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THE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS A MARKETING
STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

In our ever-expanding world, with Capitalism being the main driving force in lifting people out of poverty and giving them a chance at a successful future, consumerism is thriving. With people having more disposable income than ever before, companies are taking advantage of this fact and marketing campaigns become an essential part of every company's life. It is not necessary that every company has to create advertisements which incorporates every aspect of their product, which they would like to sell. We might not always be aware, that we are constantly influenced to make a purchase, to act as we are told by the advertisements, the truth is, we all play a role on the global market, not having a say in it, if we want to be a part of it or not. Marketing psychology plays a big part in our purchasing decisions, as humans are irrational beings, acting on their every biological impulse.

Here I would like to delve into the marketing strategies of companies, be it an SME or a multinational corporation, which use sensational news or occurrences to advertise their product, virtue signal to their potential customers, to get a bigger cut of the pie. Is using sensationalism or "wokeness" as marketing a valid strategy which might boost a company's sales numbers, image and enhance the number of people who interact with the company on social media, therefore starting a conversation with potential customers, or is it damaging to the company which could lead to people boycotting or straight up cancelling the business. Today even a strongly worded "tweet" from a person with a big enough follower base can start an all-out war, which pits multiple bases with difference in opinion, against each other. Thereby keeping the conversation flowing, which in turn keeps attracting more interested individuals which either share or disagree with the majority of the userbase, nevertheless, the company will have constant interactions with their statement and the company name will be visible to all who visit and subconsciously be more prone to make a purchase decision. Marketing psychology plays a big part in a company's ability to anticipate consumer behavior and purchase decisions.

Is it worth for corporations to pander to the public? Is it strategically and financially a sane decision to grant the wishes of a few, who make the most noise in public spaces and forums? To show that the corporation is progressive and wants to enact social change. Maybe fashionable activism is a great marketing strategy but will it backfire for companies or pay off in the long run?

1.DEFINITIONS AND USAGES OF MARKETING AND CSR

1.1 Marketing

In marketing everything is about the desire of the potential customer. The goal is to integrate their expectations and wishes into the corporate decisions and to achieve corporate goals this way. Of course, the main goal is to increase revenue through this way, to sell more of a certain product or service. Accordingly, marketing is connected with analysis, planning, implementation and control of the corporate activities in a company. Marketing is a central function of the corporate governance and an important component of the business sphere.

Marketing mix, or the four P's, are generally referred to as the most important instruments of marketing (Goi, 2009). Product, Place, Price and Promotion, where product, and or service, and the associated product policy are the real factors in a company's success (Singh, 2012). The better the product, the easier it is to achieve success through targeted marketing tools. Product policy includes product range planning, product quality, customer service and the design of the product. Place or distributions politics primarily includes considering how the product should get to the customer. Should it go through a sales agent, or should it be directly delivered to a consumer, such as a mail order or an online shop. A combination of the distribution channels is also possible, a Samsung phone can be purchased from a sales agent, an electronics store, or directly from Samsung. Price or pricing policy, means all contractual and financial conditions that arise when purchasing a product. Among other things, the pricing policy defines discounts and bonuses as well as delivery and payment conditions. The most important function, however, is the setting of the price for a product. Attention must be paid to the competition and the company's goals. Promotion is what is usually meant, when talking about marketing or advertising. This includes all of the company's communicative measures that are used to advertise a product. The most common means of communication policy are advertising, personal sales, sponsorship, trade shows, events and public relations. In the course of time, some additional elements were added to these four original P's (Claessens, 2016). Marketing is a particularly fast-moving field and is subject to constant changes and trends. Terms such as big data, multi-channel or cross-media marketing are becoming increasingly important. Nevertheless, the four P's are still the basis of any successful marketing campaign (Akroush, 2011).

In the meantime, marketing is getting bigger and bigger because the advancing digitization gives more marketing opportunities. Classic marketing was the most common form of advertising before the internet and digital possibilities existed (Gronroos, 2002). This form of advertising includes flyers, posters but also television and radio advertising. This form of advertising was completely different. The success of the entire campaign can be measured, for example, with poster advertising, but in contrast to online marketing, it is difficult to distinguish which poster was seen particularly often or whether one of the posters was particularly popular. And once a flyer has been printed, it can no longer be easily changed and adapted. Another classic form of marketing that existed before digitization. At that time, mail, phone calls or faxes were used; nowadays, e-mails or personalized advertisements on the Internet are the means to an end. Because the goal of direct marketing is to address the customer directly and thus retain them. The sale of a product is secondary, it is more about customer loyalty. (Kenny, 2010)

Online marketing, or digital media marketing, has meanwhile become a major part of advertising - but the possibilities are also diverse. Whether emails, banners, social media, affiliate marketing, augmented reality or influencer marketing - the possibilities are very diverse. And the mechanization of everyday life is constantly adding new possibilities. Therefore, with the online marketing course, there are now also courses that specialize in this area. In the meantime, many advertising campaigns also have the right events. Whether a press conference, sporting event or the launch of a new cosmetics or clothing line, which is celebrated with a special event to which stars, starlets and influencers are invited. Event marketing is becoming more and more important in times of social media - the bigger and more unusual the event, the better the reach and reputation of the company or brand. Cross-media marketing has also become much larger due to digitization, as the Internet has opened up new paths - and the advancing technology will certainly add more. Even before digitization, this form of marketing was known as multichannel marketing. Regardless of the name, the main thing is to use different channels for an advertising message, which can be both online and offline, and to connect them with one another. (Deepak Verma, 2018)

Since the emergence and constant further development of online marketing, other forms of marketing have emerged in connection with this, for example performance marketing. In contrast to print campaigns, the success or failure of online campaigns can be measured much better. And that's exactly what performance marketing is for. Ongoing online marketing measures are checked

for clicks, traffic or conversions, for example, by means of performance marketing, depending on the goal of the campaign, can be adapted if necessary and better aligned with the respective target group (Elharar, 2017). Possible channels that also can be tracked through performance marketing are email marketing, affiliate programs or search engine advertising.

Content marketing is a marketing measure that is primarily intended to provide the target group with relevant and valuable information and does not just contain promotional information. But entertaining content can also be used in content marketing. Classic examples of content marketing are blog posts, white papers, e-books, tutorials, but also games or infographics. This content is used, for example, in newsletters, social media management or PR texts. While the advertising content takes a back seat in content marketing, the aim of the measures is of course to encourage new customers to act as profitably as possible with clicks or conversions. (Rowley, 2008)

1.2. Corporate social responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR for short, includes measures that companies take to meet their social responsibility in terms of sustainability. In this area there is the discipline of CSR marketing. It promotes a company's CSR activities. CSR marketing follows the motto “do good and talk about it”. However, it is important to hit the right note. (Chambers, 2020)

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), in which businesses take on social responsibility through charitable campaigns, in connection with marketing campaigns, which seems at first glance to be contradicting each other. As individual entities, companies have a major influence on society as a whole. Thus, in terms of sustainability, they are also responsible for shaping this influence as positively as possible in all aspects. In practice, this involves measures such as reducing the CO2 footprint, saving garbage and production waste, dealing sustainably with the health of employees, observing social fairness at all points in the value chain and that in particular, the local environment is not negatively impacted. (Dirk Matten, 2004)

This corporate social responsibility (CSR for short) is often referred to as a voluntary step that positively emphasizes a company and places economic interests behind a positive social effect, which in turn makes it more interesting as an employer or brand. Today the focus on socially positive purposes is more of an obligation for companies. The image, the attitude of employees

towards the company, the comparison with competing companies and many other factors are positively influenced by a good CSR approach. These measures thus harbor great economic potential.

Consumers around the world are getting better and better informed. Boycott campaigns, or at least the knowledge of negative aspects of large global corporations that cause more conscious consumer behavior, are widespread. It is therefore essential for smaller companies in particular to be well positioned in these areas in order to be an appropriate alternative for these customers and thus to address them specifically. In this sense, a good CSR strategy can even serve as a Unique Selling Proposition (USP for short) (Connick, 2021). In a competitive sector, a focus on social justice can be unique and at the same time make the company the only alternative for conscious customers. For example, goldsmiths and jewelry manufacturers have made use of it despite the saturation of the market and only use raw materials such as gemstones from fair mining. A certified origin, in which good working conditions can be proven in the country of origin, is at the same time an expression of corporate social responsibility of its own accord, as well as an actively applicable means of unlocking competitive advantages.

1.3. The right CSR strategy

A basic rule should apply as the basis for the measures implemented for CSR: they should be genuine and honest and in line with the real values of the company. Therefore, it should be thought of as independently of communication and marketing as possible - implementing it purely for the sake of economic benefit is not effective in the long term. It is therefore important to align all cornerstones of the core business to the greatest possible degree of sustainability. This can be implemented in different ways depending on the industry (Galbreath, 2006). It is important to have a seamless approach that does not show any similarities with a sale of indulgences. As an example: Take the frequently criticized problem points in an industry, such as DHL, as a starting point and turn them into positive ones. The logistics sector is inevitably a CO₂ and climate offender due to transport (DHL, 2021). That is why DHL is continuously expanding its efforts to be more climate-friendly with climate-neutral shipping within Germany and environmental protection projects carried out under the GoGreen banner. (GoGreenBanner, 2021)

The economic advantages mentioned arise less from a focus on sustainability itself, but from the fact that they are communicated to customers, employees, business partners and shareholders - according to the motto “do good and talk about it”. (Hawkins, 2019)

It is therefore important to focus on corporate responsibility issues in all aspects of marketing, especially with online content. Ideally, this happens together with general transparency, which is supplemented by the appropriate communication of the CSR measures. A distinction can be made between two factors. Company-wide internal communication: Employees and business partners, especially issues that affect employees and applicants, all about sustainable business with people. In particular, this improves the loyalty of employees to the company. Communication and representation to the outside: interested parties, customers, critics, market observers and so on must of course be informed so that they are influenced by the positive CSR balance sheet. This influences purchasing decisions and can lead to a better image and increased customer loyalty. Of course, this communication must also take place via online marketing channels. Communicating corporate values to the outside world is extremely important and can be done in many different ways. The possibilities vary widely, depending on the sector and the orientation of the company. (Smith, 2003)

In the manufacturing industry, the products themselves or related goods or information can be used. Creativity and rethinking are required. Companies can also do their best to protect the environment when it comes to plastic packaging. For example, tubes of lifestyle products, which are often made of plastics or laminate, can be made of recyclable material and printed with appropriate recycling information. Notes on CO₂-neutral production, donations to charity for each product purchased or measures to reduce waste can also be attached to the product or packaging. This is currently more and more the case with fresh dairy products, for example - customers are encouraged to try the product beyond the best-before date in order not to have to throw it away. All of this can be part of the product marketing and thus be carried directly to customers and the public without the need for additional channels. A note on the packaging, the inclusion of the distinguishing factors in the branding (according to Fairtrade style) or an integration of CSR measures in PR and advertising measures can be just as successful as conventional product marketing (Jim Ludema, 2018).

In online marketing, on the other hand, these topics can be reflected in the entire communication as well as in media campaigns. Tchibo recently caused a sensation with an environmental campaign (Tchibo, 2021). It was essential that the topics reflected in the content play a major role for the brand's target group. The related videos can be seen in the “Responsibility” playlist on Tchibo's YouTube channel. Suitable online marketing channels for communicating CSR measures are, for example their own social media channels, Online PR, their own blog / online magazine, Newsletter. But of course, you can also implement image-promoting display campaigns or you can initiate campaigns with bloggers or influencers (Yang Cheng, 2021).

Internal communication, on the other hand, is particularly demanding. Since employees have deep insights into production and processes, hollow phrases are extremely out of place here. It is better to let actions speak, through which the social commitment can be felt. Appreciating employees: Appropriate remuneration and treatment speaks volumes here. As Robert Bosch once said: "I don't pay good wages because I have a lot of money, but I have a lot of money because I pay good wages." (Robert Bosch)

Bonuses: In addition to the legal minimum, vacation days, Christmas bonuses, working hours and so on should be available for employees. This ensures their motivation and workforce in the long term - the appropriate treatment of human resources should not be underestimated. Bring in locally, community participation is very important and effective, especially for local companies where a large part of their workforce comes from the same region. For example, sponsoring non-profit organizations, maintaining stands at city festivals, donations to local charities and so on. Understanding CSR as a process: no company is perfect. Consumers know this, which is why it is important to constantly improve CSR measures, to constantly increase the investment in them and to present it that way. Long-term objectives - such as "completely climate-neutral production by 2020" are just as much a part of external communication as the presentation of milestones that have already been reached (Pedersen, 2006).

2. AUTHENTIC CAUSE MARKETING

Consumers are more socially conscious, educated, and linked than ever before, and they understand their purchasing power. If brands want to succeed, they must meet the needs of

sophisticated customers who can easily spot deceptive advertisements. Authenticity is a strong and frequently underestimated feature of brands, but it is a fantastic method for building relationships with your consumers (Galan-Ladero, 2013).

“Nearly nine out of 10 consumers are willing to take action to reward a brand for its authenticity, including 52 percent who would recommend the brand to others and 49 percent who would pledge loyalty to the brand. Twenty percent would be prepared to put their money on the table and invest in a brand that proves its authenticity.” (Cohn&Wolfe, 2016). Customers want to see themselves reflected in the products they buy. To do this, brands must freely and honestly share information about themselves with consumers. They need to build a bond based on shared ground and stand for something more than just making money. Since authenticity is by its very nature truthful and sincere, it can bridge this gap and shape an identity that resonates. When using inbound marketing techniques for digital engagements, authenticity is even more critical. Organizations must create relevant and useful content that consumers want to connect with by using inbound approaches to raise awareness and attract customers (Edmondson, 2014). Don't just identify with a cause to further yourself or your point of view. Consumers are quick to recognize this as a ruse. Instead, find a cause that you and your company are passionate about and champion it. Try to be of genuine service to others, and others will see what you stand for. Organize your neighborhoods, raise awareness, donate money, educate, give people a voice, and inspire them. This will offer your brand credibility and character, as well as allow it to connect with people beyond simply being the best product or service.

Brand authenticity is key. Since corporations only concentrate on what their goods and services offer, brands also fail to find authenticity in their ads. Although this information is essential, concentrating solely on recurring ads limits the contact to purchases rather than substantive interactions. Exposing your true brand is a personal experience that exposes the character of your company and its employees. Being on show can be overwhelming, but the raw and potentially dangerous essence of being true to yourself is what makes it so effective (Middlemiss, 2003).

Authenticity, on the other hand, does not take precedence over market analysis and positioning yourself to provide the best service possible to your clients. Instead, it means tailoring the data to your company's strengths and staying relevant. Getting a solid, consistent brand image is a big part

of brand authenticity. The center of your company, your moral status, and what you have to give are all exemplified by this solidified branding (Jessica Vredenburg, 2020).

Purpose driven brands grant authenticity, in today's crowded and competitive market, inbound marketing stands out as the most successful way to raise awareness. Instead of interrupting your customers' attention with your offerings, inbound marketing aims to offer value to them in order to cultivate rapport and create interaction. Long-term, inbound strategies foster brand loyalty and have compounding returns. By incorporating a cause into your inbound strategy, you can establish a bond, express common values, and create/share content that isn't solely focused on a product or service. It gives you something special, different, and interesting to write about. When consumers become dissatisfied with your competitors' sales-oriented content, you engage them with information that is relevant to their families, wellbeing, and identity. This exudes sincerity and offers an infinite supply of interesting and useful subjects on which to engage people. When you have a cause, you care for, you have an infinite supply of important, interesting, and authentic content to share. People want to see and be a part of something that makes a difference in the world, not something that sells them stuff. (Holdcroft, 2021)

2.1. Contrary to inbound marketing

Outbound marketing is a traditional form of marketing which we have come to know over the decades. It tries to interrupt, block, and distract potential customers, invading their lives in order to get their attention. You wouldn't put up with a friend who always promotes himself. What makes us believe that people want this from their brands? Since outbound approaches seldom refer to a customer's current focus or goals, they are less successful at encouraging them to act. Telemarketing, Advertisements on television and radio are just two of the many examples which we have grown tired with and is not as effective at awaking interest in your product anymore. Since it tries to reach as many people as possible by pushing it on people, customers tend to distance themselves and ignore these advertisements. It also has a smaller return on investment than inbound marketing (Chouaib DAKOUAN, 2019). People become less receptive and appreciative to these intrusions as a consequence of ad fatigue, making outbound advertising less convincing. A Second, as people's tolerance for distraction increases, these methods of disruption become less successful. To compensate, advertisers cast broader nets over greater segments of the population—or spend

vast amounts of money in an effort to reach increasingly small segments of ideal customers. Advertisements have become so intrusive and pervasive that whole markets have sprung up to help people filter out the advertisements. TiVo, for example, is famous for its skip commercials feature (Hawlk, 2018).

2.2. Inbound marketing

Customers today are more discerning, well-informed, and mindful of their enormous purchasing power. Outbound marketing and awareness-building methods are becoming more costly, ineffective, and obsolete. Marketers must integrate their goods and services into the modern customer's path in a seamless manner. Rather than attempting to interrupt and distract, this necessitates finding ways to provide value, create rapport, and generate interactions with customers on their terms. Inbound marketing is a digital marketing technique that uses appropriate, helpful, and informative content to draw traffic to your website and generate leads (PATRUTIU-BALTES, 2016). People are drawn to your brand when their needs emerge, thanks to insightful and supportive tools designed for every stage of the customer journey. Inbound marketing is the polar opposite of outbound marketing. Gone are the days of bombarding your consumers with short-term, high-cost, and low-value advertisements in the hopes of distracting them long enough for your brand to imprint. Inbound marketing takes advantage of the need for educational and insightful content to raise awareness and nurture leads during the sales cycle.

Educational content is an effective marketing tool since it is in high demand, builds confidence through expertise, and shows consumer intent (Raj, 2013). People are drawn in to solve problems you specialize in and are an expert on by turning your website into a wealth of knowledge or portal. Organizations may identify potential customers while also creating opportunities to interact by providing helpful tools. Providing guidance during the buyer's journey means that you are top of mind when a decision is made to purchase. Inbound marketing often becomes an important method for building advocates and lowering service costs as services are generated to benefit customers after they have purchased something. Generating videos, online events and being active on social media is far more profitable. Videos increase a consumer's understanding of a product or service by 74% and YouTube is the number two search engine in the world when people would like to know more about a certain type of product or service, which proves that people do

not like to read anymore and get all the information about a topic as quickly as possible (Quicksprout, 2013). On average, B2B companies that blog produce 67 percent more leads each month than companies that don't blog. This just emphasizes how important it is for clients to create their own material. Getting a continuous flow of original material, whether through thought leadership, case studies, opinion pieces, panel round-ups, or press releases, will help clients exponentially (Principi, 2014). Blogs and social networking sites have a 247 percent higher chance of influencing millennials. Millennials, like it or not, are going to be a big audience in the future. They are also the demographic that is posing a threat to society's functioning, especially in terms of technology. This is just one example of how Millennials are influenced differently than previous generations who do not rely on social media or blog content for news, facts, or recommendations. However, as the Millennial generation begins to take over — and it will — the public relations industry must respond to their preferences, dislikes, and patterns, which means becoming more social media friendly (Principi, 2014). According to research, those interested in the B2B purchasing process are already 57 percent of the way to a decision before they visit your site and take an action. When B2B companies look for new clients, it's more important than ever to consider what's going on. We do know that they are employing quest. In reality, it's their primary source of information; 90 percent of online B2B buyers conduct their research using search engines. Although that number hasn't changed since the 2012 report, we can see that the way they're searching has. While the same percentage of people use google, they spend more time doing so. Prior to interacting on a brand's website, B2B researchers conduct an average of 12 searches (Snyder & Hilal, 2015). The methodology of inbound marketing consists of a few crucial points. At every point of their journey with you, inbound focuses on adding value and inspiring people to achieve their goals, conquer obstacles, and discover insights. This applies both before and after they become a client. To ensure that the consumers receive value during their journey, the inbound marketing approach has three distinct stages. Attract: Attract the right people by providing useful content and engaging in discussions that create you as a trusted advisor they want to work with. Engage: Provide ideas and strategies that are relevant to their problems and objectives, making them more likely to buy from you. Delight: Provide assistance and encouragement to your customers in order to help them succeed in their purchases. Marketing isn't just about raising consciousness. Customers will reward you with loyalty and commitment if you concentrate on meeting their needs rather than continuously extracting value. Throughout the consumer path,

inbound marketing strategies provide value and create rapport. Businesses will reduce product cycles, inspire customers, increase acceptance, lower service costs, and increase consumer satisfaction when marketing promotes sales and service.

The essentials of a successful inbound marketing strategy consist of half a dozen core concepts. Form a Unique Brand identity. Nobody wants to read endless material, see advertisements, or engage with a company that only promotes itself (Opreana, 2015). To create content that people want to watch, read, or listen to, you need to communicate with them over something more meaningful than how awesome you think you are. Instead, be sincere in your interactions and share your brand. Genuine brands are memorable, which is why they drive traffic and stand out. Share interests, engage in a cause, and get involved. Forming a customer-oriented mindset. Since it accommodates and anticipates the buying habits of modern decision-makers, inbound marketing is efficient. Understanding the customers is necessary for creating smooth and convincing buyer's journeys and unforgettable customer experiences. Know your customers' desires, challenges, goals, and expectations so you can speak directly to them.

Search engine optimization creates awareness. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a commonly used abbreviation. SEO, in its most basic form, is the process of increasing the quantity and consistency of traffic to your website through natural search engine results (Fishkin R, 2013). However, ensuring that your knowledge receives a high-relevance rating necessitates a significant amount of analysis, complexity, and strategy. By ranking well in search engine results pages, SEO is vital for bringing your educational content into the hands of potential customers. Inbound marketing performance measurement. Building and executing a plan is useless if no one understands how it benefits the business. It's difficult, if not impossible, to calculate Return on Investment and build on outcomes without proper calculation of inputs and outputs. The good news is that inbound marketing is simple to track and quantify. Organizations can easily pivot to satisfy customer behavior and remain ahead of the competition by identifying early progress signals. Inbound marketing tools and technologies (Mizik, 2007). The digital age has brought with it the need for a high degree of technological proficiency. Since marketers are marketers, many of these deep inner workings are hidden behind glamorous imagery and high-gloss experiences. Most people take the deep technological chops necessary to handle successful digital marketing for granted because they do it so well. The foundations of an effective inbound marketing campaign

are a group of technology solutions. Leading a generation website, marketing automation platform, sales processes automation, and customer relationship management (CRM) applications are among these pillars (Bezovski, 2015). Make a solid content plan for inbound marketing. Another important component of an inbound marketing campaign is a company's content strategy. Topics, keywords, mediums, and timelines for developing and sharing educational tools are all identified by a well-defined content strategy. Effective marketing campaigns will condense a large amount of data and approaches into a single map that can be used to direct all content efforts. A great content plan has a lot of different components. Problems must be solved, and content must be engaging. The buyer and consumer journeys must be covered by topics and services. Match messages to the appropriate audience and distribution channel. To accommodate different learning styles, use a variety of mediums (audio, visual, and written). Leads are created by funneling prospects into "acts of intent." Create content webs that entice customers to purchase. To direct viewers and rank high in SERPs, link content together. It's not easy to get these right but if you do, the content will be valuable for years to come. (Bezovski, 2015)

Inbound marketing has proved to be one of the most successful and efficient marketing strategies available. That's why inbound marketing is the preferred approach of 74 percent of companies worldwide.

1. Figure: The state of inbound marketing



Source: (Hubspot, 2018)

People's purchasing habits have shifted as a result of the internet, search engines, and social media. You educate yourself because, like most modern customers, you are an intelligent shopper, and the internet has given you agency on demand. You browse various websites for information

about how to solve your problem and compare notes. You read posts, watch videos, and maybe even follow a few blogs. You should decide on the best course of action based on the information you gathered during your research. You then have the option of solving the problem yourself or hiring others to assist you. Inbound marketing at work is the content and knowledge you communicate with during this phase, and it happens during your customer journey. Inbound marketing is used by helpful companies to offer insights and inspire your decision-making so that you can make the right choice for yourself. These organizations establish relationships, gain legitimacy, and imprint their brand on you as a result. When you're ready to look for a product or service to fix your dilemma, you recall the companies who spoke to you and were helpful. In other words, they earned your confidence and are now on your short list of companies to contact (Tiago, 2014).

Both you and the company benefit greatly from the time you spend engaged with their material. For the company, this means they can engage you earlier in the purchasing process and share their story, importance, and personality with you. In exchange, you will have the expertise necessary to make the right decision for you, easing your shopping experience and ensuring that you get exactly what you want (Hubspot.com, 2021). You probably have a clear idea of what you want and what to expect from your purchase because you looked at several sources and weighed your choices. You're also aware of the importance of the solution you're looking for. To put it another way, you know what you want, how much it costs, and why you want to buy it. This is a win-win scenario for both parties. This is also beneficial experience for companies whose content you read but ultimately did not pick. Even ineffective engagements help companies collect information, learn, and refine their strategy because inbound marketing allows them to measure, engage, and cultivate leads (Naydenov, 2019). There is no one-size-fits-all company that can cater to all types of customers. Even if a company provides the same services and goods, the way it communicates and operates appeals to different people. By limiting your choices, you also save the time and money of others who aren't chosen from wasting time and money trying to make a bad match work. The company will now concentrate on their target clients, who are attracted to their brand and are a great match for them. Regardless of whether they win or lose, these organizations' content and websites are still providing value. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, assisting buyers in making decisions and attracting their potential customers to them. Inbound marketing is so effective because it offers a platform that enables businesses to avoid talking about

themselves and instead listen to and learn about their customers in order to provide more value. When a business gets to know its consumers and understands their problems, it can predict their needs and deliver value up front and for free. Organizations attract consumers to them, communicate their intent, and establish rapport in this way. This experience is more pleasurable than conventional forms of marketing. It is safe to assume that we all mute/skip ads and use ad blockers for traditional outbound advertisements, and inbound marketing is therefore actively pursued rather than dismissed (Kloot, 2018). Prospects aren't disturbed when you're talking with them, and they don't have their shields up ready to redirect your pitch if you introduce details in this manner. They are not only interested in hearing what you have to say, but they are actively looking for it. Inbound marketing appeals to contemporary customers' habits and attitudes, making it seem more sincere and beneficial. It's simply a more effective marketing strategy for both the marketer and the consumer (Waterhouse, 2020).

Companies are often tempted to associate themselves with the cause that appeals to the greatest number of people, rather than trying to find genuine resonance with their own customers, brands, or goods. Companies are playing the wrong numbers game in this case. Although there's nothing wrong with promoting good causes, it won't always have the desired impact of enhancing the brand. The social mission you select must be compatible with your company's approach to the business need you're addressing. Toms Shoes is a perfect example of how to align your shoes. The idea is simple: when you purchase a pair of shoes, an additional pair is donated to children in need all over the world (savethechildren.org, 2021). Without alignment, you risk sending mixed signals and, in the end, wasting a lot of money on a cause with little return on investment. Many businesses that are experimenting with socially conscious projects create a separate brand for that purpose. The issue here is that customers may not be able to connect your good deeds to your brand. You won't gain the consumer loyalty or goodwill you want, and some consumers can wonder if the organization is genuinely committed to the cause. Make the company's goal a priority.

3. CANCEL CULTURE AND IMPORTANCE

What is Cancel Culture? Roughly speaking, and perhaps a little broader than some others: Cancel Culture is the name for a culture of debate in which opinions are suppressed rather than criticized. Cancel Culture creates a climate of fear that promotes extensive and effective self-

cancel culture in all areas of society. Cancel Culture aims to reduce diversity of opinion and restrict freedom of expression. Everyone can say what they want, they just have to accept that afterwards or at the latest after the second careless remark or "wrong" opinion they can forget their career, no longer get any jobs, their job is lost or personal hostility and threats must be defended (Dholakia, 2020). Cancel culture is therefore different from criticism. Criticism, even sharp criticism, is at the heart of any real debate. Defamation, threats, de-platforming, language regulations, censorship and anticipatory obedience are the instruments of the cancel culture. A wrong word on Facebook, a failed joke or two wrong likes on Twitter can be enough to get the discipline machine to start. Legitimate criticism follows the pattern: You are on the wrong track, and I know better. A Cancel Culture attack, on the other hand, follows the pattern: You are bad (and / or dangerous) and I am good. It aims to damage the reputation of the attacked and to increase your own. It is a combination of defamation and virtual signaling. (Sucharov, 2021)

Cancel culture is an attack on freedom of expression and is therefore a problem regardless of the political thrust. At the moment, there are predominant cases in which those affected tend to see themselves to the right in the spectrum of opinion or are seen there by the attackers. But there are also Cancel Culture attacks against the left and those that are difficult to classify in the already fragile left-right scheme (Bouvier & Machin, 2021). Burning cars, arson attacks on houses and offices, threats of violence or other attacks are also to be seen as attempts to intimidate those affected and dissuade them from exercising their right to freedom of expression. You are therefore also part of the cancel culture. Furthermore, we also include cases in which the focus is not on people, but simply the cancellation of content or modes of presentation, behind which, unknown, people are again hiding, who may feel the consequences. For example, when a company's social media post leads to a train-wreck. Even these smaller cases are very effective in contributing to a culture of fear and conformity. We also consider categorizing unpleasant content as "hate speech" and "fake news" and removing it from Internet platforms as well as ideological cleansing of language as part of the cancel culture. Cancel culture is a problem when it meets people who are aggressive and provocative and are used to being attacked. It is even more perfidious when it is directed against people who suspect no harm and are not used to defending themselves. Those directly affected by the cancel culture are individual people who are defamed or attacked and sometimes suffer massive damage. The real victim of the cancel culture and its "love for collective censorship" (Yascha Mounk) is the culture of open and honest debate that it has repressed.

Ultimately, through the deterrent effect of shooting down individuals, Cancel Culture aims to destroy a general public discourse in which everyone can participate. Proponents of this culture point out that there are enough places (especially on the Internet) where everyone can still say what they want. That's true. An open debate is dead even if everyone can speak as they please in their own consensus bubble. Last but not least, the established media become desolate when they are so purified and ideologically homogenized. Anyone who welcomes and promotes de-pluralization need not be surprised at the decline in readers and listeners. The real value of freedom of expression does not lie in the fact that everyone is allowed to express their opinion somewhere, but in the right of everyone to hear and evaluate all opinions unhindered. A democracy is not about morally discrediting the opponent or banishing them to an echo chamber, but rather about convincing the majority of their own arguments (Norris, 2020). The typical accusation of cancel culture is to have said (or thought) something that no one is allowed to say because it would hurt others: something racist, sexist, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, etc. This accusation should we deny any legitimacy with Salman Rushdie's words "no one has the right not to be offended". If even with a lot of imagination you can't find anything supposedly racist, sexist, etc., the accusation of "trivializing" racism, etc. or, if necessary, of being friends with someone on Facebook who is playing down something is enough. Contact guilt is no longer a taboo. The basic rule is: where there is the will to defame, there is also a way.

In order for Cancel Culture to grow and flourish, it is not enough to have enough people willing to revolt and destroy. The victims also have to play along. You must be willing to repent in order to save yourself perhaps the worst. Often enough they are. Especially if they are caught off guard because, in their innocence, they did not suspect that they could fall victim to such an attack (Mekouar, 2020). And it also needs the dumpers who, if possible, have nothing better to do in the slightest inconvenience than, gripped by fear, immediately distance themselves from their coworkers, colleagues, members, party comrades, etc. The most important value of an open society is tolerance - a term that is unfortunately used a lot. Tolerance presupposes that there are opinions, behaviors, lifestyles that one rejects. Tolerance means that you don't have to hide your rejection and are welcome to criticize it sharply. But also, that you don't try to suppress or forbid it, but endure it. Of course, there are also really hateful or cynical people who utter disgusting things. But even with you, the reaction should not be to try to silence or expel you as long as you do not cross

the threshold to call for violence. The academic world is one of the areas where Cancel Culture has become endemic.

3.1. Wokeness in advertising

Merriam-Webster defines the word “woke” as:” aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice)” (Merriam-Webster, 2021). The word "woke" refers to being socially conscious of racism, ageism, racial justice, white privilege, prejudice, and other issues of social justice. It's a term used by the left (though more often in African-American communities) to denote becoming fully conscious of such injustices. The expression "woke" originated in the African-American culture, where racism, police brutality, and bigotry were all too prevalent. In addition, the phrase "hang woke" refers to consciously being mindful of these injustices.

The term wokeness plays a big part in today’s advertising campaigns, as the individuals with the most purchasing power are millennials and generation Z. Younger generations are more inclined to lean left and have a sense of social responsibility in terms of social justice and standing up for what they believe is right. Marketing, while advertising the company as being woke, is an attempt by the corporations to make a profit of the current issues the developed countries are occupied with. We must recognize the rise of woke capital – the commodification of wokeness – and understand how brand support and social movements cohere and why it matters. Wokeness is a phrase that refers to a person's consciousness of racial problems in the United States. It was coined in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter movement, but it has since expanded to include general awareness of social and racial justice issues. The term "woke city" first appeared in a 2018 New York Times article by Ross Douthat (Douthat, 2018). This is because corporate activism aims to build up woke wealth, which can then be used to further corporate objectives and the bottom line. Wounded capital, like Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1986) cultural capital, is largely reducible to economic capital, which is what makes it so insidious. This is because evident social understanding of problems and support for specific groups and movements is a way of gaining financial benefit rather than an end in and of itself. Woke capitalism and woke capital are similar to liberal virtue signaling on a corporate basis. Virtue signaling entails the public display of universal ideals, but it eventually falls flat, emphasizing form over substance (Bartholomew, 2018). Woke capital is

similar to woke capital in that it is about social legitimacy and sanction, but it goes a step further in that it is about benefit rather than individual moral character. Doing good, then, isn't so much about helping communities as it is about making money.

These are the same questions raised when it comes to pink washing, or when gay-friendliness is used as a marketing tactic to improve a company's reputation by becoming "progressive, modern, and inclusive" (Ritchie, 2015). This eventually becomes self-serving, with the social movement and culture being co-opted for primarily commercial benefit. (Hunt, 2017) The hollowness of this support is exposed when pride is used as a marketing tool rather than a genuine contribution to a cause, as when Adidas continued to sponsor the 2018 World Cup in Russia, a country being well known for their anti LGBTQ stance. (Avison, 2016)

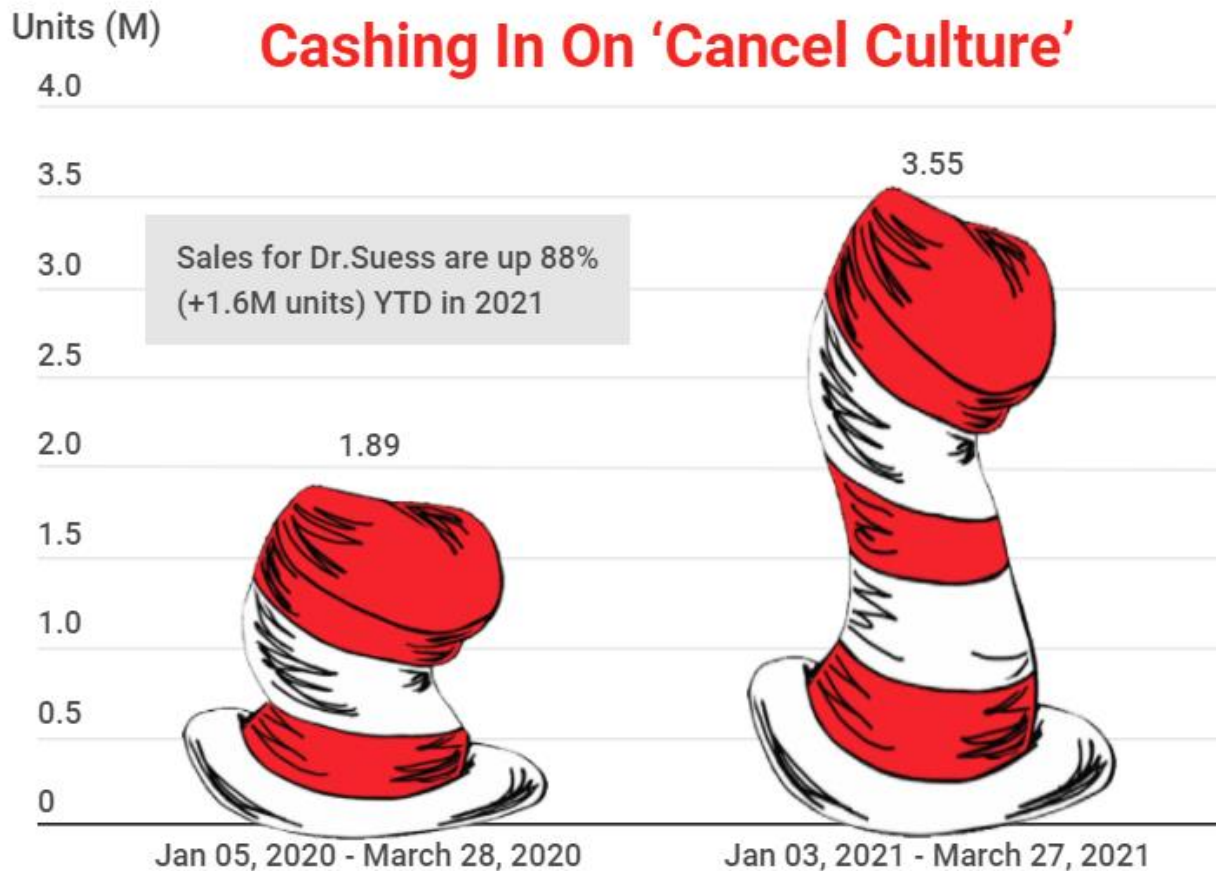
4. DR. SEUSS

On 2 March 2021, Seuss Enterprises, which manages Dr. Seuss's assets, has revealed that six of his less famous books will be discontinued due to racist imagery. Yes, Dr. Seuss is being culturally 'cancelled' in some schools as more and more details about his earlier works becomes accessible (Dr.Seuss Enterprises, 2021). Theodor Seuss Geisel was born in 1904 and went on to become a best-selling children's author all over the world. For the past 20 years, the author and illustrator has been honored for an entire week on March 2nd, his birthday. However, 2021 seems to be a little different, as the political agendas behind many of Dr. Seuss' stories are said to be more obvious. None of the books—If I Ran the Zoo, And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street, McElligot's Pool, On Beyond Zebra!, Scrambled Eggs Super!, and The Cat's Quizzer—are Seuss best-sellers, and few expected the news to spark a cultural debate. But it happened—and it resulted in a stampede of customers to bookstores (Berg, 2021). Seuss Enterprises' shocking announcement came after a 2019 report by the Conscious Kid's Library and the University of California-San Diego found themes of orientalism and anti-Blackness in some of his novels, and President Joe Biden omitted Seuss' name from his Read Across America Day Proclamation. The titles were the latest victims of "cancel culture" in conservative media, with hosts from Newsmax and Fox News devoting considerable airtime to the subject (Kate Ishizuka, 2019). Dr. Seuss' books have "racist undertones," according to Loudon County Public Schools, and they're "not appropriate for

'culturally sensitive' learning." (Clark, 2021). Cancel culture is sometimes misrepresented as a consumer reaction to controversy. It's not the case. It's often the product of a mob harassment campaign that institutions de-personalize and de-platform a person, even if they've been dead for decades. After the announcement that the books were going to be discontinued, sellers on eBay received offers for these vintage books of up to 565\$. However, eBay issued messages to those, who have had their, now discontinued, copies of Dr. Seuss for sale on their website. The message said "We had to remove your listing because it didn't follow our offensive material policy. Listings that promote or glorify hatred, violence, or discrimination aren't allowed." (Jennifer Smith, 2021). The decision to stop publishing the books sparked outrage on social media, with some calling it yet another example of 'cancel culture.'

Unit sales of print books soared 34.2 percent in the beginning of march, at outlets that report to NPD BookScan, fueled by big gains for a number of Dr. Seuss titles as well as strong results for several new books (NPD, 2021). Last year's sales at this time began to show the first signs of the pandemic's impact on the economy. Dr. Seuss titles still see a boost in sales in late February/early March as a result of Random House's Read Through America Day promotions. Dr. Seuss Enterprises announced this year that it would stop publishing six books published between 1937 and 1976 due to complaints that the titles "portray people in ways that are hurtful and wrong." None of the books on that list is among the top 50 best-selling teen fiction titles according to BookScan. (NPD, 2021). The decision to prohibit the sale of such books seems to have caused a purchasing spree on Amazon, with the now-defunct 'McElligot's Pool' soaring to the top of the "Movers & Shakers" section. The page showed that sales for the book had increased by 5,785,593 percent, while sales for another nixed novel, 'If I Ran the Zoo,' had increased by more than 835,000 percent.

2. Figure: Cashing in on cancel culture



Source: (Shapiro, 2021)

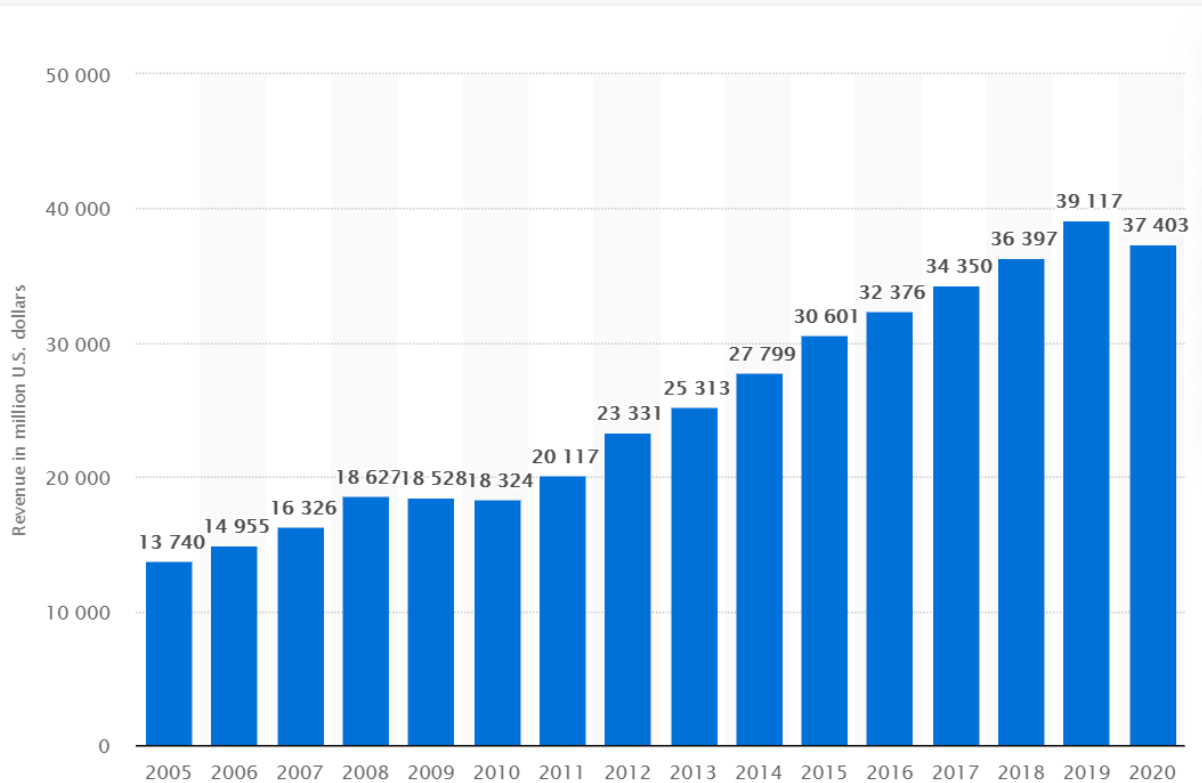
Dr. Seuss was responsible for nine of the top ten best-selling books on Amazon a day after the cancellation was announced, but none of the six controversial titles were among them. Those books are now much more difficult to come by, and their secondary market prices have skyrocketed. And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street first editions are selling for up to \$9,000 on AbeBooks, while If I Ran the Zoo is selling for \$8,200. Both titles are now out of stock at Barnes & Noble. Rare and children's bookstores, which usually get calls about The Cat in the Hat or How the Grinch Stole Christmas, have been swamped with requests for the six titles that have been canceled (Berg, 2021). Conservative media and conservative politicians turned the announcement into a rallying cry against "cancel society," and sales of the late author's books skyrocketed. In the week following the launch, bookstores sold 200 percent more copies of the books. Seuss books accounted for four of the top five bestselling titles that week, with sales well

outpacing those of the previous year: Last week, about 105,000 copies of "The Cat in the Hat" were sold, compared to 22,000 copies in the first week of March last year. "Green Eggs and Ham" sales nearly tripled to 90,000 copies from 34,000 the year before, and "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish" sold 88,000 copies compared to 26,000 the year before. "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" jumped from 43,000 to 74,000, while "Fox in Socks" went from 23,000 to 64,000 (Kelly, 2021). All of this points to a banner year for Seuss Enterprises, which earned \$16 million from book sales last year, less than half of the \$33 million in pretax earnings that put the late author at No. 2 on Forbes' list of highest-earning dead celebrities last year. According to Forbes, the estate has already made \$11 million this year from book sales (Berg, 2021)

5. NIKE

Nike was established at a time when conventional marketing reigned supreme and digital marketing had yet to be invented. Nike did not become the multi-generational company it is today by being resistant to change. Behind any great and multinational brand, there is undeniably a great business and marketing plan. Its marketing strategies have gained it a lot of respect over time. Apart from other advertisers, Steve Jobs has praised Nike's marketing campaign in the past. Nike has risen to prominence as a result of its dedication to its consumers, especially athletes. Nike uses inbound marketing techniques such as blogging, influencer marketing, and social media publishing because they have some of the best marketing minds at their disposal. Nike's target market is diverse. Rockers and rappers, singers and thinkers, entrepreneurs, athletes, and others – not just experts, but ordinary citizens – make up this community. Nike's marketing campaigns use a voice that their target audience is likely to respond to in order to talk to them in the same language (profitworks.ca, 2021).

3. Figure: Nike's revenue worldwide from 2005 to 2020



Source: (Statista, 2021)

Nike is a major multinational sports company that has long employed well-known athletes to advertise their products (Willigan, 1992). Colin Kaepernick's appearance in one of the company's latest marketing ads, on the other hand, is a departure from the company's normal practice of using celebrities to promote their brand or new product. If we look closely at the commercial, one will notice that there is no product being promoted; all we see is Colin Kaepernick, two words, and the iconic Nike logo aligned with its equally famous slogan, "Just do it." Knowing what Colin Kaepernick stands for and why he has not played football in years, one is left wondering why Nike would use him, why they would enter such a divisive political arena.

It's debatable if Nike is entering the political arena, but there's no denying that the use of Colin Kaepernick in this one-of-a-kind commercial, based on Nike's previous methods, is a very effective ad. The Kaepernick campaign, on the other hand, is striking a chord with the company's core consumer base of millennial and Generation Z men in a genuine, culturally appropriate, experiential, and emotionally engaging way.

Nike earned about 170,000 Instagram followers as a result of the campaign. The Kaepernick ad could become the company's most-liked Instagram post, with a record number of comments, many of which were critical of the company. Svezia's point of view is supported by recent Harris polling results, which revealed that 29 percent of young men said they would purchase Nike products in the future as a result of the Kaepernick ad, compared to 19 percent of all consumers. Consumers who identified as conservatives were opposed to the company's decision, while liberals were in favor (Berr, 2018).

Colin Kaepernick, the former quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers in the National Football League, was a young and talented star. After succeeding Alex Smith, a former first-round selection who led the 49ers to the Super Bowl Final, was a rising star, an African-American quarterback on the rise. Kaepernick, on the other hand, was never able to live up to his potential, eventually losing his starting spot in 2016. Colin was seen taking a knee during “The Star-Spangled Banner” during one of the preseason games, which drew national attention and became a talking point during the season. “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color,” (NFL, 2016) Colin said after the game, explaining why he took a knee. Kaepernick is currently out of the league and has difficulty finding a new squad. The advertisement is simplistic in every way imaginable, yet it is nevertheless efficient. The ad's color scheme is mostly black and white, with Colin Kaepernick taking up the entire picture room. He is staring directly at the camera, or the audience. “Believe in something,” it says under his eyes. Even if it means putting something on the line.” Most possibly referring to his kneeling during the national anthem and, as a result, getting a slim chance of returning to the league due to teams' aversion to the publicity. In addition, Nike will have to make sacrifices as a result of Colin's protest, which is divisive and financially risky. Nike's logo and the famous slogan "Just do it" appear at the bottom of the advertisement. Colin's expression is solemn, as though he is being persecuted and has had enough. Not fully defeated, but with a cool demeanor, a low-key confidence, and the hope that his stance would encourage more people to join his cause. While it's a stretch, the black and white color scheme could reflect the mistrust and friction that exists between white and black cultures. The commercial benefited both Nike and Colin; Colin's message was reintroduced, and Nike raised \$6 billion as a result (Cancian, 2018). Despite the fact that no product was sold, the company was aligning itself with those who support Colin's protest. As a result, increasing sales, even though it meant losing customers who disagree with Colin's protest. Nike

chose to associate itself with a strong message, and while it was a gamble before running the commercial, it turned out to be a huge success for both parties. Nike product revenues on the internet decreased in August and into the first week of September in 2017. They followed the same trend in 2018, but with less decline than in 2017, and some states saw a rise. In 2017, daily revenues for Labor Day and the week after were 20 percent lower on average than in August and September prior to Labor Day. The overall decrease in 2018 was just ten percent. (Trends, 2018)

4. Figure: NKE advanced charting



Source: (Nasdaq, 2021)

The data inadvertently shows, Nike made a good decision with its marketing strategy by choosing a rather controversial but famous figure for its advertising campaign. Sales have risen in the aftermath of the controversial ad, critics and sceptics have foreshadowed a decline in sales and overall perception of the company, but data indicates the opposite being true. Nike did receive a small negative hit in shares and coverage from conservative new outlets, which tried to boycott Nike and encouraged consumers to do so as well. However, Nike's constant presence in the

following months, as mentions on social media and mainstream media have brought the company in the spotlight almost worldwide, but especially in western countries. This can explain the increase in share prices and overall sales since its controversial advertisement. Nike's success can be attributed, to the company staying true to its authenticity in its marketing campaigns. It didn't promote something which was not of core value to the company, therefore not alienating or drawing criticism from its core customer base.

6. GILLETES ADVERTISING MISHAP

The Gillette Company was a multinational based in Boston, Massachusetts. The company is known for their razor products also known as Gillette, but they used to produce other appliances as well. The Gillette company fell under criticism in the near past for one of its advertisements. In the past couple years, in north America, the disparity between the major political parties has only grown. With it, they bring new legislations, new identity politics and corporations can weigh in on these matters, by advertising with sensationalistic keywords or many other options they feel comfortable with. Similar to other multinational corporations, Gillette has taken a step, which they consider the right action to take. Gillette is without a doubt the most well-known example on this side of the spectrum, having faced genuine backlash when they changed their slogan after 30 years, from "the best a man can get" to "the best men can be" (Gillette, 2021) and all that entailed. Their new advertisement's goal was to drive change which matters, men holding other men accountable for their actions. They became a vocal member of the #MeToo (MeToo, 2021) movement (which helps women who have experienced sexual assault or similar to cope with the event and/or speak out about it), with their advertisement, gaining sympathy with many men and women alike. Gillette's president and CEO, Gary Coombe said that joining with the #Metoo campaign was "a price worth paying" if it meant increasing the brand's appeal among younger consumers and reversing its declining market share (Gage, 2019).

5. Figure: P&G global market share in grooming



Source: (Georgiev, 2019)

As we know, correlation does not necessitate causation, however it cannot be ignored that the advertisement did not cause backlash to their financial situation (P&G, 2021). Since the acquisition of Gillette, their market share has been sitting steadily around 70%. Their struggle with the shares has started out in 2016 and has been declining since, despite the hopes and actions of the firm with the controversial advertisement campaign, Gillette did not manage to increase its interest among young consumers.

Their advertisement did spark outrage, as many took it as a personal attack, users on Twitter claiming that Gillette made Men look like they were all sexual predators and the like. Piers Morgan, a well-known British reporter and author, was the most high-profile of a slew of detractors, mostly men, who said they would never buy the brand again (RT, 2019). One of their goals was to attract more female customers, however with this move they managed to alienate a big chunk of their male customer base. Last year, P&G took a \$8 billion non-cash write-down on Gillette (Richa Naidu, 2019). It's tempting to say that going woke cost Nike and Gillette money even if they didn't go broke, but it's never that easy. Both businesses are competing in a market that has changed dramatically, and while they may still be the big fish in the pond, other sharks are circling. Gillette,

in particular, would have to adjust to a world where we shave less often and companies like Harry's and Dollar Shave Club are a major player.

The brand can decide the fate of the campaign. There are strong commercial reasons for the company to have a sense of mission, simply because, according to polling firm Futerra (Futerra, 2019), 88 percent of those surveyed are frustrated if their brands do not assist them in being ethical. It isn't just consumers who are affected. According to The Economist, social intent is a major factor in selecting a work position for 70% of business executives. Even if the concept of being woke is not yet mainstream, doing something that makes the brand stand out for doing the right thing might be, and employees would certainly want to be a part of something positive.

Pepsi's "Kendall Jenner commercial" (Batchelor & Hooton, 2017), drew a lot of flak for mixing up the social struggle with someone who, rightly or wrongly, reflects a special kind of privilege. Simply put, its wokeness was bought rather than received. It's why Nike will be able to transform its scandal into a stronger long-term brand, while Gillette will fail. Though Nike has rode controversy to win awards and has quickly corrected mistakes, Gillette has had to firefight an ad that, while well-intentioned, added a political aspect to a brand that had previously been largely apolitical. Gillette couldn't take the risk of essentially reversing their previous marketing message, no matter how well-intentioned it was.

Woke is, or has become, a loaded political word that can be used to criticize a lifestyle as well as to describe a sincere collection of values. Since it is becoming increasingly clear that future workers and consumers alike respect those who make good decisions, brands should make the distinction between being woke and having a reason. However, not all businesses can be mission-driven, and any who want to start a purpose that goes against the brand's long-term tradition must accept all risks, assess whether this is where their focus should be, and have a strong plan for overcoming roadblocks. Rather than fixing their advertising, Gillette should examine how their competition has shifted.

7. PRIMARY RESEARCH

7.1. Method and aim

For the final part of my study, I aimed to collect data from everyday consumers, about their opinions and habits when they go shopping and what criteria the business must meet in order to get customers into their stores. I was interested if consumers viewed corporations as a form of activist platform, with which they can resonate and have a stronger connection with, or were they just corporations to them, trying to get their business. I was curious how they viewed the company's social media presence and if they gave any attention to it, as this is an important part of the research, because most people today are browsing social media every day for multiple hours. How likely they were to go out of their way, to support a business which they resonated with. In terms of going out of their way, I was curious about monetary and time-consuming factors, as in prices and distance they are ready to travel in order to still shop there, even though there are other businesses, closer to them, maybe selling their products for cheaper. As I was aiming to get a clear picture, mostly from western countries, where consumers have, on average, more money to spend on products and are more mindful about their purchases relative to their Balkan or eastern counterparts, where corruption, inflation are more prevalent and making a good living is more difficult. I used websites which helped spread my survey in western European countries and north-America to get answers from consumers where they pay more attention to where they shop and what "cause" they are supporting with their purchase, as their relatively higher disposable income, compared to Hungarian citizens, grants them the chance to act more generously with their money.

I have tried my best to eliminate certain response biases which may arise during the answering of the questionnaire. As response bias gives me a disadvantage, when working with the data received. It gives incorrect information, which in turn yields incorrect conclusions, therefore rendering the entire primary research on my part obsolete. I tried to avoid social desirability bias, by wording my questions in a neutral way, so that the respondents didn't feel they have an obligation to choose an answer which is morally or socially acceptable. I gave them options which were neither considered good nor bad, it was up to the individuals own interpretation to choose an answer to their liking, without having to worry about social norms. Such as dissent bias, by limiting the number of questions on my questionnaire to a minimum, which still gives me the amount of data required to get an informative result and usable information for the analysis of the topic. I have used a total of 12 questions in my questionnaire, most of those questions were simplistic, where I tried to get crucial information with a relative low amount of input required from the respondent. Respondents can and will get tired of complex questions, which in turn will yield incorrect

information as respondents will not give a truthful answer, but just choose a random answer to get to the end of the questionnaire as quickly as possible. Complex questions cannot always be avoided, but they can be used in moderation and if done right, spark some additional interest in the respondent. I have used mostly simple questions for my questionnaire and used complex questions in moderation. Any complex question which I have asked, I have done so with an explanation of a word which might not be common knowledge to some. Anonymity in questionnaires is an important factor when it comes to gathering truthful information about respondents. If there is no anonymity, respondents will likely choose the answer, which society deems most acceptable and the right thing to do. By not having anonymity in questionnaires, individuals conducting research will more than likely not get the information needed which is crucial at drawing conclusions and making inferences. I have embraced anonymity in my questionnaire for this sole fact, so I will get the necessary data from which I can accurately reflect consumer behavior and get a clear picture of the needs and wants of everyday customers. I maintained neutrality throughout the questionnaire as to not insert any of my own biases into the survey. I kept the questions neutral and gave the respondents the opportunity to answer the questions in a manner which covered all the possible options.

7.2. Results

Overall, I received answers from fifty respondents to my questionnaire, which is an acceptable sample size for this kind of research topic. All of the participants completed the survey and there was no one who left the survey halfway through.

“What is your age?” People who participated in the questionnaire were mostly from younger generations, such as Generation Z and Millennials, but there were also a few from older age groups. 16 percent of those surveyed were over the age of 36 and only 4 percent were above the age of 50. Among others, 84 percent of those surveyed were between the ages of 14 and 36, this disparity among the age groups can be attributed to the fact that younger generations are using the internet more than older people, as they have been growing up with technology in their youth and are more prone to scout websites for interesting content. As younger people have to complete their studies, which incorporate generating surveys and other types of research, it gives them a great opportunity to use websites which specialize in promoting surveys and work on a quid pro

quo basis, meaning, users have to fill out other surveys in exchange for their own surveys being filled out. There exist many groups on Facebook alone, which are created for this sole purpose. Therefore, this disparity between the age groups exists not because older generations are less interested in marketing, or any other research, questionnaires, but can be attributed to the fact that younger people can use the internet more efficiently on average, than older people. Younger people have an easier time navigating through and finding websites and content on the internet, which can help their studies, or lead to personal gain.

“To which social class do you belong to?” My second question aimed to assess the background of the respondents, to be precise, which social class they belonged to, how certain “class” of consumers viewed marketing strategies of corporations and how each category responded to the campaigns. Around half of the number of respondents were from “normal” backgrounds, conforming to the perception of their own. According to the data I collected, 54 percent of respondents were from middle class backgrounds and the remaining 46 percent were almost evened out, between 22 percent of those making up the working to lower class, and 24 percent making up the upper-middle to upper class consumers.

“Are you invested in "current events"?” I was interested how much the respondents were invested in current events, meaning those events and issues which are currently found in the news. With a percentage of 84 percent, respondents answered, that they were in fact invested in current events in some way, 58 percent claimed they make their own research too, next to mainstream media coverage, and only 2 percent answered that they consider themselves an activist. I found that only 16 percent of those asked, were not invested in current events at all, which reflected on my next question, which asked if they were an informed buyer or not. Not surprisingly, more than half of those who answered they were not invested in current events at all, answered that they were in fact, not an informed buyer, according to their own perception. The remaining 82 percent of respondents claimed they were informed buyers, only 8 percent of those who answered they weren’t an informed buyer, answered that they were invested in current events.

“Do you follow your favorite brands on social media and interact with their posts?” Surprisingly, 20 percent of those questioned, were not following any brands on social media, however they are subject to marketing campaigns of corporations just the same, as the algorithm on social media websites can and will introduce advertisements, based on your online presence. Even though, respondents did not follow

brands, they were still subject to the same marketing strategies as those who were following brands, the remaining 80 percent.

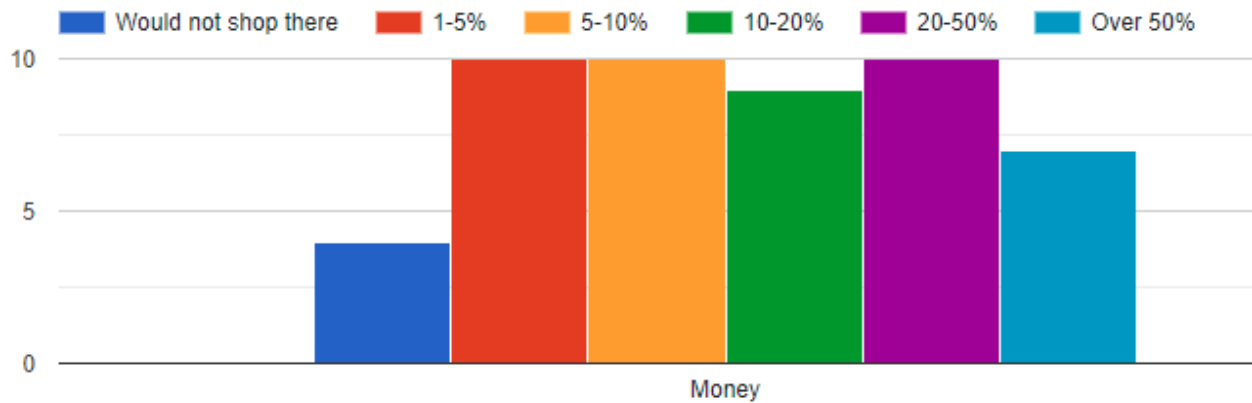
“If a brand decides to share something controversial or sensitive, will you be more likely to interact with that post?” In this part of the questionnaire I found, that there was contradiction with the previous question asked, and that I did not manage to entirely eliminate response bias. As I noticed that only half of the respondents, who answered they don’t follow any brands, answered that they don’t care what a brand’s views are. Only 8 percent of those who follow brands on social media, don’t care what the brand’s views are. Most respondents answered that they are on the more passive side of the interactions. With 72 percent only looking at the post and responses, but minimal reaction to the responses or the post itself, half of these people would “like” comments which were posted. Only 10 percent of the respondents would actually actively interact with the post, meaning they would share it with friends or on their own page, write a comment to express their opinion.

“On a scale from 1 to 6, how important are these factors when deciding on purchasing an item (With 1 being least important to 6 being very important)?” The brand itself is overall an important factor for customers when deciding on a purchase. With 66 percent of respondents putting it on number 4 or over of the importance scale, compared to 34 percent putting it on 3 or less. Shopping experience was considered by the respondents, as a middle ground, as the average response on the scale was 3,98, which means that for customers it is rather on the important side, when making a purchase. With price-quality ratio, it would come as no surprise, that it was an easy decision for respondents as they made it clear, this is the most important factor when deciding on a purchase, as 94 percent put it on the 4 or higher scale. Convenience was considered by 24 percent as less important, and by 76 percent as rather important. Companies’ reputation is rather important for customers wanting to shop, as 62 percent considered it as a rather important trait for the company to have and only 38 percent thought it was less important when making a purchase. What cause the company represents was a rather divisive topic as 44 percent thought it was unimportant and 56 percent thought it was important when making a purchase at a store. Meaning that almost half of the customers don’t care about a companies’ campaign. Buyer protection was considered an important trait again, as only 4 percent thought it was less important compared to the 96 percent who considered the opposite.

“Are you willing to go out of your way, to shop at a place where they support a cause which you are passionate about? (Fundraiser or donations for any foundation or any agency which

distributes aid?)” Almost two thirds of respondents would go out of their way, to shop at a place which supports their good cause of choice.

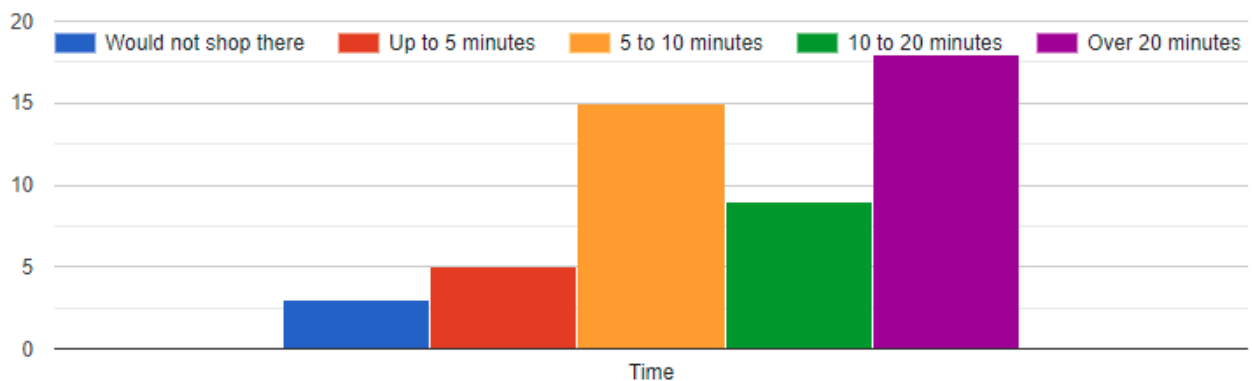
6. Figure: The company (or brand) you favor has higher prices than its competitors, to what extent would you still be willing to shop there, just because they are advocating a cause which you support?



Source: By me

As it is visible on the graph, even though the respondents said they would not go out of their way to support a brand, if it’s a brand they favor and it supports a cause the customers do too, then 92 percent would go out of their way to shop at that store.

7. Figure: The company (or brand) you favor is further away from you than its competitors, to what extent would you still be willing to shop there, just because they are advocating a cause which you support?



Source: By me

Respondents overwhelmingly support a company they favor, even if it is further away, when it promotes a good cause. With only 6 percent claiming they would not shop there.

“Do you think that companies (or brands) should voice their opinions on current events?” 38 percent of respondents don’t think, that a company should voice their opinion on current events, as most think their main goal is not to enact social change, but to generate more profit with their advertisements and that the customer’s welfare is only second in line.

Many respondents fall into the younger generation category, as previously mentioned, this is not because older generations have less desire to enact social change or are less interested in this topic, but due to the fact that younger people are more comfortable in using the internet and they can make better use the opportunities it offers. Younger people also have a greater drive in pursuing social causes, to fulfill a goal they think is important and they have more free time on their hands compared to older generations. The social classes are a healthy mix of every level except the extremities. The cause for this is probably, that most people in developed countries fit in 2 major classes, such as Working class, middle class which make up around 70 percent in total (Lumen, 2020). Most respondents are actively following current events, which means they are involved in the media and many topics which surrounds it. They are more prone to interact with topics which are more sensitive in nature, therefore advertising campaigns which incorporate injustices or advocate for social change are more attractive to them. According to my research, only 1 out of 5 people is not following any brands on their social media platform of choice, and would also not interact with any of the sensitive or controversial content shared by the brand. However, this in turn means, that 4 out of 5 people will take the time out of their day, to interact with a post, share it with other people and possibly voice their own opinion. They might not be conducting purchases this way, however they inadvertently promote the brand in some fashion, even if only for themselves. The brand stands out, the interactions are constant, and if the topic is well or negatively received by the audience, it might also make national news. Putting the company in the spotlight for days, weeks or months on end. As the saying goes, no publicity is bad publicity. Responses were divisive regarding the message of the company, as half of them thought of it was important, the other half decided it was of low value to them. Buyer protection, shopping experience and price quality ratio were amongst the most important factors when deciding on a purchase. However, if the brand which the respondents favor, has also a great message for supporting a good cause, they

would go out of their way to make a purchase at their desired store. To my surprise, the extent to which buyers would go to, to shop at their favorite store, despite of longer travel time or higher prices, was quite huge. Over half of respondents would pay more than 10 percent in increased prices and 84 percent would travel further than 5 minutes to visit their favorite store, and 36 percent would go so far as to travel more than 20 minutes just to shop at their desired location. Two thirds of respondents were in favor of companies speaking out on current events, they believe that companies have an inherent obligation in today's society to weigh in on the matter, as their message gets across barriers where politics might fail. The remaining one third of respondents don't believe companies should voice their opinions on current events. They still believe, that companies who try to use current events as a marketing gimmick, don't want what's best for their customers, but are only looking out for their self-best interest, which is generating more profit.

CONCLUSION

Advertisements will always play a huge role in our lives, as we are seen as consumers by corporations whose goal is to increase profits at any cost. There is nothing inherently wrong with the fact, that corporations try to maximize profit as much as they can, since we live in a free-market economy and there are rules which everyone must live by, and companies are not forcing us to buy their products, we do it with our own free will. Some consumers might be more susceptible to sensitive and attention-grabbing advertisements, some might be not moved by any advertisements at all. Every consumer can decide on their own, which company they are backing and which company they would rather not shop at. As more and more companies, which are trying to be successful and stay relevant, are leaving traditional outbound marketing methods and choosing to opt for inbound marketing methods, they will undoubtedly promote their content as sustainable and fair. What kind of promotional cause they will choose is up to each and every company. Noticing the success which, in this research paper, Nike had, because they used authentic cause marketing, which in return turned a lot of heads in the social media sphere and caused their share prices and sales to increase, will without question be a strategy which other companies will use to their own advantage. As young people are more prone to interact and support social causes which make the world a better place. Authenticity in marketing plays a big role, if the campaign will succeed or if it will fail. As we have seen, if your company is not genuine with their cause, which they say they are supporting, and is only trying to get the masses to shop at their place because of a promotion,

the public opinion of that company will shift rapidly. Calls for boycotting the company will be plaguing your social media feed, and since most consumers today are on social media, it will not go unnoticed. As the saying goes, all publicity is good publicity, if the company is not using the winds of change during the time they spend in the spotlight, by making actual change which enacts some sort of social change, then the damage might be permanent, from which a company might not so easily recover. Consumers like to support causes, this we can conclude, not only from my own primary research, but the secondary research which I conducted as well. People to be part of change, they like to do good in the world, which gives them some sort of fulfillment in their everyday lives. Consumers are also ready to sacrifice their time and money, and comparatively moderately vast amount of it, to be part of that change. Companies have to try to strike a chord with their target audience, pay attention to the changes in the social sphere and most importantly try to stay authentic with their message and brand.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Survey questions

- I. What is your age?
 - 14-18: **4**
 - 18-24: **26**
 - 24-36: **12**
 - 36-50: **6**
 - Above 50: **2**

- II. To which social class do you belong to?
 - Lower class: **2**
 - Working class: **9**
 - Middle class: **27**
 - Upper-middle class: **11**
 - Upper class: **1**

- III. Are you invested in "current events"? (Current events : those events and issues of interest currently found in the news. E.g : Women's rights, Black lives matter, Covid-19, Veterans, Immigration)
 - Mainstream media and I make my own research too. : **29**
 - Only what the mainstream media shows me. : **12**
 - Not invested at all. : **8**
 - I am an activist. : **1**

- IV. Do you consider yourself an informed buyer?
 - Yes : **41**
 - No : **9**

- V. Do you follow your favorite brands on social media and interact with their posts? (Likes, comments, sharing)
- I follow brands but rarely interact with them, maybe share it with some friends. : **13**
 - I just follow my brands and occasionally interact with them. : **12**
 - I follow them, but I don't interact. : **11**
 - I don't follow any brands. **10**
 - Yes, I actively follow my favorite brands and interact regularly with their posts. : **4**
- VI. If a brand decides to share something controversial or sensitive, will you be more likely to interact with that post?
- It is more intriguing to me and I will read some comments, maybe "like" some responses. : **18**
 - I will look at the responses but not interact. : **18**
 - I don't care what a brand's views are. : **9**
 - Yes, I will engage with the post and voice my opinion. : **4**
 - I will engage with the post, like, comment and share it. : **1**
- VII. On a scale from 1 to 6, how important are these factors when deciding on purchasing an item? (With 1 being least important to 6 being very important)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
The brand	1	4	12	19	8	6
Shopping experience	1	4	8	23	10	4
Price-quality ratio	1	1	1	13	10	24
Convenience	1	3	8	13	17	8
Companies reputation	0	5	14	12	12	7
What „cause” the company stands for	7	11	4	13	12	3
Buyer protection	1	1	11	16	11	10

- VIII. If a brand supports a cause which you might or might not agree with, does it impact your purchase decision?
- Not at all: **5**
 - Very little: **17**
 - Somewhat: **21**
 - To a great extent: **7**

- IX. Are you willing to go out of your way, to shop at a place where they support a cause which you are passionate about? (Fundraiser or donations for any foundation or any agency which distributes aid?)
- Yes I am: **32**
 - No I am not: **18**
- X. The company (or brand) you favor has higher prices than its competitors, to what extent would you still be willing to shop there, just because they are advocating a cause which you support?
- Would not shop there: **4**
 - 1-5%: **10**
 - 5-10%: **10**
 - 10-20%: **9**
 - 20-50%: **10**
 - Over 50%: **7**
- XI. The company (or brand) you favor is further away from you than its competitors, to what extent would you still be willing to shop there, just because they are advocating a cause which you support?
- Would not shop there: **3**
 - Up to 5 minutes: **5**
 - 5 to 10 minutes: **15**
 - 10 to 20 minutes: **9**
 - Over 20 minutes: **18**
- XII. Do you think that companies (or brands) should voice their opinions on current events?
- Yes: **31**
 - No: **18**
 - Other: No, because their main goal is always profit, never the customer's welfare. : **1**

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned Balázs Szikszay aware of my criminal responsibility,
I declare that the facts and figures contained in my dissertation correspond to reality and that it
describes the results of my own independent work.

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student's signature