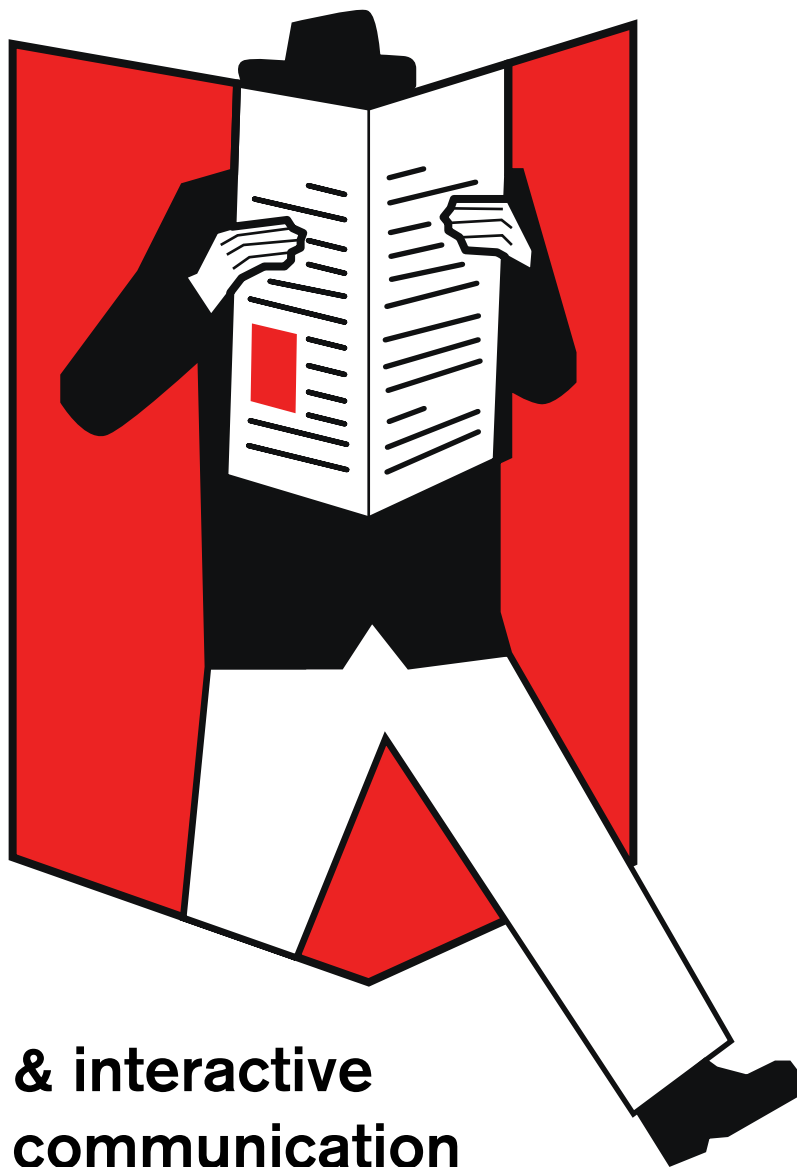


dotCOM

MAGAZINE

the network
society



& interactive
communication



**I am grateful everyday
to communicate
and be an advocate
for such important
products and the social
responsibility that
comes with them.**

*Andreas Wallbillich
Spokesperson for Mann+Hummel*

Our philosophy and goals.

As creators of this e-magazine, our primary objective is to serve as a driving force for positive change in the field of public relations. We aim to inform PR professionals about the intersection of public relations and activism, providing insights, best practices and case studies. By presenting a platform for thought-provoking content and insights, we hope to be a valuable resource for PR professionals who want to hone their skills.

In the magazine, we raise awareness about how PR can be used to support activism and drive positive change with various social and environmental issues. We want to achieve this by offering:

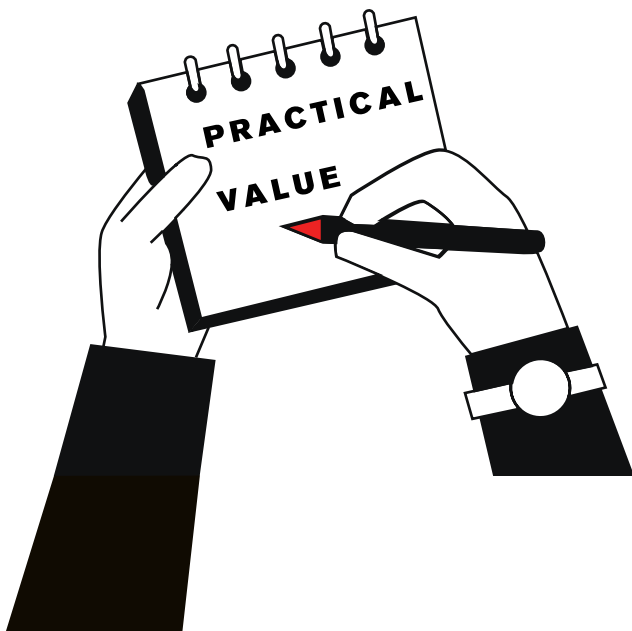


Encourage you to think critically about the role of PR in promoting activism and social change.

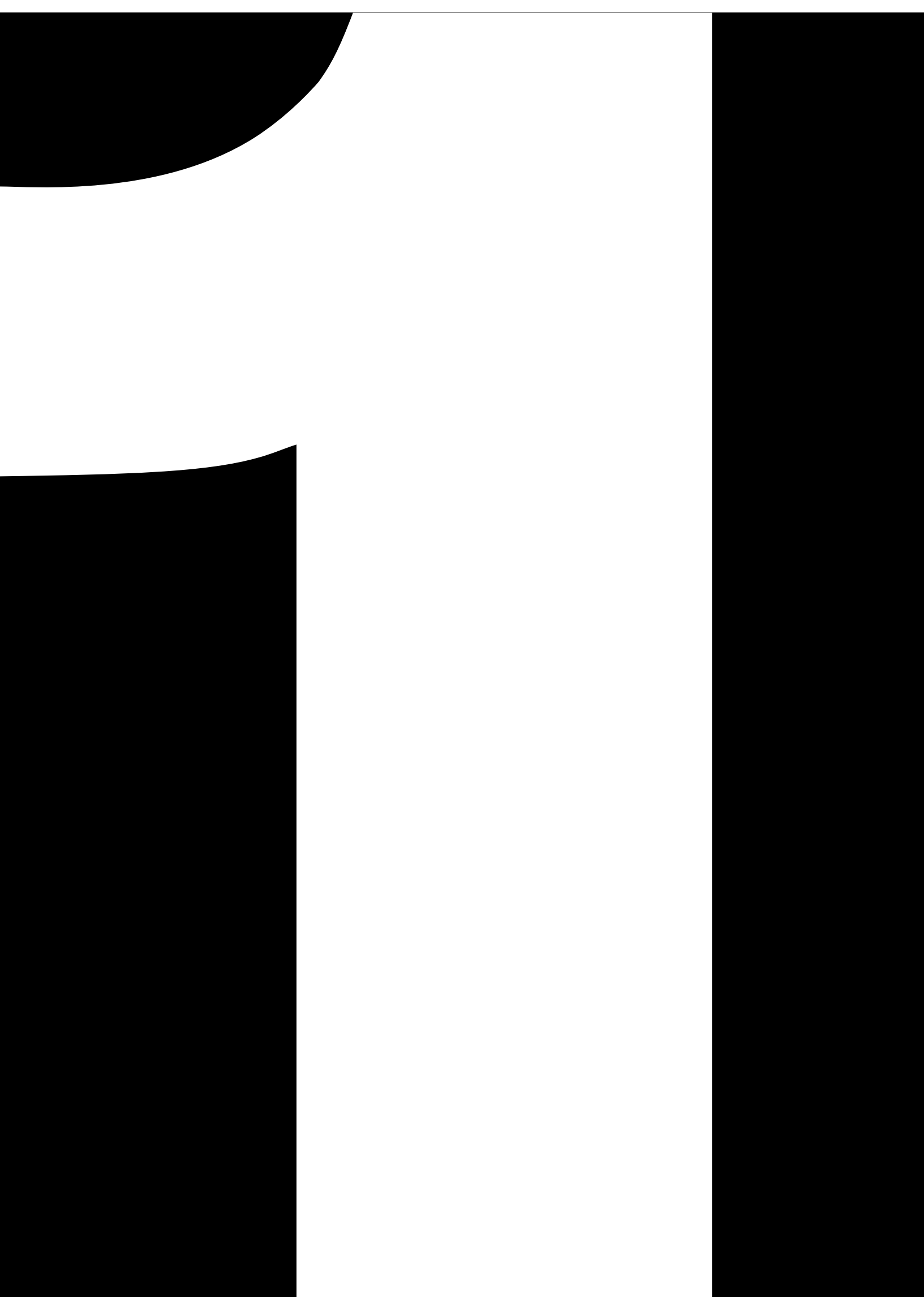
We strive to inspire you to get involved in activism and societal issues.



Ensure that the e-magazine provides informative content about current activism-related topics and how PR professionals can understand and respond to them.



Introductory Issue	PR and the activist society	Participatory culture and the network society	Activism and civic engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Meet the team. (6) . The power of purpose. (7) . Interview with Marie and Alex Büche. (8-9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Authentic brand activism. Find out what consumers want. (11-12) . Crossword Puzzle. (13) . Corporate political advocacy is the way to go. (14-15) . Toolbox. (16-17) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . An attitude we should take towards online activism. (19-20) . The impact of social networks on corporate communication. (21) . Practice Example: Diet. Prada. (22) . Fact check: Participatory Culture. (23) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Driving positive change: a PR perspective on activism. (25-26) . Case study: Patagonia Action Works. (27) . Mobilizing change. (28-29) . The Movement Cycle. (29-30)



Meet the team.

Jieun Oh



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. **field of expertise:** journalism, writing and
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. **favorite design inspiration at the
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Valentin Rupprecht



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Chantal Vermue



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moment:** Erik Marinovich, Mike Perry

We are pleased to introduce our talented team of editors. We want to give you a chance to get to know them, to see from which backgrounds we came together to create this eMagazine. It is our belief that by establishing a common ground but keeping our individual perspectives made this magazine into a purpose driven and informational piece of work.

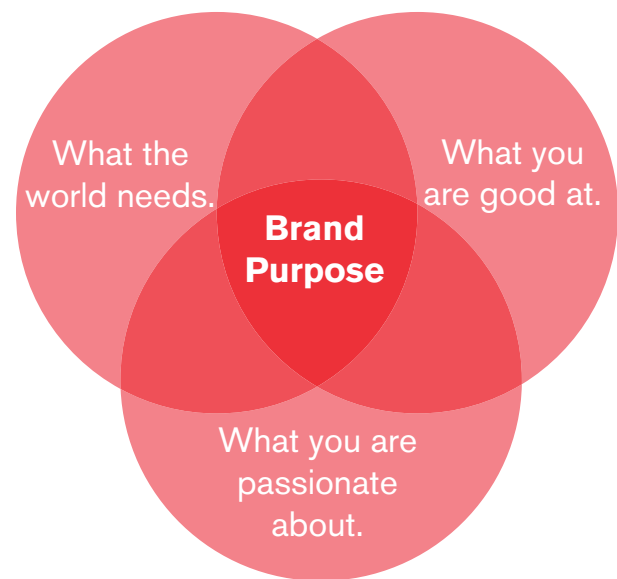
The power of purpose.

By Valentin Rupprecht.

In 2023, 95 million posts were published to Instagram every day (Flynn, J.). This number, while only a small fraction of the overall daily online activity, represents a change in the way individuals interact with today's world. Users can actively create and share content, instead of passively consuming it. Another conclusion to draw from the immense volume of content is that users are more likely to engage with content that resonates with them. Said shift in the social landscape kickstarted a change in the corporate world. Companies once solely focused on profit margins are increasingly recognizing their social responsibility. This intersection of business and social justice is what inspired this magazine. It is a deep dive into corporate activism, social networks and modern-day public relations.

Public relations have long been a way to simply inform the public. A way to introduce new products and services. In today's socially aware world, brands need to humanize themselves and have their own social agenda. Consumers support brands, whose social goals align with their personal views. A company can do good for everyone while expanding their clientele and maximizing profits. This concept is often called "Brand Activism" and social media has become a key catalyst for it (Manfredi-Sánchez, J. L.).

Our mission is to inform on the dynamic relationships between society, social media and companies, as well as the promotion of brand activism as a win-win situation. In doing so, we aim to inspire our readers to get involved in societal issues and encourage critical thoughts on the role of public relations in the promotion of activism.



Interview with Marie & Alexander Büche.

Our interviewees are Marie and Alex Büche, working at Mann+Hummel and Maveo GmbH respectively. Marie works in public relations, especially online marketing at Mann+Hummel (a world-leading filtration company). Alex is a designer and video editor at Maveo GmbH (a media agency based in Stuttgart, Germany) specializing in AV media and animation communication. Together, they form a powerful duo to assist our project in both a design and informative way.

What are you interested in these days?

Well, we just got married this year so a lot of our free time has been consumed by planning that event and other than that both of us really enjoy hiking and meeting our friends from work, university etc. for drinks. A cozy evening watching, recently mostly Marvel, movies and ordering food is also something we do quite often.

Is there a topic that you are paying attention to these days in your field?

Both of our workplaces encourage sustainability and climate change control work in a private and a corporate sense. In a strictly task based way Alex is working a lot in animation and post production nowadays and Marie mostly does web marketing and web design.

What do you think about the impact of social media and AI on the day of professionals now or in the future?

AI is something, to one hundred percent incorporate into any workflow but as of now never to finish a product or something to be shown to our customers or supervisors.

As a PR professional what kind of tone best suits an e-magazine targeted to you and your colleagues?

It definitely needs to be a serious and objective tone, since this magazine should be for getting information only and not for a great figurative read.

As a PR professional what kind of visuals best suits an e-magazine targeted to you and your colleagues? Why is that?

Mostly statistics and referential artwork that complements the information given in the text. Any information not in the text should never be shown in an artwork, because that information will never be trustworthy. We use the ZDF Method (Zahlen, Daten, Fakten/ Numbers, Dates, Facts). Also from a design and lay out perspective it should be very clean and maybe just single pictorial elements and not any full pictures and never use stock imagery, because a designer will immediately recognise it as that.

What would be the best text-to-image ratio?

Anything less than 2/3 text looks like you haven't done enough research and just need to fill space. Also the layout should be very clear, coherent and easy to follow and maybe tested in a skimming test. Also in an eMagazine we both would like to see an interactive part like a nav bar or a back to top button as well as an interactive table of contents.

Which color arrangement would be better, monotonous or colorful?

Usually you should agree on 2-3 colours to set the tone and the rest should be monochromatic or black and white. If you use pictures try colourgrading them according to your base colours. Nothing too fancy, but usually one eye catching color and then 2 either complementary or additional colours.

In your field of work, what kind of experience do you have in engaging with or within a community? What kind of insights did that give you?

We have not exactly done community outreach in a traditional sense but at Mann+Hummel and especially my previous employer (Ecover) it was always a big thing to create a sort of employee community. When your employees love the products they sell and the company it gives everyone they talk to a feeling of confidence in you and creates a passionate atmosphere inside and outside of the workplace. This creates sort of internal brand ambassadors.

Does your company have any stand on social issues? How do you address controversial issues in your work?

Mann+Hummel definitely works together with politicians and policy makers to secure research funding. Oftentimes it is more of a collaboration to promote Sustainability and Closed Circle Policies. Also in both of our workplaces the values of sincerity, fairness and sustainability are a ubiquitous part of our routine and workflow. At Maveo we have a shared car-sharing account instead of corporate cars and when the war in Ukraine broke out, all of our employees' bonus payments were matched with an equal donation in the name of the company towards the victims and survivors. Controversial issues are always to be addressed on sight and at first hand.

How can corporate activism be achieved while avoiding the risk of woke washing or greenwashing?

Authenticity and sincerity is what it is all about, when having a social or political stance as a company. Also when we have been in contact with activist individuals or communities we have always relied more on the information they can provide us with

and then combining that with our corporate funding and infrastructure to broaden their stance and recognition.

What was the most helpful way to attract the target's interest? Could you share your online or offline marketing experience?

We always follow the marketing cycle since it is proven to work. Bold Action, followed by continuous presence of the company and the information the company wants to spread. After our first and second roll out we evaluate the accomplishments up until then and what we need to change to reach our personal KPIs.

How do you think offline and online activism differ and influence each other?

Other than that online activism is usually faster to rise, but also to be buried in the endless content algorithms I would say that offline activism has gotten a lot harder to kick start.

Did any sort of professional experience with activist communities influence your private life or ways of thinking?

(A) Actually it has usually been the other way round at Maveo, because when we rebranded the company it was a personal favor to me, to include the aforementioned values and measures in the new identity. (M) Working at Ecover has definitely changed my perspectives on consumer care and on plastic use. After my workplace encouraged me to think about it more, I did some research and now we try to use as little plastic as ever and I only use natural products for personal care, other than when there is no viable more eco or consumer friendly alternative.

2



Authentic brand activism. Find out what consumers want.

by Jieun Oh.

Our predictions and preparations cannot always be correct in a rapidly changing market. What are you focusing on here and creating strategic marketing? What we should focus on is, after all, the needs and characteristics of consumers. Consumers no longer want brands to be silent on sociopolitical issues. Brand activism refers to distinguishing from other brands by taking a public stance on specific social or political issues. Consumers speak out against or agree with the actions of these brands, which has a significant impact on their purchasing behavior in the future. However, this differs from CSR (Jessica Vredenburg, 2020), which focuses on desirable behavior that everyone thinks of, and consumers do not respond to all brand activism. We will look at the authentic brand activism we need to pursue and marketing strategies that can bring out consumer delight.

Brand activism is when a brand is purpose- and values-driven rather than immediate profit and deals with controversial, naturally conservative or progressive issues. It should also send an intangible message to the public and show tangible practice (Jessica Vredenburg, 2020). Here, authentic brand activism occurs when brand purposes and values align with marketing messages and corporate activities, and consumers with the same opinion positively recognize companies and the brand has relatively great strengths in the market by drawing favorable responses and brand assets (Jessica Vredenburg, 2020). The opposite case is

Woke washing, which makes better sense when considering an example. In 2020, L'Oreal was at the center of controversy. When they supported and used the Black Lives Matter Campaign for marketing purposes, they belatedly erased terms such as "lightening" and "whitening" from their labels, which made people think it was just a fake action and caused anger (Licia Genhini, 2023). Without sufficient time for specific tasks, it uses social themes in marketing campaigns to make brands look good and attract consumers' attention. This backfires by making people feel the company is not insincere and deceptive.

Interestingly, however, the congruence of brand and sociopolitical issues does not always attract sufficient consumer attention. This is because congruence relationships are less eye-catching and do not require sufficient explanation and profound process (Martindale, 1991). So, a new argument draws keen attention from the marketing community. When there is an optimized disharmony between brands and sociopolitical issues or partners, consumers get new and surprising stimuli and great satisfaction (Kahneman, 1973). Lush participated in a campaign in 2018 claiming the rights of transgender people, which was considered an unexpected connection to consumers. Still, Rush has

Lush 2018 holiday campaign.



observed people visiting the store and has shown concern and behavior about what could be helpful, which led to the campaign. And Lush did not just produce campaign videos. They changed how the company operates, creating a more inclusive and quiet space for the rights of transgender employees (Chris Kelly, 2021). This is a good example of optimized incongruence and authentic brand activism.

At first glance, the content of the text seems complicated, but as mentioned earlier, the most important thing is to know what consumers want. Brands need to think about improving the world where consumers live

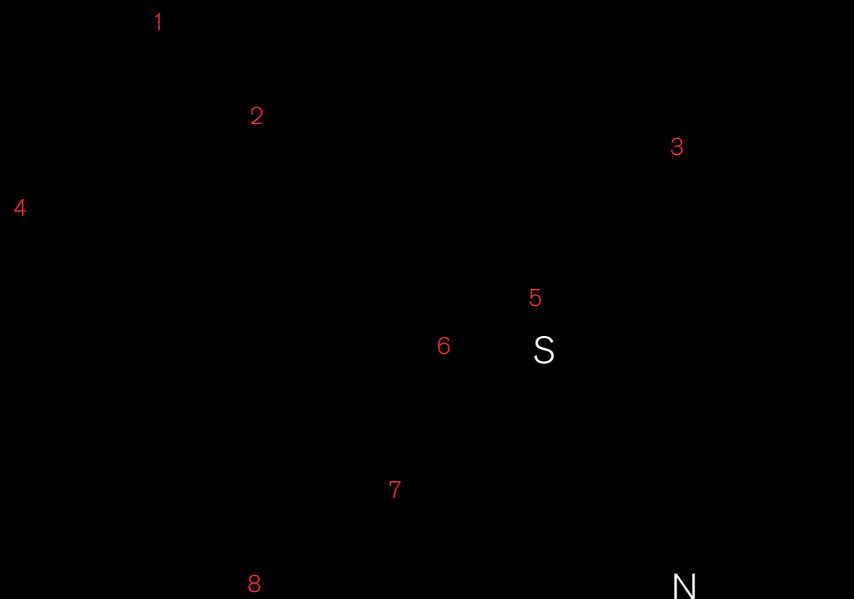
beyond economic profits, and people trust and care more about the brand when its purpose and value match their practices and messages. In addition, brands have a greater attraction when they have an appropriate mismatch in brand and sociopolitical behavior through new activities rather than familiar ones. However, this should be within the baseline to the end. Excessive disharmony can lead to consumer doubts and anger. (Jessica Vredenburg 2020) Considering the rapidly changing market and consumers, it will be our job to constantly think about attractive marketing strategies without crossing the appropriate line.

Lush "Trans Rights are Human Rights" campaign.



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Crossword Puzzle about activist campaigns.



ACROSS:

4. This is the appropriation of ethical and progressive values as a form of advertising to improve the company's reputation without demonstrating a real commitment to the communicated values. If a brand disconnects its communications from brand purpose, values, and corporate practice when engaging with sociopolitical movements, it can result in this. Customers may feel the company is deceptive and opportunistic.

6. This is a global cosmetics retailer headquartered in the United Kingdom. This participated in a campaign in 2018 claiming the rights of transgender people, which was considered an unexpected connection to consumers. They also changed how the company operates, creating a more inclusive and quiet space for the rights of transgender employees. This company is known for its colorful bath bombs and fragrant body shower products.

8. This means a state of being out of place or incompatible. When the match between the brand and its partner is in an 'Optimal _____', brands can encourage consumers to engage in the greater elaboration and deeper processing, resulting in potentially more intense reactions.

DOWN

1. The quality of being real or true. When a brand's purpose and values match with activist marketing messaging and corporate practice, companies get this for their marketing activities. Then, this leads to a rise in customer trust and corporate profits.

2. This is a marketing tactic for brands seeking to stand out by taking public stances on social and political issues. This addresses controversial, contested, or polarizing issues. The objective of this is to foster meaningful social change.

3. It is a global automobile manufacturing company established in Germany that has taken a sociopolitical position against racism and xenophobia. In 2020, the company was criticized for distributing racist Instagram ads but apologized. The company's name means 'national car' in German.

5. This is where stakeholders and organizations discuss societal issues. There are networked multi-actor (i.e., politicians, journalists, experts, members of the general public) interactions around sociopolitical issues. This can help to clarify how mediated socio-political issues are becoming more central in a communicative environment of corps.

7. This refers to the level of acceptance or approval by local communities and stakeholders of organizations and their operations. This can be considered as a sort of 'soft' regulation enforced through the beliefs and behaviors of relevant stakeholders in society. (This is an abbreviation)

Corporate political advocacy is the way to go!

by Chantal Vermue.

Corporations are under more pressure than ever before to voice their opinions and take a stand on social issues to stay relevant and maintain public support. In our divided political landscape and heavily mediatized environment it is almost impossible for corporations to balance the interests of all stakeholders. In order to maintain their Social Licence to Operate (SLO) corporations should become more value and issue-driven. The role of the PR professional is therefore shifting to a more advocacy-based approach.

Corporations need a Social License to Operate

SLO can be described as this ongoing 'approval meter' that stakeholders use to judge a company. It requires corporations to conform to societal expectations and actively involve themselves while refraining from actions that are viewed as unacceptable by the public (Gunningham et al., 2004). Based on how the stakeholders perceive the company's actions this 'approval meter' can go up or down. So in order to affirm legitimacy, PR professionals should focus on facilitating engagement with their environment about social issues that are part of the political discourse (Hurst et al., 2020; Patriotta et al., 2011).

Navigating Issue arenas

Issue arenas are where important conversations about social and political issues happen. Vos et al. (2014) define the concept as the interaction among stakeholders on an issue in the public debate, whether this is in traditional or digital media. Companies are only one part of

these conversations and are no longer the central point that controls communication. So understanding how these conversations work is crucial for companies to keep maintaining their SLO.

An organization can take part in multiple issue arenas with different environments. To better understand communication in these issue arenas Vos et al. (2014) made an analytical model consisting of four levels of analysis: the issue itself, the actors involved, media aspects and the course of the debate. You can see this model in Figure 1.

Level 1 Issue-related aspects: Issue arenas vary based on the nature of the issues they encompass. Each issue is shaped by its specific context and its connections to political or economic interests. These factors influence how the issue is framed and how it relates to the organizational policies of the actors involved. Historical background and associations also play a role in shaping perceptions of an issue.

Level 2 The actors involved: The extent and nature of stakeholder involvement can vary widely. Some issues attract numerous stakeholders, while others involve only a select few. The roles of these actors depend on factors such as credibility, legitimacy, and power. These roles are interconnected within

“To be an activist is to speak. To be an advocate is to listen. Society can’t move forward without both.”

Eva Marie Lewis

a network, where direct or indirect contact varies. In addition, they also enter the arena for various reasons, like the opportunities they see or the unfolding of events.

Level 3 Places of interaction: Issues are discussed in both physical and virtual spaces, each with unique features that impact participants in the discussion. For example, journalists mostly get their information from established sources, traditional news outlets tend to focus on famous individuals and organizations, while social media allows more people to express their views. Debates on social media can make traditional media pay more attention to a topic, and the reverse is true as well, making discussions around specific issues spread like rapid fire.

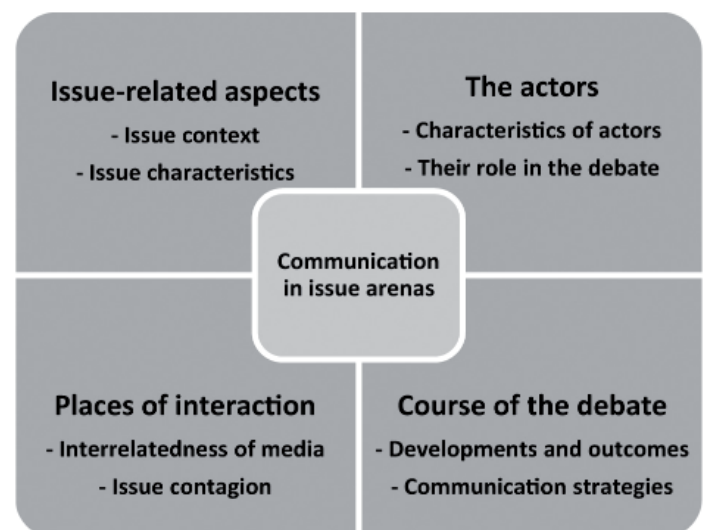
Level 4 Course of the debate: Issue arenas can develop into various phases, which in turn can lead to shifts in the focus of the debate. Organizations therefore need to employ different communication tactics tailored to specific issue arenas they engage with (Vos et al., 2014).

No more self-interest!

Corporations must adapt to a society marked by significant socio-political changes. They can do that by becoming value and issue-driven and promoting their ideals. PR professionals should advocate for the corporation's standpoints rather than attempting to balance all stakeholders' interests or the corporation's self-interest.

Corporate Political Advocacy provides a way for corporations to navigate in a polarized environment without losing their SLO. It allows them to keep renewing by actively engaging in issue arenas aligned with their core values. (van der Meer & Jonkman, 2021).

To conclude, in today's dynamic corporate landscape, the concept of a Social License to Operate has grown into one of great importance, driven by the need for corporations to actively engage with social and political issues. They must navigate complex issue arenas, relinquishing the sole control over communication and adapt to a more value-driven approach. Corporate Political Advocacy is the only way forward and PR professionals play a crucial role as advocates.



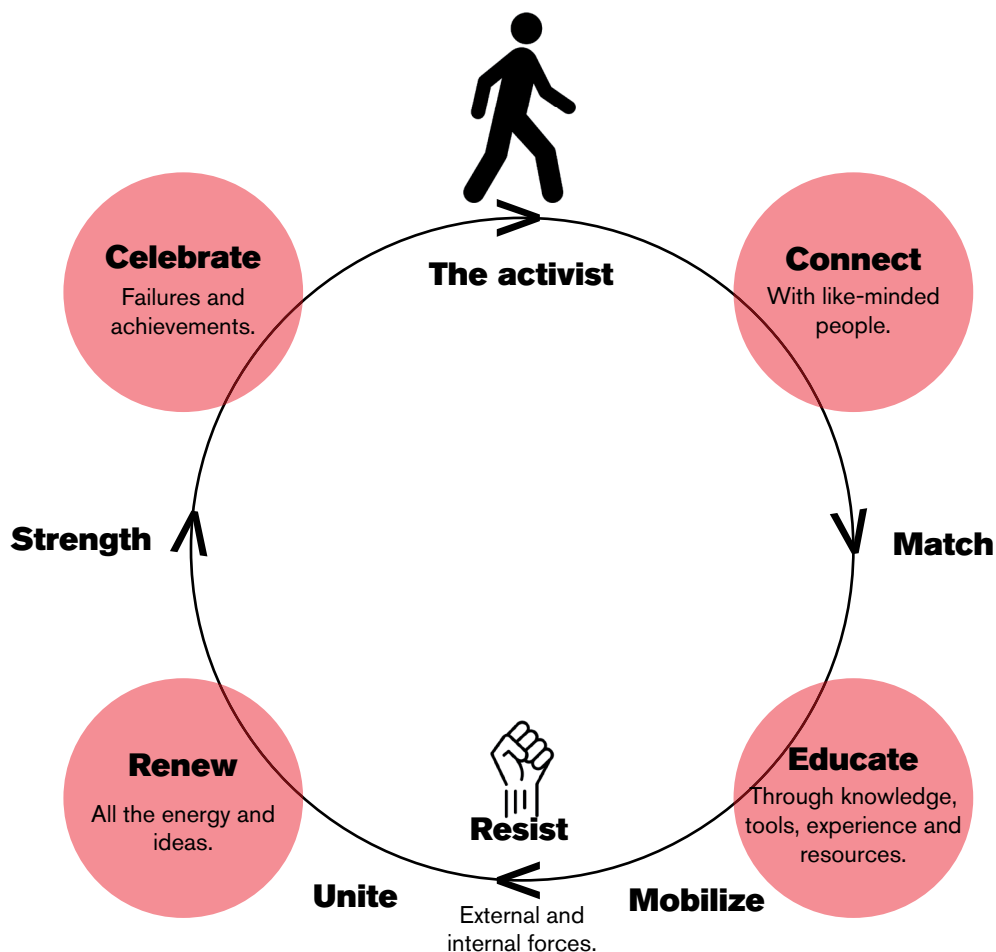
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- Vos, M., Schoemaker, H., & Luoma-aho, V. (2014). Setting the agenda for research on issue arenas. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 19(2), 200–2015. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ccij-08-2012-0055>

Toolbox.

The Activist Journey.

Every social movement goes through a certain journey. The Activist Journey is a cycle of key activities that leaders of social movements should follow. It is divided into 5 steps: connect, educate, resist, renew and celebrate.

Connect with people who feel the same way you do and want to make a difference. Changing society takes time and effort, so the best way to do this is by connecting with people who share your purpose. Start with a small group, and as time goes on, bring in more people. The focus is not to mobilize but to learn from each other and exchange ideas.



During this step: Include who you are, why you do it, what your goals are, where you can gather (online and/or offline), the background of the problem and its negative effects.

Educate yourself and others. It is important to take time to learn about different arguments and challenge your own biases and assumptions. Delve into the specifics of the issues you're tackling.

During this step: Share valuable resources

like books, movies, and websites and create a communication channel where everyone can come together to share and build your database.

Resist: Be clear about what you resist and why, what the benefits of changing it are, and the steps to achieve it. Aim to inform and attract more people who share your feelings and purpose.

During this step: Begin by organizing the initial public demonstration. This doesn't

always mean a physical march or protest. It could be a statement, a proposal, a meeting with authorities, a press conference, a video, and more.

Renew: Energize your movement and generate new ideas consistently.

During this step: Reflect on the journey and assess the achieved milestones, results, goals, limitations, and obstacles. Maintain a positive outlook and create space for renewing energy, messages, ideas, and strategy.

Celebrate failures and achievements. They are valuable lessons that help change the way you approach a problem and show the growth you have gone through.

During this step: Publicly recognize your group's achievements. Highlight each group member and make them the center of this celebration to foster greater connections. Make it memorable and heartfelt.

This tool is especially useful if you or your brand want to spearhead a movement. It

gives insight into the workings of an activist movement and helps to recognize which phase you are in. When you want to use this tool you should create a strategy for each step and present each section within a 3-minute timeframe to your team. After each presentation, provide clarity ratings (0 to 5) and constructive feedback. Take a 10-minute break to refine the presentations and then repeat the process.

When you constantly evaluate your efforts you can make better decisions to further the movement. The Global School for New Leadership, where this model is from, is an independent NGO that provides a lot of helpful tools like this. So we recommend to take a look at their website!

The Activist Journey - the Global School for New Leadership. (n.d.). The Global School for New Leadership. <https://theglobal.school/the-activist-journey/>

3

3

3

An attitude we should take towards online activism.

By Jieun Oh.

Changes in culture and society are more relevant to managing a brand than ever. If we miss or overlook it, brands can suffer a considerable loss because people are disappointed and the voices of disappointment spread very quickly (Jenkins, 2014). Therefore, as PR experts, we need to understand the general public which strongly influences shaping the culture and the changing cultural trends.



In the 1990s, the culture jammers were the change-makers. At that time, mass media monopolized the public, and change-makers focused on activities that blocked and disrupted the flow of things perceived to be manipulated by cultural industries. But as time passed, the younger generation became the new change-makers. They can create collective behavior through personal social media and no longer interfere with the flow of culture, and they have actively participated in the cycle of culture (Jenkins, 2014).

What we will pay attention to here is fan activism. Fans are no longer passive media audiences, but active actors who show collective action on social and political issues (Neta Kligler-Vilenchik, 2012). From the standpoint of PR experts, if you make good use of fan activism that creates big movements on social issues, you will get significant momentum for brand activities and create economic benefits. So, fandom feels attractive to us, but I want to emphasize the risk that fan activism can pose.

A diehard supporter can be a terrible protester. Customers who love a brand know it better than ordinary customers, so they can feel betrayed when an issue arises that goes against the brand's image or value (Cindy, 2023). They also show extreme resistance, such as boycotts. Singer BTS's fan Army has attracted the attention of many brands by leading various social engagement campaigns (Yeonghwa Kim, 2022). United through BTS, they expressed their shocking stance to boycott not only Hive but also BTS over BTS's agency Hive's entry into the NFT business in 2021. The biggest reason is that NFTs that create massive energy consumption do not match the image of BTSs sending environmentally friendly messages.

Companies can suffer from endless demands for proof from their fandom. Fans are more active and passionate about participation than the general public, so they can constantly ask for clarification when they do not feel authentic about their chosen brand. The Harry Potter Alliance, made up of fans of the children's novel Harry Potter, conducted a campaign against chocolate made from child

exploitation in its "Not In Harry's Name" campaign. They called on Warner Brothers, the licensing authority for Harry Potter-related foods, to produce fair-trade chocolate. They bullied the company hard until it responded and wanted the company to consistently submit evidence that was not a good word to hear (Jenkins, 2014). The larger the size and influence of the fandom, the more difficult it is to control at the corporate level, and fans' opinions may drag it around.

In a culture where the public directly participates and creates, particularly enthusiastic fan activism has important value for PR experts. When the fandom and the

corporate stance match, positive effects can be expected in many ways; however, there are many variables in the enthusiasm of fans, and it requires companies to be perfect. Therefore, I think many things need to be considered first rather than excessively encouraging and unconditionally using fan activism as a good thing.

Above all, we must strive to win consumer trust and reduce the risk of Woke washing by solidifying the value and vision of the brand. And it is necessary to actively communicate with customers and create various content so that customers can stay on the corporate platform even when they do not purchase goods or services. In addition, we need to establish an appropriate level of control guidelines and have enough power to prevent brands from being attracted to customers.

Henry Jenkins. (2014). Participatory Culture: From Co-Creating Brand Meaning to Changing the World. NIM Marketing Intelligence Review, vol.6, no.2, 3914, pp.34-39.

Neta Kligler-Vilenchik, Joshua McVeigh-Schultz, Christine Weitbrecht, and Chris Tokuhama. (2012). Experiencing fan activism: Understanding the power of fan activist organizations through members' narratives. University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, United States.

Yeonghwa Kim. (2022). BTS Fandom, the world's grass root exercise energy source, "ARMY ACTIVISM", Retrieved from <https://www.sisain.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=48128>

EXCLUSIVE

FAN ACTIVISM JUST LANDED A MAJOR VICTORY. WARNER BROS. IS MOVING FORWARD WITH PLANS TO MAKE ALL HARRY POTTER CHOCOLATE SOLD AT WARNER BROS. OUTLETS AND THROUGH THEIR LICENSED PARTNERS 100% UTZ OR FAIRTRADE. THIS ANNOUNCEMENT CULMINATES A FOUR YEAR, FAN-LED EFFORT BY THE HARRY POTTER ALLIANCE.

WIZARDS WIN!

JK ROWLING & FAN ACTIVISTS SCORE UNPRECEDENTED VICTORY AGAINST CHILD SLAVERY

The HPA back in 2010, the year this campaign officially started. It's grown and changed a lot since then but our focus has always remained true—to make sure that children are not being harmed in the production of Harry Potter chocolate.

The impact of social networks on corporate communication.

By Valentin Rupprecht.

The pen may be mightier than the sword, but in today's world both are second in line to the internet. As technology advances, society moves with it. The internet is not only an online encyclopaedia, but it also links people from all over the globe together.

When individuals start connecting themselves in online social networks, new forms of communities emerge. This has subsequently changed the way in which consumers navigate through their virtual and real environment. Especially in the day and age of social media, users are no longer passively consuming content and information, but rather actively creating, sharing and spreading it. As consumers all around the world hold themselves accountable to increasingly higher standards, they apply those same standards to brands they want to support or buy from. This is accompanied by a new form of online activity, called participatory culture. The prospect of gaining engagement and validation inclines users to create and share content (Jenkins & Ito, 2015). Power is created through aligned beliefs and affiliation. Customers can act for or sometimes even against brands and people of interest to try and alter their course. It is a way for individuals to get involved in global issues. This revolutionized the way public relations work, as brands need to prove their commitment to change for consumer networks to find those efforts believable.

The public is rejecting the traditional top-down approach to marketing and advertising and taking the power into its own hands. Instead of being left feeling belittled or clueless, consumers can connect to global networks of like-minded individuals and take action. This may create powerful adversaries and advocates at the same time (Miguel & Miranda, 2022).

While social media is a highly dynamic environment and trends change quickly, brands can use it to their advantage by understanding what their customers are passionate about and establishing a purpose that relates to those views.

“I have a little different definition of evil than most people. When you have the opportunity and the ability to do good and you do nothing, that’s evil. Evil doesn’t always have to be an overt act, it can be merely the absence of good.”

*Yvon Chouinard
Founder of Patagonia.*

Jenkins, H., & Ito, M. (2015). Participatory culture in a networked era: A conversation on youth, learning, commerce, and politics. John Wiley & Sons.

Miguel, A., & Miranda, S. (2022). The role of social media in the proliferation and promotion of brand activism. 8 Comunicação Pública, 17(32).

Practice example: @dietprada on Instagram.

When taking a close look at examples of participatory culture, one stands out through its exceptionally well researched and bold reporting. The Instagram accounts name is @dietprada. The account started by calling out knock offs and designers who were copying each other. Now it reports on many fashion-related topics but mainly focuses on unethical and exploitative behavior by brands or individuals.

It was established in 2014 by then-anonymous editors who have since been identified as fashion industry professionals Tony Liu and Lindsey Schuyler. Both editors have working experience which gives them a unique insider perspective to shed light on some of the industry's dark spots.

The fashion industry's fear of this account was embodied in a 2021 lawsuit against

the editors by Dolce & Gabanna, suing them for almost 700 million US dollars. The lawsuit, which was filed in a court in Milan, Italy, stated that Liu and Schuyler's reporting caused severe monetary damages to the brand after the account disapproved of a marketing campaign by D & G in China. The advertisement featured a racist depiction of Chinese culture and the immediate backlash forced the brand to cancel their fashion show last-minute, after models publicly stated they would not attend the show to present the clothes.

Dietprada was also largely involved in an effort to defund fashion designer Alexander Wang after allegations of sexual and emotional violence. It gained a lot of traction and forced the designer to react directly to prevent further losses.



<https://www.dietprada.com>

<https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2021/09/diet-prada-roasting-the-runway>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/14/fashion/diet-prada.html>

<https://www.highsnobiety.com/tag/diet-prada/>

<https://www.vogue.de/mode/mode-news/diet-prada-instagram-171006>

Fact check: Participatory culture.

What are the criteria of participatory culture?

Jenkins et al. (2009) define participatory culture as one that consists of:

- . Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement
- . Strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others
- . Some type of informal mentorship in which the most experienced members pass along their knowledge to novices
- . Members who believe that their contributions matter
- . Members who feel some degree of social connection with one another and care about other people's opinions about their contributions

Misconceptions vs. Facts: Participatory Culture

Everyone needs to participate for participatory culture to exist.

Contrary to the name it is not necessary for everyone to participate in a participatory culture. According to Jenkins et al. (2009) not every member has to contribute, but all must believe they are free to do so when they are ready. Also when people contribute it should be appropriately valued. Some will only dip their toes in, others develop skills that are most valued within the community, but both are part of it.

Participatory culture is tied to the evolution of the internet.

There is a distinction between participatory culture and participatory media or technologies. Participatory culture just took advantage of every new technology as it was presented: as a vehicle by which

to participate, engage with the world, and make a difference in your community. We throw ideas out into the world and bring them back in an improved way because of our engagement with communities. Participatory culture is a rich site of informal learning which is more easily done through participatory technologies (Jenkins, 2010).

Participatory culture is only shown through fandom.

Fan culture is an example of participatory culture and involves fans acting not only as consumers but also as producers and creators of some form of creative media. Participatory culture has many forms like affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem-solving, and circulations. New creative works produced by a fandom like fan fiction, fan art, memes, and cosplays are a form of expression. Affiliations are memberships in online communities, such as discussion boards or social media platforms and circulations are how information gets shared such as blogs and podcasts. Lastly, when working together in teams to complete tasks and develop new knowledge, such as through Wikipedia and gaming, you engage in collaborative problem-solving (Jenkins et al., 2009).

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- TEDx Talks. (2010, April 13). TEDxNYED - Henry Jenkins - 03/06/10 [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFCLKa0XRlw>

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Driving positive change: a PR perspective on activism.

By Chantal Vermue.

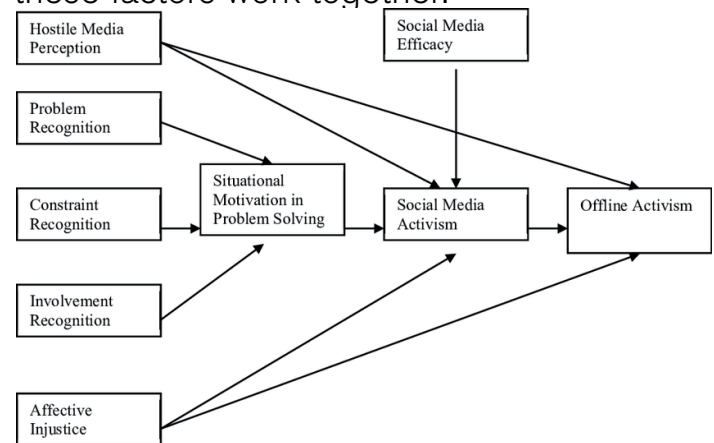
Activism has evolved. People on social media are getting more informed and involved in hot-button issues than ever before. It has found new ways to make a difference. We delve into the world of activism and explore how important engagement is with controversial issues. We discuss this using Myoung-Gi Chon and Hyojung Park's Integrative Model of Activism (2019). With this integrative model as their compass, PR professionals can be key in shaping the discourse of activist issues and influencing their outcomes.

The significance of activism.

In an age characterized by digital connectivity activism serves as a powerful catalyst for change. Activism is broadly defined as a collective action of like-minded individuals to change a society, a policy, or an organization with regard to controversial issues (Chon & Park, 2019). The rapid rise of social media platforms made connecting and organizing collective action to change social problems way easier. Social media helps to unite voices worldwide to tackle those pressing issues. Individuals can rally behind causes that matter to them and the online interactions they have often lead to offline mobilization. Social media platforms are therefore an important tool for activism by stimulating individual engagement. Within this ever-evolving arena of activism, PR professionals emerge as architects of communication, using their knowledge and strategies to amplify voices and mobilize communities. By understanding their role, PR professionals can harness the power of activism, directing it towards positive change.

The Integrative Model of Activism.

The Integrative Model of Activism helps us understand the factors that drive people to become activists in our networked society. It's a model that combines different concepts and theories to explain and predict activism. See Figure 1 underneath to understand how these factors work together.



"As individuals perceive a certain issue to be more problematic, feel more connected to it, and have fewer constraints, they are more motivated to try to solve the problem." (Chon & Park, 2019). When motivated by a given issue, those individuals are more likely to participate in social media activism. Participating in online discourse leads individuals to be more active in offline activism as well. Other indicators that influence activism are negative emotions caused by perceptions of unfairness and media coverage that is perceived as biased. Even the effectiveness of using social media is a factor to consider. People with higher confidence in media production, consumption, and related skills are more likely to use social media as a platform for activism (Chon & Park, 2019).

Hostile media perception fuels activism.

When a news story contradicts our own perception of reality, we often perceive it as biased, corrupted, or inaccurate. The reason behind this phenomenon is that we tend to interpret news in accordance with our own personal convictions. When we consider an

article as 'hostile', we believe that the media is presenting the issue we care about in a twisted manner, potentially swaying many people the 'wrong' way. (Precobias. n.d). The intensity of our feelings about a particular issue amplifies the impact of the hostile media effect, causing people to be more inclined to participate in activism in order to correct and influence public opinion (Chon & Park, 2019).

This pattern of behavior closely resembles the cognitive dissonance theory, which describes the feeling of discomfort when confronted with information that conflicts with your established attitudes and beliefs. To avoid that discomfort, people tend to tweak their behavior or seek out sources that align with their existing views. One of the ways they do this is by attributing any conflicting information to hostile media coverage (Tsfati & Cohen, 2005).

A famous example that perfectly demonstrates this effect is former US President Donald Trump accusing media outlets of being fake and full of lies. Trump openly stated that he dislikes the 'Lamestream' media because they didn't report things the way he wanted. His tactic proved effective in fueling the hostile media effect among his supporters, leading them to also develop a distrust of mainstream media (Precobias. n.d).

When presented with information that challenges our beliefs, people just dismiss the information source. It is important to note that this hostile perception is not necessarily related to the quality of a particular media outlet. Even with the most general, factual, and objective reporting the effect can kick in. In conclusion, the evolution of activism in the age of digital connectivity has revolutionized engagement with hot-button issues. Social media has become a powerful tool in facilitating real-world mobilization and hostile media perception underscores the emotional intensity of modern activism. PR professionals, armed with a profound understanding of the Integrative Model of Activism, stand at the forefront of this revolution, steering society towards a brighter and more impactful future.

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MassComm_Researcher. (2018, 16 november). The hostile media effect: What is it and how did we get here? Medium. <https://medium.com/@technoshaman777/the-hostile-media-effect-what-is-it-and-how-did-we-get-here-cddda9b21e9>

Precobias. (z.d.). HOSTILE MEDIA EFFECT. Brain.Fail. <https://www.brain.fail>

Case Study: Patagonia's Activism.

In the following we will look at Patagonia's support of grassroots organizations, activist societies and civic engagement in general. The American company originally specializing in outerwear as well as gear and equipment for the silent sports (e.g. skiing, fishing and climbing) has also become famous for their unrivaled commitment to environmental issues and social responsibility.

The brand not only supports activist groups in a financial or infrastructural way but actively engages with them to understand and further their cause. A whole section of the company website is dedicated to activism and the so-called Patagonia Action Works. One can learn more about the work the

brand does to help combat climate change, preserve wildlife and the environment. It also includes many possibilities for users to act themselves and for organizations to contact the brand about partnerships. Transparent reports and creative educational content accompany the calls to action. Patagonia is positioning itself as a sustainable clothing brand turned environmental activist. The reason their strategy works so well is, because their environmental goals relate to their range of products ("Nature is our business".) and thus appeals to a lot of prospective customers. This framework is applicable to any company and guarantees increased customer engagement as well as the possibility to make a change for the better.

[Click here to visit Patagonia's Website about Action Works and Brand Activism.](#)

Mobilizing change.

by Valentin Rupprecht.

In an age where social and political issues are taking on a bigger role every day, brands are increasingly realizing their potential to influence political change. They wield the power of their reputation, reach and resources to make a difference.

Many corporations contribute to social causes on a broad level, which influences public opinion (Toft et al., 2020). However, in today's very socially aware world, a supersized check simply is not enough to truly touch consumers. They expect to connect to a product or brand on a personal level. By establishing a social cause, many prospective customers will feel the personal

value in a brand (Han, 2016), as shown in the "Ready for Girls" campaign introduced in 2021 by LEGO. A study found that girls are less likely to conform to and be influenced by gender stereotypes than boys, when playing with toys. LEGO interpreted those findings in a way that relates to their products, through creative play. It positioned the brand as a frontrunner on gender equality and feminism, while boosting profits.

The first step to a successful brand activism campaign is a clear and communicable cause. Picking a purpose might seem easy, but it must relate to the product so that customers will not feel deceived. Authenticity starts on the inside. Fostering conversations between customers, employees and stakeholders builds a collective commitment to change. However, the external side is



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just as important. Informing the public, more specifically the target audience, about the measures taken is a key part of an authentic campaign. Being transparent and honest with consumers makes them feel as if they are part of something bigger than themselves. Successes as well as failures need to be openly communicated to establish that sense of affiliation. Brands can also use their own resources, such as political leverage, infrastructure and partners, to influence political discourse directly. In 2020 the juice manufacturer Innocent started a petition for all juice and smoothie bottles to be included in the German bottle deposit system. After one year and almost eighty thousand signatures later, lawmakers rewarded the efforts by including all PET bottles in the system. When companies seemingly go out of their purely economic modus operandi to change something that they are passionate about, it humanizes the brand. It makes customers feel like they are doing good simply by supporting said company (Fagerhaug & Andersen, 1998).

A sincere commitment to change, and integral values, has become the number one priority in the public's perception of brands. As personal opinions are being voiced and heard all around the world, companies can tap into this by addressing consumers personally and promoting change globally.

- 1 Toft, M., Sunny, J., & Taylor, R. (2020). *Authenticity: Building a brand in an insincere age*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
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The Movement Cycle.

The Movement cycle, visualized in Beautiful Trouble's Movement Compass ([link](#)), helps organizers understand the natural changes that a winning movement will often experience. It has been designed to easily navigate through a simplified set of movement life phases. These phases are Enduring Crisis, Uprising, Peak, Contraction, Evolution, and New Normal. Each phase comes with a different set of challenges and strategic decisions. When you have determined which phase of the cycle describes your movement, you can go to The Movement Compass to get tips on what to do.

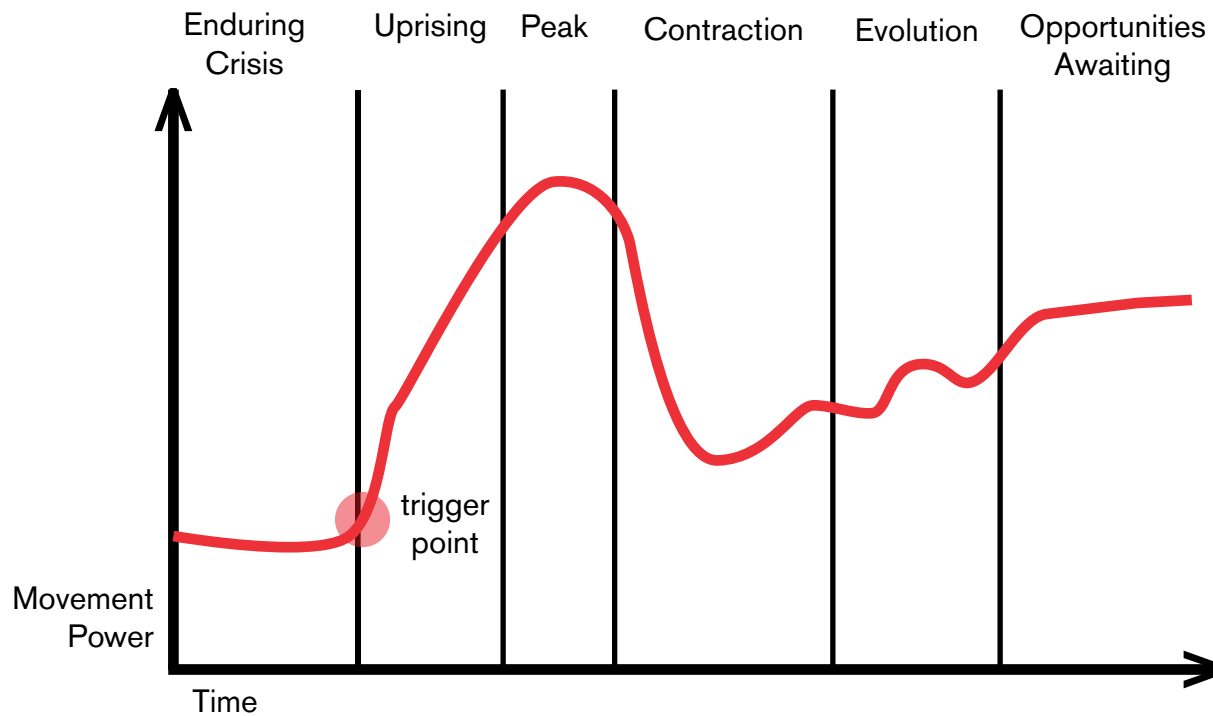
Enduring Crisis: Focus on building a group, establishing cooperation, raising awareness, and strengthening the relationships with the people you want to organize. Figure out what's bothering you, tell a story that will make others want to join you, and prepare for windows of opportunity.

Uprising: The uprising usually starts with a trigger event that makes people want to do something about it. Channel that disruptive energy and shift the balance of power to pressure decision-makers. A renewed sense of purpose drives this sudden surge in mobilization.

Peak: When your cause goes viral, everybody will pay attention to you. Stick to your main message, stay focused on your goals, and use this time to connect with more people. In this phase, it is important to be wary of band-aid solutions while you still have leverage.

Contraction: Once you've had some success, things might start to slow down. Backlash and suppression increase and more conflicts within the movement come up. Use this time to promote well-being and create safe

The Movement Compass.



spaces for emotional recovery. Explain how far you have come and celebrate your victories.

Evolution: The movement is getting reorganized using what you have learned from past experiences. This phase is focused on reflection. Develop new projects based on the analysis of what was effective and experiment with new goals that bring energy to your movement.

New Normal: The movement has put a lot of effort into forming alliances, building infrastructure, and developing skills, knowledge, and relationships among members. Now is the time to be proactive and take ambitious risks, while getting ready for the next trigger event.

Beautiful Trouble has also provided a very helpful worksheet (Link) from Movement NetLab that helps you determine in what phase of The Movement Cycle you currently are. It also shows some of the most important activities you can engage in at this critical moment.

The Movement Cycle is useful for strategists

who are not sure what their movement should be doing right now and who could benefit from guidance on figuring out their next steps.

Movement Compass link: <https://beautifultrouble.org/compass>

Worksheet link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/14mh_2SIHfLRi_kqQToELOx0DbemTOvCGf2ledyFnFEY/edit

Toolbox — The Movement Cycle. (n.d.). Beautiful Trouble. <https://beautifultrouble.org/toolbox/tool/the-movement-cycle>

Social media categorizing & spreadability

- . Categorizing Social Media Content. ([33](#))
- . Social media content management tools. ([34-37](#))
- . Adding virality to your social media marketing. ([37-38](#))

Behavioral change & sociology

- . A short guide to critical analysis of social media intake. ([40](#))
- . How to create a group to be with the brand's activism and drive their behavioral changes. ([41-42](#))
- . Shocking strategies. ([42-43](#))

What is next?

- . The future of activism. ([45-46](#))
- . Feature Interview: Andreas Wallbillich. ([47-48](#))

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Categorizing Social Media Content.

by **Valentin Rupprecht.**

Facebook, sometimes referred to as the mother of modern social networks, has just under 3 billion monthly active users (Kemp, 2023). To formalize the immense volume of content created and shared by these users, different frameworks have been established to categorize visual and textual information.

One very promising approach focuses on the content of the message and the way it is intended to connect with the audience (Tafesse & Wien, 2017). Posts are divided by purpose and joined in categories, which vary from “emotional brand posts” to “sales promotions”. The system is based on an earlier work that classified advertising campaigns based on their trans- and/or informational value. Informational advertising is defined as that which provides consumers with clear and logical data to help them evaluate the functional attributes of products and services. While transformational advertising links the experience of using a product or service to a unique set of psychological characteristics (Puto & Wells, 1984). Every advertisement was assigned a low or high value in both in- and transformational value.

Brands can utilize the insights gained from the categorization process to organize their own content and better engage with their audience.

Social media engagement is a direct and

highly influential way to connect with customers and partners. It establishes a regular connection and can even mimic personal interaction. This categorization, combined with corresponding image and text clues, enables brands to influence the social media algorithms' processing of their content. Different posts from the same category could be processed similarly to reach the same audience (Peterson-Salahuddin & Diakopoulos, 2020).

Assigning categories to posts also helps in long-term content strategy management, as it ensures coherency and simplifies key performance indicators analysis. This raises the quality of user engagement while maintaining the regularity of social media interactions.

As users are seeking a personal feel to the brand's outreach, telling a story is a great way to connect with consumers. The National Geographic Instagram page (@natgeo) demonstrates how sharing authentic narratives boosts followers as well as user engagement, as they are one of the most popular brand pages on the Platform, with 138 million followers in 2023. Many posts feature a short story by the photographer, which is always from a different perspective and allows for a genuine connection.

Categorizing social media posts can help brands plan, manage and transform their content as well as their overall communication. It is a relatively low-maintenance way to organize a company's media strategy as well as its daily posts and create a compelling brand profile.

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Tools for social media management.



Meltwater.

Meltwater allows you to measure your brand exposure by tracking what's being said in a variety of media, including print, online news, social media, and broadcasting.

This tool has a number of features that can help large businesses that track extensive media coverage. You can configure dashboards to track data points associated with content marketing and PR campaigns, including audience insights and reporting sentiments. You can also create newsletters to share media references with customers or companies.

Meltwater also lets you monitor your competitors' media coverage, monitor your social media accounts, and reply to comments. Meltwater is also a platform where journalists and publications can be found using keywords related to the company or industry. The platform also has an influencer database where journalists can be contacted for collaboration and partnership.

Vuelio.

Vuelio gives PR professionals the opportunity to predict which journalists to pitch based on their profiles and interests. Any journalist who joins this service is willing to receive a pitch for publicity purposes.

The service categorizes journalists based on their relevance to the industry they are interested in. Each profile provides information about the journalist's preferred topic so you can confidently pitch.

Vuelio offers various products and services, including media monitoring, political and media databases, news distribution, and media analysis.





SEMRush.

SEMrush is an online digital marketing service aimed at finding marketing insights and improving online visibility. The platform helps brands of all sizes and disciplines optimize visibility across all channels and create engaging content for their users. Workflow and tracking tools help users continue to run experiments and measure results more accurately, and a variety of features help them discover growth opportunities.

SEMrush features and reports support PR, SEO, PPC, content marketing, marketing insights, SMM, and campaign management for PR professionals and marketers.

SEMRUSH offers six toolkits for in-depth and diverse research on corporate websites and competitors. These include content marketing, competitor research, SEO, advertising, social media, and management capabilities.

NapoleonCat.

Napoleon Cat's social media management platform features social media publishing, audience engagement, and analytics. It integrates with all major social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. You can also use Napoleon Cat's analytics to monitor your competitors' social media performance.

While testing the software, you can see that the interface is neat and intuitive. The auto-review feature allows users to automatically post pre-designed replies based on keywords, recommend or delete content, and send client requests to selected recipients. The analysis feature allows users to track content performance compared to competitors. Users can also create and send PDF reports via email. Reports can be designed with user logos and comments. Napoleon Cat software also allows users to send email and text message notifications based on triggers they have configured, such as high content engagement. You can ask for support via email, chat, or phone.



NapoleonCat.

Brand24.

Brand24 automates most processes and provides all the data you need for reputation management.

Using the platform, users can analyze conversations about brands, products, and competitors and gain new insights into their customer base. Brand24 also provides sentiment analysis to understand customer attitudes better and identify important areas that require attention. You can filter by date, impact, mention source, or language on the dashboard. The Media Monitoring Tool collects all publicly available mentions and provides information about: the reach of a mention, Sensibility analysis, the amount of mention, Social media interaction, the most active position, the most popular public profile.

BRAND24



Mention.

Mention allows you to track online conversations and mentions about your company, product, industry, or campaign. This helps you stay up to date on important conversations about your brand. Mentions also allow you to filter media mentions you want to monitor by language, source, and date. You can set alerts by adding or removing specific keywords.

You can also create highly visualized marketing reports and automate them to share results with the company's key stakeholders.

Finding relevant brand references and conversations across the web is easy to set up and use. However, tracking campaigns can be complicated to set up without additional help from support teams.



Brandwatch

Brandwatch.

Brandwatch is one of the world's leading social media monitoring services, helping brands analyze and leverage business conversations across the social web. It provides a powerful and efficient social media monitoring and analysis platform to collect, analyze, and report relevant business insights about social media data. Brandwatch's key features include over 50 filters, powerful segmentation, fast, intuitive interfaces, filters and search tools, personalized sensitivity, real-time charts, shareable dashboards, search operators, and proprietary technologies. It is the perfect service for understanding social media conversations about you. It crawls the Internet and stores large amounts of social media data collected from at least 90 million websites in 27 languages. Therefore, the amount of data is enough to gain reliable insights for businesses of all sizes or promotional and marketing agencies. Another notable feature is the ability to identify key influencers who may be interested in purchasing products and ordering services. The multi-faceted query generation process also allows you to retrieve data from BrandWatch's web-based interface, either pre- or retrospectively, for social media mentions of a company or keyword.

Adding virality to your social media marketing.

by Jieun Oh.

No matter how good a company has and how many activities it does for the society where Target lives, it is all useless if it proceeds without anyone knowing. Now, it is all too natural to use social media for corporate branding and profit generation. But that's not all. Due to the nature of social media, posts that are unnoticed and unpopular are buried and lose their vitality. On the other hand, viral web content continues to be released

to new customers, improving online visibility and gaining an advantage in search engines (Thea Serrano, 2021). Therefore, it is very important to create virality for effective marketing. Then, let's find out how your post can appeal to targets by gaining more popularity compared to others. It becomes viral when messages delivered by content on your social media contain negative polarity and emotional appeals (Estela Saquete, 2022). Negative polarity refers to feelings such as fear, anger, and anxiety, and through countless clickbaiters on Instagram or YouTube, we are used to this method. They concentrate on earning

views and often add provocative titles or edit photos. Instead of being a clickbaiter, you should understand what emotions people move and care about and think about how to develop an ordinary existing post. Establishing an emotional relationship with the target audience is essential when creating content. An example of how emotional appeals worked is Dove's Real Beauty Sketch campaign. The highlight part of the campaign was a three-minute video of women looking more beautiful than they are. Rather than explaining the product's function, Dove showed that women must practice self-love and manage themselves in approaching beauty. This video went viral and contributed to Target's increased participation and purchasing power (Thea Serrano, 2021). Some situations make your content less shared. Situations such as the absence of news coverage, the scarcity of writers and distribution, and the absence of surprises have been found to be related to the success or failure of social media marketing (Thea Serrano, 2021). So, we need to read sociocultural trends and show people something new to get more shares and likes. The Barbie x Tangle Teezer campaign is an excellent example of this. Premium hairbrush brand Tangle Teezer collaborated with Barbie to launch new products like Barbie's Brush in the movie. Until now, Tangle Teezer has

gained a strong presence in TikTok through viral influencer marketing, and its campaign content has racked up more than 10 million views on social media in weeks. In addition, a special booth event was held during the Cannes Film Festival to reveal its presence to the public and many celebrities who attended the festival and create a large amount of additional sharing (Daniel Shale, 2023). Producing popular posts on social media brings tremendous positive factors to businesses. As

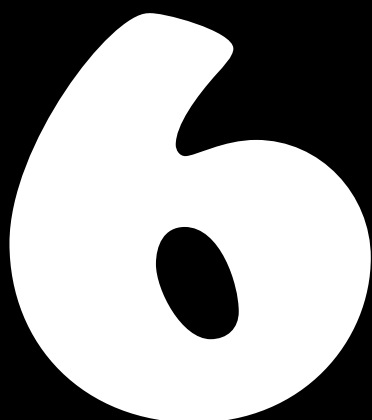
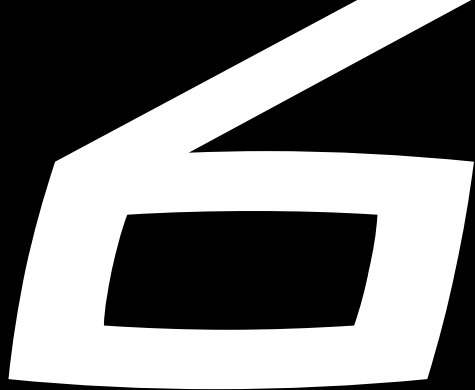
Dove and Tangle Teezer have shown, adding emotional appeals and reading trends quickly when using social media results in good corporate marketing. The number of likes and shares is a key measure of virality, so we should focus on this. However, you have to focus on the big picture, too. Before you make a popular post, you have to remember the integrity and the value of the company. Virality is likely to lead to a negative spread that undermines veracity (Mardohar Batu Bornok Simanjuntak, 2022). The goal of a company is not just to follow memes or trends and gain a lot of likes, but to build long-term relationships with customers and pursue profits. Therefore, you should think about what is most important first and think about successful social media marketing.

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A short guide to critical analysis of social media intake.

Now, people access almost all news and information in the form of digital and social media. In particular, the growing influence of social media has made it possible for not only certain professionals but also the general public to produce and disseminate information, and the age group and number of people who accept information are increasing. You have to understand the public and to reach them through various media, you have to inform more people the importance of digital media literacy and how to use it properly. Let's take a quick look at the core.

- Four ways
to critically understand media content!**
- 1. Looking at
who created the content for what purpose**
 - 2. Critically analyzing
whether posts are using
provocative or sensational techniques**
 - 3. Predicting
how content will affect audiences**
 - 4. Understanding
how a particular individual or group
is portrayed within the content**

What is Digital Media Literacy?

The ability to properly understand the characteristics of the digital environment and media and to discern the authenticity of the information being delivered, communicate reasonably, and participate in society

Why is it important?

With this ability, the public cannot be swayed by false information and prevent damage such as conflict between members of society.

[Click here to receive some more information on digital media literacy.](#)

How to create a group to be with the brand's activism and drive their behavioral changes.

by Jieun Oh.

A social problem is the result of collective human behavior, not a single individual (Immo Fritsche, 2021). And it is also a group, not an individual, that can solve and alleviate this problem. People who feel that they are individual actors may feel helpless, which leads to apathy and action. Even if they themselves think that individual contributions are important, other people's incentives prevent them from motivating them (Immo Fritsche, 2021). As a PR expert who will lead brand activism, you need to know how to gather people who will move to break down socio-political problems and effectively elicit changes in their behavior. Let's find out when and why many people join a group and show changes in their behavior.

The most important thing to motivate people and engage in groups is to get people to do ingroup identification. It is to use the human tendency to act the same as the members of the group, and when people define themselves as members of the group, they adopt the social self and begin to act as representatives of the group (Reicher S, 2010). Through processes such as self-stretching, members equalize their goals and actions to the shared goals and actions of the group. Stronger participation occurs when you recognize your in-group and think that this group is unfairly treated by other groups (Van Zomeren M, 2010). It is collective efficacy that helps these gathered members stay in the group for a long time. When the efficacy of individuals in the group increases, collective efficacy also increases, which leads to collective

behavior. Participation efficacy, which I think contributes to the success of collective action, and indirect goal efficacy, which encourages others to act, strengthen activism (Immo Fritsche, 2021). Taking one of the ways feminism works, activists remind the female public that they belong to a group by informing them of examples of female inequality in society. Members feel that their group is effective and become more active in participating as they see their demands change laws and corporate policies. If you have created participation, you should conduct an effective campaign to induce changes in the behavior of the members. You should analyze the target object and the expected effect. The intensity of the action and the number of participants are exchange conditions. The more stringent and difficult the expected behavioral change is, the fewer people will participate (Effective activists, 2022). Therefore, to deal with an issue where participation in society is important, a small change can have a greater impact, and the more concrete the behavior required, the better. For example, if a campaign that encourages vegetarianism for the animal rights movement requires too strict behavioral change, for example, the actions of a small number of people that can practice this do not have a significant impact on society depending on the consumption of a large number of foods that have given up on the practice. Through several pilot runs, you can see the target's response and determine the degree or specificity of the action to be requested. Campaigns should emphasize positive norms. Social norms have a significant influence on behavior. Studies have shown that if campaigns emphasize some harmful practices, people may regard them as implicit rules and create more undesirable behavior (Cialdini, 2006). Positive practices, not negative facts, should be emphasized. For example,

avoiding negative phrases such as “people are throwing away much trash here” and designating “join your colleagues in their efforts to protect the environment” as campaign phrases will produce better results. As mentioned earlier, to solve socio-political problems, it is necessary to create a wave of behavioral change in a community unit. You have to bring people who feel like individual activists into a group and constantly motivate them. By informing people much information about issues and reminding them that there is a supportive activist community that enables them to have a collective identity and the ability to solve problems, you can form a solid group (Effective activists, 2022). Also, campaigns for behavior change should balance independent and community-wide changes and emphasize positive practices. Based on this, you can make it possible for your brand to lead social behavior change with a stronger support community in the future.

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Shocking Strategies.

by Chantal Vermue.

Shock advertising has become a powerful tool for activists who seek to challenge societal norms and provoke introspection. Moral shock can be a crucial factor in changing attitudes and reinforcing commitment. But with that approach come many concerns, such as the potential for desensitization, normalization, and avoidance rather than engagement. As a PR professional, it is important to understand the delicate balance between captivation and caution. Only then will you be able to navigate conversations towards meaningful dialogue.

The purpose of shock advertising.

Shock advertising is a type of advertising that deliberately startles and offends its audience by violating social norms and personal ideals (Dahl et al., 2003). This evokes strong emotions that get people talking, which is the aim of most organizations that use it. Moral shock is an emotional response to intensely bewildering actions that are caused by our emotional unpreparedness in that moment (Stockdale, 2022). Many activists use that shock to teach important lessons by providing hard truths. A well-known organization that does this constantly is the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). An example we found shocking is a campaign they published in 2014 that focused on poaching and depicted tigers, rhinos, and sharks killed in gruesome ways (figure 1). The shocking nature made us remember the message better.

Disturbing imagery.

There are different approaches to cause unease in your communication, but what they all have in common is that they push the audience past their comfort zones. Disturbing

imagery is one way to force us to look and think about the messages that are portrayed on screen. According to a 2021 study conducted by Laura Fernández on strategic visual communication in animal liberation, 75% of participants stated that visuals were a key factor that contributed to their decision to become vegan and to get involved in activism. They argued that the violent images helped to break cognitive dissonance and encourage reflection due to the visceral emotions they experienced. Images are thus an important part of the process that influences their behavioural change.



On the other hand, several people indicated that they avoided content depicting explicit violence because they did not consider themselves emotionally strong enough. So if you alienate a certain percentage of your audience, your well-intended communication may never reach them. Additionally, some

raised concerns that the use of shock advertising normalizes the depiction of horrible acts, contributes to desensitization, and diminishes emotional responses to negative actions after repeated exposure.

Therefore Fernández (2021) emphasizes the need for a thoughtful and strategic use of visuals as part of a broader toolkit for promoting social change and sustaining activism.

The impact of shock advertising.

Shocking content in an advertisement significantly increases attention, benefits memory, and positively influences behavior (Dahl et al., 2003). Organizations that use moral shock aim to mobilize individuals to become advocates for change and encourage them to take action. Creating buzz can make your message hard to ignore and helps to enhance brand recall. But keep in mind that opinions on what is offensive vary widely among individuals. When you completely miss the point, you risk facing backlash. Sparking too much controversy can cause damage to the brand image.

In conclusion, applying moral shock to activism requires a nuanced approach. It is important to understand your audience and create a delicate balance between shock value and clear messaging. Make sure it is relevant for your brand and be mindful not to overdo the shock factor. When applied, always leave enough room to foster a genuine connection.

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The future of activism.

by Chantal Vermue.

Over the last decade, corporations have faced more and more pressure from consumers who expect them to take a public stance on issues such as social inequalities, climate change, or human rights. Traditionally, brand managers steered clear of political controversies, but today, a growing number are deliberately navigating their brands into societal and political debates. We'll explore this shift in brand activism and discuss what you can expect in the future.

Why brand activism will grow.

One of the biggest contributing factors to the growth of activism has been the worldwide distrust in political systems and institutions. The dissatisfaction with indifferent officials and the trust gap between elites and the mass public have significantly contributed to that (National Intelligence Council, 2021). This environment of skepticism, driven by concerns about corruption, globalization, eroding social values, and immigration, has led to a surge in public activism. Over the last couple of years, we have seen various tactics of how the public tries to put pressure on government leaders, institutions, and corporations to adjust their behaviors and policies to align more closely with their interests, needs, and values. This includes mass protests, nationwide boycotts, and advocacy campaigns. The evolving landscape underscores the pivotal role that brand activism is going to play in the future, as consumers and employees demand more meaningful alignment between corporate actions and societal concerns.

How to navigate the political storm.

Navigating the evolving landscape requires a nuanced approach to engage with consumers and maintain brand integrity. The rise in public demonstrations and civil

disobedience, fueled by distrust, is part of a decade-long trend (National Intelligence Council, 2021). This is because civil resistance movements, that put pressure on government leaders and corporations, have a higher success rate than violent campaigns (ICNC, 2011). "The consumers' decision to boycott or support a brand is strictly related to their political beliefs"

So when a brand wants to participate in activist communities it should carry out a political consumer segmentation to understand the political ideologies of its target audience. (Camarota et al., 2023). The PR professional's task is to determine whether there is political alignment between their consumers, the brand, and the movement(s) in question. When you estimate how many people you are going to alienate vs. attract with new activist values you should keep in mind the risk inaction has for your brand. Attempting to be neutral can have the opposite effect you want. You can seem deceptive and untrustworthy. As long as consumers feel that the brand has their interest in mind, is not too pushy about the activism, and their intentions appear to be honorable, people are surprisingly tolerant (Korschun, 2021).

Another critical factor in the growth of activism is social media engagement and online campaigns. They facilitate the rapid spread of information and enable groups to organize virtually without alerting authorities. At the same time, these platforms have been used to manipulate online content, spread misinformation, undermine causes, and incite public conflict (National Intelligence Council, 2021). Emancipation powered via internet culture, think of the hashtags #metoo and #blacklivesmatter, has made activism a popular marketing tool. But therein also lies the problem. When ideals become tools for economic gain brands participate in performative 'woke washing'.

This has resulted in some awkward and misguided campaigns like Pepsi's Live for Now commercial. It has been described as one of the most widely hated commercials of all time and changed the way brands talk about social justice (Macgregor, 2022). The insensitive commercial used the aesthetic of social movements and had celebrity Kendall Jenner 'solve' the conflict with a can of Pepsi. It is the perfect example of what not to do. If you can't fully commit to the cause social media will expose the hypocrisy quicker than you can imagine. As a PR professional, you should be mindful of all these challenges and proactively manage online content that shows the brand's genuine commitment.

Monitor future research.

Current research about brand activism is still at an exploratory stage and in need of advancement and conceptualization (Cammarota et al., 2023). Over time the complexity of the concept has changed in a way where authenticity based on the brand's inherent values is a must. But to truly understand what consumers expect from brands and what they perceive as authentic, the construct needs to be further analyzed and validated. Cammarota, Marino & Resciniti (2023) proposed the first scientific systematization of brand activism and provided two conceptual frameworks that can guide PR professionals in their future implementation strategies. One framework details the antecedents, intervening factors, and consequences of brand activism, while the other maps the possible actors, actions,

and communication channels. So keeping an eye on future research can give you the edge in understanding and navigating this dynamic trend.

In conclusion, brand activism will even be more important with the growing distrust around the world. Therefore PR professionals should prioritize authenticity and steer clear of performative gestures. Since the concept of brand activism is not set in stone, it is recommended to keep up to date with the latest research. This way you can stay ahead in the PR field.

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Click here to receive some more information on digital media literacy.

Feature Interview with Andreas Wallbillich, Spokesperson at Mann+Hummel.

The following is a redacted and translated version of the original interview.

Please introduce yourself and your job to the extent you think is appropriate.

Hello, my name is Andreas Wallbillich. I am the press spokesperson for Mann+Hummel. We are a company with 22,000 employees at 80 locations around the world and an average annual turnover of around 5 billion euros. The company started out around 80 years ago as an automotive supplier. Since then, our product range has expanded to include all types of filtration systems and applications, for example air and water filters. That's why this company needs someone like me. In the past, it was enough for the automotive industry to know us. Nowadays, it's important that more and more people know about filtration and know Mann+Hummel. I am the one who spreads the message.

And what does a normal working day look like for you? You don't just give press conferences, do you?

No, of course not - the subject matter is very extensive. The classic homework involves publishing press releases or answering journalists' enquiries and then there are lots of other things on the side. For example, what information do we proactively provide to the outside world, where do we position ourselves in order to publicise the topic of filtration? This includes the classic, physical, haptic media world, but also the social media world. In

addition, there are also things that come from the corporate department, such as the annual report or when a company is acquired, new markets are developed or branches are opened.

That's quite a lot. When you talk about communication and media, which media do you mainly use for your communication? Is social media a big part of your work?

Yes, so how should I put it. When I started the job, there were still very traditional press releases. Back then, we still sent them to editors by fax and were delighted when we appeared in a magazine. Although the traditional media are becoming less important, it is still relevant for us to appear in the Handelsblatt or to handle interview requests from the FAZ. In terms of constant communication, social media is very important to us and we are actively present on our corporate channels. We try to cover everything and the focus of the media varies depending on the mission or project.

So traditional channels are still important for you because they are established and you can reach a wide range of people?

Yes, although you have to differentiate a little at this point. Certain topics involve established communication channels. For example, the best way to reach tradespeople is via specialised magazines and their online offshoots. There is also B2C communication, where we do not directly encourage purchases via consumer media (as we do not sell directly to end customers), but we do create awareness of our brand and technologies. This type of communication is particularly important in our new business areas (such as air and water).

As well as using your social media channels, is analysing the associated data also relevant in your day-to-day work?

As someone who has not only worked at Mann+Hummel, but previously at Messe Stuttgart, I think it's not enough to say that we only focus on social media. The temptation to focus intensively on it is understandable, because there are so many statistics and analysis options. That's great and not to be denied, but in my professional career to date I have always focussed on other channels as well. You have to look at the whole thing backwards and start from the target group and evaluate which media are relevant. Even if the feedback is not always so direct.

How do you create concepts or strategies to communicate non-product-related content?

I would like to describe this using an example from last year, which has helped us a lot in communicating a purely economic topic. We added a special editorial section to our annual report in which we let people from our company talk about what they contributed to the business results. The people we interviewed came from all over the world and deliberately from non-management level positions. We showed what they do on a daily basis and let them speak in their native language. We communicated how international and diverse we are as well as what we actually do in the various areas.

We thought in advance that we could make the rather dull topic more accessible and

at the same time produce a lot of content for different channels. We have photo, moving image, audio and text options to keep introducing new topics and people. We have combined a wide range of communication disciplines in one project.

The topic of brand activism is now almost ubiquitous. How does this affect your day-to-day work?

Yes of course, we are mainly known for our products and in this respect it is naturally easy to communicate the topic of sustainability. It's not something we just claim to do, we actually do it. With our products, we always ensure that something runs better, longer or cleaner. Filtration and sustainability go hand in hand for us. That is our mission as a company, which means that the topic is always on our minds. We also do a lot of educational work when it comes to our technologies. During the coronavirus pandemic in particular, we have dealt with a lot of enquiries about how our virus filters work and many people have realised that there is a lot of potential in a good filter system. I am happy to be able to communicate for a company and for products that are so important and sustainable. These values are an integral part of our company and my day-to-day work.

