights: a point of saturation would be reached (Charmaz, 2006). Guest et al. (2006) stated that the saturation was usually reached within 12 interviews. Of the 13 participants, 11 were women (84,6%), and the most predominant age was between 23-24 years old (38,5%). All the interviewees were Portuguese and either students or employees.

Table 4.6 – Interviewees' demographic information

Interviewees		
	Gender	Age
Mariana	F	23
André	M	24
Carolina F	F	24
Adriana	F	26
Lara	F	26
Carolina S	F	23
Jéssica	F	21
Vitória	F	27
Sílvia	F	22

António	M	18
Carolina C	F	23
Maria	F	20
Rita	F	22

5. Results and discussion

To test the conceptual model and analyze the results, partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS, SEM) with SMARTPLS 3 was used. This is a variance-based structural equation modeling technique (Ringle et al., 2015) that implies two stages: evaluating the reliability and validity of the measurement model and then the structural model for each brand.

5.1. Reliability and Validity

First, to test the quality of the measurement model for each brand, the individual indicators of reliability and discriminant validity were investigated. There was evidence of individual indicator reliability, since the standardized factor loadings of all items were higher than 0.6, for both Duncan's (minimum value = 0.702) and for Graham's (minimum value = 0.716) and were all significant at $p < 0.001$ (Hair et al., 2017).
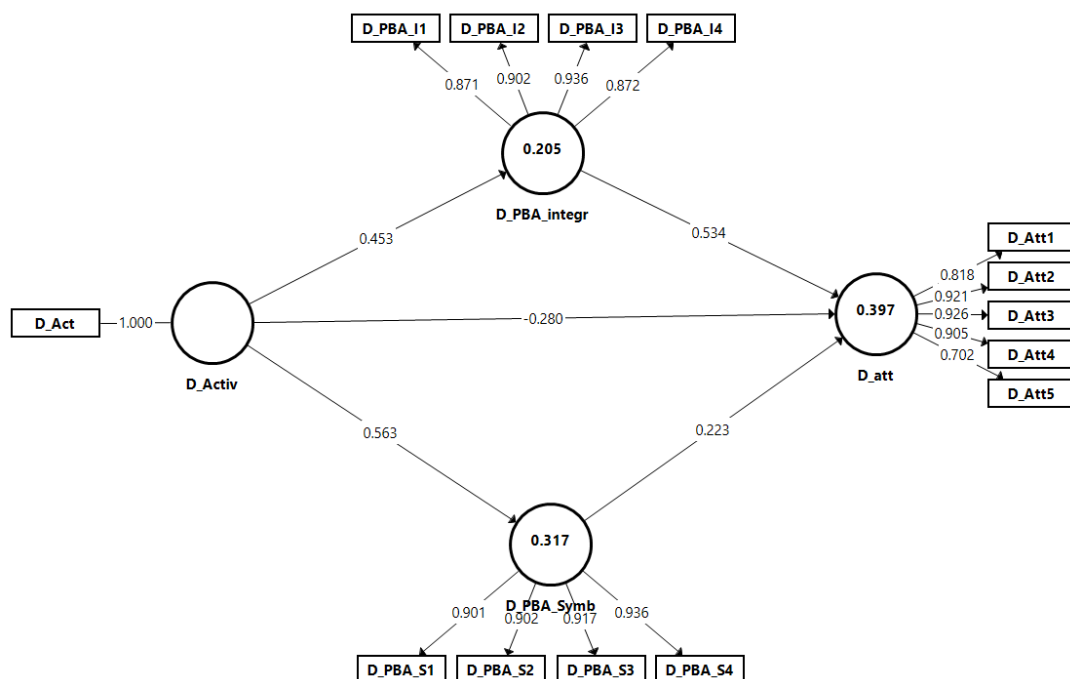

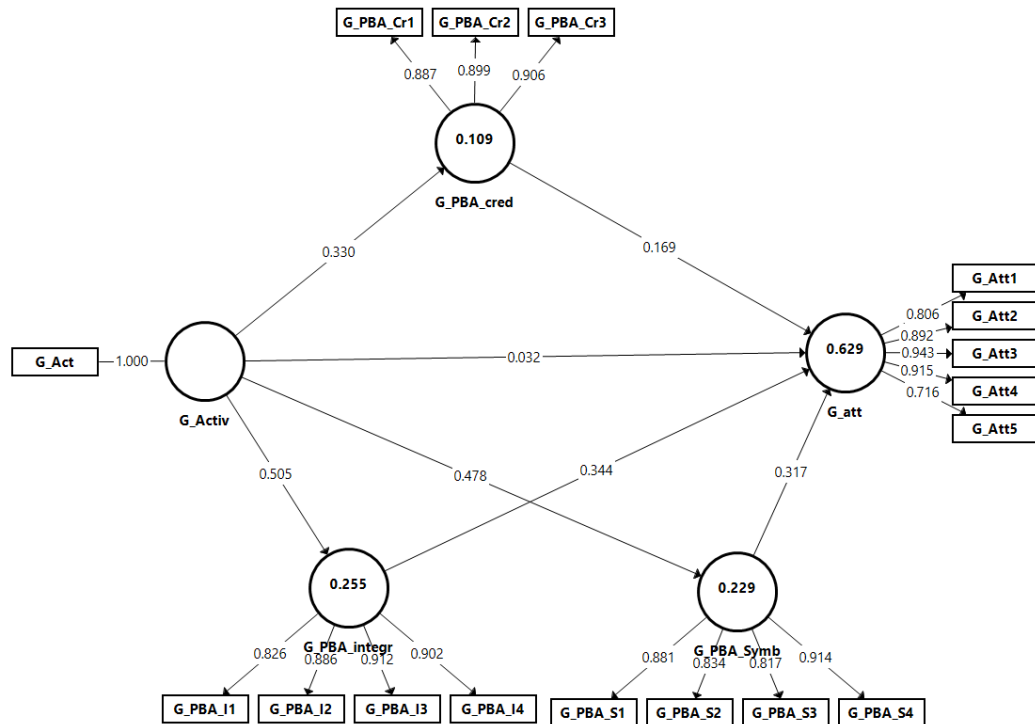*Figure 5.1 – Structural model (Duncan's)*

Figure 5.1 – Structural model (Graham's)

Additionally, internal consistency reliability is confirmed when the values of the Cronbach alphas and composite reliability (CR) are higher than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). This was confirmed in both brands for Activism, Attitude, Symbolism, and Integrity, and it was confirmed for Credibility only in Graham's (See Table 5.1 and 5.2). In Duncan's, Credibility did not contribute to the quality of the model ($r^2 < 0,1$) and was eliminated.

Table 5.1 – Composite reliability, average variance extracted, correlations, and discriminant validity checks (Duncan's)

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	D_Activ	D_PBA_Symb	D_PBA_Integr	D_Attitude
D_Activ	**1,000**	**1,000**	**1,000**	**1**	0,581	0,469	0,102
D_PBA_Symb	**0,934**	**0,953**	**0,836**	0,563	**0,914**	0,859	0,523
D_PBA_Integr	**0,918**	**0,942**	**0,802**	0,453	0,797	**0,896**	0,632
D_Attitude	**0,909**	**0,933**	**0,737**	0,087	0,491	0,585	**0,858**

Table 5.2 – Composite reliability, average variance extracted, correlations, and discriminant validity checks (Graham's)

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	G_Activ	G_PBA_ Symb	G_PBA_ Cred	G_PBA_ Integr	G_Attitude
G_Activ	1,000	1,000	1,000	1	0,506	0,342	0,526	0,429
G_PBA_Symb	0,885	0,920	0,743	0,478	0,862	0,843	0,937	0,829
G_PBA_Cred	0,880	0,925	0,805	0,330	0,753	0,897	0,889	0,760
G_PBA_Integr	0,904	0,933	0,778	0,505	0,843	0,793	0,882	0,833
G_Attitude	0,908	0,933	0,737	0,413	0,750	0,691	0,761	0,858

As for convergent validity, it was also confirmed: all items' constructs were positive and significant, all constructs had Composite Reliability values higher than 0.70, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) higher than 0.50 (Table 5.1 and 5.2) (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

Then, to assess discriminant validity, the Fornell and Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) criterion (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al, 2015) were used and verified. On the first one, the construct's square root of AVE should be larger than its biggest correlation with any construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), which is satisfied for all constructs (See the diagonal with bold values in Table 5.1 and 5.2.)

Before evaluating the structural model, collinearity was checked (Hair et al., 2017): In Duncan's, the variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.00 to 3.192, and in Graham's from 1.00 to 4.655. This is below the critical value of 5, which indicates no collinearity (Hair et al., 2017). Then, the structural model was evaluated: To measure the model's predictive accuracy, the magnitude of the R^2 value for each endogenous variable was evaluated: For Duncan's, the coefficient of determination R^2 for the three endogenous variables was higher than the threshold of 10% (Falk & Miller, 1992): The model predicts a 20,5% of the variance in Integrity, 31,7% of the variance in Symbolism, and 39,7% of the variance in Attitude. As for Graham's, the model predicts a 25,5% of variance in Integrity, 22,9% in Symbolism, 10,9% in Credibility, and 62,9% in Attitude.

To measure the model's predictive relevance, Stone Geisser's Q^2 values were evaluated. For Duncan's, all endogenous variables (Integrity: $Q^2 = 0,160$; Symbolism: $Q^2 = 0,262$; Attitude: $Q^2 = 0,285$) had Q^2 values above zero, and the same happened for Graham's

(Integrity: Q2 = 0,185; Symbolism: Q2 = 0,158; Credibility: Q2 = 0,074 and Attitude: Q2 = 0,455), which suggests the predictive relevance of the model. (Henseler et al., 2009). Finally, to assess the significance of the parameter estimates, bootstrapping with 5 000 subsamples was used (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 5.3 – Structural model assessment for direct effects (Duncan's)

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
D_Activ → D_PBA_Symb	0,563	0,057	9,841	**0,000**
D_Activ → D_PBA_Integr	0,453	0,061	7,487	**0,000**
D_Activ → D_Att	-0,280	0,071	3,956	**0,000**
D_PBA_Symb → D_Att	0,223	0,118	1,880	**0,061**
D_PBA_Integr → D_Att	0,534	0,106	5,024	**0,000**

Table 5.4 – Structural model assessment for direct effects (Graham's)

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
G_Activ → G_PBA_Symb	0,478	0,079	6,067	**0,000**
G_Activ → G_PBA_Cred	0,330	0,074	4,440	**0,000**
G_Activ → G_PBA_Integr	0,505	0,065	7,759	**0,000**
G_Activ → G_Att	0,032	0,050	0,644	**0,520**
G_PBA_Symb → G_Att	0,317	0,119	2,670	**0,008**
G_PBA_Cred → G_Att	0,169	0,108	1,563	**0,119**
G_PBA_Integr → G_Att	0,344	0,113	3,037	**0,003**

Table 5.5 – Structural model assessment for indirect effects (Duncan's)

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
D_Activ → D_PBA_integr → D_att	0,242	0,064	3,808	**0,000**
D_Activ → D_PBA_Symb → D_att	0,125	0,070	1,790	**0,074**

Table 5.6 – Structural model assessment for indirect effects (Graham's)

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
G_Activ → G_PBA_Symb → G_att	0,151	0,067	2,266	**0,024**
G_Activ → G_PBA_cred → G_att	0,056	0,040	1,406	**0,160**
G_Activ → G_PBA_integr → G_att	0,174	0,059	2,930	**0,004**

5.2. Results

It is shown in the literature that Gen Z is an environmentally and politically conscious generation (McCrindle et al., 2014) who believes firms should take action to solve social problems (Seemiller & Grace, 2018), and that activism positively influences attitude (Chang, 2011; Henderson et al., 2019; Koch, 2020; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012; Lafferty and Goldsmith, 2005; Schmidt et al., 2021; Van den Brink et al., 2006; Woisetschläger et al., 2017). These findings are also confirmed by the interviews, which gave results that better aligned with the literature throughout the study:

One of the interviewees, Mariana, said *"When we speak up by ourselves, we don't make such a difference, but companies can help spread the word and make a difference more easily, being vocal about important issues. Activism makes sense in every brand. We are in a very critical situation in terms of racism, lack of inclusion, the environment, and each industry can contribute a little bit for the conversation.* Rita added: *"I like to know that a brand's values are similar to mine. If brands don't speak out on these important issues, they are not fulfilling their role. It makes sense to incorporate activism in all industries and brands, nowadays there's not really a separation of a brand and its values."*

Despite this, the results in Table 3 a) show that when analyzing Duncan's, contrarily to what was expected, being an activist brand has a negative effect on Attitude ($\beta = -0.280$, $p < 0.001$), so H1A is not supported. This can be because Duncan's is not really an activist brand. Moreover, Mukherjee and Althuzien (2020) found there was a negative effect on brand attitude when there wasn't consumer-brand agreement about the brand's stand. This can also be the case. Silvia, one of the interviewees said: *"If a brand advocates for values that meet my own, I like it more, but if it's the opposite, it affects my perception of the brand negatively.".*

H1A: *rejected*. Brand activism does not positively impact the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.

It is, however, verified that brand activism influences attitude indirectly through integrity in Duncan's ($\beta = 0.242$, $p < 0.001$) (See Table 4a). This supports H4Aii. On the other hand, it was not proved that Symbolism mediates this relationship ($\beta = 0.125$, n.s.) (H4Aiii). Vitória said in the interview: "*Duncan's doesn't have a very active role, so it should first focus on building strong values, and only then it can create a meaning in people's lives. When talking about truly activist brands, it is more important that people are connected to themselves. In this case, not so much, because people expect to receive the product only*".

H4Aii: accepted. Integrity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.

H4Aiii: *rejected*. Symbolism does not mediate the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.

When analyzing Graham's, contrary to the studies made by most authors (Chang, 2011; Henderson et al., 2019; Koch, 2020; Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012; Lafferty and Goldsmith, 2005; Schmidt et al., 2021; Van den Brink et al., 2006; Woisetschläger et al., 2017) it was not proven that being an activist brand or associated with causes has a positive effect on Brand Attitude ($\beta = 0.032$, n.s.), which means H1B is not supported. André stated that "*It depends mostly on other things. Being activist doesn't change my feelings towards the brand that much, especially in an ice cream brand, that I expect to evoke happy moments. I wouldn't like it to be always focusing on environmental issues.*"

However, Mukherjee and Althuzien (2020) also stated that there was no significant effect on the brand attitude when there was consumer-brand agreement about the brand's stand, so this can mean that most of the consumers that answered the survey agreed with what Graham's believed in.

H1B: *rejected*. Brand activism does not positively impact the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.

Nevertheless, it is shown that integrity ($\beta = 0.174$, $p < 0.01$) and symbolism ($\beta = 0.151$, $p < 0.05$) mediate the relationship between brand activism and attitude (See Table 4b), which supports H4Bii and H4Biii, respectively, but also the idea that when Gen Z consumers

consider a brand authentic, they are more likely to like the brand (Fromm & Read, 2018). This strengthens the value of this study and the importance of analyzing the mediators in the relationship among the different variables. These results also corroborate that for Gen Z making a difference and using their consumer power to promote social change is important (Seemiller & Grace, 2018), aligning with authentic brands that reflect their values (Fromm & Read, 2018). On the other hand, it was not proved that Credibility also mediates this relationship ($\beta = 0.056$, n.s.) (H4Bi). Silvia stated that *"Activist brands are already linked to moral principles, so I expect them to already have these values in its culture, it doesn't influence that much"*.

H4Bi: *rejected*. Credibility does not mediate the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.

H4Bii: accepted**.** Integrity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.

H4Biii: accepted**.** Symbolism mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.

Brand Activism is shown to have a significantly positive effect on Symbolism ($\beta = 0.563$, $p < 0.001$) and on Integrity ($\beta = 0.453$, $p < 0.001$) when talking about Duncan's, which supports H2Aii and H2Aiii, respectively. It was also found that being an activist brand has a significant effect on Symbolism ($\beta = 0.478$, $p < 0.001$), on Integrity ($\beta = 0.505$, $p < 0.001$), and on Credibility ($\beta = 0.330$, $p < 0.001$) for Graham's, which supports H2Bi, H2Bii and H2Biii. This is in line with studies that show that authenticity is the key to the success of brand activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020), and that both concepts are strongly linked (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017; Moorman, 2020).

H2Aii: accepted**.** Brand activism positively impacts the Integrity (PBA) of Gen Z in Duncan's.

H2Aiii: accepted**.** Brand activism positively impacts the Symbolism (PBA) of Gen Z in Duncan's.

H2Bi: accepted**.** Brand activism positively impacts the Credibility (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.

H2Bii: accepted**.** Brand activism positively impacts the Integrity (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.

H2Biii: accepted**.** Brand activism positively impacts the Symbolism (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.

Moreover, being perceived as an authentic brand (Integrity dimension) also has a significantly positive effect on Attitude ($\beta = 0.534$, $p < 0.001$) for Duncan's. This supports **H3Aii**. Nevertheless, it was shown that Symbolism doesn't have a direct correlation with Attitude in Duncan's ($\beta = 0.223$, n.s.) (H3Aiii) Once again, as stated in some interviews, this can be explained because Gen Z consumers don't see a priority in Duncan's to create a meaning in people's lives before strengthening their values and supporting meaningful causes.

H3Aii: accepted**.** Integrity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's
H3Aiii: *rejected*. Symbolism is not positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's.

Contrarily to previous studies that stated that attitude was positively impacted by transparent brand communication and brand authenticity (Hyllegard et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014; Yan et al., 2010), credibility did not have a positive effect on Attitude for Gen Z ($\beta = 0.169$, n.s.), so H3Bi was not supported. One of the reasons can be, as Vitoria states, that they *"already expect that the brand is honest, since it engages in activism"*.

However, being perceived as an authentic brand in Integrity and Symbolism dimensions have a significantly positive effect on Attitude ($\beta = 0.344$, $p < 0.01$, and $\beta = 0.317$, $p < 0.01$), respectively). H3Bii and H3Biii are supported and in line with the literature review that shows that perceived brand authenticity causes better brand attitudes (Ewing et al., 2012; Fritz et al., 2017; Sheinin & Biehal, 1999; Spiggle et al., 2012;) and strong behavioral intent (Yang et al., 2021; Ilicic & Webster, 2014; Cornelis & Peter, 2017; Moulard et al., 2016; Portal et al., 2018) and that Gen Z is increasingly searching for authentic content from brands, caring about why they do things, instead of just what they do (Fromm & Read, 2018).

H3Bi: *rejected*. Credibility is not positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's
H3Bii: accepted**.** Integrity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's
H3Biii: accepted**.** Symbolism is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's.
The previous results highlight some differences between Duncan's and Graham's behaviors, showing that H5 was partially supported. For one, activism influences negatively

attitude in the case of <u>Duncan's</u>, but it is not significant in the case of <u>Graham's</u>. However, indirectly, it was shown that it influenced positively Grahams through symbolism and in both brands through integrity – even though more significantly in <u>Duncan's</u> than in Graham's. Antonio corroborates: *"Since activism and moral principles are already taken for granted in Graham's identity, if Duncan's were more honest there would be a higher difference and I would like it more."*

It is shown that both symbolism and integrity can directly influence the attitude of Gen Z in the two brands, and once again, this influence is higher in <u>Duncan's</u> when talking about integrity. Adriana made clear: *"I wouldn't want to be contributing to a brand that doesn't care about my rights."* As for Lara, another interviewee, she said: *"I like to know that I'm valued and I stop valuing a brand if I don't feel like I am."* Carolina F justified: *This is even more important in a non-activist brand, because an activist brand already shows that it cares about its customers and the society in general. On the other hand, a non-activist brand would have a bigger advantage if it focused more on showing this care."* Because of the same reason mentioned before, this influence was higher in <u>Graham's</u> when talking about symbolism.

Moreover, it was also verified that for both brands, activism directly influenced positively the perceived brand authenticity of Gen Z, but this time, for symbolism it was more significant in <u>Duncan's</u>. Lara states: *"It influences, yes. If a brand does not engage in activism, it can be harder to connect itself with certain people, but at the same time, it is easier to connect with any person.* For integrity, it was more significant in <u>Graham's</u>. As for credibility, it was significant in <u>Graham's</u>. This shows once again that the concepts of activism and authenticity are truly linked, especially in more activist brands.

H5: *Partially accepted.* Duncan's and Graham's follow different behaviors.

Table 5.7 – Direct correlations' summary

Direct Correlations	Activism → Symbolism	Activism → Integrity	Activism → Credibility	Activism → Attitude	Symbolism → Attitude	Integrity → Attitude	Credibility → Attitude
Graham's	0,478	**0,505**	0,330	*(It was not proven)*	**0,317**	0,344	*(It was not proven)*
Duncan's	**0,563**	0,453	-	**-0,280**	0,223	**0,534**	-

Table 5.8 – Indirect Correlations summary

Indirect Correlations	Activism → Symbolism → Attitude	Activism → Integrity → Attitude	Activism → Credibility → Attitude
Graham's	**0,151**	0,174	*(It was not proven)*
Duncan's	*(It was not proven)*	**0,242**	-

Table 5.9 – Hypotheses' results

Hypotheses	Result
H1A: Brand activism positively impacts the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.	*Reject*
H1B: Brand activism positively impacts the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.	*Reject*
H2A: Brand activism positively impacts the PBA of Gen Z in Duncan's	
H2Aii: Brand activism positively impacts the Integrity (PBA) of Gen Z in Duncan's.	**Accept**
H2Aiii: Brand activism positively impacts the Symbolism (PBA) of Gen Z in Duncan's.	**Accept**
H2B: Brand activism positively impacts the PBA of Gen Z in Graham's.	
H2Bi: Brand activism positively impacts the Credibility (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.	**Accept**
H2Bii: Brand activism positively impacts the Integrity (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.	**Accept**
H2Biii: Brand activism positively impacts the Symbolism (PBA) of Gen Z in Graham's.	**Accept**

H3A: Perceived brand authenticity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's.	
H3Aii: Integrity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's	**Accept**
H3Aiii: Symbolism is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Duncan's.	*Reject*
H3B: Perceived brand authenticity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's.	
H3Bi: Credibility is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's	*Reject*
H3Bii: Integrity is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's	**Accept**
H3Biii: Symbolism is positively related to Gen Z's brand attitude in Graham's.	**Accept**
H4A: Perceived brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.	
H4Aii: Integrity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.	**Accept**
H4Aiii: Symbolism mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Duncan's.	*Reject*
H4B: Perceived brand authenticity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.	
H4Bi: Credibility mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.	*Reject*
H4Bii: Integrity mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.	**Accept**
H4Biii: Symbolism mediates the relationship between brand activism and the brand attitude of Gen Z in Graham's.	**Accept**
H5: Duncan's and Graham's follow different behaviors.	*Accept partially*

6. Conclusions

6.1 Theoretical implications

There is still a lot to be studied about how brand activism influences attitudes through perceived brand authenticity, and there is, too, a lack of research on the implications of Generation Z for businesses (Pichler et al., 2021). This research combines these two themes, contributing to the literature by discussing this relationship from the point of view of a younger segment. This helps to understand how both brands and these consumers are being affected by the increasingly adopted activism efforts. Choosing Generation Z consumers as the subject of study in this research allowed to understand more deeply this segment that has a high potential (Chillakuri & Mahanandia, 2018; Haddouche & Salomone, 2018).

In a questionnaire with 157 Portuguese consumers, it was found that engaging in activism may not positively impact consumer attitude directly for Gen Z. This is in line with Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020), who states that brand activism doesn't significantly influence brand attitude in case of consumer-brand alignment. However, it was found that the relationship between activism and attitude was mediated by some dimensions of perceived brand authenticity: integrity for both brands, and symbolism for Graham's. This means that people seem to want Duncan's to focus first on important other issues before trying to be a vehicle for identity and self-concept shaping.

Integrity was revealed as the most significant mediator of the model. It is especially important to notice the significance of integrity's role, since the negative relationship observed in Duncan's becomes positive when including this dimension. These mediators hadn't been studied for this relationship yet, so this study offers valuable and fresh insights to the research concerning attitude formation when brand activism is in the picture.

It was also shown that perceived brand authenticity on its own directly influences attitude towards the brand in its integrity and symbolism dimensions, which is in line with the study from Taylor (2018), but also research made by Ewing et al. (2012), Fritz et al. (2017), Sheinin & Biehal (1999) and Spiggle et al.(2012) on the positive impact of perceived brand authenticity on brand attitude.

Moreover, it was discovered that Brand Activism has a significantly positive effect on symbolism and on integrity, when talking about Duncan's, but also on credibility, when talking about Graham's. This means that when consumers see an activist brand, they tend to think it helps people shape their identities, is of responsibility and moral purity, and is honest toward its customers. This theory aligns with Vredenburg et al. (2020), who state that

authenticity is the key to the success of brand activism, and Kotler & Sarkar (2017) and Moorman (2020), who believe that both concepts are strongly linked. However, this discovery brings more valuable insights into discussion since it had not been proven that activism positively and directly influences perceived brand authenticity, especially in the case of Gen Z.

In conclusion, this study shows that Generation Z cares about social causes but taking stands on divisive socio-political issues does not, on its own, improve consumer attitude towards brands. Brands and companies need to first be perceived as responsible and morally pure, since this is shown to be the key for consumers to have more positive attitudes towards activist brands.

6.2 Management implications

The findings of this research give insights about the impact that adopting brand activism as a strategy can have on brand attitude, as well as how perceived brand authenticity can shape this relationship. Because this is a trend that is expected to rise, this study offers insights that can be helpful for both managers and companies that are contemplating incorporating activism in their businesses.

The study emphasizes the interest of Generation Z in social causes and in brands addressing them. It is understood that not only ice cream brands, but brands in every industry should tackle some social issues, investing in activism, as long as it is honest and authentic. When this is done right and paired with authenticity, it can enhance the brand attitude and positive feelings of consumers, which can possibly lead to other beneficial behaviors. However, according to this study, brand activism can also be risky if not done correctly.

First, managers need to be aware of the appropriate cause to support. It is shown particularly in the interviews that taking a stand on a controversial issue that goes against what Gen Z believes can be hurtful for the brand. Thus, it is important that brands guarantee that their values are aligned with the ones of their target audience: for Gen Z, this means having no tolerance for inequality, embracing different cultures and being environmentally and politically conscious. This highlights the importance of proceeding with caution when taking stands on controversial issues as a brand. Even though the intentions can be good, just talking about divisive issues is not an ideal marketing strategy on its own. If a brand decides to engage in activism, it should completely and authentically embrace it, showing its responsibility towards the causes. Managers need to make sure there is consistency between

what is being said by the brand and its actions. For this, and since the attitude towards one single advertisement can shape the attitude towards the brand, companies should be consistent in every single communication; clear about their vision, mission, and values; trustable and fulfill their promises continuously; visible to increase brand exposure and awareness; and authentic.

Consumers need to perceive the brand as authentic, so brands should make clear why they are choosing to take a stand on a certain issue and how they are contributing to minimize or mitigate the problem. It could be important to show real numbers, facts, concrete actions, and effort. Perceived brand authenticity is shown to be a crucial part of brand activism, so it is important that, even before presenting the brand as "woke", the company is established in the consumers' minds as authentic in all its communications. For this, brands need to embrace the components of authenticity: for example, when producing advertisements that tackle a certain issue, agencies should make sure they are showing that the brand cares and gives back to its customers, has moral principles (integrity); that it will not betray its customers and is honest (credibility); and that it adds meaning to people's lives, connecting people with their authentic self and what is really important (symbolism). Brand managers need to understand that if the conversation about causes is not paired with action, Gen Z consumers might see the activism as inauthentic, perceiving that the brand is "woke washing". Brands that truly want to address social issues can not only do it for profit or marketing campaigns. They must do their research about the cause first, and then incorporate that culture into each action and every process in the company, making activism truly improve society.

In conclusion, this finding motivates businesses to take stands and be vocal about social causes, using their marketing efforts to support them, but the most crucial aspect is to truly embrace them.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

While this study clearly contributes to the field's understanding of the impacts of brand activism on brand attitude, it has some limitations. It was only studied the mediating role of perceived brand authenticity on the relationship. The fact that there wasn't a clearer distinction between the two brands can be related to the need for including other variables in the model. In future research and to further understand this link, it would be interesting to include additional variables or potential mediating and moderating effects in the model, like self-brand similarity and identification. It would also be important to have a prior

understanding of the beliefs of the people answering to the survey and what importance these people give to activism, and analyze the results based on those answers. Second, the dimensions for Perceived Brand Authenticity were chosen according to Morhart (2015). Dimensions proposed by other authors could be tested to see if the results would be different.

Another limitation is that only ice cream brands were presented in the survey and used for this study: there was only one kind of consumer goods. Future research could focus on different industries and types of products, like clothes, or even services, like hotels, to see if the impacts on attitude would change. Moreover, the ad presented for Graham's focused mostly on environmental activism. Political, social, or other types of activism could generate different results and it would be important to understand what the impacts would be.

The fact that the brands were fictional can also represent a limitation: while fictional brands were presented to avoid any bias related to prior attitudes, it also may be harder for consumers to connect with the brands if they never heard of them. In addition, the study comprises 157 respondents from Generation Z. While this is already considered a large number, it would be important to test the same methodology in a bigger sample, so the results would mirror answers that could be generalized and converted into patterns more accurately.

Finally, this study focuses mainly on Portuguese consumers, and this reality may not be the same for other countries or environments. It would be important to expand this study to locations with different environmental and political conditions.

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Annexes

Annex A – Questionnaire

Exhibit 1 – Questionnaire (in Portuguese)

Duncan's & Graham's

O presente questionário enquadra-se numa investigação no âmbito da dissertação de Mestrado em Marketing, no ISCTE-IUL. Este terá a duração de cerca de 5 minutos e os dados recolhidos serão completamente anónimos. Pede-se, apenas, que respondas a todas as questões de forma honesta.

Obrigada pela tua participação!

🚫 **aliceschagass@gmail.com** (não partilhado) Mudar de conta ☁

*Obrigatório

O questionário é direcionado à Geração Z - o grupo de pessoas que nasceu entre 1995 e 2012 (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

Pertences à Geração Z? *

○ Sim

○ Não

Lê e analisa a seguinte informação

A Duncan's e a Graham's são duas marcas de gelado fictícias que competem entre si. Ambas têm uma boa relação qualidade-preço e são bastante populares entre os consumidores. As duas marcas têm diversas lojas físicas espalhadas pelo país e websites que possibilitam fazer encomendas online e recebê-las em casa.


Sobre a Duncan's

A Duncan's comunica e faz publicidade aos seus gelados nas redes sociais: partilha publicações sobre os diferentes sabores e combinações que disponibiliza e menciona os comentários e feedback dos seus seguidores. Nos anúncios de televisão, divulga, principalmente, as qualidades e os pontos de diferença dos seus gelados. O Diretor Executivo da Duncan's publicita e menciona com frequência os eventos em que a marca participa e os prémios que vai recebendo ao longo do tempo.

Anúncio da Duncan's
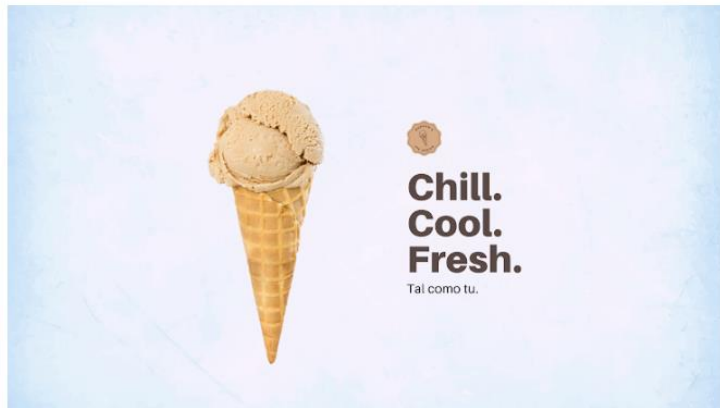
Feed de instagram da Duncan's
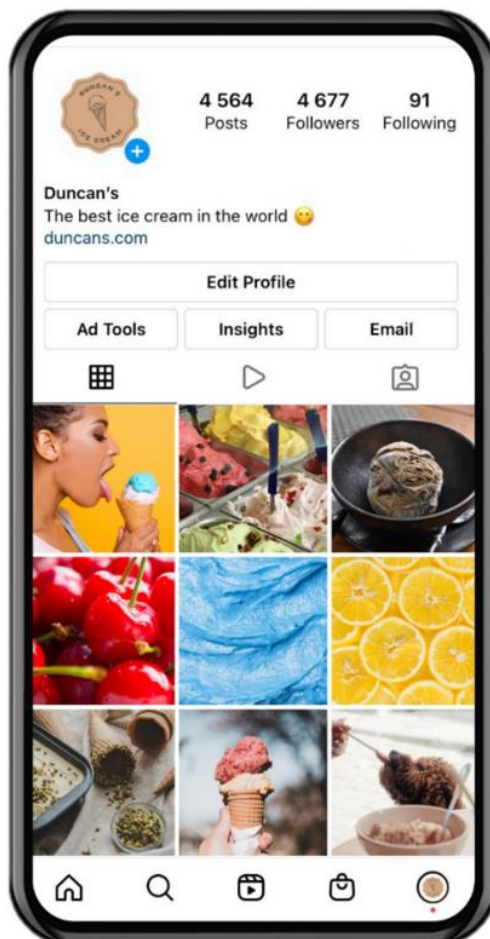
Sobre a Graham's

A Graham's comunica e faz publicidade aos seus gelados nas redes sociais, fazendo, também, publicações sobre a necessidade de caminharmos em direção a uma sociedade mais feminista e anti-racista e partilhando a sua visão em relação a problemas como as alterações climáticas e a pobreza. Nos anúncios de televisão, menciona preocupações com a sociedade e o CEO da marca vocaliza, com frequência, a sua posição no que toca a diversos problemas sociais - falando sobre a importância da reforma de vários juízos morais em prol do bem-estar da sociedade.

Anúncio da Graham's

É o planeta que está a derreter

Desde as secas e os incêndios florestais até ao assustador aumento do nível das águas do mar, as consequências das alterações climáticas fazem sentir-se em todo o lado e por todos. No entanto, não de igual forma. As pessoas nos países mais pobres são as que mais sofrem com a poluição dos mais ricos.

As alterações climáticas estão relacionadas com a justiça!

Assina a nossa petição para mostrarmos aos líderes mundiais que queremos que eles ajam. Junta-te a nós na luta para a justiça climática!

Feed de Instagram da Graham's
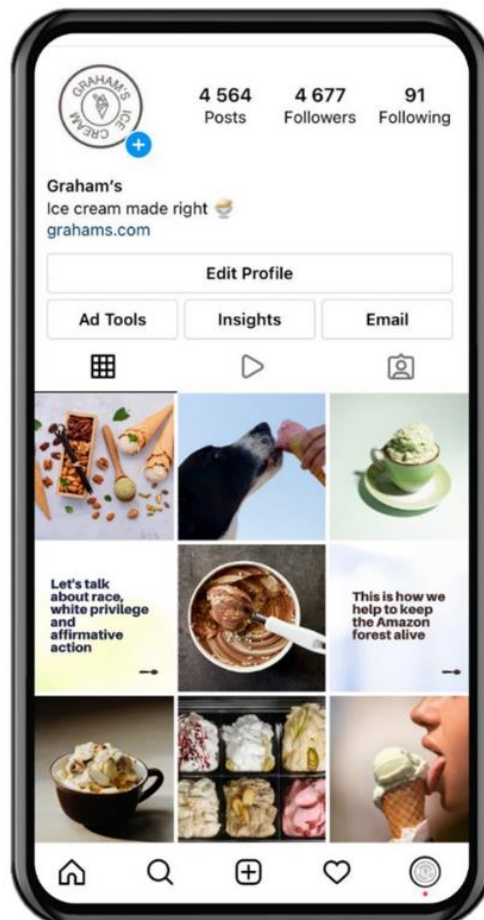
Tendo em conta a informação que acabaste de ver, responde às seguintes questões

Nota: considera a seguinte definição de ativismo de marca: "os esforços organizacionais para promover, impedir ou direcionar uma reforma ou a estagnação social, política, económica ou ambiental, com o objetivo de promover ou impedir melhorias na sociedade." (Sarkar & Kotler, 2021).

Acho que a Duncan's pratica ativismo de marca. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

Acho que a Graham's pratica ativismo de marca. *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

Responde conforme o que percecionas sobre a Duncan's

A Duncan's não me vai atraiçoar *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's cumpre o que promete *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's é uma marca honesta *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's retribui o apoio dos seus consumidores *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's é uma marca com princípios morais *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

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A Duncan's mantém-se fiel a um conjunto de valores morais *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's importa-se com os seus consumidores *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's dá mais significado à vida das pessoas *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's reflete valores importantes com que as pessoas se preocupam *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's liga as pessoas ao seu verdadeiro eu *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's liga as pessoas ao que realmente importa *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

Agora, responde conforme o que percecionas sobre a Graham's

A Graham's não me vai atraiçoar *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's cumpre o que promete *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's é uma marca honesta *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's retribui o apoio dos seus consumidores *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's é uma marca com princípios morais *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's mantém-se fiel a um conjunto de valores morais *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's importa-se com os seus consumidores *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's dá mais significado à vida das pessoas *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's reflete valores importantes com que as pessoas se preocupam *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's liga as pessoas ao seu verdadeiro eu *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Discordo totalmente ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Concordo totalmente

A Graham's liga as pessoas ao que realmente importa *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Discordo totalmente ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Concordo totalmente

Descreve como te sentes em relação à Duncan's

A Duncan's é uma marca apelativa *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Discordo totalmente ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's é uma boa marca *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Discordo totalmente ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's é uma marca agradável *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Discordo totalmente ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Concordo totalmente

A Duncan's é uma marca favorável *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Discordo totalmente ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Concordo totalmente

Gostar da Duncan's é fácil *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Discordo totalmente ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Concordo totalmente

Descreve como te sentes em relação à Graham's

A Graham's é uma marca apelativa *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's é uma boa marca *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's é uma marca agradável *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

A Graham's é uma marca favorável *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

Gostar da Graham's é fácil *

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Discordo totalmente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Concordo totalmente

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Para terminar, responde a umas últimas questões sobre ti

Qual é o teu género? *

○ Feminino

○ Masculino

○ Outro/Prefiro não dizer

Que idade tens? *

○ 18-21 anos

○ 22-24 anos

○ 25-27 anos

Qual é a tua ocupação? *

○ Estudante

○ Trabalhador/a-estudante

○ Empregado/a

○ Desempregado/a

Qual o nível de escolaridade mais elevado que completaste? *

○ Ensino básico

○ Ensino secundário

○ Licenciatura
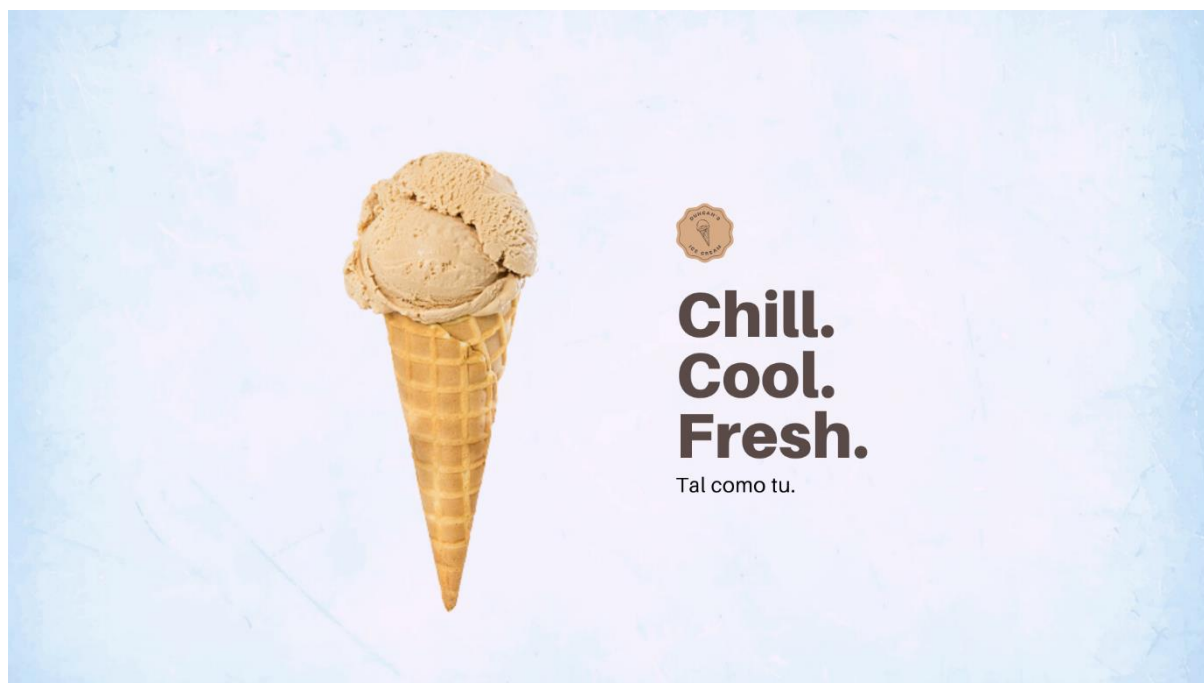
○ Mestrado

○ Doutoramento

Exhibit 2 – Interview (in Portuguese)

A Duncan's e a Graham's são duas marcas de gelado fictícias que competem entre si. Ambas têm uma boa relação qualidade-preço e são bastante populares entre os consumidores. As duas marcas têm diversas lojas físicas espalhadas pelo país e websites que possibilitam fazer encomendas online e recebê-las em casa.

Sobre a Duncan's:

A Duncan's comunica e faz publicidade aos seus gelados nas redes sociais: partilha publicações sobre os diferentes sabores e combinações que disponibiliza e menciona os comentários e feedback dos seus seguidores. Nos anúncios de televisão, divulga, principalmente, as qualidades e os pontos de diferença dos seus gelados. O Diretor Executivo da Duncan's publicita e menciona com frequência os eventos em que a marca participa e os prémios que vai recebendo ao longo do tempo.

[mostrar anúncio e feed de instagram]

Sobre a Graham's:

A Graham's comunica e faz publicidade aos seus gelados nas redes sociais, fazendo, também, publicações sobre a necessidade de caminharmos em direção a uma sociedade mais feminista e anti-racista e partilhando a sua visão em relação a problemas como as alterações climáticas e a pobreza. Nos anúncios de televisão, menciona preocupações com a sociedade e o CEO da marca vocaliza, com frequência, a sua posição no que toca a diversos problemas sociais - falando sobre a importância da reforma de vários juízos morais em prol do bem-estar da sociedade.

[mostrar anúncio e feed de instagram]

Para responderes às perguntas, *considera a definição de ativismo de marca: "os esforços organizacionais para promover, impedir ou direcionar uma reforma ou a estagnação social, política, económica ou ambiental, com o objetivo de promover ou impedir melhorias na sociedade."*

1. Consideras que ambas as marcas praticam ativismo? Qual delas consideras que pratica (mais)?

2. O ativismo é importante para ti? Porquê?

3. O ativismo nas marcas é importante para ti? Em todas as indústrias? Porquê?

4. Achas que o facto de considerares uma marca ativista muda a forma como a vês e/ou o quão gostas dela? De que forma? Porquê?

a) Se sim, isto é mais significativo quando consideras que a marca é **honesta** e não te vai trair? Em relação às duas marcas apresentadas, em qual consideras estes aspetos mais importante?

b) Se sim, isto é mais significativo quando consideras que esta tem **princípios morais** e se **preocupa com os seus consumidores**? Em relação às duas marcas apresentadas, em qual consideras estes aspetos mais importante?

c) Se sim, isto é mais significativo quando consideras que esta acrescenta **significado à vida das pessoas** e as **conecta com o que realmente importa**? Em relação às duas marcas apresentadas, em qual consideras estes aspetos mais importante?

5. Consideras que o facto de uma marca ser ativista faz com que esta **acrescente significado à vida das pessoas** e **reflita valores importantes** com que estas se preocupam? E o facto de não ser faz com que deixe de acrescentar? Porquê?

6. Consideras que o facto de uma marca ser ativista faz com que esta **conecte as pessoas com o seu verdadeiro eu** e com o que realmente importa? E o facto de não ser, faz com que deixe de o fazer? Porquê?

7. Há fatores que podem ser fulcrais para considerarmos uma marca boa e gostarmos dela. Na tua opinião,

a) O facto da marca ter **princípios ou valores morais** é um deles? E o facto de não ter? Faz com que deixes de gostar? Porquê? Achas que isto seria mais importante numa marca ativista ou não ativista?

b) E o facto da marca se **importar com os seus consumidores**? E o facto de não importar? Faz com que deixes de gostar? Porquê? Achas que isto seria mais importante numa marca ativista ou não ativista?

c) E o facto da marca acrescentar **significado à vida das pessoas** e **as conectar com o seu verdadeiro eu**? E o facto de não acrescentar faz com que gostes menos? Porquê? Achas que isto seria mais importante numa marca ativista ou não ativista?

d) E o facto da marca ser **honesta**? E o facto de não ser faz com que gostes menos? Porquê? Achas que isto seria mais importante numa marca ativista ou não ativista?