(Araştırma)

DIGITALIZATION AND CONSUMER ACTIVISM: UNDERLYING MOTIVES AND FEELINGS OF CONSUMERS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR BRANDS [1] [2]

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to gain an understanding of the motivations and feelings of consumers when participating in online activism and examine the effects of digital activism campaigns implemented by brands. The research seeks to answer how consumers are participating in digital activism and their motivations, the feelings of consumers with regards to digital activism and consumer engagement, and how consumers perceive activist movements and practices initiated by brands. A qualitative approach was carried out, and 17 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted. Projective techniques were used, and examples of activist campaigns of brands were shown to the participants. According to the findings, the motivations of the consumers are the sense of responsibility and duty they feel towards social problems, the desire to stay up-to-date and entertainment. The feelings associated with digital activism are gratification, fear, feeling of concern, and hope. The findings have further implications and suggestions for brands to have effective activist campaigns such as: paying attention to the language barrier when adapting global campaigns; defending the cause they believe in despite pressures; explaining the reasoning when they do not support a social cause, not to be lynched by consumers; and not choosing an entertainment-oriented approach when addressing sensitive issues.

Keywords: Consumer activism, brand activism, consumer motivation, digitalization

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DİJİTALLEŞME VE TÜKETİCİ AKTİVİZMİ: TÜKETİCİLERİN MOTİVASYONLARI VE DUYGULARI VE MARKALAR İÇİN SONUÇLARI

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, tüketicilerin çevrimiçi aktivizme katılma motivasyonları ve duyguları hakkında içgörü elde etmeyi ve markalar tarafından uygulanan dijital aktivizm kampanyalarının tüketiciler üzerindeki etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, tüketicilerin dijital aktivizme nasıl katıldıklarını, aktivist eylemlere katılma motivasyonlarını ve duygularını, markaların başlattığı aktivist hareketleri ve uygulamaları nasıl algıladıklarını yanıtlamayı hedefler. Tüketicilerin duygu ve motivasyonlarını daha iyi anlamak için nitel araştırma yöntemi uygulanmış ve 17 yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakat yapılmıştır. Görüşmeler sırasında projektif teknikler kullanılmış ve katılımcılara, markaların aktivist kampanya örnekleri gösterilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, tüketicilerin dijital aktivizme katılma motivasyonları, sosyal sorunlara karşı hissettikleri sorumluluk ve görev bilinci, güncel kalma arzusu ve eğlence kategorileri altında gruplanır. Dijital aktivizme katılırken tüketicilerin hissettikleri duygular, tatmin, korku, endişe ve umuttur. Araştırma ayrıca, tüketicilerin aktivist kampanyaları başarılı bulması için markaların dikkat etmesi gereken kriterler konusunda ışık tutar. Global kampanyaları farklı ülkelerde uyarlarken markaların dil engeline dikkat etmesi gerekir. Markaların siyasi ve toplumsal baskılardan arınarak bir konuyu desteklemesi tüketiciler tarafından daha samimi ve inandırıcı bulunmaktadır. Markanın toplumda değer gören bir konu hakkında sessiz kalması durumunda tüketiciler tarafından linç edilmemesi için o konuya neden destek vermediğini tüketiciye açıklaması gerekmektedir. Toplumsal veya hassas sorunlar kampanya konusu olacaksa, eğlence odaklı bir yaklaşım tercih edilmemelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tüketici aktivizmi, marka aktivizmi, tüketici motivasyonu, dijitalleşme

1. Introduction

The concepts of power and empowerment have been widely studied across different fields, including feminism, minority groups, and poverty literature (Kabeer, 1999; Lincoln et al., 2002). In marketing literature, the question has often been whether consumers or marketers can direct markets for their benefit (Varman and Vikas, 2007). In digital platforms, customers can engage with each other in online communities and social networks, take part in various brand-endorsed initiatives, review products, services, and experiences, and contribute to marketing strategies by supplying creative ideas or feedback or by influencing other customers (Montecchi and Nobbs, 2008). Although the Internet may provide tools for ‘‘empowerment’’, it remains uncertain whether these tools are effective enough or that they are critically used, or indeed used at all, by consumers (Papaoikonomou and Alarcón, 2017).

Social media is a new communication platform where both brands and consumers can meet and where consumers can interact with brands (Pitt et al., 2008). Customer engagement through social media is significant for marketers (Park, Lee and Han, 2007), as brands need to pay attention to every action of any potential customer. Consequently, social media has become a platform that rules both consumers and brands. It is becoming the most efficient global platform for a message that is announced by the users (Ferreira, 2018)) and it thrives on user excitement, which leads to a new revolution defined through participation (Solis, 2010).

Before understanding the role of social media in influencing activism, it is critical to look at the role of the Internet in our daily lives. The Internet has made it possible for everyone in the world to connect, interact, and broadcast (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017). As communication technologies evolved and became cheaper, people’s access to the Internet became easier (Kraut et al., 1998). The proliferation of mobile phones since the 2000s has created fundamental changes in communication. Today, with digitalization, content posted by users on social media increases every day. According to Highfield and Leaver (2015), shared content brings people together who are interested in the same content through hashtags and tags on social media platforms. This new environment facilitates interactive brand communication and collaboration, the creation and sharing of content by users, and the formation of internal and external virtual communities, all at a low cost (Furness, 2008). The users who want to draw attention to social or political issues, or create awareness and make changes, can easily reach people who think like themselves through social media. It has become apparent that the actions taken on online platforms reach and influence more people compared to offline actions.

There are different approaches to digital activism in literature. Some researchers highlighted the positive aspects of digital activism, while others drew attention to its downsides. Accordingly, perspectives in the literature about the value of

digital activism are grouped under optimists, pessimists, and persistent categories (Joyce, 2010; Sivitanides and Shah, 2011). Optimists (Benkler 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2008) believe that digital activism will change existing political hierarchies and empower citizens, while pessimists (Morozov, 2010) believe that digital technology is more likely to be used to assert illegal authority or encourage chaos. Like optimists, pessimists believe that digital technology will have an impact on the world, but they see technology as morally neutral, constructive, and equally useful for destructive motives. The persistent category (Weinberger, 2010) refers to those who see neither salvation nor damnation in digital technology instead; they believe that very little will change and that previous political power distributions will "continue." Simply, they do not believe that the web, and therefore digital activism, is extraordinary. In addition, some researchers argue that digital activism is quite effective, whereas others state that it can be perceived negatively by social media users. According to Ürkmez (2020), the facilitation of the digital environment has made digital activism movements more effective than traditional activism movements. On the other hand, Turhan (2017) argues that using digital activist approaches to promote street protests, movements and revolutions can lead to digital activism having a negative image.

Other researchers argue that digital activism is a subset of Corporate Social Responsibility (Clemensen, 2017; Kotler and Sarkar, 2017; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019), and brands should create committed and sincere digital activist campaigns for their consumers (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017; Rishe, 2018; Kubiak and Ouda, 2020). If the brands can apply these strategies in their campaigns, they can be successful (Kubiak and Ouda, 2020). However, if the gap between brands' values and societal benefits is too large, it can damage the company (Sarkar and Kotler, 2018), harming both the company and the corporate reputation (Klein, Smith and John, 2004), which can translate into consumers' participation in digital activist campaigns to boycott the brand. Similarly, if the consumers believe that the company does not care about social issues, then they can be motivated to boycott the brands (Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Cambefort and Roux, 2019) and initiate different reactions such as anti-brand activism (Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel, 2006). However, very few studies tried to understand the meaning of activist actions and practices for consumers. According to Kubiak and Ouda (2020), brand activism is mostly approached from a quantitative perspective, and qualitative studies that consider consumers' points of view are relatively few (Kozinets, 2014; Romani et al., 2015; Cambefort and Roux, 2019; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019). Previous qualitative research generally addressed very specific topics. For example, Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2006) aim to understand the forms of anti-brand communities by examining three anti-brand websites using in-depth interviews. Jacobson et al. (2018) investigate how brand activism in advertisements (specifically femvertising) affects male consumers' attitudes. There is also a large amount of research on consumer activism and anti-brand activism, but limited research in the field of brand activism and how consumers evaluate brands that

adopt this strategy (Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel, 2006; Romani et al., 2015; Cambefort and Roux, 2019). Previous research also has not explored consumers' feelings and perspectives on digital activism in depth. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to fill this gap in the literature by gaining a deeper understanding of the motivations behind consumer activism and how consumers perceive activist actions initiated by brands. In-depth interviews are conducted with consumers to provide insight for marketers, brands, communication professionals in understanding how the consumers are participating in digital activism and what are their feelings and motivations in participating in these activist movements or actions. The study further contributes to the literature by shedding light on how consumers perceive digital activism and what are the implications for brands.**2. Literature Review**

The literature review section summarises the related literature on digital activism -including the concepts of slacktivism, clicktivism, hacktivism-, consumer empowerment and the role of internet and social media, consumer activism and brand activism.

2.1. Digital Activism: Slacktivism, Clicktivism and Hacktivism

The historical process of digital activism is discussed under two different headings: web 1.0 and web 2.0 (Gerbaudo, 2017). Web 1.0 is the first wave of digital activism in the mid-'90s and consists of projects like the anti-globalization movement. Web 2.0 is called "social media activism," where activists gather together on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Social media provides essential technological tools of digital activism with Web 2.0 (Gerbaudo, 2017). In this way, social media has created a new media logic of "mass self-communication," which can be observed on Facebook and Twitter platforms and supports mass movements emerging in different geographies (Castells, 2009). In the Web 2.0 era, some researchers have theorized "social media ease activist movements" perception. According to this perception, thanks to social media brought by digitalization, activist movements can reach more people faster. In Morozov's "Twitter Revolution" term, he emphasized how effective the platform Twitter was during the riots that took place in Iran in 2009. Political messages that are given by brands are spread widely via e-mail, blog, WhatsApp or through other mass media. This spread usually begins with activists' messages on their digital platforms (Bennett and Lagos, 2007).

Digital activism does not only have a technological scope; it also has a cultural impact in terms of its messages, ideas, and ideologies (Gerbaudo, 2017). The use of social networks by activists ensures that many problems and events that have not found a voice in the mainstream media are learned by the masses. Petitions, another example initiated by digital activists, prevent a topic that may be of interest to the general public from being overlooked and help to raise awareness about the issue. Furthermore, activism does not only target business or government entities;

it can also be directed at celebrities or other consumers (Gretzel, 2017). The rise of social media has also prompted many political institutions and actors to re-examine not only their media strategies but, more importantly, their ways of governance (Bakardjieva, Svensson and Skoric, 2012). Digital technologies fundamentally change activism in certain ways, removing traditional media gatekeepers and forcing corporations to respond faster to concerns to encourage corporate change (Veil et al., 2015; Hon, 2016).

According to Vegh, Ayers and McCoughey (2003), digital activism can be analysed under three main headings. Firstly, awareness or advocacy entails providing contrary information to raise awareness on a given issue, organizing the movement, and engaging in lobbying efforts. The second area is organization or mobilization, which may comprise of calling for offline action that is more effectively conducted through the internet. Thirdly, action or reaction involves online attacks on various sites of interest by hackers or "hacktivists" (Vegh et al., 2003). Some of these actions are more impactful than others. Similarly, when we look at the studies in the literature, the researchers are divided into two streams in their approach to the subject. While some researchers argue that digital activism fails to achieve a result or impact (Morozov, 2010; McCafferty, 2011; Kristofferson, White and Peloza 2014; Saxton and Wang, 2014), others believe that digital activism mobilizes individuals and brings people together around a certain view (Coleman and Blumler, 2009; Selleck, 2010; McCafferty, 2011; Vitak et al., 2011; Blevins, 2018; Rudolfsdottir and Johannsdottir, 2018; Turley and Fisher, 2018). According to Karagöz, as the reaction on the Internet can be demonstrated easily with just one click, a 'like' or a message, many people do this just to 'be fashionable'. Many internet activists are not even aware of what they are supporting or opposing. Those who believe that they can change something by changing their profile photo on certain days just relieve their injured conscience in this way and become docile before their reactions turn into effect (Karagöz, 2013). Paktin (2012), on the other hand, approaches the issue more positively, arguing that the world can actually change with every click by being involved in digital activism by participating in a donation or signature campaign, individuals feel that they are fulfilling their duty to society, which helps to ease their conscience (Suwana, 2020). However, actually, they do not get actively involved with the problems of society. Therefore, the use of signature and donation campaigns on digital platforms as part of digital activism is questioned. For instance, Scholz argues that "slacktivism" and "clicktivism," as practices of digital activism, give participants the impression that they are participating in digital activism and they have achieved something just by creating online action (Scholz, 2010). The concepts of slacktivism, clicktivism, and hacktivism will be explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

On the other hand, it is difficult to deny the current importance of signature campaigns, which are highly sought after by consumers. One of the websites created to solve social problems and ask users to sign these campaigns is Change.

org, founded in February 2007. The organization was initially designed as a blog to generate social benefits. However, in 2011 the blog network was transformed into an online petition platform, enabling petitioners to initiate petition campaigns to defend a value or to raise an issue. The platform is highly preferred by digital activists, as it can address such a large audience.

Digital technology has introduced several main concepts in activism, which are slacktivism, clicktivism, and hacktivism. Activism on the digital platform can sometimes consist of a like, a hashtag used, or the frame you use to change your profile photo. This 'hollow activism' on digital platforms is defined as slacktivism (Morozov, 2009). Today, slacktivism is defined as "feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact," with the feel-good factor being singled out as the main reason behind the popularity of slacktivist activities (Morozov, 2009a). McCafferty (2011) defines slacktivists as "people who are happy to click a 'like' button about a cause and may make another nominal, supportive gestures". According to Skoric (2012), by clicking "like" on a Facebook cause page or sharing a campaign video, Facebook users hope to construct their identity as what they would like others to think of them. According to Morozov (2011), slacktivist campaigns seem to be premised on the assumption that, with enough tweets (or "likes" or "shares"), all the world's problems are solvable. That is what drives such campaigns towards a signature-collecting, member-adding, link-sharing spree. In this case, it is important to understand whether the success of action due to the classical measurements in social media depends on how many people participated in this action. In this regard, it is critical to know why people are willing to participate in an action. Consequently, social media has facilitated the rise of this new form of activism known as 'slacktivism' (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). These consumers will sign online petitions and join Facebook activist pages but do not have the desire and/or resources to engage in traditional activist movements, such as protests.

The actions of slacktivism are mostly limited to writing their views on certain events, participating in online petitions, sharing videos or images about campaigns or actions they find interesting, and they do not take risks by not physically participating in an action. On the other hand, clicktivism means organizing or supporting certain social actions in digital environments from the keyboard (Shulman, 2009). Clicktivism can start protests against certain companies for reasons such as social anxiety and hygiene; open a site or page for certain actions; initiate petition campaigns and carry out these actions systematically and continuously in line with a specific target. Clicktivists initiate the online signature campaigns on the platforms, while slacktivist people sign in to these campaigns. On the other hand, hacktivism includes actions such as hijacking a website, sending a virus to a specific target, bombarding someone or an organization with e-mail for a specific purpose, and some political reasons such as Wikileaks example (Doruk and Akbıçak, 2017).

According to some researchers, activist movements that consumers participate in on digital platforms provide personal satisfaction but do not have a tangible effect (Morozov, 2012; Skoric, 2012). Proponents of the slacktivism perspective argue that the motivation of some consumers to participate in activist action is visibility (Kristofferson, White and Peloza, 2014). Slacktivism often can engage an activist movement on Facebook or Twitter because it is a low-effort action (Morozov, 2012; Schumann and Klein, 2015). However, the label of slacktivism has been applied to a range of actions from low-effort acts such as signing a petition or adopting a token symbol of support (Kristofferson, White and Peloza, 2014) to more committed acts like boycotts (Skoric, 2012). Slacktivism critique suggests that if individuals join an activist movement and feel their behaviour is sufficient enough, then visibility on mass media and a sign or any other click movement is a qualified behaviour (Minocher, 2019). On the other hand, slacktivism efforts can help a campaign reach the masses and create meaningful outcomes (Minocher, 2019). Sometimes least effort via slacktivism can cause bigger beginnings, such as encouraging conscious consumption, volunteering, granting money (Center for Social Impact Communication, 2011; Lee and Hsieh, 2013). On the contrary, for activists, the challenge is to keep campaigns going long enough to get meaningful responses (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). Knowing the difference between these concepts is important for the purpose of this study as it makes it easier to understand why individuals are involved in online activist campaigns, their sources of motivation, and how they feel when participating in activist actions on online platforms.

2.2. Consumer Empowerment and the Role of the Internet and Social Media

The role of social media in activism comes across as a facilitator. The necessity of traditional activism's collective consciousness is also becoming possible in online activism through the influence of social media. With social media tools (hashtags, Trend topics, etc.), people become aware of current news or events. This way, people can quickly access more detailed information about current events. At the same time, social media is a very effective platform for announcing and spreading information to bigger audiences quickly. It makes it possible to bring together audiences who have similar opinions. Hashtag and Trend Topic features instigate users to share and search for news on specific subjects, whereas trending topics further highlight breaking news (Poell and Dijck, 2015). Especially Twitter has developed their trending feature into a sophisticated popular news barometer by identifying the 'most breaking news' and by allowing users to breakdown trending topics by region, country, and city (Parr, 2010). Different social media sharing components, such as 'liking' and 'retweeting', and numerous tools such as social buttons play a role in helping the shares reach a wider audience.

Social media is a broad platform including people of every opinion, where they can share their thoughts and beliefs. They can also post content shared by other people on their profiles. Furthermore, social media gives users the power to share

both positive and negative opinions (Smith, 2017). Therefore, published content may differ from each other. In general, all the shared positive and negative content are intended only for friends. However, each content shared on social media reaches our friends first, then friends of our friends. Therefore, content shared in this way ceases to be from our immediate environment and local. According to Poell and Dijck (2015), to get a sense of the size of the overall public that was reached through these Twitter and Facebook activities, it is important to keep in mind that contributing users each have their own networks of followers or friends, which may include thousands of people.

Social media is not only used by individuals. Brands and companies are also featured on social media. Social media, used by such a large audience, can be seen as a platform for brands to find their new potential customers. Therefore, it has become almost mandatory for companies to create profiles on social media. Marketers use social media to develop opportunities that appeal to customers on social networks, develop branded engagement opportunities, and share brand content (Tuten and Solomon, 2015). Moreover, brands use social media marketing as an integrated component of a marketing communication campaign, ongoing corporate communications channel, and/or specifically designed for digital exposure of a series of a campaign (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). Along with the increased use of social media, the power of consumers is increasing as well. Empowerment is often seen as part of a firm-centric strategy that increases the control given to customers when selecting products to combine the different elements proposed by the firm (Fuchs et al., 2010). In the current state of the internet, the empowerment of online consumers makes it a process that the firm cannot control because it does not only involve the development of new products or the personalization of products, but it concerns the power of the' voice', that is, the power to change something by talking (Siano, Vollero and Palazzo, 2011). Empowerment gives consumers more and more control over expressing their views online, which gradually reduces the firm's control over online information (Siano, Vollero and Palazzo, 2011). The grounds for this claim are as follows: (1) the low cost of online media increases the chance of freedom of expression; (2) the Internet disrupts the normal hierarchical power structure for information dissemination, as individuals or groups have the same domain and the same influence as traditional media formats; (3) messages generated by competitors/ activists have as much power as those put forward by the company (Bunting and Lipski, 2000; Gorry and Westbrook, 2009).

To understand this power that the consumer has today, it is necessary to understand the change over the years. Kucuk (2012) explains how the consumers are getting stronger and the stages that consumer empowerment goes through. In the first wave, consumer power was first discussed with President Kennedy's consumerism conceptualization (Day and Aaker, 1970), which is a social movement seeking to augment the rights and power of buyers concerning sellers (Kotler, 1971). In the

second wave, consumers were identified as the strongest of the distribution channel members. According to Kucuk (2012), the second wave emphasized the importance of consumers as individuals who should have certain rights and powers as a buyer or final purchasing decision-maker, and thus as market actors, not to be seen as a source of demand (El-Ansary and Stern, 1972; Gaski and Nevin, 1985; Dwyer et al., 1987; Ping, 1993; Heide 1994; Ailawadi, Borin and Farris, 1995; Lusch and Brown, 1996; Betancourt and Gautschi, 1998; Hibbard, Kumar and Stern, 2001). In the third wave, consumer power was started to be discussed and mentioned in consumer complaint literature (Hirschman, 1970; 1986; Singh, 1990; Keeley and Graham, 1991; Singh and Wilkes, 1996; Gregoire and Fisher, 2006; 2008; Kucuk, 2012). If consumers complain using either exit or voice strategies (Hirshman, 1970), it is assumed that they are applying their rights and powers in consumer markets. The final or fourth wave of consumer power discussions has recently begun to gain importance with the advent of the internet (Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2001; Pitt et al., 2002; Urban, 2004; Denegri-Knott et al., 2006; Rezabakhsh et al., 2006; Kucuk and Krishnamurthy, 2007; Kucuk, 2008a; 2008b; 2009; Gregoire, Tripp and Legoux, 2009; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009; Gregoire, Laufer and Tripp, 2010). The Internet has empowered consumers in many ways, and this fourth wave of consumer power is claimed to have undeniable and fundamental effects in digital markets (Kucuk and Krishnamurthy, 2007).

Consequently, the concept of consumer power emerged from a passive and symbolic practice, becoming an active and practical application of the concept with the use of the Internet. Consumer power on the Internet can be discussed under two groups as categorized by Hirschman‘s (1970) famous Exit, Voice and Loyalty conceptualization: exit-based and voice-based consumer power (Kucuk, 2008a). Exit-based consumer power indicates the proportion of consumers leaving the company’s consumption cycles and is often discussed as a sign of a company’s performance deficit. Voice-based consumer power emphasizes the importance of consumer feedback and recommendations in product/service failures. Therefore, the positive or negative sound is often seen as a market feedback mechanism rich in information and more useful than output (Hirschman, 1970; Singh, 1990; Keely and Graham, 1991; Stewart, 1998). As a result, all kinds of negative comments and feedback of the increasingly powerful consumer about brands on the digital platforms makes consumer activism a significant threat to marketers and brands.

2.3. Consumer Activism

Consumer activist behaviour often begins when consumers think that brands are embarking on a practice that could cause personal or social harm (Ozanne and Murray, 1995). Activists show brands their lifestyles. Especially young generations try to hinge directly on new topics that affect their personal lives, such as social justice, morality, health care, privacy, and they do not want to belong to a group or party (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). While much of the literature assumes that consumer activism involves collective action, some authors have highlighted

the need to include also the individual actions such as complaints, negative word-of-mouth, and individual decisions to give up particular forms of consumption (Penaloza and Price, 1993; Kozinets and Handelman, 1998).

Activist efforts can raise awareness in the public eye of a company's or market's weaknesses, thereby potentially harming the company image and causing an organization to spend funds on damage control (Garrett, 1987; Putnam and Muck, 1991). Boycott, the most common form of consumer activism, involves boycotting goods and services produced or sold by specific firms, industries, nation-states, or (from time to time) ethnic groups (Hyman and Tohill, 2017). Klein, Smith, and John (2004) discovered motivational factors for consumers' choice to boycott. The authors stress that companies should consider social issues in their business strategies because, for example, a boycott can occur if consumers think that companies are not interested in social issues. This can damage both the brand and corporate reputation (Klein, Smith and John, 2004). At the same time, the ethical behaviour of the brand affects the purchasing behaviour of consumers. Although some researchers claim that consumers are not interested in the ethical behaviour of the brand, others (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001) note that the ethical understanding of the brand affects the consumer's buying behaviour.

Cambefort and Roux (2019) investigated the perceived risk of anti-brand behaviour or what motivates consumers to act against a brand. They explain that consumers should be motivated and encouraged by other institutions to take risks in anti-brand behaviour, as risk can inhibit the desirable behaviour of activism (Cambefort and Roux, 2019). These institutions that can encourage consumers to activism can be non-governmental organizations or other activist groups. Therefore, boycotts and buycotts campaigns organized by NGOs and trade unions can also encourage consumers to display negative attitudes towards brands (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). The aim is to pressure brands to change their attitudes due to the power exerted by the consumers (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). For instance, NGOs and activist groups have also used campaigns to get corporations such as Nestlé to stop practices such as distributing powdered infant milk formula to places where water contamination threatened the babies who consumed it (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

In activist campaigns initiated by non-governmental organizations and activist groups, consumers are expected to participate by using the logos of brands that exhibit unethical behaviour or display the wrong attitude to social problems. Several steps of the logo-logic approach are followed when creating these campaigns. These are; (1) adding political messages to the campaigns of brands that attract consumer attention; (2) communicating these branded messages through both digital and mass media; (3) using the generally negative langue with a brand to build a political relationship with them (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). These effective campaigns aim to increase consumer awareness; to hold a brand hostage in the media; to run low-cost, long-term "permanent" campaigns to sustain the threat to the brand; to use this sustained pressure to build political relationships with

companies; and to create regulatory mechanisms to induce a change in corporate practices (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). Even though this article examines how the consumers are participating in digital activism and their feelings and motivations in participating in these activist movements, the study further investigates the purpose of brand activism and how consumers perceive the activist actions of brands. Therefore, we also cover the literature briefly on brand activism.

2.4. Brand Activism

Brand activism is defined as a marketing tactic which is carried out by brands that want to stand out by supporting the public in social and political issues (Sarkar and Kotler, 2018; Moorman, 2020). Marketing academics (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017; Moorman, 2020) and practitioners (Unilever, 2019b) highlight the importance of authenticity in brand activism. However, brands use social issues primarily as a marketing tool to sell more products (Edelman, 2019). When brands create digital activist campaigns, they sometimes focus only on a social issue, sometimes exclude a specific audience, and sometimes only address issues that support their brand value. Characteristics and aims of brand activism are grouped under four major themes; (1) the aim of the brand is at the centre of authentic brand activism and focuses on a brand's contribution to the wider public good and societal goals; (2) brand activism has expanded beyond achieving social impact to deal with controversial, contested and polarizing socio-political issues; (3) brand activism is also characterized by the adoption of progressive or conservative positions on socio-political issues; (4) brand activism includes both intangible (messaging) and tangible (implementation) commitments to a socio-political purpose (Vredenburg et al., 2020): 446. Consequently, activist campaigns created by brands may have different goals and objectives.

Vredenburg and colleagues (2020) also explain the typology of brand activism under four categories which are the absence of brand activism, silent brand activism, authentic brand activism, and inauthentic brand activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020). The "absence of brand activism" category includes brands that have not yet adopted pro-social corporate practices in their approach to the market and do not have pro-social brand goals and values or use activist marketing messages. In the "silent brand activism" category, brands adopt socio-political reasons as part of their core mission or strategic focus and work on long-term integrated prosocial corporate practices. In the "authentic brand activism" category, brands are perceived as authentic because they are compatible with brand goals and values, activist marketing messages, and pro-social corporate practices. In the "inauthentic brand activism" category, brands adopt activist marketing messages that convey their support for socio-political reasons. However, they lack explicit brand goals and values and either do not exhibit substantive pro-social corporate practices or actively hide the absence of practices (Vredenburg et al., 2020). In this regard," inauthentic brand activism" can be compared to the practice of "woke washing" (Vredenburg et al., 2018; Sobande, 2019), which exemplifies non-

authentic brand activism where activist marketing messages about focal socio-political issues are incompatible with a brand's purpose, values and institutional application (Vredenburg et al., 2020). The term "woke" is of African-American origin and used for "social awareness" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2017). In particular, woke washing is explained as unclear or ambiguous records of social cause practices (Vredenburg et al., 2018), but still marketing themselves as dealing with issues of inequality and social injustice (Sobande, 2019), despite the inconsistencies between messages and applications (Vredenburg et al., 2018). For instance, bloggers can be an example of this approach, as they can become a paid propaganda tool on social media (Morozov, 2011).

When brands become socio-political activists, their underlying motives are increasingly examined (Holt, 2002), and negative attributions can affect their business returns and brand value (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010). The main reason for this is that when brands engage in activism, consumers may not find it trustworthy (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010; Alhouti, Johnson and Holloway, 2016; Vredenburg et al., 2018). Companies can try to give social responsibility messages; however consumers may interpret them differently (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). Thus, the main message of a brand's campaign is not always easy for consumers to see and perceive, but it is possible (Bennett and Lagos, 2007). Therefore, this study also aims to understand how consumers perceive brand activism.

3. Methodology

The research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the feelings, thoughts, and motivations of individuals when participating in activist movements on digital platforms and to explore their expectations and perceptions of the activist campaigns carried out by brands. Therefore, a qualitative approach is used in this study, as qualitative research provides the necessary in-depth and exploratory tools to obtain a clear picture of the process or to understand the how and why of a particular phenomenon (Symon and Cassel, 1998). Furthermore, qualitative research appears to be most suitable for exploring individuals' perceptions, beliefs, and values rather than predicting their actions and behaviour (McCracken, 1988), and qualitative methods are useful in examining situations in which alleged attitudes and actual behaviour differ from each other (Belk, Devinney and Eckhardt 2005). Finally, there is limited qualitative research on this topic in the literature. Hence, this research aims to find different insights on the topic by using qualitative research techniques.

3.1. Data Collection

The purposive sampling method is used, and participants who can be described as "activists" are selected to be interviewed. While selecting the participants, attention was paid to their interest in activist movements that they share on digital

platforms. At the same time, as research focuses on digital activism, participants' effective use of digital platforms was also set as a criterion. Digital activism and indeed activism itself are terms that contain deep ideologies, beliefs and thoughts. Therefore, individuals who are interested in these topics were selected purposefully within the scope of the research. Taking into consideration the ethical guidelines, the purpose of the research; how and where the information provided by the participants will be used; what will be done to ensure the anonymity of participants; and the fact that the informants can at any time rescind permissions previously given, were explained to the participants at the beginning of the interviews.

They were told that the information gained during the research will be kept confidential and used only by the research team and for academic purposes. It was also explained that the identities of the participants in the study will be protected, and their real names will not be used. Instead, pseudonyms will be used in field notes, journals, and reports.

Seventeen in-depth interviews were conducted in the spring and fall of 2020 in Turkey. Participants were aged between 20-55 years old. The data collection process continued until we reached similar, repetitive results and data saturation (Bernard, 2012). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face meetings could not be made, and teleconferencing tools were used for most of the interviews. The interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes. (Table 1 includes the details of the participants and the interviews.)

A semi-structured guideline was followed, and questions were designed from general to more specific topics (Bernhard, 1988). The interview guideline was created so that the interviews began with broad scope questions that cover an agenda on related topics followed by more specific questions to gain an in-depth understanding. The questions were grouped accordingly. First, the social media usage information of the participants was obtained. Then, they were asked which platforms they preferred and why they used those platforms. Therefore, the first group of questions aims to find out participants' practices and which platforms they use to participate in digital activist movements. The second group of questions aims to understand participants' motivations when participating in digital activist campaigns and the factors that motivate them to participate. Thirdly, the feelings of participants when they participated in these actions were assessed. Finally, the fourth group of questions aims to understand participants' perceptions and expectations with regards to the digital activist communication campaigns of brands and how they evaluate the examples shown. Here, projective techniques were used, and well-known and popular examples of brand activism were selected to remind the participants of previous campaigns where brand activism was involved. The aim of using projective techniques is not to analyse the success or the impact of these campaigns but to gain deeper insight from participants and to engage them in deeper conversations on the topic. The participants are

not necessarily users and consumers of the brands, but they are aware of these campaigns. Moreover, the examples represent the most popular topics of activism, such as animal rights, bio-diversity, environmental ethics, women's rights, gender equity, diversity, and LGBT. Furthermore, the brands selected are from different industries, such as an international sanitary napkin brand, an international non-governmental organization, a global fashion brand, and an NGO that aims to cure neurodegenerative disease. The examples were shown to the participants during the interviews, which enabled them to talk in detail about these activist movements and practices. Examples of activist campaigns by brands were used to enrich the content of the in-depth interviews and to facilitate the conversation with participants. The information obtained sheds light on the extent to which the participants were involved in digital activism campaigns created by brands, the reasons for participation, and whether these campaigns had an impact on their consumer behaviour. With the permission of the participants, each interview was audiotaped and transcribed, resulting in 150 double space pages of text.

3.2. Data Analysis

When analysing the data, guidelines and processes offered by Spiggle (1994) for qualitative data analysis were followed, which include categorization, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalization, integration, iteration, and refutation. In the first step (categorization), researchers classify the data in the coding process. In the second step (abstraction), the categories previously defined are divided into conceptual classes. In the third step (comparison), similarities and differences between events within the data are analysed. As the analysis progresses and the categories develop, the researchers compare the data with the appropriate categories that arise. In the fourth step (dimensionalization), the properties of categories and structures are defined. After defining a category, attributes and properties are discovered. In the fifth step (integration), the relationship between conceptual elements is defined. On the sixth step (iteration), previous transactions, through data collection and analysis, shape subsequent transactions, and the final step (refutation) involves deliberately subjecting the resulting inferences to empirical scrutinise such as categories and conceptual framework.

These steps were followed when analysing the data in this research. First of all, the answers to the questions were categorized. Before categorizing the data, the audio recordings were deciphered. The transcripts of the interviews with each participant were written separately. Notes taken by the researcher during the interviews were added at the end of the completed transcriptions. The most prominent and repeated keywords were identified. After these keywords were identified for each transcript, subcategories were created from keywords that could be grouped. These groups (subcategories) were further grouped under the themes that emerged and shared in the findings section. Table 2 includes examples of quotes, categories, and themes that are selected from. The quotes included in the Coding Table 2 are selected from a group of quotes that reflect the related theme and category.

The notion of emergent design implies continual refinement. Therefore, to ensure the trustworthiness and integrity of the analysis, classifications were constantly evaluated and refined until the final themes were reached and the findings were constantly compared with previously highlighted literature.

To achieve the trustworthiness of the research, the approaches and recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Wallendorf and Belk (1989) were followed. Several techniques were used to enhance trustworthiness. Firstly, triangulation of researchers was used. Both researchers were involved especially in the interpretation stage, during which each evaluated the findings with a critical eye to avoid any potential biases and to both confirm and to bring a different perspective to the interpretation. As a second tool, triangulation of sources was used, where the interviews were conducted with different participants to make meaningful comparisons. Thirdly, debriefing by the advisor enabled to discuss the results revealed and to get feedback. During this process, the advisor critiqued and questioned the emerging themes and categories and the interpretation conducted by the first researcher. The fourth tool was using purposive sampling. Because the issue is digital activism, in-depth interviews were conducted with people who participate in activist movements on digital platforms. Finally, the first researcher, who collected the data, kept a reflexive journal to reflect on and tentatively interpret the data collection. The journal was useful in detecting the influences of her frame of mind, biases, and interpretations of the data being gathered. All these tools enabled to enhance the credibility, integrity and trustworthiness of the findings. The following section includes the themes that emerge from the data analysis and coding process.

4. Findings

The themes that emerge are grouped under four main headings: the practices of the consumers regarding digital activism and the platforms that they use when participating in digital activism campaigns; their motivations behind participating in these campaigns; the feelings that emerge; and the perceptions and expectations of consumers regarding the activism campaigns initiated by brands. The quotes that are included in the findings section are selected as representative examples from the interviews that best reflect the related theme and category.

4.1. Practices of the Consumers Regarding Digital Activism

According to the informants, Twitter and Instagram are the most popular social media platforms. While Twitter is preferred to follow the news and to share feelings and thoughts (generally negative) on current and popular topics of the day, Instagram is preferred to share happy and beautiful images and positive emotions and to follow other people's posts and images.

K.K. (27): "The general trend is: when the people are sad or upset, they use Twitter, but if they are happy or having fun, they prefer to use Instagram. When I

am depressed, I do not prefer to share my feelings on Instagram because people generally share positive things on Instagram. People share things that they enjoy in life. But when I'm upset, I don't prefer to see something like that, no matter how close my friends are. That's why I use Twitter in every mood, but Instagram is something I use when I feel a little more relaxed and cheerful."

Participants describe their preferred social media channel according to their emotions and moods while expressing that they think other people also use these platforms for similar purposes: Instagram when they are happy and Twitter when they are anxious or sad. Apart from social media channels, petitions have become prominent in digital activism, and some platforms have been created for this movement. One of the most popular platforms is Change.org. On Change.org, people follow petition campaigns on daily topics that they are interested in. However, even when they sign the petitions, many of them do not follow whether the campaigns they petition for were successful or not. They mostly share these petition campaigns on their profiles on social media or send them to acquaintances via their WhatsApp groups. Petition campaigns on Change.org generally cover issues such as women's rights, employee rights, animal rights, nature, and justice. People don't want to be silent on issues that concern society. Hence, the issues in which petition campaigns are organized are often social issues. The reasons for this include a sense of responsibility and a sense of duty, which are, as the findings show, among the motivations for individuals to participate in activist campaigns.

4.2. Motivations of the Consumers for Participating in Digital Activism

Participants have different motivations when participating in activist movements on digital platforms. For some of the participants helping people, supporting people, creating awareness for social problems, and being useful for society indicate the dominance of social responsibility motivation. In contrast, other participants state that they participate in activist movements on digital platforms mainly due to a desire for staying up-to-date, entertainment, and being a part of a network. In this section, the motivating factors that trigger the activist motivations of individuals on digital platforms are examined under three main themes: responsibility, desire for staying up-to-date, and having fun.

4.2.1. Responsibility and Sense of Duty

Brands, companies, opinion leaders, and activist platforms mostly focus on social problems, such as injustice and human rights. Participants' approach to these issues on digital platforms is prominent, and one of the motivations that encourage them to participate in these actions is responsibility and a sense of duty. Participants often feel responsible for the problems of the society they live in.

S.D. (28): "Of course, I want the world to be a good place. I want to be aware of the mistakes and correct them. But what I can do about this is limited. Sharing social media contents and supporting such activist groups are some of the things

that I can do. So, I feel this responsibility. If this is something I can do, why shouldn't I?"

When participants are joining an activist movement through their social media accounts, they perceive it as something they can and should do, so they take certain steps to participate in these activist movements launched on social media. For example, using hashtags, reposting existing content, petitioning or endowing are some of these steps and actions. While participants are aware of these issues and act in a socially responsible way, they also choose to participate in these activist movements because they are not difficult to participate in on social platforms. According to Snow (2001), collective identity can be defined as a common sense of 'us' and collective agency (Snow, 2001). Bennet and Segerberg's (2013) concept of 'connective action' emphasizes activism that is necessary for collective identity. Similarly, according to participants, digital activism can only be effective on social platforms if a monophonic collective movement can be created. Therefore, the success of campaigns is possible if a large number of people who share the same thoughts will participate in the campaigns. For them, an activist movement is successful if it reaches large masses, giving a reason for people involved in the activist movement and enabling different platforms to talk about the issue. For this reason, feeling responsible for raising awareness on prominent issues is seen as a common source of motivation for many individuals. Sharing the advocated idea with other individuals who are not aware of the subject and including them in this campaign is perceived as a success. Therefore, participants emphasize that it is important to raise awareness in activist movements that they participate in on social media. Similarly, Bennett and Lagos (2007) determine the first level of digital activism as increasing consumer awareness. Morozov (2009), on the other hand, describes creating awareness as something carried out to feel good without creating any social impact. He defines this "feel-good online activism with zero political or social impact" as slacktivism. He notes that this feel-good factor is the main reason behind the popularity of slacktivist activities (Morozov, 2009a).

In some cases, people's sense of responsibility drives them to post on social media. There is a need to inform their friends and close circle and make them a part of the social problems. As one of the participants states, he demonstrates an example of courage for others to act similarly by sharing his feelings. Because, according to him, if it is a social problem, everyone has to react the same way, and everyone should be informed about it (B.P.). In addition, participants sometimes perceive this sense of responsibility as a duty. This mission drives them to participate in existing activist campaigns. If they do not fulfil this duty, they believe that they make no effort to change this mistake or problem.

I.B. (47): "For example, when people petition a campaign on Change.org, then they are drifting away from that subject. They are not informed about the campaign in any way. But they think that they have fulfilled their duty of citizenship, and they discard that responsibility."

For the tasks that are carried out with the goal of social responsibility, there is the urge not to remain silent about the issue that concerns a social problem and to feel obliged to share. However, the ideology behind the activism movement involved may not be understood in the posts made with this sense of duty. When individuals post because they feel obliged, they may miss the purpose and mission of that action. Furthermore, participants state that their posts on social media or the activist movements that they are a part of are because of their willingness to help by acting with a sense of responsibility. Thus, participating in digital activism movements on social media refers to drawing attention to the source of social problems and feeling responsible for helping so that action can be heard more to reach its goal. Especially when it comes to topics such as women's rights, animal rights, and labour rights, supporting those who are exposed to violence or those who are in a difficult situation and helping to make it known to a wider audience are sources of motivation for individuals to participate in activist movements on social media.

4.2.2. Desire for Staying Up-To-Date

One of the most important innovations of digital platforms is that it facilitates and initiates the desire to stay up-to-date. Social media users want to be aware of innovations and developments in every field. When describing this motivation, participants did not use words such as "following the trend," but they specifically stated the desire as "staying up-to-date." The desire to stay up-to-date was described as a desire to be aware of all kinds of innovations and to be involved with adopting these innovations. The desire to stay up-to-date keeps many participants motivated to be a part of the activist movements.

E.E. (27): "They try to do it just because of staying up-to-date. Behind it, there is the belief that -I did a good thing with sharing the logo of that brand, and yes, I participated in that global campaign-. But when you dig deeper, they have no concrete examples of any action or nothing they have done to serve this purpose. It was only the desire for staying up-to-date at that time. However, when we check if they did anything about it afterwards, 99 per cent of them did not. I did not participate at that moment in order not to be one of those people."

On the other hand, being united about current events in digital activism is very important to create an impact that will reach a wide audience. According to Karagöz (2013), most people think that they can be an activist with just a click or by changing simple things such as changing the profile picture on special days. However, the only purpose of this is the desire to be fashionable. A hashtag that is a Trending Topic (TT) on Twitter offers opinions and ideas written about this topic for millions of people. In this case, individuals acting with a desire to stay up-to-date are taking collective action. When performing these actions, there is the desire to act simultaneously with the group. Sometimes this group is a WhatsApp group, and sometimes, it is a community created against social problems.

B.P. (27): "Most people share campaigns to raise awareness. These people are very conscious, and they increase awareness. And these people reflect and support their ideas with their actions in their private lives. But if you're sharing this just to show that you're following the trend, that's not right. You have to adopt those ideas in your life."

Participants think that when it comes to digital activism, the advocated ideas and actions should not be different from each other. Otherwise, people do not find the activist campaigns consistent and sincere. There are some groups on digital platforms where especially events related to social problems are followed. The members of the communities on these platforms feel like part of a "network." Thanks to this network, individuals get information about different subjects, meet many different people, and feel motivated to act in line with group behaviour.

4.2.3. Fun and Entertainment

In order for activist movements to be effective and reach more people, people who participate in this action need to announce it from digital platforms because, on digital platforms, the spread of an issue to a wide audience occurs very quickly. Brands may not want to be the only party that delivers a social message in their campaigns. To attract many people to the campaign and create interaction, they approach social problems from different angles. For instance, even for serious issues or when problems in society are addressed, brands may entertainingly convey them to attract attention. This can lead to the perception of some campaigns as entertainment, as stated by some of the participants.

S.A. (29): "I was in college, and it was the summer period. For something that reached the masses, I think that the purpose of the event had become just fun after a while. Because a lot of people who didn't have anything to do with it, including celebrities who were in their summer houses or on their boats, did it by challenging each other. But at the end, people had to donate after joining the challenge, and I think many of them didn't make that donation. I have seen such people around me. I think it was completely about having fun. Even if it may have started for a different purpose at first, I don't think it went too consciously afterwards. I'm not saying that it didn't contribute to creating awareness, but I'm saying that everyone didn't care about that purpose. Of course, the common initial goal was to create awareness."

In some cases, the success criterion for brands, companies, or NGOs is measured by reaching thousands of people rather than achieving the desired purpose of the message. By looking at the number of people reached by a campaign, whether it reaches the masses and attracts them to the campaign, the brand can say that this campaign has created awareness and achieved its goal. However, it is important to question if it is enough for a campaign to reach out to the masses and get thousands of people involved in that campaign to raise awareness.

Our adaptation to some trends on social media is referred to by some participants as "instantaneous and momentary." Even if this trend is a digital activist movement, it attracts people instantly for that moment and initiates a lot of interaction for a certain period so that people become involved. However, it also fades quickly and losses relevance and influence at the same speed. Because the vast majority of people who engage in such activities participate for "entertainment" purposes, they participate without knowing where the idea came from what that action represents. Therefore, the resulting actions are entertainment-oriented to create interaction, but the impact is not lasting.

4.3. Feelings Associated with Engaging in Digital Activism

Findings reveal four main feelings emerged when participating in activist movements: gratification, fear, concern, and hope. Participants' feelings and reasons offer researchers and marketers insight to become aware of and take into account these emotions to empathize with participants when organizing activist campaigns.

4.3.1. Gratification

Although issues involving individuals in digital activism are often related to their focus of interest, we often see that they cannot remain indifferent to social problems that concern society. Activist movements, which address social problems and seek solutions to these problems, share these issues on social media to raise awareness. In such cases, the emotions that drive people to participate in these actions are quite strong. These strong feelings are formed by a person's desire to be useful to society, and participation in these campaigns leads to gratification, resulting in feelings of happiness, pleasure, and pride.

S.K. (27): "Touching people's lives increases my motivation. At least, I think I can contribute as much as I can. Creating more awareness makes me feel better and relieves my conscience. Helping and touching people's lives makes me so happy; although I can't be as active as I used to be, it is a pleasure to be able to help."

Individuals express that when they are involved in problems waiting to be solved in society, at least when they express these problems in their profiles, they feel good feelings. Activist movements that people participate in on digital platforms enable these people to feel gratification. Thanks to this feeling, people find a source of motivation to participate in activist movements.

4.3.2. Fear

Social media users highlight in their profiles what best describes them in their daily lives to tell others about themselves. Everyone manages their profiles on digital platforms to represent their best, ideal selves. In these profiles, which can be regarded as our digital ID cards, we tell whatever we want and as much as we want to introduce ourselves to the outside world. Every topic we share in our

profile shows an outsider how much we internalize this topic. Sometimes we give people clues from the image we created to reflect who we want to be. These tips can be a profile picture, a used TT, or a hashtag on social media. These tools are visible to anyone who follows our profile and give them clues as to who we are. People who engage in activist actions also share the ideologies they advocate with other people through using these tools. But when sharing these posts and images, there is a feeling that either prevents them from participating in activist movements or pushes them to participate in activist movements. This feeling is fear. According to the study's findings, the feeling of fear both encourages activists and causes them to remain passive. These two situations are examined under two titles: becoming more active on social media with the fear of being left out or being lynched and becoming more passive because of being afraid of the possible reactions and pressures participation may lead to.

The motivation for staying up-to-date, which was discussed earlier, also causes participants to become afraid of being left out. According to the findings, participants state that they believe people share about these issues in order to act in line with the trends and to conform with their membership or aspirational groups. This perception also helps to understand the reason behind the fear of being left out.

D.K. (20): "As a woman, I share something that supports feminism in my profile that everyone can see. Then I make judgmental, condescending and derogatory comments about another woman on social media that many people can see as well. That's very contradictory. If I'm doing this, it means that I'm just a woman who supports feminism to increase the number of my followers. There are a lot of people like that on social media. Because lately the number of followers is everything for most of the people."

Although we try to create new identities for ourselves on social media, these identities may not be accepted by other people. Consistency of actions and spoken words are very important to people. Consequently, the identities that people create on social media and supporting or participating in activist movements digitally most often arise out of fear of being left out.

Furthermore, people who participate in activist movements on digital platforms are not always able to fully express their feelings. The digital world contains hundreds of different views, ideas and beliefs. This difference is sometimes not welcomed by different groups. Activist movements, particularly on sensitive issues, can lead to complaints about opponent ideas. The possibility of being opposed causes fear in activist individuals, while this fear creates pressure to remain passive. Activists who can't say what they want can, in some cases, feel pressured to remain silent.

B.P. (27): "If I'm sure that there will not be any opponents, I share my opinion. Because there is such a crowd that tags, for instance, the ministry of interior on

whatever I share, almost on everything I write. If I'm sure it won't be so, then I share it. But unfortunately, this can happen too often on social media. So, I can say that I can't express my reaction, especially about politics, because I'm scared. Because of society and because of people."

Activists, especially on political issues, say that pressure is being created by a certain group within the society. Because of this pressure, they may have to remain silent, even on the issues that they believe in and want to defend.

4.3.3. Concern

Digital platforms are usually mediums that other people can view since some profiles are open not only to the content owner but also to other people. Therefore, these contents can be viewed, watched, and read by others. Consequently, especially people who have a public profile try to pay attention to the posts and images they share. The desire to control what they experience both in the posts and their profiles creates a sense of concern. A sense of concern sometimes pushes individuals to stay passive and not share or just observe, while in some cases, it leads them to compare what they say today with posts shared in the past.

This feeling of concern makes people pay attention to what they are sharing. The accuracy of the content that is subject to sharing is very important for individuals. Otherwise, careless sharing can lead to different results. For this reason, activists on digital platforms want to make sure that the content is correct when sharing; they are sceptical and shy about sharing information from sources whose accuracy is unknown.

S.A. (29): "I share issues that I am knowledgeable about. Because we need to know about issues that are related to the world, the universe, and a wider audience. I have an opinion on these issues, yes, but as I said, I don't want to express an opinion on something without knowing what is true and what is not."

It is important not to be misled by people, share the right information, and pay attention to integrity. Although people want to share and participate in actions, they remain passive because of this feeling of concern about the accuracy of the content, and they prefer not to share.

With the profile created on social media, individuals create an identity for themselves. They also use this identity in their actions of digital activism. An activist can have more than one identity; for example, a feminist and an animal rights advocate can participate in actions on these different issues. How the identity he or she uses when participating in these actions is understood by other people is important for participants.

K.K. (27): "I think consistency is very important. If you're defending something, you should act and behave consistently. But usually, people are not like that. In our country, people want to express their views on everything. But when you look

at their behaviour in their personal lives, most of the time, their behaviours are different from their ideas and expressions. Then I think it's irrelevant. "

Because some of the participants think that other people are not consistent and honest in their social media profiles, they don't want people to think of them as "inconsistent" as well. They are concerned about this. Therefore, they want to create an impression on social media that does not contradict their real self. They express the opinions that they defend with their actions in order not to create an "inconsistent" perception on social media. The identity (profile) created on digital platforms makes the participants want to control the messages they give. They even want to control the posts they shared in the past to make sure they correctly represent them. If what they defend and believe is different from their past opinion, they delete the posts they have shared in the past. The need to look at the posts shared in the past and control that the posts made in the past and the idea advocated today are compatible with each other due to this concern for profile control and representation of actual self.

4.3.4. Hope

One of the biggest reasons activist actions are moving to digital platforms is to reach a bigger audience faster. Consequently, hoping to reach more people by sharing on digital platforms is among the goals of activists.

D.K. (20): "Sometimes a content shared by someone goes viral because of me, because of my contribution. Because if I share that content, the number of shares increases, so, I share it with this feeling of hope."

Each profile on digital platforms is a user, an individual, a person who owns an idea and follows an ideology. Those profiles involved in a campaign mean that dozens of people have embraced that idea by supporting this campaign. Sometimes, an action involving a person can move that action to a different audience, even to a different continent on digital platforms. For people who are aware of this power, "bringing that campaign to more people" is the reason behind the feeling of hope. Similarly, Paktin (2012) supports this and approaches the issue positively, stating that digital activism is "a method of bringing together people who will fight around the thought, faith, and mobilize them." He argues that digital activism reinforces "the idea that the world is changeable with every click" (Paktin, 2013). Sharing with the feeling of hope that the movement will succeed is one of the reasons why individuals participate in actions on digital platforms.

4.4. Consumers' Perceptions and Expectations of Activist Communication Campaigns

Participants have different perspectives on activist communication campaigns that brands share on digital platforms. Different perceptions and expectations of participants emerged based on the analysis of their reactions to the examples

of activist campaigns shown during the interviews. These expectations can be grouped under credibility, use of celebrities, trustworthiness, entertainment orientation, language barrier, and courage and sincerity.

4.4.1. Credibility and Consistency

Brands launch communication campaigns on social issues on digital platforms. While consumers participate in these campaigns, they assess the relationship between the brand and the campaign. After evaluating this relationship, the consumer either supports or opposes the brand on the platform where the campaign is launched. While deciding on this, they compare the message of the campaign with the attitude and vision of the brand.

S.A. (29): "We are a society, and there are many different ideas and ideologies. I think it is very important which ideas and topics brands support, but you cannot involve every brand in every subject. If it is in line with people's ideology and if it supports and fits with the brand's code of ethics, then it can have a positive impact. But if a company that has a different perception and positioning supports a social topic, it is not convincing for me. This is something that can change according to the target audience. So that is very relevant to the vision of the brand, very relevant to its history and its mission."

The main criterion all participants agree on is that the message given by the brand and its practices shouldn't be different. An adverse situation created by the brand causes distrust for the consumer. While brands are setting up activist campaigns, the consumer is looking for answers to the following questions: has the brand expressed the message of the campaign before; has the brand taken an attitude on the subject mentioned before; has it taken any action on the subject it defends; does the mission and vision of the brand match with this campaign? All of these need to be consistent and support each other. Furthermore, participants express that they do not trust the aid campaigns initiated by brands targeting social problems in order to solve these problems. Because they state that they do not know how and for what purposes the grant money is used.

B.E. (54): "Turkish people are not used to donating money to an institution or association, and they do not trust these institutions. My friends who support the foundation I belong to trust the foundation because they trust me. Because I am a liaison between that foundation and these people. I also do not support any campaign or anyone that I do not trust."

To persuade people to donate or give financial aid, they must know someone in the association. If there is no one they know, or there is no liaison or contact, people prefer not to trust. Although brands try to display a consistent, reliable, and credible image, their language can be a barrier to this goal.

4.4.2. Language Barrier

Global brands can broadcast their communication campaigns by adapting them to different countries. The contents such as the video, message, slogans used can be the same, but they need to be translated into the local language of that country. However, this translation may cause some misunderstandings.

I.B. (47): "One of the things we do for feminism as activists is to take words with negative connotations and try to make them positive. However, this campaign has been translated into Turkish incorrectly. In fact, we are using the words wrongly. In some international boycotts, this was what I criticized. For instance, we see this problem in the #doitlikeagirl movement. We are getting involved without understanding the essence. That's why people don't understand what is being protested."

Although the campaign contains a positive message, participants can perceive it negatively, which creates an unexpected negative attitude towards the brand. Although some people perceive the actual message given, a large part of the participants may display attitudes that are opposing and can even blame the global campaign that has been mistranslated into Turkish. In some cases, the language used by brands can even lead to lynching attempts against the brand. Although failure to deliver the actual desired message can cause a lynching attempt for participants, especially the neutral stance displayed by brands and their silence can also be a reason for lynching, as explained in the following section.

4.4.3. Fear of Lynching

Brands addressing social issues and organizing activist campaigns on digital platforms are often not trusted by participants. However, they still believe that brands feel obliged to make these posts and participate in such activist campaigns. This is because it provides an opportunity for commercial gain rather than a social benefit.

S.D. (28): "This is the power of social media. I am sure that these brands may not support women's rights and may even act the opposite. But they need to create a post, a campaign in order to enhance the brand image positively and show that they made an effort for this. They prepared an advert, maybe even allocated a budget. I think this is entirely due to the power of activist movements on social media."

Participants displayed an insecure attitude towards the social media messages given by brands. They emphasized that the posts shared are not reliable or genuine. They believe that the brands had to prepare and share these posts just because they were afraid of the negative word of mouth, the power of social media, and the danger of being lynched by consumers. When participants described the negative attitude towards brands, they used the term lynching of brands instead of boycotting

them. Lynching in their sense is different from boycotting. It consists of making negative statements about the brand on media, making bad comments to create a bad perception, and striving hard to achieve this. Consequently, brands are often afraid of being lynched. This fear is putting pressure on especially big brands rather than small and less recognized brands. In some cases, even just remaining silent and not participating can lead to the lynching of big brands. Especially on special days, all brands share some content about the day on their social media accounts. On these days, remaining silent or not sharing anything can lead to lynching of some brands, especially if these brands are big family companies because participants' expectations from large companies are different. Therefore, on special days, brands want to share their unique message with their consumers and prepare special content. One of these days is the 8 of March, International Women's Day.

S.A. (29): "I don't expect a post or campaign from a brand that advocates and supports animal rights and nature to share about International Women's Day, on March 8th. Because it is already working on issues related to the protection of animals and nature, but a well-known big company needs to share a post on International Women's Day. Because these are companies that should be supporting society and say something about the social agenda. This is actually the difference between these two cases. A brand that works on animal rights does not always have to address all the social issues. However, a big brand is expected to appeal to all target audiences at the same time by supporting all the current social issues. The brand, which already works on animal rights, is followed by people who are sensitive to this particular issue. So, I can differentiate my expectations for these two brands."

If a brand focuses and works on a specific issue, the participant does not expect that brand to take action on general issues. However, if this brand is a big, well-known family brand and is closely concerned with social problems and operates in areas that concern society, participants expect the brand to act on social problems. Of course, it also depends on the field and industry; this brand operates in and how the participants perceive this brand. Because in some cases, the sincerity and courage displayed by brands are disputed by participants.

4.4.4. Courage and Sincerity

Participants argue that the activist campaigns that most brands implement on the digital platforms are not sincere, and they do not believe them all. However, if a brand supports sensitive social issues despite public criticism, this is perceived as courageous. At this point, the participant thinks that the brand is sincere. Because according to them, other brands follow the popular agenda, and these campaigns are consumed very quickly on digital platforms. This creates the perception among participants that the campaigns initiated according to the popular agenda are not sustainable.

D.K. (20): "Perhaps 90% of brands in Turkey, they say women are flowers, but when we assess the current situation, we see that thousands of women die every year. So, it is right to defend this, but why does a brand create a campaign, especially on March 8th, International Women's Day? For example, why do they not financially support the case of a woman who has been subject to violence? If they were truly sincere, they could have helped that way. But on the other hand, it depends on the topic as well. For instance, the LGBT movement in Turkey is a cause that requires a lot of courage. If a brand really defends this issue, I think if it supports it and it risks everything, then it is doing it sincerely."

Participants perceive brands that run activist campaigns on sensitive issues as sincere and courageous. On the other hand, brands that focus only on popular and constantly changing issues are not sincere, according to the participants. Therefore, brands want to use reliable and trustworthy people in their communication campaigns to break this perception. Thanks to these celebrities, brands can reach more people quickly and give the message they want to say more comfortably, and in this way, they may affect more people, as explained in the next section.

4.4.5. Using Celebrities

Brands or businesses that use celebrities to carry out an activist action can reach more people and be more effective. Participants believe that some campaigns are more effective because of the celebrity who is involved in the campaign, and it reaches large masses.

S.D. (28): "In general, the actions of celebrities who are popular people lead to such reactions, so it affects other people, and they do the same. It is a campaign that was supported by many celebrities, so I think it was successful because of them."

Brands prefer to use famous people in their campaigns, and consumers try to get involved in what celebrities do. According to Gretzel (2017), activism does not only target businesses or government entities but can also be directed at celebrities or other consumers. On the other hand, consumers think that the reason for the success of that campaign is its use of famous people rather than the message of the campaign. Another way to achieve this success is that brands aim to make activist campaigns more fun and get more people involved in the campaign.

4.4.6 Entertainment Orientation

Participants believe that brands use entertainment-oriented communication campaigns to reach a bigger audience instead of just delivering the main message. They emphasize that brands aim to get more interaction and involve more people in the campaign so that it is successful, rather than just emphasizing social problems and finding solutions to make it change.

K.K. (27): "I think there have been many people who were unaware of this campaign. However, they used the app to turn their face into an animal and do something funny. It has been used somewhat more for entertainment than its main purpose."

An entertainment-oriented communication used by brands in activist movements can be found interesting by participants. However, they also say that they participate in such campaigns just for fun. The general belief is that it does not convey the real message to the general target audience. If the brand wants to raise awareness or give a serious social message with these kinds of campaigns, entertainment-oriented communication may not be the method as the main message the brand really wants to deliver or achieve is not perceived by the participants as it is overshadowed by fun.

5. Discussion

As mentioned previously, activism, which has moved to social platforms with digitalization, can be used as a tool by brands in their communication campaigns. For consumers to perceive brands as successful in digital activist campaigns, there must be loyalty and sincerity (Kotler and Sarkar, 2017; Rishe, 2018; Kubiak and Ouda, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to get an insight about the thoughts and feelings of consumers to understand how digital activism used by brands in communication campaigns can be made more effective. In this regard, the findings of this study can guide communicators, brands, marketers, and experts working on this issue to understand the perceptions and expectations of consumers with regard to digital activism. The contributions and implications of this research, both for theory and practice, are summarised in Table 3 in four main categories, including the findings that support previous literature and that are different from prior literature.

5.1. Practices of Consumers

Digitization enables people who are curious about similar events to get information and to find each other on social media. People can do this via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, the most used social media platforms in Turkey (We Are Social, 2020). Previous studies in literature do not reflect if consumers' usage of these online platforms differs based on certain factors. This study shows that individuals use different platforms according to their mood, emotions and purpose. According to the participants, Twitter is the most preferred medium for digital activism, as stated in the findings. One of the reasons for this is that they can easily follow the changing topics from the Trend Topic section in the Twitter app. Participants primarily prefer Twitter for everything they want to get information about and to keep up to date with events. At the same time, they prefer Twitter for the activist movements they participate in. Similarly, according to Tramayne (2014), "in the Twittersphere, the connections between users are represented by the @mentions and #hashtags" (Tramayne, 2014). It provides great convenience to users, and

launching action on Twitter about a topic and supporting it with a Hashtag brings together people who are interested in the same topic.

The platform can also change depending on people's mood, although there is no such distinction in the literature about digital activism. According to the results of this study, Instagram is emerging as a platform that people use when they are happy, but it is not preferred when people are nervous, unhappy, and angry. When participants have negative emotions, they don't want to use Instagram or see the happy photos that other people share. Some participants emphasized that they also used Instagram's Story feature to raise awareness. Thanks to this feature, the shared content is published in the Story section and deleted after 24 hours. Consequently, people do not want to keep activist content on their profiles permanently. On the other hand, Twitter is a platform where participants share their opinions and thoughts, especially on negative issues. Participants also say that it is easier to organize via Twitter about an activist topic. Similar to our findings, according to Tramayne (2014), "without Twitter, the argument goes, citizens would not have been able to realize their common sentiments and organize what became a revolution" (Tramayne, 2014). Participants expressed that the platform through which they receive information about current events and news is Twitter.

Apart from social media platforms, one of the most used websites for digital activism is Change.org, as mentioned in the findings. Participants stressed that they did not start a campaign on Change.org, but they support existing campaigns and petition them. The majority of respondents do not follow whether their petition campaigns have been successful or not, but some of them say that Change.org informs them via e-mail about the current state of the campaigns. According to participants, signing with one click is very easy to issue these signatures on their profile, but the campaign's main purpose is not understood. Similarly, in the literature, Caplan (2009) advocates a similar view of the participants. According to Caplan (2009), those who sign online petitions and join Facebook activist pages do not have the desire and/or resources to participate in traditional activist movements such as a protest. Participating in traditional activist movements often requires more effort than participating in digital activism.

5.2. Motivations of Consumers

The first source of motivation that drives participants to participate in activist actions is their sense of responsibility for social problems—studies in the literature support this finding. According to Chen (2020), online activists are often resourceful and well-educated citizens concerned about morality and social change. Similarly, Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2006) have stated the common moral obligations of people involved in acts of digital activism. Similarly, moral responsibility was defined by Muniz and O'guinn (2001) as a sense of obligation for the betterment of society. Broberg and Doshoris (2020) state that if consumers perceive the stance of the brand as being responsible, then they have positive

perception of the brand. Bhattacharya and Shen (2004) and Ramesh et al. (2019) further express that if a company manages to join corporate social duty accurately, it'll encourage positive recognition about itself by the consumers. Likewise, the findings of this research support previous literature. Participants do not want to keep silent about social problems. They share digital activist campaigns to raise awareness and influence others. A similar view is also supported in the literature. It is argued that consumers on digital platforms have the power to change something by talking (Siano, Vollero and Palazzo, 2011).

The second motivation is to stay up-to-date on all the trends and current news. Being a member of a group can help to achieve these common goals. Similarly, Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2006) said that anti-brand groups were created to provide a support group to achieve common goals. According to Kubiak and Oudo (2020), consumers perceive brand activism as adapting to the most current trends. In literature, this motivation is referred to as "adapting to trends". However, unlike literature, the findings of the paper show that the emphasis of the participants in the study is different from the literature. Participants note that the desire for staying up-to-date is different from following trends. It can be described as a hunger for whatever is new, a desire to follow and instantly learn all kinds of information, trends, developments, and every new social and political issue. Therefore, the desire to stay up-to-date is stated by participants as one of the motivations to participate in activist campaigns. Proponents of the slacktivism perspective in the literature argue that the motivation of some consumers to participate in activist actions is visibility (Kristofferson et al., 2014). Similarly, according to the research results, participants express those actions taken with a desire to stay up-to-date cause them to miss the ideology and main purpose of activism. Activist movements that consumers participate in on digital platforms provide personal satisfaction but do not have a tangible effect (Morozov, 2012; Skoric, 2012).

The last motivation, according to the findings, is entertainment. Prior literature does not include entertainment as one of the motivations of digital activism. However, according to the findings, entertainment-oriented digital activist campaigns have increased the interest of consumers. On the other hand, participants also say that in this case, the expected effect and purpose of the action cannot be understood well. Because for many people, participating in such actions is just to have fun. Although this motivation causes the movement to reach more people, it is not performed consciously.

5.3. Feelings of Consumers

Consumers' feelings about online activism are expressed very generally in the literature. Broberg and Doshoris (2020) say that if consumers perceive the message as negative, then the feeling that this ad evokes becomes negative. Hwang et al. (2016) also generalize the feelings while addressing positive and negative emotions in the same way. On the other hand, this study tries to gain an

in-depth understanding of how consumers feel when they participate in online activist movements. According to research findings, consumers feel gratification, fear, concern, and hope when participating in activist movements.

One of the prominent emotions is gratification. Helping others, donating money, participating in campaigns addressing social issues are relaxing and enjoyable for many participants. Morozov (2009a) defines this as slacktivism, in which activist actions are done only to feel good with no consequences. However, according to the findings, participants do not participate in actions to feel good; they say they feel good because they participate.

The second most common feeling was fear. Participants feel compelled to participate in online activist movements on certain issues. If they do not join, they fear that other people can think negatively about them. Broberg and Doshoris (2020) and Brennan and Binney (2010) examined not how consumers feel when participating in actions but what emotions activist ads evoke in them. According to their findings, consumers prefer self-preservation and inaction when an ad incites fear, guilt, or shame rather than an active response. Similarly, a situation in which consumers keep silent is observed in this study.

Third, the prominent feeling is a concern. Participants expressed that they felt compelled to control the content of their posts and their profiles in some cases. This causes concern that is a feeling contributes to the literature. Finally, when participants join online activist campaigns, they feel a sense of hope for changing problems in society. Similarly, Paktin expresses that thanks to digital activism, people can change the world with every click (2012).

5.4. Consumers' Perceptions and Expectations of Digital Brand Activism

The findings on perceptions and expectations of consumers with regards to digital activism will have important and useful implications for brands, marketers, and communicators. As stated in the findings, participants believe that the activist campaigns made by brands must be credible and consistent. Kubiak and Ouda (2020) emphasize that consumers expect brands to collaborate on issues related to their products, business, or the industry in which they operate since inconsistency and insincerity create distrust for the consumer. Similar to the literature, the participants emphasize that advertising, which is related to online activism, should be relevant to the vision and mission of the brand and the messages that the company shares. Otherwise, participants state that they do not find the advertising made by brands convincing and consistent. Bennett and Lagos argue (2007) that companies try to deliver a message of social responsibility through brand activism, but consumers may perceive that message differently. In support of this view, Broberg and Doshoris (2020) claim that the activist, social responsibility campaigns should be consistent with the company's core values, culture, and history. When participants do not trust brands, they also have a negative attitude

towards the brand's products. Klein, Smith and John (2004) emphasize that consumers' distrust of the brand can damage the brand and its reputation. On the other hand, in some cases, they perceive successful campaigns created by brands as trends. Participants think the brand doesn't defend and believe that idea. If a brand uses a current social problem in a campaign and the same brand does not address this problem one more time, then consumers will not trust if the brand really cares about the problem or not.

Another new contribution to the literature is the language barrier, which is a mistake when companies implement global campaigns in another country. Global campaigns can create a meaning that can contradict the values of that culture when the campaign is translated word by word. Global campaigns of brands need to change according to the values and language of that country. Although it is desirable to create a message with a positive meaning, brands sometimes fail to do so. Participants are aware of how global campaigns are misinterpreted when they are adapted to our country, and at this point they blame the brands.

Brands can create online activist campaigns, especially about social issues to draw attention to these issues. However, participants think that brands create activist campaigns on specific issues (women's rights, animal rights, etc.) because they feel they have to. Otherwise, consumers can punish the brands (Weinzimmer and Esken, 2016; Sarkar and Kotler, 2018; Shetty, Venkataramaiah and Anand, 2019). In the literature, this punishment has been explained as boycotting brands. A boycott can occur if consumers think that companies are not interested in social issues (Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Broberg and Doshoris, 2020). However, the findings of this study approach this understanding from a different perspective than the existing literature. According to the findings, the punishment by consumers is not boycotting but is referred to as "lynching" the brands. Lynching has a different meaning than boycotting. Boycotting refers to the practice of a consumer's negative attitude to purchasing the brand's product or to purchase specific products of the brand to reward them (Copeland, 2014). However, lynching includes all the negative statements made by consumers on all channels of media.

Furthermore, brands need to be convincing to consumers about their sincerity (Sarkar and Kottler, 2018; Broberg and Doshoris, 2020). The findings also support that consumers believe that brands should address social problems, but they can also understand whether they're doing it sincerely or not. Consumers argue that they appreciate it when brands take responsibility for social issues (Kubiak and Ouda, 2020). The findings support this view, but there is also a different argument. According to the participants, if a brand only advertises about trending topics and changes the campaigns according to the changing trends, this is not perceived as sincere by the consumers. Kubiak and Ouda (2020) state that consumers will have a negative attitude toward these brands if brands address too many individual and sensitive issues. However, the findings contradict this argument because participants described brands that address sensitive issues -such as LGBT- as

courageous. Brands that address these sensitive issues can be judged negatively by some consumers, but still, they are not afraid to share the opinion they advocate. Otherwise, consumers perceive brands that support only popular issues as a trickster. Similarly, Kubiak and Ouda (2020) state that consumers believe that brands use activism to enhance their image, to gain more consumers, and thus to increase their sales.

According to Gretzel (2017), activism does not only target businesses or government entities but can also be directed at celebrities or other consumers. The findings support this view as participants believe that celebrities used in activist brand campaigns made that campaign a success as many people participate in the campaign just because of this celebrity. However, brands have to be very careful when they are using celebrities because the celebrity can overshadow the message.

Finally, consumers may see brand activism as another tool to adapt to social trends (Kubiak and Ouda, 2020). Findings support this argument. Participants agree that, instead of only delivering the main message, companies use entertainment-oriented communication strategies to reach a wider audience. Instead of only stressing social issues and seeking ways to make that change, they emphasize that companies strive to interact more and engage more people in the campaign so that the campaign is effective.

Some of the research findings support the recommendations Hermann (2020) laid out for marketers, as shown in four grey coloured cells in Figure 1. The findings of this study support Herman's (2020) recommendations to brands and also add four new suggestions, as shown in orange-coloured cells in Figure 1. Findings support the significance of being authentic and choosing relevant causes or issues; and brands showing commitment to chosen cause or issue. Additionally, findings have further implications and suggestions for marketers and brands. Firstly, marketers must master the language and culture of the country in which the campaign will be implemented when adapting global campaigns. Otherwise, consumers can misinterpret the campaign, and brands will get negative feedback and face negative repercussions. Secondly, it is necessary to present the necessary arguments to the consumer. For instance, when a brand does not support a particular cause, it needs to make sure the consumer understands the reason not to be lynched on social media. A brand should not support any social movements that are not in line with its vision and values to gain the consumer's trust. Thirdly, brands may have to be bold. If there is a movement they believe in, they must support it and defend their opinion despite political and social pressures. Finally, brands should not choose an entertainment-oriented approach when addressing social and sensitive issues as this might cause the consumers to miss the actual message.

6. Conclusion

As discussed in the findings section and summarised in table 2, consumers have different motivations to participate in digital activism, such as feeling responsible and having a sense of duty, staying up to date and/or for fun. In return, participating in digital activist campaigns led to the emergence of feelings such as gratitude, fear, concern and/or hope. Findings also reveal consumers' perceptions and expectations of brands' activist communication campaigns, which can be summarised as credible, sustainable, courageous, sincere, cautious about the language barrier, fear of being lynched, using celebrities, and being entertainment-oriented. These have important implications for brands. Based on these findings, the discussion section and figure 1 include further brand suggestions to create successful activist campaigns. Consequently, online activism campaigns misapplied by brands attract negative reactions from consumers on digital platforms. Therefore, brands, communicators, and marketing professionals need to understand the perceptions and feelings of consumers to properly implement online activism. In this regard, this study helps to understand the motivations and feelings of consumers to participate in online activism and to examine the effects of the campaigns implemented by brands.

The findings of the research enable us to gain deeper insight into consumers' understanding and perception of digital activism and can serve as a guideline for brands to initiate successful activist campaigns. Brands should prepare online activism campaigns on issues related to their visions, values, and corporate history. While doing this, they also need to know how the brand is perceived by the consumers. Because the corporate image that the brand wants to create and the perception of the consumer can be very different. Furthermore, brands should pay attention to the language used in their communication campaigns. A communication language that the target audience can understand should be used. At the same time, the brand should know the culture and language of its target audience very well. Global brands should adapt international campaigns to the culture and language of that country. This is especially critical when addressing sensitive and social issues through activist campaigns. The communication campaigns the brand implements should ensure consumer trust and confidence. Therefore, brands should follow a consistent and sincere approach. They should conduct research on the issues they want to attract attention to and share with consumers. If a donation or aid campaign is to be carried out, brands should transparently share all processes and outcomes with their consumers. Furthermore, sometimes in order to be perceived sincerely, brands should resist social pressure on matters they value and take a bold stance. If they're going to use a celebrity in their advertisements, they should be sure that the person will deliver the message in the best way, and it will be a suitable celebrity because consumers think that sometimes celebrities can overshadow the message. Finally, brands should not create playful, entertainment-oriented content, even if it is to raise awareness

about serious social issues. When a fun-based communication campaign is chosen for activism, consumers don't think it's a good way to get the message out. On the contrary, they state that this situation invites people to share unconsciously, without supporting or understanding the cause.

There are several limitations of this research. First of all, due to Covid-19, instead of conducting face-to-face interviews, most of the interviews were conducted over Zoom and Skype. Participants are likely to talk less when it is online. Therefore, probing questions were asked to have deeper conversations. Moreover, the brands used as examples in this research operate in certain fields and industries, such as a sanitary napkin brand, an international non-governmental organization, a global fashion brand, and an association that aims to cure neurodegenerative disease. Future research can include examples of brands from different industries. In addition, the sample of this study was chosen from people aged 20-55 years old. Future studies may examine consumers from different age cohorts, such as the X-Y-Z generations, to determine if the answers differ. Future research can also include perspectives of non-activist consumers to understand why they do not participate in activist movements and whether their actions and motivations are similar to the reasons behind slacktivism. Future studies can further compare consumers' perspectives on digital activist campaigns of big and global brands versus small and local brands or NGOs. Finally, this research focused only on consumers. Future research can investigate the motivations, perceptions and attitudes of employees, marketers, communicators and policymakers.

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Table 1. Details of the Interviews

Participants	Gender	Age	Occupation	Duration	Place
A.Ü.	Male	28	Risk Management Assistant	30 minutes	Office
B.E.	Female	54	Retired Employee	41 minutes 49 seconds	Online
B.K.	Female	29	Project Development Specialist	34 minutes	Office
B.P.	Female	27	Account Executive	45 minutes	Online
D.K.	Female	20	Student	51 minutes 54 seconds	Online
E.E.	Female	27	Social Media Specialist	42 minutes 52 seconds	Online
G.Y.	Female	29	Buying Specialist	41 minutes	Online
I.B.	Female	47	Academician	37 minutes 51 seconds	Online
İ.A.	Male	34	Project Manager	35 minutes	Office
İ.H.	Female	29	Student	61 minutes 30 seconds	Online
K.K.	Male	27	Content Marketing Executive	48 minutes 24 seconds	Online
O.K.	Male	40	Coordinator	30 minutes seconds	Office
Ö.E.	Female	29	Physical therapist	36 minutes 49 seconds	Online
S.A.	Female	29	Social Media Specialist	45 minutes 41 seconds	Online
S.Ç.	Female	34	Project Development Specialist	47 minutes 24 seconds	Online
S.D.	Male	28	UA/UX Designer / Art Director	59 minutes 23 seconds	Online
S.K.	Female	27	Human Resources Specialist	50 minutes	Online

Table 2. Coding Table

Main Category	Themes	Sub Categories	Example Quotes
Motivations of Consumers	Responsibility and Sense of Duty	Social responsibility	I try to help these activist social responsibility campaigns with all my potential, as best as I can. (S.K.)
		Helping other people	It's a good thing to help people and touch their lives. It gives me pleasure. But I can't be as active as before. I think if I do something about one social problem, others will do, too. If I can encourage them, they can also help others. (S.K.)
		Creating Awareness	When I see content that resonates with me, I share them directly on my page. I make them more visible (E.E.)
	Desire For Staying Up-To-Date	Being Up To Date With Social Media	They try to do it just because of staying up-to-date at that moment. Behind it, there is the belief that -I did a good thing with sharing the logo of that brand and yes, I participated in that global campaign-. But when you dig deeper they have no concrete examples of any action or nothing they have done to serve this purpose. It was only the desire for staying up-to-date at that time and they did it. However, when we check if they did anything about it afterwards, 99 percent of them did not. I believe frankly that I did not participate at that moment in order not to be one of those people. (E.E.)
		Being Trendy	We all get involved in these things from time to time just to stay up-to-date and follow the trend, but we need to discuss whether this is activism or not. (İ.H.)
		Being a Part of a Network/ Group	When there is news that all groups are talking about and they say "let's share" so I share. (I.B.)
	Fun	Attracting Attention	I just think it's about showing yourself to attract attention... So, nobody cares about donating. I think they joined just for having fun while pouring ice down from their head and saying "I will create awareness, too." (S.K.)
		Having Fun	I think there have been a lot of people who have turned their face into an animal and used it to do something fun without knowing about this campaign. (K.K.)

Feelings of Consumers	Gratification	Feeling Better	When I petition, I feel good. (S.A.)
		Happiness	It makes me very happy if I can get even one petition, from somebody. (D.K.)
		Feeling Proud	There are articles I'm proud to share, including my own. (I.B.)
	Fear	Fear of Punishment	I think there's a fear in our country about petition campaigns, so people don't want to sign them. (I.B.)
		Fear of Being Left Out	They just wanted to act in line with the social agenda, so they just did it and left it, that's all. (E.E.)
		Profile Control	I think consistency is very important. If you're defending something, you should act and behave consistently. But usually, people are not like that. They express their views on everything in our country. But when you look at whether his or her behaviour in their personal life, most of the time you will see their behaviours are different from their ideas and expressions on their profile. Then I think it's irrelevant. (K.K.)
	Concern	Content Control	I share issues that I am knowledgeable about. Because, as I said, this is a very different situation. We need to know about issues that are related to the world, the universe, and a wider audience. I have an opinion on these issues, yes, but as I said, I don't want to express an opinion on something like this without knowing what is true and what is not (S.A.)
	Hope	Expectancy	Sometimes a content I shared goes viral, and a lot of people see it. I share it with this hope. (D.K.)

	Language Barrier	Language	We're getting involved in a global campaign but we're making this activism in a wrong way as it is incorrectly translated into Turkish. The correct version is the campaign that carried out globally. (I.B.)
	Fear of Lynching	Fear of Being Left Out	But they felt the need to share that day in order to show the brand support. To enhance the brand image positively they made an effort; they prepared advert; maybe they allocated a budget for it. I think this is entirely due to the power of activist movements on social media. (S.D.)
		Feeling obligatory	Consumers ' views of the brand can change and therefore brands have to share, or they'll be lynched. (S.A.)
Consumers' Perceptions and Expectations of Activist	Courage and Sincerity	Courage and sincerity	If it were something truly sincere, they could have helped that way. On the other hand, the LGBT movement in Turkey is an action that requires a lot of courage. If a brand really defends this issue, I think if it supports it, it risks everything and is doing it sincerely. (D.K.)
	Using Celebrity	Famous People	In general, the actions of celebrities and their behaviours lead to such reactions, so they affect other people and others do the same. (S.D.)
			That is related to adapting to popular culture. I mean, we all know these people. They use them because in this way people become more curious and they can research the campaign because of them. (E.E.)
	Entertainment-Oriented	Having Fun	It has been used in a way that it focused more on entertainment and having fun rather than focusing on its original purpose. (K.K.)
		Ignoring the Main Ideology	I know that there are people who consciously donate and make these applications, but I think that some people share such posts to entertain even though they do not think about the main idea. (B.P.)

Table 3. Summary of Main Contributions

	Support to Previous Literature	**Different from Previous Literature**	**New Contributions to Literature**
Practices of Consumers	*Launching action on Twitter about a topic and supporting it with a Hashtag brings together people who are interested in the same topic. *It is easier to organize about an activist topic via Twitter. *Petition campaigns launched by Change.org detract from the main goal of activism.		*Twitter is the most preferred medium for digital activism. *Instagram is emerging as a platform that people use when they are happy. However, Instagram is not preferred when people are nervous, unhappy, and angry. *Participants say that they do not prefer to share a post that is related to activism on their profile, instead they share it on Instagram's Story. Consequently, people do not want to keep activist contents in their profile permanently. They share it on the Story and allow it to be deleted 24 hours later.
Motivations of Consumers	*Participants participate in activist actions because of their sense of responsibility for social problems. *Participants do not want to keep silent about social problems and they join activist movements as if it is their duty. * The reason for being a part of an online group or community is actually because of the motivation for staying up-to-date.	*Participants note that the desire for staying up-to-date is different from following trends.	*Participants say that entertainment-oriented digital activist campaigns have increased the interest of consumers.

Feelings of Consumers	*Participants join online activist campaigns, because they feel a sense of hope for solving problems in society.	*Participants expressed that they feel better and they are happy when they participated in campaigns addressing social issues. Helping others, donating money, make participants feel better about themselves.	*Participants feel compelled to participate in online activist movements on certain issues. If they do not join, they fear that other people can think negatively about them. *Participants are afraid of being penalized by the authorized institutions, such as the government, when they criticize political issues. *Participants expressed that in some cases they felt compelled to control the content of their posts and their profiles.
Perceptions of Consumers	*Participants agree that instead of only delivering the main message, companies use entertainment-oriented communication strategies to reach to a wider audience. *Participants believe that celebrities used in activist brand campaigns made that campaign a success. *Participants perceive successful campaigns created by brands as trends. They think the brand often doesn't defend and believe that idea.		

*As contributions regarding consumers' expectations of brands are included in Figure 1, they are not included in this Table.

Figure 1. Eight Main Suggestions for Brands to Create Successful Activist Campaigns