

# Brand activism: A managerial perspective

What factors influence companies in their decision to take a stand?

Master Thesis

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*I hereby affirm that this research work was written solely by myself and that I have not previously submitted this work at another educational institution for the purpose of receiving an academic degree. Sentences or parts of sentences quoted are marked as such and have been appropriately cited. I further affirm that I have not used other than the declared sources. The submitted electronic version of the thesis matches the printed version.*

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## Zusammenfassung

### Markenaktivismus: Eine Managementperspektive

Thomas, GLUDERER

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Konzept von Markenaktivismus, das in der heutigen Welt stetig an Bedeutung gewinnt. Markenaktivismus bezeichnet dabei die Positionierung eines Unternehmens zu den soziopolitischen Problemstellungen ihrer Kund:innen. Entsprechen diese Probleme auch den Werten eines Unternehmen so können sie sich dazu äußern und auch soziopolitisch aktiv werden. Im Rahmen dieser Masterarbeit wurde eine quantitative Forschung durchgeführt, in der untersucht wird, ob der vorherrschende Entscheidungstyp im Unternehmen, der Industrietyp und die Größe des Unternehmens wie auch ihre organisatorische Struktur Einfluss darauf haben, ob das Unternehmen Stellung bezieht. Dabei wurden 151 Marketer:innen in einer Onlineumfrage, zu den in ihren Unternehmen vorhandenen Vorgehensweisen betreffend der bereits erwähnten Faktoren, befragt. Diese Masterarbeit liefert wichtige Ansätze, um Marketingverantwortlichen in Unternehmen dabei zu helfen, zu erkennen, was im Zusammenhang mit einer Entscheidung bezüglich Markenaktivismus wichtig ist. Unter anderem werden vom Autor dieser Arbeit weiterführende Forschungsaspekte im Zusammenhang mit Markenaktivismus beleuchtet und begründet.

**Schlüsselwörter:** *Markenaktivismus, Strategische Entscheidungsfindung, Organisatorische Modelle von Unternehmen, Arten von Entscheidungstypen*

## **Abstract**

### **Brand activism: A managerial perspective**

**Thomas, GLUDERER**

This paper deals with the concept of brand activism, which is becoming increasingly important in today's world. Brand activism refers to the positioning of a company towards the socio-political problems of its customers. If these problems correspond to the values of a company, it may express itself and become socio-politically active. In the context of this master's thesis, quantitative research was conducted to investigate whether the predominant decision-making type in the company, the type of the company, the size of the company but also its organizational structure has an influence on whether a company may take a stand. In an online survey, 151 brand managers and company owners were asked about the procedures in their companies regarding the factors already mentioned above. This master's thesis provides important approaches to help marketing managers within companies to understand the importance of decision-making in context with taking a socio-political stand through brand activism. Furthermore, the author of this thesis highlights further research aspects in connection with brand activism.

***Keywords: brand activism, strategic decision making, organizational models of companies, types of decision-making***

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## Introduction

It is increasingly important for companies or brands to take a stand on socio-political issues. The last few years have shown that politicians and society rarely address these issues, and it is therefore necessary for companies or brands to take a clear stand on current socio-political issues to best resonate with their customers (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, p. 7). At a time when the political situation is constantly changing and is challenged by social movements and topics such as Black Live Matters, feminist and/or queer movements, climate change, the Ukraine war or the COVID-19 pandemic, brand managers need to put more focus on aligning themselves and their brands with the needs of their target audiences. For brand managers, it is necessary to know which socio-political problems currently interest consumers (Korschun, 2021, pp. 11–12)

In their book, Kotler, and Sarkar (2020) describe how corporate identities or the individual personalities of people working in companies can influence brand activism. For example, they talk about how managing directors or employees can act as activists themselves or push for a company to take a stand through brand activism (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, pp. 47–48).

There is little literature on how to identify a decision maker within a company after the brand has become involved in activism, as well as little literature on how the decision is made to take a stand on socio-political issues. Furthermore, literature shows that the size of a company influences company decisions and their decision-makers, as well as the strategic decision-making process. Moreover, the decision-making pattern changes in connection with the growth of a company (Gänswein, 2011, p. 141; Hauser et al., 2020, p. 777).

Since brand activism is a research topic that has only recently been explored in more detail, companies need to pay more attention to it. After all, corporate identity can be exactly

what sets a company apart from the competition and makes all the difference. However, taking a stand on socio-political issues can also mean that companies drive away business partners, employees or even customers, or the trust in the brand can be lost (Moorman, 2020, p. 389; Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, p. 8).

There is little research on how decisions are made within a company to act regarding socio-political issues or to get involved with brand activism in general.

As described by Sarkar and Kotler (2020), there can be different people within a company who make the decision to take a stand on socio-political issues. These people can include Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), employees, or customers who start the process (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, pp. 47–48).

Since brand activism is and will continue to be a large component of marketing, managers should carefully consider how, and when they wish to act on an issue, as well as which topic they wish to address as a company, as the decision can influence many divisions within the company, as well as the company's relationship with shareholders and stakeholders (Bhagwat et al., 2020, p. 17).

Based on this research gap, this thesis will focus on identifying the decision-maker or decision-makers, or the deciding group within a company, and will discuss which factors influenced brand activism in the firm's marketing strategy. The outcome of this research can be used to advise companies on which type of decision-making strategies are most efficient to implement, based on their size, organizational structure, and industry.

As a result, it will be easier for managers to make decisions regarding corporate identity and activism for the future (Bhagwat et al., 2020, p. 17).

After conducting a literature review, four factors were identified that can influence a company's decision-making and potentially affect their stance on socio-political issues. These

factors include the types of decisions made by company leadership, the type of company, the company's organizational structure, and the corporate size. Based on these findings, this study has developed six hypotheses to investigate the relationship between these factors and a company's position on socio-political issues.

To test these hypotheses, this study will use a quantitative research approach by administering a uniquely structured online questionnaire. The questionnaire will utilise Likert scales to measure respondents' attitudes towards the topic of taking a stance on socio-political issues. In addition to measuring attitudes, the questionnaire will also collect demographic information, organizational data, and decision-making processes.

The primary objective of the study is to recognize market structures, identify brand motives, and draw comparisons to identify differences. By gathering data through the online questionnaire, the study aims to provide insights into the relationship between the identified factors and a company's position on socio-political issues. The results of this research can help companies understand the potential impact of these factors on their decision-making processes and inform their approach towards socio-political issues.

## **Chapter 1: Literature**

This chapter will provide initial insight into the topic and initial approaches for further work. It covers the major approaches of this work: decisions, brand activism and socio-political issues.

### **How strategic decisions are made**

In a time of revolutionary change in governments and in the business world, the pace of decision making is speeding up, especially in the digital age. Today's policy makers are

challenged by this pace and must deal with making high-pressure decisions (Obi & Agwu, 2017 n. pag.).

Strategic marketing connects an organization to its environment and makes organizations proactive. Because strategic marketing is crucial for the success of the business, strategic marketing decisions are important for achieving the goal of high performance. Strategic marketing is the active brain of an organization and marketing strategies need to be smart and useful to make the right market-related decisions. A good marketing decision must enable organizations to identify their customers' needs, create value for them, and deliver the created value in a way that satisfies them, encourages them to come back, and builds a mutually beneficial long-term relationship (Aghazadeh, 2015, p. 128).

*"It was observed that strategic decision making help the firm improve operational efficiency and improve management capabilities hence maximizing returns"* (Igamba & Wanderi, 2018, p. 145).

In corporate management, strategic decision making was observed to help firms improve operational effectiveness and management skills, thereby maximizing returns. Strategic decisions allow firms to make decisions about long-term goals; these decisions will be used in the company for a long time. (Igamba & Wanderi, 2018, p. 145).

Today, practices of strategic management that were formerly primarily used in the private sector are being implemented by public organizations, including strategic decision-making approaches. Additionally, companies capacities for agility are becoming an important factor in their ability to respond to environmental changes and strengthen their strategic decision-making approach (Gusmita & Sudhartio, 2020, p. 4039).

Entirely new markets are emerging because of the change in societal values (for example, the market for organic products is transitioning from a niche market to a profitable

high-volume mass market, due to general changes in nutritional awareness). On the other hand, there are often important stakeholders in the wider business environment that can hold this process back, for example institutions with very large and sometimes crucial influences on a company (“political decision makers”, civic initiatives, “critical media, Consumer protection organization”). Almost no marketers can avoid a systematic examination of the wider corporate environment as a part of their strategic analysis (Walsh et al., 2020, p. 155).

### **What influences company positioning through brand activism?**

Brand activism defines the increasingly important practice of companies as they take a stand on socio-political issues. It is essential to note that the issues addressed by brand activism must be considered important by society at large, as well as company-specific communities and stakeholders. The company’s position on activism is communicated publicly through marketing activities. Business processes are also adapted to support the position chosen by the company. These adaptations to business processes illustrate the difference between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and brand activism. CSR is about making the core business values of a company more sustainable or ethical, while brand activism deals exclusively with social issues that are far removed from the primary business activities of the company (Craddock et al., 2018, p. 1).

When business owners become distant from social values and lose sight of social movements that are important to their peers, employees, or customers, they tend to make the wrong decisions. Decisions that go against the needs of society can harm the brand in the long run. (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, p. 21). The literature shows that customers, investors, employees, and other stakeholders expect brands to identify themselves through activism.

Brand identities must be communicated to the public and thus, activism must be integrated into the brand's public relations and marketing strategies (Korschun, 2021, p. 16; Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, pp. 47–48).

Due to this fact, business owners should stay connected to society and social values, and not be influenced too much by stakeholders (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, p. 57).

CEOs often speak out of personal motives, but the company's values are also a crucial factor in expressing their commitment to socio-political issues (Chatterji & Toffel, 2018).

Business owners use two methods:

- Raising awareness of a topic in society
- Using economic power to get ahead politically (Chatterji & Toffel, 2018).

Not only CEOs and their motives are decisive for positioning through brand activism; the motives of customers, employees and investors also play a crucial role (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, pp. 47–48).

Companies can simply use surveys to gauge employee sentiment on certain topics and quickly get information about which socio-political issues are priorities among their workforces. In this way, companies can retain employees, and also acquire them through the positioning of their brand (Moorman, 2020, p. 388).

Customers can also start the process of positioning themselves through brand activism. Customers want their preferred brands to take a stand and get involved. Companies have three ways to engage their customers in this context. They can:

- Follow customers and adapt to their opinions
- Guide their customers and encourage them to be active in topics of interest for the brand
- Collaborate, to shape the future together (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, p. 71).

Nevertheless, companies fear upsetting customers, employees, investors or other stakeholders by taking a stand and thus losing the support of these same stakeholders (Moorman, 2020, p. 389).

### **What are socio-political issues?**

Socio-political problems confront the power dynamics of politics, as politicians or governments often have an authoritative presence in society that dominates culture without being reflective of social values (Ssorin-Chaikov, 2015, p. 5).

It should be noted that socio-political problems are not the same in different countries. Different countries have different forms of government, legal systems, as well as cultural differences. This leads to different socio-political problems in different countries (Tilt, 2016, p. 1).

The development of states and their nations as well as their internal social conflicts are examined by Jahn, a political researcher. Nations characterize groups of individuals who share common identities. These include history, language, culture, or even ethnic affinity. States connect several nations and often do not have the same factors mentioned above (Jahn, 2006, pp. 38–39). Governments can be seen as driving forces in modern society. Various political institutions make up the political system, including parliaments and political parties. (Jahn, 2006, p. 38).

The aforementioned social identifiers, such as religion, ethnic commonalities or language, have a long historical tradition and can lead to areas of tension within societies (Jahn, 2006, p. 41).



These areas of tension mean that societies develop differently. Consequently, each society has a different image of a concept defined by politics and therefore, different socio-political problems that result thereof (Tilt, 2016, p. 1).

## **Chapter 2: Theory construction**

In the following part of this master thesis, the existing literature will be summarized to further derive hypotheses which will be examined in the empirical section. The three major topic chapters of the thesis will be examined in detail and analysed for relevant findings in the literature.

### **Decision making**

The definition of decision-making in a corporate context invokes an image of choosing between options for generating company value and acting in a manner appropriate to the situation. Decision makers choose the best option to achieve a given goal or solve a problem. Structured decision aids are needed; decisions should not be made single-handedly by the CEO. High-quality decisions and quick decision-making improve the performance of the organization. (Obi & Agwu, 2017 n. pag.)

Before and during the process of implementation, a few factors must be defined, for example: The market and customer orientation, as well as the marketing resources and the customer relationship management (CRM), etc. (Aghazadeh, 2015, p. 129).

These days, the management of an organization is under pressure to contribute to the well-being of society, reduce the environmental impact of its operations and be successful in profit-making. There is an expectation that companies are socially responsible, which is often referred to as managing the triple bottom line of profit, individuals, and the environment. CSR

is an important strategic tool due to the fact that social responsibility has not always been accepted as a priority in management (McWilliams et al., 2016, p. 193).

Friedman discussed the social responsibilities of businesses and how social responsibility increases company profits in “The New York Times” magazine in 1970. This then novel approach to social responsibility was republished in a book written by Zimmerli, Holzinger and Richter (Friedman, 2007, p. 173).

The validity of CSR was questioned early on because of externalities (costs to parties outside the market) as well as criticism regarding how to weigh the interests of social impact success against the interests of the triple bottom line. This topic will be further addressed in the “triple bottom line” section below (McWilliams et al., 2016, pp. 193–194).

This analysis paved the way for economics to analyse personal provision of ecologically derived public goods, or socially responsible activities. Management recognized early on that the organization and shareholders should be serving the public. This acceptance of managerial duties to social interests, as well as those of the shareholders, was motivated by social activism in the 1960s and 1970s. Managers during these decades, mainly those in charge of larger companies, understand the relevance of social responsibility (McWilliams et al., 2016, pp. 193–194).

Better knowledge of the long-lasting and widespread effects of environmental degradation has recently been the driving force of aggressive calls for greater social responsibility as well as the creation of long-term solutions. Because sustainable solutions need a usage of minimum materials and emissions, environmental concerns were not always considered in the view of social responsibility. Likewise, concerns about globalization prompted an investigation into how a business could advance human rights. The recognition

of environmental responsibility and human rights resulted in the concept of the triple bottom line which includes the people, the planet, and profit (McWilliams et al., 2016, pp. 193–194).

### ***The decision-making process***

An organization is constantly making decisions. Decision making is the process in which the organization identifies and chooses amongst alternatives based on the demands of a situation. While decision-making, management must make intellectual decisions which involve selecting one alternative out of many, followed by plans to react. Decision-making has been described as the procedure of evaluating the options available and reducing them down to one choice. Correct decision-making leads to profit for the organization; because of this, the decision-making process in an organization is extremely critical (Panpatte & Takale, n.d., p. 73).

Organizations operate under conditions that are characterized by a high degree of complexity, variability, and instability. This puts the management in a whole new qualitative relationship. Complexity means extreme dynamics because there are more factors that affect the company. The factors affecting the development of organizations are changing at a fast rate. Managers who are making tough decisions must find the right path for the organization, which can determine the success or failure of a company. The decision-making process is not only critical for long-term company longevity but is also important for immediate development. This presents a challenge for managers. They must make fast and qualitative decisions and must identify resources and opportunities as well as risks in the environment. This involves selecting an appropriate strategy (Kozioł-Nadolna & Beyer, 2021, p. 2376).

Managers who must make decisions have to have a bit of understanding of the circumstances, because otherwise, they are not able to make rational and justified decisions.

The decision-making process is very important and consists of well-defined strategic steps, that address the problem to be solved and the selection of the best solution. Therefore, the decision-making process is one of the most important activities that managers conduct. This process can be implemented intuitively and is based on the experience of the manager, which often creates inevitable decision-making problems. As the changing dynamics of the corporate environment increase, coupled with the complexity of problems, the management is forced to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty. Given this scenario, decision theory offers managers an irreplaceable guide (Litvaj et al., 2022, pp. 247–248).

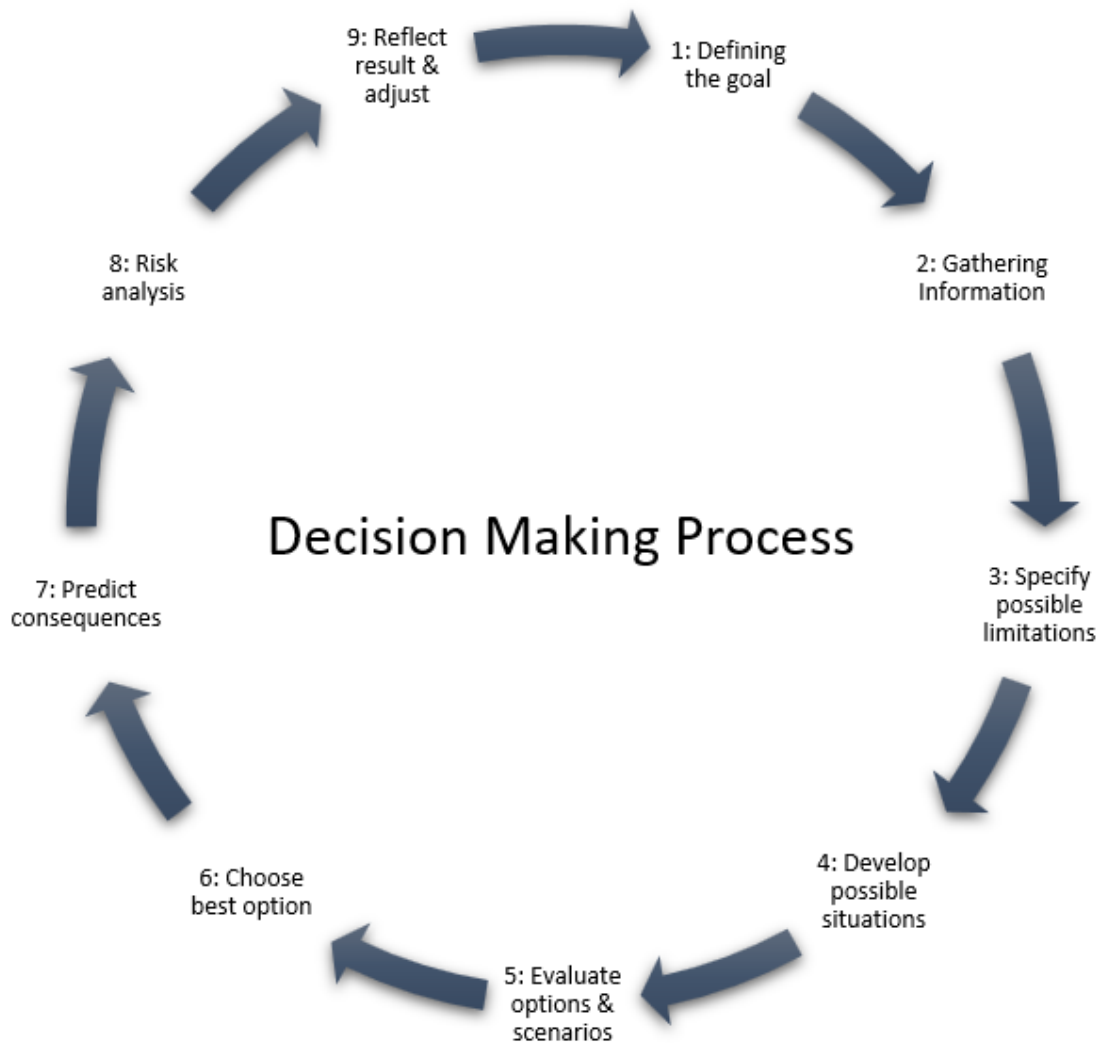
Typically, management must make operational and strategic decisions. Making decisions implies responsibility to the organization, the employees, and the stakeholders. In the literature, decision-making process models are explored to an extent. The authors explore qualitative and quantitative methods for decision-making that helps structure and clarify difficulties. It is argued that decision-making takes too long and is often made by the wrong people/wrong department of an organization or is made using false information. In the decision-making process, it is effective to involve a team as teams improve the quality of the decision in a lot of cases. This is because of the greater possibilities a team offers when it comes to generating and evaluating alternatives for different problems (Negulescu & Doval, 2014, pp. 858–859).

Identifying goals, proposing alternative solutions, and weighting and balancing interests are critical to decision quality. This requires risk analysis to differentiate alternatives. A key challenge in effective decision-making is assessing the extent to which managers use quantitative and qualitative criteria in their decision-making process. To take these actions, managers must possess characteristics like courageousness, rationality, and creativity as well

as fairness. Individual performance is influenced by decision quality, which has a positive impact on organizational effectiveness (Negulescu & Doval, 2014, pp. 858–859).

The following figure, **Figure 1**, shows the nine steps of the decision-making process according to Fayvishenko 2018.

**Figure 1:** Decision Making Process



Source: Based on Fayvishenko, 2018, p. 248

### ***Types of decisions***

Strategic decision-making involves intuitive and rational processes because they are of equal importance, but in the past, intuition didn't play a big role in strategic decision-making.

Today, the role of intuition is more commonly recognized for its importance in the decision-making process. A fundamental assumption about management is that methodical and attentive analysis makes for better decisions than those derived from intuitive processes. However, for modern decision makers, the rational decision making model is no longer believed to be adequate on its own. The environmental complexity and the wealth of information can lead to information overload, requiring the decision maker to have soft skills (Singh & Singhal, n.d., p. 38).

However, the management field also recognises spontaneous decisions as a possibility for decision-making alongside rational and intuitive ones. The authors Litvaj, Ponisciakova, Stancekova, Svobodova and Mrazik also say that all decisions should be made rationally by managers (Litvaj et al., 2022, p. 5).

Spontaneous decision-making is characterized by getting through the decision-making process as quickly as possible to fulfil the desire to have a decision made. Furthermore, this type of decision-making is often used when a decision has a certain urgency and therefore needs to be made quickly (Thunholm, 2004, p. 993).

Intuitive decision making is fast, uses a lower level of alertness to incorporate learned patterns of knowledge and is per definition a positive force. In business it can be used to identify problems, manage information, recognize patterns, deal with conflicts and form strategies within the evolvement of the environment (Singh & Singhal, n.d., p. 39).

Intuitive decision making is used increasingly in the field of management due to the complexity of the environment. Due to these circumstances, good intuitive decision-making relies on managers experience with rational and analytical decision-making procedures. Intuitive decision-makers share certain characteristics, abilities, and tendencies. The profile of an intuitive decision-maker includes characteristics like high motivation, self-awareness,

and the ability to filter information. They must be creative, mindful, and ready to take risks. Negative traits of intuitive decision-makers can be that they are easily bored and rash – that means, that they draw conclusions too fast. This quick response to making decisions stems from the complex environment managers need to function efficiently. They have the ability to see opportunities and think up creative solutions that help the organization to survive and to develop in a competitive world (Malewska, 2018, pp. 31–32).

Decision making styles can be intuitive and rational with in-between styles like quasi-intuitive or quasi-rational, making them more balanced. Most managers combine those two styles. The rational decision-makers display traits like risk affinity, confidence and independence, and are more likely to have characteristics such as motivation, enthusiasm and ambition (Malewska, 2018, pp. 36–37).

Strategic marketing decisions can include the following approaches: unstructured decisions, rational decisions, situational approaches, 'Minimax', 'Maximin' and risk proofing approaches as well as the strategic decision-making approach in strategic uncertainty (Grigorova, 2019, pp. 134–135).

The unstructured strategic decision-making approach identifies three stages of the process through empirical research: Identification, development, and selection. In the identification stage: The management recognizes a problem, or an opportunity. The development stage has two sub-processes: Looking for internal and external cyclical decisions to make potential decisions for repeated events and modifying confirmed decisions to adjust to new circumstances. The selection stage has three sub-processes: Screen and investigate possibilities initiated in the earlier stages, select and evaluate decisions through different alternatives, as for the final sub-process; examine the details of strategic alternatives (Grigorova, 2019, p. 134).

Rational decision-making involves evaluating information through deduction and can be satisfying. When recognizing how to make satisfactory strategic decisions in the field of marketing, the main criterion is that the expected outcomes of implementing the decisions are sorted by importance. These outcomes are ranked considering the interest of different groups within the company as well as the interests of external groups (such as labour unions). Furthermore, the interests of the decision-makers (management) including their personal circumstances are considered, as well as their rank within the company, and the company's structure, goals and traditions. (Grigorova, 2019, pp. 134–135).

Within the framework of rational decisions, the elements of rationality should always be included. These are coherence, objectivity, and logic. Coherence means that all steps in the decision-making process are aligned with the interests and goals of the organisation. Objectivity describes putting personal interests on hold. When it comes to logic, all goals are organized by and evaluated for their specificity and measurability (Litvaj et al., 2022, p. 5).

The situational approach first identifies the problem, describes it, and structures it. Furthermore, it develops a system of data collection which includes the creation of a model, determines a purpose, formulates a hypothesis, designs a plan for research and decides on the procedure. Accompanied by a field study, the collected information will be examined, and the results will be interpreted and presented (Grigorova, 2019, p. 135).

The 'Minimax', 'Maximin' and risk proofing approach describes three types of conditions for decision-making: Security, risk, and uncertainty. In the security situation the management can define the outcome for each possibility. In a risk situation the management can acquire details on possible results while minimizing risks. Managers can use different analyses of payment-expectations for each possibility to determine the best outcome. (Grigorova, 2019, p. 135). The minimax/optimistic and the maximin/pessimistic and risk-



averting support of a helpful plan is approached when the management does not have much information for evaluating the numerous possibilities of the result (Grigorova, 2019, p. 135).

Strategic decision-making under strategic uncertainty defines instruments for decision-making (Grigorova, 2019, p. 135).

Management can monitor environmental changes, report results, and decide on the level of importance, as well as classify and categorize tasks, and revise, update and rank the structure to make the best decision. All decisions must be made based on the analysis. Accurate marketing behaviour is supported by procedures that makes sure the adopted strategic marketing objectives are grounded in theory (Grigorova, 2019, p. 135).

### **Differences between company types**

Small businesses depend on their ability to make strategic decisions for their economic success. Small- and medium-sized business owners are the core of entrepreneurship and are crucial for fostering economic growth (Gibcus & Vermeulen, 2006, p. 4).

Academics as well as practitioners are progressively taking business ethics and corporate responsibility into account. The focus of academic research on management has targeted larger companies and included the subject of CSR. CSR in small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) was not often a focus of the research. How businesses can manage CSR has only recently become a topic of discussion in research. The majority of current studies centre around large multinational corporations (MNCs). Contemporary research pays less attention to the roles that small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) can have when it comes to CSR. Little is known about CSR practices in SMEs in comparison to MNCs, where literature notes the practices of these larger enterprises (Mousiolis et al., 2015, p. 580).

Even though most jobs are held by people working for SMEs, both in developed and developing nations, SMEs contribute a significant amount to the overall economic buying power of a country. Despite the economic interest of companies to be aware of CSR strategies and the influence they have on the company's economic success, it is difficult to find information or research on corporate social responsibility knowledge in SMEs. It is notably difficult to find information about CSR knowledge in SMEs that are integrated into global supply chains compared to analysis of the awareness of CSR in MNCs. The suggestion is that MNCs are more skilled overall and compared to SMEs, SMEs are better at implementing CSR. Researchers focusing on CSR in SMEs have not determined whether SMEs are better or worse equipped to organize CSR constructs than MNCs (Mousiolis et al., 2015, p. 580).

While MNCs and SMEs operate in the same environments and time periods, they do so in several ways. The MNCs do not lack resources but must deal with internal bureaucracy and a lack of proximity to the zeitgeist of social movements as well as their connection to their local environment. The effects of MNCs decisions on CSR issues can sometimes be so significant for society, that it is impossible for these decisions to avoid having an impact on SMEs' decision-making when it comes to social- related issues. However, SMEs are very adaptable when it comes to putting their decisions into action. They have a good connection to their external environment but lack resources and typically base their decisions on personal preferences, business finances, friends, and family (Korschun, 2021, pp. 11–12; Mousiolis et al., 2015, p. 582).

The MNCs have very different decision-making structures for their strategies, which are primarily based on international social issues. The strategic decisions made by SMEs are primarily based on environmental considerations, but sometimes these considerations are not the guiding principles behind the choices made by MNCs. The most important factors are

immediateness and the speed of implementation. These significant factors are nonetheless difficult for SMEs to implement when it comes to strategic decision-making for CSR concepts (Mousiolis et al., 2015, p. 582).

### ***Corporate size***

It is commonly agreed that size distribution is a key aspect of a company's organizational shape, which affects competitiveness. The size of a firm is regularly regarded as the primary factor of the business' innovativeness. No business founder imagines setting up a new company with over 500 employees off the bat. It is impossible to predict an enterprise's maximum size before it is established, but it can be assumed that the total size of the business results from their subsequent expansion as they grow. This growth is the outcome of the fruitful choices businesses make by copying successful business models, as well as the firm's unique selling points. Different growth rates and different post-growth periods have a significant impact on a company's size (Csabay & Stehlikova, 2020, pp. 22–23).

It is not just the influence of internal factors on company growth that is relevant to understanding why companies grow. Within an economic community, it is important to consider the distribution of company sizes and how the weight of the distribution of these sizes affects the economy. Kondo et al. (2018) reference the fact that an economy can only healthily support a good mixture of company sizes. The distribution of corporate sizes within an economy, as well as the ability of an economy to support various corporate sizes is indicative of the overall economic health of a nation. Kondo et al. (2018) postulate that the distribution of company sizes within an economy influences the overall economic behavior of this economy. For example, an uneven distribution of company sizes weighted too heavily

with MNCs would create a vulnerability to economic shock if an economic phenomena were to occur that particularly influenced large businesses (Kondo et al., 2018, p. 1).

The company size can be determined by the capitalization of the market. Market capitalization is the full price of a public company, or the price someone would have to pay to buy the company. For listed companies, market capitalization is very crucial because it embodies the overall value of the company. The company's size and market value growth are usually important indicators to measure the gains or losses of a firm's business model. Market capitalization is a common metric used by investors and funding managers when deciding to buy a public company. The market capitalization itself is an asset owned by the company, and the more successful the business of the company is, the greater the market capitalization. Agency costs are high for large companies because the company needs to provide its full financial statements to shareholders as part of its disclosure agreement (Abdullah et al., 2017, p. 157).

In addition to the liquidity as well as the profitability of a firm, the size of the company is a factor that affects the firms' value the most. Because it is easier to grow a large company, large enterprises receive funding more easily than small companies (Reschiwati et al., 2020, p. 326).

Different types of organisational sizes are discussed in statistical papers, including micro, small, medium and large companies (Pilar, 2021, p. 142). Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, or, in short, MSMEs, are autonomous companies with certain operating and financial restrictions instituted by the states or a body of states that follow certain rules, and are characterised by their unique cultures, interests, and business drive. What is considered an MSME varies from nation to nation. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) says that a large segment of the workforce in developing economies is

employed by MSMEs, which makes up 45% of employees and 33% of the GDP in these nations. MSMEs are unquestionably essential to economic growth. MSMEs are significant because they offer opportunities to advance the growth of a nation's economy. In most countries, MSMEs account for more than 95% of all businesses (Pedraza, 2021, p. 33).

Micro, small and medium-sized companies have many advantages over larger businesses. For example, they benefit from having more agility in terms of decision-making. Decision-making in large corporations is slowed down by bureaucracy and coordination between various departments, whereas MSMEs can make decisions much more quickly. Because they have a closer relationship to their customers, MSMEs have greater flexibility and are more adaptable. They can also better identify their clients' needs, which increases the client's contentment and their devotion to the company (Pedraza, 2021, p. 33).

MSMEs sizes makes it easier for them to adjust to future market changes, altering their structure and procedures to meet the demands of the new market. In contrast to large firms where employees are just numbers, MSMEs place a greater emphasis on role each employee plays in the overall success of the business. Because of the scale of the company, it is simpler to forge and strengthen relationships among employees in smaller companies. Due of the hierarchical levels and the various departments in a large company, it is difficult for a large companies to establish direct and cross-departmental communication between all their employees (Pedraza, 2021, p. 33).

The European Union (EU) differentiates between three types of companies based on their number of employees. The EU considers enterprises with less than 10 employees microenterprises, enterprises with 10 to 50 employees small enterprises, enterprises with less than 250 employees medium enterprises, and enterprises with more than 250

employees large enterprises (Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 Concerning the Definition of Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, 2003, p. 39; Pilar, 2021, p. 142).

The biggest benefit of MSMEs is their ability to make quick necessary changes to their production structures to produce new products that can better reflect the latest demands in the market. In larger companies, this ability is difficult to implement, because of the large number of staff members, the complexity of the production structure, and the huge amount of capital invested (Pedraza, 2021, p. 34).

The MSME characteristic of each type of company are as following: Microenterprises enhance the economies of nations worldwide by creating microbusinesses that better balance revenue streams and reduce their general costs of doing business. Micro-entrepreneurs are numerous because they often cannot find sufficient training or formal employment. Microenterprises often provide local products and services. Such businesses offer grocery products, household supplies, and specific repair or maintenance services for their areas (Pedraza, 2021, p. 34).

A small business is one that employs a low number of people and does not make high sales. It is a freely operated and managed company with a limited size and revenues varying in the economic sector in which it is operating. These small firms are typically private proprietorships or partnerships and are found in almost every economic sector. They vary from convenience stores to humble manufacturing facilities, private restaurants, bakeries, or law, engineering, or construction firms. They differ in size, revenue, and regulatory approvals (Pedraza, 2021, p. 34).

The mid-market category of businesses includes companies emerging from the slow and steady growth of thriving small businesses. As a business generates more revenue, it saves on the costs of renting its premises, outfitting its offices and the money needed to hire more

staff. This creates a bridge from mid-sized companies to corporations or large corporations (Pedraza, 2021, p. 34).

Elbanna et al. say, among other things, that there is a correlation between how strategic decisions are made and the size of a company (Elbanna et al., 2013, p. 149). The size of a company influences whether a company decides to take a stand on CSRs; the success of which can in turn be decisive in whether the organization is success or failure.

Elbanna et al. (2013) also includes that the study of strategic decision-making process need to be further study in the context of cross-cultural aspects in order to reveal more conclusive results of the research (Elbanna et al., 2013, p. 42).

### ***Organizational structure***

A company structure is defined as elements of an organization that enter relationships with each other. This relationship between the elements or departments is represented in a structure called an organizational chart, which depicts how each unit within the company combines in practice to create the overall functioning company. To better coordinate work packages and also to be able to evaluate employees and their performance, the structure a company has is becoming increasingly important (Ahmady et al., 2016, p. 455). The company structure influences the behavior of its employees, for example, it allows employees to develop within the framework of communication, but the structure can also restrict this growth (Griffin et al., 2020, p. 465).

There are different structures within companies, for example, some companies have several layers of hierarchy, as well as horizontal divisions in many different departments. New structures go in the direction of team structure, in which decisions are made in a decentralized manner by smaller teams. Furthermore, there is also a virtual, online form of

organization that is centralized in terms of structure but does not really have specialized departments (Ahmady et al., 2016, pp. 458–459).

When an organization has multiple levels in its structure, the upper levels increasingly perform a role that is associated with responsibility. However, it is important to note that each person in the organizational chart makes his, her or their contribution (Griffin et al., 2020, p. 465).

Combining the views of Griffin et al. 2020 and Ahmady et al. 2016, it can be said that in companies that have a hierarchy, there are many levels of leadership. In flat organizational structures or in newer organizational structures companies have a few levels of leadership (Ahmady et al., 2016, pp. 458–459; Griffin et al., 2020, p. 465).

In hierarchical companies, decisions are often made by a consensus of the managers of different departments. Group decisions are more accurate and illuminate multiple perspectives, since a large number of people are involved in the process (Griffin et al., 2020, p. 404, 2020, p. 465).

In companies with a flat hierarchy, decisions are made by partners or small groups. The leader of these small groups sees themselves as a mentor in the company and delegates different administrative activities to the team in order to devote themselves to their original leadership activities (Maximini, 2013, p. 60).

In agile companies there are different approaches used to identify a decision maker. According to Oestereich and Schröder (2019):

- **Choosing from the middle** – After clarifying the existing problem, all employees are asked whether they are willing to actively work on this topic. All participants are asked to position themselves in the middle if they are interested in working together. All members of this circle pick one person to be the decision maker. If only



one person is in the middle, this person automatically becomes the decision maker (Oestereich & Schröder, 2019, p. 98).

- **Collegial role choice** – This is a process in which positive feedback is given to different people in a round-robin format, discussing what speaks for a person to take on the role of decision-maker. The advantage of this method is that even introverted employees or new employees have the opportunity to be considered as decision-makers (Oestereich & Schröder, 2019, p. 98).
- **Consultative case decision** – This is a resource-based, pragmatic process that aims to define a decision maker and identify decision members who are involved in the decision making process (Oestereich & Schröder, 2019, p. 98).
- **Resistance polling** – This is a quantitative method, because in a resistance survey, employees rate their resistance to all possible alternatives. Subsequently, all alternative evaluations are summed up and the alternative with the lowest resistance is accepted by the company as the decision (Oestereich & Schröder, 2019, p. 99).
- **Collegial objection integration** – As part of this process, decisions are jointly developed in such a way that risks and objections are strongly minimized. The primary goal is not to gain approval for the decision, but to ensure security in connection with the decision (Oestereich & Schröder, 2019, p. 99).
- **Universal decision procedure** – This is a procedure which is treated in a similar way to the resistance test. However, in addition to content-related topics, personal opinions are also considered in the decision-making process, allowing the process to be very flexible and open (Oestereich & Schröder, 2019, p. 99).

### ***Company type***

Industries refer to the area in which a company is active and can be divided into three different sectors. These sectors are the: Agricultural sector, industrial sector, and service sector (Jahn, 2006, p. 54).

According to Jahn 2006, traditionally shaped societies have a high employment share in the agricultural sector. During the industrial revolutions, the industrial sector experienced strong growth, and the service sector began growing continuously and has grown continuously since then (Jahn, 2006, p. 54).

Currently, the sector development within Europe can be described as follows: the agricultural sector has been shrinking since 2010, and the industrial sector is also experiencing a decline in employment. The service sector, contrarily, is experiencing an increase in the number of employees (World Bank, 2020 n. pag.).

The distinction between business-to-business (B2B) companies and business-to-customer (B2C) companies is also reflected in the industrial sector. It can be said that B2B companies tend to be located in the industrial sector, while B2C companies are more prevalent in the service sector (Iankova et al., 2019, p. 173). There are also distinctions in decision making between these two types of companies. For example, B2B companies are increasingly being pushed to differentiate themselves and take a stand through social positioning in addition to feeling pressure to adopt a sustainable corporate strategy (Rudawska, 2019, p. 877).

B2B companies often make decisions in larger groups, which consist of different departments. Therefore, the decision-making process in B2B companies is of immense importance. The size of the market is limited, and decisions are designed to build long-term partnerships. These decisions are often also characterized by their complexity (Rėklaitis &

Pilelienė, 2019, pp. 76–77). Payne and Frow describe a strong formal approach to decision making in their article. Furthermore, the authors state that B2B companies adapt to the wishes of their customers and clearly know what their customers wishes are (Payne & Frow, 2014, pp. 219–220).

In comparison, decisions are made differently in B2C companies because they are shorter-term and are designed for one-time transactions (Rėklaitis & Pilelienė, 2019, p. 77). Decisions in B2C companies are also mostly based on trends and innovations to influence buyer behaviour. These decisions are informed by focusing on market monitoring as well as trend research (Klisenko & Serral Asensio, 2022, p. 17). Furthermore, decisions in B2C companies are made in smaller teams and are often the responsibility of the management (Jusop et al., 2020, p. 98). As described in the introduction, the input for making the decision to take a stand or position itself in a certain way can come from different people or stakeholders within the company (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, pp. 47–48).

### ***Triple bottom line***

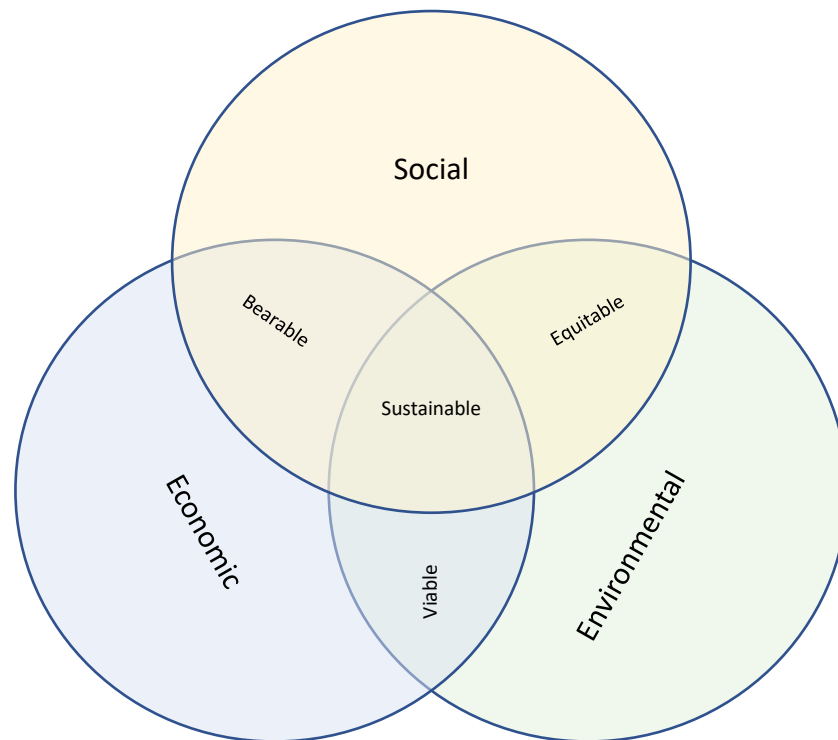
The triple bottom line was composed by John Elkington in 1994 and said that organizations should prepare three bottom lines. The first bottom line is profit – which is the traditional measurement of profit and losses. The people account is the second bottom line, and measures how effective the company's social responsibility has been, and the third bottom line is the environmental account, which measures the environmental responsibility of the company. The TBL – the triple bottom line, involves profit, people and the planet and aims to assess the corporation's long-term financial, social, and environmental performance (Onyali, 2014, pp. 196–197).

Managers can no longer act simply just to maximize the profit and ignore other factors. Managers are now aware of the significance of these other factors and the impact that these factors have on the interest of several stakeholders in the decision-making process (McWilliams et al., 2016, pp. 193–194).

The triple bottom line is a combination of three interrelated dimensions. These are the social, the economic and the environmental dimensions. The handling and the integration of the triple bottom line should not be forced by the management of the company but should be a lived practice that managers model and aspire to improve for the future. Companies should consider themselves as one part within the larger context of society, as well as one contributor to planetary health, and should be able to take an exact position in terms of the triple bottom line (Kumar & Christodouloupoulou, 2014, p. 7; Rogers & Hudson, 2011, p. 3).

The triple bottom line also defines the term sustainability within a business context; by this definition, a company only acts sustainably if it brings all three dimensions of the triple bottom line into harmony. Intersections of two dimensions make companies either sustainable, just or viable (Rogers & Hudson, 2011, p. 3). **Figure 2** shows the relationship between the dimensions in a graph.

**Figure 2:** Framework of the Triple Bottom Line



Source: Based on Rogers & Hudson, 2011 p. 3

### **Brand activism**

Consumers in the modern marketplace expect brands to express their opinions on socio-political issues. The greatest opportunity for a shift in society behaviour and the greatest increase in brand equity are created when the brands align with activist messages, motivation, and values to create prosocial business practices. This is known as authentic brand activism. Businesses that separate their messaging from their goals, principles, and methods are engaging in woke washing, a form of untrue brand activism that could harm their reputation and their ability to affect social change (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 1).

In a survey from 2020, results show that 47% of leaders in the marketing sector would make a change in their products and services as a response to political issues. The results reveal that managers are taking more risks, because alteration in products and services have consequences for the core of the organization's business. Further data shows that 73% of

leaders in the marketing sector examined all the steps that companies are likely to take to avoid negative environmental change in relation to activism, and as a result, would be likely change its products and services accordingly. A survey in 2018 showed that 70% of the leaders in marketing agree that political activism not only has the power to attract possible employees, but it also helps to retain them and encourage them to take part in campaigns by using social media. This can be seen as a human capital strategy. On the other hand, it can make an organization assailable, which is a reason why their social rating is not higher (Moorman, 2020, p. 388).

Brand activism, which entails taking public positions on social and political issues, is a new marketing strategy used by brands looking to stand out in a crowded market (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 2).

Socio-political activism can be defined as the company's public statement that shows support or opposition to an issue that exists in the public sphere. Building directly on this brand of political activism can be executed as a public speech or action undertaken by an individual that highlights controversial or polarising issues raised for a company. The activist illustrates this connection by referring to the company or personal brand name in their speech or course of action (Moorman, 2020, p. 388).

A key feature of political activism is the partisan nature of the issues it focuses on. That means there will be vested interests of customers, partners, workers, policymakers—who do not want to stick their necks out of these topics, as well as those who want to change the world. So, when brands engage with these issues, they need to choose sides, either challenging the status quo or defending it. They can do this by advocating for or opposing initiatives regarding climate change, transgender rights, racial justness, and minimum wage increases. The division between sides worries many companies, because taking a stand could

anger consumers, staff members and other stakeholders who do not agree with the company's actions. If a company engages in political brand activism, it can risk the support of disagreeing partners (Moorman, 2020, pp. 388–389).

It has never been more critical to take a public position of this kind. Customers are vocally reacting to brands. From burning Nike sneakers, boycotting Gillette razors to cancelling their Costco memberships, customers are making their opinions heard using a variety of protests (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 2).

In Moorman's "Commentary" (2020), he describes several perspectives that he believes organisations are using to determine to what degree their brands will become politically active. According to Moorman, these perspectives help organizations prioritise which information to consider when deciding how to take a socio-political stand, and how strongly they want to express their beliefs or stance. These points of view essentially serve as mental models that businesses use to think about their brands' contributions to bigger societal issues (Moorman, 2020, p. 389).

These theories reflect the norms or values that influence a corporation's decision to take a political stance. Intwined in each perspective are deep-set beliefs about the company, its role in activism, risk affinity, and corporate responsibility. These views greatly influence whether a brand will take an activist role (Moorman, 2020, p. 389). Moorman (2020) describes the lenses as views: *"Brand authenticity view- corporate citizen view, cultural authority view, calculative view, brands as educators view, political mission view and employee engagement view"* (Moorman, 2020, p. 390).

Moorman's (2020) views (listed above) include ideas about the role and responsibilities of brands and the associated risks and benefits. If a company has a political mission, these perspectives can guide the company's choices and actions. It is vital to have knowledge of the

company's own policy of brand activism and how their beliefs implicitly drive activity within the framework of socio-political issues (Moorman, 2020, p. 390).

The brand authenticity view is frequently accepted by marketers. Essentially this view describes the fact that a brand should only take a stand politically if they can do so in a way that authentically connects their products to their target markets and customers. This perspective is supported by a wide range of research, showing that people connect with companies with similar socio-political stances. Reaching beyond the values commonly communicated by the brand might come across as insincere and could make customers wonder what the company is trying to achieve. This is likely the reason why marketing leaders do not support overt political activism, as they fear losing customers. Given this fear, marketers fear that the brand authenticity view is not likely to produce reliable results. Marketing executives commonly concentrate more on potential losses rather than the opportunity to profit from long-lasting brand building. They develop a way of thinking that prioritizes safety and security, which leads to fewer brands being socio-politically active (Moorman, 2020, p. 389).

Authentic brand activism has two advantages over other types of brand activism. First, it sincerely aligns the activist's marketing message with consumer motives - and creates a profitable socially beneficial corporate policy, acting as a critical trigger for change in society (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 13). Secondly, authentic brand activism can help customers understand and develop a relationship to socio-political issues. For example, brand identities serve to both define the brand, as well as indicate the brand's position on socio-political issues within its market or target audience. This lowers the cost of information for consumers, and reduces the perceived risk associated with choosing a brand. When a brand's message is legitimate, for example, when a brand comes through on its promises to support socio-



political issues, the consumer's utility expectations rise, resulting in the brand providing the customer with more value (Vredenburg et al., 2020, pp. 13–14).

From the view of a corporation, businesses have a duty to improve the world which they act in. This is the stakeholder management viewpoint as opposed to the shareholder management viewpoint, which is the core of the corporate social responsibility perspective in marketing. This perspective appears to accept the function of a brand as an actor in politics (Moorman, 2020, p. 389).

From a cultural authority perspective, brands are strong social agents, embodying ideas that are essential to their social community. This role gives the brand clout in the community, as well as a certain responsibility to its community members. This position of power can be extended to social activism, for example, Apple took an outspoken stance on gay rights and challenged former President Trump's immigration ban. It was able to take these stances because it already has a strong social standing within its target market. Not every brand has this authority – the ability to take on potentially risky socio-political positions is something that must be achieved. Due to this achievement or social ranking, these iconic brands may see political activism as a chance for further development (Moorman, 2020, pp. 389–390).

According to the calculative view, a brand's political activism is a contest that the company wants to win. The company only enters this competition after calculating its potential losses, and additionally only enters the competition if the company anticipates making a profit. Thus, the potential benefits in the end justify the brand's potential risks. Although the brand's motives are crucial in deciding whether to enter the political activism competition, they are not always opportunistic. Because of the possible cost, these perceived gains are valued at the expense of counterparts who are watching from the sidelines or respond too gradually to the public demand for brand activism. The company's calculations

in determining the risk of entering the activism ring, include the question of whether participating can enhance their reputation, gain them new clientele, or bind already existing clientele further to the brand, or, if entering the competition could cause them to be accused of woke washing. As a result of the given risks, marketing leadership strives to place wise wagers to win (Moorman, 2020, p. 390).

The educators view indicates that the company is using its marketing skills to inspire consumers to improve their lifestyles and educate customers on topics like nutrition and well-being. Kraft Heinz, for example, removed artificial flavours, colours and preservatives from its legendary “Mac & Cheese” meal kit without disclosing this change to consumers – fearing backlash over the potential impact on taste. After a few months, the company told the public by promoting this improvement to their best-selling product using a social marketing campaign (Moorman, 2020, p. 391).

Taking on the educator’s role can be risky for the company but has also the ability to create societal change when it comes to the subject of sustainability. The educator's role may also emerge from branded sources and authorities. The louder the voice, the greater the responsibility to raise important social or political issues that in some way can help society move forward. Small businesses or startups can also take on a teaching role. For example, packaging-free grocery stores and non-toxic products for children model a more environmentally friendly, health-friendly, and sustainable approach to consumerism. The educators' view corresponds with the political mission view (Moorman, 2020, p. 391).

From the political mission view, corporations are permanently rooted in social movements. Goods and services are seen as implements that can impact the global community. This view is the easiest route to political activism because for these organizations, inspiring change is not a marketing stunt, but a corporate strategy. The creation of or

transformation of enterprises with a political goal seems to stem from their leadership. For example, Yvon Chouinard's Patagonia was built on the founding mission to create the best products without doing unneeded harm to the environment, as well as to use the business to motivate customers to become more environmentally aware and to help look for solutions to environmental issues (Moorman, 2020, p. 391).

The employee engagement view emphasizes how political activism can help organizations draw in and keep staff. Marketing leaders who deal with brand political activism say that one of the reasons they take a stand on socio-political topics is that this does enhance their ability to attract and retain employees. Millennials in particular want their work to be purposeful and appreciate the possibility to engage in social discourse and become active in events that make a difference. The need to cater to millennials workplace desires incentivizes companies to join in the social mission. Furthermore they benefit from an easier route to finding employees and also find that enthusiastic staff is an important source of attracting and satisfying customers (Moorman, 2020, p. 391).

### ***Brand positioning***

The most crucial part of the trademark's asset management strategy is brand positioning. Brand positions are well thought through as they influence the direction of the brand's development in terms of market growth, communication, prices, and the choice of distribution areas. Positioning is the process of developing the brand's identity, features, and values, to create a sustainable brand image and guarantee consumer loyalty to the brand (Fayvishenko, 2018, p. 245).

The significance of the brand's concept is further reinforced by data showing a favourable correlation between brand performance and well-defined positioning activities.

Cost leadership, distinction and a central focus point are three general strategies developed by Porter (1980) for establishing a defensible position and outperforming rivals in a particular industry. A strategic focal point on sustainability means making a commitment to achieving environmentally friendly travel consumers wherever they are in the world. The tourism sector will require growth to remain competitive in a market that is becoming more crowded. Industry needs to continue growing and flourishing, so tourism must have a global perspective to know the vital factors that determine market competitiveness (Adıgüzel, 2020, pp. 9–10).

Companies are aware that social accountability has become a significant aspect of brand personalities, and companies are worried that potential customers could perceive the brands as having an unethical image. So, brands are using ethical, sustainable, and CSR-connected principles more often than they did in the past. They use CSR-connected principals as a differentiator from their competitors, with the brand managers positioning their company and marketing their brands as ethically outstanding alternatives. With the increasing social and economic significance of brand activism, academic research exploring various aspects of environmental or ethical branding and product placement is growing fast (Brunk & de Boer, 2020).

For a company, the continuous positioning of the brand is an efficient way to centralise their image in the minds of customers. But if brand positioning is not planned well, important aspects of campaign strategies can be lost. Once successful, brand positioning must be strengthened and developed, by expanding a brand's impact on consumer awareness (Fayvishenko, 2018, p. 246).

Decision-making in brand positioning is also crucial. It is a multi-step process that typically includes the following points: Defining the goal for what the decision is to achieve, gathering and updating published information and indicating possible constraints (markets,

resources, possible buyers, etc.). It also considers likely situations, evaluating criteria for the correctness and effectiveness of decisions, weighing the possible scenarios that were adapted to these criteria. The next step would be choosing the most efficient situation and anticipating the consequences resulting from executing this decision. If the resulting decision is risky or inefficient, the company can either adjust the decision based on the forecasted outcome, or the company can choose a different approach and predict the outcome of the second approach and adjust it or choose a third and different approach (Fayvishenko, 2018, p. 248).

Brand positioning strategies for companies can provide solutions to customers. The goal of the company is to reach potential customers rather than provide information to the masses, reducing their return on investment (ROI) and increasing costs. Since the technological revolution, social media and also digital media have become a part of nearly everyone's lives. This provides an opportunity for companies to present and communicate their message about their products directly to their target audiences within the frame of using different online marketing tools. Branding is essential in a globalized world because it is a way of differentiating one company's supplies and services from those of competitors. In today's competitive world, a brand is more than just a name. Brands are evolving into commercial entities that give products an identity and personality based on consumer perception. These commercial entities (brands) also drive consumer preferences for products (Adıgüzel, 2020, p. 11).

### ***Anti-brand activism***

Brand activism can also have a negative effect on customers if they do not agree with the socio-political opinion or position a company has chosen to identify with. This negative effect can also be called anti-brand activism. Due to this effect, the level of empathy

consumers feel towards a brand is reduced (Cosentino, 2019, p. 56; Romani et al., 2015, p. 658). There is also a danger stemming from anti-brand activism because customers could boycott the brand if they do not identify with the message. This can happen via social media but also via word of mouth. On the other hand, customers can also react neutrally to brand activism campaigns. A neutral reaction for these purposes is defined by a lack of participation in the brand's messaging, ignoring campaigns or not interacting with the brand's message (Cosentino, 2019, p. 61).

A brand boycott can develop into brand hate, although this hate can also only be a temporary state of mind that could disappear again. For example, customers may begin using the product again after a certain period of time (Rodrigues et al., 2021, p. 1115).

Hate towards a brand can be expressed through several aspects:

- Negative word of mouth
- The desire to sanction a brand
- Avoiding a brand
- Negative commitment to a brand (Rodrigues et al., 2021, pp. 1118–1119).

Companies should therefore always implement strategies that prevent brand hate before they take the first step to implement their marketing campaign based on socio-political issues. They should also consider what they could do to rebuild their relationship with customers if they have lost customer approval (Rodrigues et al., 2021, p. 1126).

Furthermore, these strategies should include convincing explanations for how to avoid customer disagreement with their messaging. Continuously monitoring their approach is also an important part of counteracting or avoiding brand hate (Romani et al., 2015, p. 669).

### ***The danger of woke-washing***

The word “woke” stems from the English past-participle of the word “wake”, from the verb to “awaken”. Used as an adjective, the word woke has recently become popular within mainstream media due to its common use in African American communities. In these communities, “woke” is used to describe white Americans awareness of social injustices, especially when it comes to issues of racism or sexism. Woke originally had a complimentary meaning and was used to describe allies of marginalised communities. Due to this positive association with the word, a negative association was also born: “woke-washing”. Woke-washing refers to the appropriation of political and socially progressive ideals by companies who do not truly believe in these ideals or actively address injustices. Companies that “woke-wash” use trending socio-political causes and terminology to market their goods and to sometimes cover up unethical business practices (Herbert, 2020, p. 55; Sobande, 2019 n. pag.).

Since present markets are influenced by activists and socio-political concerns, this results in attempts by brands to convey a commitment to social justice through marketing, although the brand’s practice is not committed to liberationist politics. This act of “woke-washing” is particularly hurtful as woke-washed companys’ marketing strategies often target markets made up of people who have been historically marginalised. This means that the target market the brand is attempting to deceive is the same market the brand is pretending to lend socio-political support to. Given the historical context of who benefits from the wealth amassed by corporations, the corporate entities profiting from woke-washing continue to exploit marginalised people through their marketing attempts, upholding structural racism by invoking racial social justice (Sobande, 2019 n. pag.).

When brands engage with socio-political movements out of urgency and as a market reaction, some brands disconnect from their original intentions, ideals, and company practices, which can lead to woke-washing. For example, Nike upheld their sponsorship of the National Football League (NFL) teams that dismissed Colin Kaepernick's statement when he took a knee on the football field as a Black Lives Matter protest. Nike's refusal to drop their sponsorship of the NFL teams that did not support Kaepernick as an activist brings to light the cognitive dissonance of the brand, since Nike still sponsored Kaepernick as a spokesperson. This can be misleading to consumers, because companies and brands use socio-political performances and their products as a social advantage. As a result, brand strategies are failing to express their purpose, values, and pro-social practices, resulting in a disconnection between their messages and supporting practices. Consumers can also see brands using social issues as a marketing strategy to sell more, therefore questioning the brand's motives and true social support. Companies that are woke-washing jeopardise the potential gains they could benefit from when they engage in genuine brand activism. When customers do not have faith that a brand's activism exists as an authentic tool for encouraging social change, then the brand's message and plan of action become less powerful in terms of creating positive social effects (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 6).

In 2018, an Irish company called "Paddy Power" staged a publicity stunt by driving a passenger-less double-decker bus under the name of "the official bus of gay professional footballers" to a pride parade in an attempt to illustrate that being gay is statistically an outlier. At the time (2018), none of the premier league players were openly part of the LGBTQ-community. The bus drove to the city of Brighton's pride festival in the United Kingdom (UK) and tried to pressure gay athletes from the LGBTQ community to come out of the closet. This publicity stunt was particularly poorly received as pressured people within the gay community



to come out, which left a bad taste with consumers. Paddy Power combined their bus stunt with donations to the Attitude Foundation every time Russia scored a goal during the FIFA World Cup. Paddy Power chose to support Russia because of their anti-LGBTQ policies. The fundraising efforts were the focus of the company's bottom line. This example shows that messages supporting pride are considered to be woke-washing, as this campaign had nothing to do with LGBTQ values and did not support the LGBTQ community or social causes (Vredenburg et al., 2020, pp. 8–9).

The examples above (Nike, Paddy Power) illustrate how brands imitate socially popular activist messages that do not reflect their true intentions, principles, and practices. These brands embody inauthentic brand activism through woke-washing, which can mislead consumers, damage brand equity and damage the brand's potential for social change (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 1).

### **Chapter 3: Research question & information needs**

In the context of this master's thesis, the literature reviewed provided the opportunity to derive a clear research question. It is well known that brands use socio-political activism as a part of their marketing strategies. However, the research question addressed in this work evolved from the lack of research regarding how companies make the decision to take a stand on which socio-political issues. The question of how decisions are made in companies in regard to choosing to take a stand on socio-political issues is only rarely elaborated on in the literature. This is exactly the reason for the research question: What factors influence companies to take a stand on a socio-political issue? Does the type of company, or the industry the company is in impact how they make these socio-political decisions?

Does the type of decision, the size of the company, the industry in which the company operates or the organizational structure within the company influence the decision?

#### **Chapter 4: Methods**

The following part of this master's thesis is exclusively dedicated to the research method and contains information on the conceptual model and the associated hypotheses. Furthermore, the design of the questionnaire and the associated measurement variables are discussed. To conclude, this section discusses how the data was collected, which sample from that data was used as well as the size of this sample.

##### **Conceptual model and hypothesis**

The literature review identified four factors that influence companies in their decision making and thus potential factors that influence companies to take a position on a socio-political issue. These four factors are:

- **Types of decisions** – A distinction can be made between rational, spontaneous and intuitive decisions (Litvaj et al., 2022, p. 5). Since, according to Bhagwat et al., the decision to position oneself by means of brand activism should be carefully considered, and since rational and intuitive decisions often occur in the management field around strategic decisions, a positive hypothesis was formed based on each of these types of decisions (Bhagwat et al., 2020, p. 17; Grigorova, 2019, p. 134; Malewska, 2018, p. 31). Since spontaneous decisions are used to make important decisions that have to be made quickly and the decision-making process is usually experienced very quickly, a negative hypothesis was formulated (Thunholm, 2004, p. 993).

- **Company type** – Since there are distinctions in connection with the type of company and decisions that are made differently in B2C and B2B companies, it is important to discover if there could be differences in the grounds for why companies choose to take a stand. This is of interest because B2B companies should also take a stance on socio-political issues as should B2C companies. B2C companies already commonly position themselves within the field of brand activism (Rudawska, 2019, p. 877).
- **Organizational structure** – The more levels of hierarchy a company has, the greater the differences in how they make decisions within these levels (Ahmady et al., 2016, p. 458). One can speak of strongly hierarchical companies or of companies with a flat hierarchy (Griffin et al., 2020, p. 465). Agile companies usually have a flat hierarchy and decision makers or decisions are determined using different methods, which were mentioned in the literature section above (Oestereich & Schröder, 2019, pp. 98–99). Based on these findings from the literature, it can be assumed that if there is a difference in the organizational structure, companies will also take a different stance on socio-political issues.
- **Corporate size** – In 1997, the researcher Child found that the size of a company can influence its strategic decision-making process (Child, 1997, p. 72). Also, Elbanna et al. mention that the size of a company influences their decision making process (Elbanna et al., 2020, p. 50). Therefore, in the context of brand activism, it can be assumed that there is a difference between the size of a company and the position it takes on socio-political issues.

Hypotheses were formed based on the literature that was researched. There is no empirical verification of these hypotheses, but a positive correlation can be assumed, as the

hypotheses were formulated as directional hypotheses (Hartmann & Lois, 2015, pp. 14–15).

The following hypotheses were formed:

*H1(+)*: The more rational the decision, the more likely a company is to take a stand.

*H2(+)*: The more spontaneous the decision, the more likely a company is to take a stand.

*H3(-)*: The more intuitive the decision, the less likely a company is to take a stand.

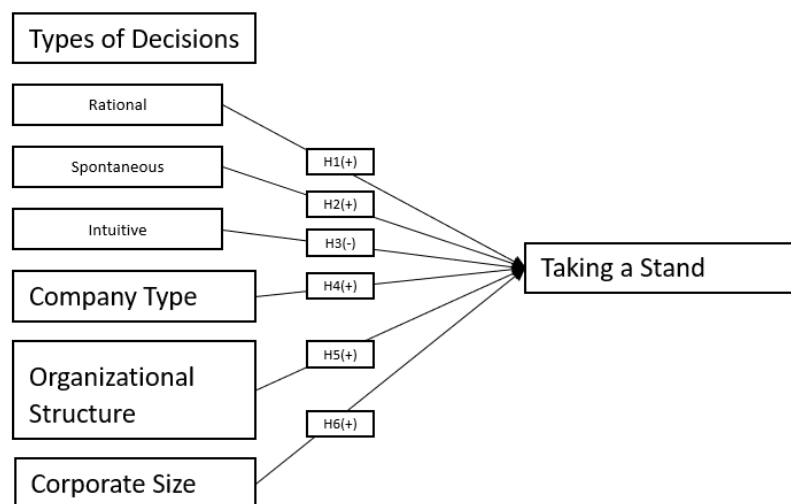
*H4(+)*: There is a difference between the types of companies and whether they take a stand.

*H5(+)*: Differences in the organizational structure of companies influence whether companies take a stand.

*H6(+)*: There is a difference between the corporate size of a company and whether the company takes a stand.

These factors put into context with the company's position result in the construct shown in **Figure 3** which also graphically represents the hypotheses.

**Figure 3:** Conceptual Model



Source: Own figure

### Questionnaire and measurement variables

This thesis intends to conduct a quantitative study via questionnaire. This allows a high degree of standardization. The predetermined questions avoid any influence by the

interviewer, as the interpretation of the questions is left to the respondents. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the questions are leading questions in order to avoid bias (Oberzaucher, 2017, p. 52).

The questionnaire is planned to be uniquely structured to obtain information about why the respondents do or do not use brand activism as a part of their corporate strategy.

This study aims to recognize market structures and identify brand motives (Raab et al., 2018, p. 24). Additionally, the high degree of the standardization of quantitative research provides a good opportunity to draw comparisons and identify differences (Oberzaucher, 2017, pp. 58–59).

The survey will be conducted online, which will allow the questionnaire to be sent out to a high number of companies or their brand managers, with immediately available results. Furthermore, the digital results can be quickly transferred into a statistical processing programme, facilitating an evaluation (Magerhans, 2016, p. 119).

To measure the theoretical construct, Likert scales are used to measure the respondents' attitudes. Within the framework of this scale, respondents have the possibility to choose between five characteristics. These characteristics are: very true, somewhat true, neither true, less true, not true (Kaya & Himme, 2009, pp. 73–74).

The structure of the questionnaire is based on the following variables:

1. Demographic data
2. Data on the organization
3. Data on the decision-making process
4. Data on the topic of taking a stand

**Table 1** presents these variables (numbered as they are above), and represents the operationalization table of the survey:

**Table 1: Operationalisation Table**

Variable	Description	Question	Scale expression	Hypothesis	Produced from
1	Exclusionary question: if “no” then exclusion	Are you responsible for brand management or brand leadership in your company?	- Yes - No	-	-
1 & 2	Exclusionary question: if “none” then exclusion	Which type of company does your company belong to?	- Small company - Medium-sized company - Large company - None	H6(+)	-
1	Question for the sample description	What position do you hold in your company?	- Owner / CEO - Team Lead - Team Member - Other (open)	-	-
1	Question for the sample description	Please state your age in years?	Open question	-	-
1	Question for the sample description	What is your gender?	- Female - Male - Divers - No indication	-	-
2	Identification of the company type	In which sector does your company mainly work?	- B2B - B2C - B2C & B2B	H4(+)	-
2	Identification of the organizational structure	How many hierarchical levels are there in the organizational structure of the marketing or brand management department in your company?	- 3 or less - 4-6 - more than 6	H5(+)	-
3	Identification of the decision-making process	You see here a decision-making process in several stages. Which of the stages is used in your company and how often?	Each step is shown, and consent is requested: - always - mostly - rarely - never		(Brunner II et al., 2001, pp. 881–882)
3	Identification of the type of decision	How are decisions most likely to be made in your company? <i>Rational</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	H1(+)	(Brunner II et al., 2001, pp. 205–206)
3	Identification of the type of decision	How are decisions most likely to be made in your company? <i>Intuitive</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	H2(+)	(Brunner II et al., 2001, pp. 205–206)

Source: Own table

**Table 1:** Continued

Variable	Description	Question	Scale expression	Hypothesis	Produced from
3	Identification of the type of decision	How are decisions most likely to be made in your company? <i>Spontaneous</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	H3(-)	(Brunner II et al., 2001, pp. 205–206)
4	Question for the sample description	I think it is important for companies to take a public stand on socio-political issues	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Question for the sample description	I believe companies should speak out publicly on the following issues: <i>Black Lives Matter</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Question for the sample description	I believe companies should speak out publicly on the following issues: <i>LGBTQ issues</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Question for the sample description	I believe companies should speak out publicly on the following issues: <i>Women's rights</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Question for the sample description	I believe companies should speak out publicly on the following issues: <i>Climate Change &amp; Environment</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Question for the sample description	I believe companies should speak out publicly on the following issues: <i>COVID-19</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-

Source: Own table

**Table 1:** Continued

Variable	Description	Question	Scale expression	Hypothesis	Produced from
4	Question for the sample description	I believe companies should speak out publicly on the following issues: <i>Ukraine war</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Identification of the position	Have you ever taken a stand with your company on one of these socio-political issues?	- Black Lives Matter - LGBTQ Issues - Women's Rights - Climate Change & Environment - COVID-19 - Ukraine War - Other (open) - Never taken a stand before	H1(+) H2(+) H3(-) H4(+) H5(+) H6(+)	-
4	Questionnaire branch: "Never taken a stand"	Why do you think companies avoid taking a public stand: <i>They fear negative word of mouth.</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Questionnaire branch: "Never taken a stand"	Why do you think companies avoid taking a public stand: <i>They fear negative sanctions from customers.</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Questionnaire branch: "Never taken a stand"	Why do you think companies avoid taking a public stand: <i>They fear being avoided by new customers.</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Questionnaire branch: "Never taken a stand"	Why do you think companies avoid taking a public stand: <i>They fear a social media shitstorm.</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Questionnaire branch: "Never taken a stand"	Why do you think companies avoid taking a public stand: <i>They do not have an opinion on these issues.</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-

Source: Own table



**Table 1:** Continued

Variable	Description	Question	Scale expression	Hypothesis	Produced from
4	Questionnaire branch: "Never taken a stand"	Why do you think companies avoid taking a public stand: <i>They separate economic and social-political issues.</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Questionnaire branch: "Never taken a stand"	Why do you think companies avoid taking a public stand: <i>They believe that they cannot make a difference.</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-
4	Questionnaire branch: "Never taken a stand"	Why do you think companies avoid taking a public stand: <i>They fear a negative reaction from their stakeholders.</i>	- very true - somehow true - neither true - less true - not true	-	-

Source: Own table

If the questions and their answer options are examined more closely, it can be said that the answer options indicate nominal and ordinal scaled data. In the context of ordinal scaled data, it is not possible for participants to consider the distances between the answers as identical. However, to perform a holistic statistical operationalization, the Likert scale is viewed as metric and therefore treated as an interval scale. The basic prerequisite for this is that the variables have at least five values and that the distances can be interpreted numerically in the same size (Völkl & Korb, 2018, p. 20).

With the help of t-tests and chi-square tests, the six defined hypotheses are tested and examined for their correlation or differences.

The t-test for independent samples is used to test difference hypotheses, so that if significance exists, a difference hypothesis can be tested by comparing the means (Bortz & Schuster, 2010, p. 172). The chi-square method serves as a significance test, which is used to analyse frequencies (Bortz & Schuster, 2010, p. 579).

The complete questionnaire can be found in the “back matter” section on the pages A-1 to A-7.

### **Data collection and sample**

The research question derived from the literature is to be examined for its causal interactions based on empirical research. The hypotheses already formulated explores the interactions presented in the conceptual model. A research sample is formed which can be transferred to the basic population and examined for its validity (Goldenstein et al., 2018, pp. 107–108).

The sample is derived from data relating to the Austrian market. According to “Statistics Austria”, as of 2020, there are 1,840 large enterprises, 8,020 medium-sized enterprises, 41,235 small enterprises and 650,848 micro enterprises in Austria, which means a total of 701.943 enterprises in Austria (Mohr, 2022, p. 7).

Since most micro enterprises are very small and therefore have no brand management, they are excluded from the survey (Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 Concerning the Definition of Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, 2003, p. 39). This results in a population of 51,095 enterprises.

The sample size was calculated based on this data, whereby it is necessary to calculate the confidence interval and standard deviation as well as the error size for the sample calculation (Häder, 2019, pp. 151–152). The sample size after the calculation should be 382 people, considering a confidence interval of 95%, a standard deviation of 50% and an error size of 5%.

For the selection of the sample, the quota procedure is used as a non-random selection procedure. The reason for using this procedure, is that it makes it possible to draw more

precise conclusions about the population due to the size of the company. The quota plan can be seen in **Table 2** (Kaya & Himme, 2009, p. 81). The sample should consist of brand managers and business owners. It is important that they have a direct influence on the positioning of a brand. This is a deliberate selection, as the respondents are chosen according to certain characteristics (Oberzaucher, 2017, p. 44).

**Table 2:** Quota plan

Enterprises	Quantity	Percent	Number of responses
Small	41.235	80,70%	308
Medium	8.020	15,70%	60
Large	1.840	3,60%	14
Total	51.095	100%	382

Source: Own table

The survey was conducted from the end of March to the beginning of April. Existing contacts were asked to complete the survey, and brand managers were also contacted through direct messages on the business networking website “LinkedIn”.

## **Chapter 5: Empirical study**

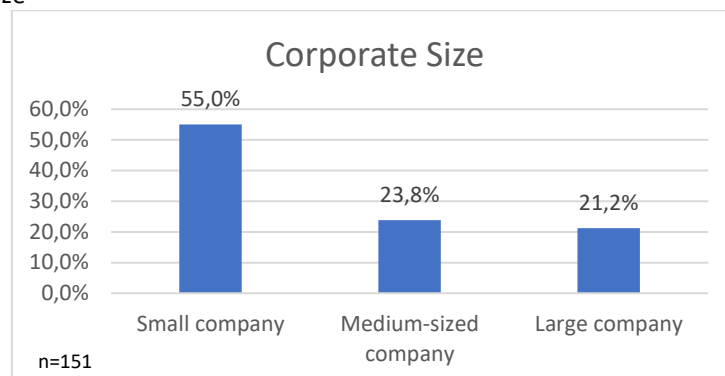
This chapter of the master thesis deals with the empirical research and shows the results and the interpretation of the fieldwork. The sample is described, and the hypotheses are tested using static methods.

### **Structural data**

The following section uses illustrations to show the basis on which the survey was conducted. A total of 151 companies or brand managers took part in the survey. Of these brand managers or companies, 58,3% were female, 39,1% male and 2,6% of the respondents identified themselves as having a “diverse” or non-binary gender. The sample population has an average age of 33,9 years.

The size of the companies as well as the number of hierarchies can be seen in **Figure 4**. Here it can be seen that many small companies took part in the survey and that medium-sized and large companies were represented in equal amounts. Of these companies, 45,7% operate in the B2C sector, 27,8% operate in the B2B sector and 26,6% of the companies operate in both sectors.

**Figure 4:** Corporate Size



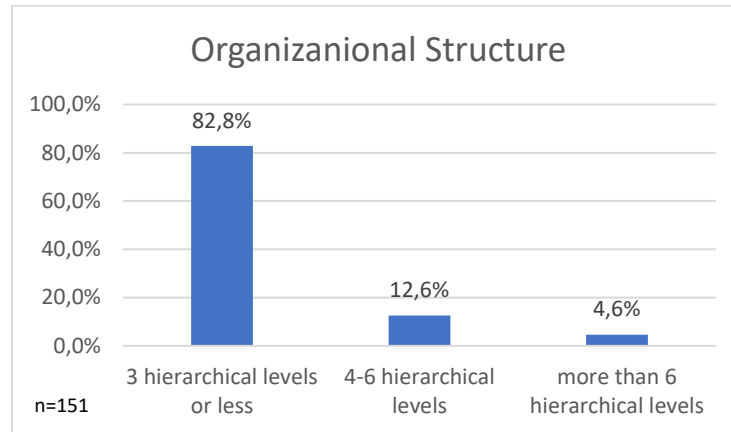
Source: Own figure

The sample population is made up of the following types of positions within a company: 23,8% business owners/CEO's, 27,8% team leads, 22,5% department heads and 21,9% team members. Only 4% of the respondents indicated that they had a job title outside of these designations.

In connection with the number of hierarchical levels, it can be said that mainly companies with less than three hierarchical levels took part in the survey as shown in **Figure**

**5.**

**Figure 5:** Organizational structure



Source: Own figure

The companies surveyed for this data operate primarily in the B2C sector (45,7%). The B2B sector is represented in the survey as making up 27,9% of the sample population and 26,5% of the companies surveyed are active in both the B2B and B2C sectors.

### **Types of decisions and decision-making process**

In the following section of this empirical work, questions around the different types of decision are interpreted. Furthermore, data on the decision-making process and its application in practice will be examined.

#### ***Types of decisions***

The literature reviewed for this thesis has shown that companies tend to make rational and intuitive decisions, while spontaneous decisions are present in the context of decision-making, but they are not primarily used. The survey does not reflect the conclusions of the literature. The preferred decision type made by the sample population of the survey is the rational decision, because 86,1% of the respondents agree or strongly agree with the statements regarding rational decision-making. Spontaneous decisions received an agreement of 70,9% based on the answers “very true” and “somewhat true”. In connection with the intuitive decision type, an agreement of 55,6% was reported. The entirety of the

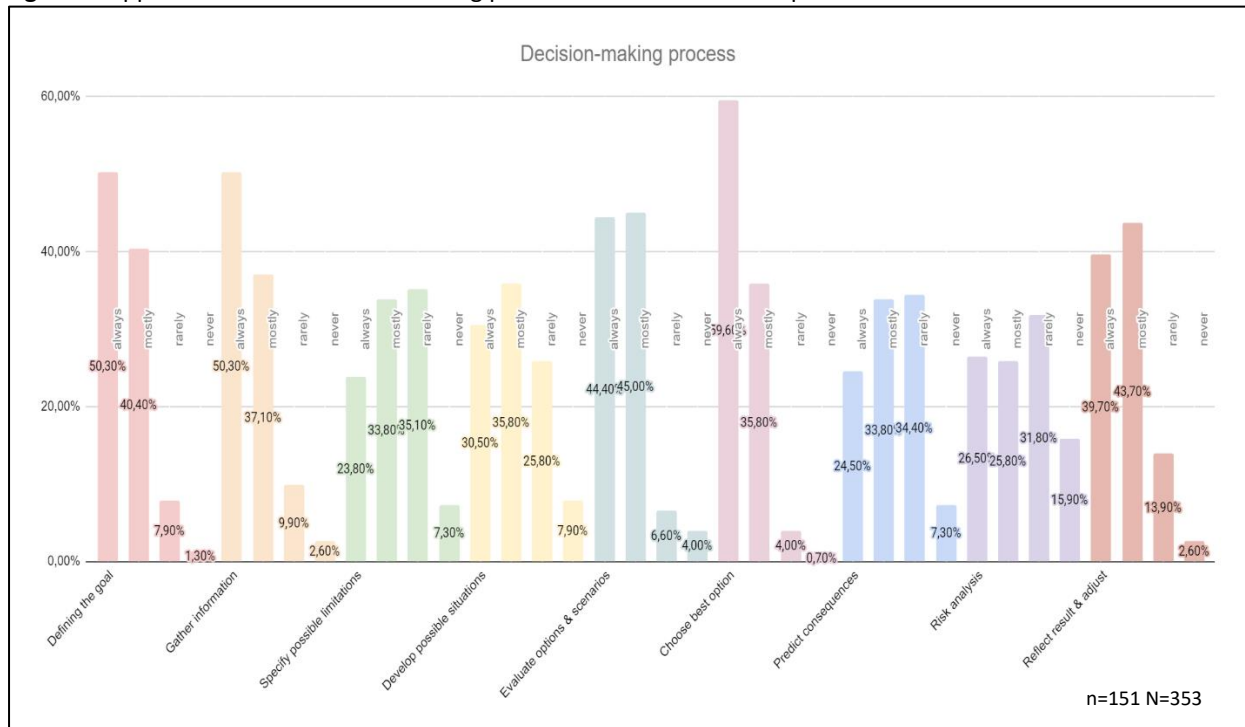
evaluation data is presented in the **Figure 1** graph in the “Back matter” appendix on page A-7.

A breakdown of the decisions reported by the sample population (categorized by their company size) reveals a tendency for large companies to make decisions using strategies based on rational decisions and only a small number of decisions made based on intuitive decision-making strategies. Small and medium-sized companies, on the other hand, use a mixture of all three types of decision-making strategies, with small companies deciding strongly based on rational decision-making strategies. However, there was no statistical test used to prove a difference between decision-making types and the company size, and the interpretation of the trend data was based on a comparison of mean values.

### ***The decision-making process***

In the context of the decision process shown in **Figure 1**, each step was reported to have been applied “more than 50% of the time” or “most of the time”. In addition, the risk analysis, with a percentage value of 15,9%, is reported to have been “most often not applied”. The following figure, **Figure 6**, shows how often the individual process steps are applied or not applied.

**Figure 6:** Application of the decision-making process in the individual steps



Source: Own figure

Based on the evaluation, the respondents most frequently use the four process steps in their companies within the framework of their decision-making processes. These four steps are always applied by the respondents, as more than 40% of the respondents described taking these steps. The four steps they used most commonly included “the definition of goals, the collection of information, the evaluation and consideration of different situations and the associated choice of the best option”.

### Taking a stand

In this chapter, survey data on the topic of "taking a stand" is evaluated and analysed. The survey collected data on the following topics:

- Should companies position themselves using the concept of brand activism?
- How important is it to take a stand on one of the socio-political issues identified in the literature?

- Have companies taken a stand so far and on which issues have they taken a stand?
- What prevents companies from taking a stand on socio-political issues?

### ***The importance of socio-political topics***

Within the framework of the survey, 80,8% of the respondents stated that the company they work for has already taken a stand on a socio-political issue. Only 19,2% of the companies surveyed have never taken a stand. If one relates the knowledge gained from this survey to the type of company, B2C companies tend to take a stand on socio-political issues, whereas only 13% of the 69 B2C companies surveyed stated that they had never taken a stand. In comparison, 26,2% of the 42 B2B companies surveyed stated that they had never taken a stand. A similar result can also be seen in companies that are active in both areas, id est (i.e.), B2C and B2B, where 22,5% of the 40 companies surveyed stated that they had never taken a stand.

Furthermore, 76,1% of the respondents consider it to be “very important” or “rather important” that companies take a stand on a socio-political issue. Only 12,5% of the respondents consider it “less important” or “not important” to take a stand. This result is descriptively recognisable across all company types and all company sizes.

As discussed in the literature, it is clear that the data trends towards the increasing importance for companies to position themselves through brand activism and to take a clear stance on socio-political issues.

Moreover, within the framework of the survey, the brand managers were asked about the topics on which a company should take a stand. The socio-political issues identified in the literature were queried and respondents were asked for their agreement.



Based on the answers of the respondents, it can be said that the topic of climate change and the environment is the topic or cause that is most important for companies to take a stand on or align themselves with. In fact, 83,5% of the respondents stated that companies should take a stand on this topic. The topic that the surveyed population voted as the second most important socio-political issue was the topic of women's rights, with 72,1% of respondents agreeing that companies should take a stand on this topic. The topic of LGBTQ issues received 60,9% approval, although it must also be said that 21,2% of the respondents said that companies should speak out less or not at all on this topic. In relation to the Black Lives Matter movement, 54,3% of respondents stated that companies should take a clear position in regard to this issue. Additionally, 22,5% of companies did not report taking a position on this issue and 23,1% of respondents stated that companies should not take a position on this issue. Meanwhile, 47,7% of respondents consider a position on the war in Ukraine to be sensible, while 27,2% of respondents neither agree nor disagree with a position on this topic. Nevertheless, 25,2% say that taking a position on the Ukraine war is “less meaningful” or “not meaningful”.

### ***Companies that have taken a stand***

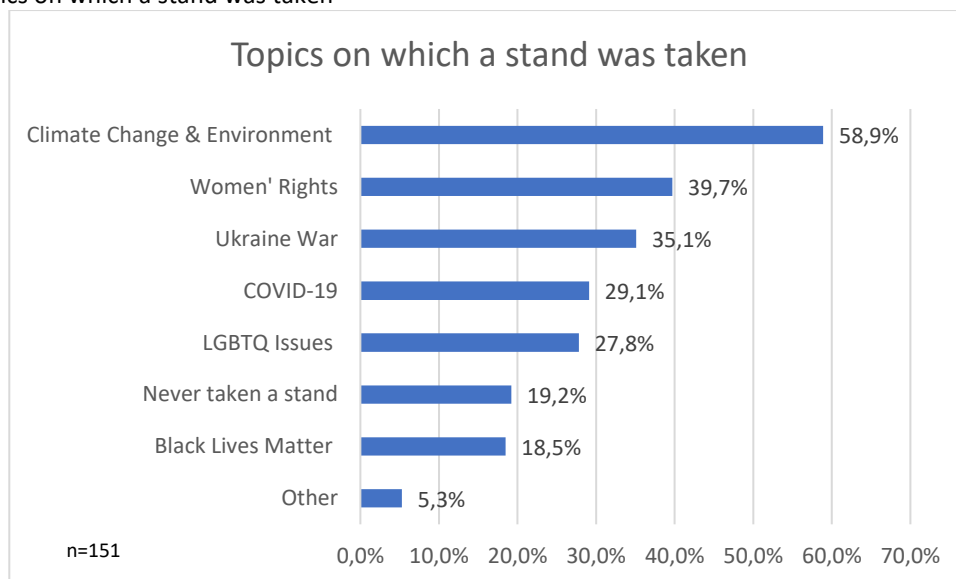
As described in the previous chapter, the respondents consider it important for companies to take a stand on socio-political issues, and more than three-quarters of companies have already taken a stand on an issue. Through the survey, it was possible to check which topics reported in the literature aligned with the positions that companies surveyed in this thesis stated that they took a position on. It was also possible to get information on socio-political topics that are not currently reflected in the literature. The following figure, **Figure 7**, shows that companies have most frequently taken a stand on the

topic of climate change and the environment and on women's rights. These trends are also reflected in the data on which topics a company should take a stand on.

The Ukraine war and COVID-19 were the third and fourth issues (respectively) that companies have taken a position on. This is an interesting finding, as companies have classified these two topics as topics that should “rather not” or “not” be used for socio-political positioning. LGBTQ issues are also less frequently designated as important to be addressed, although companies say that these issues are important to take a stand on.

The survey data revealed that 19,2% of the companies surveyed have never taken a position on a socio-political issue, which suggests that companies are very much aware that it will always be important to take an activist stance.

**Figure 7:** Topics on which a stand was taken



Source: Own figure

The topics that were mentioned under the heading “other” in the survey were:

- Abortion
- Obesity
- Age discrimination
- Renewable energy

- Promotion of volunteer work
- The gender pay gap
- Migration and refugees
- Minorities, indigenous peoples, and exploitation

### ***Reasons not to take a stand***

The following section describes the results of the respondents' statements, detailing the company's interpretation of the customer's perspective, as well as the company's perspective on statements relating to the company. Within the framework of the survey, the respondents were asked specifically about the reasons why companies do not take a stand.

#### **Statements in relation to customers**

The survey asked whether respondents thought that companies were afraid of negative word of mouth press. This statement was found to be "very true" or "somewhat true" by 61,6% of respondents, with a further 17,9% giving "neither" as an answer and 20,5% seeing this statement as false. In connection with negative sanctions by existing customers, respondents feel that this is "true" 57,6% of the time and 20,5% feel that this statement is "neither true or false" nor "not true". Respondents also believe that companies avoid taking a stand to avoid being shunned by new customers. In the survey, 60,9% of the respondents agreed with this statement and 17,9% feel neutral about it. To take a holistic view of the customer perspective, in addition to word of mouth, respondents were also asked whether companies are afraid of a shitstorm via social media. Here, the sample population is of the opinion that 64,2% of respondents agree with this statement and 15,2% feel neutrally about it.

In summary, the loss or interaction with your customers is very important for companies, especially in terms of keeping loyal customers and acquiring potential customers. It is also very important to companies that customers not vent their possibly negative opinions about the company (due to the stances they took on socio-political issues) via the internet or by word of mouth.

Interestingly, mixed types of companies, i.e., B2C and B2B companies, tend to rate these statements mentioned above as “absolutely true” or “somewhat true”. B2B companies also tend to be more afraid of a shitstorm on social media.

#### Statements in relation to the company

The statements agreed upon internally were reported by the sample population as follows: 47,7% of the respondents say that the statement: "Companies have no opinion on these issues" is “less true” or “not true” at all. Of the participants surveyed, 29,8% indicated that the statement above is “true” or “completely true”. When considering whether companies should separate business and socio-political issues, 62,3% of the survey participants “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree”, while only 20,6% of the participants say that companies should not separate these issues. One statement that could have been influenced the reported results was: "Companies are afraid of negative reactions from their stakeholders". That means that 55,6% of respondents “agreed” or “somewhat agreed” with this statement, while 23,9% disagreed.

One possible interpretation would be that companies have an opinion on socio-political issues but separate their statements regarding business and socio-political issues because of their fear of getting negative reactions from their stakeholders.

The respondents gave a balanced answer to the question of whether “companies believe that they cannot make a difference”, with 36,4% considering this statement to be

“true”, 25,2% answering with “neither true or false” and 38,4% considering this statement to be “not true”. These figures show that companies are in the process of learning that they can make a difference. Almost 50% of the large companies surveyed are already aware and believe that they can make a difference, while small and medium-sized companies are not yet convinced of the impact of their stances.

### **Review of the hypotheses**

The evaluation of the above mentioned hypotheses is an important part of the scientific work. The following chapter evaluates the hypotheses that were already formulated. Hereby, different methods for analysing the hypotheses are described. As part of the evaluation, attention is paid to the significance of the data, as this indicates whether the correlation or difference in the results is valid. Finally, this section also discusses the significance of the data. Data significance is important for this evaluation as a hypothesis can be rejected due to insufficient data.

It should be noted that all the hypotheses were formulated directionally, as it is possible to formulate them positively or negatively through the literature. When testing directional hypotheses in the statistical analysis, it is possible to halve the two-sided significance and thus assume one-sided significance (Cohen, 1988, p. 99).

### ***Hypotheses one, two and three***

In the first step, the normal distribution of the data was examined in connection with the hypotheses one, two and three via descriptive statistics. For this purpose, a histogram including a normal distribution was created for the dependent variables around the following decision-making types: Rational, spontaneous, and intuitive. Based on these histograms, the data reveals that there might not be a normal distribution.

Based on this knowledge, the skewness and the kurtosis were examined in more detail. If the distribution rises more steeply on one side than on the other, this is referred to as data “skew” in statistics. Skewed data is therefore asymmetrical and there is no normal distribution of this data set (Bortz & Schuster, 2010, p. 584). The available data shows that the skewness is not close to zero, which in turn indicates that there is no normal distribution in the available data.

In order to verify a normal distribution by means of a statistical test, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used to check the data (Bortz & Schuster, 2010, p. 198). **Table 3** shows the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test. Since the significance of this test is  $p = < 0,05$  it can be assumed that the data does not have a normal distribution.

**Table 3:** Results of the Shapiro-Wilk test

<b>Tests for normal distribution</b>				
n=151	Taking a stand	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistics	df	<b>Sig.</b>
Rational	Took a stand	,705	122	<b>,000</b>
	Never took a stand	,790	29	<b>,000</b>
Spontaneous	Took a stand	,806	122	<b>,000</b>
	Never took a stand	,871	29	<b>,002</b>
Intuitive	Took a stand	,830	122	<b>,000</b>
	Never took a stand	,813	29	<b>,000</b>

Source: Own table

Due to the lack of normal distribution, an evaluation using a t-test for independent samples could not be used, since a normal distribution of the data is a prerequisite for this type of test (Bortz & Schuster, 2010, p. 120). Therefore, a Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine the data, since it is a non-parametric procedure that compares ranks rather than means, which better suits the analysis of this data (Bortz & Schuster, 2010, p. 132, 2010, p. 118).

The results of the Mann-Whitney U-test on this data are as follows for the rational decision-making type:  $U = 1499,50$ ,  $Z = -1,405$   $p$  (one sided)  $> 0,05$ . For the spontaneous decision-making type, the following data was obtained:  $U = 1512,00$   $Z = -1,275$   $p$  (one sided)  $> 0,05$ . For the intuitive decision-making type, the following results were obtained:  $U = 1479,00$ ,  $Z = -1,412$   $p$  (one sided)  $> 0,05$ . The exact evaluation can be seen in **Figure 2** in the “Back matter” appendix on page A-8.

Due to the lack of significance, the following hypotheses must be rejected:

- $H1(+)$ : The more rational the decision, the more likely a company is to take a stand.
- $H2(+)$ : The more spontaneous the decision, the more likely a company is to take a stand.
- $H3(-)$ : The more intuitive the decision, the less likely a company is to take a stand.

The reason for the lack of significance could be the low response rate to the survey.

Based on a rank comparison, a small tendency towards a difference can be detected, but the data is not significant, so it is not possible to extract an exact statement. Despite the lack of significance of the data, the effect strength was calculated, revealing the following results:

- Rational decision-making:  $r = 0,11$
- Spontaneous decision-making:  $r = 0,10$
- Intuitive decision-making:  $r = 0,10$

This would indicate an extremely weak relationship between the variables of decision-making types and taking a stand, considering that the data is not significant and therefore the hypotheses were rejected.

**Hypotheses four, five and six**

Hypotheses four, five, and six were tested using a chi-square test and the associated cross-tabulations.

For hypothesis four, **Figure 8** shows the evaluation of the cross-tabulations. Like the descriptive statistics, these cross-tabulations shows that most companies have already taken a position on a socio-political issue. The evaluated data shows no significance since  $p$  (one sided) = 0,10, which is above the value  $p = 0,05$ , so this hypothesis must be rejected. Based on the Cramer V value of  $V = 0,148$ , a small correlation can be assumed. However, this cannot be proven statically since the result is not significant. Hypothesis four was:

*H4(+)*: There is a difference between the types of companies and whether they take a stand.

**Figure 8:** Cross table for hypothesis four

**Cross table Company Type'take a stand**

			take a stand		Total
			Took a stand	Never took a stand	
Company Type	B2C	Quantity	60	9	69
		Expected quantity	55,7	13,3	69,0
	B2B	Quantity	31	11	42
		Expected quantity	33,9	8,1	42,0
	B2C & B2B	Quantity	31	9	40
		Expected quantity	32,3	7,7	40,0
Total		Quantity	122	29	151
		Expected quantity	122,0	29,0	151,0

**Symmetrical dimensions**

		Value	Approximate Sig.
Nominal with respect to Nominal	Phi	,148	,193
	Cramer-V	,148	,193
n =		151	

Source: Own figure

In connection with hypothesis five, a cross-tabulation was made and analysed by considering the Cramer-V value. For this hypothesis, a significance of  $p$  (one sided) = 0.392 was determined, since this significance value is also above the significance value of  $p = 0.05$ , this hypothesis must also be rejected due to the lack of significance. Considering the Cramer-V value of  $V = 0.57$  of the tested hypotheses, it can be deduced that a correlation is not present. This statement is not meaningful due to the lack of significance of the results. The



**Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** below shows the evaluation of hypothesis five and the associated results. Hypothesis five was:  $H5(+)$ : Differences in the organizational structure of companies influence whether companies take a stand.

**Figure 9:** Cross table for hypothesis five

**Cross table Organizational structure 'take a stand**

			take a stand		Total
			Took a stand	Never took a stand	
Organizational structure	3 hierarchical levels or less	Quantity	102	23	125
		Expected quantity	101,0	24,0	125,0
	4-6 hierarchical levels	Quantity	15	4	19
		Expected quantity	15,4	3,6	19,0
	more than 6 hierarchical levels	Quantity	5	2	7
		Expected quantity	5,7	1,3	7,0
Total		Quantity	122	29	151
		Expected quantity	122,0	29,0	151,0

**Symmetrical dimensions**

		Value	Approximate Sig.
Nominal with respect to nominal	Phi	,057	,783
	Cramer-V	,057	,783
n =		151	

Source: Own figure

The last and sixth hypothesis was also tested using cross-tabulations and the Cramer-V value.

The sixth hypothesis also did not have enough statistical significance to be valid, as the value  $p$  (one sided) = 0.27. This value is also above the specified required significance of  $p = 0.05$ .

Therefore, the hypothesis must also be rejected due to lack of significance. The Cramer-V value, as shown in **Figure 10**, is  $V = 0.09$ , which suggests that there is no correlation between the variables. But again, no clear statement can be made due to the lack of significance.

Hypothesis four was:  $H6(+)$ : There is a difference between the corporate size of a company and whether the company takes a stand.

**Figure 10:** Cross table for hypothesis six

**Cross Table Corporate size\*take a stand**

			take a stand		Total
			Took a stan	Never took a stand	
Corporate size	Small company	Quantity	66	17	83
		Expected quantity	67,1	15,9	83,0
	Medium-sized company	Quantity	28	8	36
		Expected quantity	29,1	6,9	36,0
	Large company	Quantity	28	4	32
		Expected quantity	25,9	6,1	32,0
Total	Quantity		122	29	151
	Expected quantity		122,0	29,0	151,0

**Symmetrical dimensions**

		Value	Approximate Sig.
Nominal with respect to nominal	Phi	,090	,542
	Cramer-V	,090	,542
n =		151	

Source: Own figure

## Chapter 6: Concluding remarks

Even though the hypotheses could not be proven, this study provides several interesting results. For example, this study shows that the participants in the survey fear that companies will lose customers or be avoided by new customers if they take a stand on a socio-political issue. This is an indicator that illustrates that the survey's respondents are of the opinion that their customers could speak negatively about the company using negative word of mouth or posting over social media. Nevertheless, the study also shows that the marketing managers or brand managers who participated in this survey understand that taking a stand is important for the future. Based on these findings, companies should focus more on getting to know the issues that are close to the hearts of their target groups to achieve economic success in the long term.

It can be recognised due to the data, that climate change and the environment, women's rights and LGBTQ community issues are most-representative of the socio-political issues on which companies should take a stand. However, it must also be considered that the companies surveyed already have a strong position on these three topics and have included positions on these topics in their external communication already.

Nevertheless, especially because of the fear of losing customers or being shunned, companies should devote more focus to risk analysis in their decision-making process. Risk analysis not only shows the possible risk that can arise when companies take a stand, it also offers the possibility of well-founded data for potential opportunities. Even though risk analysis requires a lot of effort, the results it can achieve are worth the effort.

Risk analysis can therefore help make a company profitable in the long-term or show company stakeholders what potential a company must manifest in the minds of consumers in the long term. Knowledge of these beneficiary methods would help companies reduce their fear that their stakeholders would react negatively to the company's positioning in the long run. This would possibly also make companies less reluctant to separate economic and socio-political issues.

If more companies take a stand, it is possible to bring about social change through peer pressure. People and companies tend to adapt their behaviour or decisions to match the opinions or actions of others in their community groups or in their markets (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004, p. 606).

According to the literature reviewed in this thesis, management decisions tend to be made rationally and intuitively, and although spontaneous decision-making strategies are used by management, they are only used to make decisions that are characterised by a high degree of urgency (Bhagwat et al., 2020, p. 17; Grigorova, 2019, p. 134; Malewska, 2018, p. 31; Thunholm, 2004, p. 993).

In the context of this study, however, it could be recognised that rational and spontaneous decisions are primarily used by the companies that answered the questionnaire. Even if the three hypotheses in the context of decision-making types do not show statistical significance, but do show a very low significance, it would be possible reference a tendency

that the decision-making type has an influence on whether a company takes a position on a socio-political issue. However, this statement must be considered with caution due to the lack of statistical significance.

Hypotheses four, five and six were all rejected due to their lack of significance. The Cramer-V values only show a possible small correlation for hypothesis four, but this is not statistically significant. However, if significance were present, it would mean that the type of company would influence whether a company takes a stand or avoids taking a position on socio-political issues.

## **Chapter 7: Limitations and future research**

In this last chapter of the master's thesis, the limitations of the field research are presented and an outlook for future research is provided.

### **Limitations**

The present work has limitations. Firstly, there was the problem that the response rate to the questionnaire very low in comparison, to the calculated and anticipated sample size number. Thus, only 39,5% of the required sample could be obtained from the data. Furthermore, it was not possible to adhere to the planned quota due to the low response rate. For this reason, a snowball sample was used during the survey and respondents were selected randomly as well as specifically and asked to pass on the survey.

Another problem that arose during the preparation of the survey was that many companies had already taken a position on a socio-political issue. Here, however, the question arises as to whether it was clear to all respondents what exactly "to take a stand" means and whether they would already describe the one-off positioning on a topic as taking a stand. This may not have been discussed well enough during the survey. It would be possible to say that

the description of the context surrounding whether companies have already taken a stand was insufficient in its formulation.

### **Future research**

As it becomes more and more important for companies to speak out and take a stand on socio-political issues, research in this area is a field that will also become increasingly important in the future (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020, p. 7).

Thus, while this paper provides insight into the topic of brand activism, further research is needed to gain more detailed insights into this area of research. For example, many companies stated in the survey that they had already taken a stand, but in this context, it is not possible to say to what extent this stand happened. Here it would be important for both the research and the research practices to further investigate how “companies taking a stand” could be defined. For example, is “taking a stand” a one-time activity? Is taking a stand once of enough significance for a company to say that it has “taken a stand” in general, or does “taking a stand” require longer, more intensive campaigns in terms of marketing activities?

Furthermore, the question arises as to whether companies know their target groups and their target groups’ interests in connection with socio-political topics. Regarding the survey, it is indicated that companies fear customer avoidance or losing regular customers. In this instance, it would be important from the point of view of the research to develop a guideline or a step-by-step guide for the implementation of brand activism in corporate communications, in order to support companies in practice. Among other things, many companies stated that they had taken a position on the Ukraine war or COVID-19, although these two topics are not topics on which a company should take a position from the point of view of the respondents. Further research is also needed on the phenomenon of peer

pressure. That is, did companies take a position on these socio-political issues because these two issues were topical, or because so many other companies took a position on one of these issues?

Another area in need of research is the influence that stakeholders have on the companies and to what extent they prevent implementation of brand activism or advocate for the implementation of brand activism in the frame of corporate strategy. What motives drive stakeholders in connection to socio-political issues? Do they see brand activism as part of the triple bottom line or as a threat to their sales figures?

In conclusion, it can be said that the topics of brand activism and whether companies take a stand on a socio-political issue is interesting and under-researched. These areas are not only of interest for research studies and science, but they are also becoming more and more important from a corporate point of view. For this reason, it does make sense to repeat the survey with a larger sample size and to clarify in advance what the term "taking a stand" means in order to obtain meaningful results.

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## **Back matter**

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## Questionary

Dear Participant,

As part of my master's thesis on "Brand activism: A managerial perspective", which I am completing as part of my studies in "Digital Marketing Management" at the University for Applied Sciences Campus 02, I am conducting this survey of marketing managers and managing directors.

Therefore, I would like to ask you to participate in my completely anonymous survey!

The survey will take about 5 minutes.

All answers will not be passed on to third parties and will be processed in a completely sensitive and secure manner.

1) Are you responsible for Brand Management, Marketing & Communication or Brand Leadership in your company?

Yes

No

→ If "No": Then exclusion

---

2) Which type of company applies to your company?

Small company (<50 employees)

Medium-sized company (>50 but <=250 employees)

Large company (>250 employees)

None of the above

→ If „None of the above“: Then exclusion

---

3) What position do you hold in your company?

Company owner / CEO

Team lead

Head of department

Team member

Other (open)

---

4) Please state your age in years.

Number



---

5) What gender are you?

- Male
- Female
- Diverse
- Not specified

6) In which sector does your company mainly work?

- B2C
- B2B
- B2C & B2B

---

7) How many hierarchical levels are there in the organizational structure of your company?

- 3 hierarchical levels or less
- 4-6 hierarchical levels
- more than 6 hierarchical levels

---

8) You see here a decision-making process in several stages. Which of the stages is used in your company and how often?

The decision-making process takes place in the following stages:

- 1) Defining the goal
- 2) Gathering information
- 3) Specify possible limitations
- 4) Develop possible situations
- 5) Evaluate options & scenarios
- 6) Choose best option
- 7) Predict consequences
- 8) Risk analysis
- 9) Reflect result & adjust

Defining the goal

- |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| always                | mostly                | rarely                | never                 |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Gathering information

always                      mostly                      rarely                      never  
                                                                 

Specify possible limitations

always                      mostly                      rarely                      never  
                                                                 

Develop possible situations

always                      mostly                      rarely                      never  
                                                                 

Evaluate options & scenarios

always                      mostly                      rarely                      never  
                                                                 

Choose best option

always                      mostly                      rarely                      never  
                                                                 

Predict consequences

always                      mostly                      rarely                      never  
                                                                 

Risk analysis

always                      mostly                      rarely                      never  
                                                                 

Reflect result & adjust

always                      mostly                      rarely                      never  
                                                                 

9) How are strategic decisions or decisions that can strongly influence the external impact of the company most likely to be made in your company?

Rational decision-making involves evaluating different pieces of information about a problem or strategy.

very true    somehow true    neither true    less true    not true

Intuitive decision-making is fast and often occurs in the subconscious and involves learned patterns of information.

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Spontaneous decisions are characterized by a sense of urgency and the decision-making process is lived through quickly.

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

10) I think it is important for companies to take a public stand on socio-political issues (e.g.: women's rights, environmental protection, etc.).

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

11) I believe companies should speak out publicly on the following issues:

**Black lives matter:**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**LGBTQ issues:**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Women's rights:**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Climate change & Environment**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**COVID-19**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Ukraine war:**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

12) Have you ever taken a stand with your company on one of these socio-political issues:

- Black Lives Matter
  - LGBTQ Issues
  - Women's Rights
  - Climate Change & Environment
  - COVID-19
  - Ukraine War
  - Other (open)
  - Never taken a stand.
- 

13) Why do you think companies avoid taking a public stand:

**They fear negative word of mouth.**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**They fear negative sanctions from customers.**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**They fear being avoided by new customers.**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**They fear a social media shitstorm.**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**They do not have an opinion on these issues.**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**They separate economic and social-political issues.**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**They believe that they cannot make a difference.**

very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**They fear a negative reaction from their stakeholders (Suppliers, Investors, Local authorities, etc.).**

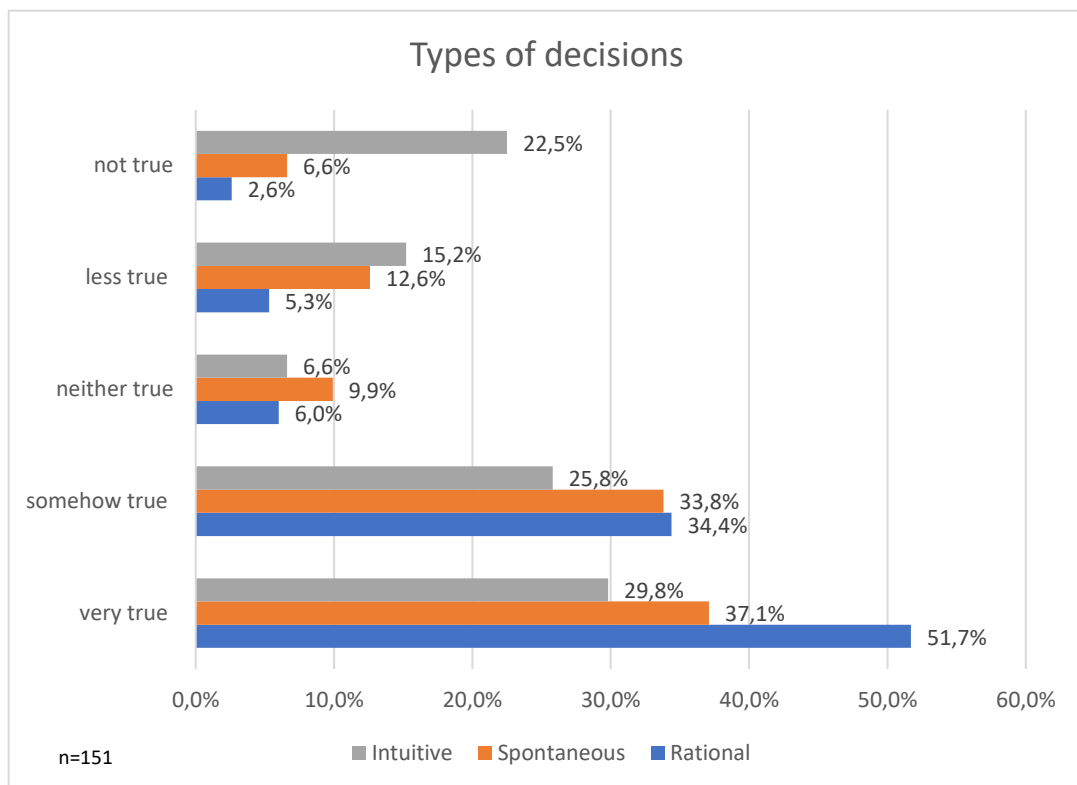
very true	somehow true	neither true	less true	not true
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

○ ... Other (open)

You have now reached the end of the survey!  
-  
Thank you for taking part in my survey!

### Supplementary representations to the result of the field work

Figure 1: Types of decisions



Source: Own figure

**Figure 2:** Results of the Mann-Whitney-U test

<b>Ranks</b>				
	take a stand	H	Middle rank	Rank sum
Rational	Took a stand	122	73,79	9002,50
	Never took a stand	29	85,29	2473,50
	Total	151		
Spontaneous	Took a stand	122	73,89	9015,00
	Never took a stand	29	84,86	2461,00
	Total	151		
Intuitive	Took a stand	122	78,38	9562,00
	Never took a stand	29	66,00	1914,00
	Total	151		

<b>Test statistics<sup>a</sup></b>			
	Rational	Spontaneous	Intuitive
Mann-Whitney-U-Test	1499,50	1512,000	1479,00
Wilcoxon-W	9002,50	9015,000	1914,00
U	-1,405	-1,275	-1,412
Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	,160	,202	,158
Exact Sig. (2-sided)	,162	,205	,159
Exact Sig. (1-sided)	,082	,103	,079
Point probability	,002	,001	,001

a. Group variable: take a stand n=151

Source: Own figure