

The Relationship Between Brand Activism and Select Brand Performance Metrics: The Cases of C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton

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Abstract

This paper determines the statistical relationship of brand activism on Facebook to the respective brand image, purchase intent, likelihood to shift, degree of interest, and recommendation toward C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton. Brand activism is a way for companies to express their opinions and values on social, environmental, or political issues that matter to them and their customers. The gathering of respondents was done in purposive way who were who are from different age groups, socio-economic classes, and regions. The researcher conducted a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis to measure the statistical association of brand activism on Facebook with various dependent variables. This is a statistical technique that assesses the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. The analysis showed that only brand image and interest level were the independent variables that had a strong positive correlation with the importance of brand activism on Facebook (dependent variable). No significant differences were observed between the responses for C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton. This paper advances the general knowledge of brand activism in the Philippine context. It provides practical implications for marketers and advertisers who want to utilize social media platforms to engage with their consumers on relevant social, environmental, or political issues. The researcher proposes that future studies examine how brand activism varies among various products and brands, such as food, beverages, clothing, electronics, etc., and how these variations influence consumer perception and behavior. The researcher also recommends applying other statistical methods to cover more aspects, generate new insights, and explore other perspectives regarding brand activism.

Keywords: *brand activism, correlation, brand image, purchase intent.*

Introduction

Consumers not only want brands to satisfy their basic needs and offer them benefits, but they also want brands to have their brand purposes. Wagner (2021) described brand purpose as the essence of a brand or organization that creates value for stakeholders by tackling a social problem. Brands that address specific human needs and fill market gaps are now more involved in social issues that affect their target audiences. Besides brand identity and purpose, which brands should maintain in the long term, being flexible in taking positions on social issues and supporting social causes and campaigns gives brands an edge. Higher involvement in such social initiatives, which are part of the broader concept of brand activism, implies more consumer loyalty to the brand, resulting in higher sales potential (Gray, 2019).

General Context of Brand Activism

Brand activism is a strategy that aims to influence consumers by using campaigns based on and sustained by political and social values (Manfredi-Sanchez, 2019). Mukherjee and Althuizen (2018) further stated that it is the action of taking a position on contentious socio-political issues. As people become more aware of important issues, most consumers want brands to take a position on socio-political matters in today's market (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Consumers attempt to inform themselves on socio-political issues and expect the same from the companies (Milfeld and Flint, 2020). Because of these, brands have recently started to adopt a brand activism strategy by aligning themselves with a socio-political cause to increase their relevance and strengthen customer relationships (Key et al., 2021). Brands are now entering an era where brand activism strategies impact consumers' decision-making rather than traditional brand marketing (Gray, 2019). Companies surpass their status as capitalist institutions and resemble fully-fledged humans when they take stands on critical issues (Manfredi-Sanchez, 2019). Consumers are more immersed in campaigning for socio-political change, so they want to see brands take a stand and support something more meaningful. Consumers express more loyalty to brands that do more than just provide them with a product or service and support the same values and beliefs they hold (Kumar, 2020). Consumers favor buying a brand if it supports a cause or purpose, and they refrain from buying if the brand behaves unethically (Shetty et al., 2019).

However, not all brands successfully do these due to disconnections between social issues, brand identity, and lack of consistency. Sourjo and Althuizen (2020) concluded that in studies involving unknown and well-known brands, attitudes towards the brand decreased significantly among consumers who disagreed with a brand's stand. In contrast, there was no significant effect among consumers who supported the stand. When brands match activist messaging, purpose, and values with pro-social corporate practice, they engage in authentic brand activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Activist brands often engage in controversies to redefine which opinions and ideas are acceptable to express publicly (Sibai et al., 2021).

Brand Activism in the Philippines

Brand activism is not a new phenomenon in the Philippines. Many companies, especially multinationals, have adopted brand activism in their advertising strategies. This advertising strategy enables brands to build a deeper relationship with consumers by raising awareness of the issues that are important to them (Champlin et al., 2019). Therefore, the existence of multinational companies in the Philippines that use this kind of advertising strategy led to the emergence of woke advertising in the country (Goh, 2016).

Ligo Sardines, one of the leading canned sardines brands in the Philippines, became viral during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic due to its several Facebook posts criticizing the lack of government actions in preventing the negative effects of the pandemic. All of Ligo Sardines' graphic advertisements on Facebook related to socio-political issues became viral, but the brand received mixed reactions. Many noted the progressive nature of the posts and praised the brand for taking a stand on socio-political matters (Get Real Philippines, 2020).

In 2013, Pantene displayed a video of men and women having similar behaviors but were labeled differently, revealing a double standard. For the first time in its brand history, Pantene did not emphasize its products but instead highlighted a critical issue that helped women to shine (Tulshyan, 2013).

Moreover, during the 2022 Presidential Elections campaign, several brands swiftly expressed their stands on Isko Moreno's call for Leni Robredo's withdrawal from the Presidential race. Durex PH, Victoria Court, BPI, Standard Insurance, Cha Tuk Chak,

C2 Green Tea

Universal Robina Corporation launched C2 Green Tea in the Philippine market in 2004 as the first ready-to-drink (RTD) tea (URC, 2019). Since then, Filipinos have developed a liking for tea drinks and love C2's refreshing flavors. And more than just refreshment for the hot days, C2 is loaded with all the benefits that green tea leaves or camellia sinensis offer; C2 promises a genuine and authentic tea experience (Business Mirror, 2018).

The selection of C2 Green Tea as a subject for this study goes beyond its market position. Being the first in the RTD Tea category and successfully challenging soda brands in crucial consumption moments is a feat only a few brands can pull through.

Lucky Me!

Introduced in 1989, Lucky Me! has become a household brand that almost every Filipino family enjoys. Filipinos' love for the brand evolved as Lucky Me! has always been empathetic and responsive to its valued consumers through continuous product innovations (Monde Nissin, 2018).

In 2020, Kantar Worldpanel reported in its 2020 Asia Brand Footprint study that Lucky Me! Has, for the fifth consecutive year, dominated the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) brand category in the Philippines, as it was bought by nearly all Philippine households (97%) in 2019, or more than 35 times in 2020 (Inquirer.net, 2020).

Lucky Me! has become a subject of public and government scrutiny after several countries banned some of its variants due to chemical contamination. Monde Nissin Corporation has issued a statement claiming its iconic Lucky Me! is safe for consumption. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) later issued a similar report that effectively closed the Lucky Me! controversy. However, the argument contributed to the 15% decline in Monde Nissin's net income in the first half of 2022, alongside rising costs of raw materials (ABS-CBN News, 2022).

Significance of the Study

In the current era, it is essential and urgent to have a profound and evidence-based comprehension of the influence of being engaged in social issues, social movements, and advocacies on Facebook to brand success regarding image, preference, and purchase propensity. Understanding this relationship on a deeper level will offer vital insights into the nature and extent of relationships consumers have with the brands they adore, despise, and admire. These insights will assist marketing professionals in navigating and crafting their respective marketing strategies for their brands while remaining relevant and purposeful. In addition to marketers, this study will also benefit psychologists and market researchers in further understanding the human mind, especially consumer behavior, and decision-making. Moreover, this study aims to serve as a basis for brands to utilize in devising their online marketing strategies, particularly those that are thought-provoking and subject to social media scrutiny and division.

Methodology

This research aims to examine the effect of brand activism on the brand image and purchase intention of C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton. To achieve this objective, the researcher conducted an online survey using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of questions that directly asked respondents about their perception of brand activism and whether brand activism influences their perception of the brands included in the survey in terms of brand image, purchase intention, the likelihood of shifting, degree of recommendation, future purchase, and degree of interest.

The researcher employed purposive (non-probability) sampling to obtain respondents to answer the online survey. Tongco (2007) described purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling technique most effective when studying a specific domain with knowledgeable respondents. Purposive sampling can also be used with both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The inherent bias of the method contributes to its efficiency, and the technique remains robust even when tested against random probability sampling. Given that this research is primarily dedicated to qualified respondents willing to answer the online survey, the researcher utilized a purposive method of getting respondents.

A total of 135 qualified respondents participated in the 10-minute online survey through Google Forms. The online survey lasted one week, from May 7, 2022, to May 14, 2022.

Results

Figure 1.
Degree of Importance of Brand Activism on Facebook

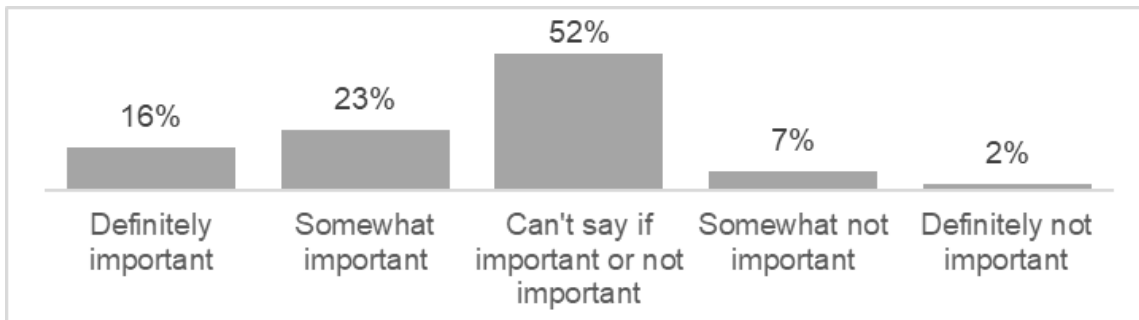


Figure 1 shows the degree of importance of brand activism on Facebook among respondents. 4 out of 10 (39%) of the respondents agree that being involved in social causes and advocacies is essential. 5 out of 10 (52%) are indifferent about considering brand activism as important or not. Meanwhile, only 1 out of 10 (9%) consider involvement in social causes and advocacies unimportant.

Figure 2.
Effect of Brand Activism on Facebook on the Brand Image of C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton

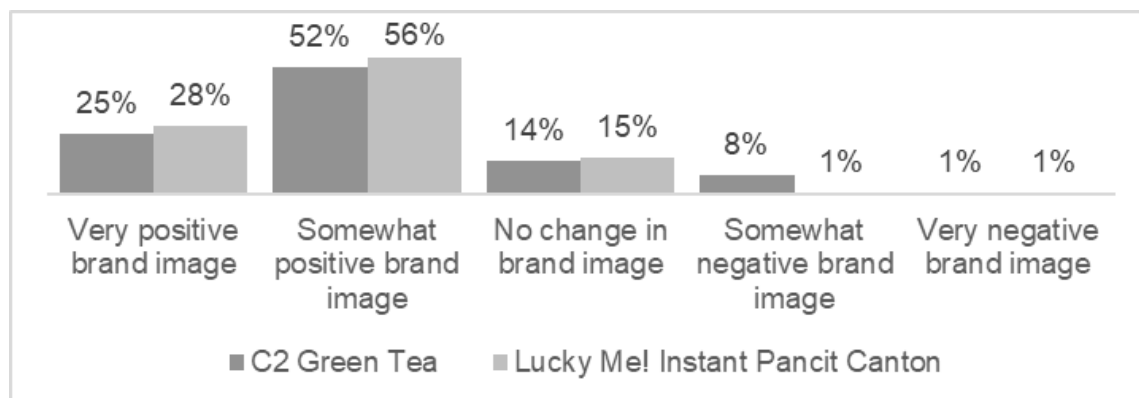


Figure 2 displays the effects of brand activism on Facebook on the brand image of C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton. Regardless of brand, a significant majority or 8 out of 10 respondents (77% C2, 84% LM) adjudged that involvement in social causes and advocacies positively impacts the brand image of C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me!

Figure 3.

Effect of Brand Activism on Facebook to Purchase Intent of C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton

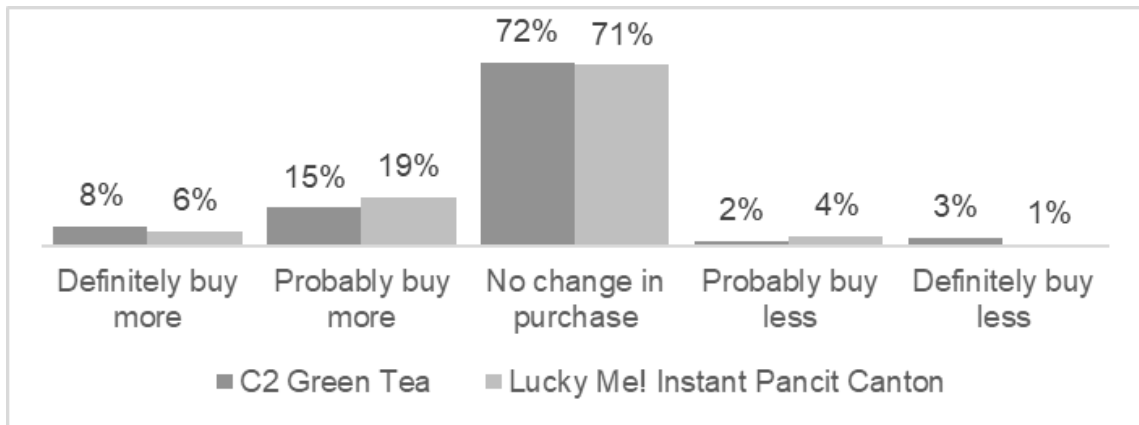


Figure 3 shows the effects of brand activism on Facebook on the purchase intent of C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton. Regardless of brand, 7 out of 10 respondents (72% C2, 71% LM) stated that involvement in social causes and advocacies does not impact their purchase intent of C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Only 2 out of 10 respondents (23% C2, 25% LM) claimed they would buy more of these brands.

Figure 4.

Effect of Brand Activism on Facebook to Likelihood to Shift from C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton to other brands

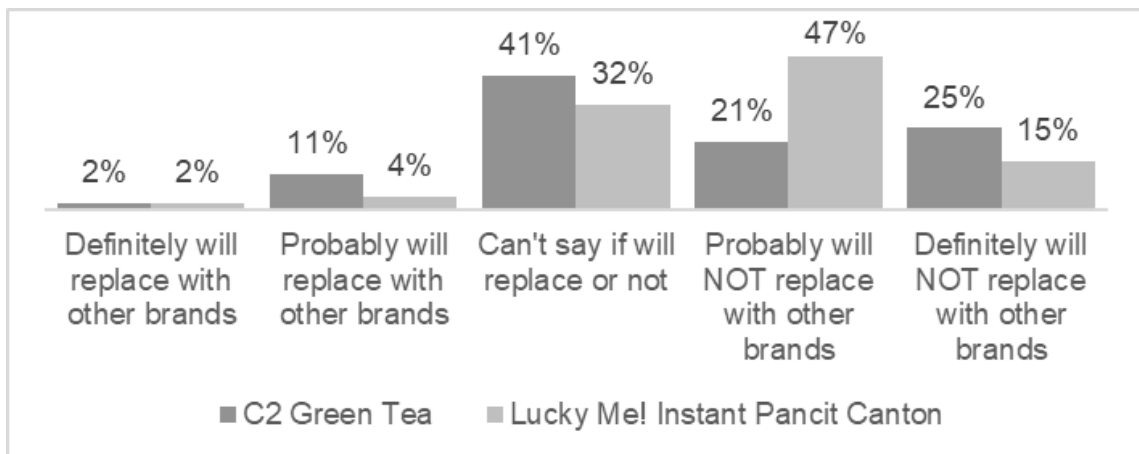


Figure 4 shows the effects of brand activism on Facebook on the likelihood of shifting from C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton to other brands. More respondents are not keen on replacing C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton (46% C2, 62% LM). Meanwhile, 3 to 4 out of 10 respondents (41% C2, 32% LM) are unsure if they will replace C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton with other brands. Only 1 out of 10 respondents (13% C2, 6% LM) are keen on replacing C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton.

Figure 5

Effect of Brand Activism on Facebook to Purchase Intent in the Next 6 Months of C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton

Figure 5 illustrates the effects of brand activism on Facebook on respondents' purchase intent of C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton in the next six months. Regardless of brand, 5 to 6 out of 10 respondents (57% C2, 54% LM) claimed their purchase propensity towards the brands would not change in the next six months, even if the brands are involved in social causes and advocacies. Only 3 out of 10 respondents (29% C2, 34% LM) claimed they would buy more of these brands in the next six months.

Figure 6

Effect of Brand Activism on Facebook to Degree of Interest Towards C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton

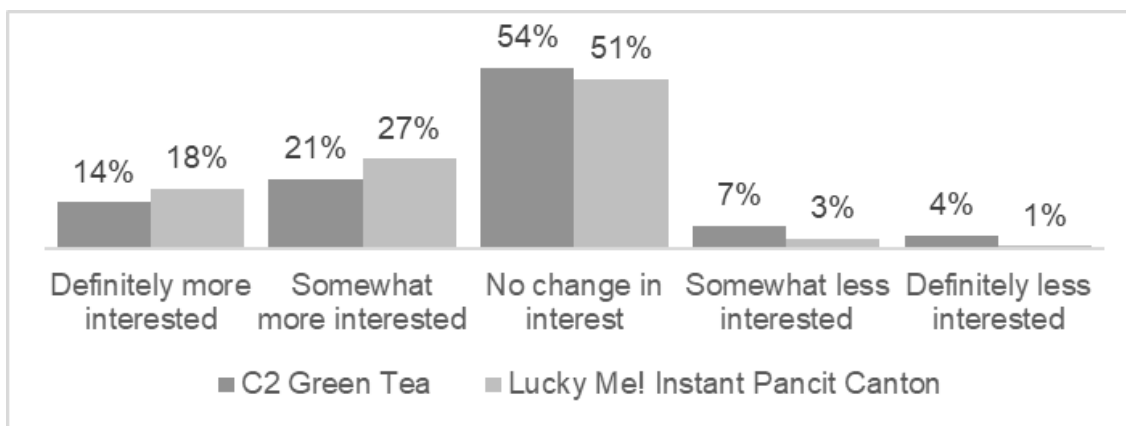


Figure 6 displays the effects of brand activism on Facebook on respondents' degree of interest in C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton. Regardless of brand, 5 out of 10 respondents (54% C2, 51% LM) claimed that being involved in social causes and advocacies has no impact on their degree of interest in C2 Green Tea and Luck Me! Meanwhile, more respondents (45%) said they would become more interested in Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton became involved in brand activism. On the other hand, around 3 out of 10 respondents (34) claimed that they would become more interested in C2 Green Tea if they became involved in brand activism.

Figure 7

Effect of Brand Activism on Facebook to Degree of Recommendation Towards C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton

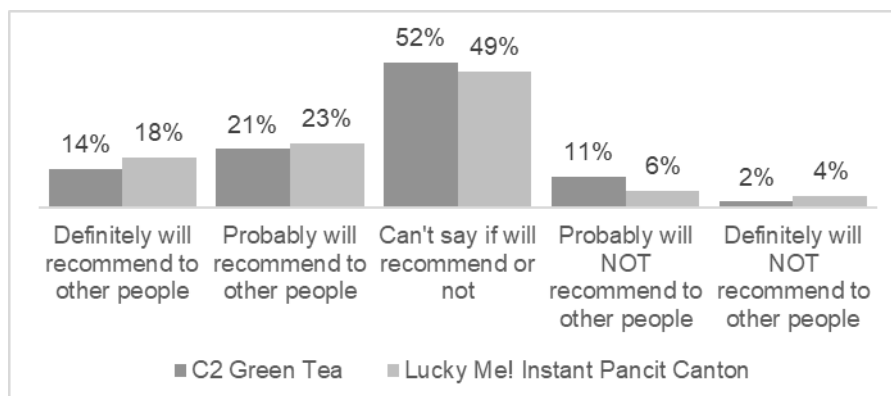


Figure 7 shows the effects of brand activism on Facebook to the degree of recommendation for C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton. Regardless of brand, 5 out of 10 respondents (52% C2, 49% LM) adjudged that being involved in social causes and advocacies has no impact on their degree of recommendation on C2 Green Tea and Luck Me! Meanwhile, 4 out of 10 (35% C2, 41% LM) stated they would recommend C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton with other people if these brands became involved in brand activism on Facebook.

Table 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Between Variables and Importance of Brand Activism on Facebook to C2 Green Tea

Variables	Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	Degree of Correlation to Importance of Brand Activism
Brand Image	0.79	Strong positive
Purchase Intent	0.13	Weak positive
Likelihood to Shift	- 0.19	Weak negative
Degree of Recommendation	0.46	Moderate positive
Purchase Propensity in the Next 6 Months	0.08	Weak positive
Degree of Interest	0.66	Strong positive

Table 2 shows the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients (Pearson r) between the variables and the importance of brand activism for C2 Green Tea. Based on the Pearson r values, only Brand Image and Degree of Interest have a strong positive correlation with the importance of brand activism for C2 Green Tea. This means that the degree of importance of brand activism on Facebook follows a positive relationship with the brand image of C2 Green Tea.

Table 3

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Between Variables and Importance of Brand Activism for Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton

Variables	Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	Degree of Correlation to Importance of Brand Activism
Brand Image	0.82	Strong positive
Purchase Intent	0.17	Weak positive
Likelihood to Shift	-0.14	Weak negative
Degree of Recommendation	0.42	Moderate positive
Purchase Propensity in the Next 6 Months	0.14	Weak positive
Degree of Interest	0.72	Strong positive

Table 3 shows the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients (Pearson r) between the variables and the importance of brand activism for Lucky Me! Pancit Canton. Based on the Pearson r values, only Brand Image and Degree of Interest have a strong positive correlation with the importance of brand activism for Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton. This means that the degree of importance of brand activism on

Facebook follows a positive relationship with the brand image of Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Discussion of Results

Based on the data table generated on the degree of importance of brand activism on Facebook, it is clear that a massive chunk of the population deems brand activism as necessary. However, more Filipinos are indifferent as to whether they find brand activism on Facebook as important or not. This lukewarm view of brand activism can be attributed to the market stance of the brands included in the study, which are all market leaders in their respective categories in the Philippines. Consumers usually favor market leaders due to their long-standing reputation and brand equities, which activates the default positive image of market leaders.

From the data tables generated for each variable (e.g., brand image, purchase intent, likelihood to shift, purchase intent in the next six months, degree of interest, degree of recommendation), responses for C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Pancit Canton does not significantly differ, which radiates their respective market positions as market leaders in the RTD Tea and Instant Noodles categories, respectively.

Pearson product-moment correlation analysis concluded that only brand image and degree of interest strongly correlate with brand activism. The positive correlation between brand image and degree of interest in brand activism on Facebook can be attributed to Filipinos' emotional attachment to brands. However, this emotional attachment does not automatically translate to purchase or consumption. Unlike the insignificant variables, brand image and degree of interest do not entail an actual change in purchase and consumption patterns (i.e., buying more or less, replacing brands).

Conclusion

This paper analyzes the correlation of brand activism on Facebook to the respective brand image and purchase intent of C2 Green Tea and Lucky Me! Instant Pancit Canton. The impact of brand activism was measured to the dimensions of brand image and purchase intent, particularly brand image, purchase intent, likelihood to shift, recommendation, and purchase intent in the next six months.

Based on Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis, brand image and degree of interest are the independent variables that strongly correlate with the importance of brand activism on Facebook (dependent variable). Other independent variables have weak to moderate correlations to the dependent variable.

The researcher recommends that further research and a literature review should be

conducted to compare the impact of brand activism between market leaders and non-market leaders and between essential and non-essential products. Market leaders are brands that have the highest market share or sales revenue in a given market, while non-market leaders are brands that have lower or no significant market share or sales revenue in the same market. Essential products are goods or services that are necessary for the survival or well-being of consumers, while non-essential products are goods or services that are not vital for the survival or well-being of consumers but may enhance their quality of life. Comparing the impact of brand activism between these categories of products and brands can add another layer of depth to the discussion of brand activism in the local context, as it can reveal how different types of consumers respond to different types of brand messages and actions on social, environmental, or political issues.

The researcher also encourages identifying and considering other factors that might affect brand activism, such as consumer demographics, psychographics, values, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, emotions, etc. These factors can help explain why consumers may support or oppose certain brands based on their alignment or misalignment with their views and values on relevant issues.

The researcher also recommends that future researchers consider applying other statistical techniques to develop more holistic and actionable conclusions.

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