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Abstract: While research dedicated to brand activism (BA) is growing, we still do not know how consumers perceive BA and how it influences their relationships with brands. This exploratory research aims at understanding the perception and reactions of consumers towards BA campaigns through a dual perspective - cognitive and affective. First, it contributes to better delineate the construct of BA from closely related constructs. Second, based on an AOL projective technique on two BA campaigns, this study reveals the potential role of psychological distance in consumer's perception of the brand's efforts in supporting a cause. From an affective viewpoint, brands gain legitimacy through BA, however, consumers could have potential feelings of scepticism towards inconsistent BA campaigns. From a cognitive perspective, this study displays dual incentives (collective and individual) for brands to adopt BA as a strategy, and the likely role of BA as a starting point for political changes.

Keywords: *Brand Activism; Consumer-Brand Relationship; Brand Relationship Quality*

Track: *Product and Brand Management*