The Impact of Brand Activism on Brand Image:

The Mediating Role of Perceived Brand Authenticity and The Effect of Celebrity and Non-Celebrity Endorsements

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the MSc in Management with Specialization in Strategic Marketing, at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa, April 2022.

ABSTRACT

Title: The Impact of Brand Activism on Brand Image: The Mediating Role of Perceived Brand Authenticity and The Effect of Celebrity and Non-Celebrity Endorsements

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Nowadays, consumers expect brands to be more involved in social matters, which has led in recent years to several global brands taking stands on major socio-political issues. Brand Activism is an increasingly popular topic that has become a part of brands' marketing strategies. Due to the highly controversial nature of social problems, however, there are long-term consequences that need to be evaluated.

This study intends to assess the impact that engaging in social activism has on a brand's image and how authentic consumers perceive brands' activism efforts to be.

First, a pre-survey was used to select in an unbiased way the social cause and celebrity to be represented in the main study. Afterward, a survey was applied in order to expose the respondents to one of the five different stimuli: Male Celebrity Endorsement; Male Non-Celebrity Endorsement; Female Celebrity Endorserment; Female Non-Celebrity Endorsemnt; No Endorsement nor Activism.

Main findings suggest that Brand Activism positively impacts the Brand Image, and that Perceived Brand Authenticity fully mediates this effect. Furthermore, Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism has a higher impact on Brand Image than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism, while both Endorsement strategies have the same effect on Perceived Brand Authenticity.

This study recommends that brands should only take a stand when there is a congruence between the social cause supported and the companies' values. Further research should investigate other forms of activism and assess whether the same results apply.

Keywords: Brand Activism; Brand Image; Perceived Brand Authenticity; Endorsement

SUMÁRIO

Título: O Impacto do Ativismo de Marca na Imagem de Marca: O Papel Mediador da Autenticidade de Marca Percecionada e o Efeito do Endorsement com Celebridade e Não Celebridade

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Atualmente, os consumidores esperam que as marcas estejam envolvidas nas questões sociais, o que levou nos últimos anos a marcas globais posicionarem-se sobre grandes questões sociopolíticas. O Ativismo de Marca é um tópico cada vez mais popular que se tem tornado parte das estratégias de marketing das marcas. Devido à natureza controversa dos problemas sociais, no entanto, há consequências que devem ser avaliadas.

Este estudo pretende avaliar o impacto que o ativismo social tem na imagem de marca e quão autênticos os consumidores percecionam os esforços de ativismo.

Primeiramente, um pré-questionário foi usado para selecionar de formar imparcial a causa social e celebridade a serem representadas no estudo principal. Em seguida, foi aplicado um questionário para expor os respondentes a um dos diferentes estímulos: Endorsement com Celebridade Masculina; Endorsement com Não-Celebridade Masculina; Endorsement com Celebridade Feminina; Endorsement com Não-Celebridade Feminina; Não Endorsement nem Ativismo.

Os resultados sugerem que o Ativismo de Marca impacta positivamente a Imagem de Marca e que a autenticidade de marca perADcionada media esse efeito. Além disso, o Ativismo de Marca com endorsement de celebridades tem um impacto maior na Imagem de Marca do que o Ativismo de Marca com endorsement por não-celebridades. Ambas estas estratégias de endorsement têm o mesmo efeito na autenticidade de marca perceADnada.

Este estudo recomenda que as marcas apenas se posicionem quando houver congruência entre a causa social apoiada e os valores das empresas. Pesquisas futuras devem investigar outras formas de ativismo e avaliar se os mesmos resultados se aplicam.

Palavras-Chave: Ativismo de Marca; Imagem de Marca; Autenticidade de Marca Percecionada; Endorsement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Professor Paulo Romeiro, for his availability and guidance throughout the development of this dissertation. His support was crucial in all steps of this process.

I would also like to thank everyone who completed my questionnaires and those that I interviewed for their essential contribution to my data collection.

Lastly, my heartfelt thanks to my parents for unconditionally supporting me and giving me the opportunity to complete my studies.

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GLOSSARY

CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility

CM - Cause Marketing

PBA – Perceived Brand Authenticity

BA – Brand Activism

BI – Brand Image

OLS – Ordinary Least Squares

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Nowadays, consumers expect brands to go further in their prosocial practices by taking a stand on sociopolitical matters to help drive change in modern society's most urgent problems. Cause Marketing (marketing-driven) and Corporate Social Responsibility (corporate-driven) concepts are no longer considered to be enough in a company's social efforts (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018).

Thus, an emerging Marketing concept known as Brand Activism (societal-driven) is growing within brands worldwide. Brand Activism is defined by its authors (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018) as "business efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, and/or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to promote or impede improvements in society." Its main differentiation factor to the previous concepts is that the latter is driven by "the most urgent problems facing society" (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018). It is being used by brands aiming to stand out from competitors in order to appeal to a target group of consumers.

Brand Activism has six main domains: Social, Workplace, Political, Environmental, Economic, and Legal (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018). This dissertation will focus on Social Brand Activism, which is driven mainly by inequality issues (e.g., gender; LGBT; race; age; immigration) and social movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter; LGBTQ+ rights; #MeToo).

Social movements such as LGBTQ+ rights and Black Lives Matter, for example, have been a significant source of interest by mainstream brands who aim to do social good and thus, engage in social activism. Due to the controversy of these socio-political issues, however, Brand Activism may also present a risk to brands, in which to attract a specific target of consumers might alienate another one. Although global brands suffer from a lack of prosocial practices and purpose, there is not yet enough evidence on the effectiveness of Brand Activism strategies employed by mass-marketed brands compared to niche brands and on their authenticity status. (Vredenburg et al., 2020)

As international brands such as Nike show their support towards trending social movements through their campaigns and use their status to inspire change in society, a significant question arises regarding brands' true motivation: whether it is based on profit or actual concern for the causes (Eyada, 2020).

Although previous research on Brand Activism has been done regarding its impact on consumers' perceptions of the brand and how the brand-social cause fit moderates this relationship, there is currently a literature gap regarding the employment of different Endorsement strategies in Brand Activism and its impact on Brand Image.

1.2 Problem Statement

The main purpose of this dissertation is to understand the impact of Brand Activism on Brand Image, considering the mediating role of Perceived Brand Authenticity and the effect of Celebrity and Non-Celebrity Endorsement strategies.

In order to address this problem statement, the following research questions have been formulated:

RQ1: How does Brand Activism impact consumers' perceptions of the Brand Image?

RQ2: Does Perceived Brand Authenticity explain the relationship between Brand Activism and Brand Image?

RQ3: Which endorsement strategy is the most effective for activist brands?

1.3 Relevance

Brand Activism is an increasingly important marketing topic, which is starting to become a trend as many major brands are using it as part of their marketing strategy. When authentically perceived, brands' activism-based marketing campaigns go beyond advertising and become part of companies' core business strategies (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018). As soon as a brand intends to take a stand on a social matter, the long-term consequences have to be evaluated due to the high controversy of social issues and movements still present in today's society. Therefore, managers need to be aware of how consumers perceive brands' social activism efforts depending on the strategy used and its impact on the Brand Image.

Moreover, it is of interest for companies to keep up with society's changing needs and, more specifically, their customers' expectations. Thus, marketeers' communications should consider which subjects genuinely matter to their target audience.

Although researchers are now starting to explore Brand Activism, it is a relatively recent subject that still lacks a diversity of resources and studies. Hence, this dissertation paper intends to contribute relevant knowledge to this fairly new marketing topic, being of both academic and managerial relevance.

1.4 Research methods

In order to solve the problem statement and answer the research questions, both primary and secondary data will be collected.

At first, existing literature on the topics studied will be critically reviewed so that relationships between the variables and concepts can be observed and serve as a basis for hypotheses generation. The primary focus will be to gather in-depth knowledge on Brand Activism, Perceived Brand Authenticity, Brand Image, and Celebrity Endorsements subjects.

Afterward, with the hypotheses considered, primary data will attempt to validate them. First, an online pre-survey will be used to decide on the most appropriate variations of the independent variable, in this case, which celebrity endorser and social cause to be considered in the main study as a representation of Brand Activism. Based on these decisions, the visual stimuli will be created. To confirm whether the stimuli are interpreted as intended, 1on1 interviews will be conducted. Lastly, the main study will take place as an online survey that will test the model and the proposed hypotheses.

This quantitative method intends to understand how Endorsed Brand Activism impacts Brand Image. The stimuli will be randomly and almost uniformly assigned to the participants in the main study. Four will contain a brand communication using activism, varying the endorsement type (celebrity and non-celebrity) and gender (male and female). The fifth stimulus will contain a generic brand communication not including endorsement nor activism, serving as a control group.

1.5 Dissertation outline

This dissertation contains five chapters. The following chapter includes the literature review and the development of the hypotheses that will guide the study. The literature review illustrates the relevance and relationship between the variables studied, Brand Activism, Perceived Brand Authenticity, Brand Image, and Celebrity Endorsements. The third chapter thoughtfully explains the methodology used to answer the previously formulated hypotheses. The fourth chapter describes the results obtained and evaluates the validity of the hypotheses. Finally, the fifth chapter concludes the dissertation and refers to encountered study limitations and possible opportunities for future research within the studied theme.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The present chapter includes a review and analysis of the existing literature about the main concepts related to the problem statement and research questions stated in Chapter 1. Subsequently, based on the gathered knowledge, the hypotheses will be formulated. The subjects approached are from multiple sources, mostly relevant academic journals and articles.

Firstly, the topic of Brand Image is introduced. Afterward, Brand Activism as a marketing strategy is presented. Then, Perceived Brand Authenticity is analyzed. Lastly, the literature on Celebrity Endorsement is reviewed.

Furthermore, the relationships between the different variables and the hypotheses are represented in a conceptual model.

2.1 Brand Image

Brand image is considered a vital concept in the Marketing field, which has been studied since the 1950s. Nevertheless, authors have yet to agree on the most suitable definition, and measurement techniques have not been standardized as they require product category-specific scale items (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990).

It was introduced by Gardner and Levy (1955), being the first consumer's brand perception present in the literature. According to their research, the brand image consists of consumers' attitudes and opinions toward brands. In their view, products have a psychological foundation that surpasses the physical aspect regarding the importance to consumers. Thus, consumers' attitudes about brands are essential to purchase choice. Since its early stages, brands' image has been associated with the concept of attitude. During the 1960s, Birdwell (1968) defined it as an attitude about a given brand.

Moreover, Herzog (1963) defines brand image as "the sum total of impressions the consumer receives from many sources". Similarly, Dichter (1985) describes it as the total impression of a product in the consumers' minds instead of its individual traits.

Brand image can be defined as perceptions that consumers attach to brands, which can be reasoned or emotional (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990). It is considered one of the sources of Brand Equity (Keller, 1993).

According to Aaker (1991), brand image is "a set of associations". Keller (1993) had a similar view on this concept. In his research, brand image was seen as perceptual associations in the minds of consumers from which the evaluation of a brand was formed.

Despite the difficulty in identifying a consistent method of measuring this variable, it is generally related to the "consumers' perceptions about a brand" (Ghodeswar, 2008; Nandan, 2005; Keller, 1993) which are reflected in the associations made in the consumers' memory. Hence, brand associations are a representation of a brand's meaning in the consumers' minds. Strong, favorable, and unique brand associations can establish a positive brand image. These associations may be based on attributes (features characteristic to a product/service), benefits (personal value/meaning to the consumers), and attitudes (overall brand evaluations) (Keller, 1993).

Notwithstanding the little consensus in defining the concept of brand image, most authors relate it to the perceptions of brands held in consumers' memory (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990). Hence, in order to develop a positive brand image, "managers attempt to influence consumer perceptions" (Kirmani and Zeithaml, 1993).

2.2 Brand Activism

Brand activism is a recent and increasingly popular concept in the Marketing field, which has been first introduced by Kotler and Sarkar (2017). According to these authors, brands engage in activism when they openly state their position regarding issues in today's society, such as social or political matters, being the primary goal to make improvements in today's society through action.

Six activism categories have been identified (social, legal, environmental, workplace, economic and political), representing the main problems modern society faces (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018). Despite the variety of issues that the studied concept comprises, this dissertation will focus on Social Activism.

Moreover, brands take public stands on causes in an attempt to differentiate themselves from competitors by showcasing their socio-political awareness. Thus, brand activism is considered to be a marketing strategy (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). However, brands that insincerely support causes receive backlash, which can lead to boycotts. Likewise, when brand activism messages are not aligned with the values of its customers, i.e., when it is not properly executed, there is a risk the brand might alienate its current customers. (Shetty et

al., 2019). Hence, it is essential that brands' activist actions are consistent with companies' values and brand image.

Although it may resemble the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which is focused primarily on the companies' values, there are key differences that have been defined by its authors. Brand activism is considered to be a "natural evolution" beyond CSR as, unlike the latter, it is driven by the "biggest and most urgent problems facing society" and is mainly related to issues beyond the company's core operations. Furthermore, it deals with controversial and polarizing topics, such as immigration and LGBTQ+ rights.

Besides advertising, the activist company contributes through actual brand practice (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018), which is considered a step further than Cause Marketing (CM), as companies' operations do not change when supporting a specific cause through CM. Instead of using an assigned budget, the donations are based on part of the profit from sales of specified products or services (Larson et al., 2008).

While, in the past, the majority of brands have avoided being associated with controversial topics and only positioned themselves based on their performance features, nowadays, several global brands have been taking stands on socio-political issues with the intent of better engaging with their consumers (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Taking a stand for a cause and/or movement is not only a more actionable approach to society's issues but also a possible source of profit (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018). As observed by Shetty et al. (2019), millennials would rather buy from brands that support causes in congruency with their brand personality and stop buying from those that do not behave ethically. Thereupon, purpose-driven and values-based brands may consider Brand Activism the next step within their strategy.

2.2.1 Impact of Brand Activism on Brand Image

As previously stated, brands that take stands in socio-political causes are more positively perceived, especially by millennials, compared to brands that remain silent or neutral in the presence of social movements. Today, brands targeting millennials cannot afford not to take a stand in these matters, as it presents itself as a hurdle when competing with activist brands (Shetty et al., 2019). Hence, Brand Image may be negatively perceived, not only by disagreement between consumers and the brand's stand but also by neutrality and/or silence in a relevant social cause.

Therefore, building on previous research regarding the impact of Brand Activism on Brand Image, the first hypothesis is predicted:

H1: Brand Activism positively affects Brand Image.

2.3 Perceived Brand Authenticity

Engaging in woke activism carries significant risks, especially in the cases in which brands struggle to be perceived by the public as authentic, which may result in a consumer backlash (Mirzaei et al., 2022; Shetty et al., 2019). In these scenarios, consumers accuse brands of inauthenticity (Moorman, 2020) as they question brands' actual motivations in going woke (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Considering this perspective, a common issue present in Brand Activism arises "how do brands transmit a genuine message in the eyes of the consumers?"

A crucial factor for the success of brands' activist messages is the perception of its authenticity, which is directly linked with the congruence with the brand values, purpose, and corporate practice. Although an aligned activist messaging and practice is needed, it is not sufficient for a brand's activism strategy to be considered authentic (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Hence, brands with a high fit between the woke topic and the core company culture, as well as brands with a history of previous activism practices, are most likely to be perceived as authentic woke brands (Mirzaei et al., 2022; Joo et al., 2019). Moreover, brands should remain neutral and inclusive when addressing controversial social issues or movements. Otherwise, some consumers may feel ignored or betrayed (Mirzaei et al., 2022).

Vredenburg et al. (2020) proposed a typology of Brand Activism that varies, from high to low, both the degree of activist messaging and the degree of activist practice. According to this model, there are four main forms of Brand Activism: Absence of, Silent, Authentic, and Inauthentic. Regarding the two last-mentioned, while both contain high activist messaging, an Authentic Strategy differs from an Inauthentic one through a high engagement, as well as an explicit brand purpose and values in prosocial practice. It is also essential that it leads to solutions to public interest problems (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

2.3.1 Mediating effect of Perceived Brand Authenticity

When authenticity is perceived in Brand Activism, a more significant positive effect in Brand Equity is generated and better potential of fundamental social change contribution. A similar effect occurs in the opposite scenario. When brands cannot establish congruency between their

values, purpose, corporate practice, and activist messages, the perceived inauthenticity, better known as "woke washing", is reflected in more negative Brand Equity and hurdle any attempt to help at social change (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Therefore, based on these findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: Perceived Brand Authenticity positively impacts Brand Image.

H3: Perceived Brand Authenticity mediates the relationship between Brand Activism and Brand Image.

2.4 Endorsement

Endorsements are an advertising technique (Kamins, 1990) that is used for products or services' communications (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). Despite the most common form of Endorsement being the use of recognizable, well-known personalities, this marketing strategy may be either through a celebrity or created spokesperson (Tom et al., 1992).

Several models have been proposed to evaluate endorsement strategies regarding their effectiveness, being the following some of the most important ones: the Source Attractiveness Model (McGuirel, 1985); the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989); and the Match-Up Hypothesis (Forkan, 1980; Kamins 1989).

Endorsed advertising, despite the type (celebrities, typical consumers, professional experts, and company presidents), has been proven to be more effective by leading to higher expectations, purchase intention, and believability than advertising without an endorser (Friedman, Termini, & Washington, 1976).

In spite of there being four different main types of endorsers in the literature (celebrity expert; celebrity non-expert; non-celebrity expert; and non-celebrity non-expert), this study will only consider both non-expert celebrity and non-celebrity.

2.4.1 Celebrity versus Non-Celebrity Endorsement

According to McCracken (1989), a celebrity endorser is an individual who enjoys public recognition and uses their recognition to promote a product or service, either in an advertisement or other form of a marketing campaign. Friedman and Friedman (1979) define a celebrity endorser as an individual publicly known for their own achievements, which are in different areas than that of the product being endorsed. When communication occurs through a celebrity, consumers are affected by the process of identification, in which an individual tries

to embody the identity of the celebrity endorser (Kelman, 1961). In order to assess the effectiveness of a Celebrity Endorsement, Ohanian (1990) developed a scale to measure the perceived expertise, trustworthiness (both are the two factors of credibility), and attractiveness of the endorser.

Celebrity Endorsement has been a popular communication strategy used by companies worldwide. It consists of a co-branding strategy, in which the celebrity endorser influences the Brand Image of the endorsed brand, as the meaning associated with the celebrity is transferred to the brand (Keller,1993; McCracken, 1989). This process is explained by the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989).

A non-celebrity non-expert endorser, on the other hand, is an ordinary person who represents the typical consumer of the brand or product being communicated. This individual's knowledge of the category being endorsed is limited to their own personal experience with it (Friedman et al., 1976). This type of endorser can be effective mainly due to the similarity they may share with the target audience (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Besides, celebrities may not always be the most effective option for brands, as some researchers suggest that it is more impactful within less involved consumers and depends on the product category (Biswas et al., 2006). Also, if celebrities are controversial or involved in scandals, the Endorsement will have a negative impact on the company's Brand Image.

2.4.2 Impact of Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism on Brand Image

Nonetheless, overall, a message conveyed by a celebrity is considered to be more persuasive than a message conveyed by a non-celebrity endorser, as a celebrity may be perceived as more expert and trustworthy (Ohanian, 1990). Moreover, brand recall is higher when the endorser is a celebrity spokesperson (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Furthermore, Celebrity Endorsements were found to be more effective than all the other endorsement types in terms of trustworthiness, believability, persuasiveness, and likability (Freiden, 1984).

Celebrity-product congruence has a positive impact on Brand Image. Thus, in pursuance of an effective celebrity endorsement strategy, there should be a match between the endorser image and the Brand Image (McCracken, 1989). Moreover, simply exposing consumers to a Celebrity Endorsement has an impact on the Brand Image (Fleck et al., 2012).

Hence, building on previous research regarding the effectiveness of Celebrity Endorsements compared to Non-Celebrity Endorsements, the following hypotheses are predicted:

H4: Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism has a higher impact on Brand Image than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism.

H5: Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism has a higher impact on Perceived Brand Authenticity than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The following model presents the relationships between this study's variables.
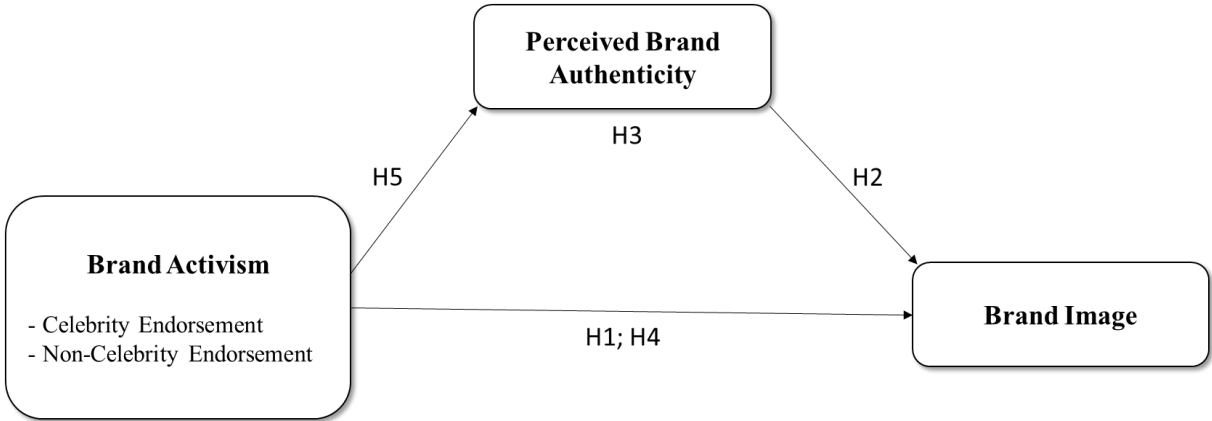
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The current chapter presents and explains the methodology used in this study to answer the hypotheses proposed in chapter 2. First, the research approach will be introduced, followed by the information gathered from primary data. The primary data sub-chapter includes a description of how the data will be collected, the key measurement and indicators, and lastly, the techniques used in the data analysis.

3.1 Research Approach

Firstly, it is essential to clarify the main research goal: The impact that different types of Endorsement (celebrity and non-celebrity) and gender (male and female) used in a brand activism strategy have on a Brand's Image, considering the mediating effect of the Perceived Brand Authenticity.

In order to achieve the study's objectives, answer the research questions and test the validity of the hypotheses, as a first step, existing literature was reviewed to develop the previously described conceptual framework. Through the problem statement and hypotheses formulated, the data to be collected was better defined.

To transform the conceptual framework into an operation model, both exploratory and explanatory research methods were used. First, the studied brand was pre-defined by the researcher. Secondly, in order to avoid researcher bias, an online pilot survey was used to decide on the most appropriate celebrity endorser and social cause to use in the main study, followed by semi-structured interviews to test the visual stimuli created by gathering the respondents' thoughts on the different stimuli. Lastly, an online survey was conducted, as an explanatory research method, with the aim to understand the relationships between the variables of the study.

3.2 Primary Data

The primary data was collected through the following stages: an online pre-survey for the identification of the most appropriate independent variable variation; 1on1 interviews for stimuli confirmation; and an online survey as the main study to test the model.

3.2.1 Endorsers and Social Cause Selection

An online pre-survey was employed in order to select the most suitable celebrity endorser and social cause for the main study (Appendix 1).

3.2.1.1 Data Collection

The social causes were selected based on some of the current most popular social movements globally. The five social causes used in the survey were gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, racial justice, refugee rights, and education access.

The celebrities present in the pre-study were chosen from a selection of the most followed and influential celebrities. The ten celebrities used in the survey were Cristiano Ronaldo, Ariana Grande, Dwayne Johnson, Scarlett Johansson, Justin Bieber, Taylor Swift, Will Smith, Kylie Jenner, Lionel Messi, and Billie Eilish.

With the aim of analyzing the differences in the effect of Celebrity and Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism on a Brand's Image, the automotive brand Ford was chosen. The main reasons behind this choice were the popularity and high level of awareness of the brand, which is expected to lead to a higher number of participants in the study, as well as its purpose-driven strategy. According to the literature reviewed, activist actions should be consistent with the brand's own values and history of practices. Thus, the chosen brand has a philanthropic and socially responsible background.

Given the focus on the main study being the brand Ford, the questionnaire started with a screening question in order to only qualify for the survey respondents who were familiar with the brand, i.e., the target sample. The second section consisted of the measurement of participants' perceptions concerning the congruency between the brand and the celebrities and social causes listed. The questionnaire ended with a demographics section.

In spite of the sampling bias, a non-random convenience sampling method was applied, due to the resources' constraints.

3.2.1.2 Measurement / Indicators

With the purpose of assessing respondents' perceptions regarding brand-cause fit, a three-item seven-point Likert scale construct developed by Lafferty (2007) was used. The items were the following: from 1=very incompatible to 7=very compatible; from 1=doesn't make any sense to 7=makes sense; from 1=not believable at all to 7=very believable.

In order to measure respondents' perceptions regarding the brand/celebrity congruence, a construct developed by Fleck et al. (2012) was applied. It consisted of a three-item seven-point Likert scale (from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). The items were the following:

"[brand X] and [celebrity Y] go well together"; "[brand X] is well matched with [celebrity Y]"; "In my opinion, [celebrity Y] is very appropriate as a celebrity endorser for [brand X]".

Measure	Items	Scale	Reference
Brand-cause fit	3	7-point Likert Scale	(Lafferty, 2007)
Brand/celebrity congruence	3	7-point Likert Scale	(Fleck et al., 2012)

Table 1: Pre-Study Constructs

3.2.1.3 Data Analysis

The pre-survey was conducted through Qualtrics and had 88 completed responses, from which 11 were excluded due to not satisfying the requirement of being familiar with the brand Ford. SPSS was used subsequently for data analysis. First, frequency statistics allowed for a sample characterization (Appendix 2). From the answers obtained, most of the respondents are Portuguese (85,7%), have ages between 18 and 54 (80,6%), a high level of education, as 71,5% have a Bachelor's or Master's degree, are employed (77,9%), and are very or extremely familiar with the brand Ford (67,6%).

Subsequently, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to assess how closely related the items of each scale are, that is to evaluate the scale reliability (George, D., & Mallery, 2003). The brand-cause fit scale showed an overall good internal consistency, given that all variables had a Cronbach's Alpha of at least good quality (Appendix 3). The brand/celebrity congruence presented a very good internal consistency, as all variables had a Cronbach's Alpha of excellent quality (Appendix 4).

Afterward, Descriptive Statistics were used in order to assess the highest brand-cause fit (Appendix 5) and brand/celebrity congruence (Appendix 6). Concerning the social causes, Gender Equality had the highest mean (M=5,1255) and the lowest standard deviation (S=1,25428). Therefore, the social cause used as a stimulus in the main study will be Gender Equality. Regarding the celebrity endorsers, Dwayne Johnson had the highest mean (M=4,8701) and the lowest standard deviation (S=1,40400) among male celebrities, while Scarlett Johansson had the highest mean (M=4,3723) and the lowest standard deviation (S=1,45495) among female celebrities. Hence, the celebrity endorsers used as a manipulation of the independent variable in the main study will be both Dwayne Johnson and Scarlett Johansson.

3.2.2 Stimuli Interpretation
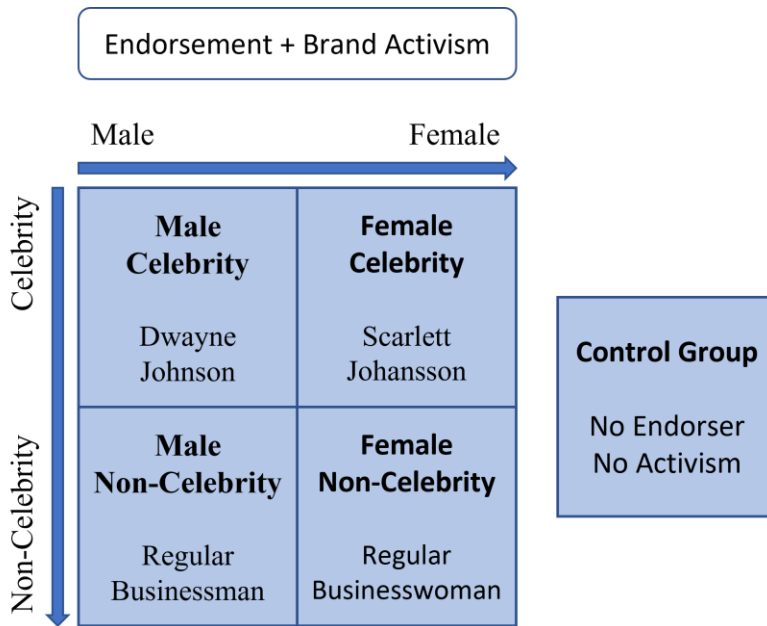
Figure 2: Stimuli Scenarios

The following stimuli were created according to the pre-survey results. In order to represent the activism practiced by the brand, the visual stimuli created to be used in the main study were a simulation of social media (Instagram) posts by the brand, containing both visual and written communication, so that the message is clear for participants.

Below are the visual stimuli created:

Figure 3: Male Celebrity Endorsement

Figure 4: Male Non-Celebrity Endorsement

Figure 5: Female Celebrity Endorsement

Figure 6: Female Non-Celebrity Endorsement
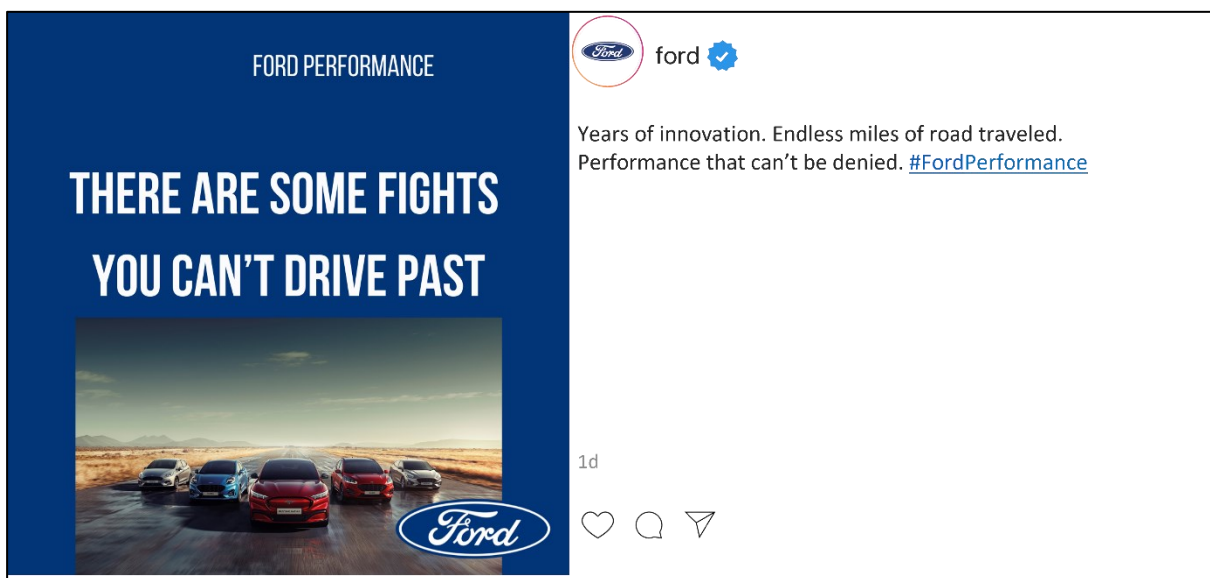
Figure 7: No Endorsement nor Activism – Control Group

1on1 interviews were later used as a qualitative method for stimuli confirmation, in order to confirm whether the created Instagram posts transmitted the intended stimuli, before applying the main questionnaire.

3.2.2.1 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate research technique to assess participants' interpretation of the visual stimuli (Saunders et al., 2008), due to the use of open-

ended questions (Boyce & Associate, 2006), which allowed a deeper understanding of respondents' individual perceptions and view on each image.

Ten interviewees were selected based on a convenience sample of individuals familiarized with the brand Ford. The sample was diverse demographically, as there were participants from different backgrounds, namely nationality, education level, occupation, gender, and age (Appendix 7), so that the results would be more reliable. The interviews were conducted online through a video call in which respondents were shown the five images one at a time. To ensure some degree of consistency between all the interviews, a script with the main questions' guidelines was used (Boyce & Associate, 2006) (Appendix 8).

3.2.2.2 Results

Notwithstanding some differences in interpretation from the respondents, the main message being communicated in all of the five stimuli was properly transmitted to all participants. The four images depicting Ford engaging in brand activism with an endorser were clearly understood, as everyone interviewed stated that the brand was taking a stand in the fight for gender equality, as well as taking action through a sponsored scholarship. While the image containing a brand message with no endorser nor social cause was understood by a great part of the interviewees as a typical Ford communication stating the attributes of their products. Additionally, the celebrity endorsers were recognized by the majority of respondents (Appendix 8).

Despite all images being overall interpreted as intended, some interviewees stated the image headline "*There are some fights you can't drive past*" does not fit well in the context of the image referring to the No Endorsement nor Activism – Control Group stimulus, which may cause some confusion among participants in the main study regarding the meaning of this stimulus. Consequently, the stimulus referring to figure 7 was improved in that regard by changing the headline to a message more congruent with the Instagram post description presented.

Figure 8: No Endorsement nor Activism – Control Group (Version 2)

3.2.3 Main Study

An online survey was employed to understand the relationships between the variables being studied, test the proposed hypotheses, and answer the research questions stated in the previous chapter (Appendix 9).

3.2.3.1 Data Collection

A primary data collection method was chosen to gather relevant information to the research problem using an online survey which was active from February 18th to February 27th, 2022. This online survey is a non-probabilistic method of sampling, and it was chosen not only for simplicity but also for being inexpensive. This survey was based on a cross-sectional design with five scenarios, each representing the visual stimuli posts by the brand in social media, where participants were randomly assigned.

The questionnaire started by assessing respondents' familiarity with the brand. Afterward, a stimulus was randomly displayed, followed by questions concerning perceived brand authenticity and brand image. Subsequently, there were two manipulation checks to ensure the stimuli were correctly interpreted. Lastly, there was a demographics section.

The target participants were social media users, independent of being familiarized with the brand Ford or not, given that the survey's main objective was to assess participants' perceptions based on the stimuli shown.

Qualtrics platform was used to gather the participants' responses, and the data was exported to an SPSS data file. A total of 321 answers to the survey were obtained, but when performing the manipulation check, 13 participants were dropped from the analysis due to inconsistent answers, which led to 308 valid answers.

3.2.3.2 Measurement / Indicators

With the aim of measuring respondents' perceived brand authenticity (PBA), a construct developed by Morhart et al. (2015) was applied. It consisted of a 15-item 7-point Likert Scale (from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) which measured PBA according to four dimensions: continuity, credibility, integrity, and symbolism. The items were the following: PBA-Continuity "[brand X] is a brand with a history"; "[brand X] is a timeless brand"; "[brand X] is a brand that survives times"; "[brand X] is a brand that survives trends". PBA-Credibility "[brand X] is a brand that will not betray you"; "[brand X] is a brand that accomplishes its value promise"; "[brand X] is an honest brand". PBA-Integrity "[brand X] is a brand that gives back to its consumers"; "[brand X] is a brand with moral principles"; "[brand X] is a brand true to a set of moral values"; "[brand X] is a brand that cares about its consumers". PBA-Symbolism "[brand X] is a brand that adds meaning to people's lives"; "[brand X] is a brand that reflects important values people care about"; "[brand X] is a brand that connects people with their real selves"; "[brand X] is a brand that connects people with what is really important".

In order to measure respondents' perceptions concerning the brand image, a construct developed by Villarejo-Ramos and Sánchez-Franco (2005) was applied. It consisted of a 7-item 7-point Likert scale (from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). The items were the following: "Some characteristics of X come to my mind quickly"; "I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of X"; "X has a strong personality"; "I have a clear impression of the type of people who use X brand"; "X has a strong image"; "The intangible attributes of X brand are reason enough to buy it"; "X provides a high value in relation to the price we must pay for it".

Framework	Measure	Items	Scale	Reference	Cronbach's α
Mediator	Perceived Brand Authenticity	15	7-point Likert Scale	(Morhart et al., 2015)	Continuity: 0,85 Credibility: 0,78 Integrity: 0,83 Symbolism: 0,86

			7-point	(Villarejo-Ramos & Sánchez-Franco, 2005)	
Dependent Variable	Brand Image	7	Likert Scale		0,8609

Table 2: Main Study Constructs

3.2.3.3 Data Analysis

First, a manipulation check, through two categorical questions, was performed to assess if the independent variable was properly manipulated. From this analysis, inconsistent answers were found and consequently removed.

Moreover, to analyse the existence of outlier observations, the Mahalanobis distance and Cook's distance were estimated in each observation.

Furthermore, to validate this survey, Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the reliability of the responses collected in each of the constructs.

Afterward, the sample was characterized by the demographic variables Gender, Age, Nationality, Education Level, Occupation, and Income through frequency tables. Likewise, Familiarity with the brand Ford and Stimulus were also characterized by frequency tables.

To analyze the impact of Brand Activism (BA) on Brand Image (BI) mediated by the effect of Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA), a linear regression model was estimated by Ordinary Least Squares (OLS), using Hayes' Process v4.0, model 4. To verify if OLS assumptions were fulfilled, the Durbin-Watson test to check autocorrelation, and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check the normality of the dependent variable were used. It was not employed any test to check homoscedasticity since Hayes' process provides heteroscedasticity consistent standard error and covariance matrix estimators.

Thereafter, to compare Celebrity Endorsement, Non-Celebrity Endorsement, and No Endorsement nor Activism, and after verifying by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test the normality conditions, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) one factor was used followed by Tuckey's posterior comparisons.

In order to compare the effect of the endorsers' gender both on BI and PBA, a previous check of normality conditions was made using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Since normality conditions were not fulfilled, the Mann-Whitney U test was used. Afterward, to assess the differences in the evaluation of BI and PBA, with and without activism, across male and female

gender, normality was verified through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Therefore, the two-way ANOVA was applied.

Finally, to assess the relationship between the demographic profile and the familiarity of the respondents with the brand Ford, a series of Chi-Square tests were performed with residual analysis, crossing brand familiarity with the demographic variables.

For all statistical tests, significance levels of 5% or 1% were used.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present chapter has the purpose of understanding the data collected through the online survey that was performed according to the methodology presented previously in the methodology chapter and its respective analysis. The main goal is to reach conclusions for the research questions that were proposed earlier. A manipulation check is made, followed by an outliers analysis, besides the validation of the survey responses, a brief sample characterization, the model estimation, the testing of hypothesis, and some further results.

4.1. Results

4.1.1 Manipulation Check

Before analysing the data collected, a manipulation check was executed to verify whether the independent variable was effectively manipulated, i.e., to confirm if participants comprehended the stimuli as intended. To assess this, two questions were used in the survey: "Does the Instagram post you saw address gender equality?" (Answers: Yes; No) and "Does the Instagram post you saw feature a celebrity?" (Answers: Yes, it features a male celebrity; Yes, it features a female celebrity; No). For both questions, the variables were categorical, therefore Crosstabs (Appendices 10 and 12, respectively) and Chi-square tests (Appendices 11 and 13, respectively) were performed. By rejecting the hypothesis of independence between the variables (Appendices 11 and 13), results indicated that the manipulation was successful.

In spite of the effectiveness of the manipulation, 13 out of a total of 321 respondents were dropped from the analysis due to an inconsistency between the stimulus seen and the answers to the manipulation questions (Appendices 10 and 12). Consequently, only 308 valid answers were considered for further analysis.

4.1.2 Outliers Analysis

The Mahalanobis and Cook's distances were used to detect the presence of outliers in the models. While Cook's distance indicates how much the estimation of a regression model changes when the ith observation is removed, and it reflects the influence of that observation, the Mahalanobis distance indicates how far the ith observation is to the mean of the predicted values. An observation is considered an influential outlier if the Mahalanobis distance of that observation is higher than the critical 1% value of a $\chi 2$ where the degrees of freedom are the number of predictors and when Cook's distance is higher than 1 (Oyeyemi, G.M. et al., 2015). The descriptive results for the Mahalanobis and Cook's distances are shown in Appendix 14.

Moreover, the values of the estimated distances were recoded to zero if the Mahalanobis distance of the observation is under the chi-square critical value and one if it is higher. An identical codification was made for Cook's distance, zero if the distance was under one and one if the distance is above one. The results of the obtained frequency tables are shown in Appendix 15.

Only one observed outlier was present in model 2, following the Mahalanobis distance. However, by Cook's distance the estimated model would not change when this observation is included, so it was kept in the analysis.

4.1.3 Scale Reliability

To validate the constructs employed in this survey, Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) with 15 items and Brand Image (BI) with 7 items, Cronbach's Alpha was used to verify the reliability of the responses collected from the ordinal Likert scales. A reliable and valid scale shall yield a value of 0.70 and above (George, D., & Mallery, 2003). Both the Perceived Brand Authenticity and the Brand Image scales showed a very good internal consistency, with alphas of 0,957 and 0,885 respectively.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Quality	Number of items
Brand Image (BI)	0,885	Good	7
Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA)	0,957	Excellent	15

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

4.1.4 Sample Characterization

In order to analyze the sample characterization, frequency statistics were used (Appendix 16). From the answers obtained 52,9% are female and 47,2% male. Most of the respondents are Portuguese (87,7%), have ages between 18 and 54 (85,1%), high level of education, being 72,4% Bachelor's or Master's degree or equivalent, employed (69,5%) with income of at most 2699€ in 75,7% of the cases. Brand Ford was very or extremely familiar to 57,6% of the respondents.

4.1.5 Mediation Model

H1: *Brand Activism positively affects Brand Image.*

H2: *Perceived Brand Authenticity positively impacts Brand Image.*

H3: *Perceived Brand Authenticity mediates the relationship between Brand Activism and Brand Image.*

Concerning the hypotheses H1, H2, and H3, a regression model taking as dependent variable Brand Image (BI), independent variable Brand Activism (BA) and mediator variable Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) was estimated.

A new variable Brand Activism (BA) was created by recording variable Stimulus into two categories: Male or Female Celebrity and Male or Female Non-Celebrity, G1, G2, G3 and G4 were coded as one, which represents Brand Activism, while No Endorsement nor Activism, G5, was coded as zero, which represents No Brand Activism.

The underlying idea of the Mediation analysis is that the direct effect of the independent variable (BA), on the dependent variable (BI) should decrease after the mediator variable (PBA) is added to the model. The Mediation analysis compares the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable without the mediator, named c-path, which is the total effect, with the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable after controlling for the mediator, denominated as c'-path, which is the direct effect (Figure 9). The purpose is to understand whether the difference between these two effects (c-path and c'-path), identified as the indirect effect, is statistically significant.

To confirm the mediation's effect, c'-path should be smaller than c-path. Furthermore, there are two different types of mediation: firstly, if c' is non-significant there is full mediation, and secondly, there is only partial mediation if both paths are significant.

At last, the Percent mediation (PM) was used to calculate the effect sizes and it should be interpreted as the percentage of the total effect that is accounted for by the indirect effect. To perform this analysis Hayes's process model 4 was used (Hayes, 2018) (Appendix 17).
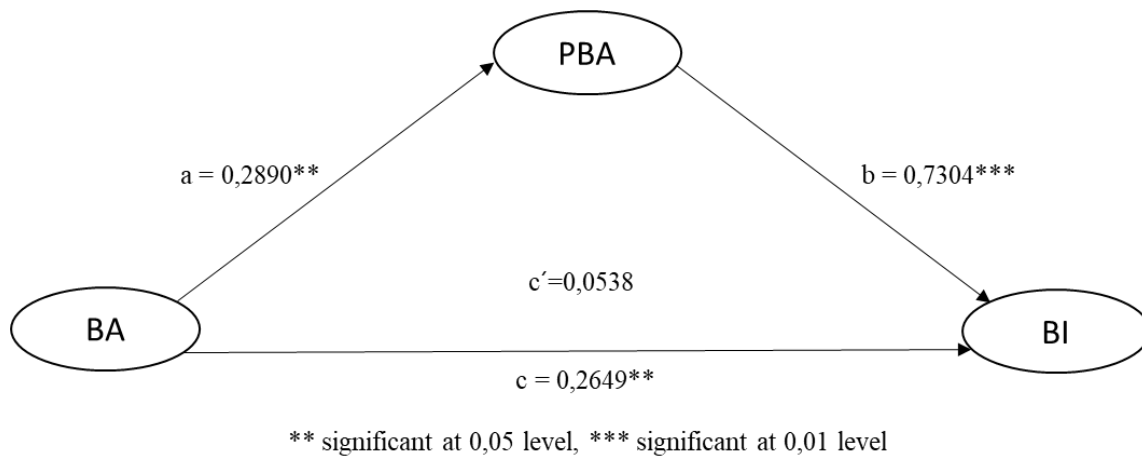
Figure 9: Mediation Statistical Model

The results (Figure 9 and Appendix 17) show that Brand Activism (BA) significantly affects positively Brand Image, since c = 0,2649 (p = 0,0250), therefore **H1 is validated**. Moreover, Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) significantly impacts positively Brand Image, b=0,7304 (p < 0,01), thus **H2 is validated**.

However, Appendix 17 shows that only 1,66% of the variance in Perceived Brand Authenticity was explained by Brand Activism, although the model was significant (p=0,0154). The coefficient a = 0,2890 means that Brand Activism will increase, on average, 0,2890 more units in Perceived Brand Authenticity than No Activism.

The relative indirect effect of Brand Activism in Brand Image is a×b=0,2890×0,7304=0,2111, so Brand Activism makes, on average, 0,2121 more units in Brand Image than No Brand Activism, and the bootstrap 95% confidence interval is (0,0521 to 0,4690) which does not include zero, meaning that Brand Activism indirectly impacts Brand Image through Perceived Brand Authenticity, thus confirming the mediation.

The direct effect of Brand Activism on Brand Image is c´= 0,0538, which is not significant, and it is lower than the total effect c = 0,2649, indicating that this is a full mediation effect of PBA. In fact, the effect of BA vanishes when PBA is introduced, and this is not due to a multicollinearity problem, because the Pearson correlation between BA and PBA is 0,129 (p=0,024). Relative indirect effect (a×b=0,2111) expressed as a ratio of the total effect (c =0,2649) results in 79,69% of the effect of Brand Activism on Brand Image occurred indirectly through Perceived Brand Authenticity. Hence, **H3 is validated**, and this is a **full mediation** process.

In order to verify if Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimation method assumptions are fulfilled, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the dependent variable was performed, as well as the Durbin-Watson test statistic (Appendix 18). Besides, a heteroscedasticity consistent standard error and covariance matrix estimator was used in Hayes' process (Appendix 17).

4.1.6 Results from the Hypotheses Testing

H4: *Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism has a higher impact on Brand Image than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism.*

H5: *Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism has a higher impact on Perceived Brand Authenticity than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism.*

To prepare the variables for testing the research hypothesis H4 and H5, the variable Stimulus was coded into a three categorical variable, being one if no endorsement nor activism was made (G5), two if it was a non-celebrity endorsement (either male or female non-celebrity, G2 and G4) and three if it was a celebrity endorsement (either male or female celebrity, G1 and G3).

Moreover, since Cronbach's Alpha is very good in both constructs, a composite measure was computed by finding the mean value of the responses in each construct, obtaining new variables BI and PBA for the mean values of respectively Brand Image and Perceived Brand Authenticity.

Given that each participant was exposed to only one of the stimuli, the independence of samples was ensured. To compare the ratio variables, BI and PBA, in the three categories, with three independent samples, either the non-parametric test of Kruskal-Wallis or the parametric test ANOVA should be used. However, to decide between them, the normality Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied (Appendix 19) to analyze if those samples follow a normal distribution to pursue through parametric tests.

For a significance level of 1%, all samples follow a normal distribution, therefore ANOVA parametric test should be used to check the validity of the research hypotheses H4 and H5, since this is a robust statistic for small escapes from normality.

A brief descriptive analysis (Appendix 20) shows that the mean values of Brand Image and Perceived Brand Authenticity are higher with a Celebrity Endorsement than with a Non-Celebrity Endorsement.

To assess the difference between the mean values of the Brand Image and Perceived Brand Authenticity according to the type of endorsement and the presence or not of activism, an ANOVA one-way analysis was performed (Appendix 21). It can be observed by Levene's test that variance across groups is identical in both variables BI and PBA, because both p-values are above the significance level of 5%, thus all conditions of ANOVA analysis are fulfilled.

The null hypothesis of mean equality between categories of endorsement and the presence or not of activism in the two variables is rejected, since the test statistic for Brand Image is 3,705 with p<0,05, and the test statistic for Perceived Brand Authenticity is 3,743 with p<0,05. In order to analyze where the differences are among each group, post hoc comparisons by Tuckey's tests were pursued (Appendix 22).

Pairwise comparisons showed that Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism (Mean=5,2276, SD=0,8659) has a significantly higher impact (p=0,037) on Brand Image than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism (Mean=4,9396, SD=0,9815), so **H4 is validated**. Moreover, No Endorsement nor Activism (Mean=4,9247, SD=0,9105) has the same impact (p=0,994) on Brand Image as Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism.

Regarding Perceived Brand Authenticity, the post hoc comparisons showed that Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism (Mean=5,3008, SD=0,8214) does not have a significantly higher impact (p=0,062) on Perceived Brand Authenticity than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism (Mean=5,0585, SD=0,8989). Therefore, **H5 is not supported**. The difference (p=0,008) lies between Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism and No Endorsement nor Activism (Mean=4,8873, SD=0,7886).

Hypothesis	Description	Result
H1	Brand Activism positively affects Brand Image.	Validated and Significant
H2	Perceived Brand Authenticity positively impacts Brand Image.	Validated and Significant
H3	Perceived Brand Authenticity mediates the relationship between Brand Activism and Brand Image.	Validated and Significant
H4	Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism has a higher impact on Brand Image than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism.	Validated and Significant
H5	Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism has a higher impact on Perceived Brand Authenticity than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism.	Not Significant

Table 4: Hypotheses testing results overview

4.1.7 Further Results

4.1.7.1 Gender of the Endorser

Given that the social cause used in the study was Gender Equality, it is of interest to assess the effect of the Celebrity Endorser's gender on both Brand Image (BI) and Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA). To compare the results of BI and PBA in the two categories of gender (Male and Female) and to choose between parametric or non-parametric tests, normality tests were executed (Appendix 23).

Since the distribution of PBA values in Female Celebrity Endorsement did not follow a normal distribution ($p<0,01$), the non-parametric test of Mann-Whitney U was performed along with a brief descriptive analysis (Appendix 24). The results showed that there are no significant differences in Brand Image nor in Perceived Brand Authenticity according to the Celebrity Endorser's gender.

The effect of the Non-Celebrity Endorser's gender on both Brand Image (BI) and Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) was also examined. Similarly, as before, to compare the results of BI and PBA in the two categories of gender (Male and Female) and to choose between parametric or non-parametric tests, normality tests were executed (Appendix 25).

At a level of significance of 1%, the distributions of BI and PBA values may be considered to follow a normal distribution, so the t-Student test for independent samples was performed, since this is a robust test even for small escapes from normality. Appendix 26 shows a brief descriptive analysis, along with the results of Levene's test for equality of variances and the t-Student test. The results indicated that there are no significant differences in Brand Image nor in Perceived Brand Authenticity according to the Non-Celebrity gender.

An identical procedure was performed to assess the effect of the Endorser's gender (Male and Female), regardless of being a Celebrity or a Non-Celebrity. According to the normality tests, Female Endorsement's distribution of PBA values did not follow a normal distribution (Appendix 27). Consequently, to compare both genders, the Mann-Whitney U test was used (Appendix 28). Although the descriptive presented Female Endorsement seems to be more effective in BI and PBA than Male Endorsement, the differences are not significant.

4.1.7.2 Participants' Brand Perceptions by Gender

As it is also important to understand how differently impacted participants' perceptions are by activism, a comparison was done between the evaluation of Brand Image (BI) and Perceived Brand Authenticity (PBA) in the presence of activism among the male and female genders. To

do so, a two-way ANOVA with interaction was performed. The dependent variables were BI and PBA, and the factors were BA with two categories (Yes or No) and Gender with two categories (Yes or No). The distribution of frequencies between factors is presented in Appendix 29.

Normality of residuals' model BI and PBA was verified through Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, and equality of variances between groups through Levene's test was also verified (Appendix 30). In order to assess the differences in BI and PBA, with and without activism, across the male and female gender, descriptive statistics were performed (Appendix 31).

According to the two-way ANOVA results, there are no significant differences in Brand Image by respondents' Gender or presence of Brand Activism, nor significant differences in Brand Image by the interaction between Gender and BA (Appendix 32). Nevertheless, there are significant differences in Perceived Brand Authenticity by Brand Activism (Appendix 33). When Activism is present, Perceived Brand Authenticity is significantly higher (Mean=5,1763, Std deviation=0,8689) than with No Activism (Mean=4,8873, Std deviation=0,7886), independently of the gender.

In spite of the participants' gender not having any significant differences in BI or PBA, with or without activism, males tend to perceive the brand slightly more positively than females, both in terms of authenticity and the brand image (Appendix 31).

4.1.7.3 Familiarity with the Brand

To analyze the relationship between the demographic variables and the level of familiarity of the respondents with the brand Ford, a sequence of Chi-Square tests was conducted to assess the association between Familiarity with the brand Ford and (1) Gender, (2) Age (3) Education Level (4) Occupation (5) Income. The Phi coefficient (f) was computed to indicate the intensity of the association between the variables and in case of dependence between the variables, a residual analysis was performed to identify with which categories the relation lies. Results are shown from Appendix 34 to Appendix 48.

The relation between Gender and Familiarity with Ford is statistically significant (c^2=15,474, p<0,01, f=0,224), although the intensity of this association is not strong. Through the residual analysis, it can be observed that Male are extremely familiar with the brand Ford (Adjusted Residual=3,3 > $Z_{0,975}$=1,96), while Female are only slightly familiar (Adjusted Residual=2,4 > $Z_{0,975}$=1,96). Moreover, there was not any relationship found with Age (c^2=27,178, p=0,296,

f=0,297), Education Level (c^2=19,963, p=0,222, f=0,255) or Occupation (c^2=18,567, p=0,292, f=0,246). Income (c^2=46,408, p<0,05, f=0,388) is also significantly associated with Familiarity, salaries under 700€ are moderately familiar with Ford but higher incomes (above 4200€) are extremely familiar. Hence, data indicates that the most familiar with the brand Ford are Males with High Income.

4.2 Discussion

Most of the results were accordingly to the literature previously reviewed.

Regarding hypothesis H4, as predicted, Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism has a significantly higher impact on Brand Image than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism, while the latter has about the same impact as No Endorsement nor Activism. It might have occurred as a result of the Meaning Transfer Model (McCracken, 1989), in which the meaning associated with the celebrity is transferred to the brand, thus, impacting the Brand Image (Keller,1993; McCracken, 1989).

Celebrity-product congruence might have also influenced participants perceptions of the brand, given that an effective Celebrity Endorsement strategy requires a fit between the image of the endorser and that of the brand. Besides, the two celebrities used in the study were selected in the pre-survey based on their congruence with the brand.

Hypothesis H5, on the other hand, was not as expected. The results showed that the effect of Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism with regards to Perceived Brand Authenticity is not significantly higher than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism. The major differences lie between Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism and No Endorsement nor Activism.

Despite, overall, a celebrity being more persuasive in conveying a message (Ohanian, 1990), a non-celebrity is an ordinary person who represents the typical consumer of the brand and who can be effective because of the similarities they share with the target audience (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Consequently, a non-celebrity may be perceived as authentic as a celebrity.

Likewise, endorsed advertising, in spite of the type, has been proven to be more effective than advertising with no endorser (Friedman, Termini, & Washington, 1976). Hence, the bigger differences between Endorsed Brand Activism and No Endorsement nor Activism.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This chapter highlights the conclusions of this study, whilst summarizing the research that has been performed, linking the results with the literature. Then, limitations identified within this study will be discussed, and recommendations for mitigating them in future studies are also presented.

5.1 Main Findings & Conclusions

5.1.1 How does Brand Activism impact consumers' perceptions of the Brand Image?

The regression model estimated to explain Brand Image through Brand Activism showed that Brand Activism directly impacted Brand Image. It is in accordance with the literature review findings which stated that brands that take stands in socio-political causes are more positively perceived (Shetty et al., 2019).

Based on this study it can be concluded that Perceived Brand Authenticity directly affects Brand Image.

5.1.2 Does Perceived Brand Authenticity explain the relationship between Brand Activism and Brand Image?

When consumers perceive authenticity in Brand Activism, a more significant positive effect on the Brand Image is generated (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Hernandez-Fernandez, 2019).

In this study, it was confirmed that Brand Activism indirectly impacts Brand Image through Perceived Brand Authenticity. In fact, 79,69% of the effect of Brand Activism on Brand Image occurred indirectly through Perceived Brand Authenticity.
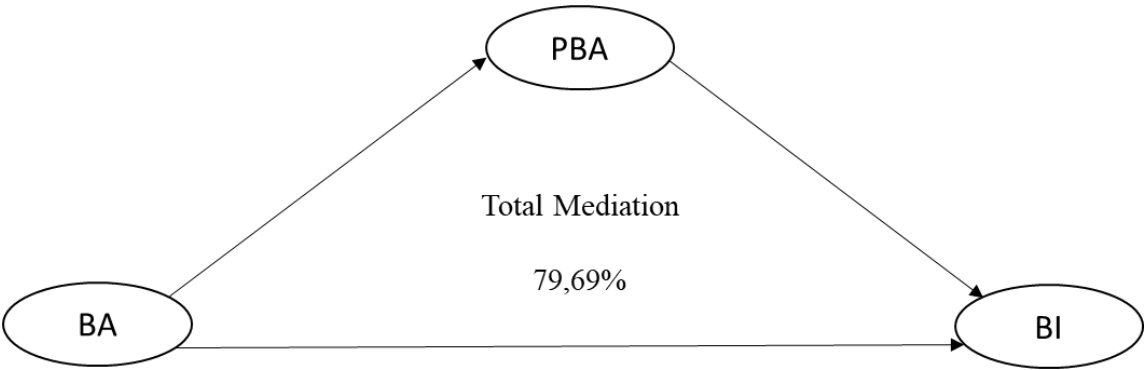
Figure 10: Mediation Role of PBA

5.1.3 Which endorsement strategy is the most effective for activist brands?

To analyze this question, three categories were considered: Celebrity Endorsement, Non-Celebrity Endorsement, and No Endorsement nor Activism. Results showed that Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism had a significantly higher impact on Brand Image than Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism, and a much higher impact on Brand Image if No Endorsement nor Activism was set. Besides, a Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism had about the same impact on Brand Image as a No Endorsement nor Activism.

As the celebrities featured in the study were selected because of their fit with the brand Ford, the high celebrity-brand congruence might have had a positive impact on the Brand Image and, consequently, be more effective than the other communications (McCracken, 1989).

Regarding Perceived Brand Authenticity, however, Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism had the same impact as Non-Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism. There is however a bigger difference between Celebrity Endorsed Brand Activism and No Endorsement nor Activism.

5.1.4 Gender Effect in Endorsement

Since the stimuli in the main study containing Brand Activism were represented by the Gender Equality social cause, it was of interest to further investigate whether the gender of the endorser has any impact on consumers' perceptions of the brand. Therefore, the gender effect was studied for Celebrity Endorsements, Non-Celebrity Endorsements, and both types of Endorsement (Celebrity and Non-Celebrity). The results showed that, despite female endorsers appearing to be slightly more impactful to Brand Image and Perceived Brand Authenticity compared to male endorsers, there are no statistically significant differences between a Female and a Male Endorsement. Thus, according to this data, the two genders equally affect BI and PBA.

Although for the brand Ford, the gender of the endorsers did not seem to make a difference in consumers' perception of Authenticity and Brand Image, these results may vary according to different brands or product categories.

5.1.5 Familiarity with the Brand

To establish a profile of the brand consumers, the demographics were used to relate to the brand familiarity. It was found that male consumers are more familiar with Ford than females. Also, high-income consumers are more familiar with the brand Ford. No relations with age, education level, or occupation were found with familiarity with the brand.

5.2 Managerial / Academic Implications

This study contributes to a literature gap in Brand Activism about the use of Celebrity and Non-Celebrity Endorsements to improve Brand Image. Several researchers have studied Brand Activism, mostly regarding the congruence between brands and social causes.

Concerning the managerial implications, the findings suggest that marketers should be aware of how different Endorsement strategies impact consumers' perceptions of the brand.

Moreover, companies should only take a stand on a social issue when there is a congruence between the social cause supported and the companies' own core values. Otherwise, companies might suffer from backlash due to not being perceived as authentic by the general public.

5.3 Limitations and Further Research

This dissertation has some limitations and restrictions that must be taken into account for future research. First, the sample size was relatively small and, thus, each group that was assigned a stimulus was not representative. Subsequent surveys should be applied over a longer period of time, through a greater variety of platforms. Also, respondents were selected by a non-probability convenience sampling technique, which may lead to biased results. These limitations of the used sample hinder the conclusions which may not be generalized for statistical reasons.

Furthermore, the study was conducted using an already existing brand from which some consumers may have their own perceptions and opinions about. This might interfere to an extent with their answers on the survey, by decreasing the impact of the stimuli. Future research may address the effects of this typology of stimuli on an unrecognized brand.

Additionally, this study is restricted to one type of activism (Gender Equality) which was selected through a pre-questionnaire. Therefore, the results obtained might have changed if another social cause was to be studied. For future research, it would be interesting to incorporate more forms of activism in order to assess whether the effect of activism on the brand image would change.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Endorsers and Social Cause Selection – Pre-survey

Dear participant, I would like to thank you in advance for participating in this survey! This study is part of my master thesis. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses are confidential. It will take about 10 minutes to answer.

Screening Questions - Block 1

Q1: How familiar are you with the brand Ford?

o   Not familiar at all (1)

o   Slightly familiar (2)

o   Moderately familiar (3)

o   Very familiar (4)

o   Extremely familiar (5)

Skip To: End of Survey If How familiar are you with the brand Ford? = Not familiar at all

Brand-cause fit - Block 2

The purpose of the following questions is to assess your perceptions regarding the fit between each social cause and the brand Ford.

Q2: On a scale from 1 to 7, please answer the following questions considering the fit between **gender equality** and Ford.

Q3: On a scale from 1 to 7, please answer the following questions considering the fit between **LGBTQ+ rights** and Ford.

Q4: On a scale from 1 to 7, please answer the following questions considering the fit between **racial justice** and Ford.

Q5: On a scale from 1 to 7, please answer the following questions considering the fit between **refugee rights** and Ford.

Q6: On a scale from 1 to 7, please answer the following questions considering the fit between **education access** and Ford.

The following Likert scales were presented for each of these questions (Q2 – Q6)

o   1= Very incompatible (1)

o   2 (2)

o   3 (3)

o   4 (4)

o   5 (5)

o   6 (6)

o   7= Very compatible (7)

o   1= Doesn't make any sense (1)

o   2 (2)

o   (3)

o   4 (4)

o   5 (5)

o   6 (6)

o   7= Makes sense (7)

o   1= Not believable at all (1)

o   2 (2)

o   3 (3)

o   4 (4)

o   5 (5)

o   6 (6)

o   7= Very believable (7)

<u>Brand/celebrity congruence - Block 3</u>

The purpose of the following questions is to assess your perceptions regarding the congruence between each celebrity and the brand Ford.

On a scale from 1=Strongly disagree to 7=Strongly agree, please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Q7: Please indicate the level that better describes your perceptions regarding **Cristiano Ronaldo** and Ford congruence.

Q8: Please indicate the level that better describes your perceptions regarding **Ariana Grande** and Ford congruence.

Q9: Please indicate the level that better describes your perceptions regarding **Dwayne Johnson** and Ford congruence.

Q10: Please indicate the level that better describes your perceptions regarding **Scarlett Johansson** and Ford congruence.

Q11: Please indicate the level that better describes your perceptions regarding **Justin Bieber** and Ford congruence.

Q12: Please indicate the level that better describes your perceptions regarding **Taylor Swift** and Ford congruence.

Q13: Please indicate the level that better describes your perceptions regarding **Will Smith** and Ford congruence.

Q14: Please indicate the level that better describes your perceptions regarding **Kylie Jenner** and Ford congruence.

Q15: Please indicate the level that better describes your perceptions regarding **Lionel Messi** and Ford congruence.

Q16: Please indicate the level that better describes your perceptions regarding **Billie Eilish** and Ford congruence.

The following items were presented for each of these questions (Q7 – Q16)

Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)

[brand X] and [celebrity Y] go well together (1)

[brand X] is well matched with [celebrity Y] (2)

In my opinion, [celebrity Y] is very appropriate as a celebrity endorser for [brand X] (3)

Demographics - Block 4

Q17: What is your gender?

o   Male (1)

o   Female (2)

Q18: What is your age?

o   Under 18 (1)

o   18 - 24 (2)

o   25 - 34 (3)

o   35 - 44 (4)

o   45 - 54 (5)

o   55 - 64 (6)

o   65 or older (7)

Q19: What is your nationality?

Drop-down list from Qualtrics (1)

Q20: What is the highest degree you have received?

o   Less than high school degree (1)

o   High school degree or equivalent (2)

o   Bachelor's degree (3)

o   Master's degree/MBA (4)

o   Doctoral Degree (5)

Q21: What is your current occupation?

o   Student (1)

o   Student-Worker (2)

o   Employed (3)

o   Unemployed (4)

o   Retired (5)

Appendix 2: Pre-survey - Sample Characterization

Frequencies		
Gender		
Male	41	53,2%
Female	36	46,8%
Age		
Under 18	1	1,3%
18 - 24	19	24,7%
25 – 34	9	11,7%
35 – 44	8	10,4%
45 – 54	26	33,8%
55 – 64	14	18,2%
Nationality		
Portuguese	66	85,7%
Non-Portuguese*	11	14,3%
Education Level		
Less than High School	1	1,3%
High School	20	26%
Bachelor's degree	25	32,5%
Master's degree/MBA	30	39%
PhD	1	1,3%
Occupation		
Student	8	10,4%
Student-Worker	6	7,8%
Employed	60	77,9%
Unemployed	3	3,9%

Familiarity with Ford		
Slightly familiar	4	5,2%
Moderately familiar	21	27,3%
Very familiar	27	35,1%
Extremely familiar	25	32,5%

* American, Brazilian, Canadian, Chinese, Malagasy, Moroccan, Peruvian, Singaporean

Appendix 3: Social Cause Selection – Internal Consistency Reliability

Brand-cause fit	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Quality
Ford - Gender Equality	3	0,831	Good
Ford - LGBTQ+ Rights	3	0,879	Good
Ford - Racial Justice	3	0,864	Good
Ford – Refugee Rights	3	0,894	Good
Ford – Education Access	3	0,907	Excellent

To assess the overall reliability of the brand-cause fit scale, three new variables were created, by computing the mean of each item of the scale (Mean_Cause_item1; Mean_Cause_item2; Mean_Cause_item3).

Brand-cause fit	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Quality
General	3	0,877	Good

Appendix 4: Celebrity Endorser Selection – Internal Consistency Reliability

Brand/celebrity congruence	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Quality
Ford / Cristiano Ronaldo	3	0,947	Excellent
Ford / Ariana Grande	3	0,972	Excellent
Ford / Dwayne Johnson	3	0,986	Excellent
Ford / Scarlett Johansson	3	0,976	Excellent
Ford / Justin Bieber	3	0,985	Excellent
Ford / Taylor Swift	3	0,988	Excellent
Ford / Will Smith	3	0,985	Excellent
Ford / Kylie Jenner	3	0,992	Excellent
Ford / Lionel Messi	3	0,962	Excellent
Ford / Billie Eilish	3	0,986	Excellent

To assess the overall reliability of the brand/celebrity congruence scale, three new variables were created, by computing the mean of each item of the scale (Mean_Celebrity_item1; Mean_Celebrity_item2; Mean_Celebrity_item3).

Brand/celebrity congruence	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Quality
General	3	0,993	Excellent

Appendix 5: Social Cause Selection – Brand-cause Fit Mean by Social Cause

The mean and standard deviation were calculated for each of the brand-cause fit 3-item scales.

Brand-cause fit	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ford - Gender Equality	**5,1255**	**1,25428**
Ford - Racial Justice	4,7056	1,47590
Ford - Education Access	4,6840	1,51686
Ford – Refugee Rights	4,4545	1,59211
Ford – LGBTQ+ Rights	4,4026	1,50956

Appendix 6: Celebrity Endorser Selection – Brand/celebrity congruence Mean by Celebrity Endorser

Brand/celebrity congruence	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ford / Dwayne Johnson	**4,8701**	**1,40400**
Ford / Will Smith	4,7273	1,52151
Ford / Scarlett Johansson	**4,3723**	**1,45495**
Ford / Cristiano Ronaldo	4,2468	1,69053
Ford / Ariana Grande	4,1212	1,58659
Ford / Taylor Swift	4,0952	1,63465
Ford / Lionel Messi	4,0087	1,69793
Ford / Billie Eilish	3,9957	1,66885
Ford / Kylie Jenner	3,6667	1,72444
Ford / Justin Bieber	3,6147	1,72957

Appendix 7: 1on1 interviews – Participants' Characterization

Name	Nationality	Education	Occupation	Gender	Age
Amanda Deng	Canadian	Bachelor's	Employed	F	22
Cláudia Ribeiro	Portuguese	Bachelor's	Employed	F	53
Constança Machado	Portuguese	Bachelor's	Student	F	22
Fábio Silva	Portuguese	Bachelor's	Employed	M	32
Francisco Pinheiro	Portuguese	High School	Student	M	23
Maria Bernardino	Portuguese	High School	Student	F	20
Pedro Ribeiro	Portuguese	PhD	Employed	M	41
Rui Estrela	Portuguese	Bachelor's	Employed	M	53
Sandra Oliveira	Portuguese	Bachelor's	Employed	F	50
Wanqing Yu	Singaporean	Bachelor's	Employed	F	25

Appendix 8: 1on1 interviews – Script and Aggregated Results

1. **Introduction**

First of all, I would like to thank you for participating in this study which is essential for my thesis development. The intent of this interview is for me to understand how you perceive and interpret the images that I will be showing you. The results presented on my dissertation will be aggregated, however I ask for your permission to record this conversation, in order for me to write afterward the transcript. It will only take you around 20 minutes to answer.

2. **Demographics**

- Nationality

-   Highest Level of Education Completed (High School; Bachelor's Degree; Master's Degree; PhD)

-   Occupation (Employed; Unemployed; Student; Student-Worker; Retired)

-   Gender (Male; Female)

-   Age

3. Stimuli Interpretation

3.1 Male Celebrity Endorsement

Main Questions	Results
What do you perceive is being communicated? Who is endorsing the brand? What do you think about this person?	- All interviewees recognized Dwayne Johnson, either as a former professional wrestler or an actor. - The majority associated him to strength and masculinity and perceived him as a public figure with a positive image. Additionally, they considered him a good role model for other men in the fight for gender equality.

The Male Celebrity Endorsement stimulus was interpreted as intended.

3.2 Male Non-Celebrity Endorsement

Main Questions	Results
What do you perceive is being communicated? What do you think about this person? Why do you think he is appearing with the brand?	- None of the interviewees recognized the person in the image. - Most interviewees assumed he might be a Ford collaborator, while others thought he is a regular businessman.

The Male Non-Celebrity Endorsement stimulus was interpreted as intended.

3.3 Female Celebrity Endorsement

Main Questions	Results
What do you perceive is being communicated? Who is endorsing the brand? What do you think about this person?	- The large majority recognized Scarlett Johansson as a Hollywood actress. - Most interviewees perceived her as someone smart and good looking. They also associated her to the fight against gender stereotypes.

The Female Celebrity Endorsement stimulus was interpreted as intended.

3.4 Female Non-Celebrity Endorsement

Main Questions	Results
What do you perceive is being communicated?	- None of the interviewees recognized the person in the image.
What do you think about this person? Why do you think she is appearing with the brand?	- Most interviewees assumed she might be a Ford collaborator who serves as a more relatable representation that the brand is truly giving the same opportunities to women.

The Female Non-Celebrity Endorsement stimulus was interpreted as intended.

3.5 No Endorsement nor Activism – Control Group

Main Questions	Results
What do you perceive is being communicated?	- All interviewees acknowledged the absence of an endorser and gender equality message.
Could you please compare it with the previous four images?	- Most interviewees interpreted the communication as a regular post of Ford promoting their products, stating attributes such as performance and innovation.

The No Endorsement nor Activism stimulus was interpreted as intended.

4. Conclusion

Considering that we are reaching the end of this interview, after seeing all the five images, is there anything you would like to add? Thank you very much.

Appendix 9: Main Study – Survey

Dear participant, I would like to thank you in advance for participating in this survey! This study is part of my master thesis at Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics.

There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses are confidential, and all data collected will be only used for this study. It will take about 5 minutes to answer.

Control Questions - Block 1

Q0: How familiar are you with the brand Ford?

o   Not familiar at all (1)

o   Slightly familiar (2)

o   Moderately familiar (3)

o   Very familiar (4)

o   Extremely familiar (5)

Stimuli - Block 2

Imagine that you are scrolling through social media, and you come across the following Instagram post from Ford. Please read it carefully.

Each participant will only see one of the 5 stimuli.

(Stimulus 1: Male Celebrity; Stimulus 2: Male Non-Celebrity; Stimulus 3: Female Celebrity; Stimulus 4: Female Non-Celebrity; Stimulus 5: Control)

Perceived Brand Authenticity - Block 3

Q.1: Considering the Instagram post you saw, please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statements, on a scale from 1=Strongly disagree to 7=Strongly agree.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)

Ford is a brand with a history (1)

Ford is a timeless brand (2)

Ford is a brand that survives times (3)

Ford is a brand that survives trends (4)

Ford is a brand that will not betray you (5)

Ford is a brand that accomplishes its value promise (6)

Ford is an honest brand (7)

Ford is a brand that gives back to its consumers (8)

Ford is a brand with moral principles (9)

Please select the option "Strongly disagree" (10)

Ford is a brand true to a set of moral values (11)

Ford is a brand that cares about its consumers (12)

Ford is a brand that adds meaning to people's lives (13)

Ford is a brand that reflects important values people care about (14)

Ford is a brand that connects people with their real selves (15)

Ford is a brand that connects people with what is really important (16)

Brand Image - Block 4

Q.2: Considering the Instagram post you saw, please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statements, on a scale from 1=Strongly disagree to 7=Strongly agree.

Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)

Some characteristics of Ford come to my mind quickly (1)

I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of Ford (2)

Ford has a strong personality (3)

I have a clear impression of the type of people who use Ford (4)

Ford has a strong image (5)

The intangible attributes of Ford are reason enough to buy it (6)

Ford provides a high value in relation to the price we must pay for it (7)

Manipulation Check - Block 5

Q.3: Does the Instagram post you saw address gender equality?

o   Yes (1)

o   No (2)

Q.4: Does the Instagram post you saw feature a celebrity?

o   Yes, it features a male celebrity (1)

o   Yes, it features a female celebrity (2)

o   No (3)

Demographics - Block 6

Q5: What is your gender?

o   Male (1)

o   Female (2)

Q6: What is your age?

o   Under 18 (1)

o   18 - 24 (2)

o   25 - 34 (3)

o   35 - 44 (4)

o   45 - 54 (5)

o   55 - 64 (6)

o   65 or older (7)

Q7: What is your nationality?

Drop-down list from Qualtrics (1)

Q8: What is the highest degree you have received?

o   Less than high school degree (1)

o   High school degree or equivalent (2)

o   Bachelor's degree (3)

o   Master's degree/MBA (4)

o   Doctoral Degree (5)

Q9: What is your current occupation?

o   Student (1)

o   Student-Worker (2)

o   Employed (3)

o   Unemployed (4)

o   Retired (5)

Q10: What is your monthly gross income?

o   Less than 700€ (1)

o   700€ – 1199€ (2)

o   1200€ – 1699€ (3)

o   1700€ – 2199€ (4)

o   2200€ – 2699€ (5)

o   2700€ – 3199€ (6)

o   3200€ – 3699€ (7)

o   3700€ – 4199€ (8)

o   More than 4200€ (9)

Appendix 10: Main Study – Crosstabs (Brand Activism*Does the Instagram post you saw address gender equality?)

			Does the Instagram post you saw address gender equality?		Total
			No	Yes	
Brand Activism	No	Count	55	2	57
		% of Total	17,2%	0,6%	17,8%
	Yes	Count	11	253	264
		% of Total	3,4%	78,8%	82,2%
Total		Count	66	255	321
		% of Total	20,6%	79,4%	100,0%

Appendix 11: Main Study – Chi-Square test (Brand Activism*Does the Instagram post you saw address gender equality?)

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	244,644[a]	1	<0,001		
Continuity Correction[b]	239,024	1	<0,001		
Likelihood Ratio	217,405	1	<0,001		
Fisher's Exact Test				<0,001	<0,001

Linear-by-Linear Association	243,882	1	<0,001			
N of Valid Cases	321					

a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11,72.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Appendix 12: Main Study – Crosstabs (Celebrity* Does the Instagram post you saw feature a celebrity?)

			Does the Instagram post you saw feature a celebrity?			
			No	Yes, it features a male celebrity	Yes, it features a female celebrity	Total
Celebrity	No Celebrity	Count	192	2	0	194
		% of Total	59,8%	0,6%	0,0%	60,4%
	Male Celebrity	Count	4	59	0	63
		% of Total	1,2%	18,4%	0,0%	19,6%
	Female Celebrity	Count	7	0	57	64
		% of Total	2,2%	0,0%	17,8%	20,0%
Total		Count	203	61	57	321
		% of Total	63,2%	19,0%	17,8%	100,0%

Appendix 13: Main Study – Chi-Square test (Celebrity* Does the Instagram post you saw feature a celebrity?)

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	557,850[a]	4	<0,001
Likelihood Ratio	489,409	4	<0,001
Linear-by-Linear Association	269,186	1	<0,001
N of Valid Cases	321		

a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11,19.

Appendix 14: Descriptive results of the Mahalanobis and Cook's distances for the three regression models

	N	Minimum	Maximum	critical value c2(df)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mahalanobis Distance model 1	308	0,2167	4,5851	6,6349 (1)	0,9968	1,6758
Cook's Distance model 1	308	0,0000	0,0575		0,0031	0,0056
Mahalanobis Distance model 2	308	0,2175	10,7068	9,2103 (2)	1,9935	2,0812
Cook's Distance model 2	308	0,0000	0,0404		0,0030	0,0063
Mahalanobis Distance model 3	308	0,2167	4,5851	6,6349 (1)	0,9968	1,6758
Cook's Distance model 3	308	0,0000	0,0468		0,0032	0,0058

Appendix 15: Frequency tables for the number of outliers in each model

		Frequency	Percent
Mahalanobis Distance - model 1	No Outlier	308	100,00%
	Outlier	0	0,00%
Cook's Distance - model 1	No Outlier	308	100,00%
	Outlier	0	0,00%
Mahalanobis Distance - model 2	No Outlier	307	99,68%
	Outlier	1	0,32%
Cook's Distance - model 2	No Outlier	308	100,00%
	Outlier	0	0,00%
Mahalanobis Distance - model 3	No Outlier	308	100,00%
	Outlier	0	0,00%
Cook's Distance - model 3	No Outlier	308	100,00%
	Outlier	0	0,00%

Appendix 16: Main Study – Sample Characterization

Frequencies		
Gender		
Male	145	47,1%
Female	163	52,9%
Age		
Under 18	9	2,9%
18 - 24	80	26,0%
25 – 34	56	18,2%
35 – 44	55	17,9%
45 – 54	71	23,0%
55 – 64	29	9,4%
65 or older	8	2,6%
Nationality		
Portuguese	270	87,7%
Non-Portuguese*	38	12,3%
Education Level		
Less than High School	14	4,5%
High School	68	22,1%
Bachelor's degree	123	39,9%
Master's degree/MBA	100	32,5%
PhD	3	1,0%
Occupation		
Student	64	20,8%
Student-Worker	14	4,5%
Employed	214	69,5%
Unemployed	7	2,3%
Retired	9	2,9%
Income		
Less than 700€	65	21,1%
700€ - 1199€	39	12,7%
1200€ - 1699€	46	14,9%
1700€ - 2199€	43	14,0%
2200€ - 2699€	40	13,0%
2700€ - 3199€	29	9,4%
3200€ - 3699€	11	3,6%

3700€ - 4199€	8	2,6%
More than 4200€	27	8,8%
Stimulus		
Male Celebrity	59	19,2%
Male Non-Celebrity	66	21,4%
Female Celebrity	64	20,8%
Female Non-Celebrity	64	20,8%
Control	55	17,8%
Familiarity with Ford		
Not familiar at all	15	4,7%
Slightly familiar	39	12,1%
Moderately familiar	82	25,5%
Very familiar	104	32,4%
Extremely familiar	81	25,2%

* American, Australian, Austrian, British, Canadian, Cape Verdean, Chinese, Dutch, Estonian, French, Iranian, Italian, Korean, Malaysian, Moroccan, Peruvian, Polish, Singaporean, Slovak, Spanish

Appendix 17: Main Study – Mediation Model

```
Run MATRIX procedure:

***************** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.0 ****************

        Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D.        www.afhayes.com
    Documentation available in Hayes (2022). www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

************************************************************************
Model  : 4
    Y  : BI
    X  : BA
    M  : PBA

Sample
Size:  308

************************************************************************
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 PBA

Model Summary (Model 1)
         R       R-sq       MSE     F(HC0)        df1        df2          p
     ,1288      ,0166      ,7315     5,9350     1,0000   306,0000      ,0154

Model
            coeff     se(HC0)         t          p        LLCI       ULCI
constant   4,8873      ,1054    46,3855      ,0000      4,6799     5,0946
BA          ,2890      ,1186     2,4362      ,0154       ,0556      ,5225

************************************************************************
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 BI

Model Summary (Model 2)
         R       R-sq       MSE     F(HC0)        df1        df2          p
     ,8225      ,6765      ,2830   403,2767     2,0000   305,0000      ,0000

Model
            coeff     se(HC0)         t          p        LLCI       ULCI
constant    ,5489      ,1720     3,1914      ,0016       ,2105      ,8873
BA          ,0538      ,0346     1,5549      ,0599      -,0140      ,1216
```

```
PBA            ,7304      ,0256   28,2781      ,0000      ,6802      ,7806

Test(s) of X by M interaction:
     F(HC0)        df1        df2          p
     1,3823     1,0000   304,0000      ,2406

************************** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL **************************
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 BI

Model Summary (Model 3)
          R       R-sq        MSE     F(HC0)        df1        df2          p
      ,0638      ,0041      ,8685     1,3153     1,0000   306,0000      ,2523

Model
              coeff    se(HC0)          t          p       LLCI       ULCI
constant    4,9247      ,1217    40,4808      ,0000     4,6853     5,1641
BA           ,2649      ,1351     1,9608      ,0250      ,0001      ,5297

************** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y **************

Total effect of X on Y
     Effect    se(HC0)          t          p       LLCI       ULCI
      ,2649      ,1351     1,9608      ,0250      ,0001      ,5297
Direct effect of X on Y
     Effect    se(HC0)          t          p       LLCI       ULCI
      ,0538      ,0346     1,5549      ,0599     -,0140      ,1216

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
          Effect     BootSE   BootLLCI   BootULCI
PBA        ,2111      ,1088      ,0521      ,4690

*********** BOOTSTRAP RESULTS FOR REGRESSION MODEL PARAMETERS ************

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 PBA

              Coeff   BootMean     BootSE   BootLLCI   BootULCI
constant    4,8873     4,8858      ,1076     4,6792     5,0952
BA           ,2890      ,2905      ,1200      ,0577      ,5176

----------

OUTCOME VARIABLE:
 BI

              Coeff   BootMean     BootSE   BootLLCI   BootULCI
constant     ,5489      ,5490      ,1722      ,2145      ,8905
BA           ,0538      ,0532      ,0346     -,0146      ,1210
PBA          ,7304      ,7302      ,0256      ,6800      ,7804

********************* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS **********************

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
   95,0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
   5000

NOTE: A heteroscedasticity consistent standard error and covariance matrix
estimator was used.

------ END MATRIX -----
```

Appendix 18: Main Study – Assumptions Results

		Statistic	Sig
Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Model 1	0,059	0,013
	Model 2	0,060	0,011
	Model 3	0,060	0,011
Durbin-Watson	Model 1	1,842	$d_L= 1,71$; $d_U=1,83$
	Model 2	1,973	$d_L= 1,70$; $d_U=1,84$
	Model 3	1,906	$d_L= 1,71$; $d_U=1,83$

Appendix 19: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results – Hypotheses Testing

		Statistic	df	Monte Carlo Sig*
BI	Celebrity endorsement	0,093	123	0,015
	Non-Celebrity endorsement	0,068	130	0,150
	No endorsement nor activism	0,072	55	0,672
PBA	Celebrity endorsement	0,072	123	0,128
	Non-Celebrity endorsement	0,054	130	0,467
	No endorsement nor activism	0,065	55	0,828

*Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2000000

Appendix 20: Descriptive Statistics – Hypotheses Testing

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
BI	Celebrity endorsement	123	5,2276	0,8659
	Non-Celebrity endorsement	130	4,9396	0,9815
	No endorsement nor activism	55	4,9247	0,9105
PBA	Celebrity endorsement	123	5,3008	0,8214
	Non-Celebrity endorsement	130	5,0585	0,8989
	No endorsement nor activism	55	4,8873	0,7886

Appendix 21: ANOVA Test Results – Hypotheses Testing

	Levene's Test		ANOVA	
	Based on the mean	Sig.	F	Sig.
BI	0,957	0,385	3,705	0,026
PBA	1,345	0,262	3,743	0,006

Appendix 22: Tuckey's post hoc Comparisons – Hypotheses Testing

Dependent Variable	(i)	(j)	Sig.
BI	Non-Celebrity endorsement	No endorsement nor activism	,994
		Celebrity endorsement	,037
	Celebrity endorsement	No endorsement nor activism	,009
PBA	Non-Celebrity endorsement	No endorsement nor activism	,423
		Celebrity endorsement	,062
	Celebrity endorsement	No endorsement nor activism	,008

Appendix 23: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results – Celebrity Gender

		Statistic	df	Monte Carlo Sig*
BI	Male Celebrity endorsement	0,089	59	0,293
	Female Celebrity endorsement	0,121	64	0,019
PBA	Male Celebrity endorsement	0,080	59	0,460
	Female Celebrity endorsement	0,139	64	0,004

*Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2000000

Appendix 24: Descriptive Statistics and Mann-Whitney U Test Results – Celebrity Gender

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Statistic (sig)
BI	Male Celebrity endorsement	59	5,2058	0,8440	-0,761
	Female Celebrity endorsement	64	5,2478	0,8917	(0,447)
PBA	Male Celebrity endorsement	59	5,3028	0,7975	0,631
	Female Celebrity endorsement	64	5,2990	0,8491	(0,528)

Appendix 25: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results – Non-Celebrity Gender

		Statistic	df	Monte Carlo Sig*
BI	Male Non-Celebrity endorsement	0,065	66	0,692
	Female Non-Celebrity endorsement	0,072	64	0,551
PBA	Male Non-Celebrity endorsement	0,062	66	0,773
	Female Non-Celebrity endorsement	0,118	64	0,027

*Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2000000

Appendix 26: Descriptive Statistics and t-Student test Results – Non-Celebrity Gender

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene´s test statistic (sig)	Test Statistic (sig)
BI	Male Non-Celebrity endorsement	66	4,8810	1,0657	1,941 (0,166)	-0,690 (0,491)
	Female Non-Celebrity endorsement	64	5,0000	0,8909		
PBA	Male Non-Celebrity endorsement	66	4,9636	1,0557	8,848 (0,004)	-1,231 (0,221)
	Female Non-Celebrity endorsement	64	5,1563	0,6969		

Appendix 27: Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results – Endorser Gender

		Statistic	df	Monte Carlo Sig*
BI	Male endorsement	0,066	125	0,192
	Female endorsement	0,089	128	0,017
PBA	Male endorsement	0,040	125	0,909
	Female endorsement	0,099	128	0,003

*Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2000000

Appendix 28: Descriptive Statistics and Mann-Whitney U Test Results – Endorser Gender

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Statistic (sig)
BI	Male endorsement	125	5,0343	0,9773	-0,914
	Female endorsement	128	5,1239	0,8964	(0,361)
PBA	Male endorsement	125	5,1237	0,9543	-1,215
	Female endorsement	128	5,2276	0,7770	(0,225)

Appendix 29: Crosstabs (Respondent Gender*Brand Activism)

			Brand Activism		
			No Activism	Activism	Total
What is your gender?	Male	Count	25	120	145
		% of Total	8,1%	39,0%	47,1%
	Female	Count	30	133	163
		% of Total	9,7%	43,2%	52,9%
Total		Count	55	253	308
		% of Total	17,9%	82,1%	100,0%

Appendix 30: Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Levene's Test Results – Gender*Brand Activism

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistic (sig)	Levene's Statistic based on the mean (sig)
BI	Gender*Brand Activism	0,055 (0,025)	1,491 (0,217)
PBA	Gender*Brand Activism	0,051 (0,046)	2,503 (0,059)

Appendix 31: Descriptive Statistics of BI and PBA by Gender and Brand Activism

	BI		PBA	

Brand Activism	What is your gender?	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
No Activism	Male	4,9371	1,07466	25	4,9653	0,9640
	Female	4,9143	,76665	30	4,8222	0,6158
	Total	4,9247	,91053	55	4,8873	0,7886
Activism	Male	5,0976	,87202	120	5,2411	0,8223
	Female	5,0634	,99402	133	5,1178	0,9081
	Total	5,0796	,93645	253	5,1763	0,8689

Appendix 32: Two-way ANOVA Results in BI by Gender and BA

Dependent Variable: BI

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1,166ᵃ	3	,389	,445	,721
Intercept	4490,608	1	4490,608	5138,371	,000
BA	1,074	1	1,074	1,229	*,268*
Gender	,037	1	,037	,042	*,838*
BA * Gender	,001	1	,001	,002	*,967*
Error	265,677	304	,874		
Total	8127,673	308			
Corrected Total	266,842	307			

a. R Squared = ,004 (Adjusted R Squared = -,005)

Appendix 33: Two-way ANOVA Results in PBA by Gender and BA

Dependent Variable: PBA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	5,012ᵃ	3	1,671	2,282	,079
Intercept	4550,965	1	4550,965	6214,900	,000
BA	3,660	1	3,660	4,999	*,026*
Gender	,796	1	,796	1,087	*,298*
BA * Gender	,004	1	,004	,006	*,938*
Error	222,609	304	,732		
Total	8316,409	308			
Corrected Total	227,621	307			

a. R Squared = ,022 (Adjusted R Squared = ,012)

Appendix 34: Crosstabs (Gender*Familiarity)

			How familiar are you with the brand Ford?					
			Not familiar at all	Slightly familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar	Total
Male		Count	5	11	32	47	50	145
		Expected Count	6,6	17,9	37,2	46,1	37,2	145,0

What is your gender?								
		Adjusted Residual	-,9	-2,4	-1,4	,2	**3,3**	
	Female	Count	9	27	47	51	29	163
		Expected Count	7,4	20,1	41,8	51,9	41,8	163,0
		Adjusted Residual	,9	**2,4**	1,4	-,2	-3,3	
	Total	Count	14	38	79	98	79	308
		Expected Count	14,0	38,0	79,0	98,0	79,0	308,0

Appendix 35: Chi-Square test (Gender*Familiarity)

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15,474	4	,004
Likelihood Ratio	15,737	4	,003
Linear-by-Linear Association	13,678	1	,000
N of Valid Cases	308		

Appendix 36: Symmetric Measures (Gender*Familiarity)

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,224	,004
	Cramer's V	,224	,004
N of Valid Cases		308	

Appendix 37: Crosstabs (Age*Familiarity)

			How familiar are you with the brand Ford?					
			Not familiar at all	Slightly familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar	Total
What is your age?	Under 18	Count	0	1	4	2	2	9
		Expected Count	,4	1,1	2,3	2,9	2,3	9,0
		Adjusted Residual	-,7	-,1	1,3	-,6	-,2	
	18 - 24	Count	4	13	26	20	17	80
		Expected Count	3,6	9,9	20,5	25,5	20,5	80,0
		Adjusted Residual	,2	1,2	1,6	-1,5	-1,0	
	25 - 34	Count	2	10	15	19	10	56
		Expected Count	2,5	6,9	14,4	17,8	14,4	56,0
		Adjusted Residual	-,4	1,4	,2	,4	-1,5	
	35 - 44	Count	1	7	14	18	15	55
		Expected Count	2,5	6,8	14,1	17,5	14,1	55,0
		Adjusted Residual	-1,1	,1	,0	,2	,3	
	45 - 54	Count	4	5	16	21	25	71
		Expected Count	3,2	8,8	18,2	22,6	18,2	71,0
		Adjusted Residual	,5	-1,5	-,7	-,5	2,1	

			Not familiar at all	Slightly familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar	Total
55 - 64		Count	3	1	3	13	9	29
		Expected Count	1,3	3,6	7,4	9,2	7,4	29,0
		Adjusted Residual	1,6	-1,5	-2,0	1,6	,7	
	65 or older	Count	0	1	1	5	1	8
		Expected Count	,4	1,0	2,1	2,5	2,1	8,0
		Adjusted Residual	-,6	,0	-,9	1,9	-,9	
Total		Count	14	38	79	98	79	308
		Expected Count	14,0	38,0	79,0	98,0	79,0	308,0

Appendix 38: Chi-Square test (Age*Familiarity)

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27,178	24	,296
Likelihood Ratio	28,466	24	,241
Linear-by-Linear Association	6,157	1	,013
N of Valid Cases	308		

Appendix 39: Symmetric Measures (Age*Familiarity)

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,297	,296
	Cramer's V	,149	,296
N of Valid Cases		308	308

Appendix 40: Crosstabs (Education Level*Familiarity)

			How familiar are you with the brand Ford?					
			Not familiar at all	Slightly familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar	Total
What is the highest degree you have received?	Less than high school degree	Count	1	1	4	5	3	14
		Expected Count	,6	1,7	3,6	4,5	3,6	14,0
		Adjusted Residual	,5	-,6	,3	,3	-,4	
	High school degree or equivalent	Count	4	13	21	15	15	68
		Expected Count	3,1	8,4	17,4	21,6	17,4	68,0
		Adjusted Residual	,6	1,9	1,1	-2,0	-,8	
	Bachelor's degree	Count	5	13	32	42	31	123
		Expected Count	5,6	15,2	31,5	39,1	31,5	123,0
		Adjusted Residual	-,3	-,8	,1	,7	-,1	
	Master's degree/MBA	Count	3	11	20	36	30	100
		Expected Count	4,5	12,3	25,6	31,8	25,6	100,0

		Adjusted Residual	-,9	-,5	-1,6	1,1	1,2	
	PhD	Count	1	0	2	0	0	3
		Expected Count	,1	,4	,8	1,0	,8	3,0
		Adjusted Residual	2,4	-,7	1,6	-1,2	-1,0	
Total		Count	14	38	79	98	79	308
		Expected Count	14,0	38,0	79,0	98,0	79,0	308,0

Appendix 41: Chi-Square test (Education Level*Familiarity)

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19,963	16	,222
Likelihood Ratio	18,225	16	,311
Linear-by-Linear Association	2,771	1	,096
N of Valid Cases	308		

Appendix 42: Symmetric measures (Education Level*Familiarity)

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,255	,222
	Cramer's V	,127	,222
N of Valid Cases		308	308

Appendix 43: Crosstabs (Occupation*Familiarity)

			How familiar are you with the brand Ford?					Total
			Not familiar at all	Slightly familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar	
What is your current occupation?	Student	Count	2	11	22	18	11	64
		Expected Count	2,9	7,9	16,4	20,4	16,4	64,0
		Adjusted Residual	-,6	1,3	1,8	-,7	-1,7	
	Student-Worker	Count	0	1	5	4	4	14
		Expected Count	,6	1,7	3,6	4,5	3,6	14,0
		Adjusted Residual	-,8	-,6	,9	-,3	,3	
	Employed	Count	11	25	47	69	62	214
		Expected Count	9,7	26,4	54,9	68,1	54,9	214,0
		Adjusted Residual	,8	-,5	-2,2	,2	2,0	
	Unemployed	Count	0	1	4	2	0	7
		Expected Count	,3	,9	1,8	2,2	1,8	7,0
		Adjusted Residual	-,6	,2	1,9	-,2	-1,6	
	Retired	Count	1	0	1	5	2	9

			Not familiar at all	Slightly familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar	Total
		Expected Count	,4	1,1	2,3	2,9	2,3	9,0
		Adjusted Residual	1,0	-1,1	-1,0	1,6	-,2	
Total		Count	14	38	79	98	79	308
		Expected Count	14,0	38,0	79,0	98,0	79,0	308,0

Appendix 44: Chi-Square test (Occupation*Familiarity)

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18,567	16	,292
Likelihood Ratio	21,358	16	,165
Linear-by-Linear Association	2,004	1	,157
N of Valid Cases	308		

Appendix 45: Symmetric measures (Occupation*Familiarity)

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,246	,292
	Cramer's V	,123	,292
N of Valid Cases		308	308

Appendix 46: Crosstabs (Income*Familiarity)

			How familiar are you with the brand Ford?					
			Not familiar at all	Slightly familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar	Total
What is your monthly gross income?	Less than 700€	Count	2	12	24	16	11	65
		Expected Count	3,0	8,0	16,7	20,7	16,7	65,0
		Adjusted Residual	-,6	1,7	**2,3**	-1,4	-1,8	
	700€ – 1199€	Count	1	4	12	14	8	39
		Expected Count	1,8	4,8	10,0	12,4	10,0	39,0
		Adjusted Residual	-,6	-,4	,8	,6	-,8	
	1200€ – 1699€	Count	4	6	13	13	10	46
		Expected Count	2,1	5,7	11,8	14,6	11,8	46,0
		Adjusted Residual	1,5	,2	,4	-,6	-,7	
	1700€ – 2199€	Count	4	2	6	17	14	43
		Expected Count	2,0	5,3	11,0	13,7	11,0	43,0
		Adjusted Residual	1,6	-1,7	-1,9	1,2	1,1	
	2200€ – 2699€	Count	2	5	10	15	8	40
		Expected Count	1,8	4,9	10,3	12,7	10,3	40,0
		Adjusted Residual	,1	,0	-,1	,8	-,9	
		Count	1	6	7	6	9	29

2700€ – 3199€	Expected Count	1,3	3,6	7,4	9,2	7,4	29,0
	Adjusted Residual	-,3	1,4	-,2	-1,4	,7	
3200€ – 3699€	Count	0	0	3	6	2	11
	Expected Count	,5	1,4	2,8	3,5	2,8	11,0
	Adjusted Residual	-,7	-1,3	,1	1,6	-,6	
3700€ – 4199€	Count	0	1	0	5	2	8
	Expected Count	,4	1,0	2,1	2,5	2,1	8,0
	Adjusted Residual	-,6	,0	-1,7	1,9	,0	
More than 4200€	Count	0	2	4	6	15	27
	Expected Count	1,2	3,3	6,9	8,6	6,9	27,0
	Adjusted Residual	-1,2	-,8	-1,3	-1,1	*3,7*	
Total	Count	14	38	79	98	79	308
	Expected Count	14,0	38,0	79,0	98,0	79,0	308,0

Appendix 47: Chi-Square test (Income*Familiarity)

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	46,408	32	,048
Likelihood Ratio	48,950	32	,028
Linear-by-Linear Association	11,736	1	,001
N of Valid Cases	308		

Appendix 48: Symmetric measures (Income*Familiarity)

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,388	,048
	Cramer's V	,194	,048
N of Valid Cases		308	308