



**DIGITALIZATION AND CONSUMER ACTIVISM:
UNDERLYING MOTIVES AND FEELINGS OF
CONSUMERS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS**

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ABSTRACT

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Master Program in Business Administration

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This study aims to gain an understanding of the motivations and feelings of consumers when participating in online activism and to examine the effects of digital activism campaigns implemented by brands. In this regard, the research seeks to answer how consumers are participating in digital activism and their motivations in participating in digital activist movements; the feelings of consumers with regards to digital activism and consumer engagement; and how consumers perceive activist movements and practices initiated by brands. To gain a deeper understanding of the consumers' feelings and motivations, a qualitative approach is carried out and 17 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted. Projective techniques were used during the interviews and examples of activist campaigns of brands were shown to the participants, which enabled to gain a deeper insight of the consumer. According to the findings, the motivations of the consumers are sense of responsibility and duty they feel towards social problems, the desire to stay up-to-date and entertainment. The feelings associated with digital activism are gratification, fear, feeling of concern and hope. The findings have further implications and suggestions for brands to have effective activist campaigns such as: paying attention to language barrier when

adapting global campaigns in different countries; defending the cause they believe in despite political and social pressures; explaining the reasoning when they do not support a social cause, not to be lynched by consumers; and not choosing an entertainment-oriented approach when addressing social and sensitive issues.

Keywords: Consumer Activism, Brand Activism, Consumer Motivation, Digitalization



ÖZET

DİJİTALLEŞME VE TÜKETİCİ AKTİVİZMİ: TÜKETİCİLERİN MOTİVASYONLARI VE DUYGULARI VE MARKALAR İÇİN SONUÇLARI

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Ocak, 2021

Bu çalışma, tüketicilerin çevrimiçi aktivizme katılma motivasyonları ve duyguları hakkında içgörü elde etmeyi ve markalar tarafından uygulanan dijital aktivizm kampanyalarının tüketiciler üzerindeki etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, tüketicilerin dijital aktivizme nasıl katıldıklarını, aktivist eylemlere katılma motivasyonlarını ve duygularını, markaların başlattığı aktivist hareketleri ve uygulamaları nasıl algıladıklarını yanıtlamayı hedefler. Tüketicilerin duygu ve motivasyonlarını daha iyi anlamak için nitel araştırma yöntemi uygulanmış ve 17 yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakat yapılmıştır. Görüşmeler sırasında projektif teknikler kullanılmış ve katılımcılara, markaların aktivist kampanya örnekleri gösterilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, tüketicilerin dijital aktivizme katılma motivasyonları, sosyal sorunlara karşı hissettikleri sorumluluk ve görev bilinci, güncel kalma arzusu ve eğlence kategorileri altında gruplanır. Dijital aktivizme katılırken tüketicilerin hissettikleri duygular, tatmin, korku, endişe ve umuttur. Araştırma ayrıca,

tüketicilerin aktivist kampanyaları başarılı bulması için markaların dikkat etmesi gereken kriterler konusunda ışık tutar. Global kampanyaları farklı ülkelerde uyarlarken markaların dil engeline dikkat etmesi gerekir. Markaların siyasi ve toplumsal baskılardan arınarak bir konuyu desteklemesi tüketiciler tarafından daha samimi ve inandırıcı bulunmaktadır. Markanın toplumda değer gören bir konu hakkında sessiz kalması durumunda tüketiciler tarafından linç edilmemesi için o konuya neden destek vermediğini tüketiciye açıklaması gerekmektedir. Toplumsal veya hassas sorunlar kampanya konusu olacaksa, eğlence odaklı bir yaklaşım tercih edilmemelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tüketici Aktivizmi, Marka Aktivizmi, Tüketici Motivasyonu, Dijitalleşme

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I dedicate this thesis to Salih Dilek, my family and Hüseyin Özkılıç.



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The concepts of power and empowerment have been widely studied across different fields, including feminism, minority groups, and poverty literature (Kabeer, 1999; Lincoln et al., 2002). In the case of consumers, the question has often been whether consumers or marketers can direct markets for their benefit (Varman and Vikas, 2007).

According to Montecchi and Nobbs (2008), in digital platforms, customers can engage with each other in online communities and social networks, take part in various brand-endorsed initiatives, review products, services, and experiences, and contribute to marketing strategies by supplying creative ideas or feedback, or by influencing other customers. According to Papaoikonomou and Alarcón (2017), although the Internet may provide tools for “empowerment” it remains uncertain whether these tools are effective enough or that they are critically used, or indeed used at all, by consumers.

Social media is a new communication platform where both brands and consumers can meet. According to Berthon, Pitt, and Campbell (2008), on social media platforms, consumers interact with brands. In such environments, each action from any potential customer matters too much for a brand. Today, social media is a platform that rules both consumers and brands. It is becoming the most efficient global platform for a message that is announced from the users (Ferreira, 2018)) and it thrives on user excitement; this leads to a new revolution defined through participation (Solis, 2010).

Customer engagement through social media is a significant factor in marketing (Park, Lee and Han, 2007). Social media gives people the power to reveal inaccuracies, misrepresentations, and injustices and allows a better understanding (Ferreira, 2018). Furthermore, for brands social media enables them to give their corporate messages to their audiences through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Solis, 2010).

Before understanding the role of social media in influencing activism, we need to look at the Internet and its place in our daily lives. The Internet has made it possible for everyone in the world to connect, to interact, and to broadcast. (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017) As communication technologies evolved and became cheaper, people’s access to the Internet became easier (Kraut et al., 1998). The proliferation of mobile phones since the 2000s has created fundamental changes in communication. Today, with

digitalization, we can see that contents that are posted by users on social media increase day by day. According to Highfield and Leaver (2015), shared content brings people together who are interested in the same content through hashtags and tags on social media platforms. According to Furness (2008), this new environment facilitates interactive brand communication and collaboration, the creation and sharing of content by users, and the formation of internal and external virtual communities, all at a low cost. The users who want to draw attention to social or political issues, or create awareness and make changes, can easily reach people who think like themselves through social media. We can see that the actions which are taken on the online platforms reach and influence more people, more than the actions performed in the offline world.

At the same time, social media is a platform where brands also actively share (Kim, Spiller and Hettche, 2015). Social media is about engaging with current customers, potential customers, and critics at every level of modern social communication (Fisher, 2009). Social media is also preferred by brands because they can analyse their potential customers by using big data. Customers are targeted by brands according to their online hours, hobbies, and preferences. To gain the sympathy of the users, brands do not stay silent about the events that concern society. With their shares, they are looking for new ways for customers to choose them. In particular, if a social activist's shares in social media have created an awareness in the country, brands are being pushed by social media agencies to become a partner in this activism. In some cases, however, brands can irritate consumers with their activist shares with regards to the communication language they use. On the other hand, Albinsson and Perera (2011), contend that the ever-rising popularity and access to the internet has given rise to this class of 'casual' activists. Thus, the key to effective consumer activism that targets the casual consumer is to propose action, on the consumers' part, that does not require much effort. Besides, while activism traditionally entailed activists meeting and engaging in protests, the Internet has given rise to web-based activism or digital activism (Albinsson and Perera, 2011).

There are different approaches to digital activism in literature. Some researchers highlighted the positive aspects of digital activism, while others drew attention to its downsides. To sum up, some researchers divide perspectives in the literature about the

value of digital activism into optimists, pessimists, and persistent ones (Joyce, 2010; Sivitanides and Shah, 2011). Optimists (Benkler, Shirky, and Kirkpatrick) believe that digital activism will change existing political hierarchies and empower citizens, while pessimists (Morozov, 2010) believe that digital technology is more likely to be used to assert illegal authority or encourage chaos. Like optimists, pessimists believe that digital technology will have an impact on the world, but they see technology as morally neutral, constructive, and equally useful for destructive motives. The third category, persistent (Weinberger, 2010) refers to those who see neither salvation nor damnation in digital technology, instead of believing that very little will change and that previous political power distributions will "continue." Simply, they do not believe that the web, and therefore digital activism, is extraordinary.

On the other hand, some of the researchers argue that digital activism is a subset of Corporate Social Responsibility (Clemensen, 2017; Kotler and Sarkar, 2017; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019). According to Hassinen (2018), some of them argue that brands should create sincere and committed digital activist campaigns for their consumers (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017; Rische, 2018; Kubiak and Ouda, 2020). If the brands can apply the two significant arguments to their campaigns then they can be successful (Kubiak and Ouda, 2020). However, if the gap between brands' values and society is too large, then it can damage the company (Sarkar and Kotler, 2018). Furthermore, the damage can result in harm to both company and corporate reputation (Klein, Smith and John, 2004) and consumer behaviour can translate into participation in digital activist campaigns to boycott the brand. Some researchers also argue that consumers have motivations to boycott the companies (Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel, 2006; Cambefort and Roux, 2019). If the consumers think that the company does not care about social issues, then it can be a reason for boycotting (Klein, Smith and John, 2004) and emotional branding can cause different reactions such as anti-brand activism (Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel, 2006). However, very few studies tried to understand the meaning of activist actions and practices for consumers. According to Kubiak and Ouda (2020) brand activism is mostly quantitative and lacks a qualitative approach from a consumer point of view (Kozinets, 2014; Romani et al., 2015; Cambefort and Roux, 2019; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019). Previous qualitative research has generally addressed very specific topics. For example, Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2006) aims to understand the forms of anti-brand

communities with three anti-brand websites and they used in-depth interviews. Another example is, Jacobson et al. (2018) investigate how brand activism in advertisements (specifically femvertising) affects male consumers' attitudes. There is also a large amount of research on consumer activism and anti-brand activism, but limited research in the field of brand activism and how consumers evaluate brands that adopt this strategy (Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel, 2006; Romani et al., 2015; Cambefort and Roux, 2019). Previous research also has not explored in depth consumers' feelings and perspectives on digital activism. On the other hand, this study aims to fill this gap in the literature by gaining a deeper understanding of the motivations behind consumer activism and how consumers perceive activist actions initiated by brands. In-depth interviews are conducted by consumers to provide insight for marketers, brands, communication professionals in understanding how the consumers are participating in digital activism and what are their feelings and motivations in participating in these activist movements or actions. The study further contributes to the literature by shedding light on how digital activism is perceived by consumers and what are the implications for brands.

According to the main objectives of the research, the research questions that the study aims to answer are as below:

- 1) How are consumers participating in digital activism?
- 2) What are the motivations of consumers in participating in digital activism?
- 3) What are the feelings of consumers with regard to digital activism and consumer engagement?
- 4) How do consumers perceive activist movements and practices initiated by brands?

In this regard, the thesis first covers literature on digital activism, consumer empowerment, consumer activism, and brand activism. Then it describes how the data is collected and analysed in methodology. The findings chapter includes the main themes discovered as a result of data analysis. In discussion and conclusion, the thesis reflects on the main contributions and implications for brands.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section provides a summary of the related literature under the topics of digital activism, slacktivism, clicktivism, hacktivism, social media, consumer empowerment, consumer activism and brand activism.

2.1 Digital Activism

We can examine the historical process of digital activism under two different headings: web 1.0 and web 2.0 (Gerbaudo, 2017). Web 1.0 is called the first wave of digital activism in the mid-'90s, and consists of projects like the anti-globalization movement. Web 2.0 is called "social media activism," where activists gathered together on social media accounts such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube. Social media has provided essential technological aspects of digital activism with Web 2.0 (Gerbaudo, 2017). In this way, social media has created a new media logic "mass self-communication" as can be seen on Facebook and Twitter platforms and this logic supports mass movements emerging in different geographies (Castells, 2009). In the Web 2.0 era, some researchers have theorized "social media ease activist movements" perception. According to this perception, thanks to the social media brought by digitalization, activist movements can reach more people faster. In Morozov's "Twitter Revolution" term, he emphasized how effective the platform Twitter was during the riots that took place in Iran in 2009. Political messages that are given by brands are spread widely by e-mail, blog, e-mail, or other mass media. This spread usually begins with the messages that activists publish on their digital platforms (Bennett and Lagos, 2007).

Digital activism does not only have a technological scope; it also has a cultural impact in terms of its messages, ideas, and ideologies (Gerbaudo, 2017). The use of social networks by activists ensures that many problems and events that have not found a place on the agenda of the mainstream media are learned by the masses. Again, a topic created by digital activists, such as a petition, prevents a topic that may be of interest to the general public from being overlooked and can raise awareness about the issue. According to Gretzel (2017), activism does not only target business or government entities but can also be directed at celebrities or other consumers. According to Bakardjieva, Svensson, and Skoric, (2012) the rise of social media has also prompted

many political institutions and actors to re-examine not only their media strategies but more importantly, their ways of governance.

According to Vegh, Ayers and McCoughey (2003) digital activism can be analysed under three main sections; (1) awareness/advocacy, which entails providing contrary information to raise awareness on a given issue, organizing the movement, and engaging in lobbying efforts; (2) organization/mobilization, which may comprise of calling for offline action that is more effectively conducted through the internet; (3) action/reaction, which involves online attacks on various sites of interest by hackers or “hacktivists” (Vegh, Ayers and McCoughey, 2003, pp.72-77).

According to Albinsson and Perera (2011), there can be four main topics where activism may occur which are; social order, consumption, and marketing, anti-brands, resistance to consumption. Digital technologies fundamentally switch activism in certain ways, removing traditional media gatekeepers and forcing corporations to respond faster to concerns to encourage corporate change (Veil et al., 2015; Hon, 2016).

Suwana (2020) argues that with digital activism, individuals think that they are fulfilling their duty to society by participating in a donation or signature campaign from where they are, and they relax their conscience. However, they do not get actively involved with the problems of society. In this context, the use of signature and donation campaigns on digital platforms, which constitute a dimension of digital activism, is questioned. According to Scholz, for example, as a practice of digital activism, "slacktivism and "clicktivism" also give the participants the impression that they have done something about some issues by creating online action, making them think that they are doing activism activities even during the lunch break (Scholz, 2010). These concepts –slacktivism, clicktivism, and hacktivism- will be explained in detail in the following sections.

When we look at the studies in the literature, we see that the researchers are divided into two streams in their approach to the subject. While some researchers argue that digital activism fails to achieve a result or impact (Morozov, 2010; McCafferty, 2011; Kristofferson, White and Pelozza 2014; Saxton and Wang, 2014), others believe that digital activism mobilizes individuals and brings people together for a certain view

(Coleman and Blumler, 2009; Selleck, 2010; McCafferty, 2011; Vitak et al., 2011; Blevins, 2018; Rudolfsdottir and Johannsdottir, 2018; Turley and Fisher, 2018). According to Karagöz, the fact that the reaction on the Internet can be demonstrated with just one click, a 'like' or a message, many people do this just to 'be fashionable'. Many internet activists are not even aware of what they are supporting or opposing. Those who believe that they can change something by changing their profile photo on certain days, relieve their injured conscience in this way and become docile before their reactions turn into effect (Karagöz, 2013, p. 145). Paktin, on the other hand, approaches the issue positively.

“Digital activism is a method of gathering people who will struggle around a thought, a belief and activating them. In addition, it is the idea that the world is changeable with every click” (Paktin, 2012).

This approach also explains the current importance of signature campaigns, which are highly sought after by consumers. One of the websites created to solve social problems and asks users to sign these campaigns is Change.org.

Change.org was founded in February 2007 by Ben Rattray and his friend Mark Dimas. The organization was designed as a blog to generate social benefits in the period it was founded. However, when a campaign launched in the petition section of the blog gathered around 170,000 signatures from 192 countries and had an impact on the South African Government that was the addressee of the petition, Rattray and Dimas realized that their petition had worked very well. Therefore, in 2011 they turned the blog network into an online petition platform. Change.org itself does not launch any campaign or support its content as an organization. The support available to users is limited to recommendations and strategies on how to create campaigns and what needs to be done to make the petition impact. Petitioners initiate petition campaigns to defend a value or raise an issue. Announcing the campaign in social or traditional media, calling the interlocutors, sending messages, making an appointment to meet with them face to face, establishing a meeting, or similar supporting activities are left to the initiative and responsibility of the organizer. For having this vision, Change.org defines itself as a “social community initiative” (Change.org, 2019).

On the website, there are links that direct users to Facebook and Twitter to allow the campaigns to be shared on social media. The number of followers on Change.org's social media accounts in Turkey is on Instagram 54.300, on Twitter 96.511, and Facebook 1.739.330. The platform is highly preferred by digital activists, as it can address such a large audience.

2.2 Slacktivism, Clicktivism and Hacktivism

Digital technology has brought several main themes in activism, which are slacktivism, clicktivism, and hacktivism. Activism on the digital platform can sometimes consist of a like, a hashtag used, the frame you use to change your profile photo. This 'hollow activism' on digital platforms is defined as slacktivism (Morozov, 2009). Today, slacktivism is defined as "feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact," with the feel-good factor being singled out as the main reason behind the popularity of slacktivist activities (Morozov, 2009a). McCafferty (2011, p.17-19) defines slacktivism as "people who are happy to click a 'like' button about a cause and may make another nominal, supportive gestures. According to Skoric (2012), by clicking "like" on a Facebook cause page, or sharing a campaign video, Facebook users hope to construct their identity as what they would like to convince others to think of them, and hence would establish their identity when others "like" their particular activity. According to Morozov (2011), slacktivist campaigns seem to be premised on the assumption that, with enough tweets (or "likes" or "shares") all the world's problems are solvable. This is what drives such campaigns towards a signature-collecting, member-adding, link-sharing spree. In this case, it is important to understand whether the success of action as a result of the classical measurements in social media depends on how many people participated in this action. In this regard, it is critical to know why people are willing to participate in an action. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media has facilitated the rise of a new form of activist known as the 'slacktivism.' These consumers will sign online petitions and join Facebook activist pages but do not have the desire, and/or resources to engage in traditional activist movements such as protests.

The actions of slacktivism are mostly limited to writing their views on certain events, participating in online petitions, sharing videos or images about campaigns or actions they find interesting, and they do not take risks by not physically participating in an

action. On the other hand, clicktivism means organizing or supporting certain social actions in digital environments from the keyboard (Shulman, 2009). Clicktivism can start protests against certain companies for reasons such as social anxiety and hygiene, open a site or page for certain actions, initiate petition campaigns, and carry out these actions systematically and continuously in line with a specific target. In an action to be carried out on digital platforms, clicktivists initiate online signature campaigns on the platforms needed, while slacktivist people sign in these campaigns. On the other hand, hacktivism includes actions such as hijacking a website, sending a virus to a specific target, bombarding someone or an organization with e-mail for a specific purpose, and some political reasons such as Wikileaks example (Doruk and Akbiçak, 2017). Understanding these concepts will enable us and make it easier to understand why individuals are involved in online activist campaigns. Therefore, it is important to provide more insight on these concepts.

According to some researchers, activist movements that consumers participate in on digital platforms provide personal satisfaction but do not have a tangible effect (Morozov, 2012; Skoric, 2012). Proponents of the slacktivism perspective argue that the motivation of some consumers to participate in activist action is visibility (Kristofferson, White and Peloza, 2014). Slacktivism often can engage an activist movement on Facebook or Twitter because it is a low-effort action (Morozov, 2012; Schumann and Klein, 2015). However, the label of slacktivism has been applied to a range of actions from low-effort acts such as signing a petition or adopting a token symbol of support (Kristofferson, White and Peloza, 2014), to more committed acts like boycotts (Skoric, 2012). Slacktivism critique suggests that if individuals join an activist movement and if they feel their behavior is sufficient enough, then for them visibility on mass media, and a sign or any other click movement is a qualified behavior (Minocher, 2019). Figure 1 shows the process of slacktivism.

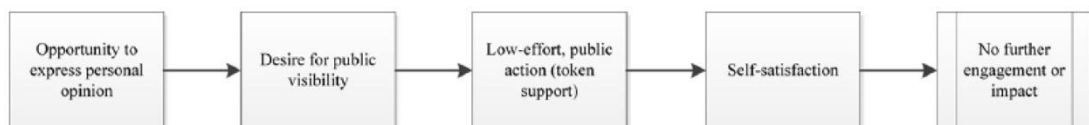


Figure 1: The Process of Slacktivism (Source: Minocher, 2019)

On the other hand, the slacktivism perspective can help a campaign reach masses and gives meaningful outcomes (Minocher, 2019). Sometimes least effort via slacktivism

can cause bigger beginnings such as encouraging conscious consumption, volunteering, granting money (Center for Social Impact Communication, 2011; Lee and Hsieh, 2013). On the contrary, for activists, the challenge is to keep campaigns going long enough to get meaningful responses (Bennett and Lagos, 2007).

These concepts, described above by previous researchers, are very important for this research, because, in this study we will use the concepts explained in this section to understand how consumers feel when participating in activist actions on online platforms and their sources of motivation, which the thesis aims to respond to.

2.3 Role of Social Media

The role of social media in activism comes across as a facilitator. The necessity of traditional activism collective consciousness is also becoming possible in online activism through the influence of social media. With social media tools (hashtags, Trend topics, etc.) people become aware of current news or events. In this way, people can quickly access more detailed information about a topic on the agenda. At the same time, social media is a very effective platform for announcing information to bigger audiences, while spreading information quickly. Social media makes it possible to bring together audiences who think the same. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), Web 2.0 is “a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, pp.60-61)”. Hashtag and Trend Topic features instigate users to share and search for news on specific subjects, whereas trending topics further highlight breaking news (Poell and Dijck, 2015). Especially Twitter has developed their trending-feature into a sophisticated popular news barometer by identifying the 'most breaking news', and by allowing users to breakdown trending topics by region, country, and city (Parr, 2010). Different social media sharing components, such as ‘liking’ and ‘retweeting’, are pushed by the stages themselves, as well as by numerous standard and elective news locales within the shape of social buttons (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013). These tools play a role in helping the shares reach a wider audience.

In such a wide audience, social media is a broad platform with people of every opinion. In the face of any situation, people can share their thoughts and beliefs. They can also post content shared by other people on their profiles. Social media gives users the

power to share both positive and negative opinions (Smith, 2017). These opinions consist of people's thoughts. Therefore, published content may differ from each other. No matter how quickly a campaign is reacted to because it is positive, the faster consumers can react to share their negative views (Smith, 2017).

In general, all the shared positive and negative content are intended only for the group of friends. But social media doesn't work that way. Each contents shared on social media reaches our friends first, then friends of our friends. Content shared in this way ceases to be from our immediate environment and local. According to Poell and Dijck (2015), to get a sense of the size of the overall public that was reached through these Twitter and Facebook activities, it is important to keep in mind that contributing users each have their own networks of followers or friends, which may include thousands of people.

We Are Social (2020) data provide the social media usage rates in Turkey. The population of Turkey is approximately 84 million people. 77 million people use mobile phones, while 62 million people are seen as internet users. Social media users in Turkey are 54 million people. By 2019, it has increased by 4 million people. The time spent on social media in a day is 2 hours and 51 minutes. The five most used social media platforms are YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter, respectively (January, 2020).

When talking about the usage rates of social media, we should note that social media is not only used individually. Although the numbers mentioned above show singular users, brands, and companies are also featured on social media. Social media, used by such a large audience, can be seen as a platform for brands to find their new potential customers. As a result of digitalization, it has become almost mandatory for companies to create profiles on social media. Marketers use social media to develop opportunities that appeal to customers on social networks, to develop branded engagement opportunities, and to share brand content (Tuten and Solomon, 2015). Also, brands use social media marketing as an integrated component of a marketing communication campaign, ongoing corporate communications as a channel, and/or specifically designed for digital exposure of a series of a campaign (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

2.4 Consumer Empowerment

Along with the increased use of social media the power of consumers is increasing as well. Empowerment is often seen as part of a firm-centric strategy that serves to increase the control given to customers when selecting products so that they can combine the different elements/modules proposed by the firm (Fuchs et al., 2010). In the current state of the internet, the empowerment of online consumers makes it a process that cannot be controlled by the firm, because it does not only involve the development of new products or the personalization of products but it concerns the power of the 'voice', that is, the power to change something by talking (Siano, Vollero and Palazzo, 2011). Empowerment gives consumers more and more control over expressing their views online, which gradually reduces the firm's control over online information (Siano, Vollero, and Palazzo, 2011). The grounds for this claim are as follows: (1) the low cost of online media increases the chance of freedom of expression; (2) the Internet disrupts the normal hierarchical power structure for information dissemination, as individuals or groups have the same domain and the same influence as traditional media formats; (3) messages generated by competitors/activists have as much power as those put forward by the company (Bunting and Lipski, 2000; Gorry and Westbrook, 2009).

To understand this power that the consumer has today, it is necessary to understand how there has been a change from the past to the present. Küçük (2012), explains how the consumers are getting stronger and what stages the consumer empowerment is going through in four different stages. In the first wave, consumer power was first discussed with President Kennedy's consumerism conceptualization (Day and Aaker, 1970), which is a social movement seeking to augment the rights and power of buyers concerning sellers (Kotler, 1971, p.49). After that, the second wave of controversy ensued, with consumers identified as the strongest of the distribution channel members. According to Küçük (2012), the second wave emphasized the importance of consumers as individuals who should have certain rights and powers as a buyer or final purchasing decision-maker, and thus as market actors, not to be seen as a source of demand (El-Ansary and Stern, 1972; Gaski and Nevin, 1985; Dwyer et al., 1987; Ping, 1993; Heide 1994; Ailawadi, Borin and Farris, 1995; Lusch and Brown, 1996; Betancourt and Gautschi, 1998; Hibbard, Kumar and Stern, 2001). Later, according to Küçük (2012) consumer power was discussed and mentioned in consumer complaint

literature, defined as the third wave (Hirschman, 1970; 1986; Singh, 1990; Keeley and Graham, 1991; Singh and Wilkes, 1996; Gregoire and Fisher, 2006; 2008). If consumers complain using either exit or voice strategies (Hirshman, 1970), it is assumed that they are applying their rights and powers in consumer markets. The final or fourth wave of consumer power discussions has recently begun to gain importance with the advent of the internet (Wolfenbarger and Gilly, 2001; Pitt et al., 2002; Urban, 2004; Denegri-Knott et al., 2006; Rezabakhsh et al., 2006; Küçük and Krishnamurthy, 2007; Küçük, 2008a; 2008b; 2009; Gregoire, Tripp and Legoux, 2009; Krishnamurthy and Küçük, 2009; Gregoire, Laufer and Tripp, 2010). The Internet has empowered consumers in many ways, and this fourth wave of consumer power is claimed to have undeniable and fundamental effects in digital markets at previously unpredictable levels (Küçük and Krishnamurthy, 2007).

The concept of consumer power emerged from a passive and symbolic practice, becoming an active and practical application of the concept with the Internet. Consumer power on the Internet can be discussed under two groups as categorized by Hirschman's (1970) famous Exit, Voice and Loyalty conceptualization: exit-based and voice-based consumer power (Küçük, 2008a). Exit-based consumer power indicates the proportion of consumers leaving the company's consumption cycles and is often discussed as a sign of a company's performance deficit. Voice-based consumer power emphasizes the importance of consumer feedback and recommendations in product/service failures. Therefore, the positive or negative sound is often seen as a market feedback mechanism rich in information and more useful than output (Hirschman, 1970; Singh, 1990; Keely and Graham, 1991; Stewart, 1998). As a result, all kinds of negative comments and feedback of the increasingly powerful consumer about brands on the digital platforms, makes consumer activism a significant threat to marketers and brands.

2.5 Consumer Activism

Consumer activist behavior often begins when consumers think that brands are embarking on a practice that could cause personal or social harm (Ozanne and Murray, 1995). Activists show brands their lifestyles. Especially young generations try to hinge directly on new topics that affect their personal lives such as social justice, morality, health care, privacy, and they do not want to belong to a group or party (Bennett and

Lagos, 2007). While much of the literature assumes that consumer activism involves collective action, some authors have highlighted the need to include also the individual actions such as complaints, negative word-of-mouth, and individual decisions to give up particular forms of consumption (Penaloza and Price, 1993; Kozinets and Handelman, 1998).

Activist efforts can raise awareness in the public eye of a company's or market's weaknesses, thereby potentially harming the company image and causing an organization to spend funds on damage control (Garrett, 1987; Putnam and Muck, 1991). Boycott, the most common form of consumer activism, involves boycotting goods and services produced or sold by specific firms, industries, nation-states, or (from time to time) ethnic groups (Hyman and Tohill, 2017). Klein, Smith, and John (2004) discovered motivational factors for why consumers choose to boycott. The authors stress that companies should consider social issues in their business strategies because, for example, a boycott can occur if consumers think that companies are not interested in social issues. This can damage both the brand and corporate reputation (Klein, Smith and John, 2004). At the same time, the ethical behaviour of the brand affects the purchasing behaviour of consumers. Although some researchers claim that consumers are not interested in the ethical behaviour of the brand, others (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001) note that the ethical understanding of the brand affects the consumer's buying behaviour.

On the other hand, Cambefort and Roux (2019) investigated the perceived risk of anti-brand behaviour, or what motivates consumers to act against a brand. It explains that consumers should be motivated and encouraged by other institutions to take risks in anti-brand behaviour, as risk can inhibit the desirable behaviour of activism (Cambefort and Roux, 2019). These institutions that can encourage consumers to activism can be non-governmental organizations or some activist groups as well. Therefore, boycotts and buycotts campaigns organized by NGOs and trade unions can also encourage consumers to display negative attitudes towards brands (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). The aim is to pressure brands to change their attitudes as a result of power exerted by the consumers (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). For instance, NGOs and activist groups have also used campaigns to get corporations such as Nestlé to stop practices such as distributing powdered infant milk formula to places where water

contamination threatened the babies who consumed it (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

In activist campaigns initiated by non-governmental organizations and some activist groups, consumers are expected to participate in these campaigns by using the logos of brands that exhibit unethical behavior or that display the wrong attitude to social problems. Several steps, which belongs logo-logic approach are followed when creating these campaigns. These are; (1) adding political messages to the campaigns of brands that attract consumer attention; (2) communicating these branded messages through both digital and mass media;(3) using the generally negative language with a brand to build a political relationship with them (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). The aims of these effective campaigns can be summarized as: (1) to increase consumer awareness; (2) holding a brand hostage in the media; (3) running low-cost, long-term "permanent" campaigns to sustain the threat to the brand; (4) using this sustained pressure to build political relationships with companies; and (5) creating regulatory mechanisms to induce a change in corporate practices (Bennett and Lagos, 2007).

Although the thesis examines how the consumers are participating in digital activism and their feelings and motivations in participating in these activist movements, the study further investigates the purpose of brand activism and how the activist actions of brands are perceived by consumers. Therefore, the following section covers literature on brand activism.

2.6 Brand Activism

Brand activism is defined as a marketing tactic, which is carried out by brands that want to stand out by supporting the public in social and political issues (Sarkar and Kotler, 2018; Moorman, 2020). Marketing academics (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017; Moorman, 2020) and practitioners (Unilever, 2019b) highlight the importance of authenticity in brand activism. However, brands use social issues primarily as a marketing tool to sell more products (Edelman, 2019).

When brands create digital activist campaigns, sometimes they focus only on a social issue, sometimes they exclude a specific audience, and sometimes they only address issues that support their brand value. Characteristics of brand activism are grouped under four major themes; (1) the aim of the brand is at the centre of authentic brand activism and focuses on a brand's contribution to the wider public good and societal

goals; (2) brand activism has expanded beyond achieving social impact to deal with controversial, contested and polarizing sociopolitical issues; (3) brand activism is also characterized by the adoption of progressive or conservative positions on socio-political issues; (4) brand activism includes both intangible (messaging) and tangible (implementation) commitments to a sociopolitical purpose (Vredenburg et al., 2020). To sum up, activist campaigns created by brands may have different goals and objectives.

After explaining the characteristic features of brand activism, Vredenburg and colleagues (2020) separate forms of brand activism according to the differences in brands' activism campaigns. Typology of brand activism is categorized under four themes; (1) absence of brand activism; (2) silent brand activism; (3) authentic brand activism; and (4) inauthentic brand activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020). The "absence of brand activism" category includes brands that have not yet adopted pro-social corporate practices in their approach to the market and do not have pro-social brand goals and values or use activist marketing messages. In the "silent brand activism" category, brands adopt socio-political reasons as part of their core mission or strategic focus and work on long-term integrated prosocial corporate practices. In the "authentic brand activism" category, brands are perceived as authentic because they are compatible with brand goals and values, activist marketing messages, and pro-social corporate practices. In the "inauthentic brand activism" category, brands adopt activist marketing messages that convey their support for socio-political reasons. However, such brands lack explicit brand goals and values and either do not exhibit substantive pro-social corporate practices or actively hide the absence of practices (Vredenburg et al., 2020). In this regard, "inauthentic brand activism" can be compared to the practice of "woke washing" (Vredenburg et al., 2018); Sobande, 2019) which exemplifies non-authentic brand activism where activist marketing messages about focal sociopolitical issues are incompatible with a brand's purpose, values and institutional application (Vredenburg, et al., 2020)

The term "woke" is of African-American origin and is a word for using "social awareness" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2017). In particular, woke washing is explained as unclear or ambiguous records of social cause practices (Vredenburg et al., 2018), but still marketing themselves by dealing with issues of inequality and

social injustice (Sobande, 2019, p.18), despite the inconsistencies between messaging and its applications (Vredenburg et al., 2018). For instance, bloggers can be an example of this approach. Bloggers can become a paid propaganda tool on social media (Morozov, 2011:14-15).

Brand activism as an emerging marketing strategy has become popular in academic research as well. A group of researchers examine whether brand activism is authentic or not under three headings; (1) how the brand (its image, its message, values and benefits) and its stakeholders are perceived in the market; (2) how the content of the message is perceived in traditional and digital media; and (3) how its corporate applications are perceived in the market (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

When brands become sociopolitical activists, their underlying motives are increasingly examined (Holt, 2002) and negative attributions can affect their business returns and brand value (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010). The main reason for this is that when brands engage in activism, consumers may not find it trustworthy (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010; Alhouti, Johnson, and Holloway, 2016; Vredenburg et al., 2018). Companies can try to give social responsibility messages however consumers may interpret them differently than it is (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). Thus, the main message of a brand's campaign is not always easy for consumers to see and perceive, but it is possible (Bennett and Lagos, 2007).

Before proceeding with the Methodology, the summary of the literature and examples of studies covered in literature review chapter can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Literature Review - Examples of Studies on Brand Activism and Consumer Activism

Initiator of Activism	Author and Year	Method	Purpose of the Study	Findings
	Candice R. Hollenbeck and George M. Zinkhan, 2006	Qualitative approach: In-depth interviews identified three anti-brand	To provide an understanding of why online anti-brand communities form. They explore the behavioural	The findings reflect on: 1. Why Anti-brand Communities Form: • Common Moral Obligations

Brand Activism		websites for in-depth analysis: anti-Wal-Mart, anti-McDonald's, and anti-Starbucks.	manifestations of such movements, and discuss technological influences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Networks • Workplace Challenges • Resource Hub 2. Behavioral Manifestations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicizing Marketplace Inequities • Instructing Members in the Rewards of Voluntary Simplicity • Constructing a New Collective Identity
	Loubna Katalin Abdallah, Camilla Jacobson, Djenane Liasse and Elisabet Lund, 2018	Qualitative approach: semi-structured interviews	The paper investigates how brand activism in advertisements (specifically femvertising) affects male consumers' attitudes towards the brand behind the advertisements.	The results of the paper indicate that men's attitude towards brand image can be either enhanced or abated, depending on the communication, authenticity, and the inclusion of both genders. In advertisements related to brand activism.
	Chelsea Joyce Terrell, 2019	Case study	The study investigates how Colin Kaepernick is used to attract Nike's consumer audiences. By comprehending audiences' reaction of the campaign, the author wants to	-

			interpret the implications of brand activism.	
	Juan Luis Manfredi, 2019	Qualitative and Quantitative approach (descriptive and analytical method)	The paper analyses the brand activism of 45 campaigns to identify patterns consistent with those described in the academic literature on movements pursuing social change to identify behavioural patterns.	The study shows that activist practice, of Anglo-Saxon origin, is a relevant trend in political communication because it aligns individual identity, the management of public assets, and corporate action in the political sphere.
	Shivakanth Shetty, Kerena Anand and Nagendra B. V., 2019	Quantitative approach: Survey	The purpose of the study is to understand the perception of millennials of brand activism in India and its business implications for brand managers.	The study shows the following results: 1. Millennials prefer to buy a brand if it supports a cause or purpose. However, they stop buying the brand if it does not behave ethically. 2. There is no gender difference between millennials in their perceptions of brand activism. 3. Millennials in different income categories have similar perceptions of brand activism. 4. The emotional connection millennials have with activist brands is that price is inflexible. 5. Brands taking a

				political stance, cherry-picking of issues, and being disruptive prompt and creates a profound backlash.
	Christine Moorman, 2020	Quantitative approach: Survey	The purpose of the research is to collect and disseminate the opinions of top marketers about brands' political activism to predict the future of markets, track marketing excellence, and improve the value of marketing for firms and society.	The study uncovered six perspectives that companies appear to use to guide decisions about the degree to which their brands will be political actors. These are: brand authenticity view, corporate citizen view, cultural authority view, calculative view, brands as educators view, political mission view, and employee engagement view.
Consumer Activism	Krist Swimberghe, Laura A. Flurry and Janna M. Parker, 2011	Projective technique and cross-sectional survey	The study examines consumer religious commitment and Christian consumers' conservative beliefs in the United States as motivating factors for consumer activist behaviour and boycott participation.	The findings state that consumers evaluate seller's actions and form ethical judgments. The study shows that these judgments are a major explanatory variable in consumers' voice complaints, third-party complaint intentions, and boycott intentions.

	<p>Marcos Sivitanides and Vivek Shah, 2011</p>	<p>Conceptual Study</p>	<p>The paper provides a framework and terminology to use when referring to digital activism and provides an understanding of the fundamental difference between traditional activism and how it has transformed into a sharper and more focused tool with the use of digital technology.</p>	<p>The study explains the positive impact of digital activism with a 3-dimensional model: X-axis represents digital technology that is used for digital activism; Y-axis represents the physical or virtual geographic reach that the activists' message manages to get to; Z-axis represents number of people or high impact organizations that start empathizing or start reacting positively to the activists' messages.</p>
	<p>Anna Hermann, 2020</p>	<p>Qualitative and Quantitative Approach: Secondary data, case study and interviews</p>	<p>The thesis aims to answer: (1) How millennial consumers perceive brands that engage in brand activism and (2) How marketing and public relations professionals can ensure that brand activism resonates with millennial consumers?</p>	<p>The results of this research offer suggestions to brands as follows: 1. Brands must dedicate time and resources to research. 2.Brands must be authentic in their activism; 3. The delivery of the message must remain authentic to the brand's pre-existing identity. 4.Brands must take steps to truly enact change and make an impact on the cause or issue chosen.</p>

	Grzegorz Zasuwa, Agnieszka Marek, Grzegorz Wesolowski, Joanna Niewiadoma, 2020	Quantitative approach: European Social Survey	The paper aims to show how the outbreak of an economic crisis and then an economic recovery affect consumer activism, and to examine how social capital moderates the effects of economic crisis and economic recovery.	The findings of the research demonstrate that social capital at the country level boosts consumer activism during an economic recovery. The study also shows that social capital seems to have a neutral effect on boycotting products during an economic crisis.
	Karolina Kubiak and Sam Ouda, 2020	Qualitative approach: Focus groups and semi-structured interviews	The purpose of the research is to advance understanding of authenticity in brand activism. It aims to explore what consumer's think of brand activism and why; how consumers evaluate brands that engage in brand activism and whether they find such communications authentic and trustworthy.	The study shows the following results: 1. Consumers perceive brand activism as an adaptation to the most current trends. 2. Consumers appreciate brands when they take an active stance. 3. Consumers are sceptical about brands' good intentions regarding brand activism. 4. Consumers argue that brands which participate in brand activism should not forget the importance of product and quality.
	Cecilie Broberg and Ifigenia Doshoris, 2020	Qualitative approach: Semi-structured interviews	The paper examines how consumers perceive brand activism and how they respond to it?	The study shows that respondents' perceptions are positive when brands are engaging in brand activism. The findings support five key concepts that affect how

				respondents formed perceptions: (1) self-identity, (2) brand-cause fit, (3) responsibility, (4) authenticity, and (5) emotions.
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CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

The research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the feelings, thoughts, and motivations of consumers when participating in activist movements on digital platforms and to explore their expectations and perceptions of the activist campaigns carried out by brands. Quantitative research methods are restricted in gaining a deeper understanding of how consumers perceive brand activism since quantitative research methodologies do not adequately answer why or how a phenomenon occurs (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Silverman, 2000). Qualitative research, on the other hand, provides the necessary in-depth and exploratory tools to obtain a clear picture of the process or to understand the how and why of a particular phenomenon (Symon and Cassel, 1998). Collis and Hussey (2003) argue that qualitative research provides a stronger basis for analysis and interpretation, as it is based on the natural environment of the phenomenon. Qualitative research appears to be most suitable for exploring individuals' perceptions, beliefs, and values rather than predicting their actions and behavior (McCracken, 1988). Furthermore, qualitative methods are thought to be most useful in examining situations in which alleged attitudes and actual behavior differ from each other (Belk, Devinney and Eckhardt) 2005). In addition, as Yıldırım and Şimşek (2005) state that, qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview, and document analysis help to reveal perceptions and events realistically and holistically.

Given these reasons, a qualitative approach is carried out in this study. In-depth interviews with consumers are carried out to shed light on consumer insights on digital activism that can help brands to create effective and powerful communication campaigns. Quantitative research, on the other hand, is not the right approach to reveal these insights, because consumers should be allowed to express their thoughts with open-ended questions. Therefore, an environment will be provided in which they will best express themselves during in-depth interviews. Another reason for choosing a qualitative research approach is that there is limited qualitative research on this topic in the literature. Hence, this research aims to find different insights on the topic by using qualitative research techniques.

3.2 Sampling

This research aims to understand the feelings, thoughts, and motivations of consumers when participating in digital activist movements and to reveal the effects of the resulting expectations and perception on the activist campaigns carried out by brands. For this reason, purposive sampling method is used and participants who can be described as "activist" are selected to be interviewed. While selecting the participants, attention was paid to their interest in activist movements that they actively share on digital platforms. At the same time, as research focuses on digital activism, not activism, participants' effective use of digital platforms was also set as a criterion. Digital activism and indeed activism itself are terms that contain deep ideologies beliefs and thoughts. Therefore, individuals who are interested in these topics were selected within the scope of the research.

The research was based on ethical understanding and considered ethical guidelines. I was careful to explain the following information to the participants at the beginning of the interviews.

- * The purpose of the research;
- * How and where the information provided by the participants will be used;
- * What will be done to ensure the anonymity of participants;
- * The informant can at any time rescind permissions previously given

It has been told to the participants that the information gained during the research will be kept confidential and used only by the research team and for academic purposes. Also, it was explained that the identities of the participants in the study will be protected and their real names will not be used. Instead, pseudonyms will be used in field notes, journals, and reports. Safeguarding informant identity also helps to ensure integrity and trustworthiness of the research.

During the interview, through semi-structured questions, their opinions and thoughts were asked about digital activism. Occasions and questions which can make participants feel bad, avoid talking, or cause them to hesitate in giving accurate information are avoided. Moreover, the transcripts were shared only with the thesis advisor to get feedback and her opinion in the preparation of deciphers and data analysis and in the presentation of the results. In addition, no one has access to this data except the researcher and the thesis advisor. The resulting data is accessible only

by the researcher and thesis advisor.

Communication campaigns published by brands are shown as an example to the participants in interviews conducted within the scope of the research. This is done to enable participants to talk about the subject more comfortably through the examples shown. However, comments and evaluations that participants said about brands were shared without using the person's and the brand's name. No brand name has been explicitly included in the research. Examples of activist campaigns by brands were only used to enrich the content of the in-depth interviews and to facilitate conversation with participants.

Participants in the study were aged between 20-55-year-olds. They include advertisers and communicators who work for well-known brands. There is a reason why such participants are specially selected; they will be able to better evaluate the activist campaigns that brands make on digital platforms. The interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes. With the permission of the participants, each interview was audiotaped and transcribed, resulting in 150 double space pages of text. Table 2 includes the details of the participants and the interviews.

Table 2: Details of the Interviews

Participants	Gender	Age	Occupation	Duration	Place
A.Ü.	Male	28	Risk Management Assistant	30 minutes	Office
B.E.	Female	54	Retired Employee	41 minutes 49 seconds	Online
B.K.	Female	29	Project Development Specialist	34 minutes	Office
B.P.	Female	27	Account Executive	45 minutes	Online
D.K.	Female	20	Student	51 minutes 54 seconds	Online
E.E.	Female	27	Social Media Specialist	42 minutes 52 seconds	Online

G.Y.	Female	29	Buying Specialist	41 minutes	Online
I.B.	Female	47	Academician	37 minutes 51 seconds	Online
İ.A.	Male	34	Project Manager	35 minutes	Office
İ.H.	Female	29	Student	61 minutes 30 seconds	Online
K.K.	Male	27	Content Marketing Executive	48 minutes 24 seconds	Online
O.K.	Male	40	Coordinator	30 minutes seconds	Office
Ö.E.	Female	29	Physical therapist	36 minutes 49 seconds	Online
S.A.	Female	29	Social Media Specialist	45 minutes 41 seconds	Online
S.Ç.	Female	34	Project Development Specialist	47 minutes 24 seconds	Online
S.D.	Male	28	UA/UX Designer / Art Director	59 minutes 23 seconds	Online
S.K.	Female	27	Human Resources Specialist	50 minutes	Online

3.3 Data Collection

To gain a deeper understanding of the feelings, thoughts, and motivations of consumers when participating in activist movements on digital platforms, total of 17 in-depth interviews were conducted in the spring and fall of 2020, in Turkey. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face meetings could not be made and teleconferencing tools were used for most of the interviews. The interviews follow a semi-structured guideline and questions are designed from general to more specific topics (Bernhard 1988). See Table 3 for the interview guideline, questions, and examples. For relatively more sensitive questions, projective techniques were used for instance, examples of

activist campaigns of brands were shown to the participants and respondents were asked to interpret the behavior of consumers, as explained later in following paragraphs (Fischer 1993).


The aim of using projective techniques is not to analyse the success or the impact of these campaigns but to gain a deeper insight from participants and to engage them in deeper conversations on the topic. The participants are not necessarily users and consumers of the brands but they are aware of these campaigns. Moreover, the examples represent the most popular topics of activism, such as animal rights, women rights, and LGBT. Furthermore, the examples represent different social topics and the brands selected are from different industries, such as a sanitary napkin brand, an international non-governmental organization, a global fashion brand, and an association that aims to cure neurodegenerative disease. For instance, WWF aims to create awareness about bio-diversity, animal rights and environmental ethics. ALS association is a charity that organizes donation campaigns for people who have neurodegenerative diseases. WWF and ALS association are NGOs that create digital activist campaigns. Orkid and United Colours of Benetton on the other hand are international and corporate brands. Orkid aims to create an awareness about gender equity and women's rights. United Colours of Benetton aims to attract attention to LGBT and diversity issues.

The interview guideline was created so that the interviews began with broad non-threatening questions that cover a broad agenda on related topics followed by more specific questions to gain an in-depth understanding. Therefore, the questions were grouped accordingly. First of all, the social media usage information of the participants was obtained. Then, which platforms consumers preferred and why they used those platforms were asked. Therefore, the first group of questions aims to find out the practices of participants and which platforms they use to participate in digital activist movements. The second group of questions aims to understand the motivations of participants when participating in digital activist campaigns and the factors that motivate them to participate. Thirdly, I tried to understand the feelings of participants when they participate in these actions. Finally, fourth group of questions aim to understand the perception and expectation of participants with regards to the digital activist communication campaigns of brands and how they evaluate the examples

shown. Here, well-known and popular examples of brand activism were selected to remind the participants of previous campaigns, where brand activism was involved and to have a deeper conversation on these topics, as discussed in questions from 17 to 20 in Table 3. The examples were shown to the participants during the interviews, which enabled them to talk in detail about these activist movements and practices. The answers given and the information obtained sheds light on the extent to which they were involved in digital activism campaigns created by brands, the reasons for participation, and whether these campaigns had an impact on their consumer behavior.

Table 3: Interview Guideline

1	Do you use social media?
2	How often do you use it?
3	What platforms do you use? Can you give any examples?
4	Do you express your feelings when sharing content on social media? What emotions do you usually express?
5	Do you make any particular distinction when using different social media platforms? For example, I spend more time on Platform A when I'm happy; on platform B when I'm worried?
6	Do you react in any way if someone shares content on social media that bothers you very much? How do you react? What do you do?
7	Can you describe yourself as an activist individual?
8	On what topics or issues are you more interested in, with regards to activism?
9	Is there an activist group that you belong to on digital platforms? Or are you a member of such a platform?
10	Have you ever participated in a petition campaign on Change.org?
11	Do you follow the outcome of the petition campaigns you support, whether they have achieved success or not?
12	How does it feel to participate in petition campaigns?
13	What do you think about the activist movements that consumers participate in on social media?
14	Are there any brands that you follow on social media?
15	What do you think about the content brands share on social media and the brands' social media posts in general? How do you think consumers perceive

	these posts and contents?
16	How do you assess the activist content and posts created and shared by brands and the activist movements the brands participate in on social media? For example, what do you think about the communication campaigns shared by brands on March 8th, International Women's day?
17	<p>WWF campaign example: It draws attention to endangered animals with its campaign by using the selfie movement. They used the slogan: "Don't let this be the last selfie you'll ever see me in.". WWF preferred to use the Snapchat platform for the campaign. Participants were asked to change their faces to the faces of these endangered animals by using a filter created by Snapchat. They then shared the filtered faces on their profiles.</p>  <p>Do you remember this campaign? Did you participate in the campaign? What are the reasons for participating or for not participating? How does this campaign make you feel? For what reasons do you think people supported or not supported this campaign?</p>
18	United Colours of Benetton campaign example titled "Unhate": It invites all the world leaders and nations to fight the culture of hate. The main focus is the act of kissing. The below images are displayed on billboards in different places.



Do you remember this campaign? Did you participate in the campaign? What are the reasons for participating or for not participating? How does this campaign make you feel? For what reasons do you think people supported or not supported this campaign?

19 Ice Bucket Challenge example: It was a campaign aimed at fundraising and creating awareness ALS association.



Do you remember this campaign? Did you participate in the campaign? What are the reasons for participating or for not participating? How did this campaign make you feel? For what reasons do you think people supported or not supported this campaign??

20 Orkid's #Kizgibiyap campaign example: aims to redefine what "doing it like a girl" means to end gender discrimination. The campaign was launched by an advertising film.



Do you remember this campaign? Did you participate in the campaign? What are the reasons for participating or for not participating? How did this campaign make you feel? For what reasons do you think people supported or not supported this campaign?

3.4 Data Analysis

When analysing the data, guidelines, and process offered by Spiggle (1994) for qualitative data analysis was followed which includes categorization, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalization, integration, iteration, and refutation. In the first step (categorization) qualitative researchers classify the data in the coding process. In the second step (abstraction), the categories previously defined are divided into conceptual classes. In the third step (comparison), similarities and differences between events within the data are analysed. As the analysis progresses and the categories develop, the researcher compares the data with the appropriate categories that arise. In the fourth step (dimensionalization), the properties of categories and structures are defined. After defining a category, attributes and properties are discovered. In the fifth step (integration), the relationship between conceptual elements is defined. On sixth step (iteration), it refers to acting in such a way that previous transaction, through data collection and analysis, shape subsequent transactions, and the final step (refutation), involves deliberately subjecting the resulting inferences to empirical scrutinises such as categories and conceptual framework.

The steps mentioned above were followed when analysing the data in this research. First of all, the answers from the questions were categorized. Before categorizing the data, the audio recordings were deciphered. The transcripts of the interviews with each

participant were written separately. Notes taken by the researcher during the interview were added at the end of the completed transcriptions. After the transcriptions were completed, each interview was read from start to finish. The most prominent and repeated keywords were identified. After these keywords were identified for each transcript, subcategories were created from keywords that could be grouped. These groups (subcategories) were further grouped under the themes that emerged and shared in the findings section. Table 4 includes examples of quotes, categories, and themes. The notion of emergent design implies continual refinement. Therefore, to ensure the trustworthiness and integrity of the analysis, classifications were constantly evaluated and refined until the final themes were reached and the findings were constantly compared with previously highlighted literature.

Table 4: Coding Table

Main Category	Themes	Sub Categories	Example Quotes
Motivations of Consumers	Responsibility and Sense of Duty	Social responsibility	I try to help these activist social responsibility campaigns with all my potential, as best as I can. (S.K.)
		Helping other people	It's a good thing to help people and touch their lives. It gives me pleasure. But I can't be as active as before. I think if I do something about one social problem, others will do, too. If I can encourage them, they can also help others. (S.K.)
		Creating Awareness	When I see content that resonates with me, I share them directly on my page. I make them more visible (E.E.)
	Desire For Staying Up-To-Date	Being Up To Date With Social Media	They try to do it just because of staying up-to-date at that moment. Behind it, there is the belief that -I did a good thing with sharing the logo of that brand and yes, I participated in that global

			campaign-. But when you dig deeper they have no concrete examples of any action or nothing they have done to serve this purpose. It was only the desire for staying up-to-date at that time and they did it. However, when we check if they did anything about it afterwards, 99 percent of them did not. I believe frankly that I did not participate at that moment in order not to be one of those people. (E.E.)
		Being Trendy	We all get involved in these things from time to time just to stay up-to-date and follow the trend, but we need to discuss whether this is activism or not. (I.H.)
		Being a Part of a Network/ Group	When there is news that all groups are talking about and they say "let's share" so I share. (I.B.)
	Fun	Attracting Attention	I just think it's about showing yourself to attract attention... So nobody cares about donating. I think they joined just for having fun while pouring ice down from their head and saying "I will create awareness, too." (S.K.)
		Having Fun	I think there have been a lot of people who have turned their face into an animal and used it to do something fun without knowing about this campaign. (K.K.)
	Gratification	Feeling Better	When I petition, I feel good. (S.A.)
		Happiness	It makes me very happy if I can get even one petition, from somebody. (D.K.)
		Feeling Proud	There are articles I'm proud to share, including my own. (I.B.)
		Fear of	I think there's a fear in our country

Feelings of Consumers	Fear	Punishment	about petition campaigns, so people don't want to sign them. (I.B.)
		Fear of Being Left Out	They just wanted to act in line with the social agenda, so they just did it and left it, that's all. (E.E.)
	Concern	Profile Control	I think consistency is very important. If you're defending something, you should act and behave consistently. But usually, people are not like that. They express their views on everything in our country. But when you look at whether his or her behaviour in their personal life, most of the time you will see their behaviours are different from their ideas and expressions on their profile. Then I think it's irrelevant. (K.K.)
		Content Control	I share issues that I am knowledgeable about. Because, as I said, this is a very different situation. We need to know about issues that are related to the world, the universe, and a wider audience. I have an opinion on these issues, yes, but as I said, I don't want to express an opinion on something like this without knowing what is true and what is not (S.A.)
	Hope	Expectancy	Sometimes a content I shared goes viral, and a lot of people see it. I share it with this hope. (D.K.)
Credibility and Sustainability		Consistency	It's very relevant to what the brand stands for, its previous attitudes, and its vision and mission. That brand is not supposed to make you say, "you say that, but you do that." (S.A.)
		Lasting	It created awareness however just

Consumers' Perceptions and Expectations of Activist Communication Campaigns			for a while... (S.K.)
	Language Barrier	Culture	Do it like a girl is the real name of the campaign shared all over the world. When translated into Turkish, it is written as Kız Gibi Yap. I don't think it's something that is used a lot in Turkish culture. In Turkey also the campaign did not create the same global impact. On the contrary, it caused controversy. (K.K.)
		Language	We're getting involved in a global campaign but we're making this activism in a wrong way as it is incorrectly translated into Turkish. The correct version is the campaign that carried out globally. (I.B.)
	Fear of Lynching	Fear of Being Left Out	But they felt the need to share that day in order to show the brand support. To enhance the brand image positively they made an effort; they prepared advert; maybe they allocated a budget for it. I think this is entirely due to the power of activist movements on social media. (S.D.)
		Feeling obligatory	Consumers ' views of the brand can change and therefore brands have to share, or they'll be lynched. (S.A.)
	Courage and Sincerity	Courage and sincerity	If it were something truly sincere, they could have helped that way. On the other hand, the LGBT movement in Turkey is an action that requires a lot of courage. If a brand really defends this issue, I think if it supports it, it risks everything and is doing it sincerely. (D.K.)

	Using Celebrity	Famous People	In general, the actions of celebrities and their behaviours lead to such reactions, so they affect other people and others do the same. (S.D.)
			That is related to adapting to popular culture. I mean, we all know these people. They use them because in this way people become more curious and they can research the campaign because of them. (E.E.)
	Entertainment-Oriented	Having Fun	It has been used in a way that it focused more on entertainment and having fun rather than focusing on its original purpose. (K.K.)
		Ignoring the Main Ideology	I know that there are people who consciously donate and make these applications, but I think that some people share such posts to entertain even though they do not think about the main idea. (B.P.)

To achieve trustworthiness of the research, the approaches and recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Wallendorf and Belk (1989) were followed. Several techniques were used to enhance trustworthiness. Firstly, triangulation researchers were used. The thesis advisor was involved especially in the interpretation stage, during which she evaluated the findings with a critical eye in order to avoid any potential biases and to both confirm and to bring a different perspective not to miss out anything important during interpretation. As a second tool triangulation of sources was used, where I conducted interviews with enough participants to make meaningful comparisons. Thirdly, debriefing by the thesis advisor enabled me to discuss periodically with the thesis advisor the results revealed and to get feedback. During this process, the advisor critiqued and questioned the emerging themes and categories and the interpretation conducted by me. Fourth tool was using Purposive sampling. Because the issue is digital activism, in-depth interviews were conducted with people

who participate in activist movements on digital platforms. Finally, I kept a reflexive journal was kept in order to reflect on, tentatively interpret, and plan data collection. The journal was useful in detecting the influences of my frame of mind, biases, and tentative interpretations of the data being gathered. Moreover, a critical eye is used during the research and I did not take anything for granted and recheck specially to discover the true feelings and motivations of the participants. All these tools enable to enhance the credibility, integrity and trustworthiness of the research.

In the methodology chapter how the interviews were carried out and structured, and how the coding is conducted were explained. The following chapter on findings include the themes that emerge as a result of the data analysis and coding process.



CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The themes that emerge are grouped under four main headings: the practices of the consumers regarding digital activism and the platforms that they use when participating in digital activism campaigns; their motivations behind participating in these campaigns; the feelings that emerge; and the perceptions and expectations of consumers regarding the activist campaigns initiated by brands. The findings section will examine consumers involved with digital activism under these four main headings along with subcategories and themes that emerge under these main topics.

4.1 Practices of the Consumers Regarding Digital Activism

In the interviews, the platforms used by participants when they participate in digital activism were asked. According to the answers of the individuals, Twitter and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms. Among social media tools, participants say that they mostly use Twitter and Instagram. While Twitter is preferred to follow the news and to share feelings and thoughts (generally negative) on current and popular topics of the day, Instagram is preferred to share happy and beautiful images and positive emotions and to follow other people's posts and images.

K.K. (27): "The general trend is: when the people are sad or upset, they use Twitter, but if they are happy or having fun, they prefer to use Instagram. When I am depressed, I do not prefer to share my feelings on Instagram because people generally share positive things on Instagram. People share things that they enjoy in life. But when I'm upset, I don't prefer to see something like that, no matter how close my friends are. That's why I use Twitter in every mood, but Instagram is something I use when I feel a little more relaxed and cheerful."

E.E. (27): "Maybe the usage purposes of Twitter and Instagram are different when we assess carefully. I use Twitter if I want to receive news quickly or if I want to spread the news on something quickly. But I can say that I am more emotional on Instagram, I share emotional posts. However, Twitter is generally the medium I use the most."

Participants describe their preferred social media channel according to their emotions and moods while expressing that they think other people also use these platforms for

similar purposes: Instagram when they are happy and Twitter when they are anxious or sad.

I.B. (47): "I consider myself a feminist and an activist, so generally I'm sharing my concerns on critical topics. For instance, especially in women's groups, there are certain campaigns and campaign periods. They tell us that there will be a social media campaign on Twitter on a certain date, so I participate and share it on Twitter. Moreover, if I have a problem in daily life, I share about it as well. Or, if there was a situation related to consumer rights, for example, if I had a bad experience with a supermarket, I share my reactions about it and express my feelings on Twitter."

Apart from social media channels, petitions have become prominent in digital activism and some platforms are created for this movement. One of the most popular platform is Change.org. On Change.org, people follow petition campaigns based on the daily topics or they follow the campaigns that they are interested in. Even when they sign the petitions, many of them do not follow whether the campaigns they petition for were successful or not. However, they share these petition campaigns on their profiles on social media or send them to acquaintances via their WhatsApp groups. Petition campaigns on Change.org generally cover issues such as women's rights, employee rights, animal rights, nature, and justice.

B.E. (54): "Change.org's campaigns are generally related to nature. Of course, women's rights, injustice, law, injustice against children are among the popular topics as well. I support 80% of campaigns on these issues."

S.A. (29): "On social media, I follow the campaigns when the topic is related to animals. So, I follow the news about nature and all living creatures."

People don't want to be silent on issues that concern society. It is quite remarkable that the issues in which petition campaigns are organized are often social issues. The reasons for this include a sense of responsibility and a sense of duty, which are as the findings show, among the motivations for consumers to participate in activist campaigns.

4.2 Motivations of the Consumers for Participating in Digital Activism

Participants have different motivations when participating in activist movements on digital platforms. For some of the participants helping people, supporting people, creating awareness for social problems, and being useful for society indicate the dominance of social responsibility motivation. Whereas other participants state that they participate in activist movements on digital platforms mainly due to a desire for staying up-to-date, for entertainment, and to be a part of a network. In this section, the motivating factors that trigger the activist motivations of consumers on digital platforms are examined under three main themes, which are: responsibility, desire for staying up-to-date, and having fun.

4.2.1 Responsibility and Sense of Duty

When activist campaigns launched on digital platforms are examined, it can be seen that they are often related to social problems. Brands, companies, opinion leaders, and activist platforms mostly focus on problems in society, such as injustice and human rights. Participants' approach to these issues on digital platforms is prominent and one of the motivations that encourage them to participate in these actions is the responsibility and a sense of duty. Participants often feel responsible for the problems of the society they live in.

S.D. (28): "Of course, I want the world to be a good place. I want to be aware of the mistakes and correct them positively. But what I can do about it is limited. Sharing social media contents and supporting such activist groups are some of the things that I can do. So, I feel this responsibility. If this is something I can do, why shouldn't I?"

S.K. (27): "I try to help these social responsibility campaigns with all my potential and as best as I can."

When participants are joining in an activist movement through their social media accounts, they perceive it as something they can and should do, because there are certain steps that must be taken to participate in the activist movements launched on social media. For example, using hashtags, reposting existing content, petitioning or endowing are some of these steps and actions. While participants are aware of these issues and act in a socially responsible way, they also choose to participate in these activist movements because they are not difficult to participate in on social platforms.

According to Snow (2001), collective identity can be defined as a common sense of 'us' and collective agency. (Snow, 2001, pp.196-254). Bennet and Segerberg's (2013) concept of 'connective action' emphasizes activism that is necessary for collective identity. Similarly, according to participants, there is a perception that digital activism can only be effective on social platforms if a monophonic collective movement can be created. According to the participants, the success of campaigns is possible if a large number of people who share the same thoughts will participate in the campaigns. For them, an activist movement is successful if it is reaching the large masses, giving a reason for people who are involved in the activist movement, and enabling different platforms to talk about the issue. For this reason, feeling responsible for raising awareness on prominent issues is seen as a common source of motivation for many consumers. Sharing the advocated idea with other individuals who are not aware of the subject, and to include them in this campaign is perceived as a success. For this reason, participants emphasize that it is important to raise awareness in activist movements that they participate in on social media. Similarly, Bennett and Lagos (2007) determine the first level of digital activism as increasing consumer awareness. Morozov (2009), on the other hand, describes creating awareness as something carried out to feel good without creating any social impact. He defines this "feel-good online activism with zero political or social impact" as slacktivism. He notes that the feel-good factor is the main reason behind the popularity of slacktivist activities (Morozov, 2009a).

B.P. (27): "In fact, when I share something about a campaign, I will raise awareness if even one person is curious about the campaign and join it like me. If even one person wonders and reads my feelings and comments that is shared on social media, he/she will be informed about this topic and will be aware of this problem. That's why I share such contents. I share to make it happen, but of course, that's not enough. Because I know that I can't do it by myself. For this, everyone needs to be aware and everyone needs to react in the same way. On the other hand, it's really important to raise awareness of people and be able to influence them."

In some cases, the sense of responsibility people feel drives them to post on social media. There is a need to inform their friends and close circle and to make them a part of the social problems. As the above participant states, by sharing his feelings, he

demonstrates an example of courage for others to act similarly. Because, according to him, if it is a social problem, everyone has to react the same way and everyone should be informed about it.

In addition, participants sometimes perceive this sense of responsibility as a duty. This mission drives them to participate in existing activist campaigns. If they do not fulfil this duty, they believe that they make no effort to change this mistake or problem.

I.B. (47): "For example, when people petition a campaign on Change.org then they are drifting away from that subject. They are not informed about the campaign in any way. But they think that they have fulfilled their duty of citizenship and they discard that responsibility."

I.B. (47): "...There are certain issues, I feel compelled to share about those issues. For example, in matters concerning women... If a law is enacted regarding women and if we react about it, I feel like I did my duty there."

For the tasks that are carried out with the goal of social responsibility, there is the urge not to remain silent about the issue that concerns a social problem and to feel obliged to share. However, the ideology behind the activism movement involved may not be understood in the posts made with this sense of duty. When individuals post because they feel obliged, they may miss the purpose and mission of that action. Furthermore, participants state that their posts on social media or the activist movements that they are a part of are because of their willingness to help by acting with a sense of responsibility.

E.E. (27): "I feel ahead in many matters. Let me tell you that I follow and make serious research about women's rights and animal rights on social media. If there are things that I can do to help to raise awareness in society about these issues or to help in any way, I provide support, and if there is something I can do I take action."

S.K. (27): "It's a good thing to help people and touch their lives. It gives me pleasure. But I can't be as active as before. I think if I do something about one social problem, others will do, too. If I can encourage them, they can also help others."

Thus, participating in a digital activism movement on social media refers to drawing attention to the source of social problems and feeling responsible to help so that action can be heard more to reach its goal. Especially when it comes to topics such as women's rights, animal rights, and labour rights, supporting those who are exposed to violence or those who are in a difficult situation and helping to make it known to a wider audience is a source of motivation for consumers to participate in activist movements on social media.

4.2.2 Desire for Staying Up-To-Date

One of the most important innovations of digital platforms is that it facilitates and initiates the desire to stay up-to-date. Social media users want to be aware of innovations and developments in every field. When describing this motivation, participants did not use words such as "following the trend," but they specifically stated the desire as "staying up-to-date." The desire to stay up-to-date was described as a desire to be aware of all kinds of innovations and to be involved with adopting these innovations. The desire to stay up-to-date keeps many participants motivated to be a part of the activist movements.

E.E. (27): "They try to do it just because of staying up-to-date at that moment. Behind it, there is the belief that -I did a good thing with sharing the logo of that brand and yes, I participated in that global campaign-. But when you dig deeper they have no concrete examples of any action or nothing they have done to serve this purpose. It was only the desire for staying up-to-date at that time and they did it. However, when we check if they did anything about it afterwards, 99 percent of them did not. I believe frankly that I did not participate at that moment in order not to be one of those people."

I.B. (47): "For example, in the women's movement when consumers see a TT or a Hashtag, they feel like they should be part of it not to remain out. Since everyone does it, they'll do it as well. But they don't what is the purpose of the movement."

On the other hand, being united in current events in digital activism is very important to create an impact that will reach a wide audience. According to Karagöz (2013), most people think that they can be an activist with just a click or by changing simple things such as changing the profile picture on special days. However, the only purpose of this is the desire to be fashionable. A hashtag that is a Trending Topic (TT) on Twitter

offers opinions and ideas written about this topic for millions of people. In this case, individuals acting with a desire to stay up-to-date are taking collective action. When performing these actions, there is the desire to act simultaneously with the group. Sometimes this group is a WhatsApp group and sometimes it is a community created against social problems.

B.P. (27): “Most people share some campaigns to raise awareness, and they do so consciously. These people are very conscious and they increase awareness. And these people reflect and support their ideas with their actions in their private lives. But if you're sharing this just to show that you're following the trend, that's not right. You have to adopt those ideas in your life.”

Participants think that when it comes to digital activism, the advocated ideas and actions should not be different from each other. Otherwise, people do not find the activist campaigns consistent and sincere.

I.B. (47): “Also, thanks to this activism, I am a part of a network, a group. To be in this community gives me an identity and educate me at the same time.”

There are some groups on digital platforms where especially the events related to social problems are followed. The members of the communities on these platforms feel like part of a “network.” Thanks to this network, individuals get information about different subjects and meet many different people, and feel motivated to act in line with group behaviour.

4.2.3 Fun and Entertainment

In order for activist movements to be effective and reach more people, people who participate in this action need to announce it from digital platforms because, on digital platforms, the spread of an issue to a wide audience occurs very quickly. Brands may not want to be the only party that delivers a social message in their campaigns. Thanks to the interaction that occurs when they attract people to the campaign, they can announce the campaign to many more people. To create this interaction, they approach social problems from different angles. Although serious issues, which are a problem in society are addressed, brands want to convey this message more gently and

sometimes in an entertaining way. This can lead to the perception of some campaigns as entertainment, as stated by some participants.

S.A. (29): "I remember that period very well. I was in college and it was the summer period. For something that reached masses, I think that the purpose of the event had become just fun after a while. Because a lot of people who didn't have anything to do with it, including celebrities who were in their summer houses, or on their boats, did it by challenging each other. But at the end, people had to donate after joining the challenge and I think many of them didn't make that donation. I have seen such people around me. I think it was completely about having fun. Even if it may have started for a different purpose at first, I don't think it went too consciously afterwards. I'm not saying that it didn't contribute to creating awareness, but I'm saying that everyone didn't care about that purpose. Of course, the common initial goal was to create awareness."

In some cases, the success criterion for brands, companies, or NGOs is measured by reaching thousands of people, rather than achieving the desired perception of the message by the consumer. By looking at the number of people reached by a campaign, whether it reaches the masses and attracts them to the campaign, the brand can say that this campaign has created awareness and achieved its goal. However, it is important to question if it is enough for a campaign to reach out to the masses and get thousands of people involved in that campaign to raise awareness.

D.K. (20): "It has become entertainment for people. A very serious disease has become the entertainment of some celebrities, young people, and children... The project was created with a very beautiful intention at first. But I think the progress and the result were very poorly connected to the initial goal, and I think it shouldn't be done so. I wish there was another way to raise awareness of this."

Examples of such campaigns were shown during in-depth interviews throughout the research. Although some are very old campaigns, participants have had no trouble remembering them. Because it was the campaigns that marked that period and reached a very wide audience, which remained on the agenda for a long time, with many people involved. Although many people think that such campaigns succeed in reaching many people, they also believe that the effect created is temporary.

K.K. (27): “On social media, everything is running out of date so fast. Social media quickly consumes content, information, anything shared as part of the agenda. People mostly consider it as entertainment-oriented. The same happened with this campaign. There was a message there, but people transformed it to fun, and after a while, it deviated from its purpose. At first, it served its purpose and someone who has never heard of this disease became aware of it with this campaign, but as it was consumed so quickly the main focus became entertainment. So, I think it is very difficult to make a lasting impact on social media.”

E.E. (27): “As I've said before, social media logic works like -I'm here, I saw the content, and I participated too. So of course, the impact was not so powerful, and then it lost its relevance.”

Our adaptation to some trends on social media is referred to by some participants as “instantaneous and momentary.” Even if this trend is a digital activist movement, it attracts people instantly for that moment and initiates a lot of interaction for a certain period so that people become involved. However, it also fades quickly and loses relevance and influence at the same speed. Because the vast majority of people who engage in such activities participate for “entertainment” purposes; they participate without knowing where the idea came from, what that action represents. Therefore, the resulting actions are entertainment-oriented to create interaction, but the impact is not lasting.

4.3 Feelings Associated with Engaging in Digital Activism

This section sheds light on how participants feel when engaging in activist movements. As part of the research, participants were asked how they felt when participating in activist movements. Findings reveal that four main feelings emerged which are gratification, fear, concern, and hope. The following section explains these feelings along with the reasons given by participants. These justifications, and the resulting feelings, offer insight to researchers and marketers to become aware of and take into account these emotions to empathize with participants when organizing activist campaigns.

4.3.1. Gratification

Although issues involving individuals in digital activism are often related to their focus of interest, we often see that they cannot remain indifferent to social problems that concern the society. Activist movements, which address social problems and seek solutions to these problems, share these issues on social media in order to raise awareness. In such cases, the emotions that drive people to participate in these actions are quite strong. These strong feelings are formed by a person's desire to be useful to society, and the participation in these campaigns leads gratification resulting in feelings of happiness, pleasure, and pride.

S.K. (27): "Touching people's lives increases my motivation. At least I think I can contribute as much as I can. Creating a little more awareness leads me to feel better and soothes my conscience of course. Helping and touching people's lives makes me so happy, although I can't be as active as I used to be, it is a pleasure to be able to help."

K.K. (27): "As a feeling, something emerges at that moment... A feeling that you are doing something good, so you feel it and it feels good."

Individuals express that when they are involved in problems waiting to be solved in society, at least when they express these problems in their profiles, the emotions they feel are good feelings. Activist movements that people participate in on digital platforms enable these people to feel gratification. Thanks to this feeling, people find a source of motivation to participate in activist movements.

4.3.2. Fear

In order to tell others about themselves, social media users highlight in their profiles what summarizes and best describes them in their daily routine life. We all do this in our profiles because we now manage our profiles on digital platforms. In these profiles, we tell whatever we want and as much as we want. These profiles that we have created on social platforms can be regarded as our digital ID cards, which serve to introduce us to the outside world. Every topic we share in our profile shows an outsider how much we internalize this topic. Sometimes we want to give people clues from the image we created to reflect whom we want to be. These tips can be a profile picture, used TT, or a hashtag on social media. These tools are visible to anyone who follows

our profile and give them clues as to who we are. People who engage in activist actions also share the ideologies they advocate with other people through using these tools. But when sharing these posts and images, there is a feeling that either prevents them from participating in activist movements or pushes them to participate in activist movements. This feeling is fear. According to the findings of the study, the feeling of fear both encourages activists and causes them to remain passive. These two situations are examined under two titles: becoming more active on social media with the fear of being left out or being lynched and becoming more passive because of being afraid of the possible reactions and pressures participation may lead to.

4.3.2.1 Fear of Being Left Out

In the previous chapter, I discussed the desire for staying up-to-date when talking about the motivations of digital activism. The motivation for staying up-to-date also causes participants to become afraid of being left out. According to the findings of the research, participants state that they believe people share about issues in order to act in line with the trends and conform with their membership or aspirational groups. This perception helps to understand why there is the fear of being left out.

D.K. (20): "Let's say as a woman, I share something that supports feminism in my profile that everyone can see. Then I make judgmental, condescending and derogatory comments about another woman on social media that many people can see as well. That's very contradictory. If I'm doing this, it means that I'm just a woman who supports feminism to increase the number of my followers. There are a lot of people like that on social media. Because lately the number of followers is everything for most of the people."

Although we try to create new identities for ourselves on social media, these identities may not be accepted by other people. Consistency of behaviours and spoken words are very important to people. Consequently, the identities that people create on social media most often arise out of fear of being left out.

4.3.2.2 Pressure

People who participate in activist movements on digital platforms are not always able to fully express their feelings. The digital world contains hundreds of different views, ideas, beliefs. This difference is sometimes not welcome by different groups. In this

case, activist movements, particularly on sensitive issues, can lead to complaints about opponent ideas. The possibility of being opposed causes fear in activist individuals, while this fear creates pressure to remain passive. Activists who can't say what they want can in some cases feel pressured to remain silent.

B.P. (27): "If I'm sure that there will not be any opponents, I share my opinion. Because there is such a crowd, they tag for instance the ministry of interior on whatever I share, almost on everything I write. If I'm sure it won't be so, then I share it. But unfortunately, this can happen too often on social media. So, I can say that I can't express my reaction, especially about politics. Because I'm scared. Because of society and because of people."

B.E. (54): "I usually try to support everything about political issues, justice, women's rights, children's rights, nature. Of course, these are very, very important issues. I share, I write comments. From time to time I have to delete what I have written. Sometimes I get warning messages from my friends, they say that "delete it." Just because they are worried about my safety. It's impossible not to perceive such a threat in Turkey."

Activists, especially on political issues, say that pressure is being created by a certain group within the society. Because of this pressure, they may have to remain silent, even on the issues that they believe in and want to defend.

4.3.3. Concern

Digital platforms are usually a medium that can be viewed by other people and have access to others. Some profiles are open not only to the content owner but also to other people. Contents on digital platforms can be viewed, watched, and read by others. People who have a public profile are trying to pay attention to the posts and images they share. The desire to control what they experience both in the posts and their profiles creates a sense of concern. A sense of concern sometimes pushes individuals to stay passive and not share or just observe, while in some cases it leads them to compare what they say today with posts shared in the past.

4.3.3.1 Concern for Content Control

The feeling of concern makes people pay attention to what they are sharing. The accuracy of the content that is subject to sharing is very important for individuals. Otherwise, careless sharing can lead to different results. For this reason, activists on digital platforms want to make sure that the content is correct when sharing; they are sceptical and shy about sharing information from sources whose accuracy is unknown.

S.A. (29): "I share issues that I am knowledgeable about. Because, as I said, this is a very different situation. We need to know about issues that are related to the world, the universe, and a wider audience. I have an opinion on these issues, yes, but as I said, I don't want to express an opinion on something like this without knowing what is true and what is not."

S.K. (27): "Although I try to help on social media, some things can contain fake elements. That's why I become suspicious. Yeah, I may share something or get involved if I want to, but often I'm concerned if it's real or fake."

It is important not to be misled by people, to share the right information, and to pay attention to integrity. Although people want to share, participate in actions, they remain passive because of this feeling of concern about the accuracy of the content, and they prefer not to share.

4.3.3.2 Concern for Profile Control: Representation of Real Self

With the profile created on social media, consumers create an identity for themselves. They also use this identity in their actions of digital activism. An activist can have more than one identity, for example, a feminist and an animal rights advocate can participate in actions on these different issues. How the identity he or she uses when participating in these actions is understood by other people is important for participants.

K.K. (27): "I think consistency is very important. If you're defending something, you should act and behave consistently. But usually, people are not like that. In our country, people want to express their views on everything. But when you look at whether his or her behaviour in their personal life, most of the time you will see their

behaviours are different from their ideas and expressions. Then I think it's irrelevant. There are too many people like this in Turkey."

Because some of the participants think that other people are not consistent and honest in their social media profiles, they don't want people to think of them as "inconsistent" as well. They are concerned about this. Therefore, they want to create an impression on social media that does not contradict with their real self. They express the opinions that they defend with their actions in order not to create an "inconsistent" perception on social media.

I.B. (47): "I mean, whenever I share something, I think that I should be in that frame of mind, what is the meaning of it, what kind of a message it sends. For example, I recently checked my profile and posts and cleared some content from social media because it no longer fits with who I am now and what I believe in."

The identity (profile) created on digital platforms makes the participants want to control the messages they give. They even want to control the posts they shared in the past to make sure they correctly represent them. If what they defend and believe in currently is different from their past opinion, then they exert effort to delete the posts they have shared in the past. The need to look at the posts shared in the past and control that the posts made in the past and the idea advocated today are compatible with each other is due to this concern for profile control and representation of actual self.

4.3.4. Hope

One of the biggest reasons activist actions are moving to digital platforms is to reach a bigger audience faster. For this reason, among the goals of activists is hoping to reach more people by sharing on digital platforms.

D.K. (20): "Sometimes a content shared by someone goes viral because of me, because of my contribution. Because I share that content the number of shares increases. So, I share it with this feeling of hope."

Each profile on digital platforms is a user, an individual, a person who owns an idea and follows an ideology. Those profiles involved in a campaign mean that dozens of people have embraced that idea by supporting this campaign. Sometimes on digital platforms, an action involving a person can move that action to a different audience,

even to a different continent. For people who are aware of this power, "bringing that campaign to more people" is the reason behind the feeling of hope. Similarly, Paktin (2012) supports this and approaches the issue positively, stating that digital activism is "a method of bringing together people who will fight around the thought, faith, and mobilize them." He argues that digital activism reinforces "the idea that the world is changeable with every click" (Paktin, 2013, p.11). Sharing with the feeling of hope that the action involved at the end of this movement will succeed, is one of the reasons why consumers participate in actions on digital platforms.

4.4 Consumers' Perceptions and Expectations of Activist Communication Campaigns

Participants have different perspectives on activist communication campaigns that brands share on digital platforms. In this part of the research, I will examine the attitudes of participants towards activist campaigns of brands based on the examples shown to participants during the interviews. Different perceptions and expectations of participants emerged based on the analysis of their reactions to these campaigns of brands. These findings can be grouped under credibility, use of celebrities, trustworthiness, entertainment orientation, language barrier, and courage and sincerity.

4.4.1 Credibility and Consistency

Brands launch communication campaigns on social issues on digital platforms. While consumers participate in these campaigns, they assess the relationship between the brand and the campaign. After evaluating this relationship, the consumer either supports or opposes the brand on the platform, where the campaign is launched. While deciding on this, they compare the message of the campaign with the attitude and vision of the brand.

S.K. (27): "It created awareness, I became aware of this, but it was for a temporary period. For example, we were under the influence of this for a few months, but then this campaign ended and everyone returned to their old lives. This campaign was just about pouring a bucket of ice-filled water over your head. For me, we can think of this as a short-term repercussion, but not a long-term one."

S.A. (29): "We are a society and there are many different ideas and ideologies in society. I think it is very important which ideas and topics brands support but you

cannot involve every brand in every subject. If it is in line with people's ideology and if it supports and fits with brand's code of ethics, then it can have a positive impact. But if a company that has a different brand perception and positioning support the current social topic, it is not convincing for me. As I said, it is something that can change according to the target audience. So that is very relevant to the vision of the brand, very relevant to its history and its mission.”

The main criterion all participants agree on is that the message given by the brand and its practices shouldn't be different. An adverse situation created by the brand causes distrust for the consumer. While brands are setting up activist campaigns, the consumer is looking for answers to the following questions: has the brand expressed the message of the campaign before; has the brand taken an attitude on the subject mentioned before; has it taken any action on the subject it defends; does the mission and vision of the brand match with this campaign? All of these need to be consistent and support each other.

Furthermore, participants express that they do not trust the aid campaigns initiated by brands targeting social problems in order to solve these problems. Because they state that they do not know how and for what purposes the grant money is used.

B.E. (54): “Turkish people are not used to donating money to an institution or association, and they do not trust these institutions. My friends who support the foundation I belong to also trust the foundation because they trust me. Because I am a liaison between that foundation and these people. I also do not support any campaign or anyone that I do not trust.”

To persuade people to donate or give financial aid, they must know someone in the business. If there is no one they know or there is no liaison or contact, people prefer not to trust. Although brands try to display a consistent, reliable, and credible image, the language they use can be a barrier to this goal.

4.4.2 Language Barrier

Global brands can broadcast their communication campaigns by adapting them to different countries. The contents such as the video, message, slogans used can be the same but these can be translated into the local language of that country. However, this

translation may cause some misunderstandings.

I.B. (47): "One of the things we do for feminism as the activists, we take words with negative connotations and try to make them positive. However, this campaign has been translated into Turkish incorrectly. In fact, we are using the words wrongly. In some international boycotts, this was what I criticized. For instance, in this #doitlikeagirl movement. We are getting involved without understanding the essence. That's why people don't understand what is being protested."

K.K. (27): "Do it like a girl is the real name of the campaign shared all over the world. When translated into Turkish, it is written as Kız Gibi Yap. I don't think it's something that is used a lot in Turkish culture. In Turkey also the campaign did not create the same global impact. On the contrary, it caused controversy."

Although the campaign contains a positive message, it can be perceived negatively by participants and this creates a negative attitude different from the expected attitude towards the brand. Although some people perceive the actual message given, a large part of the participants may display attitudes that are opposing and can even blame the global campaign that has been translated into Turkish incorrectly.

In some cases, the language used by brands can even lead to lynching attempts against the brand. Although failure to deliver the actual desired message can cause a lynching attempt for participants, especially the neutral stance displayed by brands and their silence can also be a reason for lynching as explained in the following section.

4.4.3 Fear of Lynching

Brands addressing social issues and organizing activist campaigns on digital platforms are often not trusted by participants. However, they still believe that brands feel obliged to make these posts and participate in such activist campaigns. This is because it provides an opportunity for commercial gain rather than a social benefit.

S.A. (29): "I think days like 8th of March Women's Day is not days that any brand can miss. Because it is on the agenda of the country now, they can be lynched if they do not participate. People's and consumers' perspectives on brand changes. They shouldn't miss such a thing anyway."

S.D. (28): "This is the power of social media. I am sure that these brands may not support women's rights and may even act the opposite. But they need to create a post, a campaign in order to enhance the brand image positively and show that they made an effort for this. They prepared an advert, maybe even allocated a budget. I think this is entirely due to the power of activist movements on social media."

Participants displayed an insecure attitude towards the social media messages given by brands. They emphasized that the posts shared are not reliable or genuine. They believe that the brands had to prepare and share these posts just because they were afraid of the negative word of mouth, power of social media, and the danger of being lynched by consumers.

Participants emphasized that brands may face a negative attitude by consumers. When participants described the negative attitude, they used the term lynching of brands instead of boycotting the brand. Lynching in their sense is different from boycotting. It consists of making negative statements about the brand on media, making bad comments to create a bad perception about the brand, and striving hard to achieve this. Consequently, brands are often afraid of being lynched. This fear is putting pressure on especially big brands rather than small and less recognized brands. In some cases, even just remaining silent and not participating can lead to the lynching of big brands. Especially on special days, all brands share some content about the day on their social media accounts. On these days, remaining silent or not sharing anything can lead to the lynching of some brands, especially if these brands are big family companies because participants' expectations from large companies are different. They expect them to be more interested in and support social issues. Therefore, on special days, brands want to share their unique message with their consumers and prepare special content. One of these days is the 8 of March, International Women's Day. On March 8th, all global or local brands share content from their social media accounts.

S.A. (29): "I don't expect a post or campaign from a brand that advocates and supports animal rights and nature to share about International Women's Day, on March 8th. Because it is already working on issues related to protection of animals and nature. But a well-known and big company needs to share a post on International Women's Day. Because these are companies that should be supporting the society and say something about the social agenda. So this is actually the difference between these

two cases. A brand that works on animal rights does not always have to address all the social issues. However, a big brand is expected to appeal to all target audiences at the same time by supporting all the current social issues. The brand, which already works on animal rights, is followed by people who are sensitive to this particular issue. So, I can differentiate my expectations for these two brands.”

If a brand focuses and works on a specific issue, the participant does not expect that brand to take action on general issues. However, if this brand is a big, well-known family brand and is closely concerned with social problems and operates in areas that concern society, participants expect the brand to act on social problems. Of course, it also depends on the field and industry this brand operates in and how the participants perceive this brand. Because in some cases, the sincerity and courage displayed by brands are disputed by participants.

4.4.4 Courage and Sincerity

Participants argue that the activist campaigns that most brands implement on the digital platforms are not sincere and they do not believe them all. However, if a brand supports sensitive social issues despite public criticism, this is perceived as courage. At this point, the participant thinks that the brand is sincere. Because according to them, other brands follow the popular agenda and these campaigns are consumed very quickly on digital platforms. This creates the perception among participants that the campaigns prepared according to the popular agenda are not sustainable.

D.K. (20): “Perhaps the posts shared by a prominent brand like this have been judged many times in Muslim countries. This also shows courage to me and I think it is really done to raise awareness, not to adapt to and act in accordance with the popular culture. I am supportive of such acts.”

D.K. (20): “Perhaps 90% of brands in Turkey, they say women are flowers, but when we assess the current situation, we see that thousands of women die every year. So it is right to defend this but why does a brand create a campaign especially on March 8th, International Women's Day? For example, why do they not financially support the case of a woman who has been subject to violence? If they were truly sincere, they could have helped that way. But on the other hand, it depends on the topic as well. For instance, the LGBT movement in Turkey is a cause that requires a

lot of courage. If a brand really defends this issue, I think if it supports it and it risks everything then it is doing it sincerely.”

Brands that run activist campaigns on sensitive issues are perceived by participants as sincere and courageous. On the other hand, brands that focus only on popular and constantly changing issues are not sincere according to the participants. Therefore, brands want to use reliable and trustworthy people in their communication campaigns to break this perception. Thanks to these celebrities, brands can reach more people quickly and give the message they want to say more comfortably and in this way they may affect more people, as explained in next section.

4.4.5 Using Celebrities

Brands or businesses that use celebrities to carry out an activist action can reach more people and be more effective. Participants believe that some campaigns are more effective and because of the celebrity who is involved in the campaign, it reaches large masses.

S.D. (28): “In general, the actions of celebrities who are popular people, lead to such reactions, so it affects other people and they do the same. It is a campaign that was supported by many celebrities, so I think it was successful because of them.”

Brands prefer to use famous people in their campaigns and consumers try to get involved in what the celebrities do. According to Gretzel (2017), activism does not only target businesses or government entities but can also be directed at celebrities or other consumers. Consumers, on the other hand, think that the reason for the success of that campaign is its use of famous people rather than the message of the campaign. Another way to achieve this success that brands are aiming for is to make activist campaigns more fun and get more people involved in the campaign.

4.4.6 Entertainment Orientation

Participants believe that brands use entertainment-oriented communication campaigns to reach a bigger audience instead of just delivering the main message. They emphasize that brands aim to get more interaction and involve more people in the campaign so that the campaign is successful, rather than just emphasizing social problems and findings solutions to make it change.

O.K. (40): "From another angle, people need to have fun, too. In this campaign, some people did not draw attention to the disease; they did not aim to raise awareness. They joined just for fun, because of the current popular trend on social media. I also find it very understandable."

K.K. (27): "I think there have been many people who were unaware of this campaign. However, they used the app to turn their face into an animal and do something funny. It has been used somewhat more for entertainment than its main purpose."

An entertainment-oriented communication used by brands in activist movements can be found interesting by participant. However, they say that they participate in such campaigns just for fun. There is a belief that it does not convey the real message to the general target audience. If the brand wants to raise awareness or give a serious social message with these kinds of campaigns, entertainment-oriented communication may not be the method as the main message the brand really wants to deliver or achieve is not perceived by the participants as it is overshadowed by fun.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In previous chapters, it was mentioned that activism, which has moved to social platforms with digitalization, can be used as a tool by brands in their communication campaigns. A group of researcher state that, for consumers to perceive brands as successful in digital activist campaigns, there must be loyalty and sincerity (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017; Rishe, 2018; Kubiak and Ouda, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to get insight about thoughts and feelings of consumers, in order to understand how digital activism used by brands in communication campaigns can be made more effective. The activist communication campaigns that are prepared without considering how consumers might perceive these campaigns can result in inaccurate and incomplete practices. For this reason, the findings of this study can be a good guide for communicators, brands, marketers, and experts working on this issue to understand the perceptions and expectations of consumers with regards to digital activism. In this section, I will underline the contributions and implications of this research, both for theory and practice, in four main categories. The findings that support previous literature and that are different from prior literature along with new contributions are also summarised in a table included in Appendix 1.

5.1 Practices of Consumers

Digitization enables people who are curious about similar events to get information and to find each other on social media. People can do this via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, which are the most used social media platforms in Turkey (We Are Social, 2020). Previous studies in literature do not reflect if consumers' usage of these online platforms differs based on certain factors. This study shows that consumers use different platforms according to their mood, emotions and purpose. In this section, I'll summarise the contributions of this research in this regard by shedding light on some of the factors that impact consumer preference. First, according to the participants, Twitter is the most preferred medium for digital activism as stated in the findings. One of the reasons for this is that they can easily follow the changing topics from the Trend Topic section in the Twitter app. Participants primarily prefer Twitter for everything they want to get information about and to keep up to date with events. At the same time, they prefer Twitter for the activist movements they participate in. Similarly, according to Tramayne (2014), "in the Twittersphere, the connections between users are represented by the @mentions and #hashtags" (p.113). It provides great

convenience to users. Launching action on Twitter about a topic and supporting it with a Hashtag brings together people who are interested in the same topic.

Second, the platform can change depending on the mood of people. Although there is no such distinction in the literature about digital activism, according to the results of this study, Instagram is emerging as a platform that people use when they are happy. But Instagram is not preferred when people are nervous, unhappy, and angry. When participants feel negative emotions, they don't want to use Instagram or see the happy photos that are shared by other people. On the other hand, although some participants agree with that argument, they emphasize that they also use Instagram's Story feature to raise awareness. Thanks to this feature, the shared content is published in the Story section and deleted after 24 hours. Participants say that they do not prefer to share a post that is related to activism on their profile, instead they share it on Instagram's Story. Consequently, people do not want to keep activist contents in their profile permanently. They share it on the Story and allow it to be deleted 24 hours later. This is why participants prefer Instagram Story to raise awareness about digital activism. Twitter, on the other hand, is a platform where participants share their opinions and thoughts, especially on negative issues. Also, participants say that it is easier to organize via Twitter about an activist topic. Similar to our findings, according to Tramayne (2014), "without Twitter, the argument goes, citizens would not have been able to realize their common sentiments and organize what became a revolution" (Tramayne, 2014, p.112). Participants expressed that the platform through which they receive information about an event is Twitter. In addition, Twitter is preferred as a platform for following current events and news.

Apart from social media platforms, one of the most used websites for digital activism is Change.org, as mentioned in the findings. Participants stressed that they did not start a campaign on Change.org, but they support existing campaigns and petition them. The majority of respondents do not follow whether their petition campaigns have been successful or not but some of them say that they are informed by Change.org via e-mail about the current state of the campaigns, which have been signed. Campaigns that participants follow most often on Change.org are related to women's rights, animal rights, workers' rights, justice, and nature issues. Some participants, on the other hand, state that the signature campaigns launched by Change.org detract from the main goal

of activism. According to them, signing with one click is very easy to issue these signatures on their profile, but the main purpose of the campaign is not understood. Similarly, in the literature, Caplan (2009) advocates a similar view of the participants. According to Caplan (2009), consumers who sign online petitions and join Facebook activist pages do not have the desire and/or resources to participate in traditional activist movements such as a protest. Participating in traditional activist movements often require more effort compared to participating in digital activism.

5.2 Motivations of Consumers

According to the research findings, I group the motivations of the participants to participate in digital activist actions in three main categories. These are the responsibility and duty towards social issues, the desire for staying up-to-date, and entertainment.

First of all, the first source of motivation that drives participants to participate in activist actions is their sense of responsibility for social problems. Studies in the literature support this finding. According to Chen (2020), online activists are often resourceful and well-educated citizens who are concerned about morality and social change. Similarly, Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2006) have stated the common moral obligations of people involved in acts of digital activism. Similarly, moral responsibility was defined by Muniz and O'guinn (2001, p.413) as a sense of obligation for the betterment of society. Broberg and Doshoris (2020) if consumers perceive the stance of the brand as being responsible, then they have positive perception for the brand. Bhattacharya and Shen (2004) and Ramesh et al. (2019) further express that if a company manages to join corporate social duty accurately it'll encourage positive recognitions about itself by the consumers. Likewise, the findings of this research support previous literature. Participants do not want to keep silent about social problems. They mentioned that they share about digital activist campaigns in order to raise awareness and influence others. They feel that they are not fulfilling their duty, if they keep silent and do not fight for social justice especially about animal rights, women's rights and nature. They also emphasized the power of crowds because if more people say the same thing at the same time about a social problem, then that problem can be solved. A similar view is also supported in the literature. It is argued that consumers on digital platforms have the power to change something by talking (Siano,

Vollero, and Palazzo, 2011).

Second, participants want to follow all the trends and current news. That's why they become members of certain groups. The reason for being a part of an online group or community is actually because of the motivation for staying up-to-date. Being a member of a group can be targeted for the purpose of more easily achieving common goals. Similarly, Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2006) said that anti-brand groups were created to provide a support group to achieve common goals. According to Kubiak and Oudo (2020), consumers perceive brand activism as adapting to the most current trends. In literature, this motivation is referred to as "adapting to trends". However, unlike literature, the findings of the paper show that the emphasis of the participants in the study is different than the literature. Participants note that the desire for staying up-to-date is different from following trends. It can be described as a hunger for whatever is new. The desire for staying up-to-date, which was persistently emphasized by the participants, is a desire to follow and instantly learn all kinds of information, trends, developments, and every social and political issue that is new. Therefore, the desire to stay up-to-date as emphasized by the participants of this study is stated as one of the motivations to participate in activist campaigns. Proponents of the slacktivism perspective in the literature argue that the motivation of some consumers to participate in activist actions is visibility (Kristofferson et al., 2014). Similarly, according to the research results, participants express that actions taken with a desire to stay up-to-date cause them to miss the ideology and main purpose of activism. Activist movements that consumers participate in on digital platforms provide personal satisfaction, but do not have a tangible effect (Morozov, 2012; Skoric, 2012). In addition to the researchers who advocate this view, participants also express that actions taken only with a desire to stay up-to-date will not achieve any results.

The last motivation according to the findings is entertainment. Prior literature does not include entertainment as one of the motivations of digital activism. According to the participants of this research, it is one of the motivations, which is a contribution to the literature. Participants say that entertainment-oriented digital activist campaigns have increased the interest of consumers. However, they also say that in this case the expected effect and purpose of the action cannot be understood well. Because as they noted, for many people, participating in such actions is just for having fun. Although

this motivation causes the movement to reach more people, it is not performed consciously. Some participants believe that activist movements that have an entertainment-oriented approach were created only to raise awareness. They note that these actions are not aimed to find a solution to a problem. But they think that entertainment-oriented movements can be successful if the goal is only increasing awareness. In some cases, they also note that the only reason for successful campaigns is entertainment.

5.3 Feelings of Consumers

The feelings of consumers about online activism are expressed very generally in the literature. Broberg and Doshoris (2020) say that if consumers perceive the message as negative, then the feeling that this ad evokes becomes negative. Hwang et al., (2016) also generalize the feelings while addressing positive and negative emotions in the same way. This study on the other hand, tries to gain an in depth understanding of how consumers feel when they participate in online activist movements. According to research findings, consumers feel gratification, fear, concern, and hope when they participate in activist movements.

One of the prominent emotions is gratification. Participants expressed that they feel better and they are happy when they participated in campaigns addressing social issues that could also be a charity campaign. Helping others, donating money, is a relaxing and enjoyable feeling for many participants. Morozov (2009a) defines this as slacktivism, in which activist actions are done only to feel good with no consequences. However, in my findings, participants do not participate in actions to feel good; they say they feel good because they participate.

The second most common feeling was fear. Participants feel compelled to participate in online activist movements on certain issues. If they do not join, they fear that other people can think negatively about them. One activist, for example, says she feels compelled to constantly share about the murders of women in the country. If she doesn't share, she's afraid of the negative reaction from her community. Broberg and Doshoris (2020) and Brennan and Binney (2010) examined not how consumers feel when participating in actions, but what emotions activist ads evoke in them. According to their findings, when an ad incites fear, guilt, or shame in consumers' feelings, consumers prefer self-preservation and inaction rather than an active response.

Similarly, a situation in which consumers keep silent is observed in this study. Participants are also afraid to express their thoughts openly, especially when participating in online actions related to political issues. They are afraid of being complained to the authorized institutions such as the government, when they criticize political issues. Therefore, sometimes they are afraid to share, and they prefer to keep silent.

Third, another prominent feeling is a concern. Participants expressed that in some cases they felt compelled to control the content of their posts and their profiles. This causes concern. Many participants believe that thoughts and behaviours should be the same. In order to avoid contradictory attitude, they sometimes control and delete the content that they have previously shared, if necessary. They also note that there is a lot of misinformation on social media, and they do not share anything without being sure of its accuracy. Therefore, confirming the information on social media before sharing also makes them concerned. They are concerned about sharing information that is not true because incorrect content on social media can reach too many people in a short time and then it can be very difficult to correct that mistake.

Finally, when participants join online activist campaigns, they feel a sense of hope for changing problems in society. Similarly, Paktin expresses that thanks to digital activism people can change the world with every click (2012).

5.4 Consumers' Perceptions and Expectations of Digital Brand Activism

In previous sections of discussion chapter, I underlined how the research contributes to literature with regards to which platforms consumers prefer, their motivations and feelings while participating in digital activism. In this section, the expectations and perceptions of the consumers related to digital brand activism are presented. These themes are summarized under the headings of credibility and consistency, language barrier, fear of lynching, courage and sincerity, using celebrity and entertainment-oriented. The findings on perceptions and expectations of consumers with regards to digital activism will have important and useful implications for brands, marketers, and communicators.

First, participants believe that the activist campaigns made by brands must be credible and consistent. Kubiak and Ouda (2020) emphasize that consumers expect brands to

collaborate on issues related with their products, business, or the industry in which they operate, since inconsistency and insincerity create distrust for the consumer. In this case, they say that the consumer is more critical of the company's activities. Similar, to the literature, the participants emphasize that advertising, which is related to online activism, should be relevant to the vision and mission of the brand and the messages that the company message. Otherwise, participants state that they do not find the advertising made by brands convincing and consistent. Bennett and Lagos argue (2007) that companies try to deliver a message of social responsibility through brand activism, but that message may be perceived differently by consumers. In support of this view, Broberg and Doshoris (2020) claim that the activist social responsibility campaigns should be consistent with the company's core values, culture, and history. When participants do not trust brands, they also have a negative attitude towards the brand's products. Klein, Smith, and John, (2004) emphasize that consumers' distrust of the brand can damage the brand and its reputation. On the other hand, in some cases, they perceive successful campaigns created by brands as trends. Participants think the brand doesn't defend and believe that idea. According to participants, if a brand uses a current social problem in a campaign and the same brand does not address this problem one more time, then consumers will not trust if the brand really cares about the problem or not. The social problem that brands are addressing really needs to coincide with brand values, and they need to support it in the long term, not for the short term. Participants also noted that consumers do not trust fundraising campaigns launched by companies and associations that are the subject of online activism.

Second, global campaigns of brands need to change according to the values and language of that country. Global campaigns can create a meaning that can contradict with the values of that culture, when the campaign is translated word by word. Although it is desirable to create a message with a positive meaning, brands sometimes fail to do so. Participants are aware of how global campaigns are misinterpreted when they are adapted to our country, and at this point they blame the brands.

Third, brands can create online activist campaigns, especially about social issues, and they may want to draw attention to these issues. However, participants think that brands create activist campaigns on specific issues (women's rights, animal rights, etc.) because they feel they had to. Otherwise, consumers can punish the brands

(Weinzimmer and Esken, 2016; Sarkar and Kotler, 2018; Shetty, Venkataramaiah and Anand, 2019). In the literature, this punishment has been explained as boycotting brands. A boycott can occur if consumers think that companies are not interested in social issues (Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Broberg and Doshoris, 2020). However, the findings of this study approach this understanding from a different perspective than the existing literature. According to the findings, the punishment by consumers is not boycotting, but referred to as “lynching” the brands. Lynching has a different meaning than boycotting. Boycotting refers to the practice of a consumer's negative attitude to purchasing the brand's product or to purchase specific products of the brand to reward them (Copeland, 2014). However, lynching includes all the negative statements made by consumers on all channels of media. Furthermore, according to the findings, lynched brands are usually large companies. Participants do not expect brands that are small and that operate in a specific field to support all social issues. On the other hand, they say that big companies cannot remain silent about these issues that concern the community. Otherwise, companies that keep silent can be lynched by consumers.

Fourth, brands need to be convincing to consumers about their sincerity (Sarkar and Kottler, 2018; Broberg and Doshoris, 2020). The findings also support that consumers believe that brands should address social problems, but they can also understand whether they're doing it sincerely or not. Consumers argue that they appreciate it when brands take responsibility for social issues (Kubiak and Ouda, 2020). The findings support this view, but there is also a different argument. According to the participants, if a brand only advertises about trending topics and changes the campaigns according to the changing trends, this is not perceived as sincere by the consumers. Kubiak and Ouda (2020) state that consumers will have negative attitude toward these brands if brands address too many individual and sensitive issues. However, the findings contradict this argument because participants described brands that address sensitive issues -such as LGBT- as courageous. Brands that address these sensitive issues can be judged negatively by some consumers, but still they are not afraid to share the opinion they advocate. Therefore, for consumers such brands are perceived as courageous. Otherwise, consumers perceive brands that support only popular issues as trickster. Similarly, Kubiak and Ouda (2020) state that consumers believe that brands use activism to enhance their image, to gain more consumers, and thus to increase their sales.

Fifth, according to Gretzel (2017), activism does not only target businesses or government entities but can also be directed at celebrities or other consumers. The findings support this view as participants believe that celebrities used in activist brand campaigns made that campaign a success. Because thanks to this celebrity, the campaign reaches a lot of people, and they think that there are people who participate in the campaign just because of this celebrity. However, brands have to be very careful when they are using celebrities because the celebrity can overshadow the message, and those who participate in the campaign can only aim to join the trend or participate because of their interest in the celebrity.

Finally, consumers may see brand activism as another tool to adapt to social trends (Kubiak and Ouda, 2020). Findings support this argument. Participants agree that, instead of only delivering the main message, companies use entertainment-oriented communication strategies to reach to a wider audience. Instead of only stressing social issues and seeking ways to make that change, they emphasize that companies strive to have more interaction and engage more people in the campaign so that the campaign is effective. According to participants, the consumers may find an entertainment-oriented interaction used by brands in activist movements fascinating. However, they participate in such campaigns just for fun. If the brand wants to raise awareness or give a serious social message, entertainment-oriented communication may not be the right approach since customers cannot perceive the main message that brands really want to deliver as it is overshadowed by fun.

As a result, in this section, the findings of the research are interpreted together with and in comparison to previous literature. Findings and themes that both support and are different from the literature are discussed. Some of the research findings support the recommendations Hermann (2020) laid out for marketers, as shown in four grey coloured cells in Figure 2. This study further contributes to Hermann's "Four Main Recommendations from the Marketing Experts" figure (2020, p.62) by adding four new suggestions, as shown in orange coloured cells in Figure 2.

Brand must have a strong, well-established brand identity.	Brands must understand their consumer. Research is essential.	Brands must pay attention to the language barrier when adapting global campaigns in different countries.	Brands need to be bold and support the cause they believe in and the opinion they defend (despite political and social pressures).
Brands must be authentic and choose relevant causes or issues.	Brands must display a substantial commitment to the chosen cause or issues.	When brands do not support a particular cause, they need to present necessary arguments not to be lynched on social media.	Brands should not choose an entertainment oriented approach when addressing social and sensitive issues.

Figure 2: Eight Main Suggestions for Brands to Create Successful Activist Campaigns

The findings of this study support Herman's recommendations on brands having a strong and well-established identity and the importance of understanding the consumer. Findings also support the significance of being authentic and choosing relevant cause or issues; and brands showing commitment to chosen cause or issue. Additionally, findings have further implications and suggestions for marketers and brands. Firstly, marketers must master the language and culture of the country in which the campaign will be implemented when adapting global campaigns. Otherwise, the campaign can be misinterpreted by consumers and brands will get negative feedback and face negative repercussions. Secondly, it is necessary to present the necessary arguments to the consumer. For instance, when a brand does not support a particular cause it needs to make sure the consumer understands the reason not to be lynched on social media. A brand should not support any social movements that are not in line with its vision and values, in order to gain the trust of the consumer. Thirdly, brands may have to be bold. If there is a movement that they believe in, they must support it and defend their opinion despite political and social pressures. Finally, brands should not choose an entertainment-oriented approach when addressing social and sensitive issues as this might cause the consumers to miss the actual message.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

It is very important to understand what online activism, which increased with digitalization and increased use of social media, means for consumers and brands, how it is perceived, and how it is applied. Online activism campaigns misapplied by brands attract negative reactions from consumers on digital platforms. Brands, communicators, and marketing professionals need to understand the perceptions and feelings of consumers to properly implement online activism. This study aims to understand the motivations and feelings of consumers to participate in online activism and to examine the effects of the campaigns implemented by brands.

The findings of the research enable us to gain deeper consumer insight on this issue and can serve as a guideline for brands to initiate successful activist campaigns. Brands should prepare online activism campaigns on issues related to their visions, values, and corporate history. While doing this, they also need to know how the brand is perceived by the consumers. Because the corporate image that the brand wants to create and the perception of the consumer can be very different. Furthermore, brands should pay attention to the language used in their communication campaigns. A communication language that the target audience can understand should be used. At the same time, the brand should know the culture and language of its target audience very well. Global brands should adapt international campaigns to the culture and language of that country. This is especially critical when addressing sensitive and social issues through activist campaigns. The communication campaigns the brand implements should ensure consumer trust and confidence. Therefore, brands should follow a consistent and sincere approach. They should conduct research on the issues they want to attract attention to and share with consumers. If a donation or aid campaign is to be carried out, brands should transparently share all processes and outcomes with their consumers. Furthermore, sometimes in order to be perceived sincerely brands should resist social pressure on matters they value and take a bold stance. If they're going to use a celebrity in their advertisements, they should be sure that the person will deliver the message in the best way and it will be a suitable celebrity, because consumers think that sometimes celebrities can overshadow the message. Finally, brands should not create a playful, entertainment-oriented content, even if it is to raise awareness about serious social issues. When a fun-based

communication campaign is chosen for activism, consumers don't think it's a good way to get the message out. On the contrary, they state that this situation invites people to share unconsciously, without supporting or understanding the cause.

There are several limitations of this research. First of all, due to Covid-19, instead of conducting face-to-face interviews most of the interviews were conducted over Zoom and Skype. Participants are likely to talk less when it is online. Therefore, probing questions were asked to have deeper conversations. In addition, this research was conducted only with Turkish consumers. Future research can be carried out with consumers from different countries and cultures to understand if there are any differences in motivations, feelings and perceptions. Moreover, the brands used as examples in this research operate in certain fields and industries such as a sanitary napkin brand, an international non-governmental organization, a global fashion brand, and an association that aims to cure neurodegenerative disease. Future research can include examples from brands in different industries. In addition, the sample of this study was chosen from people aged 20-55 years old. Future studies may examine consumers from different age cohorts such as the X-Y-Z generations to examine if the answers differ between generations. Future research can also include perspectives of non-activist consumers to understand why they do not participate in activist movements and whether their actions and motivations are similar to reasons behind slacktivism. Future studies can further compare consumers' perspectives on digital activist campaigns of big and global brands versus small and local brands or NGOs. Finally, this research focused only on consumers. Future research can investigate the motivations, perceptions and attitudes of employees, marketers, communicators and policy makers.

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APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS

	Support to Previous Literature	Different from Previous Literature	New Contributions to Literature
Practices of Consumers	<p>*Launching action on Twitter about a topic and supporting it with a Hashtag brings together people who are interested in the same topic.</p> <p>*It is easier to organize about an activist topic via Twitter.</p> <p>*Petition campaigns launched by Change.org detract from the main goal of activism.</p>		<p>*Twitter is the most preferred medium for digital activism.</p> <p>*Instagram is emerging as a platform that people use when they are happy. However, Instagram is not preferred when people are nervous, unhappy, and angry.</p> <p>*Participants say that they do not prefer to share a post that is related to activism on their profile, instead they share it on Instagram's Story. Consequently, people do not want to keep activist contents in their profile permanently. They share it on the Story and allow it to be deleted 24 hours later.</p>
Motivations of Consumers	<p>*Participants participate in activist actions because of their sense of responsibility for social problems.</p> <p>*Participants do not want to keep silent about social problems and they join activist movements as if it is their duty.</p> <p>* The reason for being a part of an online group or community is actually because of the motivation for staying up-to-date.</p>	<p>*Participants note that the desire for staying up-to-date is different from following trends.</p>	<p>*Participants say that entertainment-oriented digital activist campaigns have increased the interest of consumers.</p>
Feelings of Consumers	<p>*Participants join online activist campaigns,</p>	<p>*Participants expressed that</p>	<p>*Participants feel compelled to participate in online activist</p>

	<p>because they feel a sense of hope for solving problems in society.</p>	<p>they feel better and they are happy when they participated in campaigns addressing social issues. Helping others, donating money, make participants feel better about themselves.</p>	<p>movements on certain issues. If they do not join, they fear that other people can think negatively about them.</p> <p>*Participants are afraid of being penalized by the authorized institutions, such as the government, when they criticize political issues.</p> <p>*Participants expressed that in some cases they felt compelled to control the content of their posts and their profiles.</p>
<p>Perceptions of Consumers</p>	<p>*Participants agree that instead of only delivering the main message, companies use entertainment-oriented communication strategies to reach to a wider audience.</p> <p>*Participants believe that celebrities used in activist brand campaigns made that campaign a success.</p> <p>*Participants perceive successful campaigns created by brands as trends. They think the brand often doesn't defend and believe that idea.</p>		

*As contributions regarding consumers' expectations of brands are included in Figure 2, they are not included in this Table.

APPENDIX 2 : ETHICAL BOARD APPROVAL

SAYI : B.30.2.İEÜ.0.05.05-020-106

22.01.2021

KONU : Etik Kurul Kararı hk.

Sayın Pınar Özkılıç Dilek,

“Digitalization and Consumer Activism: Underlying Motives and Implications” başlıklı projenizin etik uygunluğu konusundaki başvurunuz sonuçlanmıştır.

Etik Kurulumuz 25.12.2020 tarihinde sizin başvurunuzun da içinde bulunduğu bir gündemle toplanmış ve projenin incelenmesi için bir alt komisyon oluşturmuştur. Projenizin detayları alt komisyon üyelerine gönderilerek görüş istenmiştir. Üyelerden gelen raporlar doğrultusunda Etik Kurul 22.01.2021 tarihinde tekrar toplanmış ve raporları gözden geçirmiştir.

Sonuçta 22.01.2021 tarih ve 116 numaralı **“Digitalization and Consumer Activism: Underlying Motives and Implications”** konulu projenizin etik açıdan uygun olduğuna oy birliği ile karar verilmiştir.

Gereği için bilgilerinize sunarım.

Saygılarımla,


Prof. Dr. Murat Bengisu

Etik Kurul Başkanı