

“The companies that perform best over time build a social purpose into their operations that is as important as their economic purpose.”

Rosabeth Moss Kanter



BRAND ACTIVISM

“a purpose- and values-driven strategy in which a brand adopts a nonneutral stance on institutionally contested sociopolitical issues, to create social change and marketing success.”

Vredenburg et al. (2020, 446)



The Difference Between CSR and Brand Activism

Corporate Social Responsibility

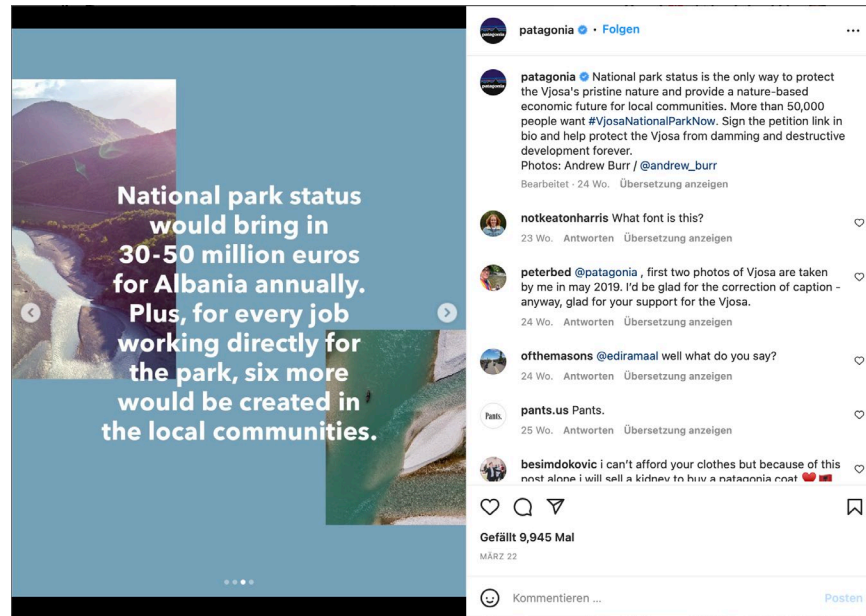
- A reactive method to improve brand reputation by eliminating negative byproducts of a company (e.g. not polluting rivers)
- CSR is seen as a hygiene factor that companies must follow to legitimate their operations
- Low likelihood of negative feedback as it is directed towards causes that are well-accepted by the public



Brand Activism

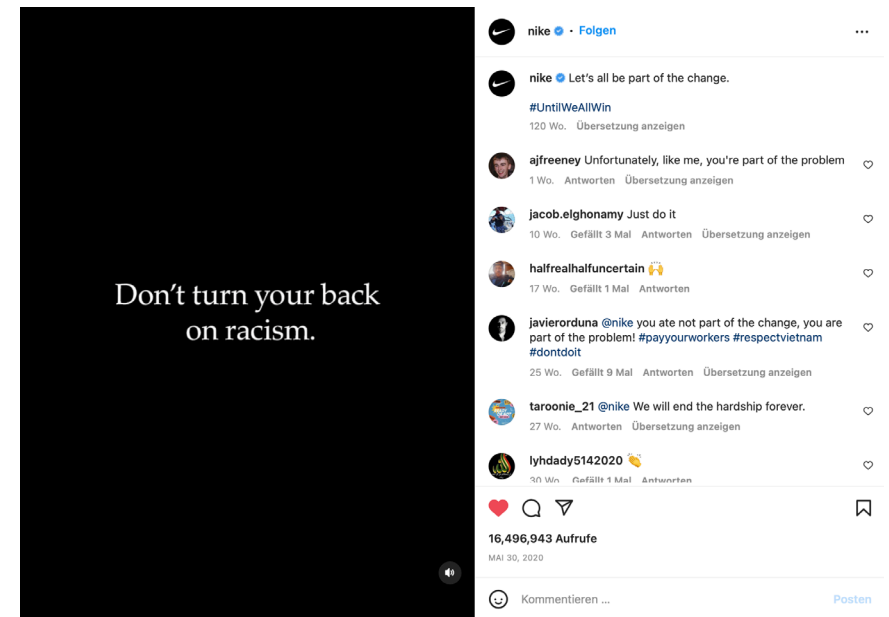
- A proactive method that intends to solve social problems which might have nothing to do with the company's operations (Racism)
- Brands become political actors, inspired by social movements.
- High likelihood of negative feedback, depending on whether the brand's stand aligns with stakeholders' values

Brand Activism Is Now Entering The Mainstream



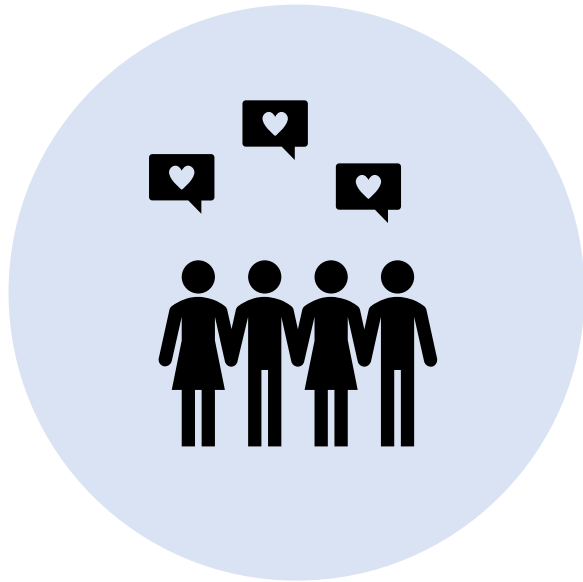
Patagonia is a popular example, as the brand has been committed to the environment since its establishment.

Nike became known primarily for campaigns on behalf of the Black Lives Matter movement, earning both, much criticism and much approval.



Why Do Brands Enter Activism?

There are two reasons:

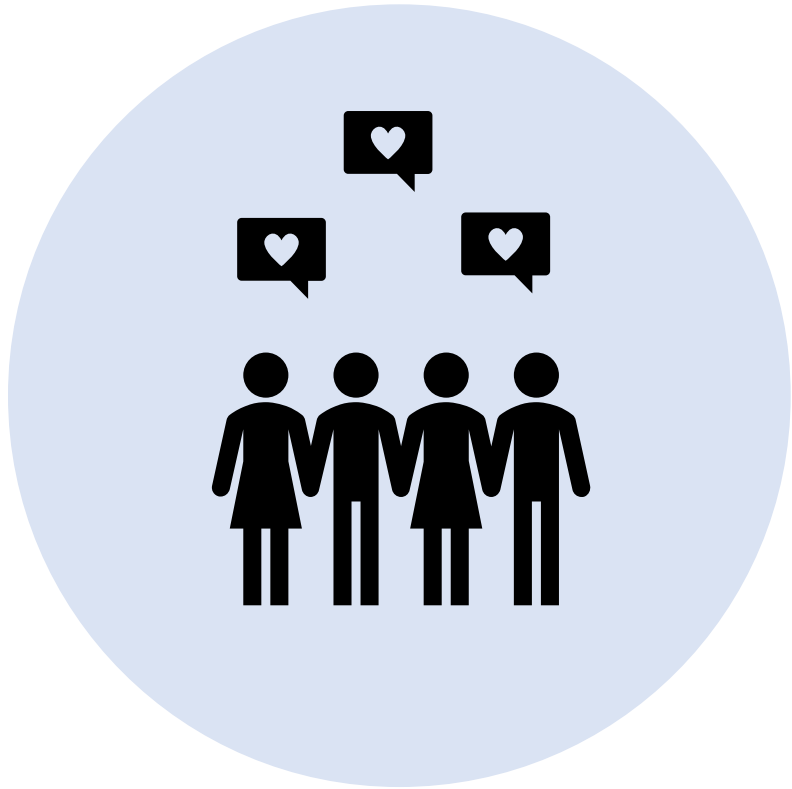


Activist brands are favored by
(young) consumers.



Brands can contribute
enormously to the common good.

Activist Brands Are Favored By (Young) Consumers



- Compared to the government, media and NGOs, young consumers trust businesses to put the most effort to solve societal issues.*
- The new generation of customers prefers to get identified with brands which are socially responsive.
- Almost 60% of respondents buy or advocate a brand based on their beliefs and values.*

* As shown in the Edelman Trust Barometer: An annual survey on trust in governments, companies, media, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Brands Can Contribute Enormously To The Common Good



- In terms of the environment: Most companies have a huge (harmful) influence on the environment. This can be changed by donating money, raising funds, producing sustainably, revising the value chain, etc.
- In terms of employees: Young talents are looking for a job with a purpose which is provided by an activist brand.
- In terms of customers: Solving issues together with customers in a co-creational process and thus building unique relationships with them.

What Do You Think ...

... Will Brand Activism Become an Established Corporate Strategy or Is It Just a Temporary Phenomenon?

