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**Luxury Brands Taking a Stand: A
Cross-Cultural Study of Generation Z
Responses to Luxury Fashion Brand Activism
in Italy and Vietnam**

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Abstract

Luxury fashion brand activism creates both opportunity and reputational risk because consumers may reward credible commitment while punishing inconsistency between a brand's public position and its conduct. Grounded principally in the persuasion knowledge model, with social identity theory and signalling and self-expression theory as supporting lenses, this study examines how consumer-brand agreement, perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, perceived prestige, and brand attitude shape boycott and boycott intentions. The core theoretical tests are the direct routes from perceived authenticity to boycott intention and from perceived hypocrisy to boycott intention. Brand attitude is assessed as a supporting mediator and individual-level collectivist orientation as a moderator, while the Italy-Vietnam comparison serves as supplementary contextual analysis.

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey exposed Italian and Vietnamese Generation Z consumers to a hypothetical environmental activism announcement by Hermès. After screening, 162 valid responses were retained, comprising 80 Italian and 82 Vietnamese respondents. The measurement and structural models were estimated using partial least squares structural equation modelling in SmartPLS 4. Path coefficients and explained variance were obtained from the PLS algorithm, and the significance of all direct, indirect, and moderating effects was assessed through bootstrapping with 5,000 percentile-bootstrap resamples. Measurement quality, direct and indirect effects with complementary direct paths, moderation, predictive performance, importance-performance results, and supplementary cross-national differences were assessed. A robustness model replaced the primary binary agreement indicator with the original four-point agreement measure.

The most consistent findings concern the core credibility routes. Perceived hypocrisy directly increased boycott intention, the strongest path in the model, and perceived authenticity directly increased boycott intention. Both effects were stable across the two agreement specifications. The supporting attitudinal mechanism was selective. Brand attitude increased boycott intention but did not significantly reduce boycott intention. It partially transmitted the effect of perceived authenticity on boycott intention, fully transmitted the effect of perceived hypocrisy on boycott intention, and transmitted neither credibility judgment to boycott intention. Perceived prestige did not make a significant additional contribution to brand attitude once credibility judgments were considered.

The agreement-related findings were specification-sensitive. In the primary binary-agreement model, agreement reduced perceived hypocrisy and collectivist orientation moderated the agreement-to-perception relationships, but neither effect was reproduced in the four-point robustness model, which also substantially reduced the associated collinearity. The agreement-related findings and the collectivist-orientation

moderation of the agreement-to-perception paths should therefore be treated as exploratory.

This study contributes a credibility-centred explanation of luxury brand activism. Authenticity provides a basis for consumer reward, while hypocrisy provides a more direct basis for punishment. Brand attitude selectively transmits credibility judgments into supportive purchasing but not into punitive avoidance, prestige plays a secondary role, and cultural orientation operates as a path-specific boundary condition rather than a uniform amplifier. For managers, the findings imply that activism should be treated as an organisational credibility commitment supported by observable action, sustained follow-through, and active monitoring of hypocrisy risks, rather than as a stand-alone communication campaign.

Keywords: luxury fashion; brand activism; authenticity; hypocrisy; brand prestige; boycott intention; boycott intention; collectivist orientation; PLS-SEM.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research background: the rise of brand activism and the luxury fashion context

Over the past decade, brands have become increasingly visible participants in public debate. Companies now speak about issues such as racial justice, immigration, gender equality, gun control, healthcare, and LGBTQ+ rights through advertising, public statements, social media, and corporate action (Hong & Li, 2021). This development has expanded the role of the brand beyond the provision of products and services. A brand can now function as a social actor whose values, public voice, and conduct are evaluated alongside its commercial offering (Moorman, 2020).

Brand activism is commonly defined as a brand, company, or brand-associated individual publicly taking a position on a divisive social or political issue (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). The construct therefore contains several important elements. The position is public, the issue is contested, the stance is non-neutral, and the communication can support or oppose change (Moorman, 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020). Brand activism is also both societal and strategic. It seeks to influence attitudes, behaviour, or institutional change, while it can simultaneously create marketing value for the brand (Vredenburg et al., 2020). These dual objectives make activism different from a conventional promotional campaign because the brand is judged not only by communication effectiveness, but also by the social meaning and credibility of its position.

Brand activism is related to corporate social responsibility, but the two concepts are not interchangeable. CSR generally concerns widely accepted prosocial activities, including education, poverty reduction, community support, fair trade, and disaster relief. Brand activism addresses issues on which social consensus is limited and on which stakeholders may hold opposing moral or political positions (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Shukla et al., 2025). Brand activism can therefore be understood as an evolution of CSR, but its contested character creates stronger and less predictable responses (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018; Wannow et al., 2024). Whereas a conventional CSR initiative is unlikely to be rejected because of its cause alone, an activist stance can attract supporters and opponents at the same time. This polarising potential is a defining characteristic of activism rather than an unintended side effect (Moorman, 2020).

Brand activism must also be distinguished from related political activities. Corporate social advocacy refers to a corporation publicly supporting a controversial social or political issue, often through an organisational initiative or a statement by a senior executive (Dodd & Supa, 2015). This concept substantially overlaps with brand activism because both are public and directed toward external stakeholders. Corporate political activity is different because it primarily seeks to influence political actors through institutional channels such as lobbying

and political donations (Katic & Hillman, 2023). Brand activism is more visible and market-facing, whereas corporate political activity can remain non-public and institution-facing (Gidaković et al., 2026; Katic & Hillman, 2023). CEO activism is a further related form in which an executive's personal statement becomes associated with the corporation and influences how stakeholders evaluate the brand.

The increasing use of activism reflects changing expectations about corporate participation in society. Brands face pressure from consumers and other stakeholders to clarify what they stand for, particularly when a sociopolitical issue receives extensive public attention (Ahmad et al., 2024). This pressure does not mean that all consumers want the same position. It means that silence, speech, timing, and follow-through can all become information from which consumers infer the brand's values and motives. The strategic question is therefore no longer limited to whether a brand should speak. It also concerns which issue it addresses, which position it adopts, how it communicates that position, and whether its subsequent conduct supports the public claim.

This development is particularly relevant to younger consumers and to markets in which brands carry strong identity meanings. Research on Generation Z in Vietnam describes brand activism as an increasingly important response to contemporary consumer expectations and links activist engagement with trust, loyalty, and favourable brand attitudes (Nguyen et al., 2023). Younger consumers can evaluate brands through ethical, political, and cultural criteria in addition to product quality and price. Their responses can therefore include support, avoidance, switching, public advocacy, or criticism. For a luxury fashion brand, these reactions are especially consequential because consumption is highly visible and frequently communicates identity, taste, and social position.

Consumer responses to activism are not symmetrical. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) found that disagreement with a brand's stance reduced brand attitude, behavioural intention, and actual choice, while agreement generally did not produce a comparable improvement in brand attitude. This pattern indicates that the risk of alienating opponents can be stronger than the benefit of attracting supporters. It also explains why a campaign can receive substantial approval and still harm the brand if the negative response is more intense or comes from important existing customers. Activism therefore changes the distribution of consumer relationships rather than producing a uniformly positive or negative market effect.

Moral emotions provide a further explanation for these polarized reactions. Three scenario-based experiments found that activist messages generate other-praising emotions when consumers agree with the brand and other-condemning emotions when they disagree, and these emotions shape subsequent brand responses (Wannow et al., 2024). Consumer-brand identification moderates this process because strong prior identification can reduce the emotional effect of both agreement and disagreement (Wannow et al., 2024). Message design also matters. Hope-framed activism messages produced more

consumer inspiration and higher purchase intentions than frustration-framed messages, although the effect varied with consumer mindset and issue salience (Xie et al., 2024). These findings show that consumer response depends not only on the issue and the brand's position, but also on the emotional and motivational form through which the position is communicated.

Brand activism also connects branding with political consumerism. Consumers can reward a firm through deliberate purchasing, commonly described as buycotting, or punish it through deliberate avoidance, commonly described as boycotting. These actions allow consumers to influence corporate conduct while also expressing personal values and group identities. Digital media strengthen this process by making information about corporate behaviour easier to circulate and by helping like-minded consumers coordinate participation. A meta-analysis of 66 studies identifies media use, ideological strength, and political orientation as important predictors of political consumerism (Copeland & Boulianne, 2022). The consequences of activism can therefore extend beyond private attitudes because individual reactions can be communicated, aggregated, and transformed into collective market pressure.

Negative and positive political consumption should not be treated as equivalent reactions. Evidence on the psychology of political consumerism shows that negative information has greater power than positive information in inducing consumer action and that boycotting is distinct from other forms of participation (Kam & Deichert, 2020). This negativity bias is consistent with the asymmetric findings in brand activism research. A consumer who sees an activist position as a moral violation may have a stronger motivation to punish the brand than an aligned consumer has to reward it. For luxury brands, where purchases are discretionary, visible, and symbolically meaningful, the decision to avoid or publicly reject a brand can itself become a strong identity statement.

The growth of activism has also increased consumer skepticism. Consumers do not assess only whether a brand supports a desirable cause. They assess whether the support reflects genuine conviction or an attempt to gain attention and financial benefit. Research on activism authenticity shows that consumers infer inner conviction from the brand's behaviour; stronger authenticity perceptions reduce skepticism and improve consumer reactions (Virkus & Klein, 2026). Authenticity is therefore not identical to consumer-brand agreement. A consumer may support the cause but still reject the campaign because the brand's involvement appears opportunistic, superficial, or inconsistent.

The concept of woke washing captures this problem. Woke washing occurs when activist messaging is detached from the brand's purpose, values, and corporate practice, potentially misleading consumers and weakening both brand equity and the potential for social change (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Authentic brand activism requires alignment among four elements: brand purpose, organisational values, activist communication, and observable

practice (Vredenburg et al., 2020). A statement can therefore appear inauthentic even when its content is socially progressive. If the company does not support the claim through its employment practices, governance, supply chain, financial commitments, or long-term behaviour, consumers can interpret the campaign as symbolic rather than substantive.

Perceived hypocrisy explains why inconsistency can produce severe reputational consequences. Experimental research shows that inconsistent CSR information increases perceptions of corporate hypocrisy and damages beliefs about the firm's social responsibility and attitudes toward the firm (Wagner et al., 2009). A proactive communication strategy can even be counterproductive when a firm's public statement is followed by behaviour that contradicts it (Wagner et al., 2009). More recent evidence on brand activism similarly indicates that sustained expression and sustained action are more effective than one-off symbolic statements in reducing skepticism and accusations of performative activism (Jiang et al., 2026). Authenticity is thus evaluated over time. Consumers compare present messages with prior conduct and observe whether commitment continues after public attention declines.

The behavioural importance of authenticity is supported by earlier CSR research. Alhouti et al. (2016) found that perceived impact, reparation, and brand-cause fit contribute to authenticity judgments, and that authenticity mediates important consumer outcomes. Their empirical model showed that authenticity was positively related to purchase intention and loyalty and negatively related to boycott behaviour (Alhouti et al., 2016). Although CSR and brand activism are conceptually different, these findings establish a broader credibility mechanism that remains highly relevant when the issue is more controversial. Activist communication is unlikely to generate durable support unless consumers believe that the brand's involvement is credible, consequential, and consistent with its conduct.

These dynamics become particularly complex in luxury fashion because luxury consumption is strongly symbolic. Luxury brands provide functional and aesthetic value, but they also communicate status, distinction, aspiration, and self-identity. Research on brand credibility and prestige shows that both constructs influence purchase intention, particularly in highly self-expressive product categories such as clothing, cosmetics, and fragrance (Baek et al., 2010). Prestige can serve as a symbolic signal that helps consumers enhance their social image and self-image (Baek et al., 2010). An activist stance can therefore alter not only attitudes toward a campaign, but also the symbolic meaning and perceived prestige of the luxury brand itself.

Luxury brand activism can create value when the stance provides consumers with an additional means of expressing identity. Experimental evidence shows that activism can improve evaluations of luxury brands through self-expressive value, enhanced luxury brand perception, and subsequent purchase intention (Khalifa & Osburg, 2025). Activism can also strengthen the symbolic benefits associated with luxury by signalling what the brand

represents beyond its products (Khalifa & Osburg, 2025). This mechanism is strategically important because high self-expressive products are evaluated through both credibility and prestige rather than through functional performance alone (Baek et al., 2010).

However, the same symbolic visibility creates greater exposure to contradiction. Luxury is often associated with exclusivity, scarcity, status, and self-enhancement, whereas many activist causes emphasise inclusion, equality, collective welfare, and social change. Consumers may interpret a credible stance as a meaningful extension of the brand's identity, but they may also see a conflict between the message and the economic or social practices of luxury production. The outcome depends on whether the stance is consistent with consumer values, whether the brand appears authentic or hypocritical, and whether activism strengthens or weakens the prestige attached to the brand. Prior evidence supports each of these routes but usually examines them separately (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Alhouti et al., 2016; Wagner et al., 2009; Khalifa & Osburg, 2025).

The central research problem of this thesis follows from this tension. Luxury fashion brands are increasingly expected to participate in sociopolitical debate, yet the consequences of doing so are contingent and potentially asymmetric. Activism may generate support through identity alignment, moral approval, authenticity, and enhanced symbolic value. It may generate punishment through disagreement, condemning emotions, skepticism, perceived hypocrisy, and the loss of brand prestige. Understanding how consumer-brand agreement shapes authenticity, hypocrisy, prestige, brand attitude, boycott intention, and boycott intention is therefore necessary for explaining Gen Z consumers' responses to luxury fashion brand activism. This problem is examined in the following sections and developed into the conceptual model and hypotheses presented in Chapter 2.

1.2 Problem statement

Brand activism creates a managerial problem because neither engagement nor silence offers a consistently safe outcome. Brands may remain silent to avoid alienating consumers, yet silence can also be interpreted as indifference, fear, or unwillingness to act when stakeholders expect a position. Research on socio-politically silent brands shows that consumers infer different motives from silence and that these motives can produce different evaluations of the brand (Malik et al., 2025). Speaking publicly is equally uncertain because a partisan issue necessarily contains supporters and opponents, and taking a position can upset consumers, employees, partners, and other stakeholders whose values do not align with the brand (Moorman, 2020). The practical problem is therefore not a simple choice between speaking and remaining silent. It is a problem of determining when, how, and under which consumer conditions activism creates social and market value rather than relational and reputational damage.

The importance of this problem has been recognised for several years. The Marketing Science Institute identified whether brands should take public stands on controversial issues as an important research priority and emphasised the need to establish whether courting controversy helps or harms a brand (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). The question remains unresolved because the effects of activism are contingent on the issue, the brand, the message, the consumer, and the surrounding social context. A central source of this contingency is the asymmetric effect of consumer-brand agreement. Across five studies, disagreement with a brand's activist stance reduced brand attitude, behavioural intention, and actual choice, whereas agreement generally did not produce an equivalent improvement in brand attitude (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). A comparatively small group of strongly opposed consumers may therefore generate substantial damage that supportive consumers do not offset. For luxury fashion brands, this risk is amplified because existing customers often have long-standing emotional, symbolic, and financial relationships with the brand.

Consumer reactions also depend on judgments that go beyond agreement itself. Consumers evaluate whether activism reflects genuine conviction or a strategic effort to gain attention and financial benefit, and stronger perceived authenticity reduces skepticism and improves reactions (Virkus & Klein, 2026). Woke washing, in which activist messaging is detached from the brand's purpose, values, and corporate practice, can mislead consumers and weaken brand equity (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2024). Perceived hypocrisy captures the corresponding judgment that the brand's words and actions are inconsistent; it damages beliefs about the firm and attitudes toward it (Wagner et al., 2009), and sustained expression and action over time reduce such perceptions more effectively than one-off symbolic statements (Jiang et al., 2026). These judgments have direct behavioural relevance, because authenticity research shows positive associations with purchase intention and loyalty and a negative association with boycott behaviour (Alhouti et al., 2016).

The problem is sharper in luxury fashion than in the general consumer settings where most evidence was produced. Luxury consumption is strongly symbolic, and brand prestige contributes to purchase intention in highly self-expressive categories such as clothing (Baek et al., 2010). Luxury-specific evidence shows that activism can increase self-expressive value and improve luxury brand perception and subsequent purchase intention (Khalifa & Osburg, 2025). However, the same symbolic visibility creates exposure to contradiction between activist messages of inclusion and collective welfare and the exclusivity traditionally associated with luxury. An activist stance may therefore strengthen or weaken perceived prestige, and it may convert agreement into support or, through perceived hypocrisy, into punishment. Existing research has paid greater attention to brand attitude, authenticity, and purchase intention than to prestige as a mechanism connecting activist communication with political consumption.

The behavioural outcomes also require differentiation. Boycotting rewards a brand through intentional support, while boycotting punishes it through intentional avoidance, and the two

behaviours reflect different motivational processes rather than opposite points on a single purchase-intention scale. Negative information is more powerful than positive information in producing consumer action, and boycotting is psychologically distinct from other forms of participation (Kam & Deichert, 2020). Digital media further allow individual reactions to become collective pressure by facilitating information sharing and coordination among like-minded consumers (Copeland & Boulianne, 2022). A model that combines the two behaviours into one general outcome would therefore conceal an important part of the managerial problem.

The available literature supports parts of this process, but the mechanisms remain fragmented. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) establish the asymmetric effect of agreement. Wannow et al. (2024) identify moral emotions and consumer-brand identification as explanatory conditions. Virkus and Klein (2026) connect inner conviction with authenticity and skepticism. Wagner et al. (2009) demonstrate the attitudinal consequences of perceived hypocrisy. Khalifa and Osburg (2025) show that activism can influence self-expressive value and luxury brand perception, and Baek et al. (2010) establish the importance of prestige in self-expressive product choice. These studies examine different outcomes, contexts, and explanatory paths, and their findings do not show how consumer-brand agreement, authenticity, hypocrisy, prestige, and brand attitude operate simultaneously between a single antecedent and separate boycott and boycott intentions in luxury fashion.

Consumer responses also reflect both personal values and perceived social expectations. Individualist consumers may place greater weight on independent self-expression, whereas collectivist consumers may place greater weight on group harmony, shared norms, and collective consequences (Yoo et al., 2011). Evidence that consumers respond to the perceived opinion climate when deciding to boycott or boycott (Hong & Li, 2021), and that individual-level cultural dimensions shape fashion consumption decisions (Khan et al., 2024), indicates that cultural orientation may alter how agreement is translated into brand judgments and political-consumption intentions. This research examines Generation Z consumers in Italy and Vietnam while treating collectivism as an individual-level characteristic rather than assuming that nationality determines cultural orientation.

The research problem is therefore both practical and academic. Practically, luxury fashion managers lack clear guidance on which consumers will reward, punish, or disregard activism and which perceptions must be managed to reduce the risk of backlash. Academically, the literature has not integrated consumer-brand agreement as a single antecedent; perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, perceived brand prestige, and brand attitude as parallel perceptual and attitudinal mechanisms; and boycott and boycott intentions as separate outcomes within one luxury fashion model. It also remains unclear whether individual-level collectivist orientation strengthens or weakens the links between agreement, brand perceptions, and brand attitude among Generation Z consumers. This study addresses the problem by developing and empirically testing an integrated model in which consumer-brand

agreement influences brand perceptions, brand perceptions and brand attitude shape boycott and boycott intentions, and collectivist orientation moderates the agreement-to-perception and perception-to-attitude relationships. The following section translates this problem into the specific literature gaps that define the contribution of this study.

1.3 Literature gaps

The preceding problem statement identifies a broad need for more reliable explanations of consumer responses to luxury fashion brand activism. A useful contribution, however, requires more than transferring established activism relationships into another product category. The literature must be examined for specific limitations that affect the context, theoretical mechanism, behavioural outcomes, and boundary conditions of the present research. Five connected gaps define the contribution of this study. Each gap identifies what prior research has established, what remains unresolved, why the limitation matters, and how the proposed model responds.

The first gap concerns the luxury fashion and Generation Z context. Foundational brand activism research establishes that a public stance can influence brand attitude, behavioural intention, and consumer choice. It also demonstrates an asymmetric pattern in which disagreement produces more reliable negative effects than agreement produces positive effects (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). These findings are important, but much of the evidence was developed outside luxury fashion. General consumer settings do not fully reproduce the visibility, symbolic value, identity expression, and prestige that characterize luxury consumption. Clothing and other highly self-expressive products are evaluated partly through their symbolic and affective benefits rather than only through functional utility (Baek et al., 2010). The meaning of an activist stance may therefore be different when the brand itself serves as a public signal of status and identity.

Luxury-specific research has begun to address this limitation. Khalifa and Osburg (2025) show that activism can enhance self-expressive value, luxury brand perception, and subsequent purchase intention. This evidence confirms that activism can change the symbolic meaning of a luxury brand, but it concentrates on a positive pathway leading to purchase-related intentions. It does not fully explain how the same stance may produce separate rewarding and punitive responses through authenticity, hypocrisy, prestige, and brand attitude. Evidence concerning Generation Z is also incomplete. Research in Vietnam connects Generation Z perceptions of brand activism with trust, loyalty, and favorable attitudes, but its setting does not establish how this cohort responds when the activist is a luxury fashion brand and the outcomes are boycotting and boycotting (Nguyen et al., 2023). The first gap is therefore not the complete absence of luxury or Generation Z research. It is the absence of an integrated explanation of Generation Z reward and punishment intentions toward luxury fashion activism.

The second gap concerns the fragmentation of explanatory mechanisms. Existing studies identify several important processes, but they usually examine different mechanisms in different models. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) focus on agreement, consumer-brand identification, and brand attitude. Wannow et al. (2024) show that agreement and disagreement generate other-praising and other-condemning moral emotions and that consumer-brand identification moderates these responses. Virkus and Klein (2026) examine inner conviction, authenticity, and skepticism. Wagner et al. (2009) identify perceived hypocrisy as a psychological mechanism through which inconsistent corporate information damages consumer beliefs and attitudes. Khalifa and Osburg (2025) establish self-expressive value and luxury brand perception as mechanisms in the luxury setting.

Together, these studies show that consumer response is perceptual, emotional, symbolic, and attitudinal. However, examining the mechanisms separately prevents comparison of their relative importance. A favourable brand attitude may result from perceived authenticity, symbolic prestige, agreement with the stance, or a combination of these judgments. A boycott intention may arise from disagreement, hypocrisy, identity threat, or a more general negative attitude. When these paths are tested in separate studies, it is not possible to determine whether one mechanism remains important after the others are considered. This study addresses this fragmentation by modelling perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, perceived prestige, and brand attitude simultaneously as parallel mechanisms between consumer-brand agreement and behavioural intentions.

The third gap concerns the relationship between consumer-brand agreement and authenticity. Agreement clearly matters for consumer response. Disagreement with an activist stance can reduce brand attitude, behavioural intention, and actual choice even when agreement does not generate an equivalent positive gain (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Authenticity also matters because consumers evaluate whether the stance reflects the brand's inner conviction, and stronger authenticity reduces skepticism and improves reactions (Virkus & Klein, 2026). The unresolved issue is whether agreement itself changes authenticity judgments or whether the two operate as distinct evaluations.

This distinction is theoretically important. Consumer-brand agreement concerns the correspondence between the consumer's position and the brand's position. Authenticity concerns whether the brand appears sincere, consistent, and committed to its own position. A consumer can agree with the cause but judge the brand's involvement as opportunistic. A consumer can also disagree with the cause while recognising that the brand's commitment is genuine. Indeed, authentic commitment may intensify opposition among disagreeing consumers because it signals a durable conflict between the consumer's values and the brand's values (Fan et al., 2025). The woke washing framework further indicates that authenticity depends on alignment among purpose, values, messaging, and corporate practice rather than on the social desirability of the stance alone (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

The agreement-authenticity path therefore requires direct testing in luxury fashion rather than being assumed.

The fourth gap concerns perceived brand prestige as a distinct mechanism. Prestige is central to luxury consumption because it communicates status, symbolic positioning, and self-image. Both brand credibility and brand prestige influence purchase intention in highly self-expressive product categories, and consumers consider both when selecting products that communicate identity (Baek et al., 2010). Brand prestige can also help consumers enhance their social image and self-image through consumption (Baek et al., 2010). These findings make prestige directly relevant to luxury fashion activism.

Existing luxury activism research shows that a sociopolitical stance can enhance symbolic benefits and luxury value perceptions (Khalifa & Osburg, 2025). However, this evidence does not establish perceived brand prestige as a separate mediator leading to boycott and boycott intentions. Activism may increase prestige when the stance makes the brand appear principled, distinctive, and culturally relevant. It may reduce prestige when the stance conflicts with the consumer's identity or makes the brand appear inconsistent, opportunistic, or excessively politicized. Treating prestige only as a stable attribute of the brand would overlook the possibility that activism changes the status meaning of the brand. This research model therefore treats perceived prestige as an evaluative mechanism that can be influenced by consumer-brand agreement and can contribute to subsequent political consumption.

The fifth gap concerns cultural orientation as an individual-level boundary condition. Prior research has established several moderators of activism effects. Consumer-brand identification changes how agreement and disagreement activate moral emotions (Wannow et al., 2024), political ideology conditions responses to activist messages (Haupt et al., 2023), and message framing effects depend on consumer mindset and issue salience (Xie et al., 2024). Political consumerism research also identifies ideological strength, political orientation, and media use as predictors of participation (Copeland & Boulianne, 2022). These findings confirm that activism outcomes depend on consumer characteristics, but they do not explain whether collectivism changes the way consumers process luxury brand activism.

This cultural gap matters because activism combines personal moral expression with sensitivity to social groups and public opinion. Individualist consumers may prioritize personal congruence and independent value expression, whereas collectivist consumers may favour group expectations, social harmony, and collective consequences (Yoo et al., 2011). The relevance of the social environment is supported by evidence that perceived majority support and the credibility of public-support information change the effects of stance consistency on brand attitude and on boycott and boycott intention (Hong & Li, 2021). Evidence that individual-level cultural dimensions influence willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion establishes the relevance of culture to fashion-related decisions, but it

does not test cultural orientation in the luxury brand activism process (Khan et al., 2024). This research examines Generation Z samples in Italy and Vietnam to obtain variation in social and cultural experience, while measuring collectivist orientation at the respondent level. It does not assume that nationality determines cultural orientation. The gap concerns whether an individual's own orientation changes the effects of consumer-brand agreement on brand perceptions and attitude, and the translation of these perceptions into behavioural intentions.

The five gaps are related rather than independent. The limited luxury and Generation Z evidence creates uncertainty about the empirical context. The fragmented mechanisms create uncertainty about how consumers form their responses. The agreement-authenticity tension creates uncertainty about whether value congruence and brand credibility are distinct. The missing prestige path creates uncertainty about how activism changes luxury's symbolic value. The limited cultural evidence creates uncertainty about whether the relationships vary across cultural orientations.

Taken together, these gaps justify an integrated and culturally contingent model of Generation Z responses to luxury fashion brand activism. This model combines consumer-brand agreement as the antecedent; perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, perceived brand prestige, and brand attitude as parallel perceptual and attitudinal mechanisms; boycott and boycott intentions as distinct outcomes; and individual-level collectivist orientation as a boundary condition on the agreement-to-perception and perception-to-attitude relationships. The empirical application to Generation Z consumers in Italy and Vietnam allows these relationships to be examined across different social contexts without treating nationality as a substitute for individual cultural values. The following section translates these gaps into the research questions and objectives of this study.

1.4 Research questions and objectives

The five gaps identified in the previous section converge on a single overarching inquiry: how do consumers form behavioural intentions toward luxury fashion brands that engage in activism? This inquiry is sharpened by two features of the evidence base: within political consumerism, boycotting has received less research attention than boycotting (Tan, 2025), and the motivational foundations of political consumerism, whether consumers act from personal conviction or from a desire to signal identity and group affiliation, remain unresolved (Hou & Poliquin, 2026). The overarching research question is therefore decomposed into three sub-questions.

RQ1: How does consumer-brand agreement influence perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige, and how do these perceptions influence brand attitude toward luxury fashion brands engaged in activism?

This question is motivated by evidence that consumer-brand agreement operates asymmetrically, with disagreement eroding brand evaluations more reliably than agreement improves them (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020), and with disagreeing consumers experiencing feelings of devaluation and marginalisation (Haupt et al., 2023). It also addresses the unresolved tension of whether agreement shapes authenticity perceptions (Hydock et al., 2020) or leaves them unaffected (Nam et al., 2023).

RQ2: How do perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, perceived brand prestige, and brand attitude shape boycott and boycott intentions toward luxury fashion brands engaged in activism?

This question contains the core theoretical tests of this study: whether perceived authenticity directly increases boycott intention and perceived hypocrisy directly increases boycott intention. It further examines the supporting attitudinal mechanism, namely whether brand attitude transmits the effects of perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy to boycott and boycott intentions through specific indirect effects, with complementary direct paths estimated for every mediated route.

RQ3: How does collectivist orientation, measured at the individual level, moderate the relationships between consumer-brand agreement and brand perceptions, and between brand perceptions and brand attitude?

This question answers the explicit call to examine whether boycott behaviour varies across cultural backgrounds (Fan et al., 2025), addresses the limited research on the conditions that moderate activism's effects (Haupt et al., 2023), and extends evidence that individual-level cultural dimensions shape fashion consumption decisions (Khan et al., 2024) into the brand activism domain.

To answer these questions, this research pursues four corresponding objectives:

RO1: To examine the direct effects of consumer-brand agreement on perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige (H_1).

RO2: To test the core theoretical paths, namely the direct effects of perceived authenticity on boycott intention and perceived hypocrisy on boycott intention (H_4), together with the supporting attitudinal mechanism: the effects of perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige on brand attitude (H_2) and the effects of brand attitude on boycott and boycott intentions (H_3).

RO3: To assess whether brand attitude transmits the effects of perceived brand authenticity and perceived brand hypocrisy to boycott and boycott intentions through specific indirect effects (H_7), and to test the moderating role of collectivist orientation on the agreement-to-perception (H_5) and perception-to-attitude (H_6) paths.

RO4: To develop and empirically validate an integrated conceptual model of consumer responses to luxury fashion brand activism, and to derive evidence-based recommendations for luxury brand managers considering activist engagement.

These objectives are pursued through a sequential design: a systematic review of the activism, political consumerism, and luxury branding literatures to construct the conceptual model and hypotheses (Chapter 2); a quantitative survey of luxury fashion consumers using established measures, including one single-item agreement measure and seven multi-item constructs (Chapter 3); and estimation of the model with partial least squares structural equation modelling, including bootstrapped tests of indirect and interaction effects (Chapter 4). The next section provides an overview of the theoretical framework that underpins the model.

1.5 Overview of the theoretical framework

To answer the research questions, this thesis develops an integrated conceptual model with a hierarchical theoretical framework. The persuasion knowledge model is the principal foundation because it explains how consumers interpret activist communication, infer the brand's motives, and judge the credibility of its commitment. Social identity theory provides a supporting explanation for consumer-brand agreement as value congruence, while signalling and self-expression theory provides a secondary explanation for the symbolic role of activism in luxury fashion. Collectivist orientation is treated as a secondary individual-level boundary condition rather than as a separate overarching theory.

The persuasion knowledge model underpins the central relationships involving perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy. Consumers may interpret activism as sincere and internally motivated, or as opportunistic and commercially motivated. Authenticity is therefore expected to encourage boycott intention, whereas hypocrisy is expected to encourage boycott intention. The brand's purpose, values, messaging, and conduct provide the evidence from which these credibility judgments are formed (Friestad & Wright, 1994; Vredenburg et al., 2020; Virkus & Klein, 2026).

Social identity theory explains why the activist position becomes relevant to consumer identity. Agreement can signal shared values, whereas disagreement can create identity distance and damage brand evaluations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Hydock et al., 2020; Haupt et al., 2023). Signalling and self-expression theory explains why these evaluations may also affect the symbolic meaning and perceived prestige of a luxury brand, as luxury brands provide status and identity-signalling value (Baek et al., 2010; Belk, 1988; Khalifa & Osburg, 2025).

Collectivist orientation is examined as a secondary boundary condition on the agreement-to-perception and perception-to-attitude relationships. This study measures cultural orientation at the individual level and does not assume that nationality determines

whether a respondent is individualist or collectivist. Section 2.5 develops this hierarchy and specifies the role of each perspective in the conceptual model.

1.6 Overview of the methodology

This study used a positivist philosophy and a deductive approach to test the model developed in Chapter 2 with primary survey data. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was selected because the research questions concern relationships among latent psychological constructs measured through standardised scales. Chapter 3 explains the design and analytical procedures. Data were collected through an online self-administered questionnaire completed by Italian and Vietnamese Generation Z consumers who were aware of the luxury fashion industry. After the screening questions, respondents viewed a luxury brand activism scenario and evaluated the focal brand. The sample requirement was assessed through an a priori power analysis, as detailed in Section 3.4. The constructs were measured using scales established in prior studies. The questionnaire included measures of consumer-brand agreement, perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, perceived prestige, brand attitude, boycott intention, boycott intention, and collectivist orientation. The instrument was evaluated through expert review and qualitative cognitive pre-testing with ten Generation Z participants, five Italian and five Vietnamese, before the main survey. The questionnaire was administered in English only, and no large quantitative pilot was conducted.

Ethical safeguards included study information, voluntary participation, consent, anonymous responses, and restricted use of the data for the master's research project, as discussed in Section 3.10.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study offers contributions to theory, to managerial practice, and to society, each corresponding to the gaps and problems established in Sections 1.2 and 1.3. Theoretically, this study makes four connected contributions. First, it extends brand activism research into the luxury fashion context, where empirical evidence remains limited and where the symbolism, visibility, and exclusivity of luxury brands prevent straightforward generalisation from nonluxury settings (Tan, 2025; Khalifa & Osburg, 2025). Second, it places the persuasion knowledge model at the centre of an integrated explanation in which the direct credibility routes, from perceived authenticity to boycott intention and from perceived hypocrisy to boycott intention, constitute the core theoretical tests, while brand attitude operates as a supporting evaluative mechanism. Third, it examines consumer-brand agreement as a value-congruence context and prestige as a secondary luxury-specific mechanism. Fourth, it tests whether individual-level collectivist orientation conditions selected relationships without treating nationality as a substitute for cultural orientation. This study also tests whether brand attitude transmits the effects of perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy to boycott and boycott intentions through specific indirect effects, with

complementary direct paths estimated for every mediated route. This mediation structure distinguishes the broader evaluative route through brand attitude from the direct credibility-based routes to supportive and punitive political consumption.

For society, this study speaks to the conditions under which brand activism can function as a genuine force for change rather than a marketing device. Activism is less likely to yield actual social change when consumers do not trust it as authentic, and woke washing can mislead the public about a brand's true sociopolitical engagement (Vredenburg et al., 2020). By identifying the perceptual mechanisms that distinguish credible from performative activism in the eyes of consumers, this research clarifies how brands can engage in ways that consumers reward rather than punish, and how political consumerism, as an expressive act through which citizens vote with their purchases (Hong & Li, 2021), can be channelled toward brands whose commitments are genuine. The final section of this chapter outlines the structure of the remainder of the thesis.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters, which proceed from the theoretical framing of the research problem to its empirical resolution and interpretation. Chapter 1 has introduced the research context, tracing the rise of brand activism and its particular tensions in the luxury fashion industry. It has articulated the problem statement, identified five gaps in the literature, formulated the research questions and objectives, and outlined the theoretical framework, methodology, and significance of this study. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature and develops the conceptual model. It begins by delineating the concept of brand activism and its boundaries with related constructs such as corporate social responsibility and corporate political advocacy, before reviewing consumer responses to activism in general and in the luxury fashion industry in particular. The chapter then examines each construct in the model, namely consumer-brand agreement, perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, perceived brand prestige, brand attitude, boycott and boycott intentions, and collectivist orientation. It presents a hierarchical theoretical framework in which the persuasion knowledge model provides the principal foundation, social identity theory supports the explanation of consumer-brand agreement, signalling and self-expression theory explains the secondary luxury-symbolic mechanism, and collectivist orientation is examined as a secondary boundary condition. The chapter culminates in the development of hypotheses H_1 to H_7 , together with the conceptual model. Chapter 3 describes and justifies the research methodology. It sets out the positivist philosophy and deductive approach, the cross-sectional survey design, the population and sampling strategy with an a priori power analysis, the activism scenario and questionnaire design, the measurement scales for each construct, the expert review and qualitative cognitive pre-testing procedure, and the data collection procedure. The chapter closes with the justification for partial least squares structural equation modelling and the analytical procedures for assessing the measurement and structural models, together with common method bias controls and ethical

considerations. Chapter 4 reports the data analysis and results. It covers data screening, the sample profile, and descriptive statistics, followed by the evaluation of the measurement model and structural model. It then presents the direct effects, specific indirect effects, moderation analysis, predictive assessment, IPMA results, and supplementary MICOM and MGA comparisons. Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to the extant literature, interpreting the supported and unsupported hypotheses against prior evidence on brand activism, luxury consumption, and political consumerism. The chapter derives the theoretical implications of the results and translates them into managerial recommendations for luxury fashion brands, alongside this study's societal implications. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by summarising this research, answering the three research questions in turn, restating the contributions, acknowledging the limitations of the design, and proposing directions for future research.

1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has laid the foundation for the thesis. It established that brand activism is a growing, expected, yet risky practice, distinct from conventional social initiatives, whose consequences are most uncertain in the luxury fashion industry, where symbolic value and hypocrisy exposure are greatest. It specified the twofold practical and academic problem: managers face a dilemma in which neither engagement nor silence is safe, while the literature offers fragmented, largely nonluxury evidence. It identified five gaps in the literature concerning context, mechanisms, the agreement-authenticity tension, prestige, and cultural moderation, and translated these gaps into three research questions and four objectives aligned with H_1 to H_7 . The chapter further outlined a hierarchical theoretical framework informing the model, the quantitative PLS-SEM methodology, and the thesis's theoretical, managerial, and societal significance. The next chapter turns to the literature to construct the conceptual model and develop the hypotheses.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on brand activism, political consumerism, and luxury branding in order to construct the conceptual foundation for the research model and hypotheses. The review has three purposes: to define brand activism and distinguish it from related corporate and political activities; to explain how consumers evaluate the credibility, identity meaning, and symbolic value of activist brands; and to position consumer-brand agreement, perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, perceived brand prestige, brand attitude, boycott intention, and collectivist orientation within the proposed model.

The chapter is organised thematically.

The literature reviewed comprises peer-reviewed research in marketing, consumer behaviour, and public policy, identified through structured searches using keywords such as brand activism, corporate political advocacy, political consumerism, boycott, buycott, woke washing, luxury branding, authenticity, hypocrisy, prestige, and individualism-collectivism. The discussion moves from the broader phenomenon to the central credibility mechanisms and then to the supporting identity, symbolic, and cultural mechanisms tested in this study.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the structured selection process through which the literature for this review was identified and retained. A search across five databases (ScienceDirect, Wiley, SAGE, Springer, and Taylor & Francis) on 30 April 2026 returned 147 records. After eligibility screening restricted to English-language articles and reviews ($n = 15$) and the removal of duplicates ($n = 27$), 105 records entered the titles and abstracts analysis. A further 35 records were excluded at this stage for lacking relevance to political consumerism or brand activism or for not meeting the inclusion criteria, leaving 70 articles for full-text analysis. Full-text screening excluded 25 articles, and an additional 10 relevant works were identified through forward and backward snowballing, producing a final sample of 55. Within this final sample, the 42 articles that speak most directly to consumer responses to brand activism, political consumerism, luxury consumption, and the constructs of the conceptual model are analyzed and compared in Table 2.1 below; the remaining works serve as foundational or measurement-source references throughout the chapter.

Figure 2.1: Literature selection process

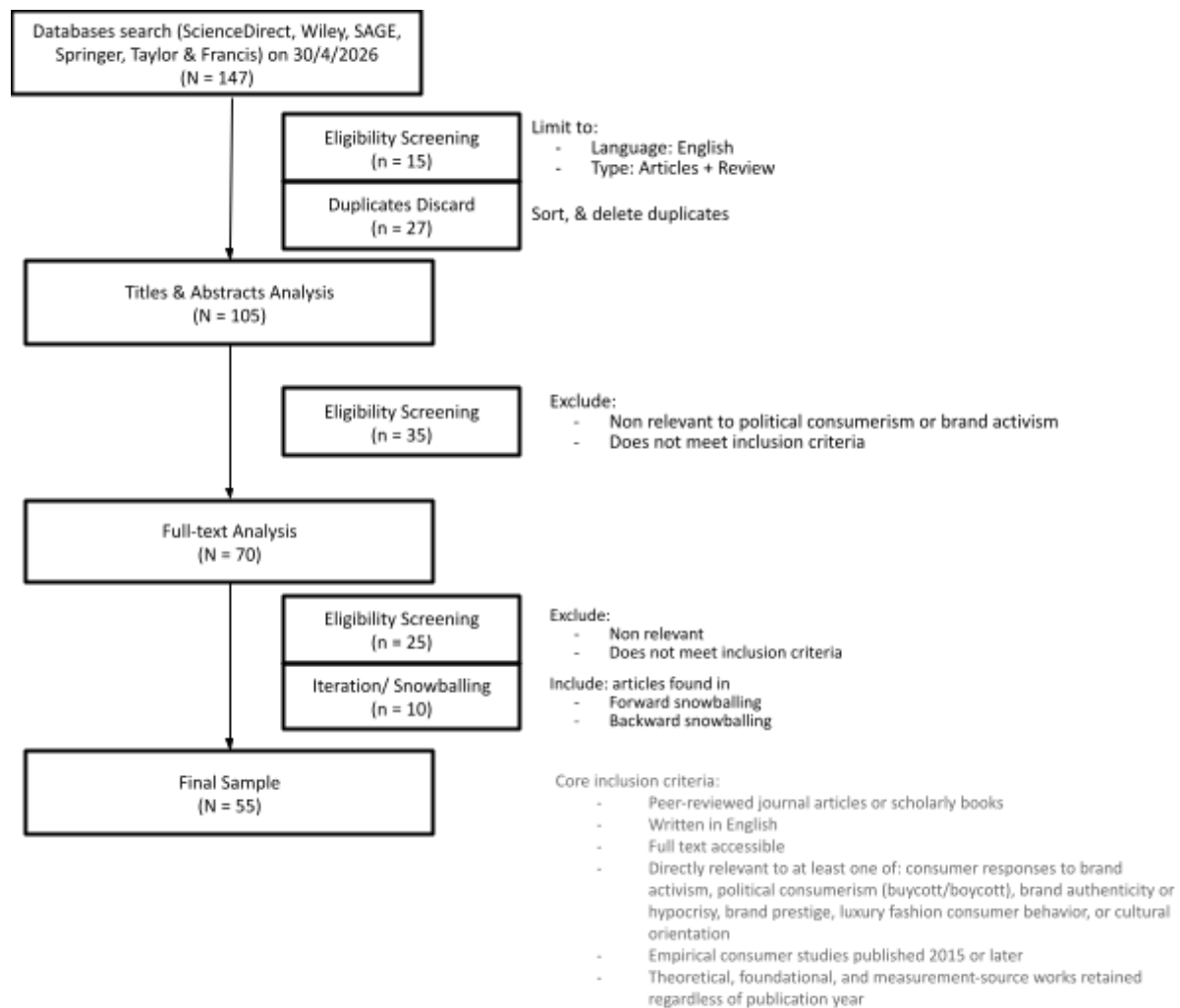


Table 2.1 provides a comprehensive overview of the 42 peer-reviewed articles reviewed in this thesis, together with the present study, which is included in the final row to position it within this literature. For each article, the table reports the full title, authors and year, journal, research level, profile of respondents, independent and dependent variables, mediators and moderators, research method and data analysis approach, and main findings. The articles are ordered thematically, following the structure of this chapter, so that the table can be read as a map of the review that unfolds in the sections below. Throughout the chapter, the table serves as a reference point: each section develops the evidence summarised in the corresponding rows in greater depth.

Table 2.1: Comprehensive overview of the reviewed literature

Title	Authors (Year)	Journal	Research level	Respondents profile	Independent variable(s)	Dependent variable(s)	Moderator / Mediator	Research method / data analysis	Main findings
Brands Taking a Stand: Authentic Brand Activism or Woke Washing?	Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry, & Kemper (2020)	Journal of Public Policy & Marketing	Conceptual; brand level with individual consumer implications	None (conceptual paper)	Brand activism alignment (purpose/values , messaging, corporate practice); brand-cause congruence	Brand equity; potential for social change; authenticity perceptions (conceptual outcomes)	None; brand-cause congruence proposed as boundary condition (optimal incongruence)	Conceptual (theory-driven typology; no empirical analysis)	Authentic brand activism requires alignment of purpose, values, messaging and practice; misalignment constitutes woke washing; moderate (optimal) incongruence between brand and cause strengthens brand activism outcomes.
Brand activism: Does courting controversy help or hurt a brand?	Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020)	International Journal of Research in Marketing	Individual (consumer experiments)	U.S. consumer samples; four experimental studies (Studies 1 to 4) with unknown and well-known brands	Agreement vs disagreement with the brand's stand	Brand attitude; behavioural intentions; actual choice	Mediator: consumer-brand identification; boundary conditions: perceived brand-stance distance, public backlash, stance withdrawal and apology	Quantitative; four experiments (including real choice data); ANOVA and mediation analysis	Asymmetric effect: disagreement substantially lowers brand attitude, intentions and choice, while agreement produces no significant gain; consumer-brand identification mediates the negative effect; moral decoupling weakens it; withdrawing the stance and apologising lowers attitudes among both proponents and opponents.

The role of authenticity and skepticism in consumers' reactions to brand activism	Virkus & Klein (2026)	Journal of Business Research	Individual (consumer experiments)	German consumers; two experiments, including a nationally representative sample in Study 2	Motivational character of activism (intrinsic vs extrinsic); impact of activism (high vs low)	Perceived authenticity of brand activism; consumer skepticism; consumer reactions/attitudes	Mediator: perceived authenticity of brand activism	Quantitative; two experiments (Study 2 nationally representative); ANOVA and mediation analysis	Intrinsic (vs extrinsic) motivation and high (vs low) impact increase perceived authenticity; authenticity reduces skepticism toward brand activism and improves consumer reactions.
Corporate Hypocrisy: Overcoming the Threat of Inconsistent Corporate Social Responsibility Perceptions	Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz (2009)	Journal of Marketing	Individual (consumer experiments)	U.S. experimental consumer samples (fictitious retailer scenario); three studies	Inconsistent CSR information	Perceived corporate hypocrisy; CSR beliefs; attitude toward the firm	Mediator: perceived corporate hypocrisy; moderators: communication strategy (proactive vs reactive), statement abstractness, inoculation message	Quantitative; three scenario-based experiments; ANOVA and mediation analysis	Proactive (vs reactive) CSR communication raises perceived hypocrisy when behaviour contradicts statements; hypocrisy damages firm attitudes directly and indirectly via weakened CSR beliefs; abstract statements and inoculation strategies reduce hypocrisy and its negative consequences.
Corporate social responsibility authenticity: Investigating its antecedents and outcomes	Alhouti, Johnson, & Holloway (2016)	Journal of Business Research	Individual (mixed methods: content analysis and survey)	Study 1: 487 participants describing authentic/inauthentic CSR companies (content analysis); Study 2: consumer survey for	Impact, reparation and fit of CSR initiatives	Perceived CSR authenticity; consumer outcomes (attitudes, purchase intention, loyalty, boycott behaviour)	Mediator: perceived CSR authenticity	Mixed methods; Study 1 qualitative content analysis; Study 2 quantitative survey with scale development and validation (CFA)	Fit, impact and reparation drive perceived CSR authenticity; authenticity mediates important consumer outcomes, positively relating to purchase intention and loyalty and negatively to boycott behaviour.

				scale validation					
Woke brand activism authenticity or the lack of it	Mirzaei, Wilkie, & Siuki (2022)	Journal of Business Research	Individual (netnographic content analysis)	46,000 Gillette and 34,000 Nike social media comments (inductive content analysis)	Woke brand activism campaigns (Gillette 'The Best Men Can Be'; Nike 'For Once, Don't Do It') as objects of consumer evaluation	Perceived woke activism authenticity (six dimensions); consumer backlash	None (conceptual framework; social context independency and sacrifice as mediating dimensions of authenticity)	Qualitative; interpretive inductive content analysis (netnography) of 80,000 social media comments	Six dimensions of woke brand activism authenticity identified: social context independency, inclusion, sacrifice, practice, fit and motivation; the proposed WAAF framework explains how inauthenticity perceptions and consumer backlash arise.
Brand activism and the consequence of woke washing	Ahmad, Guzmán, & Al-Emran (2024)	Journal of Business Research	Individual (experiments)	U.S. university students and nationally representative online samples (MTurk, Prolific); four experiments on abortion rights, racial equality and LGBTQ rights	Message abstractness (abstract vs concrete internal vs concrete external); woke washing type (congruent vs incongruent)	Brand authenticity; brand evaluations (negative consequences of woke washing)	Mediator: brand activism fit	Quantitative; four experiments (student and nationally representative samples); ANOVA and mediation analysis	Concrete internal messages (specific changes inside the organisation) increase brand authenticity via higher brand activism fit; congruent woke washing (failing to fulfil one's own promise) is more destructive than incongruent woke washing.

The brand activism path: Mapping the activism intensity and consumer responses	Cammarota, D'Arco, Marino, & Resciniti (2026)	Journal of Business Research	Individual (computational grounded theory)	489 activist posts and 17,634 user comments on Ben & Jerry's Instagram (2013 to 2023)	Activism intensity (messaging frequency; tone of voice) over time	Consumer responses (support vs backlash); perceived authenticity; brand over-politicisation	None (qualitative; propositions linking activism intensity, perceived authenticity and consumer responses)	Qualitative; Computational Grounded Theory (large-scale text analysis of posts and comments)	Authentic brand activism unfolds as a long-term 'Brand Activism Path' from light to heavy activism; adverse reactions stem from ideological misalignment and perceived over-politicisation, not only inauthenticity; the AIRM matrix maps activism intensity against consumer responses.
Is brand activism an emotional affair? The role of moral emotions in consumer responses to brand activism	Wannow, Haupt, & Ohlwein (2024)	Journal of Brand Management	Individual (scenario experiments)	German research setting; three scenario-based experiments on two divisive sociopolitical topics	Brand activism message (agreement vs disagreement with brand stance)	Moral emotions; brand attitude; issue advocacy	Mediators: other-praising and other-condemning moral emotions; moderator: consumer-brand identification	Quantitative; three scenario-based experiments; ANOVA and moderated mediation analysis	Activist messages elicit other-praising emotions among agreeing consumers and other-condemning emotions among disagreeing consumers, which shape brand attitude and issue advocacy; strong consumer-brand identification attenuates the activation of moral emotions in both cases.

Explaining Consumer Reactions to Brand Activism With the ABC Model of Brand Stereotypes	Gidaković, Kos Koklic, Zečević, & Zabkar (2026)	Psychology & Marketing	Individual (experiments)	Six empirical studies (combined N = 3,096)	Brand activism stance (progressive vs conservative); brand agency	Brand communion; brand attitude; purchase intentions	Mediators: brand conservative-progressive beliefs (full mediation), brand communion; moderator: consumer political identity	Quantitative; six experimental studies (combined N = 3,096); SEM and mediation/moderation analyses	Consumers infer a brand's conservative-progressive beliefs from its activism; brand beliefs fully mediate effects of activism on brand communion, brand attitude and purchase intentions; political identity moderates the beliefs-communion link; progressive stances carry a positive indirect effect on purchase intentions on average.
Power from words: The influence of brand activism message framing on consumer purchase intention	Xie, Wei, & Chen (2024)	Psychology & Marketing	Individual (experiments)	Consumer samples across five experimental studies	Message framing (hope vs frustration)	Consumer inspiration; purchase intention	Mediator: consumer inspiration; moderators: consumer mindset (growth vs fixed), issue salience	Quantitative; five experiments; ANOVA and moderated mediation analysis	Hope-framed (vs frustration-framed) activism messages inspire consumers and raise purchase intentions; growth mindsets amplify the effect, while issue salience can reverse the negative reactions caused by frustration-framed messages and fixed mindsets.

Speedy activists: How firm response time to sociopolitical events influences consumer behaviour	Nam, Balakrishnan, De Freitas, & Wood Brooks (2023)	Journal of Consumer Psychology	Individual (field data and experiments)	Instagram comments on 74 Fortune 500 firms' posts after George Floyd's death (26,000+ comments) plus three online experiments (N = 2,452)	Firm response time to sociopolitical events (fast vs slow)	Consumer sentiment; purchase intention	Mediator: perceived stance authenticity; moderator: issue divisiveness	Mixed methods quantitative; Instagram field data with automated text/sentiment analysis plus three online experiments; mediation analysis	Consumers express more positive sentiment and greater purchase intentions toward firms that respond quickly; response speed signals stance authenticity, which mediates the effect; speedy responses bring limited benefits when the issue is highly divisive.
Time tells all: The impact of long-term brand activism on brand loyalty and hypocrisy perceptions	Jiang, Chen, Qin, & Lei (2026)	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Individual (cross-cultural experiments)	Four experiments with online panel consumers in China and the United States	Duration of brand activism (long-term vs short-term)	Perceived brand hypocrisy; brand loyalty	Mediator: perceived brand hypocrisy; moderator: brand reputation	Quantitative; four experiments across China and the United States; ANOVA and mediation analysis	Long-term (vs short-term) activism significantly increases brand loyalty; the effect is mediated by reduced perceived brand hypocrisy; the effect is more pronounced for low-reputation brands and holds across cultural contexts and issue controversy levels.

Who is more responsive to brand activism? The role of consumer-brand identification and political ideology in consumer responses to activist brand messages	Haupt, Wannow, Marquardt, Graubner, & Haas (2023)	Journal of Product & Brand Management	Individual (experiments)	U.S. MTurk samples; three experiments (n = 262; n = 322; n = 383)	Agreement vs disagreement with brand stance (vs no stance)	Perceived marginalisation by the brand; brand attitude; word-of-mouth intentions	Mediator: perceived marginalisation by the brand; moderators: consumer-brand identification, political ideology	Quantitative; three experiments; moderation and moderated mediation (PROCESS)	Strong consumer-brand identification and a conservative ideology buffer the negative effects of disagreement on brand attitude and word-of-mouth; agreement produces no direct or interactive effects; perceived marginalisation by the brand mediates the effects of disagreement.
Values and visibility: How CEO activism influences private and public consumer choices	Hou & Poliquin (2026)	Strategic Management Journal	Individual (incentive-compatible experiment)	1,198 consumers in 599 pairs who know each other (U.S.); coffee product choice experiment	Exposure to CEO statement supporting gun rights	Real, incentive-compatible purchase choice (product vs cash)	Moderator: purchase visibility (private vs public choice)	Quantitative; randomized incentive-compatible experiment; discrete choice (logit) analysis	CEO activism reduces demand among consumers who disagree with the stance regardless of whether their purchase is observable; signalling motives play a minor role, so boycotts and buycotts extend to privately consumed products.
The effects of CEO activism: Partisan consumer behaviour and its duration	Hou & Poliquin (2023)	Strategic Management Journal	Firm/market level (natural field setting)	Store-level mobile location data across U.S. retailers; counties classified by political leaning	CEO support for gun control (letter by 146 CEOs after two mass shootings)	Store visits (foot traffic from mobile phone location data)	Moderator: county political leaning (partisanship); duration examined over time	Quantitative; quasi-experimental event study on mobile phone location data (difference-in-differences)	CEO support for gun control decreased store visits by about 3 percent; the decrease was asymmetric (about 5 percent in the most conservative counties, no change in the most liberal counties); effects dissipated within ten

									weeks, with no long-term net sales decrease.
Assessing the Impact of CEO Activism	Chatterji & Toffel (2019)	Organization & Environment	Individual (framed field experiments)	U.S. online survey respondents; two framed field experiments (one-question surveys on RFRA and climate policy)	Exposure to CEO activism statements (Tim Cook on Indiana RFRA; unnamed CEOs and other messengers on climate policy)	Public opinion support for policies; intent to purchase Apple products	Moderator: alignment of consumers' political preferences with the CEO's stance	Quantitative; two framed field experiments (randomized one-question surveys); difference-of-means tests	CEO statements can shape public opinion as effectively as statements by politicians; Cook's activism raised purchase intent for Apple products, driven by same-sex-marriage supporters; no significant effects were found for unnamed CEO groups on climate change.
Can Brand Activism Benefit Luxury Brands?	Khalifa & Osburg (2025)	Psychology & Marketing	Individual (experiments)	Four studies and one pretest with consumer samples	Brand activism by luxury (vs nonluxury) brands across topics (Ukraine-Russia war, abortion rights, Black Lives Matter)	Self-expressive value perception; luxury brand perception; purchase intentions; brand evaluations	Mediators: self-expressive value perception, luxury brand perception; moderator: consumer political identity	Quantitative; four studies plus pretest (experiments); ANOVA and moderated mediation analysis	Luxury brand activism positively affects purchase intentions and brand evaluations; the effect is driven by self-expressive value that enhances luxury brand perception; it holds for liberal consumers but not for conservative consumers.

How Sustainable Luxury Influences Product Value Perceptions and behavioural Intentions: A Comparative Study of Emerging vs. Developed Markets	Osburg, Yoganathan, Bartsch, Diallo, & Liu (2024)	Journal of Business Ethics	Cross-national (individual level; emerging vs developed markets)	Experimental study with consumers in Indonesia, South Africa and Brazil (emerging) and the United Kingdom (developed)	Product features (sustainable vs conventional); product type (luxury vs mass-market)	Quality, emotional, price and social value perceptions; purchase intention; eWOM intention	Mediators: product value perceptions; moderators: market type (emerging vs developed), product type (luxury vs mass)	Quantitative; cross-national experiment; analysis of variance and linear mixed models	Value perceptions and behavioural intentions are consistently higher in the three emerging markets; sustainability features raise value perceptions and intentions; the sustainability effect is partially stronger in the developed market for mass-market products; sustainable luxury functions as a global consumer culture signal.
Cause-related marketing of luxury brands: Nudging materialists to act prosocially	Kim, Park, & Shrum (2022)	Psychology & Marketing	Individual (experiments)	Four experiments with consumer samples (luxury brand contexts)	CRM campaign type (product-linked vs donation-linked); materialism	Willingness to engage in CRM (participation intentions)	Mediator: status-signalling qualities of luxury products; moderators: brand type (luxury vs value), momentary status satiation	Quantitative; four experiments; ANOVA and moderation analysis	Materialists are more willing to engage in product-linked than donation-linked CRM, whereas nonmaterialists show the opposite pattern; the effect is driven by the status-signalling qualities of luxury products and disappears for value brands and when status needs are satiated.

The differential roles of brand credibility and brand prestige in consumer brand choice	Baek, Kim, & Yu (2010)	Psychology & Marketing	Individual (survey, SEM)	Consumers across multiple product categories representing high vs low self-expressiveness (U.S.); structural equation modeling	Brand credibility; brand prestige	Brand purchase intention	Mediators: perceived quality, information costs saved, perceived risk	Quantitative survey; covariance-based structural equation modeling (SEM)	Both brand credibility and brand prestige positively influence purchase intention through perceived quality, information costs saved and perceived risk; the relative strength of the two routes varies with the self-expressive nature of the product category.
Possessions and the Extended Self	Belk (1988)	Journal of Consumer Research	Conceptual; individual level	None (conceptual synthesis of psychological, anthropological and consumer evidence)	Possessions (as incorporated into the self; conceptual antecedent)	Sense of self / identity (extended self construct); consumer behaviour implications	None (conceptual work)	Conceptual (theory synthesis across psychology, anthropology and consumer research)	Possessions are a major contributor to and reflection of identity; the extended self construct (we are what we have) underpins the symbolic and self-expressive meanings of brands, including luxury goods as signals of identity and status.

The influence of cultural differences on consumers' willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion	Khan, Varaksina, & Hinterhuber (2024)	Journal of Cleaner Production	Cross-national ; individual (PLS-SEM survey)	Consumers in Italy (established fashion market) and Russia (evolving fashion market); PLS-SEM	Individual-level Hofstede cultural dimensions (collectivism, long-term orientation, power distance, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance)	Willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion	None (cultural dimensions modelled as direct antecedents)	Quantitative survey; partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)	Collectivism drives willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion among Italian consumers, whereas long-term orientation drives it among Russian consumers; power distance, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance negatively affect Italian but not Russian consumers' willingness to pay.
Ethical consumer behaviour in Germany: The attitude-behaviour gap in the green apparel industry	Wiederhold & Martinez (2018)	International Journal of Consumer Studies	Individual (qualitative, grounded theory)	13 in-depth interviews with German consumers	Barriers to green apparel purchase (conceptual antecedents explored qualitatively)	Attitude-behaviour gap in ethical fashion consumption	None (exploratory qualitative study)	Qualitative; 13 in-depth interviews analyzed with grounded theory	Price, availability, knowledge, transparency, image, inertia and consumption habits impede green apparel purchases despite positive attitudes; recommendations focus on product attributes, digital communication and availability.
To Buy or Not to Buy: Determinants of Socially Responsible Consumer behaviour and Consumer Reactions to Cause-Related	Paek & Nelson (2009)	Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising	Individual (national survey and experiment)	U.S. national survey data (2004-2005 DDB Life Style Study panel) plus a follow-up experiment with university students	Consumer characteristics: altruism, opinion leadership, attitudes toward big business and brand values, beliefs in	Boycotting and boycotting (socially responsible consumer behaviour); responses to cause-related and	None (direct associations examined)	Quantitative; national survey (regression analysis) plus follow-up experiment	Altruism and beliefs in advertising ethics relate to responses to cause-related advertising, while socially responsible consumer behaviour tendency and advertising ethics beliefs relate more strongly to reactions to boycotting ads.

and Boycotting Ads					advertising ethics	boycotting ads			
To Buy or Not to Buy: Who are Political Consumers? What do they Think and How do they Participate?	Baek, Y. M. (2010)	Political Studies	National; individual (secondary survey analysis)	Two U.S. national survey samples (2002)	Demographics, socio-political attitudes, issue orientations, media use	Boycotting and buycotting; broader civic and political participation	None (descriptive and multivariate associations)	Quantitative; secondary analysis of two national surveys; descriptive statistics and multinomial logit	Boycotters and buycotters differ demographically and should be distinguished; political consumers hold post-material values, focus on lifestyle-oriented social issues, and are more active political participants than non-participants.
Boycotting, Buycotting, and the Psychology of Political Consumerism	Kam & Deichert (2020)	The Journal of Politics	Individual (survey experiments)	U.S. consumer samples; three original survey experiments	Negative vs positive information about a company	Boycott intention (avoidance) and buycott intention (approach)	None (information type modelled as direct antecedent)	Quantitative; three survey experiments; experimental difference tests	Negative information is far more powerful in inducing boycotting than positive information is in inducing buycotting; boycotting is psychologically distinct from other participation because it is avoidance-based, supporting a negativity bias in political consumerism.
Political consumerism: A meta-analysis	Copeland & Boulianne (2022)	International Political Science Review	Meta-analysis (cross-national evidence)	66 studies with more than 1,000 tests across dozens of countries	Micro-level predictors: media use, ideology, political interest, education, organisational membership, political distrust	Political consumerism (boycotts and buycotts)	None (predictors synthesized directly)	Meta-analysis (quantitative synthesis of 66 studies, 1,000+ effect tests)	More support for lifestyle politics than resource-based models: political consumerism is associated with political distrust, liberal ideology, media use, education, political interest and organisational membership.

Will Consumers Silence Themselves When Brands Speak up about Sociopolitical Issues? Applying the Spiral of Silence Theory to Consumer Boycott and Buycott behaviours	Hong & Li (2021)	Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing	Individual (experiment)	U.S. online consumers; 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects experiment	Personal stance consistency with the company	Boycott and buycott intentions	Mediator: brand attitude; moderators: magnitude of public support (majority vs minority), perceived credibility of public support information	Quantitative; 2 x 2 between-subjects experiment; moderated moderated mediation (PROCESS)	Consumers buycott (boycott) when their stance is consistent (inconsistent) with the company's; the effect is mediated by brand attitude and moderated by the magnitude and perceived credibility of public support information, consistent with spiral of silence theory.
Socio-politically silent brands: A double-edged sword	Malik, Ahmad, & Guzmán (2025)	Journal of Business Research	Individual (text analysis and experiment-based SEM)	Exploratory text analysis of consumer attributions plus an experiment analyzed with structural equation modeling	Consumer attributions toward brand silence (fear of losing market share, perceived apoliticism, neutrality, perceived risk)	Consumer attitudes; consumer-based brand equity; purchase intentions	Mediator: consumer attitudes; moderators: political ideology, self-focus motivations	Mixed methods; exploratory text analysis plus experiment analyzed with structural equation modeling (SEM)	Brand silence does not always backfire: self-serving attributions (fear of losing share, apoliticism) and socially justified attributions (neutrality, risk avoidance) have different attitudinal consequences; silence predominantly shapes liberal consumers' attitudes, conditioned by self-focus motivations.

Consumer attitudes toward brand supportive communication during geopolitical crises	Kononov & Linzen (2026)	Journal of Business Research	Individual (experiments and field study)	Four preregistered experiments plus a field study of 154 brands; local consumers in a geopolitical conflict context (Israel)	Brand support messages (solidarity statements) during geopolitical crises	Consumer brand attitudes	Mediator: perceived riskiness of the supportive action; moderator: brand type (global vs local)	Quantitative; four preregistered experiments plus a field study (text analysis of brand communications); ANOVA and mediation	Local consumers show more favorable attitudes toward global brands that express support for their communities; the effect is less pronounced for local brands; global brands benefit because their support is perceived as riskier; even small solidarity gestures improve attitudes.
The effect of Generation Z's perceptions of brand activism on brand loyalty: evidence from Vietnam	Nguyen, Le, Truong, & Vu (2023)	Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	National; individual (survey, SEM)	1,133 Generation Z consumers in Vietnam; structural equation modeling (ELM-based)	Perceived argument quality; perceived authenticity; perceived altruistic motives; perceived self-interest motives	Brand loyalty	Mediators: brand trust, brand attitude	Quantitative survey; covariance-based structural equation modeling (SEM)	Perceived argument quality, authenticity and altruistic motives positively affect brand attitude and brand trust; perceived self-interest motives positively affect brand attitude; brand trust positively affects brand attitude; both brand attitude and trust increase brand loyalty.

Should Global Brands Engage in Brand Activism?	Shukla, Rosendo-Rios, & Khalifa (2025)	Journal of International Marketing	Cross-national ; individual (experiments)	Five studies with consumer samples across industries (fashion, luxury, sports) and issues (immigration, abortion, LGBTQ+ rights)	Brand activism (statements vs actions); brand origin (positive vs negative)	Purchase intentions; behavioural intentions	Mediator: self-brand connection; moderators: brand origin, alignment of prior attitude valence with the stance	Quantitative; five experiments; mediation and moderation analyses	Consumers prefer activist global brands; the positive activism effect is strongest for global brands with negative brand origin, regardless of prior attitude valence, while positive-origin brands benefit only when attitudes align; self-brand connection mediates the effect.
Should your Brand Take a Stand? Comparing the Impact of Brand Activism and CSR on Brand Equity	Herzberg & Rudeloff (2023)	Journal of Brand Strategy	Individual (online experiment)	215 participants (Germany); online experiment with fictitious brand	Communication type: brand activism vs CSR vs control (fictitious sneaker brand)	Brand equity dimensions: uniqueness, purchase intention, positive word-of-mouth, premium price acceptance, brand identification, brand sympathy, brand trust	Moderator: gender (on behavioural intentions)	Quantitative; one online experiment (n = 215); ANOVA and moderation analysis	Brand activism has a positive impact on brand equity, but the impact is not higher than that achieved through CSR; moderation analyses reveal gender effects on behavioural intentions.

The times they are a-changing: examining the effects of luxury brand activism on political consumerism and eWOM	Tan, C. S. L. (2025)	Journal of Strategic Marketing	National; generational cohorts; individual (survey, SEM)	Japanese consumers from Generation Y (n = 309), Generation X (n = 305) and Generation Jones (n = 270); SEM across four studies	Perceived hypocrisy; perceived authenticity; issue/brand involvement	Boycott intention; boycott intention; intention to share behaviours on social media (eWOM)	None specified; generation treated as a grouping variable (multi-group comparison)	Quantitative survey; covariance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) with multi-group comparison across generations	Generational differences exist in relationships involving perceived hypocrisy and perceived authenticity; all generations show positive links between involvement and boycott/boycott intentions, and between these intentions and the intention to share on social media.
The Role of Consumer Speech Acts in Brand Activism: A Transformative Advertising Perspective	Fletcher-Brown, Middleton, Thompson-Whiteside, Turnbull, Tuan, & Hollebeek (2024)	Journal of Advertising	Individual (netnographic text analysis)	YouTube user comments on a brand activism campaign; automated text analysis and qualitative thematic analysis	Consumer speech acts responding to a brand activism campaign on an environmental problem (tone and clout as linguistic features)	Consumer speech act typologies; amplification of brand activism	None (qualitative classification)	Qualitative; netnography combining automated text analysis (LIWC: tone, clout) and thematic analysis	Consumer language functions as rhetorical institutional work: linguistic tone and clout give speakers agency to create, maintain or disrupt marketplace logics; a tripartite classification of consumer speech acts supports and amplifies brand activism.
Testing the Viability of Corporate Social Advocacy as a Predictor of Purchase Intention	Dodd & Supa (2015)	Communication Research Reports	Individual (experimental survey)	519 U.S. undergraduate students (257 matched, 262 mismatched conditions)	Corporate social advocacy stance (organisations for/against same-sex marriage); congruence between individual attitude and	Purchase intention	None (attitude-by-congruence interaction tested directly)	Quantitative; experimental survey; 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA	Corporate social advocacy significantly predicts purchase intention; purchase intentions are highest when the individual's issue attitude is congruent with the organisation's stance, with a significant attitude-by-congruence interaction.

					organisational stance				
Should Your Brand Pick a Side? How Market Share Determines the Impact of Corporate Political Advocacy	Hydock, Paharia, & Blair (2020)	Journal of Marketing Research	Individual and market level (experiments)	Five experiments with U.S. consumer samples	Corporate political advocacy (stance vs none)	Identification and disidentification (process); brand choice share	Moderators: initial market share, authenticity condition; process: identification and disidentification	Quantitative; five choice experiments; moderation and market-share modeling	At the individual level a negativity bias means advocacy repels opponents more than it attracts supporters; at the market level the net effect of political advocacy is positive for small-share brands and negative for large-share brands; authenticity is a necessary condition for small-share brands to benefit.
How does brand activism trigger consumers' boycott? The mediating role of psychological contract violation	Fan, Zou, & He (2025)	Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	Individual (scenario experiments)	Chinese consumers; three scenario-based experiments against the backdrop of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict	Commitment type (financial vs non-financial)	Psychological contract violation; boycott intention	Mediator: psychological contract violation; moderators: relationship quality, repair strategy (affective vs functional)	Quantitative; three scenario-based experiments; mediation and moderation (PROCESS)	Financial commitments generate stronger psychological contract violation and boycott intention than non-financial commitments; psychological contract violation fully mediates the effect; higher relationship quality amplifies violation for value-inconsistent financial commitments; affective repair strategies work best after financial commitments.

Predicting Unethical behaviour: A Comparison of the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned behaviour	Chang (1998)	Journal of Business Ethics	Individual (survey, SEM)	181 university students (Hong Kong); structural equation modeling	Attitude; subjective norm; perceived behavioural control (TRA vs TPB specifications)	behavioural intention (unethical behaviour: unauthorized software copying)	None (theoretical model comparison)	Quantitative survey; structural equation modeling (SEM) comparing TRA and TPB specifications	The theory of planned behaviour outperforms the theory of reasoned action in predicting unethical behavioural intention; perceived behavioural control is the strongest predictor; subjective norm affects intention indirectly through attitude.
Commentary: Brand Activism in a Political World	Moorman (2020)	Journal of Public Policy & Marketing	Firm level; conceptual	The CMO Survey data (U.S. marketing leaders, 2018 and 2020 waves) as supporting evidence	Managerial decision lenses on brand political activism (brand authenticity, corporate citizen, cultural authority, calculative, brands as educators, political mission, employee engagement views)	Propensity of firms and brands to engage in political activism (conceptual)	None (conceptual commentary)	Conceptual commentary with descriptive analysis of The CMO Survey data	Defines brand political activism as public speech or actions on partisan issues; marketing leaders remain hesitant (about 18 percent deem stance-taking appropriate) though specific low-risk actions gain more approval; six managerial lenses shape engagement decisions.

Corporate Political Activity, Reimagined: Revisiting the Political Marketplace	Katic & Hillman (2023)	Journal of Management	Firm and societal level; literature review	Systematic review of 331 publications on corporate political activity	Corporate political activity tactics (lobbying, campaign contributions, grassroots mobilisation) organized by formality and directness	Firm political influence; policy and financial outcomes (review-level)	None (review-level framework)	Qualitative systematic literature review (331 publications coded)	Updates the political marketplace conceptualisation (political marketplace 2.0) and classifies corporate political activity tactics along formality and directness dimensions; identifies field biases toward lobbying, the U.S. context and firm-level financial outcomes, distinguishing institutional channels from market-facing activism.
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Three observations from Table 2.1 motivate the structure of this review. First, consumer responses to brand activism have been examined predominantly through experimental designs in single-country settings, mainly the United States and Europe, with survey-based structural equation modeling remaining comparatively rare. Second, the reviewed studies typically isolate one explanatory mechanism per model, such as consumer-brand agreement, perceived authenticity, or perceived hypocrisy, rather than testing these credibility judgments simultaneously as parallel processes. Third, empirical evidence on brand activism in the luxury fashion industry remains scarce, and no reviewed study links a single antecedent to both boycott and boycott intentions as distinct behavioural outcomes. The final row of the table shows how the present study responds to these patterns: it integrates the mechanisms identified separately in prior research into one model, tests them with a survey-based partial least squares structural equation modeling approach among Generation Z consumers in two national contexts, and evaluates responses to luxury fashion brand activism specifically. The following sections develop each stream of this literature in turn, beginning with the concept of brand activism itself.

2.2 Brand activism

2.2.1 Definitions and conceptual boundaries

Brand activism has developed into a distinct field within marketing, public relations, and corporate strategy. The literature uses related terms, including corporate social advocacy, corporate political advocacy, sociopolitical activism, and CEO activism, but these terms share a concern with public involvement in contested issues. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) define brand activism as a brand or a brand-associated individual publicly taking a stand on a divisive social or political issue. Moorman (2020) similarly emphasises public speech or action on partisan issues undertaken through a corporate or individual brand name. Vredenburg et al. (2020) add that the strategy is driven by purpose and values, adopts a non-neutral position, and seeks both societal change and marketing success.

These definitions identify four essential characteristics. First, activism is public. A position must be expressed through communication, action, or both in a form that stakeholders can observe and evaluate. Second, the issue is contested. It involves competing values, political sensitivity, and limited social consensus rather than an issue on which most stakeholders already agree. Third, the actor is a brand, company, or person whose position becomes associated with the brand. Fourth, the action combines social and strategic purposes. Brand activism seeks to influence public understanding, behaviour, or institutional conditions, while the brand may also expect differentiation, stronger relationships, or economic returns (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Herzberg & Rudeloff, 2023).

The public and contested character of activism distinguishes it from conventional corporate social responsibility. CSR generally addresses widely accepted prosocial concerns and tends to receive positive or neutral reactions unless consumers question its sincerity. Brand activism deliberately enters issues on which supporters and opponents hold conflicting positions, making polarisation part of the construct rather than an implementation failure (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Shukla et al., 2025). Herzberg and Rudeloff (2023) summarise the difference by emphasising that activism includes communication and action, is rooted in corporate values, and primarily seeks sociopolitical development, even though marketing benefits may follow.

The boundary with CSR is not absolute. Both activities can pursue social benefits, improve stakeholder relationships, and influence brand equity. The distinction lies mainly in the level of controversy, the non-neutrality of the position, and the degree of message-practice alignment expected from the firm. Empirical comparison indicates that brand activism can improve dimensions of brand equity such as uniqueness, identification, and positive word of mouth, although purchase intention may not always exceed the effects of CSR (Herzberg & Rudeloff, 2023). Activism is therefore best understood as a higher-risk extension of corporate social engagement rather than as a replacement for CSR.

Brand activism also differs from corporate political activity. Corporate political activity primarily seeks to influence political actors through institutional channels such as lobbying, political donations, and participation in the political marketplace. Brand activism is directed more visibly toward consumers, employees, communities, and the public. Corporate social advocacy and corporate political advocacy overlap more closely with brand activism because they involve publicly supporting or opposing a contested issue (Hydock et al., 2020). The terminology differs across disciplines, but the central marketing problem remains the same: the public position changes the meaning of the brand and permits consumers to compare the brand's values with their own.

CEO activism represents a related but narrower form. It occurs when a chief executive publicly addresses an issue that is not necessarily connected to the firm's core operations. The executive is the immediate speaker, but consumers may attribute the position to the company and adjust their behaviour toward its brand. CEO activism differs from conventional nonmarket strategy because it is inherently public, centres on the individual executive, and addresses audiences beyond politicians and regulators (Hou & Poliquin, 2023). It is relevant to brand activism when the identity and authority of the executive make the statement a signal of corporate values.

The distinction between communication and practice is also fundamental. Activist advertising alone does not establish authentic activism. Vredenburg et al. (2020) argue that authenticity requires symmetry among brand purpose, organisational values, activist messaging, and prosocial corporate practice. High activist communication without corresponding practice produces inauthentic activism or woke washing, while substantive practice with limited public messaging can be understood as silent activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020). This framework shows that activism varies not only by issue or ideology, but also by the relationship between what a brand says and what it does.

Later research develops this idea by treating activism as a process rather than a single campaign. Cammarota et al. (2026) conceptualize activism intensity through message frequency and tone of voice and propose a Brand Activism Path through which brands move gradually from light to heavy activism. Authenticity can therefore be accumulated through repeated communication, institutional involvement, and long-term commitment. Greater intensity does not guarantee acceptance, however. Even authentic activism can create resistance when consumers perceive that the brand has become excessively politicized or has altered its core identity (Cammarota et al., 2026).

Time is consequently part of the construct's strategic meaning. A rapid initial response can signal that the brand did not need extensive deliberation before expressing its position. Across social-media data and experiments, faster responses produced more positive sentiment, stronger purchase intentions, and higher perceived stance authenticity, although the purchasing advantage weakened for highly divisive issues (Nam et al., 2023). Duration

communicates a different form of commitment. Long-term activism generates greater loyalty than short-term engagement because sustained involvement reduces perceived hypocrisy (Jiang et al., 2026). Brand activism should therefore be conceptualized as a sequence of public positions and actions whose timing, continuity, and intensity provide information about the brand's motives.

Silence also belongs within the conceptual field because consumers can interpret the absence of a stance. A silent brand does not engage in overt activism, but silence can still be attributed to neutrality, protection of core operations, apoliticism, or fear of losing customers. These interpretations produce different consumer evaluations and vary with political ideology and self-focused motives (Malik et al., 2025). The relevant contrast is therefore not between meaningful activism and meaningless silence. Both speech and silence can communicate values when stakeholders expect the brand to respond.

For this research, brand activism is defined as a public statement or action by a luxury fashion brand, or an individual representing it, that adopts a non-neutral position on a contested sociopolitical issue and is intended to contribute to social change while also carrying strategic consequences for the brand. The definition includes messaging and observable action, but it does not assume that every campaign is authentic or effective. It also treats activism as potentially progressive or conservative because the analytical focus is the consumer's response to the brand's position rather than the researcher's approval of its ideology. This definition makes consumer-brand agreement, authenticity, hypocrisy, prestige, brand attitude, boycott intention, and boycott intention conceptually relevant to the model.

2.2.2 Consumer responses to brand activism

Consumer responses to brand activism are heterogeneous because a contested position makes the brand's moral and political identity visible. The same message can be interpreted as principled leadership by one consumer and as an unacceptable intervention by another. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) provide evidence of an asymmetric response: disagreement reduces brand attitude, behavioural intention, and actual choice, while agreement generally does not produce an equivalent positive improvement. Consumer-brand identification partly explains this effect because disagreement reveals that the brand does not share the consumer's moral foundations.

This asymmetry matters because aggregate approval can conceal concentrated opposition. Activism may attract aligned consumers while simultaneously pushing existing customers away. Hydock et al. (2020) explain that corporate political advocacy can generate polarising reactions rather than the broadly favourable response sometimes associated with CSR. The strategic outcome depends on the distribution and intensity of agreement among stakeholders, not simply on whether a social cause is popular in the general population.

Political ideology and prior identification further condition these reactions. Haupt et al. (2023) find that consumer-brand identification buffers the negative effect of disagreement on brand attitude. Their results also show that political ideology changes the strength of response. These findings indicate that consumers do not approach activism as neutral observers. They interpret the message through existing brand relationships, ideological identities, and expectations about what the brand should represent.

The ABC model of brand stereotypes provides a broader account of this evaluative process. Gidaković et al. (2026) propose that consumers infer a brand's conservative or progressive beliefs from its activism and combine these beliefs with perceptions of brand agency to form judgments of brand communion, meaning whether the brand appears beneficial or harmful to society. Their studies support a sequence in which brand beliefs and communion mediate attitudinal, behavioural, and relational responses. Political identity changes how inferred brand beliefs affect communion, which helps explain why the same activism can produce opposite evaluations among different consumers.

Brand attitude translates these interpretations into political-consumption intentions. Hong and Li (2021) find that consumers tend to boycott when their personal stance is consistent with the company's stance and support when it is inconsistent. Brand attitude mediates these effects, while the magnitude of public support and the perceived credibility of that support moderate the process. Consumers therefore respond to both personal congruence and the perceived opinion climate.

Authenticity constitutes another central mechanism. Consumers assess whether the stance reflects the brand's purpose and values, whether the commitment is supported by practice, and whether the brand appears willing to incur costs for the cause. Authentic activism can strengthen trust and brand equity, while woke washing can mislead consumers and weaken the possibility of social change (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Mirzaei et al. (2022) similarly show that authentic woke activism depends on factors such as social-context independence, commitment, fit, and credible motivation. A history of relevant action can make a current stance more believable, while perceived corrupt motivation creates a major barrier to authenticity.

The content of the message affects these judgments. Ahmad et al. (2024) find that concrete internal messages describing specific organisational changes create stronger perceived activism fit and authenticity than abstract or externally focused messages. Unfulfilled concrete internal commitments cause a particularly large reduction in authenticity because the initial specificity creates a clear standard against which the brand can be judged. Detailed commitments can therefore provide strong authenticity signals, but they also increase accountability.

Response time and duration provide additional credibility cues. Consumers interpret a rapid reaction as evidence of intuitive conviction, which increases stance authenticity even when

they do not agree with the position (Nam et al., 2023). Sustained activism has a different effect because it demonstrates that the stance continues after immediate public attention has declined. Across studies, long-term activism reduced perceived hypocrisy and increased loyalty compared with short-term activity (Jiang et al., 2026). These findings show that authenticity is dynamic. Consumers evaluate not only the consistency of words and actions at one point in time, but also the persistence of commitment across time.

Authenticity does not eliminate all backlash. Cammarota et al. (2026) identify negative responses arising from ideological disagreement, perceived over-politicisation, and doubts about authenticity. Consumers can believe that a brand is sincere and still oppose the issue, the tone, the frequency of communication, or the transformation of the brand's identity. This distinction prevents all opposition from being classified as skepticism or hypocrisy attribution.

Psychological contract violation explains another route to punishment. Consumers form expectations about what a brand represents and how it should behave. When activist commitments conflict with the brand's established values or with the consumer's understanding of the relationship, the inconsistency can be experienced as betrayal. Fan et al. (2025) show that commitment, authenticity, and value conflict are relevant to boycott responses, particularly when consumers perceive a durable incompatibility between themselves and the brand. Boycott intention is therefore not simply a low purchase intention. It can be a moral and relational response to a perceived violation.

CEO activism provides evidence that these responses can extend beyond self-reported attitudes. Hou and Poliquin (2023) find that exposure to CEO activism was followed by a decline in store visits, although the effect later weakened. The finding demonstrates that activism can affect observable behaviour while also showing that a single episode may have temporary consequences.

Consumer action is not driven only by a desire to display values publicly. Hou and Poliquin (2026) show that CEO activism reduced demand among consumers who disagreed with the stance whether their choices were private or visible to another person. Political consumerism can therefore reflect personal conviction and self-signalling even when no external audience observes the decision. Public visibility may matter in some settings, but it is not necessary for activism to influence choice.

Consumers also participate through communication. Fletcher-Brown et al. (2024) conceptualize consumer speech acts as a part of transformative brand activism because consumers use language, emotion, and interaction to support, challenge, or reshape activist claims. Brand activism can enable marketplace differentiation, purchase intention, and advocacy when the cause aligns with consumer values, but consumer communication can also expose contradictions and accelerate backlash.

The brand's existing scope and origin also matter. Shukla et al. (2025) find that consumers generally prefer activist global brands and that self-brand connection mediates downstream behavioural intentions. Activism can modify pre-existing brand schemas rather than merely confirm an established reputation. Supportive communication during geopolitical crises can also be valued because affected consumers expect recognition and solidarity, although the emotional and political intensity of these events increases the risk of backlash (Kononov & Linzen, 2026).

The overall evidence rejects a universal positive or negative effect. Activism outcomes depend on consumer-brand agreement, political identity, brand identification, inferred brand beliefs, authenticity, hypocrisy, public support, message content, response time, duration, activism intensity, brand origin, and crisis context. These conditions are not interchangeable. Agreement describes alignment with the position; perceived authenticity concerns the sincerity of the brand's commitment; perceived hypocrisy concerns inconsistency; brand attitude summarises overall evaluation; and political-consumption intentions capture supportive or punitive action. This study integrates the mechanisms most directly connected to its research questions while recognising that other factors remain relevant boundary conditions.

2.2.3 Brand activism in the luxury fashion industry

Luxury fashion provides a distinctive context because the product carries symbolic, social, and identity value beyond functional performance. Luxury brands communicate status, distinction, aspiration, craftsmanship, and group affiliation. When such a brand takes a public sociopolitical position, the stance can become part of the symbolic benefit that consumers purchase. Activism may strengthen the brand by adding moral or cultural meaning, but it may also disrupt the carefully controlled identity on which prestige depends.

A fundamental tension exists between self-enhancement and self-transcendence. Luxury consumption is commonly associated with personal pleasure, exclusivity, conspicuousness, and status, while prosocial action emphasises collective welfare and benefits to others. Research on cause-related marketing shows that consumers can perceive conflict between these value systems (Kim et al., 2022). Materialistic consumers are especially relevant because they value luxury products as possessions and status signals but may be less naturally attracted to altruistic causes.

This tension does not make prosocial luxury communication ineffective. Kim et al. (2022) find that materialistic consumers respond more positively to product-linked than donation-linked luxury campaigns because the product preserves status-signalling benefits while incorporating the prosocial cause. The finding demonstrates that luxury consumers can support social causes through egoistic and altruistic motives at the same time. It also suggests that the form through which activism is connected to the luxury offering affects whether consumers perceive compatibility or contradiction.

Luxury-specific activism research remains comparatively limited. Tan (2025) examines political consumerism and electronic word of mouth across generational groups and confirms that luxury activism can influence boycott and boycott intentions. The findings also show that authenticity and hypocrisy do not affect every generation in the same way. These results indicate that strong consumer-brand relationships, prior attitudes, or cohort-specific expectations may restrain punitive responses even when consumers identify inconsistency. Authenticity and hypocrisy should therefore be modelled as distinct mechanisms rather than assumed to generate equal and opposite effects.

Luxury activism can create positive symbolic value. Evidence from luxury and global branding shows that an activist stance can strengthen self-brand connection, reshape what the brand represents, and influence behavioural intention (Shukla et al., 2025). This process is relevant to prestige because global and luxury brands already carry strong aspirational associations. An aligned activist stance can provide consumers with an additional way to express identity, moral values, and desired group membership.

The same visibility increases exposure to hypocrisy accusations. Luxury brands have been criticized for communicating commitments to diversity, inclusion, or sustainability while retaining practices that appear inconsistent with those messages. Vredenburg et al. (2020) therefore require alignment among purpose, values, messaging, and practice. This requirement is demanding in a sector with complex supply chains, symbolic pricing, and public scrutiny.

Generation Z adds another layer to the luxury context. Among Vietnamese Generation Z consumers, perceived argument quality, authenticity, and altruistic motives positively influenced brand attitude and trust, and attitude and trust increased loyalty (Nguyen et al., 2023). The findings show that younger consumers evaluate the reasoning, sincerity, and motives supporting activism rather than responding only to the issue itself. For this research, this evidence supports examining Generation Z while extending the outcome from general loyalty to separate boycott and boycott intentions in luxury fashion.

Perceived prestige is the mechanism through which symbolic gains and losses may become behaviourally relevant. If activism makes the luxury brand appear distinctive, admirable, and aligned with the consumer's identity, the stance can strengthen status and self-expressive value. If activism appears opportunistic, incompatible with the brand, or hostile to the consumer's values, it can weaken the symbolic benefit that justifies luxury consumption. Existing luxury activism studies establish self-expression, luxury brand perception, authenticity, hypocrisy, and political consumption as important, but they do not test perceived prestige alongside these mechanisms in one integrated model.

The luxury evidence therefore supports neither unconditional activism nor continued neutrality. Luxury brands can benefit when their position is credible, sustained, identity-consistent, and meaningful to consumers. They face greater risk when

communication is detached from practice, when activism becomes over-politicized, or when later behaviour violates the standards established by the public stance. Consumer-brand agreement is consequently a plausible starting point for the evaluative process, but it must be examined together with authenticity, hypocrisy, prestige, and brand attitude.

This study responds by examining Generation Z consumers' reactions to luxury fashion brand activism through an integrated structure. Consumer-brand agreement is the antecedent. Perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, and perceived prestige represent distinct brand perceptions. Brand attitude represents the broader evaluation that follows these perceptions. Buycott and boycott intentions capture supportive and punitive political consumption. Individual-level cultural orientation is introduced as a boundary condition on the agreement-to-perception and perception-to-attitude paths.

2.3 Political consumerism

Political consumerism describes the use of consumption as a means of political, ethical, or social participation. Consumers apply political and moral criteria to market choices and use their purchasing power to support or oppose corporate conduct. Shopping is therefore not treated only as an economic exchange. It becomes a form of participation through which consumers attempt to influence firms, express personal values, and contribute to social change.

The two principal forms of political consumerism are boycotting and buycotting. Boycotting involves intentionally avoiding a company, brand, product, or service in order to punish conduct or oppose a position. Buycotting involves intentionally purchasing from a company or brand in order to reward conduct or support a position. Both behaviours connect individual choice with a judgment about the social and political conduct of the firm (Tan, 2025).

Political consumerism combines instrumental and expressive motives. The instrumental motive concerns outcomes. Consumers may believe that coordinated purchasing or avoidance can change corporate policy, affect economic performance, or encourage institutional reform. The expressive motive concerns identity and communication. Consumers may use a buycott or boycott to show what they believe, distinguish themselves from opposing positions, or affirm membership in a moral or political group. Hong and Li (2021) show that boycott and buycott intentions express consumers' underlying attitudes toward both the issue and the brand that takes a public stance.

The relative importance of social signalling and personal conviction remains contested. Political consumption is often visible because clothing, luxury products, social-media posts, and public boycotts can communicate identity to other people. However, public visibility is not necessary for activism to affect behaviour. Hou and Poliquin (2026) find that CEO activism reduced demand among consumers who disagreed with the position regardless of

whether their product choice was private or observable. Political consumerism can therefore arise from conviction and self-signalling even when no external audience observes the decision.

Consumer-brand agreement helps determine the direction of political-consumption responses. When the consumer's stance is consistent with the brand's position, the brand can be evaluated as an ally and rewarded. When the positions are inconsistent, the brand can be perceived as morally distant, identity-threatening, or inappropriate and may be punished. Hong and Li (2021) find that stance consistency increases boycott intention, whereas inconsistency increases boycott intention, with brand attitude mediating these effects.

The effects of agreement and disagreement are not symmetrical. Across multiple studies and product contexts, disagreement reduced brand attitude, behavioural intention, and actual choice, while agreement generally did not generate an equivalent positive improvement (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Negative political consumption can consequently be more intense than positive political consumption. This asymmetry makes separate analysis of boycotting and boycotting necessary because a single general purchase-intention measure can conceal differences in motivation and behavioural strength.

Political consumerism is also relational. A consumer does not respond only to the public issue. The response can reflect expectations about the brand and the existing consumer-brand relationship. If activism contradicts the values that consumers associate with the brand, the position may be interpreted as a violation of the relationship. If activism confirms a valued identity, it may strengthen connection and supportive intention. Gidaković et al. (2026) show that activism shapes inferred brand beliefs and judgments of whether the brand is beneficial or harmful to society, and that these judgments mediate attitudinal, behavioural, and relational responses.

Political consumerism must consequently be understood as a process rather than a direct reaction to a message. Consumers first interpret the issue and compare the brand's position with their own. They then evaluate the brand's motives, credibility, consistency, identity, and social meaning. These evaluations influence brand attitude and determine whether the consumer ignores the campaign, supports the brand, avoids it, or communicates a position to others. This process supports the structure of the present model, in which consumer-brand agreement precedes perceptual and attitudinal judgments that lead to separate boycott and boycott intentions.

2.3.1 Boycott intention

Boycotting is the deliberate avoidance of a company, brand, product, or service in order to express opposition or impose economic and reputational costs. The behaviour can be individual, but its strategic logic is collective because the intended pressure becomes

stronger when many consumers participate. A boycott can seek a specific change in corporate policy, communicate moral disapproval, warn other consumers, or distance the individual from a brand whose position conflicts with personal identity.

Boycott intention is particularly relevant to brand activism because activism makes disagreement visible. A consumer can reject the brand's position, resent the brand's involvement in politics, or interpret the stance as a threat to a moral or social group. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) find that disagreement consistently lowers attitudes and behaviour toward the activist brand across several contested issues. The consistency of this effect indicates that boycott risk is connected to moral disagreement rather than to one specific campaign.

Negative reactions can also arise from perceived hypocrisy or opportunism. Consumers may support the underlying issue but reject the brand because its claims appear inconsistent with its purpose, values, or conduct. Perceived inauthenticity is therefore distinct from disagreement with the cause. The first rejects the brand's execution or motives, while the second rejects the position itself.

Psychological contract violation provides a relational explanation for boycott intention. Consumers develop beliefs about what a brand represents and what conduct can reasonably be expected from it. When activism contradicts these expectations, consumers may experience betrayal rather than simple dissatisfaction. Fan et al. (2025) show that activist commitments can trigger boycott responses when consumers perceive a conflict between the brand's commitment, its established values, and their own position.

Boycotting is also consistent with the broader asymmetry found in political consumption. Negative information and moral violations can motivate stronger action than positive information. Observational evidence on CEO activism shows that activist statements can be followed by a decline in store visits, although such effects may diminish over time (Hou & Poliquin, 2023). Boycott intention should therefore not be represented merely as the absence of buying. It captures an active willingness to impose a consequence on the brand.

Social context can amplify or suppress boycott expression. Hong and Li (2021) show that the magnitude of perceived public support and the credibility of information about that support affect whether stance disagreement becomes boycott intention. In online environments, visible criticism can further reduce the perceived social cost of participation and encourage coordinated punishment.

Boycott intention in this research is consequently treated as a distinct negative outcome. It captures purposeful avoidance motivated by disagreement, perceived inconsistency, relational violation, or moral condemnation. It is not assumed to be the mathematical opposite of buycott intention because the two behaviours differ in motivation, cost, visibility, and intensity.

2.3.2 Boycott intention

Boycotting is the deliberate purchase of a brand or product to reward corporate conduct that the consumer approves. It transforms an ordinary purchase into an affirmative political act. Consumers may boycott because they want to increase the economic benefits of responsible conduct, help an activist brand continue its efforts, express agreement with the cause, or associate themselves with the values communicated by the brand.

Agreement with the brand's stance provides a basis for boycott intention. Hong and Li (2021) find that stance consistency improves brand attitude and increases consumers' willingness to support the company through purchasing. Agreement does not guarantee action, however. The asymmetric evidence indicates that aligned consumers may remain passive even when opponents actively punish the brand (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Positive political consumption therefore requires more than the absence of disagreement.

Authenticity can help convert agreement into support. Consumers are more likely to reward activism when the position appears sincere, consistent with the brand's values, and supported by meaningful action. In the luxury context, Tan (2025) finds that authenticity-related effects differ across generations. This variation shows that authenticity is important but may operate together with prior brand relationships, symbolic value, and the consumer's overall attitude toward the brand.

Self-brand connection provides another route to boycotting. Shukla et al. (2025) identify self-brand connection as a mediator between global brand activism and behavioural intentions. A consumer may support an activist brand because the stance changes what the brand represents and makes it more compatible with the consumer's self-concept. This mechanism is particularly relevant to luxury fashion, where brands are used to communicate identity, aspiration, and social affiliation.

Luxury boycotting can combine political support, status, and identity expression. Kim et al. (2022) show that product-linked luxury campaigns can transform prosocial support into an attractive status signal. A luxury boycott can therefore reward the firm, support the cause, and communicate identity through one consumption choice. The purchase may also be constrained by price, product need, availability, and purchasing habits, which can prevent favourable attitudes from becoming action (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018).

Boycott intention is modelled separately from brand attitude because approval does not automatically create a purchase. A consumer may like an activist brand without intending to purchase it, particularly when the product is expensive or unnecessary. The model therefore treats brand attitude as an evaluative mechanism and boycott intention as a subsequent behavioural outcome. Prestige is included as a secondary antecedent of brand attitude; its possible indirect route to intentions is not hypothesised or tested, and the model tests only the prestige-to-attitude relationship specified in H₂.

2.3.3 Attitudinal foundations and the digital context of political consumerism

Brand attitude is a central link between activist communication and political-consumption intentions. It summarises whether the consumer evaluates the brand favourably or unfavourably after considering its position and conduct. Hong and Li (2021) demonstrate that brand attitude mediates the effect of stance consistency on boycott and boycott intentions. Consumers therefore do not move automatically from agreement to purchase or from disagreement to avoidance. They first form an overall judgment of the brand.

Brand attitude does not replace more specific perceptions. Authenticity concerns whether the commitment is genuine. Hypocrisy concerns whether words and actions are inconsistent. Prestige concerns the symbolic status attached to the brand. Agreement concerns the relationship between the brand's position and the consumer's own view. Each perception can contribute to the overall attitude, but each also captures information that a general evaluation cannot fully represent. Their simultaneous inclusion allows this study to compare distinct routes to political-consumption intentions.

Digital media strengthen the social dimension of political consumerism. They make corporate actions easier to observe, allow consumers to share evaluations rapidly, and enable dispersed individuals to coordinate support or opposition. In luxury activism, consumers communicate positive and negative emotional reactions through social media, and political-consumption intentions influence electronic word of mouth (Tan, 2025). Online expression can increase campaign visibility and shape the opinion climate encountered by later consumers.

Consumer communication is not simply a secondary reaction to the campaign. Fletcher-Brown et al. (2024) show that consumer speech acts can support, contest, and transform the meaning of brand activism. Consumers use narratives, moral claims, emotions, and calls to action to influence one another and the brand. Their communication can expand the social effect of activism, but it can also expose contradictions and accelerate backlash.

Overall, political consumerism provides the behavioural framework required by the conceptual model. Consumer-brand agreement helps determine whether the consumer approaches or avoids the brand. Authenticity, hypocrisy, and prestige represent specific judgments about the activist luxury brand. Brand attitude summarises the resulting evaluation.

2.4 Constructs in the conceptual model

This section reviews the constructs included in the conceptual model. The model follows a sequence from stance evaluation to brand-specific perceptions, overall brand evaluation, and political-consumption intentions. Consumer-brand agreement is the antecedent. Perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige represent

distinct brand perceptions. Brand attitude represents the broader evaluation. Boycott intention and boycott intention are the behavioural outcomes. Collectivist orientation is included as an individual-level cultural moderator.

The constructs are separated because they address different parts of the consumer response. Agreement indicates whether the consumer supports the position taken by the brand. Authenticity concerns whether the commitment appears sincere and consistent with the brand's identity. Hypocrisy concerns whether the brand's claims and conduct contradict each other. Prestige concerns the status and symbolic value attached to the brand. Brand attitude captures the consumer's overall evaluation. Boycott and boycott intentions represent deliberate reward and punishment. Cultural orientation indicates whether consumers place greater weight on autonomous judgment or on group norms and obligations.

Consumers may agree with a cause but distrust the brand's motives, accept that a brand is authentic but reject its ideology, perceive a brand as prestigious but dislike its activism, or approve of the campaign without being willing to purchase an expensive luxury product. The conceptual model therefore treats the constructs as related but empirically distinct.

2.4.1 Consumer-brand agreement

Consumer-brand agreement refers to the correspondence between the consumer's own position on a sociopolitical issue and the position publicly adopted by the brand. It is a stance-specific form of value congruence. The construct does not measure whether the consumer generally likes the brand, approves of corporate activism in principle, or believes that the company is ethical. It measures whether the consumer supports the particular position communicated in the activism stimulus.

Brand activism makes agreement salient because it reveals part of the brand's moral and political identity. Hydock et al. (2020) argue that political advocacy allows consumers to identify with brands whose ideological values match their own and to distance themselves from brands representing identities they wish to avoid. Fletcher-Brown et al. (2024) similarly note that consumer affinity increasingly depends on congruence between a brand's stated purpose and the consumer's core values. Agreement can therefore create perceived similarity, while disagreement can produce disidentification and moral distance.

The evidence consistently shows a negative asymmetry. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) find that disagreement reduces brand attitude, behavioural intention, and actual choice, whereas agreement generally does not produce an equivalent positive improvement. Their explanation is relational: disagreement reveals that the brand does not share the consumer's moral foundations and reduces consumer-brand identification. Agreement can become more behaviourally powerful when the brand faces public backlash because an external threat can activate in-group favoritism and motivate aligned consumers to defend the brand.

Haupt et al. (2023) refine this account by showing that strong consumer-brand identification buffers the negative effect of disagreement on brand attitude and word-of-mouth intention. Disagreement is therefore less damaging when a strong prior relationship gives the consumer reasons to maintain the connection, although it remains a source of tension.

Agreement also affects political-consumption intentions through brand attitude. Hong and Li (2021) find that consumers tend to boycott when their stance is consistent with the company's stance and boycott when it is inconsistent. Brand attitude mediates these effects, while perceived majority support and the credibility of that information moderate the process.

Agreement must remain separate from authenticity. Agreement compares the brand's stance with the consumer's stance. Authenticity compares the brand's stance with its own purpose, values, communication, and conduct. A consumer may agree with the issue but reject the brand's execution, or disagree with the issue while recognising that the brand has acted consistently. Agreement is therefore treated as a likely antecedent of perceptions, not as a component of their definitions.

2.4.2 Perceived brand authenticity

Perceived brand authenticity is the consumer's judgment that the activist position is sincere, credible, and consistent with what the brand genuinely represents. Authenticity is perceptual because consumers cannot directly observe corporate motives. They infer sincerity from the relationship among the brand's identity, communication, actions, sacrifices, and history of engagement.

Vredenburg et al. (2020) provide the central brand-activism account. Authentic activism requires alignment among brand purpose, organisational values, activist messaging, and prosocial corporate practice. Their typology distinguishes authentic activism, silent activism, the absence of activism, and inauthentic activism or woke washing according to the levels of activist messaging and substantive practice. Alignment between messaging and practice is necessary but not sufficient because purpose and values must also support the position.

Mirzaei et al. (2022) extend this framework by treating woke-activism authenticity as context specific. In politically contested settings, fit between the activism, the brand's core purpose, its communicated message, and its practice is central to authenticity. An established brand can therefore be authentic in its products while appearing opportunistic in its activism.

Intrinsic motivation provides a strong authenticity cue. Virkus and Klein (2026) distinguish inner conviction from extrinsic motives such as commercial gain or social pressure. Their experiments show that intrinsically motivated activism produces higher authenticity, lower skepticism, stronger brand attitude, greater purchase intention, and more positive word of

mouth. Authenticity can therefore explain consumer response beyond formal brand-cause fit alone.

Timing and duration supply different forms of evidence. Nam et al. (2023) show that faster responses to sociopolitical events can signal greater stance authenticity. Duration signals sustained commitment. Jiang et al. (2026) find that long-term activism reduces skepticism and accusations of performative activism more effectively than one-off statements. Cammarota et al. (2026) further conceptualize authenticity as a dynamic process shaped by coherence across channels, integration into products, consistent action, and alignment with audience values.

Authenticity has favourable attitudinal consequences, but the size of the effect varies by setting. Nguyen et al. (2023) find that perceived authenticity positively affects brand attitude and brand trust among Vietnamese Generation Z consumers. Alhouti et al. (2016) similarly show in the CSR context that authenticity mediates purchase intention, loyalty, and boycott-related outcomes. In luxury activism, Tan (2025) finds generational differences in the relationships among authenticity, political consumption, and electronic word of mouth. Authenticity should therefore be treated as a positive evaluative mechanism, not as a guarantee of universal support.

2.4.3 Perceived brand hypocrisy

Perceived brand hypocrisy is the consumer's judgment that the brand publicly claims values or commitments that are contradicted by its conduct. It is a moral attribution rather than a general impression of weak credibility. The consumer perceives that the brand presents itself as principled while failing to behave according to the standard it communicates.

Hypocrisy and low authenticity overlap but are not identical. Low authenticity means that the activism does not appear genuine or rooted in the brand. Hypocrisy requires a perceived contradiction between words and actions, current and past behaviour, or public values and private decisions. Wagner et al. (2009) distinguish this stronger judgment through items referring to acting hypocritically, saying one thing and doing another, and pretending to be something the firm is not.

The woke-washing framework explains how hypocrisy perceptions arise. Vredenburg et al. (2020) classify high activist messaging combined with low prosocial practice and weak purpose-value alignment as inauthentic activism. They warn that unsubstantiated activist claims can mislead consumers, damage trust, and reduce the capacity of activism to create social change. Fletcher-Brown et al. (2024) similarly show that exposure of weak commitment can disrupt consumer-brand relationships and motivate anti-brand or anti-consumption rhetoric.

Message specificity determines the severity of the contradiction. Ahmad et al. (2024) show that failure to fulfill a concrete internal commitment creates a particularly large decline in authenticity because the original statement provides a precise standard against which the brand can be judged. Detailed promises can therefore increase credibility and the risk of hypocrisy attribution at the same time.

Duration can reduce hypocrisy by supplying repeated evidence of commitment. Jiang et al. (2026) find that short-term activism activates hypocrisy-related judgments, which then damage loyalty. Continuity across time strengthens authentic activist positioning (Cammarota et al., 2026). Hypocrisy is especially salient in luxury fashion because the category's public symbolism invites comparison between activist claims and corporate practice.

Fan et al. (2025) show that perceived contradiction can become psychological contract violation and boycott intention. Hypocrisy is therefore expected to reduce brand attitude and may also strengthen boycott intention through a perceived relational breach. The present model treats hypocrisy as a distinct negative perception rather than as the reverse-coded form of authenticity.

2.4.4 Perceived brand prestige

Perceived brand prestige is the consumer's judgment that a brand possesses high status, distinction, exclusivity, and aspirational value. Prestige is different from credibility and quality. Credibility concerns whether information and promises are dependable, while prestige concerns the symbolic standing of the brand and the status consumers can obtain through association with it.

Prestige is central to luxury fashion because clothing, cosmetics, and fragrance are highly self-expressive. Baek et al. (2010) find that both brand credibility and brand prestige influence consumer choice through perceived quality, information costs, and perceived risk. In self-expressive product categories, consumers evaluate both the functional assurance of credibility and the symbolic benefit of prestige.

Global-brand research reinforces this symbolic account. Shukla et al. (2025) describe global brands as carriers of aspirational lifestyles and strong prestige associations. Their studies show that activism can strengthen self-brand connection and produce downstream behavioural intentions, although the effect depends on brand origin and prior attitude alignment. Activism can thus modify the symbolic meaning of a prestigious brand rather than simply add a separate social message.

Luxury cause-related marketing shows how prosocial meaning and status can operate together. Kim et al. (2022) find that materialistic consumers prefer product-linked over donation-linked luxury campaigns because the product preserves possession and

status-signalling benefits while embedding support for a cause. This evidence demonstrates that prosocial consumption in luxury markets can combine altruistic and status-seeking motives.

Activism can strengthen prestige when it gives the brand a distinctive, admired, and identity-relevant position. Khalifa and Osburg (2025) find that luxury brand activism can improve self-expressive value and luxury brand perception, which subsequently support purchase intention. Activism can also weaken prestige when it appears incompatible with luxury identity, opportunistic, or excessively politicized. Prestige must therefore remain distinct from brand attitude. A consumer may consider the brand prestigious but dislike its stance, or support the activism while believing that it weakens exclusivity.

In this study, prestige is positioned as a perception that contributes to brand attitude. It is not hypothesised to have a separate direct path to boycott or boycott intention. This specification tests whether the symbolic status of the activist luxury brand influences political consumption through the consumer's broader evaluation of the brand.

2.4.5 Brand attitude

Brand attitude is the consumer's overall favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the brand. It summarises whether the brand is liked, viewed positively, and evaluated as good after the consumer processes the activist stance. Unlike authenticity, hypocrisy, and prestige, brand attitude does not identify one specific reason for the evaluation. It integrates beliefs, emotions, identity judgments, and perceptions into a general assessment.

Brand activism can change attitude because it reveals moral and political information that may have been absent from the consumer's earlier brand knowledge. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) show that disagreement substantially reduces brand attitude across several contested issues and product categories, while agreement usually produces no comparable increase. Prior relationships and ideology alter the size of the attitudinal effect (Haupt et al., 2023).

Moral emotions explain how agreement becomes an attitude. Wannow et al. (2024) find that agreement activates other-praising emotions and disagreement activates other-condemning emotions, with these emotional responses mediating effects on brand attitude and issue advocacy. Brand attitude therefore reflects not only cognitive congruence but also emotionally charged moral appraisal.

Specific brand perceptions can feed into the broader attitude. Gidaković et al. (2026) show that consumers infer brand beliefs from activism and use brand agency and beliefs to evaluate whether the brand appears beneficial or harmful to society. Nguyen et al. (2023) connect authenticity, argument quality, motives, trust, attitude, and loyalty among

Vietnamese Generation Z consumers. These findings support positioning brand attitude after the more specific perceptions.

Brand attitude also provides the principal link between stance alignment and political consumption. Hong and Li (2021) find that attitude mediates the effects of stance consistency on boycott and boycott intentions. This thesis extends this logic by testing authenticity, hypocrisy, and prestige as antecedents of brand attitude and by testing the direct authenticity-to-boycott and hypocrisy-to-boycott paths specified in H₄.

2.4.6 Buycott intention

Buycott intention is the consumer's deliberate willingness to purchase from a brand in order to reward or support conduct that the consumer approves. It differs from ordinary purchase intention because the brand's sociopolitical conduct is part of the reason for the intended purchase.

Agreement provides a basis for boycotting, while brand attitude helps translate agreement into intention (Hong & Li, 2021). Authenticity can strengthen this supportive route because consumers are more willing to reward activism when the position appears sincere and supported by meaningful action. Shukla et al. (2025) identify self-brand connection as a mechanism through which activism produces positive behavioural intentions.

The translation from supportive attitude to purchase is constrained by practical barriers. In ethical fashion, price, availability, knowledge, transparency, image, inertia, and consumption habits can prevent favourable attitudes from becoming purchases (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). These barriers are especially relevant to luxury boycotting because high prices and strong style expectations can widen the gap between approval of activism and willingness to buy.

Buycott intention is therefore modelled separately from brand attitude. The construct captures the additional willingness to reward the brand because of its activism and represents a stronger behavioural commitment than general liking. In the proposed model, it is predicted by brand attitude and perceived authenticity, while prestige is tested only as an antecedent of brand attitude.

2.4.7 Boycott intention

Boycott intention is the consumer's deliberate willingness to avoid or reject a brand in order to punish conduct, oppose a position, or distance the self from values associated with the brand. It differs from ordinary non-purchase because the avoidance is motivated by the brand's sociopolitical stance or conduct.

Disagreement is a consistent antecedent of negative responses. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) find negative effects of disagreement on attitudes, intentions, and actual choice

across several activism contexts. Hydock et al. (2020) explain that consumers are attracted to identity-consistent brands and repelled by brands whose identities they seek to avoid. Boycotting can consequently protect the consumer's identity while imposing a cost on the misaligned brand.

Hypocrisy and relational violation provide additional routes to boycotting. Fan et al. (2025) find that psychological contract violation mediates the relationship between activist commitment and boycott intention. Consumers may therefore boycott even when they support the cause if they interpret the brand's involvement as manipulative, contradictory, or betraying an established relationship. Cammarota et al. (2026) also identify boycotts produced by ideological opposition and perceptions that the brand has become excessively politicized, even when sincerity is not questioned.

Boycott intention is modelled separately from buycott intention because punishment and reward have different thresholds and are not equal opposites. Kam and Deichert (2020) find that negative information induces avoidance more strongly than positive information induces approach. A consumer can have weak intentions toward both, support the cause while rejecting the brand, or dislike the activism without being willing to change purchasing habits. Separate outcomes preserve the documented negative asymmetry and permit distinct explanatory paths.

2.4.8 Collectivist orientation

Individualism and collectivism describe orientations toward the relationship between the self and important social groups. Individualism emphasises autonomy, personal goals, independent judgment, and self-expression. Collectivism emphasises interdependence, group welfare, loyalty, harmony, and obligations to in-groups. These orientations are individual tendencies rather than fixed national categories.

Yoo et al. (2011) argue that country-level scores should not automatically be assigned to individual consumers because substantial cultural diversity exists within every nation. They developed the CVSCALE as a measure of cultural values at the individual level and demonstrated its reliability and validity across national and sample contexts. The collectivism dimension includes willingness to sacrifice self-interest, remain loyal to the group, and prioritise group welfare and success.

This individual-level approach is necessary for the Italy-Vietnam comparison. Nationality provides social and institutional context, but it cannot establish the cultural orientation of a particular respondent. Measuring the moderator directly avoids treating all Italian consumers as individualist or all Vietnamese consumers as collectivist. It also allows cultural orientation to be tested as a continuous source of variation within each national sample.

Individualism and collectivism are theoretically relevant because political consumerism contains both private and social motives. More individualist consumers may rely strongly on personal principles and use brands to maintain an autonomous moral identity. More collectivist consumers may give greater weight to group welfare, consensus, and the risk of disrupting important relationships. Yoo et al. (2011) describe collectivists as more susceptible to in-group influence, more loyal to in-group norms, and more oriented toward harmony.

Hong and Li (2021) find that perceived majority support and the credibility of public-support information change the effects of stance consistency on brand attitude and boycott or boycott intention. Their findings do not directly test collectivism, but they show that personal agreement is not expressed independently of perceived social support. Khan et al. (2024) further demonstrate that individual-level cultural values influence sustainable-fashion decisions. Together, these studies provide a basis for examining whether collectivist orientation changes the strength of the agreement-to-perception and perception-to-attitude paths.

The reviewed literature tests political ideology, consumer-brand identification, generation, public support, and national context more often than individual-level individualism and collectivism. This study therefore treats collectivist orientation as a theoretically grounded but insufficiently examined moderator. It is not modelled as a direct cause of support or opposition. Instead, it is expected to change the weight consumers place on agreement, group compatibility, social norms, and relational consequences.

2.4.9 Integrative synthesis of evidence across the constructs

Some studies emphasise stance congruence, others examine authenticity and hypocrisy, and others focus on symbolic value, political consumption, or cultural conditions.

For consumer-brand agreement, the literature consistently identifies stance congruence as a primary driver of evaluation. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) demonstrate the negative asymmetry of disagreement. Hong and Li (2021) show that agreement and disagreement affect boycott and boycott intentions through brand attitude and in interaction with the perceived opinion climate. Dodd and Supa (2015) find that consumer-organisational stance congruence predicts purchase intention, while Chatterji and Toffel (2019) show that the purchasing effects of CEO activism differ according to whether consumers support the position. Agreement is therefore supported as a stance-specific antecedent whose effect depends on prior relationships, identity, and social context.

The authenticity literature defines authentic activism through alignment among purpose, values, messaging, and practice (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Alhouti et al. (2016) show that authenticity mediates purchase intention, loyalty, and boycott-related outcomes in the CSR context. Virkus and Klein (2026) demonstrate that intrinsic motivational character is important for activism authenticity and that authenticity reduces skepticism while improving

behavioural intentions. Message specificity, response speed, duration, and cumulative consistency provide additional authenticity signals (Ahmad et al., 2024; Nam et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2026; Cammarota et al., 2026).

The hypocrisy literature supplies the corresponding negative mechanism. Wagner et al. (2009) demonstrate that perceived corporate hypocrisy reduces attitude toward the firm. Vredenburg et al. (2020) explain how inconsistency among purpose, values, messaging, and practice produces woke washing. Ahmad et al. (2024) show that failure to honor a concrete internal promise creates a severe penalty. Jiang et al. (2026) demonstrate that long-term activism reduces hypocrisy perceptions, while Fan et al. (2025) show that perceived contradiction can become psychological contract violation and boycott intention. These findings establish hypocrisy as an active moral judgment with consequences beyond low authenticity.

For prestige, foundational brand-choice evidence shows that symbolic status has behavioural value. Baek et al. (2010) find that brand prestige and credibility influence purchase intention, especially in self-expressive categories. Khalifa and Osburg (2025) show that activism can enhance self-expressive value and luxury brand perception, while Shukla et al. (2025) find that activism can strengthen self-brand connection. Osburg et al. (2024) show that sustainable luxury affects several value perceptions and behavioural intentions across developed and emerging markets. The prestige construct therefore captures a symbolic route that is related to, but more specific than, general brand attitude.

Brand attitude is the most established integrative evaluation in the reviewed activism literature. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) show that disagreement lowers attitude. Hong and Li (2021) identify attitude as the mediator between stance consistency and political-consumption intention. Wannow et al. (2024) add that moral emotions transmit the effects of agreement and disagreement to brand attitude. Nguyen et al. (2023) connect authenticity, motives, trust, attitude, and loyalty among Vietnamese Generation Z consumers. Brand attitude is therefore positioned after the more specific perceptions because it integrates cognitive, emotional, symbolic, and relational evaluations.

The political-consumption literature supports separating boycott and boycott intentions. Kam and Deichert (2020) find that negative information induces avoidance more strongly than positive information induces approach. Baek (2010) demonstrates that boycotters and boycotters differ in demographic and political profiles. Paek and Nelson (2009) identify different attitudinal patterns behind cause-related support and boycott responses, while Wiederhold and Martinez (2018) show how practical barriers can prevent favourable ethical attitudes from becoming fashion purchases. Hong and Li (2021) connect the two outcomes to stance consistency and brand attitude, and Tan (2025) confirms their relevance in luxury activism.

The individualism-collectivism literature provides the cultural basis for examining heterogeneity in the model. Yoo et al. (2011) show why national culture scores should not be assigned automatically to individuals and provide an individual-level cultural measure. Khan et al. (2024) demonstrate that individual-level cultural values predict willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion. Osburg et al. (2024) further show that luxury value perceptions and behavioural intentions vary across developed and emerging markets. These studies establish the relevance of culture and market context, but they do not test individualism versus collectivism as a moderator of an integrated luxury brand activism process.

Taken together, the reviewed evidence supports the ordering of the conceptual model. Agreement provides the direction of value congruence. Authenticity, hypocrisy, and prestige represent positive credibility, negative consistency, and symbolic-status evaluations. Brand attitude integrates these evaluations. Boycott and boycott intentions capture behaviourally distinct forms of political consumption. Collectivist orientation is expected to change the weight assigned to agreement, social norms, and group compatibility. Testing all constructs together addresses the fragmentation of the existing literature.

2.5 Theoretical framework

The conceptual model is anchored in the persuasion knowledge model, which provides the principal explanation for how consumers interpret brand activism as a potential influence attempt and infer whether the brand is acting from genuine conviction or commercial self-interest. Social identity theory provides a supporting explanation for consumer-brand agreement as value congruence. Signalling and self-expression theory provides a secondary explanation for why these judgments have particular symbolic relevance in luxury fashion. Collectivist orientation is treated as a secondary boundary condition rather than as an additional overarching theory.

The framework therefore has a clear hierarchy. The persuasion knowledge model explains the central credibility judgments of perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy. Social identity theory explains why agreement or disagreement with the brand's stance becomes identity relevant. Signalling and self-expression theory explains how activism can alter the symbolic meaning of a prestigious luxury brand. Collectivist orientation is examined as an individual-level condition that may change the strength of selected relationships. These perspectives are complementary, but they do not have equal explanatory status in this study.

2.5.1 Persuasion knowledge model

The persuasion knowledge model treats consumers as active interpreters of marketing attempts rather than passive recipients of brand messages. It distinguishes the persuasion agent, the target, the topic, and the tactics used to influence the target (Friestad & Wright, 1994). When consumers encounter activist communication, they therefore draw on

knowledge about the social issue, the brand, and marketing practices to infer why the brand is speaking and what it seeks to achieve.

This perspective is especially appropriate for brand activism because activist communication has a dual character. It presents a position on a contested social or political issue, but it also communicates through a commercial actor with an interest in reputation, differentiation, and consumer response. Consumers may consequently attribute the activism to intrinsic motives, such as genuine conviction and alignment with the brand's values, or to extrinsic motives, such as reputation management, competitive pressure, or financial gain. Research on brand activism shows that perceived intrinsic motivation is associated with higher authenticity and lower skepticism (Virkus & Klein, 2026).

The model also explains why authenticity is an inference rather than an objective property that consumers simply observe. Consumers use available evidence about the brand's history, purpose, conduct, issue fit, and likely impact to judge whether the activist message reflects a genuine commitment. Alhouti et al. (2016) show that consumers evaluate the social problem, the company's history, the contribution made, and brand-cause fit when forming authenticity judgments. Mirzaei et al. (2022) similarly identify fit, commitment, practice, social-context independence, and motivation as relevant dimensions of woke-activism authenticity. Authenticity therefore depends on the perceived coherence of the brand's motives, identity, communication, and actions.

The persuasion knowledge model also provides the theoretical basis for distinguishing authenticity from hypocrisy. Perceived inauthenticity indicates that the activism appears insincere, opportunistic, or poorly grounded in the brand. Perceived hypocrisy is a stronger moral attribution that the brand's public claims and conduct contradict one another. Wagner et al. (2009) show that perceived corporate hypocrisy damages consumer evaluations, while Vredenburg et al. (2020) explain how a lack of alignment among brand purpose, values, activist messaging, and prosocial practice produces woke washing. A consumer may therefore agree with the cause but judge the brand's execution as opportunistic, or disagree with the cause while recognising that the brand has acted consistently.

Credibility judgments are also dynamic. Message specificity creates a clear standard against which the brand can later be evaluated, so unfulfilled concrete commitments can produce especially severe authenticity penalties (Ahmad et al., 2024). Response speed can operate as a cue of stance authenticity, while sustained activism provides evidence of continued commitment (Nam et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2026). Cammarota et al. (2026) further conceptualize brand activism as a process in which coherence across communication, practice, and time shapes consumer responses. These findings strengthen the persuasion-knowledge explanation because they identify the types of evidence consumers may use when coping with activist persuasion attempts.

The model supplies the principal theoretical foundation for the two central behavioural routes in this study. Perceived authenticity can encourage consumers to reward the brand through boycotting, whereas perceived hypocrisy can encourage consumers to punish the brand through boycotting. Authenticity and hypocrisy may also influence brand attitude, but their direct routes to the corresponding behavioural outcomes remain theoretically meaningful. Consumer-brand agreement may create a favourable or unfavourable interpretive context, but agreement does not prove authenticity and disagreement does not by itself prove hypocrisy.

2.5.2 Social identity theory

Social identity theory holds that individuals derive part of their self-concept from membership in social categories and seek to maintain a positively valued identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Consumers can use brands as symbolic resources for constructing and expressing identity, particularly when the brand publicly communicates values that are relevant to political or moral group membership. Brand activism makes this identity function visible because the brand adopts a position that consumers can compare with their own values.

Consumer-brand agreement can therefore signal shared moral foundations and value congruence, whereas disagreement can create identity distance. Hydock et al. (2020) explain that corporate political advocacy can attract consumers whose ideological identities match the brand and repel consumers who wish to distance themselves from the identity represented by the brand. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) similarly show that disagreement with a brand's activist stance produces more reliable negative effects on brand attitude, behavioural intention, and choice than agreement produces positive effects.

Consumer-brand identification qualifies this process. Haupt et al. (2023) find that strong identification can buffer the negative effects of disagreement, while disagreement can create feelings of marginalisation when the brand appears to reject the consumer's moral or political identity. Wannow et al. (2024) add that agreement can activate other-praising moral emotions and disagreement can activate other-condemning emotions, with these emotions shaping brand attitude and issue advocacy.

Social identity theory therefore supports the role of consumer-brand agreement as the model's antecedent. It explains why stance congruence becomes self-relevant and why disagreement may make the brand appear socially distant or identity threatening. It does not, however, establish whether activism is authentic or hypocritical. Those judgments require consumers to interpret the brand's motives, conduct, and consistency through the persuasion knowledge process. Social identity theory is consequently used as a supporting lens for the agreement-related paths rather than as a general explanation for every relationship in the model.

2.5.3 Signalling and self-expression theory

Signalling theory explains how observable actions and communications can convey qualities that consumers cannot directly verify. A brand's accumulated conduct can signal commitment, reliability, or values, but the signal is persuasive only when consumers consider it credible. In luxury fashion, brand prestige adds a symbolic dimension because association with a prestigious brand can communicate status, distinction, aspiration, and self-worth in addition to functional quality (Baek et al., 2010).

Self-expression theory complements signalling theory by explaining how consumers use brands and possessions to construct, maintain, and communicate identity. Brands can become part of the extended self, and luxury brands can provide visible resources for expressing desired identities and group affiliations (Belk, 1988). Shukla et al. (2025) show that global brand activism can change what the brand represents and influence behavioural intentions through self-brand connection. Activism can therefore modify the meaning communicated by association with a luxury brand.

Luxury brand activism provides a specific application of this symbolic mechanism. Khalifa and Osburg (2025) show that activism can enhance self-expressive value and luxury brand perception, which subsequently support purchase intention. Related research on luxury cause-related marketing shows that product-linked campaigns can preserve status-signalling benefits while incorporating prosocial meaning (Kim et al., 2022). Sustainable-luxury research likewise indicates that symbolic value perceptions can shape behavioural intentions across market contexts (Osburg et al., 2024).

This lens explains why perceived prestige is included in the model, but it is secondary to the credibility framework. An activist stance may strengthen prestige when it is distinctive, admired, and compatible with the brand's identity. It may weaken prestige when it appears opportunistic, excessively politicised, or inconsistent with luxury exclusivity. A consumer may therefore regard a brand as prestigious while judging its activism as hypocritical, or perceive the activism as authentic without believing that it increases the brand's status. Signalling and self-expression theory supports the prestige-to-attitude pathway and the secondary symbolic route to political consumption, but it does not replace the central authenticity and hypocrisy explanation.

2.5.4 Collectivist orientation as a secondary boundary condition

Collectivist orientation is treated as a secondary boundary condition rather than as a fourth theoretical foundation. Individual-level collectivism concerns the extent to which consumers emphasise interdependence, group welfare, loyalty, harmony, and obligations to important social groups. Individualism and collectivism should not be assigned automatically from national membership because meaningful variation exists within countries (Yoo et al., 2011).

The cultural orientation may affect how strongly consumers translate agreement and credibility judgments into broader brand evaluations. More collectivist consumers may attach greater importance to group compatibility, shared standards, loyalty, and relational consequences. More individualist consumers may rely more strongly on personal principles and autonomous value expression. Evidence that individual-level cultural values influence sustainable-fashion decisions supports the relevance of this distinction to fashion consumption (Khan et al., 2024).

The moderation hypotheses are therefore extensions of the central credibility framework. They test whether collectivist orientation changes the strength of the agreement-to-perception and perception-to-attitude paths. The expectation is not that collectivism is inherently favourable or unfavourable toward activism, but that cultural orientation may change the weight assigned to shared values, group compatibility, credibility, and symbolic meaning. The model does not use spiral of silence theory because perceived opinion climate, fear of social isolation, and public conformity are not measured directly.

2.5.5 Theoretical integration and model boundaries

The theoretical framework can be summarised as a hierarchy. The persuasion knowledge model provides the principal explanation for how consumers interpret activist communication and form authenticity and hypocrisy judgments. Social identity theory explains why consumer-brand agreement creates a value-congruence context for those judgments. Signalling and self-expression theory explains why credibility judgments may also influence the symbolic meaning of a luxury brand through prestige. Collectivist orientation is tested as a secondary condition that may change the strength of selected relationships.

The resulting process is not that four theories explain every path with equal importance. Consumers encounter a public activist position, compare it with their own values, and evaluate whether the brand's communication is credible and consistent. Authenticity and hypocrisy are the central credibility outcomes. These judgments can shape boycott and boycott intentions directly and through brand attitude. Prestige, collectivist orientation, and country context qualify this process but do not replace it.

The model preserves several conceptual boundaries. Agreement is not authenticity because agreement concerns the match between the consumer's position and the brand's position. Authenticity is not the absence of hypocrisy because hypocrisy requires a perceived contradiction between claims and conduct. Prestige is not brand attitude because symbolic status can coexist with a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the activist stance. Boycotting and boycotting are not opposite points on one purchase-intention scale because they represent distinct supportive and punitive responses.

2.6 Hypothesis development

The preceding review supports seven hypotheses that connect one antecedent, three brand perceptions, one overall brand evaluation, two political-consumption outcomes, and one cultural moderator. The hypotheses follow a sequence from stance agreement to brand perceptions (H_1), from perceptions to brand attitude (H_2), and from attitude to behavioural intention (H_3). Authenticity and hypocrisy also have direct behavioural paths (H_4). Collectivist orientation moderates the agreement-to-perception and perception-to-attitude relationships (H_5 and H_6). H_7 focuses on whether brand attitude mediates the relationships between perceived authenticity or perceived hypocrisy and boycott or boycott intentions.

The model is deliberately non-symmetrical. Boycotting and boycotting are not treated as opposite ends of one continuum because they differ in motivational orientation, behavioural cost, and sensitivity to negative information. Kam and Deichert (2020) find that negative information produces avoidance more strongly than positive information produces approach. The hypotheses therefore preserve separate supportive and punitive paths.

Table 2.2: Summary of hypotheses, paths, and expected effects

Hypothesis	Predictor	Outcome	Expected effect
H_1	Consumer-Brand Agreement	Perceived Authenticity, Perceived Prestige, Perceived Hypocrisy	Positive for authenticity and prestige; negative for hypocrisy
H_2	Perceived Authenticity, Perceived Prestige, Perceived Hypocrisy	Brand Attitude	Positive for authenticity and prestige; negative for hypocrisy
H_3	Brand Attitude	Boycott Intention, Boycott Intention	Positive for boycott; negative for boycott
H_4	Perceived Authenticity, Perceived Hypocrisy	Boycott Intention, Boycott Intention	Positive authenticity-to-boycott; positive hypocrisy-to-boycott
H_5	Collectivist Orientation	Agreement-to-Perception paths	Moderation, with stronger relationships for collectivist consumers
H_6	Collectivist Orientation	Perception-to-Attitude paths	Moderation, with stronger relationships for collectivist consumers

H ₇	Perceived Brand Authenticity or Perceived Brand Hypocrisy, with Brand Attitude as mediator	Boycott Intention and Boycott Intention	Brand attitude mediates the perception-to-intention relationships
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2.6.1 Consumer-brand agreement and brand perceptions (H₁)

Consumer-brand agreement supplies the directional component of the model. Brand activism communicates a moral or political identity, allowing consumers to classify the brand as aligned or misaligned with their own position. Hydock et al. (2020) explain that consumers can approach brands whose ideological values match their identities and distance themselves from brands representing identities they wish to avoid. Agreement should therefore improve the interpretation of the brand, while disagreement should create identity distance.

The relationship between agreement and authenticity is theoretically contested but supported by identity-based reasoning. When the brand's position fits the consumer's values, identity consistency may encourage a more favourable interpretation of the brand's motives. Under the persuasion knowledge model, consumers who perceive value alignment may be less likely to attribute self-serving motives to the brand and more likely to infer genuine commitment (Virkus & Klein, 2026). Hydock et al. (2020) imply that agreement can shape authenticity perceptions, while Nam et al. (2023) suggest that the two can operate independently. H₁ tests this unresolved relationship directly.

Vredenburg et al. (2020) define authentic activism through alignment among brand purpose, organisational values, activist messaging, and prosocial practice, not through consumer agreement. Consumers can support the cause while judging the brand's execution as opportunistic, or oppose the cause while recognising that the brand has acted consistently.

The corresponding negative mechanism concerns perceived hypocrisy. Hypocrisy requires a perceived contradiction between the brand's claims and conduct. Wagner et al. (2009) show that perceived corporate hypocrisy damages attitudes toward the firm, while Vredenburg et al. (2020) identify inconsistency among purpose, values, messaging, and practice as the basis of woke washing. Agreement may reduce the likelihood that ambiguous inconsistencies are interpreted as moral deception, whereas disagreement may encourage closer scrutiny and more unfavorable motive attribution. Disagreement alone does not demonstrate hypocrisy. The negative agreement-to-hypocrisy path tests an attributional tendency while preserving the conceptual distinction between ideological misalignment and inconsistency.

Agreement may also increase prestige when activism gives the luxury brand an admired and identity-relevant symbolic position. Shukla et al. (2025) find that prior attitude alignment conditions the effects of global brand activism and that self-brand connection carries activism effects to behavioural intentions. Khalifa and Osburg (2025) show that luxury brand

activism can increase self-expressive value and luxury brand perception. These findings imply that an aligned activist position can add symbolic value to the brand. The effect is not automatic because activism that appears inauthentic, excessively political, or inconsistent with luxury exclusivity may weaken prestige.

H₁: Consumer-brand agreement with the luxury fashion brand's activism stance positively influences perceived brand authenticity and perceived brand prestige, and negatively influences perceived brand hypocrisy.

2.6.2 Brand perceptions and brand attitude (H₂)

Perceived authenticity, perceived prestige, and perceived hypocrisy represent distinct routes to overall brand attitude. Authenticity signals that the activism reflects the brand's identity, values, and sustained commitments. Prestige signals that the brand possesses symbolic status and self-expressive value. Hypocrisy signals that the brand communicates a moral position that its conduct does not support. The three judgments are related but conceptually independent, and each is expected to contribute to brand attitude.

Evidence consistently connects authenticity with favourable consumer responses. Virkus and Klein (2026) find that authenticity improves brand attitude, purchase intention, and positive word of mouth. Among Vietnamese Generation Z consumers, Nguyen et al. (2023) find that perceived authenticity positively affects brand attitude and trust, which subsequently support loyalty. Alhouti et al. (2016) similarly show that authenticity mediates important consumer outcomes in the CSR context. These findings support authenticity as a positive input into overall brand evaluation.

Prestige also contributes to brand attitude in the luxury context. Baek et al. (2010) find that brand prestige influences consumer choice in self-expressive product categories. Khalifa and Osburg (2025) show that activism can enhance self-expressive value and luxury brand perception. When activism gives the luxury brand a distinctive and admired symbolic position, prestige should strengthen the consumer's overall evaluation of the brand. H₂ therefore extends the role of prestige beyond a stable luxury attribute and tests whether activism-related prestige contributes to brand attitude.

Hypocrisy should produce the opposite effect because it converts uncertainty about motive into a judgment of moral inconsistency. Wagner et al. (2009) find that perceived corporate hypocrisy directly reduces attitude toward the firm and also weakens attitude indirectly through CSR beliefs. Jiang et al. (2026) show that longer-term activism reduces hypocrisy perceptions and strengthens loyalty, indicating that continuity can protect the brand from performative-activism judgments. The hypocrisy-to-attitude path focuses on the proximal attitudinal consequence of perceived inconsistency.

H₂: Perceived brand authenticity and perceived brand prestige positively influence brand attitude, while perceived brand hypocrisy negatively influences brand attitude.

2.6.3 Brand attitude and political-consumption intentions (H₃)

Brand attitude integrates the consumer's cognitive, emotional, identity-based, and moral evaluations of the activist brand. A favourable attitude should increase willingness to reward the brand, while an unfavourable attitude should increase willingness to avoid or punish it. Hong and Li (2021) provide direct support by showing that brand attitude mediates the effects of stance consistency on boycott and boycott intentions. Gidaković et al. (2026) similarly position brand attitude after specific brand-belief and communion judgments and before behavioural and relational responses.

The two paths should not be expected to have equal strength. Negative activist information and disagreement often create stronger avoidance than positive information creates approach. Favourable attitudes also face practical barriers such as price, product need, availability, and purchasing habits, which can prevent approval from becoming a purchase (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). Boycotting may require only avoidance, whereas boycotting may require an additional high-cost purchase. H₃ therefore specifies opposite directions without assuming symmetrical effect sizes.

H₃: Brand attitude positively influences boycott intention and negatively influences boycott intention.

2.6.4 Direct perception-to-behaviour paths (H₄)

The mediated route through brand attitude may not fully capture the behavioural consequences of authenticity and hypocrisy. Authenticity may directly increase boycott intention because consumers who perceive the brand as sincere are more willing to reward it through purchasing, even beyond the effect transmitted through overall attitude. Alhouti et al. (2016) find that authenticity is positively associated with purchase intention and negatively associated with boycott behaviour in the CSR context. Virkus and Klein (2026) similarly find that authenticity improves purchase intention and positive word of mouth.

Hypocrisy may directly increase boycott intention because perceived inconsistency activates a punitive response that does not require the intermediate formation of an overall negative attitude. Fan et al. (2025) show that psychological contract violation can transmit activist inconsistency into boycott intention. Wagner et al. (2009) show that hypocrisy damages attitudes toward the firm, but the moral and relational character of hypocrisy may also produce a direct impulse to punish. Ahmad et al. (2024) further show that failed concrete commitments create severe authenticity penalties and accountability consequences.

Including these direct paths alongside the mediated route through brand attitude allows the model to test whether brand attitude fully or only partially mediates the perception-to-behaviour relationship. If the direct paths are significant, brand attitude is important but not exclusive. If they are not significant, the mediated route is sufficient.

H₄: Perceived brand authenticity positively influences boycott intention, while perceived brand hypocrisy positively influences boycott intention.

2.6.5 Collectivist orientation as a moderator of the agreement-to-perception paths (H₅)

Collectivist orientation is expected to strengthen the relationship between consumer-brand agreement and brand perceptions. Collectivism emphasises interdependence, in-group welfare, loyalty, and harmony. Consumers with a stronger collectivist orientation are more sensitive to the social meaning of shared values and group compatibility. When a brand takes a public stance, collectivist consumers should weigh more heavily whether the brand's position aligns with the values of their reference groups and whether the brand represents an identity they wish to associate with.

Yoo et al. (2011) describe collectivist consumers as more susceptible to in-group influence, more loyal to in-group norms, and more oriented toward harmony. Hong and Li (2021) show that perceived majority support and the credibility of that information condition how stance consistency affects brand attitude and political-consumption intentions. Khan et al. (2024) further find that individual-level cultural values predict willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion. These findings support the expectation that agreement-based evaluations will be stronger among consumers who place greater weight on shared norms and group compatibility.

The moderation is expected to apply to all three agreement-to-perception paths. For collectivist consumers, agreement should more strongly increase perceived authenticity because the brand's aligned position signals shared group values. Agreement should more strongly reduce perceived hypocrisy because inconsistency with an aligned brand can be interpreted as a violation of shared standards. Agreement should more strongly increase perceived prestige because the brand's aligned position enhances its symbolic value within the consumer's reference group.

The evidence for this moderation is less direct than the evidence for the main effects. Previous brand-activism research has examined ideology, identification, generation, national context, and perceived public support more frequently than individual-level collectivism. H₅ therefore tests a theoretically grounded but insufficiently examined boundary condition. It does not predict that collectivism is inherently favourable or unfavourable toward activism. It predicts differences in the strength of the agreement-to-perception paths.

H₅: Collectivist orientation moderates the relationship between consumer-brand agreement and brand perceptions (perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige), such that the relationships are stronger for consumers with a more collectivist orientation.

2.6.6 Collectivist orientation as a moderator of the perception-to-attitude paths (H₆)

Collectivist orientation is also expected to strengthen the relationship between brand perceptions and brand attitude. The reasoning extends the norm-sensitivity mechanism from the antecedent stage to the evaluative stage. Consumers with a stronger collectivist orientation should weigh social and relational cues more heavily when forming an overall judgment of the brand.

Perceived authenticity, which signals that the brand is sincere and committed to shared values, should carry more attitudinal weight for collectivist consumers because it confirms the brand's reliability as a group-aligned actor. Perceived hypocrisy, which signals betrayal of shared standards, should more strongly damage attitude for collectivist consumers because the inconsistency can be interpreted as a violation of group trust. Perceived prestige, which signals the brand's symbolic standing within a social context, should more strongly contribute to attitude because social meaning is central to the evaluation of a luxury brand.

No prior study in the reviewed literature directly tests whether collectivism moderates the authenticity-to-attitude, hypocrisy-to-attitude, or prestige-to-attitude relationships. H₆ therefore extends the cultural moderation beyond the antecedent stage and tests whether the evaluative process itself is culturally contingent. Its theoretical basis comes from individual-level cultural research linking collectivism with group welfare, relational consequences, and the importance of shared standards (Yoo et al., 2011; Khan et al., 2024). This extension remains an empirical proposition. Because perceived opinion climate, fear of social isolation, and public conformity are not measured directly, H₆ is not grounded in spiral of silence theory.

H₆: Collectivist orientation moderates the relationship between brand perceptions (perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige) and brand attitude, such that the relationships are stronger for consumers with a more collectivist orientation.

2.6.7 Mediation of brand attitude between brand perceptions and behavioural intentions (H₇)

H₇ examines whether brand attitude transmits the effects of perceived brand authenticity or perceived brand hypocrisy to consumer behavioural intentions. This hypothesis is distinct from the agreement-related paths in H₁ and H₅. Consumer-brand agreement remains the

antecedent of the broader model, but H_7 focuses on the evaluative sequence that follows the formation of brand perceptions.

The theoretical logic is based on the distinction between specific brand perceptions and an overall brand evaluation. Perceived authenticity captures whether the activist commitment appears sincere and credible, while perceived hypocrisy captures whether the brand's claims and conduct appear inconsistent. Brand attitude integrates these more specific evaluations into a broader favourable or unfavourable judgment. That judgment may then influence both supportive and punitive political-consumption intentions.

Hong and Li (2021) show that brand attitude can mediate the relationship between stance consistency and boycott or boycott intentions. The present model extends this logic by testing whether brand attitude transmits the effects of perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy to both behavioural outcomes. Alhouti et al. (2015) provide related evidence that authenticity mediates consumer outcomes, while Wagner et al. (2009) show that perceived hypocrisy damages broader evaluations of the firm. These studies support examining brand attitude as an intermediate evaluative mechanism rather than assuming that a specific perception translates directly into behaviour.

The model also retains the direct authenticity-to-boycott and hypocrisy-to-boycott paths specified in H_4 . This allows the analysis to distinguish between a route operating through general brand attitude and a direct credibility-based route. A significant indirect effect through brand attitude would indicate that the perception influences behaviour partly by shaping the overall evaluation of the brand. A significant direct effect alongside the indirect effect would indicate partial mediation. Prestige remains an antecedent of brand attitude under H_2 but is not included as a focal perception in H_7 .

H_7 : Brand attitude transmits the effects of perceived brand authenticity and perceived brand hypocrisy to boycott intention and boycott intention.

This hypothesis is tested through four specific indirect effects, with all complementary direct paths estimated in the model, allowing each route to be classified as complementary, indirect-only, or direct-only mediation.

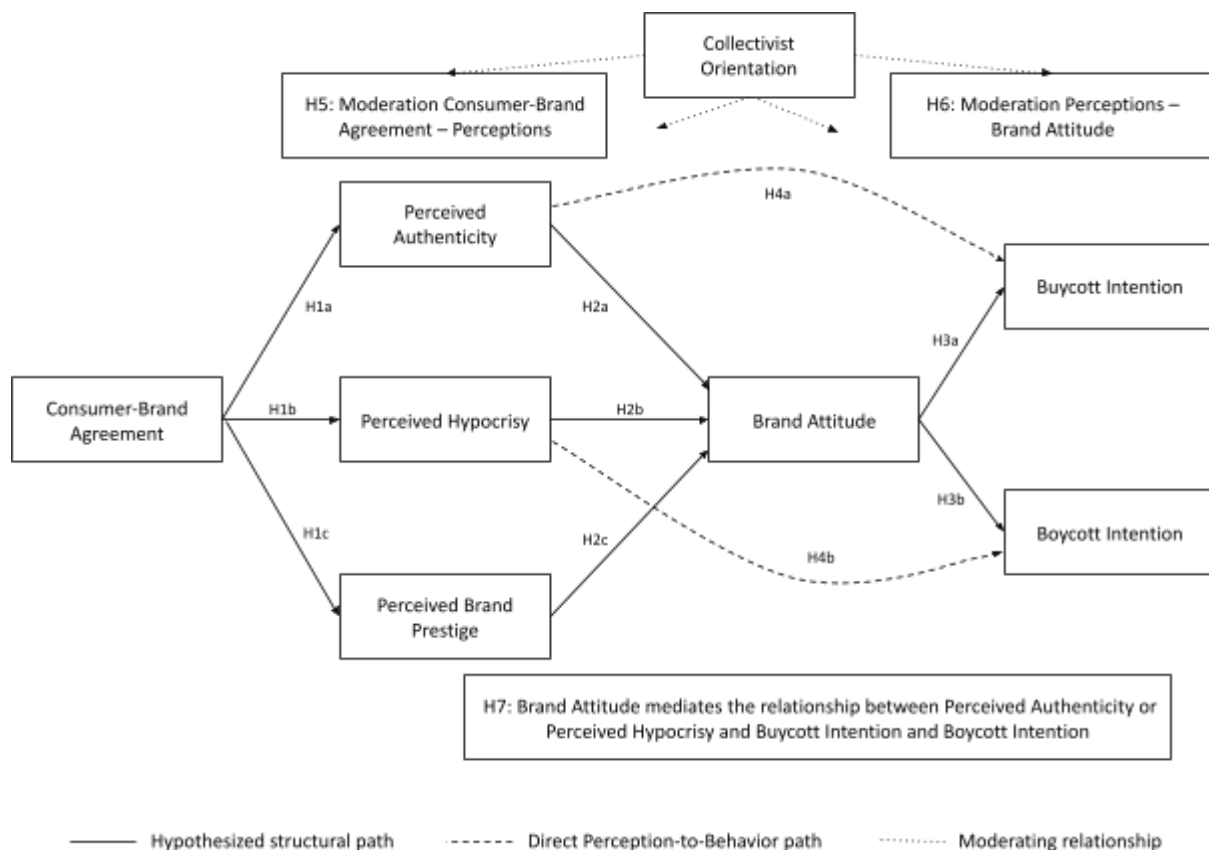
2.6.8 Synthesis of the hypothesised process

The hypotheses form an integrated but non-deterministic process. Agreement provides the initial value-congruence context. Authenticity and hypocrisy capture positive and negative judgments about the credibility and consistency of activism, while prestige captures the symbolic value of association with the activist luxury brand. Brand attitude consolidates specific brand perceptions and connects them to boycott and boycott intentions. Authenticity and hypocrisy also carry direct behavioural consequences that bypass brand attitude. H_7 focuses on whether brand attitude transmits the effects of authenticity and

hypocrisy to supportive and punitive behavioural intentions. Collectivist orientation is expected to alter the strength of the agreement-to-perception and perception-to-attitude paths rather than determine the direction of consumer response.

2.7 Conceptual model

Figure 2.2: Conceptual model and hypothesised paths



The conceptual model translates the literature review and theoretical framework into a testable structure explaining consumer responses to luxury fashion brand activism. It combines identity-based, attributional, symbolic, attitudinal, behavioural, and cultural mechanisms. Rather than assuming that activism produces a uniformly favourable or unfavourable response, the model explains how the same brand position can generate support, indifference, or resistance among different consumers.

2.7.1 Architecture of the model

The model is organized into four sequential blocks. The first block contains consumer-brand agreement, which captures whether the consumer's stance corresponds with the position taken by the brand. Agreement is the sole antecedent in the revised model. It provides the direction of value congruence without being treated as equivalent to authenticity, hypocrisy, or brand attitude.

The second block contains three brand-specific perceptions: perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige. Perceived authenticity represents a positive inference that the activism is sincere and aligned with the brand's purpose, values, communication, and practice. Perceived hypocrisy represents the judgment that the brand's words and conduct are inconsistent. Perceived brand prestige represents the symbolic status and self-expressive value associated with the luxury brand. These perceptions are expected to be influenced by agreement under H_1 .

The third block contains brand attitude. Brand attitude is positioned after the specific perceptions because it consolidates cognitive, emotional, identity-based, and moral evaluations into an overall favourable or unfavourable assessment of the brand. It is not interchangeable with the three brand perceptions. A consumer may regard the activism as authentic while opposing the position, view the brand as prestigious while disliking its activism, or support the cause while judging the brand's conduct as hypocritical.

The fourth block contains boycott intention and buycott intention. Buycott intention represents deliberate support through purchasing, whereas boycott intention represents deliberate punishment or avoidance. They are modelled as separate outcomes because rewarding and punishing are not psychologically or behaviourally equivalent. The model predicts these outcomes from brand attitude under H_3 , and it includes direct perceived-authenticity-to-buycott and perceived-hypocrisy-to-boycott paths under H_4 .

2.7.2 Structural paths and indirect mechanisms

H_1 connects consumer-brand agreement with perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige. These paths test whether stance congruence affects the interpretation of motives, consistency, and symbolic value. Agreement is expected to increase perceived authenticity and perceived brand prestige and reduce perceived hypocrisy, but the constructs remain theoretically independent. Authenticity depends on evidence about the brand's own commitments and practices. Hypocrisy requires perceived contradiction rather than simple ideological disagreement. Prestige concerns the status and self-expressive meaning of association with the brand.

H_2 connects the three perceptions with brand attitude. Perceived authenticity should strengthen attitude by signalling sincere and internally consistent commitment. Perceived brand prestige should strengthen attitude by signalling symbolic status and identity value. Perceived hypocrisy should weaken attitude by signalling moral inconsistency or manipulation. These paths create indirect routes from agreement through perception to overall brand evaluation.

H_3 connects brand attitude with the two political-consumption outcomes. A favourable attitude is expected to increase buycott intention and reduce boycott intention. An

unfavourable attitude is expected to reduce boycott intention and increase boycott intention. The two paths have opposite expected signs but are not assumed to have equal magnitude.

H₄ adds direct behavioural paths for perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy. Perceived authenticity may encourage a supportive purchase without requiring the consumer to form a general brand attitude first. Perceived hypocrisy may encourage punishment without requiring the full formation of an overall negative evaluation. Perceived brand prestige is not assigned a separate direct path to behaviour in the revised model because its expected behavioural role is tested through brand attitude.

H₇ specifies the indirect mechanisms from perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy to boycott and boycott intentions through brand attitude. The model therefore tests whether the broader brand evaluation transmits the effects of specific credibility judgments to supportive and punitive political-consumption intentions. The direct perceived-authenticity-to-boycott and perceived-hypocrisy-to-boycott paths specified in H₄ remain in the model, allowing the analysis to distinguish mediated and direct credibility-based routes. Perceived brand prestige is not included in H₇ as a focal perception because its proposed role is tested through brand attitude under H₂ and H₃.

2.7.3 Cultural moderation and comparative context

Individualism versus collectivism is positioned as a moderator of the agreement-to-perception paths and the perception-to-attitude paths. This specification avoids implying that either cultural orientation is inherently favourable toward activism. More collectivist consumers are expected to translate agreement into perceived authenticity, lower perceived hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige more strongly because they assign greater weight to group compatibility and shared standards. They are also expected to translate these perceptions into brand attitude more strongly because social and relational meaning is more central to their evaluation.

The moderator is measured at the individual level. Yoo et al. (2011) show that cultural variation exists within countries and that national scores should not automatically be assigned to individual consumers. The Italy-Vietnam comparison supplies contextual variation, but nationality is not used as a substitute for cultural orientation. This distinction permits within-country moderation analysis and comparison of the structural model across the two national samples.

H₅ is represented analytically by three interaction effects: collectivist orientation with the agreement-to-authenticity, agreement-to-hypocrisy, and agreement-to-prestige paths. H₆ is represented by three further interaction effects: collectivist orientation with the authenticity-to-attitude, hypocrisy-to-attitude, and prestige-to-attitude paths. Treating the interactions separately is necessary because cultural orientation may strengthen one relationship without affecting the others.

2.7.4 Theoretical contribution and model boundaries

The model's main contribution is its integration of research streams that have usually been examined separately. Social identity theory explains the value-congruence context created by consumer-brand agreement. The persuasion knowledge model provides the principal explanation for perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy as credibility judgments. Signalling and self-expression theory explains the secondary symbolic role of perceived brand prestige in luxury fashion. The revised H_7 adds a focused mediation test of whether brand attitude transmits the effects of perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy to boycott and boycott intentions. Collectivist orientation is treated as a secondary boundary condition rather than as an additional overarching theory.

The model is parsimonious rather than exhaustive. It does not include every possible identity, emotional, cultural, or social-norm mechanism through which activism may affect consumers. The selected structure keeps the theoretical emphasis on credibility, while retaining prestige, brand attitude, collectivist orientation, and country context as relevant secondary elements. It also distinguishes the direct credibility routes in H_4 from the broader attitudinal mediation tested in H_7 .

The model predicts behavioural intentions rather than verified purchasing or avoidance. Ethical and political attitudes do not always become behaviour because price, availability, product need, information, habits, and other practical constraints can intervene. This boundary is particularly important in luxury fashion, where the financial threshold for boycotting is high. The findings must therefore be interpreted as explanations of intended political consumption following an activism scenario, not as direct evidence of actual market behaviour or long-term brand performance.

Before this chapter draws to a close, Table 2.3 positions the present study within the reviewed literature. Following a classification logic common to literature-overview tables, the topics examined in this thesis are grouped according to how extensively they have been studied: the upper section lists topics that are well established in prior research and that this study builds on, while the lower section lists topics that remain under-researched and that this study directly addresses. For each topic, representative publications from the reviewed set are reported, together with a short statement of how the topic is treated in this conceptual model and hypotheses.

Table 2.3: Positioning of this study within the reviewed literature

Topic explored	Representative publications	Research intensity	How the topic is addressed in this study
WELL-RESEARCHED TOPICS IN THE EXISTING LITERATURE			
Brand activism: conceptualisation and	Vredenburg et al. (2020); Moorman (2020); Mirzaei et al. (2022); Ahmad	•	Adopted as the conceptual foundation (Section 2.2); used to design the Hermès

authentic vs. woke-washing typology	et al. (2024); Herzberg & Rudeloff (2023)		activism scenario and define perceived authenticity and hypocrisy.
Asymmetric consumer responses: agreement vs. disagreement with the brand's stance	Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020); Haupt et al. (2023); Wannow et al. (2024); Hong & Li (2021); Dodd & Supa (2015)	●	Consumer-brand agreement is used as the single antecedent of the model (H ₁), building on the documented asymmetry between agreement and disagreement.
Authenticity and skepticism as drivers of consumer reactions	Virkus & Klein (2026); Vredenburg et al. (2020); Alhouti et al. (2016); Mirzaei et al. (2022); Ahmad et al. (2024)	●	Perceived authenticity is modelled as a central parallel mechanism (H ₁ , H ₂ , H ₄ , H ₇), measuring consumers' credibility judgment of the stance.
Consumer-brand identification and political ideology as boundary conditions	Haupt et al. (2023); Wannow et al. (2024); Gidaković et al. (2026); Hydock et al. (2020); Khalifa & Osburg (2025)	●	The moderator logic is extended by testing individual-level collectivist orientation (H ₅ , H ₆) instead of identification or political ideology.
Political consumerism: psychology and predictors of boycotting and buycotting	Kam & Deichert (2020); Copeland & Boulianne (2022); Baek, Y. M. (2010); Paek & Nelson (2009)	●	Buycott and boycott are retained as distinct outcome constructs, inheriting the approach-avoidance and negativity-bias rationale.
Message characteristics: framing, abstractness and firm response time	Xie et al. (2024); Ahmad et al. (2024); Nam et al. (2023); Jiang et al. (2026)	●	Used to justify scenario design; treated as controlled message context rather than experimentally manipulated.
UNDERRESEARCHED TOPICS: GAPS ADDRESSED BY THE PRESENT STUDY			
Luxury fashion brands as activists	Khalifa & Osburg (2025); Tan (2025); Herzberg & Rudeloff (2023); Kim, Park, & Shrum (2022)	○	Focuses on luxury fashion and separates supportive (buycott) from punitive (boycott) responses, which existing luxury studies do not cover jointly.
Integrated model with parallel credibility mechanisms (authenticity, hypocrisy, prestige, attitude)	No study found; mechanisms studied separately (Virkus & Klein, 2026; Wagner et al., 2009; Baek et al., 2010; Khalifa & Osburg, 2025)	○	Models all four mechanisms simultaneously (H ₂ , H ₄ , H ₇) so their relative importance can be compared within one model.
Perceived brand prestige as a mechanism of (luxury) brand activism	Baek et al. (2010); Khalifa & Osburg (2025) (partial approximation)	○	Tests perceived brand prestige as an evaluative mechanism influenced by agreement and feeding brand attitude (H ₁ , H ₂).
Buycott and boycott as dual, distinct outcomes of luxury brand activism	Tan (2025); Hong & Li (2021) (non-luxury or generational focus)	○	Models buycott and boycott as separate dependent variables with distinct credibility-driven routes (H ₃ , H ₄).
Generation Z cohort in luxury brand activism	Nguyen et al. (2023); Khalifa & Osburg (2025)	○	Empirically samples Generation Z consumers in two national contexts, an under-explored cohort for luxury activism.
Individual-level collectivist orientation as a moderator	Khan et al. (2024); Yoo et al. (2011) (culture in fashion/consumption, not activism)	○	Tests collectivist orientation at the individual level (H ₅ , H ₆) rather than treating nationality as a proxy for culture.
Cross-national comparison (Italy vs. Vietnam)	No luxury-activism evidence found; Khan et al. (2024) compare Italy-Russia for sustainable fashion	○	Collects separate samples in Italy and Vietnam and adds supplementary MICOM and permutation MGA comparison.

Survey-based PLS-SEM estimation of an integrated model	Khan et al. (2024) PLS-SEM (sustainability); most brand-activism studies are experimental	○	Employs a quantitative cross-sectional survey estimated with PLS-SEM (SmartPLS 4), bootstrapping, PLSpredict and IPMA.
Whether consumer-brand agreement shapes perceived authenticity (unresolved evidence)	Hydock et al. (2020) (agreement shapes); Nam et al. (2023) (may not)	○	Directly tests the agreement-to-authenticity path (H_1) and checks its stability with a robustness specification.
Perceived hypocrisy in the (luxury) brand activism context	Jiang et al. (2026); Tan (2025); Wagner et al. (2009) (CSR origin)	○	Tests perceived hypocrisy to boycott intention as the core punitive route (H_4 , H_7), going beyond the CSR setting of the construct.

(Note: Research intensity: ● Well-researched ○ Under-researched / limited evidence)

Table 2.3 makes the contribution of this research explicit at a glance. The upper rows show that the foundations of this study, namely the conceptualisation of brand activism, the asymmetric role of consumer-brand agreement, and the importance of authenticity in consumer reactions, are well established in the literature and are therefore adopted here rather than re-derived. The lower rows show that this study advances the field where evidence is scarce: it integrates perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, perceived brand prestige, and brand attitude as parallel mechanisms, links these to boycott and boycott intentions as separate outcomes, and does so in the contexts of luxury fashion brands, Generation Z consumers, and a cross-national comparison between Italy and Vietnam, with individual-level collectivist orientation as a moderator. These under-researched topics correspond to the gaps identified in Section 1.3 and to hypotheses H_1 to H_7 , which were developed in Section 2.6 and consolidated in the conceptual model in Section 2.7. The next chapter describes the methodology used to test this model.

2.8 Chapter summary

This chapter developed the conceptual and empirical foundation for examining consumer responses to luxury fashion brand activism. It first defined brand activism as a brand or brand-associated individual publicly adopting a non-neutral position on a contested sociopolitical issue (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). It then distinguished activism from corporate social responsibility, corporate political activity, corporate social advocacy, and CEO activism. Consistent with Vredenburg et al. (2020), the chapter treated activism as purpose- and value-driven engagement that can seek social change while also carrying strategic consequences for the brand.

The review showed that consumer responses to activism are heterogeneous, conditional, and frequently asymmetric. Disagreement generally damages attitudes and behavioural responses more strongly than agreement improves them (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Motive attribution, message specificity, response timing, sustained action, perceived public support, and consumer identity all affect the interpretation of activism. Perceived

authenticity and perceived hypocrisy were treated as distinct perceptions because a consumer can support a cause while distrusting the brand's motives, or recognise a brand's sincerity while opposing its position.

Political consumerism provided the behavioural framework. Boycotting rewards a brand whose conduct the consumer approves, while boycotting punishes or avoids a brand whose position or conduct the consumer opposes. The literature indicates that the two behaviours differ in psychological orientation, participation threshold, consumer profile, and sensitivity to negative information. They were consequently retained as separate outcomes rather than combined into a general purchase-intention construct.

The chapter then reviewed the seven construct blocks in the revised model. Consumer-brand agreement captures the direction of value congruence. Perceived authenticity represents perceived sincerity and consistency with the brand's purpose and conduct. Perceived hypocrisy represents a stronger judgment that the brand's claims and actions contradict each other. Perceived brand prestige captures the status and self-expressive value of the luxury brand. Brand attitude integrates the consumer's overall evaluation. Boycott and boycott intentions capture supportive and punitive marketplace responses. Individualism versus collectivism represents variation in the relative importance of autonomous judgment, group welfare, harmony, and social consensus.

The theoretical framework is hierarchical. The persuasion knowledge model explains how consumers infer whether activist motives and practices are credible or manipulative. Social identity theory explains why consumer-brand agreement becomes self-relevant and why disagreement can create identity distance. Signalling and self-expression theory explains the secondary symbolic meaning of activism in luxury fashion. Collectivist orientation is examined as a secondary boundary condition, while spiral of silence theory is not retained because its central constructs are not measured directly.

The chapter developed H_1 to H_6 and a mediation hypothesis H_7 . H_1 connects consumer-brand agreement with perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige. H_2 connects these perceptions with brand attitude. H_3 connects brand attitude with boycott intention and boycott intention. H_4 specifies the core direct paths from perceived authenticity to boycott intention and from perceived hypocrisy to boycott intention. H_5 and H_6 propose that collectivist orientation moderates the agreement-to-perception and perception-to-attitude paths. H_7 tests whether brand attitude transmits the effects of perceived authenticity or perceived hypocrisy to boycott or boycott intentions through specific indirect effects.

The resulting conceptual model contributes by testing these relationships together in a luxury fashion setting rather than examining identity alignment, credibility, symbolic value, political consumption, or cultural orientation in isolation. It permits comparison of Generation Z consumers in Italy and Vietnam while measuring cultural orientation at the

individual level. Chapter 3 translates this conceptual framework into the empirical research design.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodology used to test the conceptual model developed in Chapter 2. It presents this research philosophy and design, target population and sampling approach, questionnaire and scenario, measurement scales, data-collection procedure, analytical strategy, common method bias controls, and ethical safeguards.

3.2 Research philosophy and approach

This research adopted a positivist philosophy and a deductive approach. The relationships among consumer-brand agreement, brand perceptions, brand attitude, political-consumption intentions, and collectivist orientation were specified from theory and previous empirical research before the data were analysed. A quantitative design was therefore appropriate because the purpose was to estimate the direction, strength, and significance of predefined relationships rather than to generate a new theory from qualitative accounts.

3.3 Research design

A quantitative, cross-sectional online survey was used. Respondents evaluated the same hypothetical activism announcement and then completed standardised measures of the constructs in the conceptual model. Using a common scenario ensured that differences in the responses were linked to how participants interpreted the same brand action rather than to different activism examples. Scenario-based surveys and experiments are established in brand-activism research (Malik et al., 2025).

The design measured perceptions and intentions at one point in time. It was suitable for testing the proposed model, but it does not establish temporal change or actual purchasing and avoidance behaviour.

3.4 Population and sampling

The target population comprised Generation Z consumers born from 1997 to 2012 who held Italian or Vietnamese nationality and were aware of the luxury fashion industry. The nationality comparison provided two study contexts, while cultural orientation was measured at the individual level and was not inferred directly from nationality.

A non-probability sampling approach combined convenience recruitment with purposive screening. The questionnaire was administered through Qualtrics. Eligibility questions covered year of birth, nationality, and luxury-fashion awareness. Embedded attention checks and a repeated birth-year item were used to identify inattentive or inconsistent responses. The Q3.1 sociopolitical-involvement block was administered in the original questionnaire, but it was excluded from the revised model and all substantive analyses. Only its embedded attention-check item was used for data-quality screening.

The minimum sample was assessed through an a priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009), with the test "linear multiple regression, fixed model, R^2 deviation from zero," a significance level of 0.05, statistical power of 0.80, a medium effect-size assumption of $f^2 = 0.15$, and seven tested predictors corresponding to the most complex endogenous equation (numerator df = 7). The resulting minimum required sample was 103 responses, and the final cleaned sample of 162 corresponds to achieved power of approximately 0.96 for the assumed medium effect. This means the study was powered to detect medium main effects, but not small interaction effects: detecting an interaction effect of $f^2 = 0.02$ to 0.05 at $\alpha = 0.05$ would require samples of approximately 295 to 725 responses, sizes that exceed the scope of a master's research project. The moderation results for H_5 should therefore be read with this power constraint in mind, in addition to the collinearity and specification caveats documented in Chapter 4.

Table 3.1: Sample size power analysis parameters and result

Parameter	Value	Basis
Statistical test	Linear multiple regression, fixed model, R^2 deviation from zero	G*Power (Faul et al., 2009)
Significance level	0.05	Prespecified error probability
Desired statistical power	0.80	Prespecified power criterion
Expected effect size	$f^2 = 0.15$ (medium)	Cohen (1988)
Number of tested predictors (numerator df)	7	Most complex endogenous equation
Minimum required sample	103	G*Power calculation
Final valid sample	162	Cleaned survey responses

Achieved power at N = 162	0.96	Recomputed with the stated parameters
Assessment	Sufficient for medium effects; underpowered for small interaction effects	Final sample exceeded the calculated minimum

3.5 Survey instrument

3.5.1 Measurement scales

The questionnaire used established scales adapted to the luxury fashion activism scenario. The original response formats were retained to preserve the meaning of the measures. Reverse-coded items were recoded before construct scores were estimated.

Table 3.2: Constructs, measurement items, and sources

Construct	Items	Scale format	Source
Consumer-Brand Agreement	1 item: "Do you personally agree with the philosophy that luxury corporations should permanently stop producing their top three best-selling leather item lines to protect the global environment?"	4-point semantic differential (1 = Definitely NO, 4 = Definitely YES)	Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020)
Perceived Brand Authenticity	5 items: Hermès stands up for what they believe in; Hermès is a socially responsible company; Hermès is being true to itself with its actions on social issues; Hermès is concerned about improving the well-being of society; Hermès is genuine	6-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree)	Alhouti et al. (2015)
Perceived Brand Hypocrisy	4 items: Hermès acts hypocritically; What Hermès says and what it does are two different things;	6-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree)	Wagner et al. (2009)

	<p>Hermès pretends to be something it is not;</p> <p>Hermès puts its words into action (reverse-coded)</p>		
Perceived Brand Prestige	<p>3 items:</p> <p>This brand is very prestigious;</p> <p>This brand has high status;</p> <p>This brand is very upscale</p>	9-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 9 = Strongly Agree)	Baek et al. (2010)
Brand Attitude	<p>3 items:</p> <p>Bad-Good;</p> <p>Unpleasant-Pleasant;</p> <p>Dislike-Like</p>	7-point semantic differential	Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020)
Boycott Intention	<p>3 items:</p> <p>I intend to buy such luxury brands in the future to reward them because of their activism in social issues;</p> <p>I will make an effort to buy such luxury brands in the future to reward them because of their activism in social issues;</p> <p>I definitely want such luxury brands' products because of their activism in social issues</p>	6-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree)	Chang (1998)
Boycott Intention	<p>3 items:</p> <p>I don't intend to buy such luxury brands in the future to punish them because of their activism in social issues;</p> <p>I definitely do not want such luxury brands' products because of their activism in social issues;</p> <p>I will definitely not buy such luxury brands' products because of their activism in social issues</p>	6-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree)	Martin et al. (2003)
Collectivist Orientation	<p>6 items:</p> <p>I like sharing little things with my neighbors;</p> <p>Being a unique individual is important to me (reverse-coded);</p>	7-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)	Triandis (2018)

	<p>Decisions reached in groups are better than those reached by single individuals;</p> <p>I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group;</p> <p>I'd rather depend on myself than on others (reverse-coded);</p> <p>It is important to me to be useful to others</p>		
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3.5.2 Activism scenario and agreement measure

The stimulus presented an official-style announcement stating that Hermès would permanently discontinue top three best-selling leather item lines to protect the global environment. Respondents then indicated whether they personally agreed with the philosophy expressed in the announcement. Presenting the stimulus before the perception and outcome measures anchored all evaluations to one concrete brand action. Khalifa and Osburg (2025) also used Hermès as the focal brand and measured responses after exposure to an activism condition in their luxury-activism study.

3.5.3 Questionnaire structure

Table 3.3: Questionnaire structure and block overview

Survey Block	Construct Name	Question Code(s)	No. of Items	Operationalisation & Item Description
Introduction	Participant informed consent	Q1.1	1	Study introduction, data privacy statement, voluntary consent
Block 1: Screening & Qualifications	Gen Z birth year, nationality and luxury awareness	Q2.1 - Q2.4	4	Screening for Gen Z birth year, Italian/Vietnamese nationality, high-end brand recognition, and self-reported luxury-fashion awareness
Block 2: Pre-Exposure Traits	Socio-political involvement	Q3.1	9 (+1 Attention Check)	General relevance of social issues to personal values; includes Attention Check item #8
	Collectivist Orientation	Q3.2_1 - Q3.2_6	6	In-group interdependence, group sacrifice, and collective decision-making

Block 3: Experimental Stimulus	Hermès activism announcement	Q4.1	1	Official Hermès corporate statement on permanently ending top leather lines
	Consumer-Brand Agreement	Q4.2	1	Personal alignment with the brand's policy stance
Block 4: Post-Exposure perceptions	Perceived Authenticity	Q5.1_1 - Q5.1_5	5	Perceptions of brand genuineness, social responsibility, and value consistency
	Perceived Hypocrisy	Q5.2_1 - Q5.2_4	4	Perceptions of insincerity, corporate pretense, and word-action misalignment
	Perceived Brand Prestige	Q5.3_1 - Q5.3_4	3 (+1 Attention Check)	Perceptions of high status, upscale positioning, and prestige; includes Attention Check item #3
Block 5: Evaluative Outcomes	Brand Attitude	Q6.1_1 - Q6.1_3	3	Overall evaluation: Bad-Good, Unpleasant-Pleasant, Dislike-Like
	Boycott Intention	Q6.2_1 - Q6.2_3	3	Willingness to purchase and reward the brand for its stance
	Boycott Intention	Q6.3_1 - Q6.3_3	3	Refusal to purchase and desire to punish the brand for its stance
Block 6: Redundant integrity control	Birth-year validation	Q7.1	1	Repeated year-of-birth entry compared with Q2.1 to identify inconsistent responses
Block 7: Socio-Demographics	Gender, education, employment and income	Q8.1 - Q8.4	4	Gender identity, education level, employment status, and monthly personal income or allowance

(Note: The introduction (Q1.1) precedes the numbered blocks and is therefore listed without a block number. The Q3.1 sociopolitical-involvement items were administered but excluded from the revised conceptual model and all substantive analyses (Section 4.2); only the embedded attention-check item was retained for data-quality screening)

The self-administered questionnaire was hosted on Qualtrics and indicated an expected completion time of approximately five to seven minutes.

3.6 Pre-test and pilot study

A structured pre-testing procedure was conducted before the final survey deployment to reduce measurement error, evaluate item clarity, and assess the readability of the questionnaire across the Italian and Vietnamese sub-samples. Following the survey research framework proposed by Ruel et al. (2016), the pre-test considered three dimensions of the questionnaire: administration, organisation, and content.

All measurement items were adopted or adapted from established scales in the consumer psychology and brand activism literature, as reported in Table 3.2. An expert review was first conducted by the thesis supervisor, who has expertise in marketing and consumer behaviour. The review focused on face and content validity, including whether the items represented their intended constructs, whether their wording was semantically aligned with the theoretical definitions, and whether the sequence of the questionnaire followed a clear logical structure.

A qualitative respondent pre-test was then conducted with ten participants who matched the target demographic profile of this study. The group consisted of five Italian and five Vietnamese participants who belonged to Generation Z and had an interest in or awareness of luxury fashion. Five sessions were conducted face to face and five through online video calls with real-time screen sharing. Participants completed the questionnaire while explaining how they interpreted the questions and response options. This cognitive debriefing process helped identify wording that could be misunderstood and provided feedback on the clarity of the concepts and instructions.

The pre-test examined three practical aspects of the instrument. First, scale and direction consistency were checked to ensure that the response anchors, Likert-scale polarities, and instructions were intuitive and unambiguous. Second, completion time was assessed. The average completion time was approximately five to seven minutes, which established a reference point for limiting respondent burden. Third, technical functionality was assessed on both mobile and desktop devices. Display and formatting problems identified during these checks were corrected before the main survey was distributed.

The survey was administered in English only. This decision was taken to maintain consistency in the wording and interpretation of the questions across the two sub-samples, particularly because the measurement items and response scales were drawn from English-language research. During the respondent pre-test, the readability and comprehensibility of the English wording were specifically reviewed by both Italian and Vietnamese participants. The pre-test did not constitute a translation or back-translation procedure because no translated versions of the questionnaire were used.

A formal large-scale quantitative pilot study was not conducted. This decision was appropriate for the scope and resources of the master's research project and was also

intended to avoid unnecessarily reducing the pool of eligible respondents for the main study. Ruel et al. (2016) note that a pilot should be designed in relation to the purpose and practical conditions of the survey, while repeated exposure to identical questions may introduce pre-testing effects or contaminate the main sample.

Instead, the instrument was evaluated through expert review and qualitative cognitive pre-testing with participants from both target sub-samples. Because the scales were grounded in established literature and the pre-test found no unresolved problems in item comprehension, response-direction consistency, completion time, or technical presentation, the questionnaire was considered suitable for full-scale administration. This procedure supports the face validity and practical usability of the instrument, but it does not replace the reliability and validity assessment conducted with the final sample in Chapter 4.

3.7 Data collection procedure

Data collection was conducted through an online, self-administered questionnaire hosted on Qualtrics between 21 July 2026 and 24 August 2026. The survey was distributed through anonymous links, which allowed respondents to access the questionnaire without directly identifying themselves in the dataset.

Participants were recruited through the researcher's personal networks, university networks, social media, and student research communities. These recruitment channels were appropriate for reaching Italian and Vietnamese Generation Z respondents who met this study's screening criteria, although the non-probability sampling approach limits the generalizability of the findings.

After opening the survey, participants received the research information and consent material before answering the eligibility questions. Eligible respondents completed the individual-level collectivist-orientation items, read the Hermès activism scenario, reported their consumer-brand agreement, and then completed the measures of brand perceptions, brand attitude, boycott intention, and boycott intention. The questionnaire ended with the integrity check and socio-demographic questions.

3.8 Data analysis strategy

3.8.1 PLS-SEM and SmartPLS

The data were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). This estimator is appropriate for the model for three reasons. First, the model is structurally complex, combining one antecedent, four intervening constructs, two behavioural outcomes, and six moderation interactions. Estimating the paths separately would make it difficult to assess the relative contribution of each mechanism and would not provide a complete test of the proposed model. PLS-SEM allows the measurement and structural models to be

estimated within one framework. Second, this research is oriented toward explaining and predicting behavioural intentions. The main outcomes are boycott and boycott intentions, and the analysis seeks to determine how much of their variation is explained by the proposed perceptual and attitudinal mechanisms. This prediction-oriented purpose is compatible with PLS-SEM. Third, PLS-SEM makes fewer distributional assumptions than covariance-based approaches and can accommodate complex models and non-normal survey data. This does not remove the need to inspect the data, but it makes PLS-SEM suitable for the planned design.

PLS-SEM has direct precedent at the intersection of culture and fashion consumption, where Khan et al. (2024) used it to estimate the effects of individual-level cultural dimensions on willingness to pay more for sustainable fashion. Structural equation modelling has also been used in research on luxury brand activism (Tan, 2025).

3.8.2 Measurement model

The measurement model was assessed using outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, AVE, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and HTMT. Loadings and reliability values around or above 0.70 and AVE above 0.50 were used as the main criteria; HTMT below 0.85 was used as the conservative discriminant-validity criterion.

Indicators were not removed solely to improve a statistic. Loading strength, construct reliability, AVE, and theoretical coverage were considered together so that statistical refinement did not weaken content validity.

3.8.3 Structural model

The structural assessment examined inner VIF values, coefficients of determination, effect sizes, path coefficients, p-values, and bootstrap confidence intervals. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples and the percentile-bootstrap option was used to evaluate direct, indirect, and interaction effects. A hypothesis component was treated as supported only when the coefficient followed the predicted direction and its two-tailed p-value was below 0.05. The 95% percentile-bootstrap confidence interval was reported as supplementary evidence. If the p-value and confidence interval led to different decisions, the p-value was used as the primary decision criterion and the discrepancy was reported transparently. Related PLS-SEM research evaluates structural VIF, explanatory power, and bootstrapped path significance in this sequence.

PLSpredict was used to compare out-of-sample prediction errors with a linear-model benchmark. IPMA was included as a supplementary analysis to compare the relative importance and performance of predictors for boycott and boycott intentions. These analyses supplemented, but did not replace, the hypothesis tests.

3.8.4 Mediation and moderation

H₅ and H₆ were tested using interaction terms involving individual-level collectivist orientation. Significant interactions were interpreted using conditional effects and simple-slope plots at lower and higher levels of the moderator. Statistical significance alone was not treated as support when the observed interaction ran against the predicted direction.

H₇ was assessed through percentile-bootstrap specific indirect effects from perceived brand authenticity and perceived brand hypocrisy to boycott and boycott intentions through brand attitude. Four indirect routes were estimated: authenticity through brand attitude to boycott intention, authenticity through brand attitude to boycott intention, hypocrisy through brand attitude to boycott intention, and hypocrisy through brand attitude to boycott intention. All complementary direct paths, namely authenticity to boycott intention, authenticity to boycott intention, hypocrisy to boycott intention, and hypocrisy to boycott intention, were also estimated, so that each route could be classified as complementary, indirect-only, or direct-only mediation. The primary significance criterion was a two-tailed p-value below 0.05. The 95% percentile-bootstrap confidence interval was reported as supplementary evidence. When the p-value and percentile interval differed, the p-value determined the hypothesis decision and the discrepancy was documented.

3.8.5 Supplementary multi-group analysis

A supplementary analysis compared the Italian and Vietnamese subsamples. Measurement invariance should be established before differences in structural coefficients are interpreted. The country comparison was kept separate from the individual-level moderation analysis because nationality and collectivist orientation are not equivalent measures.

3.9 Common method bias controls

Procedural controls included anonymity, separation of predictor and criterion blocks, nondisclosure of the hypotheses, clear wording, and questionnaire review before distribution. Statistical assessment used two diagnostics. First, Harman's single-factor test examined whether a single factor accounted for a majority of the variance. Second, a random marker variable was generated as the indicator of a technical target construct, and VIF values from paths between the analytical constructs and this target were used to assess whether one pervasive method factor was likely to dominate the results. The diagnostics were interpreted together with the procedural controls and not as proof that common method bias was absent.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Participation was voluntary, and respondents received information about this research before providing consent. The information explained the purpose of this research, the expected completion time, the anonymous nature of the questionnaire, and the use of the responses for academic research. Respondents could choose not to participate or leave the survey without completing it.

No personal information was recorded in the questionnaire. The dataset was stored on the Qualtrics platform, and access was restricted to the author and the thesis supervisor. These measures were used to protect respondent confidentiality and limit access to the collected data.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the quantitative, cross-sectional survey used to test the seven-hypothesis model. It described the Generation Z population, eligibility and screening procedures, activism scenario, measurement scales, questionnaire blocks, PLS-SEM analysis, common method bias controls, and ethical safeguards. Chapter 4 reports the screening results, sample profile, measurement assessment, and structural findings.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical analysis of the survey data collected to test the proposed relationships between consumer-brand agreement, brand perceptions, brand attitude, political-consumption intentions, and individual-level collectivist orientation. The analysis is based on the final dataset of 162 valid responses obtained after the author screened the 261 collected responses.

The results are presented in a sequence that follows the logic of the research model. Section 4.2 describes the screening, coding, missing-data treatment, outlier assessment, and distributional checks applied before model estimation. Section 4.3 reports the demographic profile of the retained respondents and the descriptive statistics for the analytical constructs. The subsequent sections assess common method bias, the measurement model, and the structural model. The structural analysis then examines the direct effects, mediation paths, moderation by individual-level collectivist orientation, predictive performance, and the supplementary comparison between the Italian and Vietnamese subsamples.

The analysis tests the seven hypotheses developed in Chapter 2. These hypotheses concern the effects of consumer-brand agreement on perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, and perceived prestige; the effects of these perceptions on brand attitude; the effects of

brand attitude on boycott and boycott intentions; the direct behavioural routes proposed for authenticity and hypocrisy; the moderating role of collectivist orientation; and the proposed indirect effects. The sociopolitical-involvement construct collected in the original questionnaire is excluded completely from the analytical model and from all calculations reported in this chapter.

The chapter distinguishes between statistical results and their interpretation. Descriptive and measurement results are reported before the structural hypotheses are evaluated. This ordering is necessary because the interpretation of structural paths depends on the adequacy of the measurement model. All inferential conclusions are therefore based on the retained variables, the coding decisions described in Section 4.2, and the PLS-SEM procedures specified in Chapter 3.

4.2 Data screening and preparation

The raw survey export contained 261 responses. Before the main analysis, the author removed responses that were unfinished, failed the programmed attention checks, did not meet the nationality criterion, fell outside the target age range, or did not meet the luxury-fashion-awareness criterion. The second birth-year question was used as a redundant integrity check by comparing it with the earlier birth-year response. Responses with inconsistent birth-year entries were excluded during the author's filtering process. After screening, 162 valid responses remained for the main analysis.

The filtered dataset was used as the final analysis file. Complete responses were available for all indicators belonging to the analytical constructs. Some demographic responses were missing because the demographic questions were not configured as forced-response questions when the survey was first released. These omissions were retained because gender, education, employment status, and income were not included in the hypothesised structural model and were not required for the substantive tests.

The revised analysis includes consumer-brand agreement, individual-level collectivist orientation, perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, perceived brand prestige, brand attitude, boycott intention, and boycott intention. The Q3.1 sociopolitical-involvement items were excluded from all construct scores, descriptive statistics, normality assessments, outlier assessments, measurement-model analyses, and structural-model analyses. Any attention-check information used during the author's response-screening procedure was treated as a data-quality control and not as a substantive measure of sociopolitical involvement.

4.2.1 Missing data and coding preparation

No missing analytical indicator values remained in the filtered dataset. Therefore, no imputation, mean substitution, or additional listwise deletion was required for the

hypothesis-testing variables. All retained analytical responses were numeric and fell within the permissible range of their respective scales. The prestige attention-check item was excluded from the prestige construct, which was calculated from the three substantive prestige indicators.

Reverse-coded variables were created in Excel before the data were imported into SmartPLS. The collectivist orientation items were reverse-coded so that higher scores represented the intended direction of collectivist orientation. The hypocrisy item concerning whether the brand puts its words into action was also reverse-coded so that the item was consistent with the direction of the remaining hypocrisy indicators. The original and reverse-coded columns were checked and showed no discrepancies in the retained data.

Consumer-brand agreement was initially measured with four response categories. For SmartPLS estimation, “Definitely NO” and “Probably NO” were combined and coded as 0, while “Probably YES” and “Definitely YES” were combined and coded as 1. The binary variable is therefore an indicator of whether the respondent agreed or disagreed with the philosophy expressed in the activism scenario. The original response information remains useful for data auditing, but the binary version is the variable used in the structural model.

4.2.2 Outlier and distributional assessment

Outlier diagnostics were conducted before model estimation. No respondent was removed solely because of an extreme statistical value, and the final analytical sample remained 162 valid responses.

The descriptive distribution in Table 4.2 indicates that the binary consumer-brand-agreement variable is highly concentrated at the agreement category. Its mean is 0.901, its median is 1.000, and its skewness and excess kurtosis are -2.715 and 5.438, respectively. These values reflect the fact that most respondents agreed with the activism position, rather than an arithmetic error. The other constructs also show departures from perfect symmetry, especially boycott intention, which has positive skewness of 1.214, and perceived brand prestige, which has negative skewness of -1.151. The remaining skewness values are between -0.735 and -0.186, and excess kurtosis ranges from -1.044 to 0.477.

These results indicate that the data should not be treated as normally distributed continuous observations. No transformation was applied because the variables retain their original substantive scale meanings, and consumer-brand agreement is intentionally binary. The non-normal and bounded distributions support the use of the bootstrapping procedure specified in Chapter 3 when confidence intervals and significance tests are obtained from the PLS-SEM model.

4.3 Sample profile and descriptive statistics

This section describes the composition of the final sample and summarises the observed tendencies in the variables retained for hypothesis testing. The demographic tables use the full sample denominator of 162, with unanswered demographic questions reported as a separate category. This approach preserves all qualified respondents because demographic variables were not included in the structural model. The descriptive results should be interpreted as characteristics of the sampled Generation Z respondents rather than as estimates that represent all Generation Z consumers.

4.3.1 Demographic profile of respondents

The final sample was nearly balanced by nationality, comprising 80 Italian respondents (49.4%) and 82 Vietnamese respondents (50.6%). The sample was predominantly female, with 116 female respondents (71.6%), 31 male respondents (19.1%), 4 non-binary respondents (2.5%), and 1 respondent who preferred not to say (0.6%). Ten respondents (6.2%) did not answer the gender question. Thus, gender composition is an important characteristic of the sample when interpreting the observed consumer responses, although gender was not included as a predictor or control variable in the hypothesised model.

Approximate age was reported for 2026. Most respondents were between 23 and 25 years old, and the sample had a mean approximate age of 24.76 years and a median of 24.5 years. The concentration in this age range is consistent with this study's focus on Generation Z, although the use of year of birth means that exact ages on the date of participation cannot be established.

The sample was relatively highly educated. Bachelor's-degree holders represented 51.2% of the sample, and master's-degree holders represented 38.9%. The employment profile was consistent with a young-adult sample: 45.7% were students and 30.9% were employed full-time. Income or allowance was concentrated in the €501 to €1,500 category, which included 42.6% of respondents, followed by the under-€500 category at 29.0%. These demographic patterns help describe the context in which respondents evaluated the luxury-brand activism scenario, but they do not constitute tests of the hypotheses.

Table 4.1a presents the overall demographic profile. Age is grouped into three bands to improve readability, and the mean and median are reported in the text. Percentages are based on the full sample of 162 respondents.

Table 4.1a: Overall demographic profile of respondents (N = 162)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
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Nationality	Italy	80	49.4
	Vietnam	82	50.6
Age	20 to 22 years	13	8.0
	23 to 25 years	90	55.6
	26 to 29 years	59	36.4
Gender	Female	116	71.6
	Male	31	19.1
	Non-binary	4	2.5
	Prefer to self-describe	0	0.0
	Prefer not to say	1	0.6
	Missing	10	6.2
Education	Middle school or lower secondary	0	0.0
	High school diploma	4	2.5
	Bachelor's degree	83	51.2
	Master's degree	63	38.9
	PhD or doctorate	2	1.2
	Missing	10	6.2
Employment	Student	74	45.7

	Employed full-time	50	30.9
	Employed part-time	7	4.3
	Self-employed or freelancer	6	3.7
	Unemployed	15	9.3
	Not in the labor force	0	0.0
	Other	0	0.0
	Missing	10	6.2
Monthly income or allowance	Under €500 / Under 15,000,000 VND	47	29.0
	€501 to €1,500 / 15,000,001 to 45,000,000 VND	69	42.6
	€1,501 to €3,000 / 45,000,001 to 90,000,000 VND	32	19.8
	Over €3,000 / Over 90,000,000 VND	4	2.5
	Missing	10	6.2

Table 4.1b provides a nationality-specific comparison. Italy and Vietnam are displayed as the principal comparison columns, and percentages are calculated within each nationality group. The denominator is 80 for Italy and 82 for Vietnam. The two groups have similar age distributions, with most respondents in both groups aged approximately 23 to 25 years in 2026. The Vietnamese subgroup has a greater proportion of female respondents (87.8%) than the Italian subgroup (55.0%). The Italian subgroup has a higher proportion of master's-degree holders (43.8%), whereas the Vietnamese subgroup has a higher proportion of bachelor's-degree holders (61.0%). The Vietnamese subgroup also contains a larger proportion of full-time employees and respondents in the lowest income or allowance category.

All ten missing demographic responses appear in the Italian subgroup in the supplied filtered file. This pattern does not change the analytical sample size because the missing variables are not used in the structural model, but it should be considered when interpreting the

country-specific demographic comparison. The comparison remains descriptive and should not be interpreted as evidence of population-level differences because this study used a non-probability sample.

Table 4.1b: Demographic profile by nationality

Characteristic	Category	Italy n (%)	Vietnam n (%)
Age	20 to 22 years	6 (7.5)	7 (8.5)
	23 to 25 years	46 (57.5)	44 (53.7)
	26 to 29 years	28 (35.0)	31 (37.8)
Gender	Female	44 (55.0)	72 (87.8)
	Male	22 (27.5)	9 (11.0)
	Non-binary	3 (3.8)	1 (1.2)
	Prefer to self-describe	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Prefer not to say	1 (1.3)	0 (0.0)
	Missing	10 (12.5)	0 (0.0)
Education	Middle school or lower secondary	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	High school diploma	2 (2.5)	2 (2.4)
	Bachelor's degree	33 (41.3)	50 (61.0)
	Master's degree	35 (43.8)	28 (34.1)
	PhD or doctorate	0 (0.0)	2 (2.4)
	Missing	10 (12.5)	0 (0.0)

Employment or occupation	Student	35 (43.8)	39 (47.6)
	Employed full-time	18 (22.5)	32 (39.0)
	Employed part-time	4 (5.0)	3 (3.7)
	Self-employed or freelancer	2 (2.5)	4 (4.9)
	Unemployed	11 (13.8)	4 (4.9)
	Not in the labor force	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Other	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Missing	10 (12.5)	0 (0.0)
Monthly income or allowance	Under €500 / Under 15,000,000 VND	14 (17.5)	33 (40.2)
	€501 to €1,500 / 15,000,001 to 45,000,000 VND	43 (53.8)	26 (31.7)
	€1,501 to €3,000 / 45,000,001 to 90,000,000 VND	10 (12.5)	22 (26.8)
	Over €3,000 / Over 90,000,000 VND	3 (3.8)	1 (1.2)
	Missing	10 (12.5)	0 (0.0)

4.3.2 Descriptive statistics for constructs

Table 4.2 reports the SmartPLS descriptive output for the eight variables retained in the analytical model. The sociopolitical-involvement construct is excluded. The multi-item constructs were scored using the arithmetic mean of their substantive indicators after the Excel reverse-coding procedures described in Section 4.2. Consumer-brand agreement was analyzed in SmartPLS as a binary indicator, where 0 represents disagreement and 1 represents agreement. Consequently, its mean represents the proportion of respondents who agreed with the philosophy expressed in the activism scenario.

Table 4.2: SmartPLS descriptive statistics for analytical constructs

Construct	Mean	Median	Min	Max	N	Standard deviation	Excess kurtosis	Skewness
Boycott Intention	2.043	1.000	1.000	6.000	162	1.413	0.282	1.214
Brand Attitude	5.362	5.618	1.000	7.000	162	1.315	0.274	-0.735
Buycott Intention	3.426	4.000	1.000	6.000	162	1.450	-1.044	-0.232
Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.901	1.000	0.000	1.000	162	0.298	5.438	-2.715
Perceived Authenticity	4.241	4.236	1.000	6.000	162	1.222	0.087	-0.586
Perceived Brand Prestige	7.761	8.000	3.651	9.000	162	1.385	0.477	-1.151
Perceived Hypocrisy	2.973	3.224	1.000	6.000	162	1.244	-0.840	-0.186
Collectivist Orientation	3.827	4.015	1.000	7.000	162	1.521	-0.767	-0.371

The descriptive results show that 146 of the 162 respondents, or 90.1%, were coded as agreeing with the activism philosophy, while 16 respondents, or 9.9%, were coded as disagreeing. The median of 1.000, the negative skewness of -2.715, and the excess kurtosis of 5.438 show that responses were heavily concentrated in the agreement category. For the sampled Generation Z respondents, this indicates broad acceptance of the specific environmental position presented in the Hermès scenario. It does not mean that Generation Z consumers generally support all forms of brand activism, because the result concerns one scenario, one brand, and a sample with a highly unbalanced agreement variable.

The concentration of agreement has an important analytical implication. The model contains substantially more respondents on the agreement side than on the disagreement side. Therefore, estimated effects involving consumer-brand agreement, including its hypothesised relationships with authenticity, hypocrisy, and prestige and its interaction with collectivist orientation, should be interpreted with attention to the limited size of the disagreement group. The descriptive table cannot determine whether the imbalance produces statistically significant or practically important effects; those questions require the structural-model results.

Individual-level collectivist orientation had a mean of 3.827 and a median of 4.015 on a seven-point scale. These values are close to the scale midpoint and do not support describing the sampled respondents as uniformly collectivist or uniformly individualistic. The standard deviation of 1.521 indicates meaningful variation between respondents. This variation is important for H_5 and H_6 because the proposed moderation tests require differences in individual-level orientation. It also supports treating collectivist orientation as a continuous individual characteristic rather than assuming that all Vietnamese respondents are collectivist and all Italian respondents are individualistic.

Perceived authenticity had a mean of 4.241 on a six-point scale, above the scale midpoint of 3.5. Its median of 4.236 and moderate negative skewness of -0.586 indicate that respondents tended to evaluate the brand as authentic, with a modest concentration toward more favourable evaluations. Perceived hypocrisy had a mean of 2.973, below the six-point midpoint, and a median of 3.224. The result suggests that respondents generally perceived relatively limited hypocrisy in the brand's activism, although the distribution still includes respondents who gave more negative evaluations. The descriptive contrast between higher perceived authenticity and lower perceived hypocrisy is consistent with a generally favourable credibility assessment, but it does not demonstrate the agreement-to-perception paths proposed in H_1 .

Perceived brand prestige had a mean of 7.760 on a nine-point scale and a median of 8.000. These values are clearly above the scale midpoint of 5.0. The negative skewness of -1.151 indicates that many respondents placed the brand toward the prestigious end of the scale, while the observed minimum of 3.651 shows that the sample still included some less favourable prestige evaluations. For the sampled Generation Z consumers, the environmental announcement did not eliminate the brand's established luxury and status associations. Whether prestige strengthens brand attitude or contributes to boycott intention must be determined through the structural paths rather than from this mean alone.

Brand attitude had a mean of 5.362 and a median of 5.618 on a seven-point scale, both above the midpoint of 4.0. The negative skewness of -0.735 indicates that overall evaluations were concentrated toward the favourable end of the scale. This suggests that the sampled respondents generally maintained a positive attitude toward Hermès after exposure to the activism scenario. However, the boycott mean was 3.426 on a six-point scale, slightly below the midpoint of 3.5, with a median of 4.000. This difference is substantively meaningful: a favourable overall attitude did not translate into uniformly strong intentions to reward the brand through future purchasing. It suggests a possible attitude-to-behaviour gap, although the existence and size of an attitude effect require formal hypothesis testing.

Boycott intention had the lowest mean among the behavioural outcomes, at 2.043 on a six-point scale, and a median of 1.000. The positive skewness of 1.214 shows that responses

were concentrated at the low end, with a smaller group reporting stronger punitive intentions. Within this sample, most respondents did not express strong intentions to punish the brand by avoiding its products, while a minority displayed more pronounced boycott tendencies. The lower boycott level compared with boycott intention should not be interpreted as evidence that respondents were strongly willing to buy the brand, because boycott intention itself remained close to the scale midpoint. It instead indicates that rejection or punishment was less common than neutral or moderate supportive intentions in this scenario.

The skewness and kurtosis values also provide information about the response distributions. The largest negative skewness appears for consumer-brand agreement (-2.715), which is expected from the high proportion of agreement responses. Among the multi-item constructs, prestige has the strongest negative skewness (-1.151), while boycott intention has the strongest positive skewness (1.214). Excess kurtosis ranges from -1.044 for boycott intention to 0.477 for prestige. These results indicate that the variables are bounded and not perfectly symmetric, which supports the use of bootstrapped confidence intervals in the subsequent PLS-SEM analysis.

Overall, the descriptive findings portray the sampled Generation Z respondents as largely accepting of the specific environmental activism scenario, generally positive toward Hermès, and unlikely to express strong boycott intentions. At the same time, the near-midpoint boycott score shows that positive perceptions and attitudes did not automatically produce strong reward-oriented purchasing intentions. The variation in collectivist orientation provides a basis for testing moderation, while the descriptive differences between authenticity, hypocrisy, prestige, attitude, boycott, and boycott provide the empirical context for testing the proposed direct and indirect relationships. None of these descriptive patterns alone establishes support for H_1 to H_7 ; support depends on the measurement quality, path coefficients, confidence intervals, effect sizes, and indirect-effect results reported in the later sections.

4.4 Common method bias assessment

Common method bias was considered because the predictor, mediator, moderator, and outcome measures were collected from the same respondents through one self-administered questionnaire. The assessment combined procedural safeguards applied during questionnaire design with two post-collection statistical diagnostics, following the full-collinearity approach discussed by Kock and Lynn (2012) and Kock (2015).

The procedural safeguards included respondent anonymity and confidentiality, separation of predictor and criterion variables into different questionnaire blocks, nondisclosure of the hypotheses, clear item wording, and pre-testing of the questionnaire. These measures reduced opportunities for evaluation apprehension, socially desirable responding, and

deliberate consistency across constructs. They reduce risk but do not demonstrate that common method bias is absent.

For the statistical assessment, a dummy marker variable was generated independently of all substantive variables in Excel using the RAND() formula. It was entered as a single-indicator technical target construct in SmartPLS, and direct paths from the eight analytical constructs to this target were specified solely for the diagnostic. The dummy was not interpreted as sociopolitical involvement, and Q3.1 remained excluded from the analytical model. The reported values are full-collinearity VIFs and are treated as diagnostic evidence rather than proof that common method bias is absent.

Table 4.3: Harman's Single-Factor Test and Full-collinearity VIF assessment for common method bias

Assessment Method	Construct	Observed Value	Threshold Standard	Status
Harman's Single-Factor Test	Single Factor AVE	0.293 (29.3%)	<0.500 (50%)	PASS (No Single Factor Dominance)
Full Collinearity VIF	Collectivist Orientation	1.908	≤3.300	PASS (Strict Cutoff)
	Consumer-Brand Agreement	1.074	≤3.300	PASS (Strict Cutoff)
	Perceived Authenticity	4.695	≤5.000	PASS (Acceptable Cutoff)
	Perceived Hypocrisy	3.948	≤5.000	PASS (Acceptable Cutoff)
	Perceived Brand Prestige	1.528	≤3.300	PASS (Strict Cutoff)
	Brand Attitude	2.991	≤3.300	PASS (Strict Cutoff)
	Boycott Intention	2.488	≤3.300	PASS (Strict Cutoff)
	Boycott Intention	1.980	≤3.300	PASS (Strict Cutoff)

The two diagnostics point in the same direction. In Harman's single-factor test, the single factor accounted for only 29.3% of the total variance, well below the 50% benchmark, so no single factor dominates the observed correlations. The full-collinearity VIFs ranged from

1.074 to 4.695. Six of the eight constructs, namely collectivist orientation, consumer-brand agreement, perceived brand prestige, brand attitude, boycott intention, and boycott intention, fell below the conservative 3.300 cutoff recommended by Kock (2015). Perceived authenticity (VIF = 4.695) and perceived hypocrisy (VIF = 3.948) exceeded this strict value but remained below the ceiling of 5.000 that is considered acceptable for PLS-SEM structural models containing interaction terms (Hair et al., 2024). The elevated values for these two constructs arise from lateral collinearity rather than from method variance: both are outcome variables of the collectivist-orientation × consumer-brand-agreement interaction terms, and the interaction block produces high structural collinearity in this specification, as documented in Section 4.6.1. Taken together, the two diagnostics indicate that common method variance does not explain the observed relationships among the constructs. This conclusion is limited to the reported diagnostics and should be read together with the procedural safeguards rather than treated as proof that all method-related bias has been eliminated.

4.5 Measurement model assessment

The measurement model was assessed before the structural paths were interpreted. The assessment examined indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. This sequence is consistent with the two-stage evaluation of PLS-SEM models used in related research (Khan et al., 2024).

4.5.1 Indicator reliability and outer loadings

Outer loadings of approximately 0.70 or higher indicate that the construct explains a substantial proportion of the indicator variance. Indicators between 0.40 and 0.708 may be retained when construct reliability, AVE, and theoretical coverage remain adequate.

Table 4.4: Indicator loadings and significance

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading (λ)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Error (SE)	t-statistic	p-value	95% Percentile CI
Collectivist Orientation	Q3.2_1	0.881	0.881	0.019	46.228	< 0.001	[0.842, 0.916]
	Q3.2_2_R	0.747	0.745	0.04	18.627	< 0.001	[0.658, 0.815]
	Q3.2_3	0.885	0.883	0.02	45.051	< 0.001	[0.840, 0.918]
	Q3.2_4	0.927	0.926	0.012	79.156	< 0.001	[0.901, 0.946]

	Q3.2_5_R	0.784	0.783	0.034	23.337	< 0.001	[0.709, 0.841]
	Q3.2_6	0.891	0.891	0.017	53.953	< 0.001	[0.853, 0.920]
Consumer-Brand Agreement	Q4.2_recoded	1	1	0	N/A	N/A	[1.000, 1.000]
Perceived Authenticity	Q5.1_1	0.91	0.908	0.019	49.064	< 0.001	[0.868, 0.940]
	Q5.1_2	0.937	0.937	0.011	81.542	< 0.001	[0.912, 0.958]
	Q5.1_3	0.949	0.949	0.009	105.535	< 0.001	[0.929, 0.965]
	Q5.1_4	0.924	0.924	0.016	56.899	< 0.001	[0.888, 0.951]
	Q5.1_5	0.925	0.925	0.014	68.292	< 0.001	[0.895, 0.948]
Perceived Hypocrisy	Q5.2_1	0.903	0.903	0.018	49.3	< 0.001	[0.862, 0.934]
	Q5.2_2	0.93	0.93	0.011	87.79	< 0.001	[0.908, 0.949]
	Q5.2_3	0.925	0.926	0.014	64.969	< 0.001	[0.894, 0.950]
	Q5.2_4_R	0.731	0.73	0.053	13.843	< 0.001	[0.611, 0.819]
Perceived Brand Prestige	Q5.3_1	0.948	0.949	0.013	74.638	< 0.001	[0.920, 0.970]
	Q5.3_2	0.938	0.938	0.012	79.109	< 0.001	[0.913, 0.959]
	Q5.3_4	0.927	0.927	0.016	59.536	< 0.001	[0.893, 0.953]
Brand Attitude	Q6.1_1	0.965	0.964	0.007	141.1	< 0.001	[0.949, 0.976]
	Q6.1_2	0.961	0.96	0.008	126.768	< 0.001	[0.944, 0.974]
	Q6.1_3	0.972	0.972	0.005	181.228	< 0.001	[0.960, 0.981]

Boycott Intention	Q6.2_1	0.972	0.972	0.005	189.28	< 0.001	[0.962, 0.982]
	Q6.2_2	0.974	0.974	0.005	189.482	< 0.001	[0.963, 0.983]
	Q6.2_3	0.941	0.941	0.017	55.295	< 0.001	[0.903, 0.969]
Boycott Intention	Q6.3_1	0.974	0.974	0.009	112.542	< 0.001	[0.954, 0.988]
	Q6.3_2	0.984	0.984	0.004	245.659	< 0.001	[0.975, 0.991]
	Q6.3_3	0.987	0.987	0.004	273.033	< 0.001	[0.979, 0.993]

All multi-item indicators exceeded the recommended loading threshold of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2024). Outer loadings ranged from 0.731 to 0.987, so every indicator explained more than half of its construct's variance. Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples showed that all loadings were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$, with t-statistics between 13.843 and 273.033, and all 95% percentile confidence intervals excluded zero. The lowest loading belonged to the reverse-coded hypocrisy indicator Q5.2_4_R (0.731, CI [0.611, 0.819]), which remained above the threshold despite the widest interval. Two further observations complete the assessment. First, consumer-brand agreement is a single-item construct, so its loading is fixed at 1.000 by definition and is not informative about item quality. Second, several loadings were very high, particularly for boycott intention (0.974 to 0.987); values close to 1.00 can indicate highly similar items, an issue that is considered again in the reliability assessment in Section 4.5.2. The interaction terms generated for the moderation tests are not part of the reflective measurement model and are therefore excluded from this table.

4.5.2 Internal consistency and convergent validity

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, while convergent validity was assessed using AVE. Values above 0.70 for reliability and above 0.50 for AVE are commonly used minimum criteria (Hair et al., 2024).

Table 4.5: Internal consistency and convergent validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Collectivist Orientation	0.926	0.94	0.942	0.731

Perceived Authenticity	0.96	0.962	0.969	0.864
Perceived Hypocrisy	0.896	0.9	0.929	0.768
Perceived Brand Prestige	0.931	0.933	0.956	0.879
Brand Attitude	0.964	0.964	0.976	0.933
Boycott Intention	0.96	0.962	0.974	0.927
Boycott intention	0.981	0.982	0.988	0.964

All constructs met the stated criteria. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.896 to 0.981, composite reliability rho_c ranged from 0.929 to 0.988, and AVE ranged from 0.731 to 0.964, so internal consistency and convergent validity were established for all seven multi-item constructs. Two observations qualify this otherwise strong result. First, several reliability coefficients were very high: boycott intention in particular showed alpha of 0.981, rho_c of 0.988, and AVE of 0.964, and brand attitude and boycott intention showed similarly elevated values. Coefficients this close to 1.00 suggest substantial overlap between items, which can inflate correlations between constructs and should be borne in mind when the structural paths involving these outcomes are interpreted. This issue does not differ across the two agreement specifications and therefore does not threaten the robustness comparisons in Section 4.9. Second, collectivist orientation showed the lowest AVE (0.731), which still comfortably exceeded the 0.500 benchmark. The measurement quality of the constructs feeding the core theoretical tests, namely perceived authenticity (AVE = 0.864) and perceived hypocrisy (AVE = 0.768), was satisfactory, supporting the reliability of the H₄ path estimates.

4.5.3 Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT. The Fornell-Larcker criterion compares the square root of each construct's AVE with its correlations with other constructs, while HTMT provides a more direct assessment of construct distinctiveness.

Table 4.6: Discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Boycott Intention	Brand Attitude	Boycott Intention	Collectivist Orientation	Consumer-Brand Agreement	Perceived Authenticity	Perceived Brand Prestige	Perceived Hypocrisy

Boycott Intention	0.982							
Brand Attitude	-0.245	0.966						
Buycott Intention	0.05	0.664	0.963					
Collectivist Orientation	0.054	0.471	0.54	0.855				
Consumer-Brand Agreement	-0.184	0.147	0.092	0.075	1			
Perceived Authenticity	-0.067	0.758	0.722	0.628	0.059	0.929		
Perceived Brand Prestige	-0.385	0.468	0.318	0.079	0.086	0.388	0.938	
Perceived Hypocrisy	0.421	-0.685	-0.57	-0.545	-0.073	-0.764	-0.413	0.876

For every construct, the diagonal value exceeded all correlations in its row and column, so the Fornell-Larcker criterion was satisfied. Three observations are worth recording. First, the strongest inter-construct relationship was between perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy ($r = -0.764$). Both constructs judge the credibility of the brand's activism, so the strong inverse relationship is theoretically plausible, but its size means the two judgments overlap substantially; the implications of this overlap for the interpretation of the direct authenticity-to-boycott path are discussed in Section 4.6.3. Second, brand attitude correlated positively with buycott intention ($r = 0.664$) and negatively with boycott intention ($r = -0.245$), which is consistent with its proposed mediating role between credibility judgments and political-consumption intentions. Third, consumer-brand agreement showed weak correlations with all three perceptions at the bivariate level ($r = 0.059$ with authenticity, -0.073 with hypocrisy, 0.086 with prestige), so the agreement-to-perception paths in the structural model depend on the joint estimation of the full system rather than on strong bivariate association.

Table 4.7: HTMT ratios and 95% percentile-bootstrap confidence intervals

Construct Pair	HTMT Estimate (O)	Sample Mean (M)	95% Percentile CI [LL, UL]	Status (≤ 0.850)
Brand Attitude ↔ Boycott Intention	0.252	0.251	[0.078, 0.425]	PASS
Boycott Intention ↔ Boycott Intention	0.053	0.089	[0.022, 0.220]	PASS
Boycott Intention ↔ Brand Attitude	0.69	0.688	[0.585, 0.773]	PASS
Collectivist Orientation ↔ Boycott Intention	0.156	0.164	[0.106, 0.231]	PASS
Collectivist Orientation ↔ Brand Attitude	0.49	0.492	[0.340, 0.628]	PASS
Collectivist Orientation ↔ Buycott Intention	0.567	0.566	[0.433, 0.682]	PASS
Consumer-Brand Agreement ↔ Boycott Intention	0.186	0.185	[0.044, 0.335]	PASS
Consumer-Brand Agreement ↔ Brand Attitude	0.15	0.148	[0.023, 0.310]	PASS
Consumer-Brand Agreement ↔ Buycott Intention	0.094	0.107	[0.018, 0.248]	PASS
Consumer-Brand Agreement ↔ Collectivist Orientation	0.084	0.112	[0.051, 0.189]	PASS
Perceived Authenticity ↔ Boycott Intention	0.069	0.095	[0.028, 0.236]	PASS
Perceived Authenticity ↔ Brand Attitude	0.786	0.788	[0.707, 0.857]	PASS
Perceived Authenticity ↔ Buycott Intention	0.751	0.75	[0.671, 0.814]	PASS

Perceived Authenticity ↔ Collectivist Orientation	0.651	0.65	[0.520, 0.757]	PASS
Perceived Authenticity ↔ Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.059	0.08	[0.032, 0.176]	PASS
Perceived Brand Prestige ↔ Boycott Intention	0.402	0.405	[0.288, 0.524]	PASS
Perceived Brand Prestige ↔ Brand Attitude	0.493	0.496	[0.390, 0.604]	PASS
Perceived Brand Prestige ↔ Buycott Intention	0.336	0.336	[0.223, 0.445]	PASS
Perceived Brand Prestige ↔ Collectivist Orientation	0.1	0.127	[0.074, 0.207]	PASS
Perceived Brand Prestige ↔ Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.089	0.104	[0.020, 0.260]	PASS
Perceived Brand Prestige ↔ Perceived Authenticity	0.411	0.413	[0.311, 0.516]	PASS
Perceived Hypocrisy ↔ Boycott Intention	0.448	0.449	[0.330, 0.566]	PASS
Perceived Hypocrisy ↔ Brand Attitude	0.739	0.74	[0.652, 0.821]	PASS
Perceived Hypocrisy ↔ Buycott Intention	0.615	0.614	[0.494, 0.723]	PASS
Perceived Hypocrisy ↔ Collectivist Orientation	0.596	0.595	[0.450, 0.717]	PASS
Perceived Hypocrisy ↔ Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.079	0.09	[0.028, 0.179]	PASS
Perceived Hypocrisy ↔ Perceived Authenticity	0.825	0.825	[0.745, 0.894]	PASS

Perceived Hypocrisy ↔ Perceived Brand Prestige	0.456	0.458	[0.355, 0.558]	PASS
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All 28 HTMT point estimates were below the conservative 0.850 threshold. The highest value was 0.825 for the perceived hypocrisy and perceived authenticity pair, with a 95% percentile-bootstrap interval of [0.745, 0.894]. Two further pairs involving the constructs of the core theoretical tests also stood out: perceived authenticity with brand attitude (HTMT = 0.786) and perceived authenticity with boycott intention (HTMT = 0.751). These high values reflect the strong theoretical and empirical links among credibility judgments, brand evaluation, and supportive intentions, and they remained below the threshold. Because the hypocrisy-authenticity interval extends above 0.850, discriminant validity for this pair is supported by the point estimate but not uniformly by the interval, and this should be kept in mind when the two constructs are used as simultaneous predictors in the same equations. Overall, the results support discriminant validity across the measurement model, while confirming that authenticity and hypocrisy are the most closely related constructs in the model.

The marginal discriminant validity between perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy has a specific structural consequence for the model. Because the two constructs correlate at $r = -0.764$ (Table 4.6), their simultaneous inclusion in the same equations makes each coefficient a partialled effect estimated against a highly overlapping judgment. The positive direct effect of perceived authenticity on boycott intention (Section 4.6.3), which contradicts the negligible zero-order correlation between the two constructs, is the clearest symptom of this overlap and is interpreted as a suppression artefact rather than a substantive effect. Findings that depend on statistically separating the two credibility judgments, particularly the direct authenticity-to-boycott path, its effect size, and the corresponding IPMA total effect, should therefore be read as conditional on this measurement overlap, whereas the findings that rest on each construct's unique contribution to separate outcome equations, above all the H_4 paths, are unaffected.

4.6 Structural model assessment

The structural model was assessed using inner VIF values, coefficients of determination, effect sizes, and bootstrapped path estimates in line with current PLS-SEM guidance (Hair et al., 2024). Related PLS-SEM research similarly evaluates VIF, explanatory power, and bootstrapped path significance after establishing the measurement model (Khan et al., 2024).

4.6.1 Collinearity

Table 4.8: Collinearity assessment for structural predictors

Endogenous (Target) Construct	Structural Predictor Construct	Inner VIF	Status
Perceived Authenticity	Consumer-Brand Agreement	1.169	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Collectivist Orientation	36.972	Moderation artefact
	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Consumer-Brand Agreement	36.766	Moderation artefact
Perceived Hypocrisy	Consumer-Brand Agreement	1.169	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Collectivist Orientation	36.972	Moderation artefact
	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Consumer-Brand Agreement	36.766	Moderation artefact
Perceived Brand Prestige	Consumer-Brand Agreement	1.169	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Collectivist Orientation	36.972	Moderation artefact
	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Consumer-Brand Agreement	36.766	Moderation artefact
Brand Attitude	Perceived Brand Prestige	1.595	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Perceived Brand Prestige	2.889	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Perceived Hypocrisy	2.937	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Collectivist Orientation	3.199	Pass (≤ 5.000)
	Perceived Authenticity	3.769	Pass (≤ 5.000)
	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Perceived Hypocrisy	5.949	Moderation inflation

	Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Authenticity	6.172	Moderation inflation
Buycott Intention	Consumer-Brand Agreement	1.029	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Brand Attitude	2.565	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Perceived Hypocrisy	2.566	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Perceived Authenticity	3.214	Pass (≤ 5.000)
Boycott Intention	Consumer-Brand Agreement	1.029	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Brand Attitude	2.565	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Perceived Hypocrisy	2.566	Pass (≤ 3.000)
	Perceived Authenticity	3.214	Pass (≤ 5.000)

Structural collinearity was assessed through inner VIF values for every predictor-target pair, using a ceiling of 5.000 and treating values below 3.000 as unproblematic (Hair et al., 2024). The equations carrying the core theoretical tests and the outcome paths were well behaved. In the buycott and boycott intention equations, which contain the same four predictors, all inner VIFs were acceptable (consumer-brand agreement 1.029, brand attitude 2.565, perceived hypocrisy 2.566, perceived authenticity 3.214), so the estimates for H_3 , H_4 , the complementary direct paths, and the control paths were not distorted by collinearity; the identical VIF values across the two equations reflect their identical predictor sets rather than a reporting duplication. In the brand attitude equation, five of the seven predictors fell below 3.300 (perceived brand prestige 1.595, collectivist orientation × perceived brand prestige 2.889, perceived hypocrisy 2.937, collectivist orientation 3.199, perceived authenticity 3.769), while the two interaction terms collectivist orientation × perceived hypocrisy (5.949) and collectivist orientation × perceived authenticity (6.172) exceeded the ceiling and represent moderation-related inflation. The most severe values occurred in the three perception equations, where collectivist orientation and the collectivist orientation × consumer-brand-agreement terms reached VIFs of 36.972 and 36.766, while consumer-brand agreement itself remained low at 1.169. This pattern arises because the binary agreement variable was highly unbalanced (approximately 146 agreement to 16 disagreement responses), and product-term creation with an unbalanced binary moderator necessarily produces shared variance between main effects and interaction terms that

standardisation does not remove. Such inflation is a known mathematical property of two-stage moderation modelling rather than evidence of structural contamination, but it can still enlarge standard errors and produce unstable or suppressor-like coefficients, so the H_5 moderation results in Table 4.12 and the multi-group comparisons in Section 4.7 are interpreted cautiously. The reported coefficients were not adjusted after estimation; instead, the prespecified robustness analysis in Section 4.9 re-estimated the identical structural specification with the original four-point agreement measure to verify whether the agreement-related findings depend on this collinearity. Finally, the strong negative correlation between perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy ($r = -0.764$, Table 4.6) contributed to the elevated VIF of perceived authenticity in the outcome equations, but the value remained within the acceptable range; its interpretive consequences for the direct authenticity-to-boycott path are addressed in Section 4.6.3.

4.6.2 Explanatory power and effect sizes

Table 4.9: Coefficients of determination and f^2 effect sizes

Target Endogenous Construct	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Structural Predictor Construct	Observed f^2	Effect Size Rating
Perceived Authenticity	0.446	0.436	Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.017	None (< 0.020)
			Collectivist Orientation	0.026	Small
			Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.093	Small
Perceived Hypocrisy	0.322	0.309	Collectivist Orientation	0.006	None (< 0.020)
			Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.011	None (< 0.020)
			Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.036	Small
Perceived Brand Prestige	0.053	0.035	Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.024	Small
			Collectivist Orientation	0.037	Small
			Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.043	Small

Brand Attitude	0.664	0.649	Collectivist Orientation	0	None (< 0.020)
			Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Brand Prestige	0.009	None (< 0.020)
			Perceived Brand Prestige	0.042	Small
			Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Hypocrisy	0.059	Small
			Perceived Hypocrisy	0.060	Small
			Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Authenticity	0.071	Small
			Perceived Authenticity	0.222	Medium
Boycott Intention	0.554	0.543	Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.001	None (< 0.020)
			Perceived Hypocrisy	0.001	None (< 0.020)
			Brand Attitude	0.067	Small
			Perceived Authenticity	0.199	Medium
Boycott Intention	0.376	0.361	Consumer-Brand Agreement	0.028	Small
			Brand Attitude	0.030	Small
			Perceived Authenticity	0.271	Medium
			Perceived Hypocrisy	0.425	Large

(Note: Effect-size thresholds follow Cohen's benchmarks (Cohen, 1988): $f^2 \geq 0.02$ = small, $f^2 \geq 0.15$ = medium, and $f^2 \geq 0.35$ = large.)

The model explained 66.4% of the variance in brand attitude and 55.4% of the variance in boycott intention. It explained 44.6% of perceived authenticity, 37.6% of boycott intention,

32.2% of perceived hypocrisy, and 5.3% of perceived brand prestige. Explanatory power was therefore strongest for brand attitude and boycott intention, moderate for the two credibility perceptions and boycott intention, and weak for perceived brand prestige. The moderate R^2 for boycott intention indicates that punitive avoidance depends partly on factors outside the model, which is consistent with the view that boycotting is motivated by processes not fully captured by credibility judgments and brand attitude.

The effect sizes placed the core theoretical tests at the centre of the model's explanatory power. Perceived hypocrisy was the single strongest determinant of boycott intention ($f^2 = 0.425$, large effect), and perceived authenticity was the strongest determinant of boycott intention ($f^2 = 0.199$, medium effect) and the strongest predictor of brand attitude ($f^2 = 0.222$, medium effect). These three effects form the empirical core of this study: credibility judgments dominate both the supportive and the punitive routes, with brand attitude acting as the main additional conduit to boycott intention ($f^2 = 0.067$, small). By contrast, the effects of brand attitude on boycott intention ($f^2 = 0.030$) and of perceived hypocrisy on boycott intention ($f^2 = 0.001$) were small or negligible, and the control paths and interaction terms contributed little incremental explanatory power, with the largest being the collectivist orientation $\times$ consumer-brand-agreement interaction on perceived authenticity ($f^2 = 0.093$, small). One value requires a restricted interpretation. Perceived authenticity showed a medium effect size on boycott intention ($f^2 = 0.271$), but as noted in Section 4.6.1, this path is affected by suppression: the zero-order correlation between the two constructs is negligible ($r = -0.067$, Table 4.6), and the effect size reflects variance partialled against the strongly overlapping hypocrisy judgment rather than a substantive influence of perceived authenticity on boycotting. No theoretical conclusion is drawn from this effect size. R^2 and f^2 describe explanatory power and incremental contribution, respectively; neither measure alone determines hypothesis support. Hypothesis decisions are based primarily on path direction and the two-tailed p-value, with the percentile-bootstrap intervals reported as supplementary evidence in Tables 4.10 and 4.11.

4.6.3 Direct effects and hypothesis testing

Table 4.10: Percentile-bootstrap direct effects for H_1 to H_4 and control paths

Hypothesis	Structural Path (Predictor $\rightarrow$ Target)	Path Coeff. (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Std. Error (SE)	t-statistic	p-value	95% Percentile CI [LL, UL]	Result
Direct Structural Hypotheses								
H_{1a}	Consumer-Brand Agreement $\rightarrow$	0.347	0.337	0.207	1.673	0.094	[-0.059, 0.744]	Not Supported

	Perceived Authenticity							
H _{1b}	Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Hypocrisy	-0.319	-0.313	0.159	2.008	0.045	[-0.637, -0.003]	Supported (p < 0.05)
H _{1c}	Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Brand Prestige	0.543	0.551	0.322	1.690	0.091	[-0.048, 1.237]	Not Supported
H _{2a}	Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude	0.530	0.521	0.120	4.420	< 0.001	[0.281, 0.752]	Supported (p < 0.001)
H _{2b}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude	-0.244	-0.250	0.073	3.364	0.001	[-0.394, -0.106]	Supported (p < 0.01)
H _{2c}	Perceived Brand Prestige → Brand Attitude	0.150	0.157	0.085	1.777	0.076	[-0.008, 0.324]	Not Supported
H _{3a}	Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	0.276	0.274	0.083	3.321	0.001	[0.108, 0.440]	Supported (p < 0.01)
H _{3b}	Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	-0.218	-0.215	0.130	1.681	0.093	[-0.464, 0.046]	Not Supported
H _{4a}	Perceived Authenticity → Boycott Intention	0.533	0.531	0.095	5.592	< 0.001	[0.334, 0.712]	Supported (p < 0.001)
H _{4b}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Boycott Intention	0.825	0.822	0.097	8.507	< 0.001	[0.616, 0.995]	Supported (p < 0.001)
Control paths	Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Authenticity	-0.736	-0.725	0.334	2.202	0.028	[-1.417, -0.060]	Significant (p < 0.05)

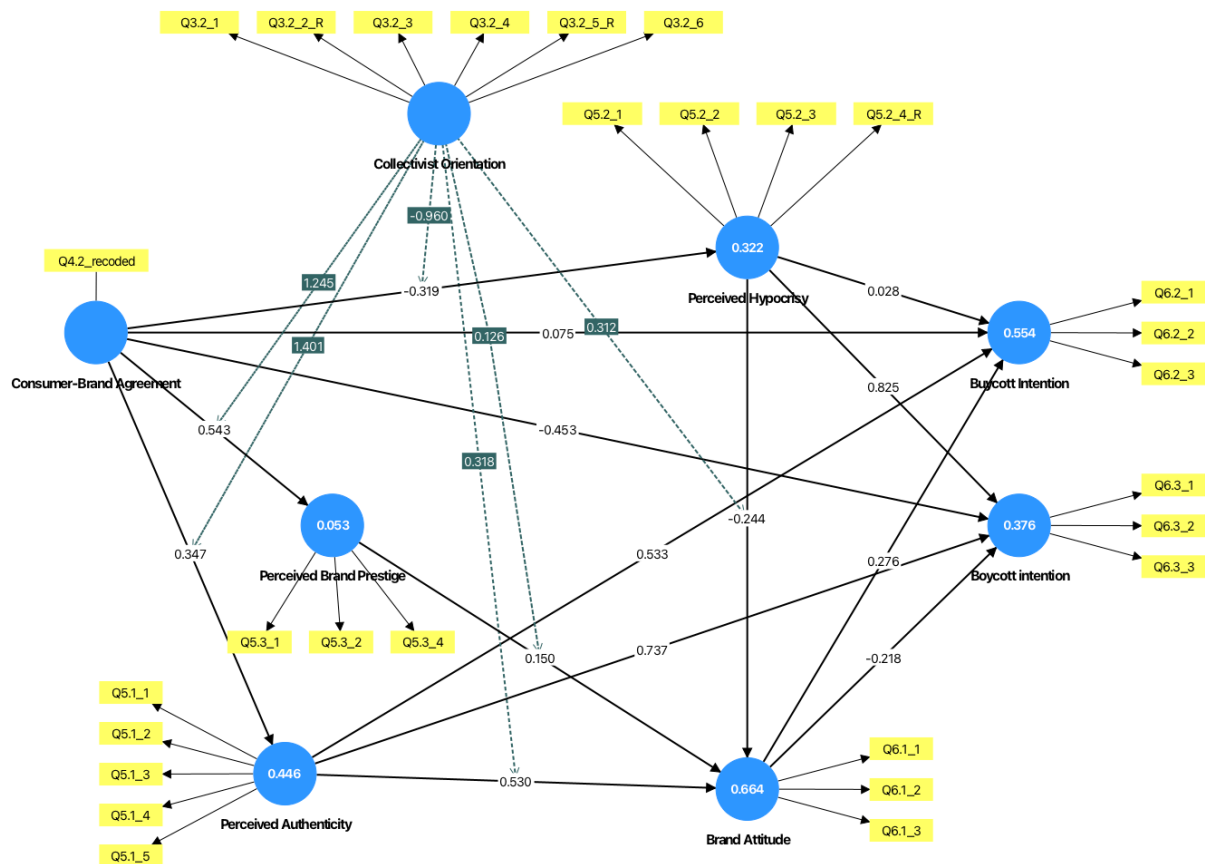
	Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Brand Prestige	-1.139	-1.176	0.401	2.840	0.005	[-2.078, -0.482]	Significant (p < 0.01)
	Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Hypocrisy	0.392	0.364	0.302	1.298	0.194	[-0.336, 0.921]	Not Significant
	Collectivist Orientation → Brand Attitude	0.021	0.028	0.101	0.205	0.837	[-0.166, 0.235]	Not Significant
	Consumer-Brand Agreement → Boycott Intention	0.075	0.072	0.225	0.333	0.739	[-0.370, 0.511]	Not Significant
	Consumer-Brand Agreement → Boycott Intention	-0.453	-0.450	0.252	1.799	0.072	[-0.950, 0.045]	Not Significant
Complementary direct path	Perceived Authenticity → Boycott Intention	0.737	0.732	0.107	6.891	< 0.001	[0.518, 0.935]	Significant (p < 0.001; suppression artefact, no substantive interpretation)
	Perceived Hypocrisy → Boycott Intention	0.028	0.026	0.082	0.347	0.728	[-0.148, 0.176]	Not Significant

The direct-effect results place the core theoretical tests at the centre of the analysis. Both H_4 paths, which predict reward and punishment directly from credibility judgments, were strongly supported. Perceived authenticity increased boycott intention (H_{4a} : $\beta = 0.533$, $p < 0.001$, CI [0.334, 0.712]), and perceived hypocrisy increased boycott intention (H_{4b} : $\beta = 0.825$, $p < 0.001$, CI [0.616, 0.995]). The hypocrisy-to-punishment path was the largest direct effect in the model, consistent with the large effect size reported in Table 4.9 and with the negativity asymmetry in political consumerism, whereby consumers are more strongly motivated to punish perceived violations than to reward alignment. These two paths carry this study's central claim: the credibility of a luxury brand's activist commitment translates directly into supportive and punitive political consumption, without requiring prior formation of an overall brand attitude.

The attitudinal mechanism was partially supported. Brand attitude increased boycott intention (H_{3a} : $\beta = 0.276$, $p = 0.001$) but did not significantly reduce boycott intention (H_{3b} : $\beta = -0.218$, $p = 0.093$), and among the perception-to-attitude paths, authenticity (H_{2a} : $\beta = 0.530$, $p < 0.001$) and hypocrisy (H_{2b} : $\beta = -0.244$, $p = 0.001$) were both significant while prestige was not (H_{2c} : $\beta = 0.150$, $p = 0.076$). Agreement reduced perceived hypocrisy (H_{1b} : $\beta = -0.319$, $p = 0.045$), but the effects of agreement on perceived authenticity (H_{1a} : $\beta = 0.347$, $p = 0.094$) and perceived brand prestige (H_{1c} : $\beta = 0.543$, $p = 0.091$) were nonsignificant, so H_1 received partial support. The marginal H_{1b} result should be interpreted with care because its percentile-bootstrap interval $[-0.637, -0.003]$ only narrowly excludes zero.

The control paths completed the specification. Collectivist orientation was negatively associated with perceived authenticity ($\beta = -0.736$, $p = 0.028$) and perceived brand prestige ($\beta = -1.139$, $p = 0.005$), while its relationships with perceived hypocrisy and brand attitude were nonsignificant; these estimates are affected by the interaction-block collinearity documented in Section 4.6.1. Agreement itself had no significant direct effect on either behavioural outcome (boycott intention: $\beta = 0.075$, $p = 0.739$; boycott intention: $\beta = -0.453$, $p = 0.072$), indicating that agreement influences political consumption only through the perceptual and attitudinal routes rather than directly. Among the two complementary direct paths, perceived hypocrisy had no direct effect on boycott intention ($\beta = 0.028$, $p = 0.728$), which clears the way for an indirect-only interpretation of the hypocrisy-to-boycott mediation in Section 4.6.4. Perceived authenticity showed a significant direct effect on boycott intention ($\beta = 0.737$, $p < 0.001$); however, as documented in Sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2, this effect is a suppression artefact, since the zero-order correlation between the two constructs is negligible ($r = -0.067$, Table 4.6). The coefficient completes the specification required for the mediation tests and is not interpreted substantively. These control and complementary effects are not separate hypotheses and are not described as supported or unsupported hypotheses.

Figure 4.1: SmartPLS structural model with path coefficients and R^2 values



Solid arrows show the hypothesised structural paths (H_1 to H_4) and the complementary direct paths; dashed arrows show the six two-stage interaction terms for H_5 and H_6 . Coefficients are standardised estimates from the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. R^2 values are displayed inside the endogenous construct circles and are reported in full in Table 4.9. The main effects of collectivist orientation on perceived brand authenticity, perceived brand hypocrisy, perceived brand prestige, and brand attitude, together with the direct paths from consumer-brand agreement to buycott intention and boycott intention, are estimated as part of the model specification and are reported in Table 4.10; they are omitted from the figure for readability. Complete estimates for all paths, including significance tests and confidence intervals, are reported in Table 4.10, and the interaction effects are reported in Table 4.12.

4.6.4 Indirect effects and mediation assessment

Table 4.11: Bootstrapped specific indirect effects testing H_7

Hypothesis	Specific Indirect Path (Predictor → Mediator → Target)	Indirect Path Coeff. (β)	Direct Path Coeff. (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Std. Error (SE)	t-statistic	p-value	Direct p-value	95% Percentile CI [LL, UL]

H _{7a}	Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude → Buycott Intention	0.147	0.533	0.144	0.058	2.529	0.011	< 0.001	[0.044, 0.272]
H _{7b}	Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	-0.116	0.737	-0.118	0.082	1.418	0.156	< 0.001	[-0.296, 0.019]
H _{7c}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude → Buycott Intention	-0.067	0.028	-0.067	0.025	2.712	0.007	0.728	[-0.121, -0.023]
H _{7d}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	0.053	0.825	0.055	0.040	1.344	0.179	< 0.001	[-0.010, 0.147]

H₇ concerns the indirect routes from perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy to buycott and boycott intentions through brand attitude. Statistical support is determined primarily from the two-tailed p-value, while the 95% percentile-bootstrap confidence interval is reported as supplementary evidence; when the two criteria diverge, the p-value determines the hypothesis decision and the discrepancy is documented. Estimates were evaluated using 5,000 percentile-bootstrap resamples in SmartPLS 4. Mediation classifications were assigned using the standard decision logic: an indirect effect and a direct effect that are both significant with the same sign indicate complementary mediation; a significant indirect effect with a nonsignificant direct effect indicates indirect-only mediation; a nonsignificant indirect effect indicates no mediation regardless of the direct effect.

H₇ received partial support, and the pattern of support is informative about how credibility judgments become behaviour. Brand attitude transmitted both credibility judgments into supportive purchasing, but through different structures. The authenticity-to-buycott route was complementary mediation (indirect $\beta = 0.147$, $p = 0.011$; direct $\beta = 0.533$, $p < 0.001$), meaning that perceived authenticity increased reward intentions both directly and through improved brand attitude. The hypocrisy-to-buycott route was indirect-only mediation (indirect $\beta = -0.067$, $p = 0.007$; direct $\beta = 0.028$, $p = 0.728$), meaning that perceived hypocrisy damaged reward intentions entirely by eroding the overall evaluation of the brand, with no direct behavioural effect of its own. Neither credibility judgment showed an attitudinal route

to punishment: the indirect paths to boycott intention were nonsignificant for both authenticity (H_{7b} : $\beta = -0.116$, $p = 0.156$) and hypocrisy (H_{7d} : $\beta = 0.053$, $p = 0.179$), while their direct effects on boycott intention were large. Boycott intention was therefore driven by the credibility judgments directly rather than through brand attitude. As noted in Sections 4.6.1 to 4.6.3, the direct authenticity-to-boycott effect is a suppression artefact and is not interpreted substantively.

Taken together, the results identify brand attitude as a selective rather than universal mediator of credibility effects. It carries both positive and negative credibility judgments into supportive purchasing, but it carries neither into punitive avoidance. This asymmetry aligns with the direct-effect results for H_3 and H_4 : reward responds to both general evaluation and specific credibility, whereas punishment responds to specific credibility, above all to perceived hypocrisy.

4.6.5 Moderation analysis (H_5 and H_6)

Table 4.12: Interaction effects and simple-slope results for H_5 and H_6

Hypothesis	Moderated Interaction Path	β	SE	t-statistic	p-value	95% Percentile CI [LL, UL]	f^2	Simple Slope (-1 SD)	Simple Slope (Mean)	Simple Slope (+1 SD)
H_{5a}	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Consumer-Brand Agreement $\rightarrow$ Perceived Authenticity	1.401	0.334	4.198	< 0.001	[0.728, 2.084]	0.093	-1.054	0.347	1.748
H_{5b}	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Consumer-Brand Agreement $\rightarrow$ Perceived Hypocrisy	-0.960	0.308	3.115	0.002	[-1.482, -0.234]	0.036	0.642	-0.319	-1.279
H_{5c}	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Consumer-Brand Agreement $\rightarrow$ Perceived Brand Prestige	1.245	0.405	3.078	0.002	[0.582, 2.199]	0.043	-0.702	0.543	1.789
H_{6a}	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Perceived	0.318	0.096	3.327	0.001	[0.144, 0.521]	0.071	0.213	0.530	0.848

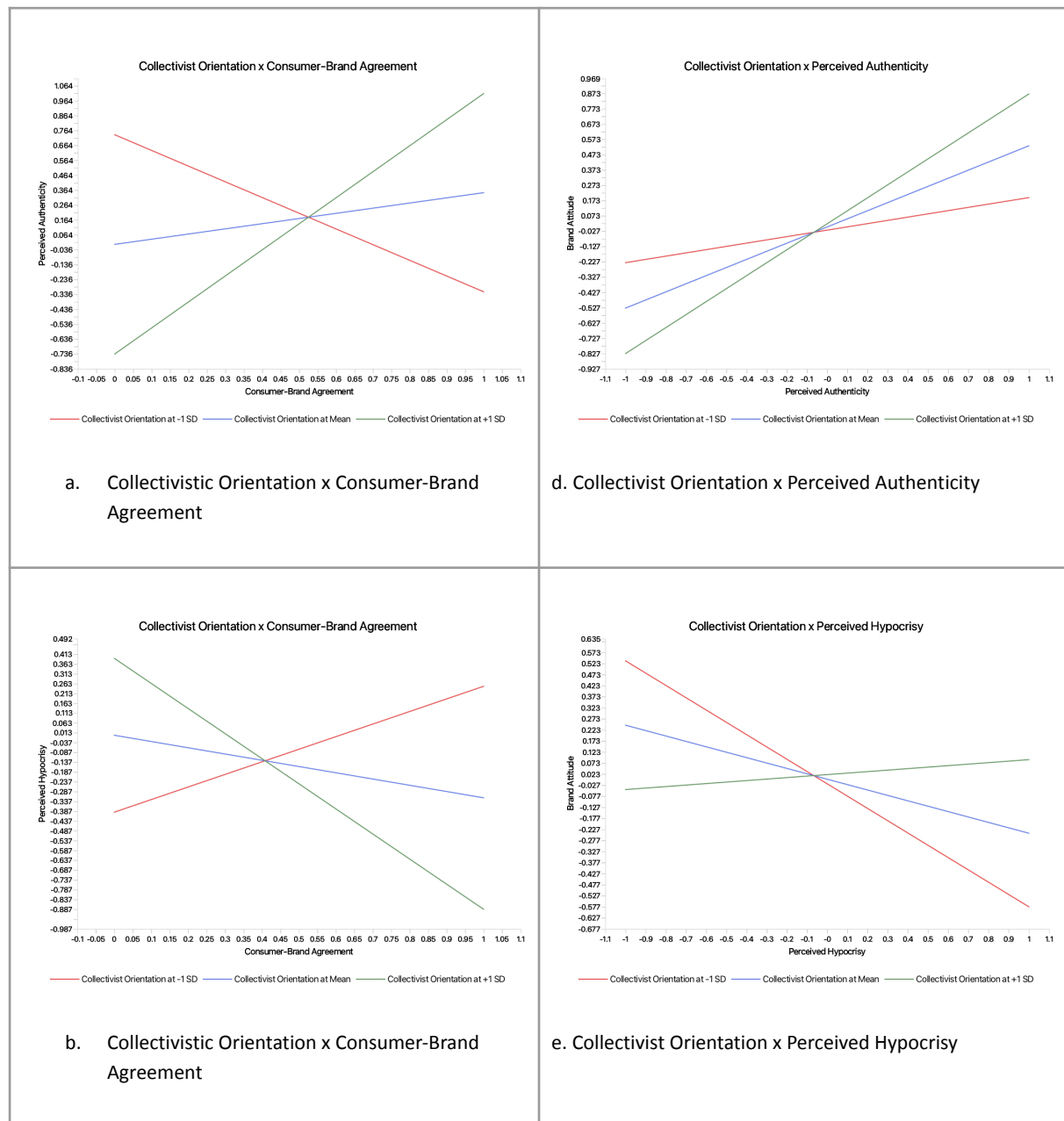
	Authenticity → Brand Attitude									
H _{6b}	Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude	0.312	0.093	3.357	0.001	[0.138, 0.507]	0.059	-0.556	-0.244	0.068
H _{6c}	Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Brand Prestige → Brand Attitude	0.126	0.114	1.112	0.266	[-0.103, 0.343]	0.009	0.024	0.150	0.277

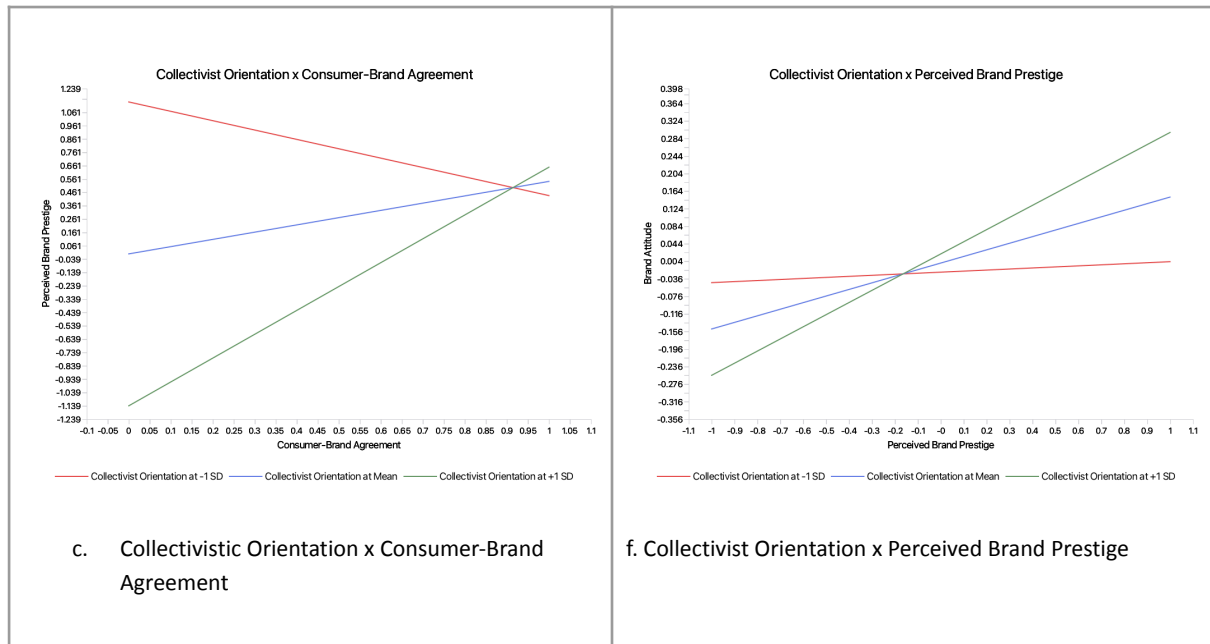
All three H₅ interactions were statistically significant and followed the predicted pattern, so H₅ was supported. Higher collectivist orientation amplified the effect of consumer-brand agreement on all three perceptions. The positive agreement-to-authenticity relationship became steeper as collectivist orientation increased (H_{5a}: $\beta = 1.401$, $p < 0.001$), as did the agreement-to-prestige relationship (H_{5c}: $\beta = 1.245$, $p = 0.002$), while the negative agreement-to-hypocrisy relationship became substantially steeper (H_{5b}: $\beta = -0.960$, $p = 0.002$). The simple slopes in Table 4.12 show the same pattern: at one standard deviation above the mean of collectivist orientation, the conditional effect of agreement on authenticity was 1.748 and on prestige 1.789, compared with 0.347 and 0.543 at the mean, and the conditional effect on hypocrisy fell from -0.319 at the mean to -1.279 at high collectivism. Collectivist consumers were therefore more sensitive to stance alignment, translating agreement into stronger credibility judgments in both directions.

For H₆, the results were mixed. H_{6a} was supported because collectivist orientation strengthened the positive relationship between perceived authenticity and brand attitude ($\beta = 0.318$, $p = 0.001$), with the conditional effect rising from 0.213 at low collectivism to 0.848 at high collectivism. H_{6b} was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.312$, $p = 0.001$) but ran opposite to the hypothesised direction: rather than strengthening the negative hypocrisy-to-attitude relationship among collectivist consumers, higher collectivist orientation weakened it, with the conditional effect moving from -0.556 at low collectivism to 0.068 at high collectivism. H_{6b} was therefore not supported as hypothesised. Descriptively, this pattern suggests that collectivist orientation may buffer the attitudinal damage of perceived hypocrisy, but because the hypothesis predicted the opposite, this interpretation is post hoc and requires confirmation in future research. H_{6c} was not supported ($\beta = 0.126$, $p = 0.266$), as the prestige-to-attitude relationship did not vary significantly across levels of collectivist orientation. Overall, H₆ received partial support through H_{6a} only.

Two caveats qualify the moderation results. First, as documented in Section 4.6.1, the interaction block predicting the perceptions produces severe collinearity, so the H_5 coefficients and their simple slopes should be interpreted cautiously. Second, these agreement-related findings depend on the binary operationalisation of consumer-brand agreement; the prespecified robustness analysis in Section 4.9 re-estimates the identical specification with the original four-point measure, and the H_5 and H_6 findings should be read together with that comparison.

Figure 4.2: Simple-slope plots for the moderation paths





The six panels display the conditional effects of the H_5 and H_6 interactions at lower (-1 SD), mean, and higher ($+1$ SD) levels of individual-level collectivist orientation. Panels (a) to (c) show the moderating effect of collectivist orientation on the consumer-brand agreement paths to perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige (H_{5a} to H_{5c}). Panels (d) to (f) show the moderating effect on the paths from perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, and perceived brand prestige to brand attitude (H_{6a} to H_{6c}). Slopes are estimated from the two-stage interaction model; significance tests, interaction coefficients, and conditional-effect values are reported in Table 4.12. The H_5 results should be interpreted as exploratory because they were not replicated under the four-point agreement specification (Section 4.9), and the H_5 interaction-block estimates are affected by collinearity (Section 4.6.1).

4.6.6 Predictive assessment

Table 4.13: PLSpredict results for endogenous indicators

Target Construct	Indicator	Q ² predict	PLS-SEM RMSE	LM RMSE	Δ RMSE (PLS-LM)	Error Comparison & Out-of-Sample Predictive Status
Perceived Authenticity	Q5.1_1	0.223	1.107	1.056	+0.051	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)
	Q5.1_2	0.307	1.166	1.119	+0.047	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)

	Q5.1_3	0.332	1.064	0.998	+0.066	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)
	Q5.1_4	0.265	1.153	1.108	+0.045	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)
	Q5.1_5	0.162	1.228	1.139	+0.089	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)
Perceived Brand Prestige	Q5.3_1	-0.228	1.742	1.538	+0.204	No predictive relevance ($Q^2_{\text{predict}} < 0$, PLS higher error)
	Q5.3_2	-0.221	1.565	1.409	+0.156	No predictive relevance ($Q^2_{\text{predict}} < 0$, PLS higher error)
	Q5.3_4	-0.204	1.627	1.436	+0.191	No predictive relevance ($Q^2_{\text{predict}} < 0$, PLS higher error)
Perceived Hypocrisy	Q5.2_1	0.183	1.391	1.325	+0.066	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)
	Q5.2_2	0.204	1.389	1.308	+0.081	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)
	Q5.2_3	0.163	1.41	1.365	+0.045	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)
	Q5.2_4_R	0.079	1.172	1.132	+0.040	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)
Brand Attitude	Q6.1_1	0.583	0.832	0.909	-0.077	PLS Lower Error (PLS Outperforms)
	Q6.1_2	0.597	0.908	0.978	-0.07	PLS Lower Error (PLS Outperforms)
	Q6.1_3	0.547	0.954	1.071	-0.117	PLS Lower Error (PLS Outperforms)

Boycott Intention	Q6.2_1	0.509	1.057	1.078	-0.021	PLS Lower Error (PLS Outperforms)
	Q6.2_2	0.517	1.06	1.106	-0.046	PLS Lower Error (PLS Outperforms)
	Q6.2_3	0.447	1.132	1.187	-0.055	PLS Lower Error (PLS Outperforms)
Boycott Intention	Q6.3_1	0.144	1.305	1.227	+0.078	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)
	Q6.3_2	0.156	1.379	1.305	+0.074	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)
	Q6.3_3	0.171	1.309	1.209	+0.100	PLS Higher Error (LM Outperforms)

(Note: The PLSpredict procedure used 10-fold cross-validation with 10 repetitions, following Shmueli et al. (2019).)

The model showed positive Q^2_{predict} values for 18 of the 21 endogenous indicators, confirming out-of-sample predictive relevance for perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, brand attitude, boycott intention, and boycott intention. The three perceived brand prestige indicators had negative Q^2_{predict} values (between -0.228 and -0.204), consistent with that construct's minimal explained variance ($R^2 = 0.053$). The RMSE comparison against the linear benchmark (LM) showed a selective pattern that is theoretically meaningful. PLS-SEM produced lower prediction errors than the LM benchmark for all three brand-attitude indicators (ΔRMSE between -0.070 and -0.117) and all three boycott-intention indicators (ΔRMSE between -0.021 and -0.055), meaning that the model outperformed the linear benchmark for every indicator of the two outcome constructs on the supportive side. By contrast, the LM benchmark produced lower errors for all perception-side indicators (ΔRMSE between +0.040 to +0.204, with prestige reaching +0.204) and for all three boycott-intention indicators (ΔRMSE between +0.074 and +0.100). Following Shmueli et al. (2019) and Hair et al. (2024), the model therefore demonstrates medium out-of-sample predictive power that is concentrated on the attitudinal and supportive-behavioural outcomes: the model predicts reward-oriented responses better than a linear benchmark, while its advantage does not extend to the perceptual constructs or to punitive avoidance, whose prediction likely depends on factors outside the model. This pattern parallels the explanatory results and should be kept in mind when the managerial recommendations for boycott prevention are framed in Chapter 5.

Table 4.14: IPMA results for boycott and boycott intention

Precursor Construct	Performance (0–100 Scale)	Target: Buycott Intention	Target: Boycott Intention	Strategic Priority & Managerial Focus
		Importance (Total Effect)	Importance (Total Effect)	
Collectivist Orientation	48.901	-0.557	-0.080	Contextual moderator / cultural baseline
Consumer-Brand Agreement	90.123	0.346	-0.535	No direct effect on intentions; perceptual route only (boycott column unstable, see below)
Perceived Authenticity	64.770	0.680	0.621	Primary lever for buycott enhancement (boycott column: suppression artefact, no managerial reading)
Perceived Hypocrisy	40.050	-0.039	0.878	Dominant priority for risk mitigation
Perceived Brand Prestige	84.474	0.042	-0.033	Secondary hygiene factor
Brand Attitude	72.682	0.276	-0.218	Core psychological mediator

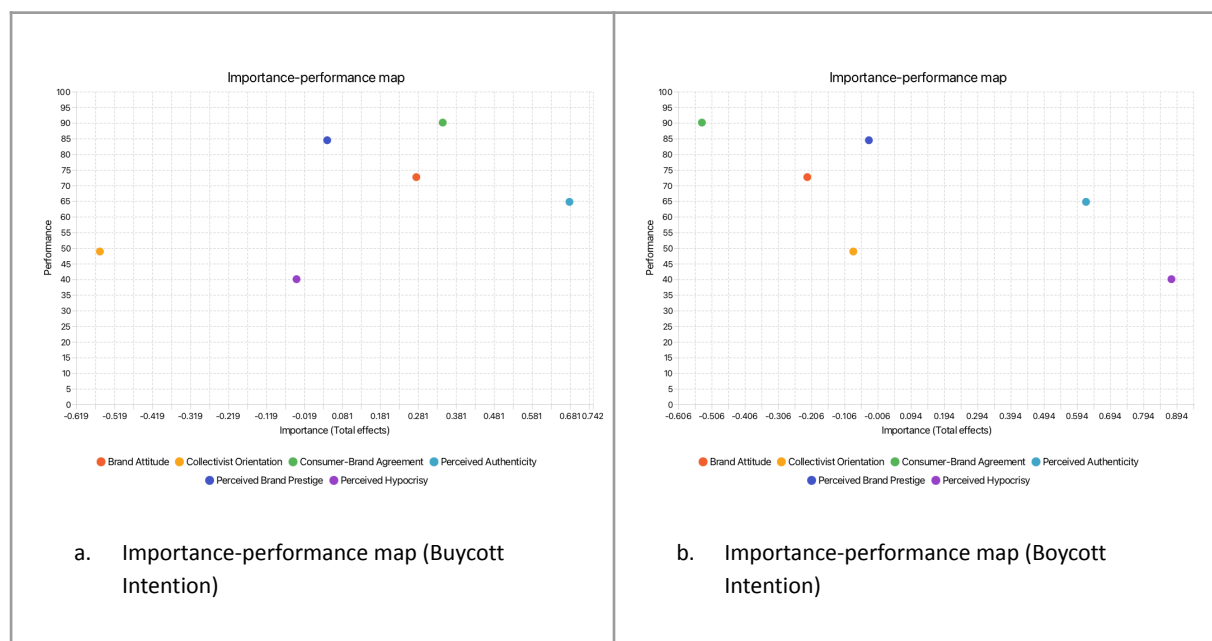
(Note: Importance scores represent unstandardised total effects on the target construct. Performance scores are rescaled on a 0–100 scale.)

The IPMA results identify perceived hypocrisy as the most important predictor of boycott intention (total effect = 0.878) and perceived authenticity as the most important predictor of buycott intention (total effect = 0.680). These two results are the importance-performance counterparts of the core theoretical tests: the credibility judgments dominate both the punitive and the supportive route, and each combines high importance with moderate to low current performance (hypocrisy 40.1, authenticity 64.8), which marks them as the primary managerial priorities within this model. Brand attitude is the most important psychological predictor for buycott intention (0.276), at high performance (72.7), consistent with its role as the supporting attitudinal conduit.

Two total-effect values require restricted interpretation. First, the importance of perceived authenticity for boycott intention (0.621) inherits the suppression artefact documented in

Sections 4.6.1 to 4.6.3: because the direct authenticity-to-boycott path is a partialled effect against the strongly overlapping hypocrisy judgment, the corresponding total effect should not be read as evidence that authenticity perceptions drive boycotting, and the authenticity column for boycott intention carries no managerial implication. Second, the total effect of consumer-brand agreement on boycott intention (-0.535) includes a direct component that was itself nonsignificant in the bootstrapping results ($\beta = -0.453$, $p = 0.072$, Table 4.10); its magnitude is therefore unstable, and the label of agreement as a boycott-prevention lever is not supported by the hypothesis tests. The remaining constructs showed small total effects on both outcomes: perceived brand prestige (0.042 and -0.033) and collectivist orientation (-0.557 on boycott intention, an effect that operates through the interaction structure and the collinearity-sensitive perception equations, and -0.080 on boycott intention). Overall, the IPMA confirms the priority pattern of the hypothesis tests, with hypocrisy management as the dominant lever for reducing boycott risk and authenticity signalling as the dominant lever for stimulating supportive purchase intentions. These priorities are relative within the estimated model and do not constitute evidence of financial return or causal effects from managerial intervention.

Figure 4.3: Importance-performance map for boycott and boycott intention



The map (a) with the boycott intention as the target construct plots the total effects (importance, horizontal axis) against the rescaled construct performance values (vertical axis, 0-100) for the six precursors of boycott intention. Perceived authenticity combines the highest importance (0.680) with moderate performance (64.77), marking it as the primary managerial priority for stimulating supportive purchasing. Consumer-brand agreement shows high performance (90.123) with a small total effect, and perceived brand prestige shows high performance with a negligible effect, indicating limited leverage. Construct scores are mean-centred index values; total effects and performance values are reported in Table

4.14. The importance value of perceived authenticity for boycott intention is not displayed in this map and carries no managerial interpretation because it is affected by the suppression artefact documented in Sections 4.6.1 to 4.6.3.

The map (b) with the boycott intention as the target construct plots the total effects (importance, horizontal axis) against the rescaled construct performance values (vertical axis, 0-100) for the six precursors of boycott intention. Perceived hypocrisy combines the highest importance (0.878) with the lowest performance (40.05), marking it as the principal vulnerability and the primary managerial priority for reducing boycott risk. The total effect of perceived authenticity on boycott intention (0.621) is a suppression artefact arising from the overlap between the two credibility judgments and carries no managerial implication (Sections 4.6.1 to 4.6.3); the same restriction applies to the total effect of consumer-brand agreement on boycott intention (-0.535), which includes a direct component that was nonsignificant in the hypothesis tests (Table 4.10). Total effects and performance values are reported in Table 4.14.

4.7 Supplementary multi-group analysis

The Italy-Vietnam comparison was conducted as a supplementary analysis because the primary cultural variable is individual-level collectivist orientation rather than nationality. Table 4.15a reports the measurement-invariance assessment, and Table 4.15b reports the permutation MGA results for the structural paths.

All constructs achieved configural invariance, and the compositional-invariance permutation p-values were above 0.05. This indicates that the constructs were formed and understood sufficiently similarly across the two groups for standardised path comparisons. The results for equal means and variances indicate full invariance for consumer-brand agreement, perceived brand prestige, and boycott intention, and partial invariance for the remaining constructs.

The MGA results should be interpreted as differences between the two sampled groups, not as evidence that nationality determines individual cultural orientation. The analysis is supplementary to the individual-level moderation tests reported for H_5 and H_6 .

Table 4.15a: MICOM Assessment Results (Italy vs. Vietnam)

Construct	Compositional Corr. (c)	Step 2 (p-value)	Step 3a: Mean (p-value)	Step 3b: Variance (p-value)	MICOM Invariance Status
Collectivist Orientation	0.998	0.307	< 0.001	0.009	Partial invariance
Consumer-Brand Agreement	1.000	0.173	1.000	0.808	Full invariance

Perceived Authenticity	1.000	0.168	< 0.001	0.215	Partial invariance
Perceived Hypocrisy	1.000	0.398	< 0.001	0.095	Partial invariance
Perceived Brand Prestige	1.000	0.556	0.084	0.554	Full invariance
Brand Attitude	1.000	0.388	< 0.001	0.997	Partial invariance
Boycott Intention	1.000	0.268	< 0.001	0.114	Partial invariance
Boycott Intention	1.000	0.919	0.068	0.158	Full invariance

(Note: Evaluated across 2,500 permutations. Step 2 requires $p > 0.05$ to establish compositional invariance.)

Table 4.15b: Permutation MGA results for the Italian and Vietnamese subsamples

Structural Path	Path Coeff. (β Italy)	Path Coeff. (β Vietnam)	Path Diff. ($\Delta\beta$)	Permutation p-value	Significant Group Difference?
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Authenticity	-1.041	1.118	-2.159	< 0.001	Yes ($p < 0.001$)
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Hypocrisy	0.519	-0.996	1.514	< 0.001	Yes ($p < 0.001$)
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Brand Prestige	-0.310	0.383	-0.693	0.332	No
Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Authenticity	1.653	1.083	0.57	0.451	No
Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Brand Prestige	0.934	1.188	-0.254	0.786	No
Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Hypocrisy	-0.697	-1.242	0.545	0.416	No

Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude	0.397	-0.055	0.452	0.014	Yes (p<0.05)
Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Brand Prestige → Brand Attitude	0.154	0.123	0.031	0.909	No
Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude	0.23	0.034	0.196	0.306	No
Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude	0.366	0.540	-0.174	0.522	No
Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude	-0.497	-0.057	-0.440	0.002	Yes (p < 0.01)
Perceived Brand Prestige → Brand Attitude	0.076	0.288	-0.213	0.234	No
Brand Attitude → Buycott Intention	0.171	0.451	-0.280	0.084	No
Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	-0.299	-0.065	-0.234	0.393	No
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Buycott Intention	0.015	0.231	-0.216	0.658	No
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Boycott Intention	-0.694	-0.033	-0.661	0.208	No
Perceived Authenticity → Buycott Intention	0.400	0.418	-0.017	0.928	No
Perceived Authenticity → Boycott Intention	0.586	0.338	0.248	0.259	No
Perceived Hypocrisy → Boycott Intention	0.417	0.971	-0.554	0.007	Yes (p < 0.01)
Perceived Hypocrisy → Buycott Intention	-0.158	0.172	-0.330	0.040	Yes (p < 0.05)
Collectivist Orientation → Brand Attitude	-0.003	0.050	-0.053	0.798	No
Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Authenticity	-1.186	-0.335	-0.851	0.253	No
Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Brand Prestige	-1.359	-0.391	-0.967	0.284	No

Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Hypocrisy	0.515	0.329	0.185	0.776	No
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(Note: Path coefficients are standardised estimates from group-specific SmartPLS 4 interaction models. The same structural specification and algorithmic settings were applied to the Italian and Vietnamese groups, and group differences were evaluated using 2,500 permutations, two-tailed testing, and $\alpha = 0.05$. Standardised partial regression coefficients in multivariate interaction models are not mathematically restricted to the interval [-1, 1]. Values exceeding this range can occur when predictors and product terms are highly collinear or when suppression is present. No post-estimation truncation, Winsorisation, or rescaling was applied. Individual coefficients exceeding ± 1.0 should be interpreted cautiously, while conclusions about cross-national differences rely primarily on the permutation p-values and the direction of the group-specific estimates. MICOM Step 2 establishes compositional invariance for path comparison but does not itself prove identical group-level standardisation.)

The MICOM results established configural invariance through the identical measurement specification and compositional invariance through Step 2, as all permutation p-values exceeded 0.05 (ranging from 0.168 to 0.919). Standardised structural paths can therefore be compared between the Italian and Vietnamese groups. Full invariance, meaning that equal means and equal variances were also established, was observed for consumer-brand agreement, perceived brand prestige, and boycott intention. The remaining five constructs showed partial invariance: for collectivist orientation, both equal means ($p < 0.001$) and equal variances ($p = 0.009$) were rejected, while for perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, brand attitude, and boycott intention only equal means was rejected. Partial invariance of this kind permits path comparison but implies that mean-level differences exist between the groups, so differences in structural paths should be read against these construct-level differences rather than in isolation.

The permutation MGA identified significant between-group differences on six paths. Group-specific estimates differed for both agreement-to-perception paths that were significant in the pooled model, agreement to perceived authenticity (β Italy = -1.041, β Vietnam = 1.118, $p < 0.001$) and agreement to perceived hypocrisy (β Italy = 0.519, β Vietnam = -0.996, $p < 0.001$), although both estimates sit in the collinearity-sensitive agreement block and carry signs that reverse across groups. Beyond the agreement block, perceived hypocrisy affected brand attitude more negatively in Italy than in Vietnam (β Italy = -0.497, β Vietnam = -0.057, $p = 0.002$) and affected boycott intention more strongly in Vietnam than in Italy (β Italy = 0.417, β Vietnam = 0.971, $p = 0.007$). The hypocrisy-to-boycott path also differed significantly between the groups (β Italy = -0.158, β Vietnam = 0.172, $p = 0.040$), and the collectivist-orientation $\times$ authenticity interaction on brand attitude differed as well (β Italy = 0.397, β Vietnam = -0.055, $p = 0.014$). No significant differences were found for the collectivist-orientation $\times$ agreement interactions or the

collectivist-orientation main effects. Most relevant to the core theoretical tests, the two central H_4 paths were statistically invariant or directionally stable across the groups: the authenticity-to-buycott path was almost identical in both samples (β Italy = 0.400, β Vietnam = 0.418, $p = 0.928$), and although the hypocrisy-to-boycott path differed in magnitude ($p = 0.007$), it was positive and substantial in both groups (0.417 and 0.971), so the direction of the core punishment mechanism is stable across countries while its strength varies. These findings describe differences between the sampled groups and should not be interpreted as evidence that nationality determines individual-level collectivist orientation.

Coefficients exceeding ± 1.0 appear in several group-specific estimates (for example, agreement to perceived authenticity and the collectivist-orientation control paths) and are retained as reported standardised partial regression coefficients from the interaction models. They should not be manually rescaled, truncated, or replaced. Their magnitude is consistent with the elevated structural VIFs in the agreement block reported in Table 4.8 and may reflect unstable partial effects or suppression under multicollinearity; conclusions about cross-national differences therefore rely primarily on the permutation p -values and the direction of the group-specific estimates rather than on coefficient size.

4.8 Summary of hypothesis results

In the primary binary-agreement model, both core theoretical tests were supported: perceived authenticity increased buycott intention (H_{4a} : $\beta = 0.533$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived hypocrisy increased boycott intention (H_{4b} : $\beta = 0.825$, $p < 0.001$). The attitudinal mechanism received mixed support. Perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy significantly predicted brand attitude (H_{2a} and H_{2b}), while perceived brand prestige did not (H_{2c}). Brand attitude increased buycott intention (H_{3a}) but did not significantly reduce boycott intention (H_{3b}). Among the agreement-related paths, consumer-brand agreement significantly reduced perceived hypocrisy in the primary model (H_{1b} : $\beta = -0.319$, $p = 0.045$), while its relationships with perceived authenticity (H_{1a}) and perceived brand prestige (H_{1c}) were nonsignificant. All three H_5 interactions and H_{6a} were statistically significant in the primary model, H_{6b} was significant but opposite to the hypothesised direction, and H_{6c} was nonsignificant.

Two caveats qualify these primary-model results. First, the agreement-related estimates in the primary model are affected by the severe interaction-block collinearity documented in Section 4.6.1. Second, the agreement operationalisation itself is a modelling choice, because the original four-point agreement item was recoded into a binary indicator. Section 4.9 therefore reports the prespecified robustness analysis with the original four-point agreement measure, and Section 4.10 integrates the primary and robustness results into a single summary of H_1 to H_7 in Table 4.21.

4.9 Robustness analysis of the agreement-related effects

4.9.1 Rationale and robustness design

The primary structural model operationalised consumer-brand agreement as a binary indicator. The original four-point agreement item combined “Definitely NO” and “Probably NO” into disagreement and “Probably YES” and “Definitely YES” into agreement. Because the agreement variable was highly unbalanced and the primary interaction model produced elevated VIFs, a sensitivity analysis re-estimated the model using the original four-point agreement measure.

The binary model was first replicated in the copied SmartPLS project to verify that the original estimates could be reproduced. The robustness model then replaced the binary agreement indicator with the original four-point item while retaining the same sample, structural paths, interaction terms, PLS-SEM settings, bootstrap procedure, and significance criteria. The robustness analysis therefore tested sensitivity to the operationalisation of agreement rather than sensitivity to a different sample or estimator.

4.9.2 Comparison of structural VIFs

The alternative specification produced substantially lower VIFs for the agreement-related moderation terms. The VIF for collectivist orientation in the agreement-to-perception equations decreased from 36.972 to approximately 1.190, while the VIF for the collectivist-orientation × agreement terms decreased from 36.766 to approximately 1.214. The remaining moderation VIFs were substantively similar across the two specifications.

Table 4.16: Comparison of structural VIFs across agreement specifications

Structural Path	Binary Model VIF	4-Point Model VIF	Collinearity Assessment & Impact
Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Authenticity	36.972	1.190	Collinearity completely resolved (VIF < 3.0)
Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Brand Prestige	36.972	1.190	Collinearity completely resolved (VIF < 3.0)
Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Hypocrisy	36.972	1.190	Collinearity completely resolved (VIF < 3.0)
Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Authenticity	36.766	1.214	Collinearity completely resolved (VIF < 3.0)

Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Brand Prestige	36.766	1.214	Collinearity completely resolved (VIF < 3.0)
Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Hypocrisy	36.766	1.214	Collinearity completely resolved (VIF < 3.0)
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Authenticity	1.169	1.157	Stable (VIF < 3.0)
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Brand Prestige	1.169	1.157	Stable (VIF < 3.0)
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Hypocrisy	1.169	1.157	Stable (VIF < 3.0)
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Boycott Intention	1.029	1.091	Stable (VIF < 3.0)
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Boycott Intention	1.029	1.091	Stable (VIF < 3.0)
Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude	6.172	6.173	Moderate collinearity (unchanged)
Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude	5.949	5.950	Moderate collinearity (unchanged)
Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Brand Prestige → Brand Attitude	2.889	2.889	Stable (VIF < 3.0)
Collectivist Orientation → Brand Attitude	3.199	3.198	Acceptable (VIF ≈ 3.0)
Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude	3.769	3.769	Acceptable (VIF < 5.0)
Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude	2.937	2.937	Stable (VIF < 3.0)
Perceived Brand Prestige → Brand Attitude	1.595	1.595	Stable (VIF < 3.0)
Perceived Authenticity → Boycott Intention	3.214	3.345	Acceptable (VIF < 5.0)
Perceived Authenticity → Boycott Intention	3.214	3.345	Acceptable (VIF < 5.0)

Perceived Hypocrisy → Buycott Intention	2.566	2.578	Stable (VIF < 3.0)
Perceived Hypocrisy → Boycott Intention	2.566	2.578	Stable (VIF < 3.0)
Brand Attitude → Buycott Intention	2.565	2.624	Stable (VIF < 3.0)
Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	2.565	2.624	Stable (VIF < 3.0)

Table 4.16 shows that the extreme collinearity is concentrated in the binary agreement specification and its interactions with collectivist orientation. The four-point specification brings the agreement-related VIFs close to conventional acceptable levels, while the H_6 interaction diagnostics remain essentially unchanged (6.173 and 5.950). Importantly for the core theoretical tests, the collinearity structure of the outcome equations is stable across specifications: the VIFs in the buycott and boycott intention equations remain between 1.091 and 3.345 in both models, so the estimates of H_3 , H_4 , the complementary direct paths, and the control paths are not differentially affected by the agreement operationalisation. This pattern indicates that the main stability concern is specific to the binary agreement and H_5 interaction block rather than to the entire structural model.

4.9.3 Comparison of explanatory power and effect sizes

Table 4.17: Comparison of R^2 and adjusted R^2 values

Endogenous Construct	Binary Model R^2	Binary Model Adj. R^2	4-Point Model R^2	4-Point Model Adj. R^2	Explanatory Power Assessment
Perceived Authenticity	0.446	0.436	0.399	0.387	Moderate variance explained ($\Delta R^2 = -0.047$)
Perceived Hypocrisy	0.322	0.309	0.304	0.291	Moderate variance explained ($\Delta R^2 = -0.018$)
Perceived Brand Prestige	0.053	0.035	0.025	0.007	Weak overall explanatory power
Brand Attitude	0.664	0.649	0.664	0.649	Identical substantial explanation ($R^2 = 66.4\%$)

Boycott Intention	0.554	0.543	0.554	0.543	Identical substantial explanation ($R^2 = 55.4\%$)
Boycott Intention	0.376	0.361	0.391	0.376	Slight improvement ($\Delta R^2 = +0.015$)

The R^2 comparison reinforces the two-tier pattern of the robustness analysis. Brand attitude (0.664) and boycott intention (0.554) showed identical explanatory power in both specifications, and boycott intention actually improved slightly in the four-point model (0.376 to 0.391), so the downstream attitudinal and behavioural equations do not depend on the agreement operationalisation. The perception layer was more sensitive: the four-point model explained less variance in perceived authenticity (0.446 to 0.399), perceived hypocrisy (0.322 to 0.304), and perceived brand prestige (0.053 to 0.025). This pattern is expected because the binary agreement variable, amplified by its interaction with collectivist orientation, contributed substantial shared variance to the perception equations in the primary model, variance that largely disappeared once the collinearity was resolved. Agreement operationalisation therefore affects the perception layer more strongly than the outcome equations, which parallels the VIF comparison in Table 4.16 and confirms that the estimates for the core theoretical tests rest on stable explanatory ground in both specifications.

Table 4.18: Comparison of agreement-related effect sizes

Structural Path	Binary Model f^2	4-Point Model f^2	Effect Size Classification & Impact
Perceived Hypocrisy → Boycott Intention	0.425	0.455	Large effect ($f^2 \geq 0.35$; primary direct driver)
Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Authenticity	0.026	0.508	Shifts from small to large effect after VIF resolution
Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Hypocrisy	0.006	0.392	Shifts from negligible to large effect after VIF resolution
Perceived Authenticity → Boycott Intention	0.271	0.23	Medium effect ($0.15 \leq f^2 < 0.35$)
Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude	0.222	0.222	Medium effect (identical impact across models)

Perceived Authenticity → Boycott Intention	0.199	0.194	Medium effect ($0.15 \leq f^2 < 0.35$)
Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude	0.071	0.071	Small effect ($0.02 \leq f^2 < 0.15$; identical)
Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	0.067	0.065	Small effect ($0.02 \leq f^2 < 0.15$)
Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude	0.06	0.06	Small effect (identical across models)
Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude	0.059	0.059	Small effect (identical across models)
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Boycott Intention	0.028	0.054	Small effect (slight increase in four-point model)
Perceived Brand Prestige → Brand Attitude	0.042	0.042	Small effect (identical across models)
Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	0.03	0.022	Small effect ($0.02 \leq f^2 < 0.15$)
Collectivist Orientation → Perceived Brand Prestige	0.037	0.016	Shifts from small to negligible effect
Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Authenticity	0.093	0.006	Uninflated post-collinearity correction
Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Brand Prestige	0.043	0.013	Uninflated post-collinearity correction
Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Hypocrisy	0.036	0.011	Uninflated post-collinearity correction
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Authenticity	0.017	0	Negligible effect ($f^2 < 0.02$)
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Brand Prestige	0.024	0.003	Negligible effect ($f^2 < 0.02$)
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Hypocrisy	0.011	0.001	Negligible effect ($f^2 < 0.02$)
Consumer-Brand Agreement → Boycott Intention	0.001	0.001	Negligible effect ($f^2 < 0.02$)

Perceived Hypocrisy → Boycott Intention	0.001	0.001	Negligible effect ($f^2 < 0.02$)
Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Brand Prestige → Brand Attitude	0.009	0.009	Negligible effect ($f^2 < 0.02$)
Collectivist Orientation → Brand Attitude	0	0	No structural effect ($f^2 = 0.000$)

The effect-size comparison reinforces the VIF and R^2 findings, and it separates stable from specification-sensitive results. The core theoretical effects were stable or strengthened across specifications: perceived hypocrisy's large effect on boycott intention increased from $f^2 = 0.425$ to 0.455 , the H_4 and H_2 effects of perceived authenticity remained at medium levels (boycott intention 0.199 to 0.194 , brand attitude 0.222 , boycott intention 0.271 to 0.230), and the attitude paths of brand attitude and perceived hypocrisy were essentially identical across models. By contrast, the agreement-related effects were uniformly small or negligible in both specifications: all three agreement-to-perception direct effects dropped to negligible levels in the four-point model, the H_5 interaction effects fell from small to negligible (0.093 , 0.043 , and 0.036 to 0.006 , 0.013 , and 0.011), and the agreement-to-intention control effects remained negligible (boycott intention 0.001 in both; boycott intention 0.028 to 0.054). One value requires a restricted interpretation: the collectivist-orientation main effects on perceived authenticity (0.026 to 0.508) and perceived hypocrisy (0.006 to 0.392) expanded sharply once the interaction-block collinearity was resolved in the four-point model, which indicates that the binary specification suppressed these control effects rather than that they changed substantively; as control paths, they carry no hypothesis weight in either specification.

4.9.4 Comparison of H_1 direct effects

Table 4.19: Robustness comparison of direct effects

Hypothesis	Direct Structural Path	Primary Binary Model (β , t , p , 95% CI)	Robustness 4-Point Model (β , t , p , 95% CI)	Empirical Stability & Verdict
H_{1a}	Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Authenticity	$\beta = 0.347$, $t = 1.673$, $p = 0.094$, 95% CI [-0.059, 0.744]	$\beta = -0.007$, $t = 0.095$, $p = 0.924$, 95% CI [-0.155, 0.140]	Consistent (not supported in both specifications)
H_{1b}	Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Hypocrisy	$\beta = -0.319$, $t = 2.008$, $p = 0.045$, 95% CI [-0.608, -0.030]	$\beta = 0.030$, $t = 0.373$, $p = 0.709$, 95% CI [-0.128, 0.188]	Sensitive (supported in the binary model, nonsignificant in the four-point model)

		95% CI [-0.637, -0.003]		
H _{1c}	Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Brand Prestige	$\beta = 0.543$, $t = 1.690$, $p = 0.091$, 95% CI [-0.048, 1.237]	$\beta = 0.056$, $t = 0.593$, $p = 0.553$, 95% CI [-0.121, 0.253]	Consistent (not supported in both specifications)
H _{2a}	Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude	$\beta = 0.530$, $t = 4.420$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.281, 0.752]	$\beta = 0.530$, $t = 4.419$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.281, 0.752]	Robust (supported, $p < 0.001$, identical coefficients)
H _{2b}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude	$\beta = -0.244$, $t = 3.364$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [-0.394, -0.106]	$\beta = -0.244$, $t = 3.364$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [-0.394, -0.106]	Robust (supported, $p = 0.001$, identical coefficients)
H _{2c}	Perceived Brand Prestige → Brand Attitude	$\beta = 0.150$, $t = 1.777$, $p = 0.076$, 95% CI [-0.008, 0.324]	$\beta = 0.151$, $t = 1.779$, $p = 0.075$, 95% CI [-0.008, 0.324]	Consistent (not supported in both specifications)
H _{3a}	Brand Attitude → Buycott Intention	$\beta = 0.276$, $t = 3.321$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [0.108, 0.440]	$\beta = 0.275$, $t = 3.272$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [0.108, 0.442]	Robust (supported, $p = 0.001$)
H _{3b}	Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	$\beta = -0.218$, $t = 1.681$, $p = 0.093$, 95% CI [-0.464, 0.046]	$\beta = -0.189$, $t = 1.521$, $p = 0.128$, 95% CI [-0.424, 0.065]	Consistent (not supported in both specifications)
H _{4a}	Perceived Authenticity → Buycott Intention	$\beta = 0.533$, $t = 5.592$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.334, 0.712]	$\beta = 0.538$, $t = 5.572$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.334, 0.716]	Robust (supported, $p < 0.001$)
H _{4b}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Boycott Intention	$\beta = 0.825$, $t = 8.507$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.616, 0.995]	$\beta = 0.845$, $t = 8.573$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.632, 1.019]	Robust (supported, $p < 0.001$)

Table 4.19 compares the direct-effect hypotheses across specifications. The core theoretical tests were fully robust: H_{4a} remained essentially identical ($\beta = 0.533$ to 0.538 , $p < 0.001$) and

H_{4b} equally stable ($\beta = 0.825$ to 0.845 , $p < 0.001$), so the direct credibility-to-behaviour routes do not depend on how agreement is measured. The attitudinal mechanism was likewise robust: H_{2a} and H_{2b} produced identical estimates in both specifications, and H_{3a} remained significant with negligible change, while H_{3b} was consistently nonsignificant with its negative direction preserved ($\beta = -0.218$ to -0.189). The agreement-to-perception paths were specification-sensitive: H_{1b} , the only supported component of H_1 in the binary model ($\beta = -0.319$, $p = 0.045$), was nonsignificant in the four-point model ($\beta = 0.030$, $p = 0.709$), with even its sign reversed, and H_{1a} and H_{1c} collapsed toward zero while remaining consistently nonsignificant. The H_{1b} result should therefore be interpreted with particular caution, because it emerged only under the specification with severe interaction-block collinearity.

4.9.5 Comparison of H_5 , H_6 , and H_7

Table 4.20: Robustness comparison of H_5 , H_6 , H_7

Hypothesis	Structural Path	Primary Binary Model (β , t , p , 95% CI)	Robustness 4-Point Model (β , t , p , 95% CI)	Empirical Stability & Verdict
H_{5a}	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Consumer-Brand Agreement $\rightarrow$ Perceived Authenticity	$\beta = 1.401$, $t = 4.198$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.728, 2.084]	$\beta = 0.075$, $t = 0.772$, $p = 0.440$, 95% CI [-0.139, 0.233]	Sensitive (collinearity artefact in the binary model)
H_{5b}	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Consumer-Brand Agreement $\rightarrow$ Perceived Hypocrisy	$\beta = -0.960$, $t = 3.115$, $p = 0.002$, 95% CI [-1.482, -0.234]	$\beta = 0.109$, $t = 0.957$, $p = 0.339$, 95% CI [-0.063, 0.377]	Sensitive (collinearity artefact in the binary model)
H_{5c}	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Consumer-Brand Agreement $\rightarrow$ Perceived Brand Prestige	$\beta = 1.245$, $t = 3.078$, $p = 0.002$, 95% CI [0.582, 2.199]	$\beta = -0.140$, $t = 1.198$, $p = 0.231$, 95% CI [-0.431, 0.022]	Sensitive (collinearity artefact in the binary model)
H_{6a}	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Perceived Authenticity $\rightarrow$ Brand Attitude	$\beta = 0.318$, $t = 3.327$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [0.144, 0.521]	$\beta = 0.318$, $t = 3.328$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [0.144, 0.521]	Robust (supported, $p = 0.001$, identical estimates)
H_{6b}	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Perceived Hypocrisy $\rightarrow$ Brand Attitude	$\beta = 0.312$, $t = 3.357$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [0.138, 0.507]	$\beta = 0.312$, $t = 3.358$, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [0.138, 0.507]	Robust (supported, $p = 0.001$, identical estimates)
H_{6c}	Collectivist Orientation $\times$ Perceived Brand Prestige $\rightarrow$ Brand Attitude	$\beta = 0.126$, $t = 1.112$, $p = 0.266$, 95% CI [-0.103, 0.343]	$\beta = 0.127$, $t = 1.114$, $p = 0.265$, 95% CI [-0.102, 0.344]	Consistent (not supported in both specifications)

H _{7a}	Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude → Buycott Intention	$\beta = 0.147, t = 2.529, p = 0.011, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.044, 0.272]$	$\beta = 0.146, t = 3.234, p = 0.001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.045, 0.270]$	Robust (supported, identical indirect effect)
H _{7b}	Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	$\beta = -0.116, t = 1.418, p = 0.156, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.296, 0.019]$	$\beta = -0.100, t = 1.337, p = 0.182, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.288, 0.027]$	Consistent (not supported in both specifications)
H _{7c}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude → Buycott Intention	$\beta = -0.067, t = 2.712, p = 0.007, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.121, -0.023]$	$\beta = -0.067, t = 2.408, p = 0.016, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.128, -0.023]$	Robust (supported, identical indirect effect)
H _{7d}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	$\beta = 0.053, t = 1.344, p = 0.179, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.010, 0.147]$	$\beta = 0.046, t = 1.234, p = 0.217, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.015, 0.149]$	Consistent (not supported in both specifications)

Table 4.20 extends the comparison to the moderation and mediation hypotheses. The H₅ results were entirely specification-sensitive: all three interactions were significant in the binary model (H_{5a}: $\beta = 1.401$; H_{5b}: $\beta = -0.960$; H_{5c}: $\beta = 1.245$) and nonsignificant in the four-point model ($\beta = 0.075, 0.109$, and -0.140 , all $p > 0.23$), with the four-point estimates collapsing toward zero once the interaction-block collinearity was resolved. The H₅ findings should therefore be treated as exploratory rather than as robust evidence of collectivist moderation, and the simple-slope results reported in Table 4.12 apply only to the primary specification. The H₆ results were robust in both significance and magnitude: H_{6a} and H_{6b} produced identical estimates across specifications ($\beta = 0.318$ and $0.312, p = 0.001$), although H_{6b} remained opposite to the hypothesised direction in both, and H_{6c} was consistently nonsignificant. The H₇ mediation results were fully robust: the complementary authenticity-to-buycott indirect effect (H_{7a}: $\beta = 0.147$ to 0.146) and the indirect-only hypocrisy-to-buycott effect (H_{7c}: $\beta = -0.067$ in both) were supported in both specifications, while the two indirect routes to boycott intention were nonsignificant in both. The selective-mediator pattern, with brand attitude transmitting credibility judgments to reward but not to punishment, therefore does not depend on the agreement operationalisation.

4.9.6 Robustness conclusion

The robustness analysis indicates that the core theoretical results were stable across agreement specifications: the direct credibility routes (H_{4a}, H_{4b}), the attitudinal mechanism (H₂, H_{3a}), the H₆ authenticity and hypocrisy interactions, and both supported indirect routes of H₇ were statistically equivalent under the binary and four-point agreement measures, and the outcome-equation collinearity was acceptable in both. In contrast, the agreement-related findings were not robust. The original binary model generated significant H_{1b} and H₅ effects, whereas the four-point specification produced negligible or nonsignificant

effects and substantially lower VIFs, and the H_{1b} effect even reversed sign. These agreement-related findings should therefore be interpreted as specification-sensitive and exploratory. Because the four-point measure resolves the collinearity while preserving the core results, it provides the cleaner test of the agreement-related hypotheses, and the substantive conclusions of this research rest on the robust credibility-based routes rather than on the specification-sensitive agreement effects.

4.10 Integrated summary of hypothesis results across specifications

Table 4.21: Summary of H_1 to H_7

Hypothesis	Structural Paths	Path Coeff. (β)	t-statistic	p-value	95% Percentile CI [LL, UL]	Empirical Result
H_{1a}	Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Authenticity	0.347	1.673	0.094	[-0.059, 0.744]	Not Supported; near-zero and nonsignificant in the four-point model
H_{1b}	Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Hypocrisy	-0.319	2.008	0.045	[-0.637, -0.003]	Specification-sensitive: significant in the primary binary model; nonsignificant and sign-reversed in the four-point model (Section 4.9)
H_{1c}	Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Brand Prestige	0.543	1.690	0.091	[-0.048, 1.237]	Not Supported; near-zero and nonsignificant in the four-point model
H_{2a}	Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude	0.530	4.420	< 0.001	[0.281, 0.752]	Supported ($p < 0.001$); robust
H_{2b}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude	-0.244	3.364	0.001	[-0.394, -0.106]	Supported ($p < 0.01$); robust
H_{2c}	Perceived Brand Prestige → Brand Attitude	0.150	1.777	0.076	[-0.008, 0.324]	Not Supported: stable across specifications
H_{3a}	Brand Attitude → Buycott Intention	0.276	3.321	0.001	[0.108, 0.440]	Supported ($p < 0.01$); robust

H _{3b}	Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	-0.218	1.681	0.093	[-0.464, 0.046]	Not Supported; consistent across specifications
H _{4a}	Perceived Authenticity → Buycott Intention	0.533	5.592	< 0.001	[0.334, 0.712]	Supported (p < 0.001); robust
H _{4b}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Boycott Intention	0.825	8.507	< 0.001	[0.616, 0.995]	Supported (p < 0.001); robust
H _{5a}	Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Authenticity	1.401	4.198	< 0.001	[0.728, 2.084]	Specification-sensitive: significant in the primary binary mode; nonsignificant in the four-point model; exploratory (Section 4.9)
H _{5b}	Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Hypocrisy	-0.960	3.115	0.002	[-1.482, -0.234]	Specification-sensitive: significant in the primary binary mode; nonsignificant in the four-point model; exploratory (Section 4.9)
H _{5c}	Collectivist Orientation × Consumer-Brand Agreement → Perceived Brand Prestige	1.245	3.078	0.002	[0.582, 2.199]	Specification-sensitive: significant in the primary binary mode; nonsignificant in the four-point model; exploratory (Section 4.9)
H _{6a}	Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude	0.318	3.327	0.001	[0.144, 0.521]	Supported (p < 0.01): robust
H _{6b}	Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude	0.312	3.357	0.001	[0.138, 0.507]	Not Supported (significant but opposite to the hypothesised direction; stable across specifications)

H _{6c}	Collectivist Orientation × Perceived Brand Prestige → Brand Attitude	0.126	1.112	0.266	[-0.103, 0.343]	Not Supported; stable across specifications
H _{7a}	Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	0.147	2.529	0.011	[0.044, 0.272]	Supported (complementary, partial mediation); robust
H _{7b}	Perceived Authenticity → Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	-0.116	1.418	0.156	[-0.296, 0.019]	Not Supported (no mediation); consistent across specifications
H _{7c}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	-0.067	2.712	0.007	[-0.121, -0.023]	Supported (indirect-only, full mediation); robust
H _{7d}	Perceived Hypocrisy → Brand Attitude → Boycott Intention	0.053	1.344	0.179	[-0.010, 0.147]	Not Supported (no mediation); consistent across specifications

(Note: Support decisions are based on path direction and the two-tailed p-value in the primary binary-agreement model, with the 95% percentile-bootstrap intervals reported as supplementary evidence. "Robust" indicates that the result was supported in both the binary and four-point agreement specifications (Tables 4.20 and 4.21). "Specification-sensitive" indicates that the result was significant only under the binary specification, whose agreement-related interaction block showed severe collinearity (Table 4.8); these findings should be interpreted as exploratory.)

4.11 Chapter summary

This chapter screened and described the final sample, assessed the measurement and structural models, and tested the direct, indirect, moderation, predictive, IPMA, and supplementary cross-national results. The robustness analysis showed that the agreement-related H_{1b} and H₅ findings were sensitive to the use of a binary rather than the original four-point agreement measure and should be interpreted as exploratory, whereas the credibility-based findings (H_{2a}, H_{2b}, H_{3a}, H_{4a}, H_{4b}, H_{6a}, H_{7a}, and H_{7c}) were robust across both specifications. Chapter 5 discusses these findings and their theoretical, managerial, and societal implications.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter interprets the empirical findings in relation to the theoretical framework and prior literature. The discussion combines statistical evidence with substantive interpretation, using the estimated coefficients, effect sizes, explained variance, mediation results, and robustness findings to clarify this study's contribution. The central argument is that consumer responses to luxury brand activism are explained more consistently by credibility judgments, particularly authenticity and hypocrisy, than by agreement or prestige alone.

5.2 Summary of key findings and central theoretical interpretation

The most consistent pattern is a credibility-based asymmetry, and it rests on the core theoretical tests. Perceived hypocrisy had a strong direct effect on boycott intention ($\beta = 0.825$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.425$), the single largest path in the model. Perceived authenticity had a positive effect on brand attitude ($\beta = 0.530$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.222$) and a direct positive effect on boycott intention ($\beta = 0.533$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.199$). These relationships remained substantively stable when the original four-point agreement item replaced the binary agreement measure, so the core conclusions do not depend on the agreement operationalisation.

The supporting attitudinal mechanism worked selectively. Brand attitude was shaped by both credibility judgments and predicted boycott intention ($\beta = 0.276$, $p = 0.001$) but not boycott intention ($\beta = -0.218$, $p = 0.093$). The mediation results clarified the structure of this selectivity: brand attitude partially transmitted the effect of perceived authenticity on boycott intention (complementary mediation), fully transmitted the effect of perceived hypocrisy on boycott intention (indirect-only mediation, since hypocrisy had no direct effect on boycott intention), and transmitted neither judgment to boycott intention, which was driven directly by the credibility judgments themselves.

By contrast, perceived prestige did not significantly predict brand attitude ($\beta = 0.150$, $p = 0.076$), and the agreement-related H_1 and H_5 findings did not survive the alternative agreement specification. These results support the persuasion knowledge model as the principal theoretical foundation. Consumers appeared to respond more consistently to what the activism implied about the brand's sincerity and consistency than to whether they simply agreed with the stance. This interpretation aligns with research showing that consumers distinguish intrinsic commitment from commercially motivated persuasion and respond more positively when activism appears authentic (Virkus & Klein, 2026). It also supports the woke-washing framework, in which credibility depends on alignment among purpose, values, communication, and corporate practice (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

5.3 Discussion of direct effects

5.3.1 Consumer-brand agreement and brand perceptions

In the primary binary model, H_1 received partial support. Consumer-brand agreement reduced perceived hypocrisy ($\beta = -0.319$, $p = 0.045$), but its relationships with perceived authenticity ($\beta = 0.347$, $p = 0.094$) and perceived brand prestige ($\beta = 0.543$, $p = 0.091$) were not statistically significant. The corresponding effect sizes were small or negligible, ranging from $f^2 = 0.011$ to $f^2 = 0.024$.

Taken alone, the negative agreement-to-hypocrisy coefficient suggests that consumers who supported the environmental stance were less likely to regard the announcement as inconsistent. This is broadly compatible with the asymmetric effect identified by Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020), who found that disagreement damages evaluations more reliably than agreement improves them. However, agreement did not create significant gains in authenticity or prestige, indicating that support for the cause was insufficient to establish sincere motive or symbolic value.

The robustness analysis materially qualifies H_1 . With the original four-point agreement item, the effects on perceived authenticity ($\beta = -0.007$, $p = 0.924$), perceived brand prestige ($\beta = 0.056$, $p = 0.553$), and perceived hypocrisy ($\beta = 0.030$, $p = 0.709$) were all nonsignificant. The agreement-to-hypocrisy coefficient also changed sign. H_{1b} should therefore be treated as specification-sensitive rather than as firm evidence that agreement reduces hypocrisy. The qualifier is reinforced by the collinearity diagnosis in Section 4.6.1: the binary specification's interaction block, with VIFs near 37, is precisely the condition under which unstable partial effects arise, and the four-point specification resolves that collinearity.

This qualification strengthens an important conceptual distinction. Agreement concerns congruence between the consumer's stance and the brand's stance. Authenticity and hypocrisy concern the relationship between the brand's claims, motives, identity, and conduct. A consumer can support the cause while distrusting the brand, or oppose the cause while recognising that the brand has acted consistently. The data therefore do not support reducing credibility judgments to stance agreement.

5.3.2 Brand perceptions and brand attitude

H_2 received partial support. Perceived authenticity was the strongest positive predictor of brand attitude ($\beta = 0.530$, $p < 0.001$), while perceived hypocrisy had a smaller but significant negative effect ($\beta = -0.244$, $p = 0.001$). Together with the other predictors and interactions, the model explained 66.4% of the variance in brand attitude. The medium effect of perceived authenticity ($f^2 = 0.222$) and smaller effect of perceived hypocrisy ($f^2 = 0.060$) show that credibility judgments contributed meaningfully beyond their statistical significance. Both

estimates were identical in the four-point robustness specification, so the perception-to-attitude relationships do not depend on how agreement is measured.

The authenticity finding indicates that respondents evaluated Hermès more favourably when the activism appeared genuine. This is consistent with evidence that perceived authenticity improves purchase-related intentions and positive consumer responses (Virkus & Klein, 2026). It also aligns with luxury-specific research showing that consumers support authentic activism but reject initiatives that appear detached from brand values and practices (Tan, 2025).

The negative hypocrisy effect demonstrates that perceived contradiction weakened the overall evaluation of the brand even when authenticity and prestige were considered simultaneously. This supports the argument that hypocrisy is not merely low authenticity. It is a stronger attribution that the brand has violated a standard established by its own communication. Prior research similarly shows that inconsistency between activist claims and corporate practice can generate woke-washing accusations, weaken trust, and provoke backlash (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2024).

Perceived brand prestige had a positive but nonsignificant effect on brand attitude ($\beta = 0.150$, $p = 0.076$, $f^2 = 0.042$), despite its high descriptive mean of 7.761 on a nine-point scale. This contrasts with research showing that luxury activism can enhance self-expressive value and luxury brand perception, which can support purchase intention (Khalifa & Osburg, 2025). A plausible interpretation is that Hermès's established prestige functioned as a background asset with limited room to increase after one hypothetical announcement. Once perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy were included, credibility mattered more than additional status symbolism. Consistent with this thesis's priority structure, prestige is treated as a secondary mechanism: its role was tested only as an antecedent of brand attitude, and no prestige-to-intention paths were specified or interpreted.

5.3.3 Brand attitude and political-consumption intentions

H₃ received partial support. Brand attitude increased boycott intention ($\beta = 0.276$, $p = 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.067$) but did not significantly reduce boycott intention ($\beta = -0.218$, $p = 0.093$, $f^2 = 0.030$). The model explained 55.4% of the variance in boycott intention and 37.6% of the variance in boycott intention. This difference indicates that the proposed mechanisms capture supportive purchasing better than punitive avoidance, although the direction of the boycott path was negative as theorised, and the four-point specification explained slightly more variance in boycott intention (39.1%).

The positive boycott path is consistent with Hong and Li (2021), who identify brand attitude as a mechanism connecting evaluations of a corporate stance with political-consumption intentions. In a luxury context, a supportive purchase requires not only approval of the activism but also a sufficiently favourable overall evaluation to justify a high-cost transaction.

The nonsignificant boycott path shows that general liking of the brand was less important for punishment than the specific judgment of hypocrisy. The coefficient pointed in the theorised negative direction but lacked significance, so the data do not establish an attitudinal route to punishment. Consumers may retain some favourable feelings toward a prestigious brand while still deciding to avoid it because they perceive a moral or behavioural contradiction. Boycotting can therefore follow a focused negative judgment without requiring a uniformly negative brand attitude.

5.3.4 Direct credibility-to-behaviour paths

Both H_4 paths, the core theoretical tests of this research, were supported. Perceived authenticity directly increased boycott intention ($\beta = 0.533$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.199$), while perceived hypocrisy directly increased boycott intention ($\beta = 0.825$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.425$). The hypocrisy-to-punishment effect was the largest direct path in the model, and both effects were larger than the corresponding effects of brand attitude on the two outcomes. Both estimates were stable across the binary and four-point agreement specifications.

The two complementary direct paths completed the picture. Perceived hypocrisy had no direct effect on boycott intention ($\beta = 0.028$, $p = 0.728$), which enabled the indirect-only classification of its attitudinal route. The direct path from perceived authenticity to boycott intention was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.737$, $p < 0.001$), but as documented in Sections 4.6.1 to 4.6.3, this effect is a suppression artefact: the zero-order correlation between authenticity and boycott intention is negligible ($r = -0.067$), so the coefficient reflects variance partialled against the strongly overlapping hypocrisy judgment and carries no substantive interpretation.

The H_4 effects provide the clearest evidence for this research's two-route contribution. Perceived authenticity gives consumers a reason to reward the brand, while perceived hypocrisy gives them a reason to punish it. This finding is consistent with luxury activism research showing that authenticity and hypocrisy have different behavioural consequences (Tan, 2025). It also supports treating boycotting and boycotting as distinct outcomes rather than opposite points on a single purchase-intention scale.

5.4 Brand attitude as a selective mediator

H_7 received partial support, with three distinct classifications across the four specific indirect routes.

The classifications carry different theoretical weight. The complementary mediation for perceived authenticity means that sincerity judgments encourage supportive purchasing through two channels, improved brand attitude and a direct behavioural route. The indirect-only mediation for perceived hypocrisy is the sharper finding: perceived hypocrisy damages supportive purchasing entirely by eroding the overall evaluation of the brand, with

no independent behavioural effect once attitude is considered. These indirect effects were stable across both agreement specifications.

5.5 Cultural moderation and robustness

In the primary model, H_5 was supported. The interactions of collectivist orientation with consumer-brand agreement were significant for perceived authenticity ($\beta = 1.401$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.093$), perceived brand prestige ($\beta = 1.245$, $p = 0.002$, $f^2 = 0.043$), and perceived hypocrisy ($\beta = -0.960$, $p = 0.002$, $f^2 = 0.036$). The simple slopes suggested stronger agreement-to-perception relationships at higher collectivist orientation.

These H_5 findings were not robust. In the four-point model, none of the interactions was significant: perceived authenticity ($\beta = 0.075$, $p = 0.440$), perceived brand prestige ($\beta = -0.140$, $p = 0.231$), and perceived hypocrisy ($\beta = 0.109$, $p = 0.340$). At the same time, the agreement-related interaction VIFs fell from 36.766 to approximately 1.214. H_5 should therefore be interpreted as an exploratory result of the binary specification rather than as dependable evidence that collectivism amplifies agreement effects.

H_6 was more stable but did not show uniform cultural amplification. Collectivist orientation strengthened the perceived-authenticity-to-attitude relationship ($\beta = 0.318$, $p = 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.071$), supporting H_{6a} . The perceived-hypocrisy interaction was also significant ($\beta = 0.312$, $p = 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.059$), but its positive sign meant that the negative perceived-hypocrisy-to-attitude relationship became weaker at higher collectivist orientation, contrary to H_{6b} . The perceived-brand-prestige interaction was nonsignificant ($\beta = 0.126$, $p = 0.267$, $f^2 = 0.009$).

The unexpected perceived-hypocrisy interaction may indicate that relational loyalty, conflict avoidance, or contextual tolerance protects the broader brand evaluation even when hypocrisy is perceived. This explanation remains provisional because these mechanisms were not measured. Prior brand-activism research also shows that identity-related characteristics can buffer, rather than amplify, negative effects when consumers have an established relationship with a brand (Haupt et al., 2023). Cultural orientation should therefore be treated as a path-specific boundary condition, not as a general predictor of support or opposition.

5.6 Predictive assessment and importance-performance results

The explanatory results were strongest for brand attitude ($R^2 = 0.664$) and boycott intention ($R^2 = 0.554$), moderate for perceived authenticity ($R^2 = 0.446$), perceived hypocrisy ($R^2 = 0.322$), and boycott intention ($R^2 = 0.376$), and weak for perceived brand prestige ($R^2 = 0.053$). Boycott intention had lower explanatory power than boycott intention, reinforcing the conclusion that punitive avoidance depends on factors not fully represented in the model.

PLSpredict showed the strongest performance for brand attitude and boycott intention, for which all indicators had lower RMSE than the linear benchmark. Prediction was weaker for the perception constructs and for boycott intention, where all three indicators had higher PLS-SEM error than the benchmark. Perceived brand prestige also showed negative predictive-relevance values. These results indicate that the model's out-of-sample advantage is concentrated on the supportive side, which parallels the explanatory pattern and should be kept in mind when boycott-prevention recommendations are framed.

The IPMA results supported the central interpretation. Perceived hypocrisy had the largest total effect on boycott intention (0.878) with a performance score of 40.05, identifying it as the principal vulnerability associated with punishment. Perceived authenticity had the largest total effect on boycott intention (0.680) with a performance score of 64.77, identifying it as the main potential leverage point for consumer support. Two IPMA values require restricted interpretation: the total effect of perceived authenticity on boycott intention (0.621) inherits the suppression artefact documented in Chapter 4 and carries no managerial implication, and the total effect of consumer-brand agreement on boycott intention (-0.535) includes a direct component that was nonsignificant in the hypothesis tests. IPMA remains a prioritisation tool rather than evidence that managerial intervention will produce causal or financial returns; its importance and performance scores should be interpreted as relative model-based indicators (Hair et al., 2024).

5.7 Supplementary comparison between Italy and Vietnam

The permutation MGA identified significant between-group differences between the Italian and Vietnamese subsamples on six paths: consumer-brand agreement to perceived authenticity and consumer-brand agreement to perceived hypocrisy (both $p < 0.001$, both situated in the collinearity-sensitive agreement block), perceived hypocrisy to brand attitude ($p = 0.002$), perceived hypocrisy to boycott intention ($p = 0.007$), perceived hypocrisy to boycott intention ($p = 0.040$), and the collectivist-orientation $\times$ perceived-authenticity interaction ($p = 0.014$). Most relevant to the core theoretical tests, the perceived-authenticity-to-boycott path was statistically identical across the two groups ($\beta = 0.400$ in Italy, 0.418 in Vietnam, $p = 0.928$), and the perceived-hypocrisy-to-boycott path, although differing in magnitude, was positive and substantial in both. The supportive route therefore operates almost identically in both contexts, while the strength of the punishment route varies.

Two of these six differences require restricted interpretation. The agreement-to-perceived-authenticity and agreement-to-perceived-hypocrisy differences are located in the agreement block, whose group-specific estimates were affected by the severe interaction-block collinearity documented in Section 4.6.1: the group coefficients exceed ± 1.0 in magnitude and reverse signs between the two samples. These two differences should therefore be treated as unstable estimation artefacts rather than as evidence of

cross-national variation. The remaining four differences, the three perceived-hypocrisy paths (to brand attitude, boycott intention, and buycott intention) and the collectivist-orientation $\times$ perceived-authenticity interaction, are the credible indicators of contextual heterogeneity in this sample, with hypocrisy perceptions operating more strongly in Vietnam than in Italy.

These findings suggest that the credibility process may operate differently across the sampled contexts, particularly for hypocrisy. However, nationality should not be treated as a proxy for collectivist orientation. Configural and compositional invariance permitted path comparison, but several constructs achieved only partial invariance, and the group-specific estimates in the agreement block were affected by collinearity. The country results are therefore supplementary evidence of contextual heterogeneity, not proof of national cultural causation.

5.8 Key theoretical contributions

The first contribution is a credibility-centred explanation of luxury brand activism. The stable effects of perceived authenticity on brand attitude ($\beta = 0.530$) and buycott intention ($\beta = 0.533$), and of perceived hypocrisy on brand attitude ($\beta = -0.244$) and boycott intention ($\beta = 0.825$), support the persuasion knowledge model more strongly than an agreement-centred account. Consumers' inferences about sincerity and contradiction explain responses more consistently than whether they merely share the brand's stance.

The second contribution is the identification of differentiated reward and punishment routes. Perceived authenticity supported boycotting directly and indirectly through brand attitude, with the mediation classified as complementary. Perceived hypocrisy reduced boycotting entirely through attitude, an indirect-only route with no direct effect, but influenced boycotting directly, with no attitudinal route. This combination of direct and indirect results shows why supportive and punitive political consumption should not be collapsed into one behavioural outcome.

The third contribution is a clearer boundary around brand attitude. Brand attitude transmitted both credibility judgments to buycott intention, but neither to boycott intention. It is therefore not a universal mechanism through which activist perceptions become behaviour. The results qualify accounts that assign general attitude the same mediating function for both consumer reward and punishment.

The fourth contribution is to reposition perceived brand prestige and culture as secondary, conditional mechanisms. Perceived brand prestige had a high mean but did not significantly predict brand attitude, while the H_5 agreement interactions disappeared under the four-point specification. H_6 showed path-specific and partly counter-directional effects. These findings favour a hierarchical framework in which credibility is central and symbolic or cultural mechanisms qualify, rather than replace, the main process.

5.9 Managerial implications

Luxury brands should manage activism as an organisational credibility commitment rather than merely as a communications campaign. Perceived authenticity had medium effects on brand attitude ($f^2 = 0.222$) and boycott intention ($f^2 = 0.199$), whereas perceived hypocrisy had a large direct effect on boycott intention ($\beta = 0.825$, $f^2 = 0.425$), the strongest path in the model. Managers should therefore assess alignment among the issue, brand purpose, internal policies, supply-chain practices, resource commitments, and long-term conduct before making a public claim. This recommendation is consistent with research emphasising alignment between activist messaging and corporate practice (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

A practical pre-campaign process should include four checks. First, the proposed issue should have a credible relationship with the brand's purpose and historical conduct. Second, the brand should identify the internal actions that will substantiate the public claim. Third, the firm should assess whether the commitment requires sacrifice or resource allocation rather than only symbolic communication. Fourth, the brand should establish indicators for monitoring whether later conduct remains consistent with the claim. These checks translate the persuasion-knowledge implication into managerial practice: consumers need evidence that reduces the plausibility of a self-serving motive. This recommendation is consistent with research describing authentic activism as a gradual process that requires a preparatory phase, coherent positioning, and progressive escalation rather than a one-off statement (Cammarota et al., 2026). Concrete internal commitments can also create stronger credibility signals, although failure to fulfil them can trigger particularly severe authenticity penalties (Ahmad et al., 2024).

Strategies for generating support should be distinguished from strategies for preventing punishment. Encouraging boycotting requires credible conduct and a favourable overall evaluation, because both the direct perceived-authenticity path and the indirect attitude routes were significant. Preventing boycotting requires attention to specific hypocrisy triggers, because general brand attitude did not significantly predict boycott intention and showed no attitudinal route for the perceived-hypocrisy-to-boycott relationship. Managers should therefore track both broad brand attitude and issue-specific credibility signals, rather than using overall satisfaction as the only indicator of activism risk.

Post-campaign monitoring is equally important. Brands should audit whether public claims remain consistent with internal policies, sourcing practices, labour standards, environmental targets, and subsequent campaigns. When a contradiction emerges, delaying or minimising the discrepancy may intensify perceived hypocrisy. A transparent correction, evidence of remedial action, and continued reporting may protect credibility more effectively than another symbolic campaign. This emphasis on continuity is consistent with evidence that sustained expression and sustained action reduce skepticism and accusations of performative activism more effectively than isolated statements (Jiang et al., 2026).

Luxury brands should also distinguish symbolic value from credibility. Research suggests that activism can enhance self-expressive value and luxury brand perception when the activist meaning is compatible with the brand and the consumer's identity, while product-linked cause initiatives can preserve status-signalling value (Khalifa & Osburg, 2025; Kim et al., 2022). This supports carefully designed initiatives that connect the cause with the brand's product and identity, but it does not justify adding a social cause merely to make a product appear more desirable.

Managers should not assume that selecting a widely supported cause will automatically improve perceived authenticity or perceived brand prestige. The robustness analysis showed that the agreement-related direct and moderation findings changed when the original four-point measure replaced the binary coding. Segmentation and campaign decisions should therefore rely on measured consumer responses and credibility diagnostics rather than broad agreement categories or national stereotypes. Country comparisons may inform local adaptation, but they should not substitute for individual-level evidence about values, identification, and perceived credibility.

5.10 Societal implications and chapter summary

Brand activism can create incentives for firms to connect public commitments with observable conduct. In this study, stronger perceived authenticity was associated with greater willingness to reward the brand, while stronger perceived hypocrisy was associated with greater willingness to punish it. These relationships concern stated intentions following a hypothetical scenario and do not establish actual purchases, avoidance, or social change.

Overall, the strongest empirical and theoretical contribution is the distinction between credibility-based reward and punishment. The coefficients and effect sizes show that perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy explain consumer reactions more consistently than consumer-brand agreement or perceived brand prestige. Brand attitude selectively transmitted these perceptions to boycott intention, cultural moderation was path-specific and partly specification-sensitive, and country differences were supplementary. The findings therefore support a focused conclusion: in luxury brand activism, consumers' interpretation of the credibility of the brand's commitment matters more consistently than agreement with the cause alone.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises this thesis, answers its research questions, outlines the main contributions, and presents the limitations and directions for future research.

6.2 Summary of the thesis

This research examined how Italian and Vietnamese Generation Z consumers responded to a hypothetical environmental activism announcement by a luxury fashion brand. It tested an integrated model linking consumer-brand agreement with perceived authenticity, perceived hypocrisy, perceived brand prestige, brand attitude, boycott intention, and boycott intention. Individual-level collectivist orientation was examined as a moderator, and the structural model was estimated using PLS-SEM with 162 valid responses.

6.3 Answers to the research questions

6.3.1 RQ1: Agreement, brand perceptions, and brand attitude

RQ1 shows that consumer-brand agreement did not provide a sufficient explanation of how respondents judged the brand's activism. The more consequential judgments concerned whether the activism appeared authentic or hypocritical. Perceived authenticity improved the broader evaluation of the brand, while perceived hypocrisy damaged it. Perceived brand prestige did not add a distinct explanatory mechanism once these credibility perceptions were considered. The theoretical implication is that stance congruence should be treated as an interpretive context rather than as a substitute for credibility assessment. The robustness analysis further shows that agreement-related conclusions depend on how agreement is operationalised.

6.3.2 RQ2: Behavioural and indirect mechanisms

RQ2 shows that supportive and punitive political consumption followed different routes. Perceived authenticity provided a basis for rewarding the brand, while perceived hypocrisy provided a basis for punishing it. Brand attitude helped translate credibility perceptions into boycott intention, but it did not transmit them into boycott intention. This indicates that a general evaluation of the brand is more important for the decision to reward than for the decision to avoid. Boycotting can be triggered by a specific judgment of contradiction without requiring a comprehensive negative evaluation of the brand.

6.3.3 RQ3: Moderation by collectivist orientation

RQ3 is only partially supported. Individual-level collectivist orientation changed several links in the model, but the effects were not uniform. It strengthened the perceived-authenticity-to-attitude relationship, while its effect on the perceived-hypocrisy-to-attitude relationship ran opposite to the prediction. The agreement-related moderation findings were also sensitive to the alternative agreement specification. The theoretical implication is that cultural orientation should be treated as a path-specific boundary condition rather than as a general tendency to intensify consumer reactions.

6.4 Contributions of the study

The first contribution is a credibility-centred explanation of luxury brand activism. This study shows that consumers respond to what activist communication reveals about the brand's sincerity and consistency, not only to whether they agree with the cause. Perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy therefore function as distinct mechanisms of consumer reward and punishment.

The second contribution is the distinction between supportive and punitive political consumption. Buycotting is linked to perceived authenticity and to the broader brand evaluation, whereas boycotting is linked more directly to perceived hypocrisy. This explains why a favourable brand attitude can encourage purchase without necessarily preventing avoidance after a perceived moral contradiction.

The third contribution concerns the limits of attitudinal mediation. Brand attitude transmits the effects of perceived authenticity and perceived hypocrisy to buycott intention but not to boycott intention. This study therefore qualifies any assumption that one general attitude mechanism explains both forms of political consumption.

The fourth contribution is the positioning of perceived brand prestige and cultural orientation as secondary mechanisms. Perceived brand prestige did not become the central explanation once credibility perceptions were considered, and collectivist orientation altered some relationships without producing a uniform pattern. The robustness analysis further shows that the agreement-related effects are less stable than the credibility-based effects.

6.5 Limitations

The cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation and does not show how perceptions change over time. The scenario-based survey measures stated intentions rather than actual purchasing or avoidance. The environmental announcement concerned one luxury brand and one issue, so the findings may not extend to other brands, issues, or forms of activism.

The non-probability sample limits generalisability beyond the respondents studied. The agreement variable was measured with one item and was highly unbalanced, with 90.1% of respondents classified as agreeing with the announcement. The binary recoding compressed four response categories into two and left only 16 respondents in the disagreement group. This imbalance may have affected the precision of agreement-related paths and interactions. The robustness analysis reinforces this limitation: replacing the binary agreement indicator with the original four-point measure reduced the agreement-related VIFs from 36.972 and 36.766 to approximately 1.190 and 1.214 and removed the significance of H_{1b} and H_5 . The agreement-related findings should therefore be treated as specification-sensitive and exploratory rather than definitive. A further constraint is statistical power. The a priori analysis reported in Section 3.4 was powered for medium effect sizes at $N = 162$, so small

interaction effects, which typically require samples of several hundred respondents to detect reliably, could not be estimated with confidence. This limitation applies directly to H₅, whose interaction effects fell to $f^2 = 0.006$ to 0.013 in the four-point specification. The absence of significant agreement-related moderation therefore reflects limited statistical power as well as the possible absence of a substantively meaningful effect, and future studies should treat both explanations as open.

All analytical variables were collected through the same questionnaire. The full-collinearity VIF values reported for the common-method-bias diagnostic were below the stated threshold, but this diagnostic does not remove every possible source of common method bias. This result should not be confused with the elevated structural VIF values for some interaction-model predictors reported in Table 4.8. Those elevated structural VIFs may reduce the stability and precision of moderation and MGA coefficients. The very high reliability coefficients for several constructs may also indicate item overlap.

A further limitation concerns the direct path from perceived authenticity to boycott intention. This path was estimated to complete the specification of the mediation tests, and its positive coefficient is a suppression artefact arising from the strong negative overlap between the authenticity and hypocrisy judgments ($r = -0.764$). The path carries no substantive interpretation, and the corresponding total-effect value in the importance-performance analysis is similarly restricted. Future replications should retain this path but should anticipate and report this pattern when the two credibility constructs are used as simultaneous predictors.

The supplementary country comparison requires additional caution. MICOM established configural and compositional invariance for all constructs, while full invariance was established only for consumer-brand agreement, perceived brand prestige, and boycott intention. The remaining constructs showed partial invariance, and nationality should not be treated as a direct measure of individual-level cultural orientation.

6.6 Directions for future research

Future studies should use longitudinal or experimental designs to test whether authenticity and hypocrisy perceptions persist, whether activist credibility changes after subsequent brand actions, and whether stated intentions translate into actual purchasing or avoidance. Replication across luxury brands with different levels of prestige, across environmental and non-environmental issues, and across age groups and countries would establish the boundaries of the credibility-based explanation.

Future research should recruit samples with greater variation in agreement and disagreement and should avoid collapsing an original multi-category agreement measure unless a clear theoretical justification exists. Larger and more balanced samples would improve estimation of agreement effects and interactions. Researchers should also

pre-specify whether agreement is expected to operate as a categorical stance, an ordered intensity measure, or a continuous value-congruence construct.

Further studies should investigate why collectivist orientation weakened the negative relationship between hypocrisy and brand attitude in this sample. Qualitative interviews, experimental manipulations of relational loyalty and social consensus, and measures of conflict avoidance or psychological contract violation could clarify the mechanism. Such extensions should remain grounded in the persuasion knowledge and social-identity framework rather than adding theories without directly measured constructs.

For practice-oriented research, future studies should measure observable indicators of corporate follow-through, including internal policy changes, resource commitments, supply-chain consistency, and the duration of activist engagement. This would allow researchers to test whether perceived-authenticity judgments predict actual accountability and whether public claims produce measurable social outcomes beyond consumer intention.

6.7 Concluding remarks

This study shows that consumer responses to luxury fashion brand activism depend less on agreement alone than on how the brand's commitment is interpreted. Perceived authenticity provides a basis for favourable evaluation and consumer reward, while perceived hypocrisy provides a basis for unfavourable evaluation and consumer punishment. Brand attitude selectively transmits credibility perceptions to boycotting, whereas boycotting can follow a more direct judgment of contradiction. Collectivist orientation changes some relationships, but not in a uniform or consistently predicted way.

For luxury fashion brands, taking a stand is therefore not only a question of selecting a cause. It is a question of whether the position is supported by observable conduct, consistent with brand identity, and credible enough to justify consumer reward. The practical conclusion is twofold: brands should build evidence of perceived authenticity before communicating activism, and they should monitor perceived-hypocrisy risks after communicating it. A favourable general attitude may help generate boycotting, but it is not a reliable defence against boycotting when consumers perceive a contradiction. The robustness analysis further shows that agreement-related direct and moderation effects are sensitive to measurement specification, while the credibility-based findings are more stable. The country comparison remains supplementary and does not establish nationality as a measure of cultural orientation.

Appendices

Appendix A. Questionnaire

SURVEY: CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF LUXURY BRAND ACTIVISM

Q1.1 Introduction

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in this academic study. This survey is part of a master's research project investigating how Vietnamese and Italian Generation Z consumers perceive sociopolitical corporate strategies implemented by luxury fashion brands. Your responses will remain entirely anonymous and confidential and will be used strictly for statistical analysis. The survey will take approximately 5 to 7 minutes to complete.

If you have any questions regarding the study, you may contact the researcher, Bao Ngoc Le, at 888203@stud.unive.it. By proceeding with the questionnaire, you confirm that you have read the information provided and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Block 1: Screening and baseline qualifications

Q2.1. What is your year of birth?

The survey displayed a dropdown list from 1995 to 2014, together with an Other option. The analytical eligibility criterion was 1997 to 2012.

Q2.2. What is your nationality?

- Austrian.
- Chinese.
- Dutch.
- French.
- German.
- Italian.
- Japanese.
- Korean.
- Portuguese.

- Spanish.
- Vietnamese.
- Other.

Q2.3. Which of the following brands are you aware of regarding high-end fashion, leather craftsmanship, and luxury positioning? Select all that apply.

- Zara.
- Hermès.
- H&M.
- Gucci.
- Uniqlo.
- Chanel.
- Louis Vuitton.
- Calvin Klein.

Q2.4. Which of the following statements best describes your level of awareness regarding luxury fashion brands, such as Hermès, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and Prada?

- I am unaware of these brands and do not know their market reputation or status.
- I am aware of these brands and recognize their high-status reputation, even though I do not actively follow fashion trends or consume luxury products.
- I actively follow, observe, or consume luxury fashion brands and keep up with their trends and updates.

The survey flow directed respondents outside the target age range, outside the Italian or Vietnamese nationality categories, or selecting the lowest awareness category to the end of the survey.

Block 2: Pre-exposure baseline traits

Q3.1. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding general social and political issues.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree.

- Social issues affect my ability to live my life as I want to.
- It is easy to think of ways that social issues affect me.
- Social issues are directly relevant to my life.
- My opinion on social issues relates to values that I care about.
- My attitudes toward social issues are based on my personal values.
- I tend to base my attitudes on social issues on my general principles of how life should be lived.
- Social issues affect people close to me.
- To confirm your attention, please select Somewhat Disagree for this row.
- Social issues are important to people I care about.
- Social issues are important to the social groups I identify with.

The Q3.1 responses were collected in the original survey but are not included in the revised conceptual model or statistical analysis.

Q3.2. Please indicate how closely the following statements match your personal core values.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree.

- I like sharing little things with my neighbors.
- Being a unique individual is important to me.
- Decisions reached in groups are better than those reached by single individuals.
- I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group.
- I'd rather depend on myself than on others.
- It is important to me to be useful to others.

For the collectivist-orientation score, the individualism-oriented items are reverse-coded during data preparation where required by the scoring procedure.

Block 3: Experimental stimulus

Q4.1. Please read the following corporate announcement carefully. On the next pages, you will be asked questions about your perceptions of the brand based on this specific scenario.

Official Announcement from Hermès:

"Protecting our environment is a shared responsibility. To ensure the well-being of our global community and safeguard future generations, Hermès has made the decision to permanently end the production of our top three best-selling leather item lines. We believe true luxury means prioritising the common good over short-term corporate profits. We willingly sacrifice our income today so that our global family can enjoy a stable tomorrow."

Q4.2. Please state your personal stance regarding the statement you just read. Do you personally agree with the philosophy that luxury corporations should permanently stop producing their top-selling leather item lines to protect the global environment?

- Definitely NO.
- Probably NO.
- Probably YES.
- Definitely YES.

Block 4: Post-exposure brand perceptions

Q5.1. Based on the announcement you just read, please evaluate Hermès as a brand.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree.

Perceived brand authenticity

- Hermès stands up for what they believe in.
- Hermès is a socially responsible company.
- Hermès is being true to itself with its actions on social issues.
- Hermès is concerned about improving the well-being of society.
- Hermès is genuine.

Q5.2. Based on the announcement you just read, please evaluate Hermès as a brand.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree.

Perceived brand hypocrisy

- Hermès acts hypocritically.
- What Hermès says and what it does are two different things.
- Hermès pretends to be something it is not.
- Hermès puts its words into action.

Q5.3. Based on the announcement you just read, please evaluate Hermès as a brand.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Slightly Disagree, 5 = Neutral, 6 = Slightly Agree, 7 = Somewhat Agree, 8 = Agree, 9 = Strongly Agree.

Perceived brand prestige

- This brand is very prestigious.
- This brand has high status.
- To verify data-entry quality, please select Somewhat Agree for this item.
- This brand is very upscale.

The attention-check row is excluded from the perceived-prestige construct score.

Block 5: Evaluative outcomes and intentions

Q6.1. Please rate your overall personal feelings toward Hermès following this sustainability announcement.

Seven-point semantic-differential scale:

- Bad [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] Good.
- Unpleasant [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] Pleasant.
- Dislike [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] Like.

Q6.2. Considering the corporate stance taken by Hermès, evaluate your future behavioural intentions.

Boycott intentions, rewarding behaviours. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree.

- I intend to buy such luxury brands in the future to reward them because of their activism in social issues.
- I will make an effort to buy such luxury brands in the future to reward them because of their activism in social issues.
- I definitely want such luxury brands' products because of their activism in social issues.

Q6.3. Considering the corporate stance taken by Hermès, evaluate your future behavioural intentions.

Boycott intentions, punishing behaviours. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree.

- I don't intend to buy such luxury brands in the future to punish them because of their activism in social issues.
- I definitely do not want such luxury brands' products because of their activism in social issues.
- I will definitely not buy such luxury brands' products because of their activism in social issues.

Block 6: Redundant integrity control

Q7.1. What is your year of birth? Please enter only digits, not text, such as 2002.

This response can be compared with Q2.1 to identify inconsistent or potentially unreliable responses.

Block 7: Socio-demographics

Q8.1. Which of the following best represents your gender identity?

- Female.
- Male.
- Non-binary.
- Prefer to self-describe.

- Prefer not to say.

Q8.2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Middle school or lower secondary.
- High school diploma.
- Bachelor's degree.
- Master's degree.
- PhD or doctorate.

Q8.3. What is your current employment or occupation status?

- Student.
- Employed full-time.
- Employed part-time.
- Self-employed or freelancer.
- Unemployed.
- Not in the labor force, for example, homemaker or retired.
- Other.

Q8.4. What is your approximate monthly personal net income, or monthly allowance equivalent if you are a student?

- Under €500 / Under 15,000,000 VND.
- €501 to €1,500 / 15,000,001 to 45,000,000 VND.
- €1,501 to €3,000 / 45,000,001 to 90,000,000 VND.
- Over €3,000 / Over 90,000,000 VND.

End of survey. Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

The undersigned **Bao Ngoc Le**, student ID number 888203, enrolled at Ca' Foscari in the *Master's Degree Programme in International Management* (Single Cycle Degree Programme in International Management), author of the final paper/degree thesis "*Luxury Brands Taking a Stand: A Cross-Cultural Study of Generation Z Responses to Luxury Fashion Brand Activism in Italy and Vietnam*", thesis supervisor *Prof. Andreas Hinterhuber*, aware of the penalties provided for in Article 76 of the Consolidated Act set out in Presidential Decree no. 445 of 28 December 2000, and of the loss of benefits provided for in Article 75 of the same Consolidated Act in the event of false or misleading statements, under his/her own responsibility pursuant to Articles 46 and 47 of Presidential Decree no. 445 of 28 December 2000,

DECLARES

☒ that she **HAS** used generative artificial intelligence technologies to support various aspects of the research and writing of her degree thesis, in particular:

Name of the tool and version: Anara, used with the "Auto" model setting, in which the platform automatically selects the underlying language model; access period: September 2026. The specific underlying model version cannot be stated by the user because it is selected automatically by the platform at the time of each request.

How the tool was used:

☒ Revision and optimisation of texts to improve clarity and coherence;

☒ Checking for spelling and grammar mistakes.

Sections or chapters concerned: The use of the tool was limited to language-level revision across written chapters of the thesis (mainly Chapter 2), namely improving clarity and coherence of sentences and paragraphs, harmonising terminology, and correcting spelling and grammar mistakes. The tool was not used to generate research content, data, analyses, citations, or theoretical arguments; the research design, the survey data, all statistical analyses, the hypotheses, and all substantive academic content were developed solely by the author.

How accuracy, quality and reliability were verified: All AI-assisted revisions were reviewed manually by the author, who compared the revised text against the original wording to ensure that no meaning, data, citation, or scientific claim was altered. Grammar and spelling suggestions were accepted only after verification against standard academic English usage. The author assumes full responsibility for the final text.

DECLARE FURTHER

that all material generated by AI has been carefully checked, reviewed and reworked by the author, who assumes full responsibility for the quality, accuracy and scientific integrity of the work.

Date: 27/9/2026

Signature: 