

A Typology for Sociopolitical Stance of International Brands in the Case of Ukraine War

By Amir Ekhlassi & Amir Rahideh[±]*

Politics can no longer be avoided by brands. In the dynamic world of today where controversial socio-political issues emerge on a daily basis, consumers' political stances on loaded issues of any particular period could determine consumer-brand relationships. A number of examples in this regard can be found in recent literature. In some instances brands justify their stances by using a "higher purpose" in an attempt to project an image consistent with lack of political involvement. This research aims to analyze strategies adopted by various international brands in regards to the war in Ukraine and attempts to categorize these strategies into various types based on their reflection in domestic and international electronic media. This paper explores why brands taking a sociopolitical stance and using different kinds of positioning strategy under-researched area as a source of leverage for brand attachment. We try to design a typology for brands sociopolitical stance in the case of Ukraine war whether they are long term strategies with higher costs or short time strategies with fewer costs. The main questions addressed in this research are: What do customers expect from brands to take a political stance? How can a brand image change as a result of political stance? What is the purpose of brands' political stance and how can it be interpreted? Brands seem to have reacted to the Ukraine war because of one or more of the followings: 1. The brand has taken a political stance under the influence of their stakeholder pressure. 2. To create a desired image for themselves. 3. The brand sees its political response to the Ukraine war as consistent with their higher purpose and social responsibility, even if it is financially detrimental. 4. To boost awareness and ultimately increase sales.

Keywords: brand political stance, higher purpose, brand image, Ukraine War

Introduction

Nowadays, consumers live in a world where re-acting to social causes is a lauded form of self-expression. This happens to coincide with ever increasing numbers of brands taking various stances (Schmidt et al., 2020) on a wider range of sociopolitical issues such as wars, immigration, animal rights, gun control and climate change (Butler-Madden, 2017). This has given rise to an unprecedented turn in brand-consumer relations.

Since the Ukraine war, lots of companies have changed their strategies and policies; as a result, Russian market faced wide reactions that made the situation unbalanced and had remarkable influence on the world economy. Consumers are

*Visiting Lecturer, ESB Business School, Reutlingen University, Germany.

[±]Graduate Student, Imam Khomeini International University, Iran.

nowadays surrounded by mass media. Considering the increasing importance of social media in people's lives, today customers engage a lot more with news and ideologies. Moreover, it seems that they do not keep this to themselves and tend to project such engagement onto the corporations the products and services of which they regularly purchase and expect such corporations to empathize and share their viewpoints. For instance, The Corporate Social Mind (2020) states that 60% of customers in the US wish for corporations to engage in advocacy marketing and Bhagwat et al. (2020) believe that they wish for their brands to show strong support of particular sides in sociopolitical issues. People seem to want to have a role in changing the world they live in into the shape they desire (Radnofsky, 2021).

Needless to say, this has resulted in a closer-than-ever engagement of politics and branding in a deep and mutually efficacious relation. This engagement, depending on the issue in question and consumers' ideas on such issues, such engagement can take various forms and lead to different kinds of attitudes by brands. The purpose of the current work is to better understand why brand owners take a particular sociopolitical stance, and subsequent to such an understanding, categorize actions of popular brands into different kinds of categories.

Literature Review

Political Stance and Brand Attachment

The relation between political stance of a brand and emotionally connected to that brand, a concept dubbed "brand attachment" - "the emotional connection between humans and brands"- has recently been getting more significance and contributes to formation of consumers' preferences (Flight and Coker, 2021). According to Cone Communications (2017) and Kim (2019), more than 60% of customers hope that companies will play an active role in sociopolitical change. The importance of taking stance in sociopolitical issues is undeniable (Jungblut & Johnen, 2021), so the number of brands that take stance on political issues are permanently growing (Jung and Mittal, 2020). Political reasons are becoming more important for consumers in their decision-making process, i.e., they increasingly choose to either support a brand by using their products ("promoting"), or turn away from a brand ("boycotting") based on the brand's strategy in regard to politically charged current affairs (Jungblut & Johnen, 2021). In an essay by Flight and Coker (2021) it is argued that customers choose brands that "fit into and support their worldview" and as such, political ideologies may affect the nature of consumer-brand relationships. This has led to a deeper and more intimate relation between branding and politics which subsequently influence the attitudes of marketers. As a result, the choice of one or the other brand and product strategy by marketers in light of particular social events has become more understandable (Katsanis, 1994).

Sociopolitical Activist Brands and Brand Activism

In this study, we have defined “sociopolitical activist brands” in line with Bhagwat et al. (2020, p. 1) as those that make a “public demonstration of pros and cons on sociopolitical issue”. But sometimes consumers have different kinds of opinions about the same events, and the resulting differential social narrative stories might lead to different understanding (Milfield & Flint, 2020), which might cause some problems for brand managers too. Golob et al. (2020) argues that brand managers should think beyond common solutions and suggestions by paying attention to their wider social influence, because, as Vredenburg et al. (2020) argue, when messages do not conform to customers beliefs, it has the potential to make brands unpopular.

Why Brands Engage with Sociopolitical Causes?

A brand is a collection of human and nonhuman actors (Price & Coulter, 2019), including the consumers, values of the brand and sociopolitical stances. Brands deliver value through social, self-expressive, emotional, and functional, benefits (Aaker, 2014) that extend further the features of the product or service into a wider context (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2007; Holt, 2004) where culture and brand culture become indistinguishable (Banet-Weiser, 2012). After the Russian president, Vladimir V. Putin, ordered the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, multinational companies, whether forced by sanctions or simply a matter of choice under pressure from investors and consumers, have become involved with taking stance on different kind of strategies for their brand. Brands can contribute to making people’s identity (Schmidt et al., 2020). In such an environment, brands help consumers define themselves (Belk, 1988) by constructing their identities through consumption of products and services that embrace wider values (Guzman et al., 2017; Morhart et al., 2015; Swaminathan et al., 2020). As a result, it can be construed that sometimes consumption is, in and of itself, a sociopolitical act (Banet-Weiser, 2012). From consumers’ viewpoint, following a political brand with consideration of its reputation is a common move. According to self-identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), consumers can be motivated to show their sociopolitical orientation and belonging, through ethical behaviors, in two opposing actions that are known to us as *boycotting* and *promoting* products (Shaw & Shui, 2002; Stolle et al., 2005). Consumers use brands that relate to their identity by providing relevant cultural elements that reinforce their sense of self (Guzman & Paswan, 2009; Holt, 2002) and it helps them make their social personas (Baalbaki & Guzman, 2016) through symbolic consumption (Solomon, 1983). Recent surveys prove that 42% of consumers have changed their consumption patterns in response to brand social activities (Ives, 2021). Brands re-actions have direct effects on brand reputation and might cause increase or decrease the profitability of a brand (Urumutta Hewage et al., 2021). Deloitte (2018) implied that 21.4% of marketing managers in the US believe that their brands should engage with political issues, because, “it shows that their company cares about more than making profits”. Getting involved with political

issues through implementation of the correct positional strategy will have 4 distinct impacts on a brand (Table 1).

Table 1. Why Brands Engage with Politics?

1	<p style="text-align: center;">Political consumption</p> <p>Societies become more politically polarized (Tucker et al., 2018; Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015), and consumers become more aware of the political nature of consumption (Simon, 2011) so brands, by taking a sociopolitical stance, offer their consumers benefits (Aaker, 2014).</p>
2	<p style="text-align: center;">Leveraging competitive advantage</p> <p>A sociopolitical stance helps brands to leverage competitive advantage in the sight of customers (Keller, 2003).</p>
3	<p style="text-align: center;">Answering to expectation of consumers</p> <p>Consumers increasingly expect brands to engage socio-politically (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Bhagwat et al., 2020; Swaminathan et al., 2020; Moorman, 2020) and by filling the void left by others, solve social imbalances (Edelman, 2020).</p>
4	<p style="text-align: center;">Co-creating brand meaning</p> <p>By involving with sociopolitical issues that matter to customers, brands can become closer with them (Holt, 2004) and co-create brand meaning (Ind & Schmidt, 2019; Iglesias & Ind, 2020; Price & Coulter, 2019).</p>

Sometimes brand activism as a strategy goes beyond producing products (Mirzaei et al., 2021). Brand related actions in the context of abstract moral concerns related to rightness, goodness, or virtuousness, help brands to have deeper connection with the feeling of consumers (Caruana, 2007). Consumers would usually rather to choose brand through symbolic consumption (Solomon, 1983) that is related, or contributed directly, to their identities in order to help with creating their social personas (Baalbaki & Guzman, 2016). They try to construct their identities through consuming that embraces wider values, because this action helps them feel better about themselves (Guzman & Davis, 2017; Morhart et al., 2015; Swaminathan et al., 2020). So, when importance of social events is high and gets enough attractions, brands can take positions either beside or in front of that to connect deeper with consumers and get more loyalty (Needham, 2005). That's why brand managers as political activists are trying to develop brand social role to affect consumers and help them with their social change to get closer to ideal themselves (Swaminathan et al., 2020).

Can a Sociopolitical Position & Brand Activism be a Higher Purpose for Brand?

“Higher purpose” has been known as the key factor to consider if aiming for success in the twenty-first century by both Ignatius (2019) and Clendaniel (2013). In purposeful branding, central issues are beliefs about what the world should look like and how we can help it to happen faster (Quinn & Thakor, 2018). Definition of higher purpose highlights the positive impact on people's lives and the world in general. Purpose-driven branding refers to make the purpose a part of a brand's identity or even the whole business model (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010), which

is a longer-term and strategic decision. The way that a brand acts in the society helps its image to go beyond economic profit and organizational boundaries (Garbe & Stengel, 2013) and how it stands in inspirational reason helps the brand to take positions beyond making profit (Kramer, 2017). A valuable brand position, beyond social and political re-actions helps both sides - brands, and consumers - to get along and become compatible with each other (Flight & Coker, 2021). This joining of forces forms a synergy that helps the relationship and, as a result, makes the brand reputation grow (Mirzaei et al., 2021).

The Effect of Sociopolitical Stance & Activism on Brand Image

Brands can take a sociopolitical stance either because they find an opportunity to create a competitive advantage (Friedman, 1970) or because managers recognize when brands exist in a social context and it should deliver value to different stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2007; Svensson & Wood, 2008). Recent investigations on consumers demonstrate that connecting a brand with a cause can increase a company's sales and improve brand image position if the cause is comprehended explicitly and the company's motivation behind consumers is not perceived as exploitative (Andrews et al., 2014; Barone et al., 2000; Webb & Mohr, 1998). Schmidt et al. (2020) demonstrate that managers believe that an appropriate sociopolitical stance helps a brand to differentiate, attract new customers and build emotional relation with becoming part of consumers' lives that enhance brand reputation and increase customer's loyalty. Milfield & Flint (2020) tried to evaluate brands re-actions in response to George Floyd's death, or Moorman (2020) has tried to evaluate re-actions to Colin Kaepernick's racial protest at NFL games, when he would kneel, instead of stand, during the playing of the US national anthem. Considering dominance of Ukraine war in news headlines, companies are trying to have a role in keeping the economic pressure on president Vladimir Putin and Russia, but there is a significant lack of research, in the case of Ukraine war on how brands usually act and on whether the differentiation between industries can have sizable effects on strategies taken by brands, and on whether eventually there is any meaningful connection between brands' strategies and their countries of origin. In this article we try to address this gap and our main goal in this regard is to represent a typology of strategies that include all sociopolitical stances taken by brands in the matter of the war in Ukraine.

Methodology

While the actions of brands adopting a sociopolitical stance about Ukraine war have been the subject of heated, widely watched, and prolonged arguments in the media recently, there has been a lack of empirical evidence about categorizing international brands reactions (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Moorman, 2020). Therefore, we designed a process for concluding about different methods to gain insights into attitudes and motivations of managers for each brand in different categories. These categories have been defined in 4 types including leaving Russia, suspending

activities, scaling back activities and halting investment. Our definition for each one of these categories are mentioned below:

- **Leaving Russia:** companies who are making a clean break from Russia, leaving behind essentially no operational footprint.
- **Suspending activity:** companies who have suspended all or almost all their corporate operations in Russia without permanently exiting or divesting.
- **Scaling back activity:** companies who have suspended a significant portion of their business in Russia.
- **Halting investment:** companies who have publicly announced that they are pausing new investments in Russia but are largely continuing to operate in the country as they did before.

We designed a 4-step model to define brand strategies. Our first step was to recognize companies who take a sociopolitical stance in the matter of Ukraine war. This step included two levels: at the first level we check an Iranian domestic news channel about Ukraine war and then we cross check each news item with NY TIMES news outlet to ascertain correctness of reflection announced in the news.

The second step involved categorization of all of brands recognized into 9 industries including CPG/FMCG/retail/fashion, energy, banking and finance, food & beverage, media, professional services, high-tech, travel & logistics, and manufacturing.

In the third step we defined different kinds of strategies and, based on our definition, we categorized strategies for brand reactions into 4 types (presented in Table 2). As a result, in this step, we can identify whether there is any connection between type of industry and type of brands sociopolitical stance in regards to Ukraine war. And finally in the last step we set out to delineate whether there is any meaningful connection between brands countries of origin and types of their reactions.

Table 2. Brands and Their Re-Actions

Brand Name		Country of Origin	Category /Industry	News headline	Domestic news channel (check)	International news channel (Double Check)	Strategy
1	Adidas	Germany	CPG/ FMCG/ Retail/ Fashion	Adidas stop cooperating with Russian football federation.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
2	Uniqlo	Japanese		the Japanese clothing company that operates Uniqlo, said it would suspend its operations in Russia	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
3	H&M	Sweden		H&H suspends sales in Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
4	Danone	France		Danone Stops investing in russia	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Halting investment
5	Nestlé	Switzerland		Nestlé punishes Russia with chocolate boycott	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
6	Nike	United states		Nike Stop Selling products in Russia.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
7	Reebok	United Kingdom		Reebok is leaving Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia

8	Chanel	France		Chanel Stop Selling products in Russia.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
9	Unilever	United Kingdom		Unilever has halted investment in <i>Russia</i>	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Halting investment
10	BP	United Kingdom	Energy	BP Oil and Gas Company is leaving Russia	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia
11	Total Energies	France		French energy giant Stop buying petroleum from Russia.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
12	Shell	United Kingdom		SHELL stop investing in Russia for future project	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Halting investment
13	American Express	United States		The United States is closing its skies to Russian aircraft	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia
14	Bank of America	United States	Banking and Finance	The New sanctions 7Group package of against Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia
15	Deutsche Bank	Germany		The New sanctions 7Group package of against Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia
16	Credit Suisse	Switzerland		Credit Suisse stop investing in Russia for future project	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Halting investment
17	Goldman Sachs	United States		Goldman Sachs is leaving Russia	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Scaling back activity
18	Mastercard	United States		Visa and MasterCard join Russia sanctions !campaign	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
19	Visa	United States		Visa and MasterCard join Russia sanctions !campaign	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
20	Mars	United States	Food & Beverages	Mars is scaling back in Russia.	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Scaling back activity
21	McDonald's	United States		Mc Donald's said: "In response to the invasion of Ukraine, 850 restaurants in Russia are temporarily closed"	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
22	PepsiCo	United States		McDonald, Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Starbucks have all ceased operations in .Russia	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
23	Cola Coca	United States		Coca-Cola ceased operations in Russia.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
24	Restaurant Brands International	United States		Burger King ceased operations in Russia.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
25	Starbucks	United States		Starbucks ceased operations in Russia.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
26	Paramount	United States	Entertainment	Paramount sanctioned Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
27	Netflix	United States		Netflix service stopped in Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
28	The Walt Disney Company	United States		Walt Disney sanctioned Russia	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
29	Warner Bros.	United States		sanctioned Warner Bros. Russia	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
30	& co.Bain	United States	Professional services	Big consultancies move to cut ties with Russia after backlash	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia
31	KPMG	Netherlands		KPMG & PWC are leaving russia	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia
32	PWC	United Kingdom		KPMG & PWC are leaving russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia
33	Boston Consulting Group	United States		European companies are leaving Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
34	Ernst & Young	United Kingdom		Ernst & Young is cutting tie with Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia
35	Amazon Web Services	United States	High-tech	Sanctions on Russia by the Amazon method	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Scaling back activity
36	Apple	United States		Apple, AMD & Cisco has announced that they will cease operations in Russia.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity

37	Samsung	South Korea		Samsung and Cisco have imposed sanctions on Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
38	AMD	United States		Apple, AMD & Cisco has announced that they will cease operations in Russia.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
39	Cisco	United States		Apple, AMD & Cisco has announced that they will cease operations in Russia.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
40	Google	United States		Google excludes Russian state media from search results.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
41	Twitter	United States		Twitter blocks account of Putin's supporters.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
42	IBM	United States		IBM ends operations in Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
43	Intel	United States		Intel ceased operations in Russia.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
44	Microsoft	United States		We help Ukraine for defending against Russian cyber-attacks.	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
45	Ebay	United States		Ebay is leaving Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia	
46	Nokia	Finland		Nokia joins Russian sanctions list	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
47	Micron	United States		Micron Corporation, the largest manufacturer and exporter of electronic components, entered the international sanctions list.	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
48	Uber	United States		Uber Distances Itself from Yandex	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia	
49	Airbus	France		Travel and logistics	Airbus and Boeing also imposed sanctions on Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia
50	American Airlines	United States			The United States is closing its skies to Russian aircraft	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Suspending activity
51	Boeing	United States	Airbus and Boeing also imposed sanctions on Russia		Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia	
52	Caterpillar	United States	Manufacturing	Caterpillar is scaling back in Russia	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Scaling back activity	
53	Siemens	Germany		Siemens cut some ties with Russia	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Scaling back activity	
54	Hyundai Motor Company	South Korea		Hyundai joins Russian sanctions list	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
55	Stanley Black & Decker	United States		Stanley Black & Decker is leaving Russia	Khabar fori	NY TIMES	Leaving Russia	
56	Volvo	Sweden		Volvo will leave the Russian car market in both the passenger and heavy sectors	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity	
57	Renault	France	Renault stops production in Russia in compliance with international sanctions	Akharin khabar	NY TIMES	Suspending activity		

In Table 3 two of widely referenced Iran's news channels and their number of subscribers are depicted. These channels are also the most popular news channel in the Telegram app, an extremely popular virtual social medium.

Table 3. Iran's Domestic News Channel

Name of news channel	Number of subscribers
Khabar fori	5,691,375
Akharin khabar	2,264,585

Table 4 demonstrates categorization of strategies with regard to Ukraine war along with respective frequencies. As can be seen, “Suspending Activity” is the most common strategy followed by “Leaving Russia”. The less frequent approaches are “Scaling Back Activities”, taken by 5 companies, and “Halting Investment” used by only 4 companies.

Table 4. *Brands’ Strategies*

Strategies	Frequency
Suspending Activities	34
Leaving Russia	14
Scaling Back Activities	5
Halting Investment	4

Table 5. *Frequency of Strategies Used in Various Industries*

Type of industries	Number of brands Observed	Strategies	Frequency of each strategy
CPG/ FMCG/ Retail/ Fashion	9	Suspending activity	6
		Leaving Russia	1
		Scaling back activity	0
		Halting investment	2
Energy	3	Suspending activity	1
		Leaving Russia	1
		Scaling back activity	0
		Halting investment	1
Banking and Finance	7	Suspending activity	2
		Leaving Russia	3
		Scaling back activity	1
		Halting investment	1
Food & Beverages	6	Suspending activity	5
		Leaving Russia	0
		Scaling back activity	1
		Halting investment	0
Entertainment	4	Suspending activity	4
		Leaving Russia	0
		Scaling back activity	0
		Halting investment	0
Professional services	5	Suspending activity	1
		Leaving Russia	4
		Scaling back activity	0
		Halting investment	0
High-Tech	14	Suspending activity	11
		Leaving Russia	2
		Scaling back activity	1
		Halting investment	0
Travel and logistics	3	Suspending activity	1
		Leaving Russia	2
		Scaling back activity	0
		Halting investment	0
Manufacturing	6	Suspending activity	3
		Leaving Russia	1
		Scaling back activity	2
		Halting investment	0

Table 5 demonstrates our suggested categorization that is based on various strategies taken by companies in different industries. This table aims to depict a comparison of the most common strategies, previously outlined in Table 4, in each sector. The most common strategy in consumer goods and retail, Food & Beverages, Media, tech and manufacturing industries is “suspending activities” whereas in banking and finance, travel and logistics and professional services industries the most frequently taken strategy is “leaving Russia”. “Scaling back activities” has been used more frequently in manufacturing industries. None of the studied companies in energy sector have taken the strategy of “scaling back activities” while the other three types of strategies have been equally frequent. Finally all four companies studied in entertainment sector have used “Suspending activity” strategy; this industry is the only industry in which only one type of strategy is employed by all brands.

In Table 6, frequency of various strategy types is depicted based on the brands’ countries of origin. It also shows which countries have the most socio-politically active brands in the case of Ukraine war. Our result demonstrate that we have identified 34 companies from United States, 6 brands from United Kingdom, 5 brands from France, 3 brands from Germany, 2 brands from Sweden, Switzerland and South Korea, 1 brand from Finland, Netherland and Japan that have shown some sort of re-action in relation to Ukraine war.

Table 6. *Frequency of Various Strategies Based on Countries of Origin*

Continent	Total	Country of origins	Total	Suspending activity	Leaving Russia	Scaling back activity	Halting investment
America	34	United States	34	23	7	4	-
Europe	20	United Kingdom	6	-	4	-	2
		France	5	3	1	-	1
		Germany	3	1	1	1	-
		Sweden	2	2	-	-	-
		Switzerland	2	1	-	-	1
		Finland	1	1	-	-	-
		Netherland	1	-	1	-	-
Asia	3	South Korea	2	2			
		Japan	1	1	-	-	-

It is also shown that in the companies entered our analyses; in all continents the most frequently used strategy is “Suspending Activities”. Interestingly, companies in the UK have not employed this strategy and have mostly taken the approaches of either “Leaving Russia” or “Halting Investment”. Companies that are originally from Germany have equal frequencies in the categories of “Suspending Activity”, “Leaving Russia” and “Scaling Back Activities”.

Conclusion

The purpose of our research was to develop a typology for brands' sociopolitical stances in the case of Ukraine war, whether they are long term strategies with higher costs or short time strategies with less cost. We set out to conclude with a typology that includes different kinds of strategies and enables us to make a quantitative assessment of the type of re-action in order to find out what the most commonly used strategies among different kinds of industries are. Building on these, we argue that brands are increasingly taking sociopolitical stances and using sociopolitical connotations in their communications. The suggested reasons behind these re-actions are: (1) political consumption (2) leveraging competitive advantage (3) answering to expectation of consumers and (4) co-creating brand meaning. Our research demonstrates that in this case, the most commonly employed strategy among brands to address a sociopolitical stance is suspending activities; i.e., international brands are suspending their activities in Russia in re-action to the issue of Ukraine war in most industries. But in banking and finance industries most companies are leaving Russia. It is worth emphasizing that despite our efforts to design a typology for brands strategy; our results are specific to the Ukraine war and cannot be applied to other socio-politically charged issues. Our research opens multiple avenues for future investigations in the field of brands' sociopolitical stances. Firstly, future studies should focus on assessing how brands act in other social events. Secondly, a deeper investigation of different industries to gather more data and analyzed them with this typology could lead to development of effective concepts. Thirdly, future research can attempt to find alternative and potentially deeper categorization for brands strategy. Last but not least, our findings sets the stage for studies that aim to delineate how environments can affect the way brands usually act in these kinds of social events and contribute to the expansion of knowledge in the field of brand culture.

References

- Aaker, D. (2014). *Aaker on branding: 20 principles that drive success*. New York: Morgan James Publishing.
- Andrews, M., Luo, X., Fang, Z., Aspara, J. (2014). Cause marketing effectiveness and the moderating role of price discounts. *Journal of Marketing*, 78(6), 120–142.
- Baalbaki, S., Guzman, F. (2016). A consumer-perceived consumer-based brand equity scale. *Journal of Brand Management*, 23(3), 229–251.
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2012). *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*. New York: NYU Press.
- Barone, M. J., Miyazaki, A. D., Taylor, K. A. (2000). The influence of cause-related marketing on consumer choice: Does one good turn deserve another? *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(2), 248–262.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139–168.
- Bhagwat, Y., Warren, N. L., Beck, J. T., Watson, G. F. (2020). Corporate sociopolitical activism and firm value. *Journal of Marketing*, 84(5), 1–21.

- Butler-Madden, C. (2017). *Path to purpose: how to use cause marketing to build a more meaningful and profitable brand*. Sydney: Sunday Lunch PTY LTD.
- Caruana, R. (2007). A sociological perspective of consumption morality. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour: An International Research Review*, 6(5), 287–304.
- Clendaniel, M. (2013). *A successful 21st-century brand has to help create meaningful lives*. Fast Company.
- Cone Communications (2017). *2017 Cone communications CSR study*. Available at: www.conecomm.com/2017-conecommunications-csr-study-pdf.
- Deloitte (2018). *The CMO survey: fall 2018 report*. Available at: www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/chiefmarketingofficer/articles/thecmosurveyfall2018report.html.
- Edelman (2020). *Edelman trust barometer 2020*. Available at: www.edelman.de/research/edelman-trust-barometer-2020.
- Flight, R. L., Coker, K. (2021). Birds of a feather: brand attachment through the lens of consumer political ideologies. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 31(5), 731–743.
- Freeman, R. E., Harrison, J. S., Wicks, A.C. (2007). *Managing for Stakeholders: survival, Reputation, and Success*. Yale University Press.
- Friedman, M. (1970, March 2). *The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits*. The New York Times Magazine.
- Garbe, B., Stengel, J. (2013). *Ideals: The new engine of business growth*. Available at: http://www.jimstengel.com/wpcontent/uploads/2013/11/Millward_Brown_Stengel_POV_on_Brand_Ideals.pdf.
- Golob, U., Davies, M. A. P., Kernstock, J., Powell, S. M. (2020). Trending topics plus future challenges and opportunities in brand management. *Journal of Brand Management*, 27, 123–129.
- Guzman, F., Davis, D. (2017). The impact of corporate social responsibility on brand equity: consumer responses to two types of fit. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 26(5), 435–446.
- Guzman, F., Paswan, A. K. (2009). Cultural brands from emerging markets: brand image across host and home countries. *Journal of International Marketing*, 17(3), 71–86.
- Guzman, F., Paswan, A. K., Fabrize, R. (2017). Crossing the border: changes in self and brands. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 34(4), 306–318.
- Hetherington, M. J., Rudolph, T. J. (2015). *Why Washington, DC won't work: polarization, political trust, and the governing crisis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Holt, D. B. (2002). Why do brands cause trouble? A dialectical theory of consumer culture and branding. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(1), 70–90.
- Holt, D. B. (2004). *How brands become icons: the principles of cultural branding*. Chicago, IL: Harvard Business Press.
- Iglesias, O., Ind, N. (2020). Towards a theory of conscientious corporate brand co-creation: the next key challenge in brand management. *Journal of Brand Management*, 27(6).
- Ignatius, A. (2019). Profit and purpose. *Harvard Business Review*, 3.
- Ind, N., Schmidt, H. J. (2019). *Co-creating brands: brand management from a co-creative perspective*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Ives, N. (2021). Consumers are more likely to use or drop brands based on racial justice response, survey finds. *Wall Street Journal*, (May).
- Jung, J., Mittal, V. (2020). Political identity and the consumer journey: a research review. *Journal of Retailing*, 91(1), 55–73.
- Jungblut, M., Johnen, M. (2021). When brands (don't) take my stance: the ambiguous effectiveness of political brand communication. *Communication Research*, 49(8), 1–26.

- Katsanis, L. P. (1994). The ideology of political correctness and its effect on brand strategy. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 3(2), 5–14.
- Keller, K. L. (2003). Brand synthesis: the multidimensionality of brand knowledge. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(4), 595–600.
- Kim, S. (2019). The process model of corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication: CSR communication and its relationship with consumers' CSR knowledge, trust, and corporate reputation perception. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 154(4), 1143–1159.
- Kramer, M. (2017). Brand purpose: the navigational code for growth. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, 6(1), 46–54.
- Milfield, T., Flint, D. J. (2020). When brands take a stand: the nature of consumers' polarized reactions to social narrative videos. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 30(4).
- Mirzaei, A., Webster, C. M., Siuki, H. (2021). Exploring brand purpose dimensions for non-profit organizations. *Journal of Brand Management*, 28(Jan), 186–198.
- Moorman, C. (2020). Commentary: brand activism in a political world. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 39(4), 388–392.
- Morhart, F., Malär, L., Guèvremont, A., Girardin, F., Grohmann, B. (2015). Brand authenticity: an integrative framework and measurement scale. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 25(2), 200–218.
- Needham, C. (2005). Special issue papers Brands and political loyalty. *Brand Management*, 13(3), 178–187.
- Osterwalder, A., Pigneur, Y. (2010, August 26). *Aligning profit and purpose through business model innovation*. Available at: <https://discoverso.cialsciences.com/wpcontent/uploads/2018/08/CANVAS-1.pdf>.
- Price, L. L., Coulter, R. A. (2019). Crossing bridges: culture into brands and brands into consumers' global local cultural lives. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 29(3), 547–554.
- Quinn, R. E., Thakor, A. V. (2018). *Creating a purpose-driven organization*. Harvard Business Review 2018:78-85.
- Radnofsky, L. (2021). *Simone biles leaves nike for partnership with athlete*. Available at: www.wsj.com/articles/simonebiles-gymnastics-nike-athleta-11619140549?mod=searchresults_pos5&page=1.
- Salzer-Mörlling, M., Strannegård, L. (2007). Ain't misbehavin' – consumption in a moralized brandscape. *Marketing Theory*, 7(4), 407–425.
- Schmidt, H. J., Ind, N., Guzman, F., Kennedy, E. (2020). Sociopolitical activist brands. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 31(1), 40–55.
- Shaw, D. S., Shui, E. (2002). The role of ethical obligation and self-identity in ethical consumer choice. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 26(2), 109–116.
- Simon, B. (2011). Not going to Starbucks. Boycotts and the out-sourcing of politics in the branded world. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11(2), 1831–1838.
- Solomon, M. R. (1983). The role of products as social stimuli: a symbolic interactionism perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10(3), 319–329.
- Stolle, D., Hooghe, M., Micheletti, M. (2005). Politics in the supermarket: political consumerism as a form of political participation. *International Political Science Review*, 26(3), 245–269.
- Svensson, G., Wood, G. (2008). A model of business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 77(3), 303–322.
- Swaminathan, V., Sorescu, A., Steenkamp, J. B. E., O'Guinn, T. C. G., Schmitt, B. (2020). Branding in a hyperconnected world: refocusing theories and rethinking boundaries. *Journal of Marketing*, 84(2), 24–46.

- Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin, S. Worchel (eds.), *The Social Psychology of Ingroup Relations*, 33–48. Brooks/Cole, Monterey, CA.
- The Corporate Social Mind (2020). *The corporate social mind research report: the public's expectations of companies to address social issues*. The Corporate Social Mind.
- Tucker, J. A., Guess, A., Barbera, P., Vaccari, C., Siegel, A., Sanovich, S., et al. (2018). Social media, political polarization, and political disinformation: a review of the scientific literature. *SSRN*, (Mar).
- Urumutta Hewage, G. S., Klucarova, S., Boman, L. (2021). The effects of political ideology and brand familiarity on conspicuous consumption of fashion products. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 12(4), 343–358.
- Vredenburg, J., Kapitan, S., Spry, A., Kemper, J. A. (2020). Brands taking a stand: authentic Brand activism or woke washing? *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 39(4), 444–460.
- Webb, D. J., Mohr, L. A. (1998). A typology of consumer responses to cause-related marketing: from skeptics to socially concerned. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 17(2), 226–238.