



From Dr. Seuss to Barbie's cancellation: brand's institutional work in response to changed market logics

Aya Aboelenien¹ · Chau Minh Nguyen¹

Revised: 20 April 2023 / Accepted: 5 July 2023 / Published online: 22 August 2023
© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Limited 2023

Abstract

Research on brand activism does not fully inform us about how established brands are transforming in response to the ever-changing political, cultural, and social norms. To answer this gap, our paper investigates 24 established brands in the entertainment industry, within 18 mother companies, targeting children to unveil these dynamics. Using institutional theory as our enabling lens, our paper first traces the changes in the institutional logic guiding the market leading to threatening the brand's legitimacy. We then uncover how these brands came under attack for violating the changing market logics through passive exclusion and representation offence. Forced to sustain their legitimacy, the brands direct their institutional work towards conducting structural interactive strategies. These strategies create symmetry across a spectrum of stakeholders: consumers, employees, and communities. We label these strategies: revamping, surgerying, and attaching. The strategies enable brands to sustain legitimacy amid change. Our findings contribute to the literature on legitimacy repairs and maintenance, brand activism, and children-related marketing. We also provide managerial recommendations on conducting structural changes.

Keywords Institutional logics · Branding · Institutional work · Legitimacy · Inclusion · Entertainment industry

Introduction

We're committed to building a diverse organization with a unique sense of belonging to reach and inspire every child in the world. We work with a broad definition of diversity, from gender, ethnicity, background, and experience to other dimensions such as lifestyle and family responsibilities. Our goal is to increase the representation of all dimensions to reflect the increasingly diverse and global marketplace we operate in. Diversity depends on inclusion. Inclusion starts with creating a safe space and helping everyone be seen, heard, valued, and respected. The more inclusive we are, the better we will be at developing and empowering everyone to contribute at their full potential. (LEGO's website, January 2022)

From introducing more racially inclusive American Girls to cancelling the production of Aunt Jemima, from revisiting racist images within Disney theme park rides to declaring their position on diversity, equity, and inclusion, brands are changing. Such changes were sparked by their evolving social, cultural, and political environments inspired by diverse movements seeking diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., #Metoo and #BlackLivesMatter). These movements are disrupting institutional logics, or the normalized practices, values, beliefs, and rules within a marketplace (Thornton and Ocasio 1999, 2008). Institutional logics dictate the acceptable behavior of organizations by providing them with a roadmap to follow (Boone and Özcan 2020). With the changes in the sociocultural context of organizations, different brands and companies became activists.

Brand activism is defined as the “alignment of a brand's explicit purpose and values with its activist marketing messaging and prosocial corporate practice” (Vredenburg et al. 2020, 445). It is a differentiating marketing tactic to demonstrate firms' involvement in the marketplace by taking public stances on social and political issues (Vredenburg et al. 2020; Moorman 2020; Sarkar and Kotler 2018). When done successfully, brand activism enables brands to become social change agents through the empowerment of

✉ Aya Aboelenien
aya.aboelenien@hec.ca

Chau Minh Nguyen
Chau-minh.nguyen@hec.ca

¹ HEC Montreal, 3000 Chemin de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine,
Montréal, QC H3T 2A7, Canada



the relevant consumers (Hajdas and Kleczek 2021). It can also legitimate their actions as in the case of Oatly, the oat milk brand, which played the role of “citizen activist” and called attention to the environment and public health (Koch 2020). However, as brands take an activist stand, their established legitimacy (Kates 2004; Navis and Glynn 2010; Suchman 1995) in the marketplace is re-evaluated by other marketplace actors. While some consumers accept the transformation, others perceive it as virtue signaling, and others resist the change for not adhering to their values (Ritson 2020; Walansky 2020).

The literature has focused on unveiling the antecedents of authentic support for political and social causes (Mirzaei et al. 2022). For example, Vredenburg et al. (2020) advise brands for a moderate congruency between the chosen sociopolitical goals. Mirzaei et al. (2022) put forward different dimensions to improve the perception of authenticity including sacrifice, fit, and motivation behind the choice of the cause. However, the focus of this emerging literature had been on brands that were activists from inception (e.g., Patagonia and their sustainability initiatives) and on improving the perceived authenticity of their advocacy. With the growing literature on brand activism, less is known about why and how established brands within the marketplace, who were not activists in the past, are becoming engaged with activist claims.

Our paper answers these questions through an investigation of 24 entertainment brands, within 18 mother companies, targeting generation alpha (i.e., children between the age of 0–10) and their millennial parents to trace their changes in the marketplace. We focus on this generation as there is scarce research aiming to understand children's engagement with brands from a cultural perspective (Hémar-Nicolas and Rodhain 2017). In addition, the brands are striving to sustain their legitimacy by engaging with activism. Through this focus, our paper investigates how the institutional logics in the entertainment industry are changing and why and how the brands are responding to such changes.

We build on and contribute to the literature on brand activism in several ways. First, we unveil how the changed institutional logics are reshaping the marketplace's assessment of other actors' behaviors, to be more precise how they are reshaping consumers' assessments of established brands' previous behaviors and practices. Here, we look beyond scandals and recent violations and focus on accusations directed towards the identity of established brands. We pinpoint two accusations directed towards the brands' long history and market offerings: (1) representation offence and (2) passive exclusion. This helped us unveil the threats to the brands' legitimacy as their past behaviors, actions, and market offerings are re-scrutinized by marketplace actors. This aspect has relevant managerial implications as the

same accusations can be found in other industries also facing changes in the institutional logics guiding their markets.

Second, we pinpoint the brands' institutional work to manage the situation. Instead of providing conceptual advice, or using experimental manipulations, we investigate existing established brands that are facing a threat to their legitimacy, despite working the same way since their inception. Here, we pinpoint three structural interactive strategies, revamping, surgerying, and attaching that create symmetry across stakeholders: consumers, employees, and communities. These strategies declare the brands' adherence to the changed logics. We map them along with their various implementation tactics.

These strategies enable brands to sustain their legitimacy during change by demonstrating their values as corporate citizens. Thus, rather than focusing on only consumer-oriented strategies for brand activism, as highlighted in most of the previous literature, we expand it to include other crucial stakeholders (e.g., employees and the external environment of brands). We show how the changes on the consumer front are echoed by changes with the other stakeholders to secure the brands' legitimacy. We also contribute to the previous literature on brand activism that highlighted the importance of authenticity (Vredenburg et al. 2020; Mirzaei et al. 2022), by demonstrating that companies can go beyond surface-level activism through structural changes on different fronts.

Finally, this context enabled us to contribute to the literature on legitimacy in the marketplace. Literature on this topic has mainly focused on unveiling how market actors and institutions gain legitimacy (see Huff et al. 2021; Wilner and Huff 2017; Humphreys 2010a). An emerging stream of literature started to look into how market actors are also losing their legitimacy (Valor et al. 2020; Regany et al. 2021). We show how brands facing a threat to their legitimacy safeguard it through their institutional work. This enabled us to show the resistance of market actors to de(legitimacy) claims which foreshadows the dynamic process of market creation and market change.

We begin by threading the literature review on activism in the marketplace, followed by presenting our theoretical framework, then contextualizing our research, and explaining our methods and findings. We conclude our paper with our discussion and theoretical and managerial contributions.

Literature review: activism in the marketplace

Diverse marketplace actors (e.g., consumers, employees, and brands) are involved in activism in the marketplace to rally support around various social causes (see Mirzaei et al. 2022; Sarkar and Kotler 2018; Romani et al. 2015; Bhagwat et al. 2020; Vredenburg et al. 2020; Kozinets and



Handelman 2004). Zooming in on consumer activism, literature has looked into their role as a moral compass of the marketplace as they are framed as a powerful actor holding firms accountable for their performance (Romani et al. 2015; Cherrier 2009; Lee et al. 2011). They are increasingly equipped with tools to rally support for their ideas and stand against power structures in the market (e.g., social media) (Minocher 2019; Pain 2021; Mundt et al. 2018). They boycott brands, either publicly or privately, as part of their identity narratives (see Borghini et al. 2009; Dong and Tian 2009; Fournier 1998; Luedicke et al. 2010; Simon 2011; Thompson 2014) and scrutinize their initiatives towards activism and social responsibility claims (Alhouti et al. 2016; Vredenburg et al. 2020).

On the employee front, they are also demanding their organizations to address important social issues (Briscoe and Gupta 2016). While less discussed than consumer activism, employee activism is a rising trend in the management literature. Millennials, being the largest group in the labor force, are the ones driving this trend given their involvement in activism (Nocera 2022). Up to 4 out of 10 employees acknowledged having supported or protested against their employers' actions on controversial social issues, most often to influence their colleagues and top leaders (Weber Shandwick 2019). Two main features distinguish employee activism from other types of internal activism (e.g., shareholder activism). First, their high resource dependency makes them more liable to retaliations towards their careers, and second, their strong familiarity with organizational structure and informal culture helps them gain internal support (Briscoe and Gupta 2016; Krishna 2021). From the organizational side, leaders respond differently to employee activism. Their response ranges from gaslighting the activist claims, suppressing them, to supporting them, and constructively engaging the employees in discussions on social issues (Reitz and Higgins 2022).

Both consumer and employee activism are forcing firms and brands to declare their values in the marketplace (Schmidt et al. 2021). This is driven by brands' obligation towards their diverse stakeholders, to maximize profits, and to contribute positively to their communities (Åsberg and Uggla 2019). Researchers and practitioners have acknowledged the myriad benefits that brands can reap if they announce their interest in society's economic and social transformation (Irwin 2003; Rahman et al. 2019). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) became a critical business function (Melo and Galan 2011), yet there is a great deal of skepticism and mistrust concerning the corporate's true intention to participate in such campaigns (Porter and Kramer 2011; Mazutis and Slawinski 2015). Thus, CSR is not a sufficient tool to ensure brand and corporate legitimacy.

Brand activism appeared as a tool for marketers (Vredenburg et al. 2020; Moorman 2020; Sarkar and Kotler 2018). It

extends beyond corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaigns that are mainly concerned with accepted, normalized prosocial issues (Alhouti et al. 2016). It includes the involvement in the sociopolitical realm which renders it a risk for the firm since brand activism goes beyond actions normally considered positive by the diverse stakeholders (Eilert and Cherup 2020), and can generate unexpected reactions from the brand's public (Vredenburg et al. 2020; Mirzaei et al. 2022).

Previously, brands were advised to strive for a strategic balance when engaging in the sociopolitical domain to avoid the alienation of their consumers (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Jung et al. 2017). The view in the literature recently shifted to advise brands to embrace and monetize political topics even if it involved renouncing groups of consumers (Mirzaei et al. 2022). Thus, despite the threat, brand activism became an emerging form of differentiation in the marketplace (Sarkar and Kotler 2018). It enabled brands to become social change agents through their empowerment of relevant consumers (Hajdas and Kleczek 2021).

Research on brand activism is fragmented and still underway given the recency of the topic in practice and still provides contradictory advice on the best way. For example, Ulver (2021) argues for the potential monetization of political conflict within the marketplace, while Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) argue that brand activism does not necessarily reap any benefits for brands. Their study reveals that attitudes towards the brand (e.g., behavioral intentions) decrease substantially among consumers who disagreed with the brand's stand, while those who were supportive of such a stand did not have a significant difference in their attitude. In spite of such conflicting information, brands are embracing the possible benefits of declaring stands on social issues. However, the literature is yet to explore how and why established brands in the market become involved with activism. To build on this evolving literature, and answer the research gap, we revert to institutional theory.

Theoretical framework: institutional theory

To explore how activist brands are adapting to the changing sociocultural structuring of the market, we utilize institutional theory and its pillars of institutional logics, legitimacy, and institutional work. Institutional theory argues that organizations and their people (e.g., workers, customers, shareholders) coexist within institutional environments, and to account for their behaviors, they must be located in a social context (Thornton and Ocasio 2008). Institutional theory was employed in marketing to understand market dynamics (see Huff et al. 2021; Humphreys 2010a), and its implication on marketing decisions (Ertimur and Coskun-Balli 2015; Dolbec et al. 2022). This is because markets are



sociologically viewed as “constructed plastic entities, open to manipulations by those actors who collectively generate their form” (Baker et al. 2019, 303).

Within markets, the actions of the organization are guided by institutional logics or “the socially constructed, historical pattern of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules” (Thornton and Ocasio 1999, p. 804). Logics provide templates for organizations to follow (Boone and Özcan 2020), as they direct and circumscribe the behavior of the organizations to maintain a positive regard in the marketplace (Dolbec et al. 2022). Exploring institutional logics is a crucial block in conceptualizing and understanding market evolution (Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015; Dunn and Jones 2010; Reay 2004; Bossy 2014).

Previous work acknowledges the diverse and competing nature of the market each with its unique template (Boone and Özcan 2020; Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015; Pache and Santos 2013). Logics can replace one another or blend certain aspects from others into their own templates or co-exist (Glynn and Lounsbury 2005; Thornton et al. 2012). This can lead to the creation of plural logics (Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015), and the emergence, and the disappearance of logics within markets (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015). From an organizational perspective, companies can stay loyal to one market logic, shift between market logics (Gawer and Phillips 2013; Vargo and Lusch 2004), or hybridize them (Boone and Özcan 2020; Spry et al. 2021; Battilana et al. 2017). Adherence to institutional logics grants organizations a legitimate position by confirming the desirability, and appropriateness of their actions “within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchman 1995, 574).

For an organization to be recognized as a legitimate structure, it needs the acquisition of regulative (i.e., adherence to rules), normative (i.e., adhere to the status quo), cognitive (i.e., adhere to a frame of reference), and moral (i.e., adherence to ideals) pillars (Huff et al. 2021; Humphreys 2010a; Navis and Glynn 2010; Suchman 1995). For example, casino gambling in the USA became legitimate, through a shift in the discourse from the laws, and regulations guiding the business, then a focus on social benefits to support its normative legitimacy (Humphreys 2010a).

Legitimacy is a flexible construct that can be gained, lost, or repaired contingent on the supporting environment (Suchman 1995). Research in marketing has discussed in great detail the process of acquiring legitimacy of new products and innovations (Rao et al. 2008), and how markets can gain legitimacy (see Humphreys 2010a, b; Humphreys and Latour 2013; Kates 2004; Press and Arnould 2011). Research has less frequently examined the process of losing legitimacy. Valor et al. (2020) highlighted how animal activists are seeking to delegitimize the practice of bullfighting in Spain through the use of emotional discourse.

Marketplace actors follow institutional logics to secure their legitimacy, in other words, to be recognized as viable businesses in the market (Schultz and Hatch 2003). After all, markets, firms, and brands reflect their social, cultural, political, and economic context (Mittelstaedt et al. 2006). Since legitimacy can be lost, organizations need to constructively work to repair delegitimation narratives in their respective social fields to protect their position. This task is crucial for the survival of organizations given our amplified, changing, and connected cultures that challenges the legitimacy of market institutions (Åsberg and Ugglå 2019; Vredenburg et al. 2020). When the underlying values, rules, and beliefs guiding a social field (e.g., the market) shift, as a response to its stakeholders, organizations alter their practices to respond to the institutional logics.

Such alteration of practices takes place through the institutional work of involved actors (Battilana et al. 2009; Gawer and Phillips 2013; Parmentier and Fischer 2018). Institutional work is the “purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006, 215). Thus, the work undertaken by any actor in the market (e.g., consumers, media, or the organization) implies intentionality to either shape or manage the institutional or the social structure (e.g., the market) (Lawrence et al. 2011; Baker et al. 2019).

Literature on institutional work focused on exploring the work of actors in challenging the status quo of current institutions to push for change (Battilana et al. 2009; Maguire and Hardy 2009; Parmentier and Fischer 2018). Disruptions to firms can take place as the ethical and normative foundations of a field are challenged which leads to questioning the morality of practices (Zietsma and McKnight 2009; Baker et al. 2019). In response to such pressures, organizations become involved in a different type of institutional work to shield their legitimacy in a way congruent with the discursive cultural changes (Werner and Cornelissen 2014).

Our research extends this work on institutional theory by investigation how established brands in the marketplace are threatened and how and why they respond to such threats of legitimacy. We next discuss our context revolving around children and the amplified age of cancel culture.

Context: young children and cancel culture

Young children (from birth to 10 years old) seem to have a very modest role in consumption theories, and little attention has been paid to their cultural and social habitats (Cook 2008). Research on children's relationships with brands often focused on older children (e.g. Chaplin and Lowrey 2010), and used psychological rather than cultural approaches (Hémar-Nicolas and Rodhain 2017). Yet, the relationship with brands plays an



important role in young children's lives as they guide themselves and world views (Hill 2011).

Indeed, children as young as four, are influenced by negative stereotypes (Daniel and Daniel 1998). Between the age of six and ten, their awareness of stereotypes increases sharply (McKown and Weinstein 2003). This knowledge, once reaching its apex during early adolescence, becomes fixed in children's mindsets and only turns more flexible in their late adolescent years (Chaplin and Lowrey 2010).

However, multiple movements are bringing to the spotlight systemic biases and problems within societies and brands, seeking fundamental changes in society, geared toward greater equality and fighting systemic biases (Buechler 1995; Mundt et al. 2018). #BlackLivesMatter (BLM), which started in 2013 (McCoy 2020), was jolted to a new level of public recognition (Silverstein 2021), with the death of George Floyd. In the front of fighting for gender equality, the #MeToo storm swept across societies and countries, demanding a stop to sexual harassment and assaults (Ozkazanc-Pan 2018). Among other impacts of this movement were the calls against sexism and gender stereotypes (Gill and Orgad 2018; Veissière 2018).

Disability activism, though received less focus in the media and scholarly attention (Winter 2003), advocates for adopting a positive outlook toward disability as a unique form of ability. The movement led to changes in market offerings as it encourages the production of disability toys, through the creative work of community members who altered their mass-produced toys (Ellis 2018). These movements are leading to intersectional calls toward greater diversity and inclusion.

Social media platforms enabled the amplification of these sociocultural movements by recruiting new participants, strengthening their coalition, and amplifying their causes (De Choudhury et al. 2016; Hwang and Kim 2015; Mundt et al. 2018; Pain 2021). Social media users utilize hashtags (e.g., #BLM, #MeToo, #Toyslikeme) to resent all forms of social inequalities. The villainization of marketplace actors (Gopaldas 2014) led to a different form of boycott labeled cancellation. Cancel culture or call-out culture pressures the corporate sector to make social commitments to varying degrees (Mishan 2020) and the brands to take stands on such social debates (Liffrening 2020; Smoth 2021). This is especially important for entertainment brands targeting children and their millennial parents as they are more Internet savvy and multicultural than older generations (Bologna 2021). We represent next our methods.

Methodology

Our project answers our research questions through a focus on children's entertainment brands that were either directly under fire from recent movements or decided voluntarily

to embrace the ethos of such movements (Gopaldas 2014). Such alteration was with the motivation to better fit the evolving cultural and social norms. Our selection of the industry was based on our data set as we initially explored the influence of social movements on brands at large.

We used an automatic script in Python to scrape the first 45 pages of Google News from the years 2017 to 2021 with the terms "cancel culture" and "brands" in the headlines or the descriptions of the articles. We, then, removed the duplicate headlines and ended up with 263 unique titles. Using the same process, with the terms "censor" and "brands," we collected 278 unique titles. From these titles, we learned that the cancel culture and self-censorship affected many children's brands, and we picked the common brands appearing in these articles. Thus, we decided to extend similar searching procedures to the terms "censor" and "children" to investigate children's brands' decisions, from 2017. The results were 295 unique headlines related to the subject. The articles indicated that the three most influential social movements impacting children's brands are disability, gender, and racial inclusiveness.

From these news articles, we pinpointed the most common brands within the entertainment industry that moved from confirming social stereotypes to supporting progressive norms to varying degrees (Sibai et al. 2021). We ended up with 24 children's entertainment brands (e.g., American Girl, Barbie, Sesame Street, Dr. Seuss, LEGO, and Peppa Pig) (see Table 1). Here, we used Factiva to download additional news articles that discuss these brands in detail, we used the brand names together with the terms "disability," "gender" and "race." The process resulted in 438 articles in total.

For our selected brands, we additionally collected and qualitatively analyzed an archival data set composed of press releases, newspaper articles, websites, and reports published by the selected brands. This amounted to 35 press releases, 495 articles, 12 diversity and inclusion reports published by the firms, and 18 web pages embedded within the companies' websites on diversity and inclusion. These resources enabled us to dig deeper and understand the reaction of these brands to social movements in guiding their changes. Finally, to understand the target market of these brands, we conducted a netnographic analysis of parenting blogs to gain parental perspective on the role of the entertainment industry in children's upbringing and their reaction to the changes in the brands.

Our data analysis was undertaken concomitantly with the data collection. We moved back and forth between data collection, analysis, and theorization. This is standard procedure in qualitative research (Belk et al. 2012). Coding was both open and theoretical. In other words, not only did we code the data openly and generated themes as they emerged, but also we generated theoretically informed codes to develop our findings further. The theoretical coding was



Table 1 Dataset of children's entertainment brands and their mother companies

Brands	Mother company
LEGO	LEGO Group
Playmobil	Playmobil
Barbie	Mattel
UNO	Mattel
American Girl	Mattel
Thomas and Friends	Mattel
Peppa Pig	Hasbro
Monopoly	Hasbro
Potato Head	Hasbro
Dr. Seuss	Dr. Seuss Enterprises
Sesame Street	Sesame Workshop
Warner Bros	WarnerMedia
Disney	Disney
Caillou	WildBrain
SpongeBob	ViacomCBS
Little Tikes	MGA Entertainment
Scholastic	Scholastic Corporation
PAW Patrol	Spin Master
Nickelodeon	ViacomCBS
Cartoon Network	WarnerMedia
Pokémon	Nintendo
PlayStation	Sony
Minecraft	Microsoft
Xbox	Microsoft

informed by institutional theory, codes include actors, logics, institutional work, and normative, cognitive, and regulative legitimacy. Examples of the codes are presented in Table 2.

Findings

Our findings are organized into three sections. In the first section, we thread the changes in the market logics dedicating the entertainment industries and how such changes are threatening the legitimacy of established brands. We detail the violations of the brands as their past actions no longer align with the new values and practices within the marketplace. In the second section, we discuss the various structural interactive strategies that are carried out by brands as a response to their volatile situation in the marketplace. In the final section, we examine the drivers behind the changes in the brands' strategies.

Violations to the changing institutional logics

Our findings show that parents have become influential actors in the entertainment industry causing a change in the

institutional logics dictating the market at large. Markets are processes, rather than a pre-existing structure, that evolve through the institutional work of the different actors (Baker et al. 2019). Rather than targeting a company or a brand for their transgressions (Blachor 2017), parents' institutional work is threatening the legitimacy of the industry for not respecting the valor of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI).

Our involvement in parenting forums reveals that parents rely on the entertainment industry to entertain as well as educate their children. The educational aspect sought out from books, movies, and toys does not stop at acquiring school skills, soft skills, and nurturing passions, but also extends to educating kids about their sociocultural environment in an age-appropriate manner.

“Well, toys play a huge part in how our little ones see the world, so ensuring it is represented effectively is key to raising children who are open-minded, accepting of differences, and have a keen interest in the society we live in. Diverse representation in TV shows and films is a great way for kids to learn about many cultures and people who look different to them -- but it's a passive activity. By playing with physical toys, they can design their own stories and characters. This is where making sure they have a diversified cast to direct is really important.” (Lines 2021)

The education sought from the entertainment industry, thus, includes teaching kids through play about politics, and social and cultural issues. Such a desire led parents, especially from minority groups (e.g., people of color and differently-abled people), to call out the entertainment industry for its failure to represent, include, and educate kids about such topics. It is through the institutional work of other marketplace actors that the logics themselves are modified (Lawrence and Sudaby 2006; Lawrence et al. 2011). Movements against racism, sexism, and other forms of social injustices pressure the children's entertainment industry to become more reflexive in its role in falsely normalizing systemic biases. The logics in the market expand to include values of equality, inclusivity, and diversity. Subscribed by the new changes, entertainment brands became scrutinized for their divergence from the newly shaped norms.

Our data show that children's entertainment brands were criticized across different social media platforms (e.g., #canceldisney, #cancelbarbie), and in online newspapers for violating values of the changed logics related to diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI). Marketplace actors (e.g., consumers, activists, and the media) are relying on the affordances of the digital sphere (Humphery and Jordan 2018; Mundt et al. 2018; Pain 2021; Matich et al. 2019) to voice their criticism against these brands (Appel et al. 2020; Leitch and Merlot 2018; Odou et al. 2018). This is problematic as



Table 2 Data coding samples

Example	Open codes	Theoretically informed codes
Warner Bros. "Your voices matter, your messages matter. #BlackLivesMatter"	Openly supporting a social justice cause	Attaching strategy, episodic
Disney—"This \$5 million pledge will continue to support the efforts of nonprofit organizations such as the NAACP that have worked tirelessly to ensure equality and justice."	Donating to a social justice cause	Attaching strategy, episodic
"Hasbro is making sure all feel welcome in the Potato Head world by officially dropping the Mr. from the Mr. Potato Head brand name and logo to promote gender equality and inclusion"	Adding inclusive features	Revamping strategy, patching
Barbie's Fashionista line in 2016 included dolls with different body types and skin tones and in 2019 dolls with different disabilities	Offering systematically inclusive representations of products	Revamping strategy, overhauling
LEGO collaborated with sight-loss associations in different countries to develop a toolkit of 250 bricks, allowing children to learn braille characters and numbers and thus to read and do basic math through playing with blocks	Partnership with social non-profit on a project	Attaching strategy, continual
Thomas & Friends entered strategic partnership with the United Nations	Strategic partnership with a social non-profit	Attaching strategy, continual
"At WarnerMedia, we are committed to preserving a culture of opportunity, inclusion and respect. At all levels of the company, we hold ourselves accountable through a performance management process that includes how we (individually and collectively) perform in the area of diversity and inclusion."	Commitment to diversifying the workforce	Surgering strategy, transplant
Sesame Workshop—"A community built on diversity, equity, and inclusion, where creators, educators, partners, and beloved characters come together to help kids grow smarter, stronger, and kinder."	Using one's own non-profit for activism	Attaching strategy, continual
Space Jam 2's director—"We reworked a lot of things, not only her look, like making sure she had an appropriate length on her shorts and was feminine without being objectified but gave her a real voice."	De-sexualizing a character	Revamping strategy, patching
Disney—"These stereotypes were wrong then and are wrong now. Rather than remove this content, we want to acknowledge its harmful impact, learn from it and spark conversation to create a more inclusive future together."	Including a disclaimer	Revamping strategy, patching
"Scholastic halted distribution of the 2010 book <i>The Adventures of Ook and Gluk</i> . Together, we recognize that this book perpetuates passive racism. "	Cancelling a whole work/whole works	Revamping strategy, eliminating

moral misconduct creates negative feelings in the consumer population, and can lead to anti-brand activism (Romani et al. 2015), thus threatening their legitimacy in the market.

These violated values include normalizing cultural stereotypes in the brands' offerings and misusing cultural references by the brands and their organizations. Contrary to the literature on brand transgression and service failure and recovery that focus on contemporary scandals (Grégoire and Mattila 2020; Khamitov et al. 2020), we investigate structural problems within established legitimate brands. The violations threaten the brands' moral and normative legitimacy (see Huff et al. 2021; Humphreys 2010a; Suchman 1995) as their practices in the marketplace are no longer congruent with its changing norms (Kipnis et al. 2021; Crockett 2021; Nardini et al. 2021). Our findings demonstrate that

marketplace actors (i.e., millennial parents and the media) challenge the legitimacy of the brands by pinpointing their passive exclusion and representation offence.

Passive exclusion refers to brands' failure to adequately represent certain demographics from the organization's visual representation based on cultural stereotypes. It is a normalization of inaccurate cultural representation, as previously brands adhered only to the commercial market logics of maximizing profits. Passive exclusion is evident in brands' visual representation including their physical product and advertisements as they were skewed in their representation and focused on generic stereotypes in their market. Barbie, for instance, was a slim white female from its introduction in 1958. It was not until 2016 that it expanded its visual representation of race and body type



(Holland 2019). This focus, thus, limits the brands' visual representations and hinders them from efficiently being inclusive of their target markets.

Representation of diverse kids in their toys, movies, and books is crucial for enabling open dialogues on crucial topics such as disability and for normalizing diversity (Jones et al. 2020). Yet, the reality in the market offering is a lack of such representation. The media exert exemplifies this problematic representation:

“Kids with disabilities rarely get an opportunity to see themselves reflected in their toy box heroes and this lack of representative toys also has a knock-on effect on able-bodied children, who are deprived of valuable lessons in normalizing disability through pretend play from a young age.” (Alexiou, Forbes 2020)

Representation offence refers to brands' devaluation of minority groups either through conforming to cultural stereotypes (e.g., depicting women to be housewives) or the misuse of their cultural totems, idioms, pictures, and histories (e.g., Indigenous communities) within the brand. We use this term instead of cultural appropriation, when dominant cultures misuse elements from a minority culture (Kennedy and Makkar 2021), as it is unclear whether those who worked on the brands' development belong solely to a dominant group. For instance, Disney's recent animated movie “Raya and the Last Dragon” which in theory represents Southeast Asians, was criticized for misrepresenting elements from the culture, though Southeast Asian writers were part of the team (Pericherla 2021).

Disney was found at fault for violating the changing market logics through representation offence in their rides. Two of the main attractions of Disneyland Florida theme parks, the Jungle Cruise Ride, and Splash Mountain were called out for negatively depicting Indigenous communities through scenes, and visuals, and for choosing the controversial racist Song of the South respectively (Alexander, USA Today 2021). Representation offence not only alienates the misrepresented minority groups but also demonstrates brands' inability to demonstrate good citizenship within their communities thus threatening the brands' normative legitimacy.

Our research reveals that some brands were accused by the marketplace actors of both passive exclusion and representation offence. For example, American Girl founded in 1986 (Schild 2020), introduced its first Black girl in 1993 followed by another in 2016. Coupled with the minor representation of people of color in their product line, Addy Walker, the first Black American Girl who represents a 9-year-old girl born into slavery and later escapes to freedom, was criticized for not being sensitive to the Black community (Harris, Slate Magazine 2016). Both errors demonstrate an incongruity between the brands' values and

those of the society, creating counternarratives around the entertainment brands.

This eventually leads to marketplace activism against brands in the form of boycotts and cancellations. Counternarratives threaten the different brands' legitimacy pillars (e.g., normative, cognitive, and moral). As diverse marketplace actors are calling out the systemic biases in organizations and calling for greater inclusion in the marketplace, brands are adapting to the change, we explain this next.

Brands' structural interactive strategies

Our data show that social injustices and brands' roles in such injustices require deeper and more drastic solutions than previously identified in the literature (Alhouti et al. 2016; Bhagwat et al. 2020). Rather than merely donating to a cause such as in CSR initiatives, or choosing a specific social and political movement to pledge their allegiance such as brand activism initiatives, our brands' institutional work involves structural modifications on multiple fronts. The strategies, as part of the brands' institutional work, ensure the continued legitimacy of the brands.

We label these strategies as revamping, surgerying, and attaching. These strategies are (1) structural since they alter the way the business has been operating, rather than simply donating money or supporting one social cause, and (2) interactive as it is through their connectedness and interdependency that brands can sustain their legitimacy in the marketplace. These strategies were aimed at their consumers, employees, and communities and were at play to highlight the change in brands' assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules in compliance with the changed logics.

Our findings show that all our brands were involved in the three strategies, however, their implementation differed. *Revamping* differed in terms of the severity of change across a spectrum of major to minor changes. The revamping strategy was achieved through *patching*, *eliminating*, and *overhauling*. *Surgerying* differed from an integrality perspective on the employee front. It was achieved through shallow (plastic surgerying) to deep (transplant surgerying) internal structural changes. Lastly, *attaching* was implemented differently in terms of its temporality as continuous or episodic. We explain the strategies next.

Revamping strategies

By revamping strategies, we refer to brands' institutional work involving their modifications in their consumer touchpoints to showcase the adherence to the changed logics. It is evident in the brands' alterations of their visuals and materials in the marketplace. This work extended to include modifications to their website, advertisements, social media profiles, press releases, and the actual products.



Beyond choosing one political or social cause and facing the dilemma of congruency and perceived legitimacy (e.g., Patagonia and sustainability, see Vredenburg et al. 2020), revamping strategies help dodge such dilemma as they ensure brands' commitment to the changed logics. We identify three revamping strategies: patching, eliminating, and overhauling that range from minor to major structural changes.

Patching. First, brands revamped through patching by relying mainly on narratives to acknowledge their mistakes and the addition of apologetic messages accompanying the existing material products. Patching is a minor structural change as the majority of the brands' visuals remain unchanged. Multiple Disney classic movies, e.g., the *Aristocats*, *Lady and the Tramp*, *Dumbo*, and the *Jungle Book* were accused of representation offences against marginalized communities. Threatened by not following the changes in logics, Disney's institutional work involved the addition of a warning before these classics. The warning acknowledged the company's violations and that certain elements within the movies no longer represent the company and its production.

"The stereotypes were wrong then and are wrong now. Rather than remove this content, we want to acknowledge its harmful impact, learn from it, and spark conversation to create a more inclusive future together. Disney is committed to creating stories with inspirational and aspirational themes that reflect the rich diversity of the human experience around the globe."
(Disney Movies)

From one side, some marketplace actors question the motives of such patching strategies and the reasoning behind not discontinuing the movies. On the other end, other marketplace actors applaud the company for acknowledging its violations. These actors believe that the continuity of these movies, coupled with the apologetic messages, are learning opportunities for future generations of the evolving cultural norms.

Eliminating. Other brands were revamped by eliminating the offensive product offerings from the brands' portfolio to remedy their violations of representation offence. Warner Brothers removed the character *Pepé Le Pew* from "*Space Jam 2*," in response to criticisms that the skunk normalized rape culture. Eliminating enables brands to showcase their willingness to absorb counternarratives and modify them according to the changed institutional logics. To ensure pertinent reformations, brands reached out to other marketplace actors to guide their changes. Dr. Seuss Enterprise consulted educators and experts in the field to ensure their congruency with the evolving cultural norms and ended up eliminating six books including "*And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*" and "*If I Ran the Zoo*." Another

example was carried out by PBS Kids, who decided to eliminate the entire animated show *Caillou*. Concerned parents formed opposing groups (e.g., *Parents Against Caillou* and *A Group Where We All Really Hate Caillou*) to pressure for change. Developers of *Caillou* were unable to adjust to the new logics, which led to it being discontinued in the USA. Here, the brand failed to sustain its legitimacy in the marketplace. Eliminating is another major revamping structural change as it includes a noticeable change in the current market offerings vis a vis its previous implementation.

Overhauling. Finally, children's entertainment brands are revamping by overhauling their visuals and material offerings. In their visuals, brands resorted to unconventional representation compared to their earlier stereotypical ones. For instance, Mattel chose to use a progressive picture of a father who is wearing lipstick and hair curlers, instead of a stereotypical picture of a mother with this representation or a masculine depiction of fatherhood. Such an image represents the evolving values and practices of the brand subscribed by the changed logics and attempts to defy gender stereotypes. The new visuals reflect the brands' values and beliefs that are in line with the logics of inclusion and diversity.

Overhauling was also evident in the material offerings to tighten the link between brands' values and the evolving cultural norms. Brands increased and ensured an equal representation of their diverse target market, especially for their marginalized consumers in their market offerings. This is a crucial step as earlier research argued that stigmatized consumers are especially attentive to firms inclusivity efforts (Chaney et al. 2019). Overhauling, thus, safeguards the foregrounding of the brands' institutional work. For example, Mattel gradually transformed the image of Barbie, in its doll shapes from its stereotypical white, blonde slim female through an introduction of dolls of different body types, disabilities, skin tones, and hairstyles, a gender-neutral line, and dolls in underrepresented jobs. In 2018, the company pushed its product further by incorporating more diversified role models celebrating International Women's Day, and partnering with Tynker to encourage girls to explore STEM. The dolls include veiled women, people of color, dolls in wheelchairs, and other visible minority representations. Overhauling entails a commitment to ensure diverse representation across product lines, accompanied by narratives reflecting such commitment. It represents a major revamping strategy that sustains the brands' legitimacy in an evolving marketplace.

Our research shows that overall the revamping strategies, including patching, eliminating, and overhauling, carried out by children's entertainment brands represent a strategic shift towards the adherence of the firm to the new practices and values of the institutional logics. However, rather than just taking a stand on one political or social issue (e.g., Ben and Jerry's and their support for LGBTQ+), these brands are



using their institutional work to adhere to multiple entangled issues on the consumer front.

Surgerying strategies

Our analysis shows that children's entertainment brands conducted surgerying strategies which we use to refer to brands' institutional work involving their internal organization to echo the changes at the consumer touchpoints. Complementary to existing research that talks about authentic brand activism regarding the choice of political causes (Moorman 2020), our paper adds a deeper level of engagement with such issues: the organizations' internal structure and employee makeup. This added layer is almost absent from the marketing literature on CSR or brand activism that mainly focuses on donation and choice of social and political causes.

Our brands surgeryed their workforce through changes in the makeup of their employees, ensuring having a diverse set and providing them with equal opportunities. This was evident in the brands' websites that dedicated a page to exhibit their commitment to diversity and inclusion. These pages reported organizations' pledges and descriptions of their current efforts in transforming themselves into socially responsible citizens. Netflix declares that "women make up half of [their] workforce (47.1%), including at the leadership level: directors and above (47.8%), vice presidents (43.7%) and senior leadership (47.6%)," and Warner Brothers declare that 47% of their US workforce are females, and 42% of their non-managers are People of Color. Diversity and inclusion reporting reflect transparency and the actual changes in the values, beliefs, and practices of the brands.

Our brands carried our surgerying strategies to sustain their cognitive legitimacy in the marketplace as they showcase to their stakeholders that they are "walking the talk." Surgerying strategies differed in terms of their integrality to the organizational makeup as shallow or deep changes. On the shallow end, *plastic surgerying*, brands hired a diverse workforce, including women, POC, and disabled employees at lower levels within the organization. On the deep end, *transplant surgerying*, brands ensured the continuous success of the minority workforce, the disappearance of the glass ceiling, and the appearance of minority leaders within the companies (e.g., on the board of directors, C-suit).

Plastic surgerying. In surgerying their workforce, some brands conducted shallow structural changes within the corporation. Nintendo is one such example. They vouched in the year 2022 to be more transparent in their hiring procedures ensuring equitability in the workforce. However, they still do not publish any diversity reports regarding the makeup of their employees contrary to competitors like Microsoft and Sony. Women account for only

24% of Nintendo's managerial positions globally (Furukawa 2022). While this is the current status of the company, to sustain its legitimacy Nintendo is striving toward a deeper change. They recently declared new initiatives to increase the number of women employees over the period 2021–2026 by 20% (Nintendo website).

Transplant surgerying. Other brands relied on their institutional work to conduct deep surgerying strategies. This included not only the current composition of the organization's structure but also its commitment to further adhere to the values of the changed logics in hiring and promotion. Hasbro utilized long-sighted language in such a description:

"To make efforts to improve the diversity of our workforce at all levels and [...] We are committed to our goal to grow ethnically and racially diverse employee representation in the U.S. to 25 percent by 2025" (Hasbro Website)

This shows an enhanced commitment to equitable hiring and to recreating their internal organizational culture in a manner compliant with the changing values in the market. Transplant surgerying eventually transforms brands' internal environment and business practices echoing a unified front with their revamping strategies. LEGO, on their webpage titled "A Diverse and Inclusive Workspace," declare their contribution to workspace changes.

"[To] Improve HR processes and tools, [w]e strive to develop an organization where employees with different backgrounds, knowledge, experiences, perspectives, and beliefs can all realize their full potential. We invest in everyone and make lifelong learning and career development solutions available to all. In 2019, we launched a new learning platform, improved our succession planning, and introduced new tools to make the language in our job adverts gender-neutral and our commitment more visible on our online platforms." (LEGO Website)

LEGO here is transplanting surgerying through educating its workforce. This is also echoed in the composition of their board of directors which is balanced from a gender perspective, having 6 women out of 14. Transplant surgerying ensures a successful adherence to market logics rather than their loose coupling that brings about internal challenges for the organization (Battilana et al. 2017; Kraatz and Block 2008; Meyer and Rowan 1977). Surgerying shields the revamping strategies from any washing claims by the consumers. The interaction of surgerying and revamping strategies assists in conveying brands' legitimacy while creating a coherent brand identity.



Attaching strategies

Finally, interacting with their revamping and surgerying strategies, our research shows that children's entertainment brands carried attaching strategies with their communities. By attaching strategies, we refer to brands' institutional work to demonstrate their code of ethics through being good citizens in their communities. These strategies include sponsorship and partnership with strategically aligned social causes. Barbie for instance teamed up with the non-profit branch of GoFundMe for the girls' empowerment campaign. Contrary to prior literature that advocates for a moderate congruency between the cause and the brand for an optimum fit (Vredenburg et al. 2020), the children's entertainment brands adopted a high congruence.

The brand conducted diverse attaching strategies, in terms of active commitment and involvement, within their community outreach. On the orthodox side, which we will briefly mention, brands sponsored causes to elevate unjust social issues to minority groups. This attaching strategy is similar to previously identified paths in the literature (see Chien, Cornwell, and Pappu 2011). This strategy was episodic donating money to associations every once in a while. American Girl donates and raises donations to various associations including "The Children's Hospital Association" and "Save the Children" (American Girl Website).

In addition, brands rely on the knowledge of organizations advocating for minority consumers to ensure the inclusivity of their offerings. UNO partnered with the National Federation for the Blind to develop the UNO Braille edition. Similarly, Microsoft developed the Xbox Adaptive Controller for gamers with limited mobility in partnership with different organizations, such as the Able-Gamers Charity and the Cerebral Palsy Foundation.

Other brands established interwoven attachment strategies with others in the market that were continual in nature. They created strategic partnerships with non-profit organizations that are involved with elevating social and cultural injustices. On that front, the brands conducted continuous attachment to their communities. This shows different types of community outreach than simple donations highlighted and studies in previous literature (Gautier and Pache 2015). Thomas and Friends joined the United Nations, in their campaign for sustainability and works with UN advisors to make its show more diverse. They "hope to inspire the next generation of global citizens and encourage learning between children and parents" (Thomas & Friends' Twitter, October 11, 2019).

At the other extreme, brands capitalized on their own non-profit institutions to demonstrate their commitment to social equality. The organization responsible for Sesame Street, Sesame Workshop, provides families with educational materials to help them navigate sensitive and crucial

topics with their kids relating to racism, sexism, and other forms of stereotypes. The tools are designed for parents to understand the best methods of opening such conversations with their children as well as tools for the families to watch together. (Sesame Workshop 2021). On Sept 7th Sesame Workshop tweeted about their new book guide to help stand up for racial justice.

"Listen, Act, Unite, and stand up for what is right! Learn how to be an upstander to racism with @Elmo and your Sesame Street pals with Come Together, Change the World: A Sesame Street Guide to Standing Up for Racial Justice from our friends."

Our research demonstrates that children's entertainment brands seek to sustain their legitimacy in the market through interactive strategies which create brand-consumer-employee-community alignments. It is through these combined strategies that brands are responding to the changing institutional logics and remedying their prior violations. Within our brands, the structural interactive strategies were different as presented in our manuscript. We are not arguing that a brand will conduct only one revamping strategy, always overhauling for example, but rather that brands use a diverse set of strategies when appropriate to reshape their beliefs, values, and assumptions. We map the interactive strategies in Fig. 1.

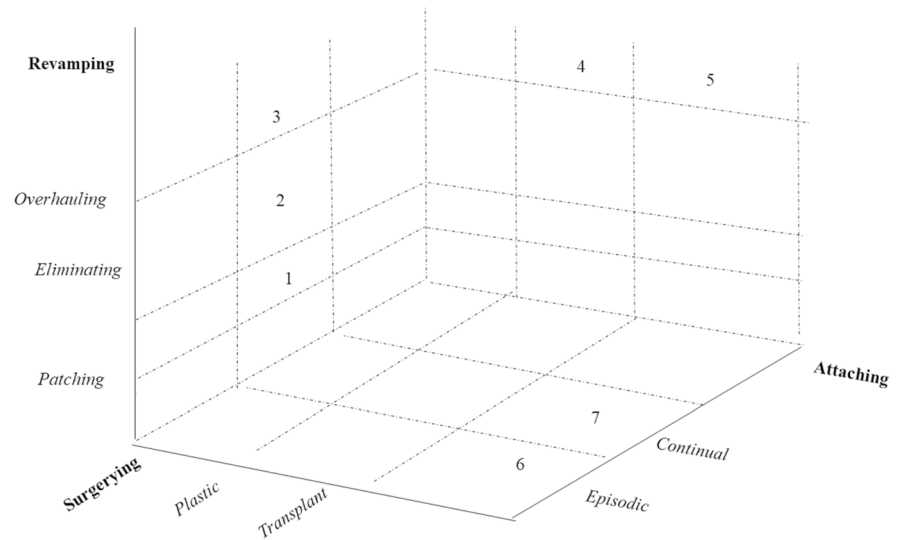
Conclusion and implications

Our paper focuses on children's entertainment brands and investigates how the established brands within this market are facing threats to their legitimacy given the changing sociocultural and political environment. We show how logics, subscribing a the market, shift as a result of parents' institutional work. Parents expect the entertainment industry to provide their kids with play, integrate education related to hard skills, and soft skills, and teach them about the social and political environment in an age-appropriate manner. We thread the impact of such changes on threatening the legitimacy of brands through their accusations of passive exclusion and representation offence. Later, we delve deeper into the brands' institutional work through their interactive strategies and their various implementation tactics to protect their place in the market. This work included strategies aimed at the consumers, the employees, and the communities. It was through the combined work of these strategies that brands communicate their changes, sustain their legitimacy, and attempt to stay relevant to their target market. Figure 2 provides a summary of our main findings.

Our paper contributes to the emerging literature on brand activism in different ways. First, we operationalize the impact of the changed logics on threatening the legitimacy



Fig. 1 The structural interactive strategies



Strategy type	Brand incident
1 – Patching	Warner Bros. - Tom and Jerry warning as depicting racial and ethnic prejudices
2- Eliminating	Scholastic - The Adventures of Ook and Gluk distribution halt
3- Overhauling	Nickelodeon included LGBT characters, e.g., asexual SpongeBob, gay Stimpny and bisexual Luna Loud
4 - Plastic surgerying	Sony conducted workforce diversity initiatives but still received accusations of discriminations and harassment targeting women
5 - Transplant surgerying	More than half of the leadership board of ViacomCBS are women, one of the few among S&P 500 companies
6 – Episodic attachment	Disney – Donations to social justice causes
7 – Continual attachment	LEGO Braille Bricks and partnership with sight-loss associations

of established brands. Here, the entertainment brands are not involved in any form of recent scandals but are rather threatened for their roles in normalizing systemic biases for years. The brands' inherent histories of stereotypes and controversies (Sørensen et al. 2021) led consumers to accuse them of passive exclusion and representation offences. With this focus, our paper answers call in the literature to better account for how excluded consumers reshape markets (see Tsai 2012; Scaraboto and Fischer 2012). In our case, it was a threat to the existing legitimacy of the brands in the marketplace.

Second, we pinpoint how brands that witness delegitimation threats from marketplace actors are reflexively using their institutional work. This includes various implementation tactics for their revamping, surgerying, and attaching strategies to reshape their business practices. Their institutional work necessitates the integration of more than apologetic messages (Khamitov et al. 2020), to include structural changes in the beliefs, values, and practices of the brands on the consumer, employee, and community fronts. These interactive strategies ensure that

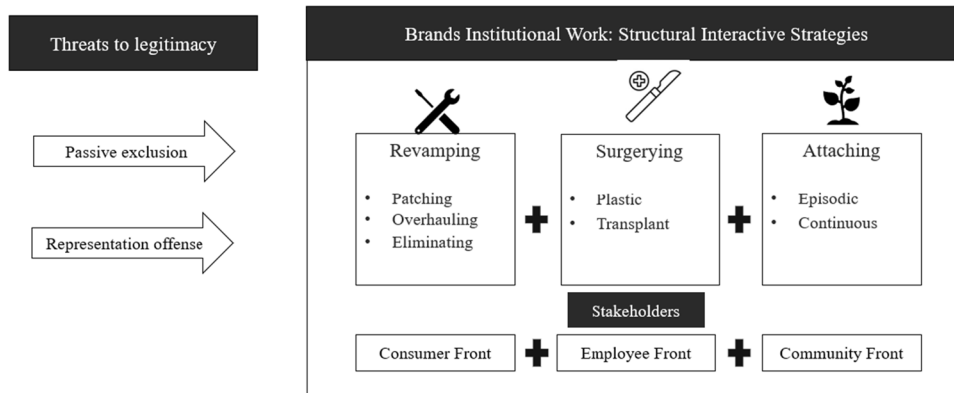
brands change in a harmonious direction with the evolving institutional logics. This supports the creation of a synergetic alignment between the brands' values and those of their target markets (Millennials and Generation Z).

Third, the literature on brand activism has focused on guiding brands' choice of a social or political goal (see Koch 2020; Moorman 2020; Vredenburg et al. 2020). Our entertainment brands, however, have undergone structural interactive strategies that extend further than the selection or the declaration of one value (for instance, supporting immigration or protecting abortion rights). These brands are attempting to become civic citizens by reconciling diverse errors while pledging to DEI values. Thus, they implement complementary strategies that go deeper into business practices. As earlier research on brand activism highlights the importance of authenticity to prevent any backfire from customers, we show that authenticity extends beyond merely choosing a cause.

Finally, we add to the literature on marketing for future generations. On the one side, literature on children-related marketing focuses on studying children and their parents



Fig. 2 Brands' institutional work to protect their legitimacy



as consumers (Silhouette-Dercourt and De Lassus 2016; Marshall 2010) and children's utilization of brands for creating a connection with their peers and distinction from adults (Kollmayer et al. 2018; Hémar-Nicolas and Rodhain 2017; Machin and Van Leeuwen 2009). On the other side, literature on brands' activism efforts for children is very limited, often included in overall corporate charity advocacy (e.g., Pratono and Tjahjono 2017; Pracejus and Olsen 2004). The few studies on brands' work for children focus on the most immediate issues: nutrition and health (e.g., programs of free milk in public schools (Aitken and Watkins 2017) and healthy food educational campaigns (Colls and Evans 2008)). We complement these studies by unraveling the brands' interactions from an activist perspective.

Our paper provides managerial recommendations for brands seeking controversial changes that risk alienating a segment of their target market. Deciding to become an activist brand is a double-edged sword. If a brand decides to remain outside the social and political discussions, it is vulnerable to a backlash from its progressive communities. On the other hand, if it chooses to participate in the social and political discussion, it risks facing its conservative communities' anger (Jung et al. 2017; Catana 2021). Brands can monetize the conflicts within the marketplace and risk alienating a consumer segment, as long as they demonstrate deep involvement with the values of core consumers (Ulver 2021). We show that becoming an activist goes beyond supporting one cause but rather that brands need to conduct multiple structural changes aligning the brand with its customers—employees—community to help sustain its legitimacy in the marketplace.

Brand managers have reported that giving employees the freedom to speak out on political issues and conducting changes in products and services is an effective strategy to engage in political activism (Moorman 2020). Our paper demonstrates that to transform brands, companies need interactive strategies targeting their diverse stakeholders. On the consumer front, brands need to ensure actual changes in the market offerings if they are to sustain

their position in the marketplace. Revamping strategies, overhauling, reformatting, and patching can guide the market offerings in adapting to changing cultures. On the employee front, to aid in internal branding (Barros-Arrieta and García-Cali 2021), brands need to align their hiring and training strategies with the values and beliefs they seek to convey to their consumers. This alignment takes place through surgerying strategies that shield the brand from any washing claims and exhibit to consumers the brands' commitment to change. Finally, on the community front, pushing beyond simple sponsorship toward partnership allows brands to adjust their practices and showcase their civic responsibility.

In the amplified age of social media driving major cultural changes, brands need to reflexively assess their internal biases and preceding violations. They also need to stay vigilant in their adherence to institutional logics since the assumptions, values, practices, and beliefs that makeup logics can change. Brands are better off conducting this assessment proactively to protect their normative and moral legitimacy in the market.

The strategies implemented by the brands do not provide a unilateral pathway for the brands' future. For instance, the decision to reform a brand through cancellation is likely to hurt the brand's interests unless carefully selected, as Dr. Seuss Enterprises did. Thus, firms could also consider less radical actions, such as revamping the appearance/package of a product or including warnings.

As we examine structural changes in children's entertainment that complement activism claims, other researchers can study the activism of brands in other industries also targeting Millennials and Generation Alpha. In addition, further research is needed to understand thoroughly Generation Alpha's understanding and reflexivity around social movements. Conservative brands, consumers, and market actors in the cultural war also promise rich grounds for legitimacy studies.

Another promising area of research is examining the long-term effectiveness of various combinations of interactive



strategies for brands. What is considered justified at a certain time point might not later on, as the logics keep changing. The roles of stakeholders, their interactions, brand influence on the market place and brand history could all contribute to how such changes are perceived. This research could help firms to counter more effectively negative narratives in the unpredictable world of changed logics. Finally, future research can look into the interactive strategies we identified in our paper to examine the reasons behind their different implementation tactics. For instance, what makes a certain brand overhaul its offerings, while another one decides to patch them?

Acknowledgements The authors thank the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Declarations

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

References

- Aitken, Robert, and Leah Watkins. 2017. "Harm or Good?": Consumer Perceptions of Corporate Strategic Giving in Schools: "Harm or Good?" *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 51 (2): 406–432. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.12124>.
- Alexander, Bryan. 2021. Disneyland Jungle Cruise Ride Removes Racially Insensitive Features. *USA Today*, 12 July 2021. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/2021/07/10/disneyland-jungle-cruise-ride-removes-racially-insensitive-features/7907044002/>.
- Alexiou, Gus. 2020. Accessible And Representative Toys Key For Development Of Kids With Disabilities. *Forbes*, 15 December 2020, sec. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gusalexiou/2020/12/15/accessible-and-representative-toys-key-for-development-of-kids-with-disabilities/>.
- Alhouthi, Sarah, Catherine M. Johnson, and Betsy Bugg Holloway. 2016. Corporate Social Responsibility Authenticity: Investigating Its Antecedents and Outcomes. *Journal of Business Research* 69 (3): 1242–1249. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.09.007>.
- American Girl. n.d. 'Request Donation | American Girl'. Making the World a Brighter Place. Accessed 6 October 2021. <https://www.americangirl.com/request-donation>.
- Appel, Gil, Lauren Grewal, Rhonda Hadi, and Andrew T. Stephen. 2020. The Future of Social Media in Marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 48 (1): 79–95.
- Åsberg, Per, and Henrik Ugglå. 2019. Introducing Multi-Dimensional Brand Architecture: Taking Structure, Market Orientation and Stakeholder Alignment into Account. *Journal of Brand Management* 26 (5): 483–496. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-018-00147-1>.
- Baker, Jonathan J., Kaj Storbacka, and Roderick J. Brodie. 2019. Markets Changing, Changing Markets: Institutional Work as Market Shaping. *Marketing Theory* 19 (3): 301–328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593118809799>.
- Barros-Arrieta, David, and Ernesto García-Cali. 2021. Internal Branding: Conceptualization from a Literature Review and Opportunities for Future Research. *Journal of Brand Management* 28 (2): 133–151. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-020-00219-1>.
- Battilana, Julie, M.L. Besharov, and Björn Christian. Mitzinneck. 2017. On Hybrids and Hybrid Organizing: A Review and Roadmap for Future Research. In *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, ed. R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T.B. Lawrence, and R.E. Meyer, 133–169. New York: SAGE Publishing.
- Battilana, Julie, Bernard Leca, and Eva Boxenbaum. 2009. How Actors Change Institutions: Towards a Theory of Institutional Entrepreneurship. *Academy of Management Annals* 3 (1): 65–107. <https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520903053598>.
- Belk, Russell, Eileen Fischer, and Robert V. Kozinets. 2012. *Qualitative Consumer and Marketing Research*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Bhagwat, Yashoda, Nooshin L. Warren, Joshua T. Beck, and George F. Watson IV. 2020. Corporate Sociopolitical Activism and Firm Value. *Journal of Marketing* 84 (5): 1–21.
- Blachor, Devorah. 2017. Perspective | Learning to Accept My Daughter's Obsession with Disney Princesses. *Washington Post*, 13 November 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2017/11/09/learning-to-accept-my-daughters-obsession-with-disney-princesses/>.
- Bologna, Caroline. 2021. What Do We Call The Generation After Gen-Z? HuffPost. 09 2021. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/generation-alpha-after-gen-z_1_5d420ef4e4b0aca341181574.
- Boone, Christophe, and Serden Özcan. 2020. Oppositional Logics and the Antecedents of Hybridization: A Country-Level Study of the Diffusion of Islamic Banking Windows, 1975–2017. *Organization Science* 31 (4): 990–1011. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2019.1338>.
- Borghini, Stefania, Nina Diamond, Robert V. Kozinets, Mary Ann McGrath, Albert M. Muniz Jr, and John F. Sherry Jr. 2009. Why Are Themed Brandstores so Powerful? Retail Brand Ideology at American Girl Place. *Journal of Retailing* 85 (3): 363–375.
- Bossy, Sophie. 2014. The Utopias of Political Consumerism: The Search of Alternatives to Mass Consumption. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 14 (2): 179–198. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540514526238>.
- Briscoe, Forrest, and Abhinav Gupta. 2016. Social Activism in and Around Organizations. *Academy of Management Annals* 10 (1): 671–727. <https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520.2016.1153261>.
- Buechler, Steven M. 1995. New Social Movement Theories. *Sociological Quarterly* 36 (3): 441–464.
- Catana, Kelli. 2021. One Million Moms Are Not Okay With American Girl Doll's LGBTQ+ Aunt. Moms. 16 February 2021. <https://www.moms.com/one-million-moms-boycott-american-girl-dolls-lgbtq-aunt/>.
- Chaney, Kimberly E., Diana T. Sanchez, and Melanie R. Maimon. 2019. Stigmatized-Identity Cues in Consumer Spaces. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 29 (1): 130–141.
- Cherrier, Hélène. 2009. Anti-consumption Discourses and Consumer-Resistant Identities. *Journal of Business Research* 62 (2): 181–190. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2008.01.025>.
- Chaplin, Lan Nguyen, and Tina M. Lowrey. 2010. The Development of Consumer-Based Consumption Constellations in Children. *Journal of Consumer Research* 36 (5): 757–777. <https://doi.org/10.1086/605365>.
- Chien, P Monica, T. Bettina Cornwell, and Ravi Pappu. 2011. Sponsorship Portfolio as a Brand-Image Creation Strategy. *Journal of Business Research* 64 (2): 142–149.
- Colls, Rachel, and Bethan Evans. 2008. Embodying Responsibility: Children's Health and Supermarket Initiatives. *Environment and Planning a: Economy and Space* 40 (3): 615–631. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3935>.



- Cook, Daniel Thomas. 2008. The Missing Child in Consumption Theory. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8 (2): 219–243. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540508090087>.
- Crockett, David. 2021. Racial Oppression and Racial Projects in Consumer Markets: A Racial Formation Theory Approach. *Journal of Consumer Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucab050>.
- Daniel, Jerlean E., and Jack L. Daniel. 1998. Preschool Children's Selection of Race-Related Personal Names. *Journal of Black Studies* 28 (4): 471–490. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002193479802800403>.
- De Choudhury, Munmun, Shagun Jhaver, Benjamin Sugar, and Ingmar Weber. 2016. Social Media Participation in an Activist Movement for Racial Equality. In *Tenth International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*.
- Diversity and Inclusion - People - Sustainability. n.d. LEGO. Accessed 20 September 2021. <https://www.lego.com/en-us/sustainability/people/diversity-and-inclusion/>.
- Dolbec, Pierre-Yann., Zeynep Arsel, and Aya Aboelenien. 2022. A Practice Perspective on Market Evolution: How Craft and Commercial Coffee Firms Expand Practices and Develop Markets. *Journal of Marketing*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429221093624>.
- Dong, Lily, and Kelly Tian. 2009. The Use of Western Brands in Asserting Chinese National Identity. *Journal of Consumer Research* 36 (3): 504–523. <https://doi.org/10.1086/598970>.
- Dunn, Mary B., and Candace Jones. 2010. Institutional Logics and Institutional Pluralism: The Contestation of Care and Science Logics in Medical Education, 1967–2005. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 55 (1): 114–149. <https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.2010.55.1.114>.
- Eilert, Meike, and Abigail Nappier Cherup. 2020. The Activist Company: Examining a Company's Pursuit of Societal Change Through Corporate Activism Using an Institutional Theoretical Lens. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 39 (4): 461–476. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743915620947408>.
- Ellis, Katie. 2018. Changing Representations of Disability in Children's Toys as Popular c. In *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Arts, Culture, and Media*, 15. Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com.proxy2.hec.ca/chapters/edit/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351254687-24/changing-representations-disability-children-toys-popular-culture-katie-ellis?context=ubx&refId=364fd3b2-d7fa-4145-95ff-03e8e2103168>.
- Ertimur, Burçak, and Gokcen Coskuner-Balli. 2015. Navigating the Institutional Logics of Markets: Implications for Strategic Brand Management. *Journal of Marketing* 79 (2): 40–61.
- Fournier, Susan. 1998. Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research* 24 (4): 343–373.
- Furukawa, Shuntaro. 2022. Nintendo's Corporate Governance Reptot. Nintendo Co., Ltd. 12 June 2022. <http://www.nintendo.co.jp/ir/en/management/index.html>.
- Gautier, Arthur, and Anne-Claire. Pache. 2015. Research on Corporate Philanthropy: A Review and Assessment. *Journal of Business Ethics* 126 (3): 343–369. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1969-7>.
- Gawer, Annabelle, and Nelson Phillips. 2013. Institutional Work as Logics Shift: The Case of Intel's Transformation to Platform Leader. *Organization Studies* 34 (8): 1035–1071. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840613492071>.
- Gill, Rosalind, and Shani Orgad. 2018. The Shifting Terrain of Sex and Power: From the "Sexualization of Culture" to #MeToo. *Sexualities* 21 (8): 1313–1324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460718794647>.
- Glynn, Mary Ann, and Michael Lounsbury. 2005. From the Critics' Corner: Logic Blending, Discursive Change and Authenticity in a Cultural Production System*. *Journal of Management Studies* 42 (5): 1031–1055. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2005.00531.x>.
- Gopaldas, Ahir. 2014. Marketplace Sentiments. *Journal of Consumer Research* 41 (4): 995–1014.
- Grégoire, Yany, and Anna S. Mattila. 2020. Service Failure and Recovery at the Crossroads: Recommendations to Revitalize the Field and Its Influence. *Journal of Service Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670520958073>.
- Hajdas, Monika, and Ryszard Kleczek. 2021. The Real Purpose of Purpose-Driven Branding: Consumer Empowerment and Social Transformations. *Journal of Brand Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-021-00231-z>.
- Harris, Aisha. 2016. Why American Girl's First Black Doll Had to Be Born a Slave. *Slate Magazine*. 22 September 2016. <https://slate.com/culture/2016/09/the-making-of-addy-walker-american-girls-first-black-doll.html>.
- Hasbro. n.d. CSR - Diversity and Inclusion. Consumercare. Accessed 21 September 2021. <https://csr.hasbro.com/en-us/diversity-inclusion>.
- Hémar-Nicolas, Valérie, and Angélique Rodhain. 2017. Brands as Cultural Resources in Children's Peer Culture. *Consumption Markets & Culture* 20 (3): 193–214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2016.1205494>.
- Hill, Jennifer Ann. 2011. Endangered Childhoods: How Consumerism Is Impacting Child and Youth Identity. *Media, Culture & Society* 33 (3): 347–362. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443710393387>.
- Holland, Brynn. 2019. 'Barbie Through the Ages'. HISTORY. 8 March 2019. <https://www.history.com/news/barbie-through-the-ages>.
- Huff, Aimee Dinnin, Ashlee Humphreys, and Sarah J S. Wilner. 2021. The Politicization of Objects: Meaning and Materiality in the U.S. Cannabis Market. *Journal of Consumer Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucaa061>.
- Humphery, Kim, and Tim Jordan. 2018. Mobile Moralities: Ethical Consumption in the Digital Realm. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 18 (4): 520–538. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540516684188>.
- Humphreys, Ashlee. 2010a. Megamarketing: The Creation of Markets as a Social Process. *Journal of Marketing* 74 (2): 1–19.
- Humphreys, Ashlee. 2010b. Semiotic Structure and the Legitimation of Consumption Practices: The Case of Casino Gambling. *Journal of Consumer Research* 37 (3): 490–510.
- Humphreys, Ashlee, and Kathryn A. Latour. 2013. Framing the Game: Assessing the Impact of Cultural Representations on Consumer Perceptions of Legitimacy. *Journal of Consumer Research* 40 (4): 773–795.
- Hwang, Hyesun, and Kee-Ok. Kim. 2015. Social Media as a Tool for Social Movements: The Effect of Social Media Use and Social Capital on Intention to Participate in Social Movements. *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 39 (5): 478–488. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12221>.
- Irwin, Ron. 2003. Corporate Social Investment and Branding in the New South Africa. *Journal of Brand Management* 10 (4): 303–311.
- Jones, Sian, Leanne Ali, Mohona Bhuyan, Laura Dalnoki, Alicia Kaliff, William Muir, Kiia Uusitalo, and Clare Uytman. 2020. Parents' Responses to Toys Representing Physical Impairment. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 39 (8): 949–966. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-08-2019-0213>.
- Jung, Kiju, Ellen Garbarino, Donnel A. Briley, and Jesse Wynhausen. 2017. Blue and Red Voices: Effects of Political Ideology on Consumers' Complaining and Disputing Behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research* 44 (3): 477–499. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucx037>.
- Kates, Steven M. 2004. The Dynamics of Brand Legitimacy: An Interpretive Study in the Gay Men's Community. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 (2): 455–464.



- Kennedy, Ann-Marie., and Marian Makkar. 2021. Cultural Appropriation. In *The SAGE Handbook of Marketing Ethics*, ed. Lynne Eagle, Stephan Dahl, Patrick Pelsmacker, and Charles Taylor. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Khamitov, Mansur, Yany Grégoire, and Anshu Suri. 2020. A Systematic Review of Brand Transgression, Service Failure Recovery and Product-Harm Crisis: Integration and Guiding Insights. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 48 (3): 519–542. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00679-1>.
- Kipnis, Eva, Catherine Demangeot, Chris Pullig, Samantha N.N.. Cross, Charles Chi Cui, Cristina Galalae, Shauna Kearney, et al. 2021. Institutionalizing Diversity-and-Inclusion-Engaged Marketing for Multicultural Marketplace Well-Being. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 40 (2): 143–164. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743915620975415>.
- Koch, Christian H. 2020. Brands as Activists: The Oatly Case. *Journal of Brand Management* 27 (5): 593–606. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-020-00199-2>.
- Kollmayer, Marlene, Marie-Therese. Schultes, Barbara Schober, Tanja Hodosi, and Christiane Spiel. 2018. Parents' Judgments about the Desirability of Toys for Their Children: Associations with Gender Role Attitudes, Gender-Typing of Toys, and Demographics. *Sex Roles* 79 (5–6): 329–341. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0882-4>.
- Kozinets, Robert V., and Jay M. Handelman. 2004. Adversaries of Consumption: Consumer Movements, Activism, and Ideology. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 (3): 691–704.
- Kraatz, Matthew S., and Emily S. Block. 2008. Organizational Implications of Institutional Pluralism. *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* 840: 243–275.
- Krishna, Arunima. 2021. Employee Activism and Internal Communication. In *Current Trends and Issues in Internal Communication. New Perspectives in Organizational Communication*, ed. Linjuan Rita Men and Ana Tkalac Verčič, 113–129. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78213-9_7.
- Lawrence, Thomas B., and Roy Suddaby. 2006. Institutions and Institutional Work. In *The SAGE Handbook of Organization Studies*, ed. Stewart Clegg, Cynthia Hardy, Thomas Lawrence, and Walter Nord, 215–254. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Lawrence, Thomas, Roy Suddaby, and Bernard Leca. 2011. Institutional Work: Refocusing Institutional Studies of Organization. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 20 (1): 52–58.
- Lee, Matthew K.O., Na Shi, Christy M.K. Cheung, Kai H. Lim, and Choon Ling Sia. 2011. Consumer's Decision to Shop Online: The Moderating Role of Positive Informational Social Influence. *Information & Management* 48 (6): 185–191. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2010.08.005>.
- Leitch, Shirley, and Elizabeth Merlot. 2018. Power Relations within Brand Management: The Challenge of Social Media. *Journal of Brand Management* 25 (2): 85–92.
- Liffrening, Ilyse. 2020. The 9 Biggest “cancels” of 2020. Ad Age. 18 December 2020. <https://adage.com/article/year-review/9-biggest-cancels-2020/2299066>.
- Lines, Amy. 2021. The Importance Of Diverse Toys And Where To Find Them. *Kidadl*, 19 February 2021. <https://kidadl.com/articles/the-importance-of-diverse-toys-and-where-to-find-them>.
- Luedicke, Marius K., Craig J. Thompson, and Markus Giesler. 2010. Consumer Identity Work as Moral Protagonism: How Myth and Ideology Animate a Brand-Mediated Moral Conflict. *Journal of Consumer Research* 36 (6): 1016–1032.
- Machin, David, and Theo Van Leeuwen. 2009. Toys as Discourse: Children's War Toys and the War on Terror. *Critical Discourse Studies* 6 (1): 51–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900802560082>.
- Maguire, Steve, and Cynthia Hardy. 2009. Discourse and Deinstitutionalization: The Decline of DDT. *Academy of Management Journal* 52 (1): 148–178.
- Marshall, Dave. 2010. *Understanding Children as Consumers*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE. <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10392719>.
- Matich, Margaret, Rachel Ashman, and Elizabeth Parsons. 2019. #free-the-nipple—Digital Activism and Embodiment in the Contemporary Feminist Movement. *Consumption Markets & Culture* 22 (4): 337–362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2018.1512240>.
- Mazutis, Daina D., and Natalie Slawinski. 2015. Reconnecting Business and Society: Perceptions of Authenticity in Corporate Social Responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics* 131 (1): 137–150. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2253-1>.
- McCoy, Henrika. 2020. Black Lives Matter, and Yes, You Are Racist: The Parallelism of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 37 (5): 463–475. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-020-00690-4>.
- McKown, Clark, and Rhona S. Weinstein. 2003. The Development and Consequences of Stereotype Consciousness in Middle Childhood. *Child Development* 74 (2): 498–515. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.7402012>.
- Melo, Tiago, and Jose Ignacio Galan. 2011. Effects of Corporate Social Responsibility on Brand Value. *Journal of Brand Management* 18 (6): 423–437. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2010.54>.
- Meyer, John W., and Brian Rowan. 1977. Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (2): 340–363.
- Minocher, Xerxes. 2019. Online Consumer Activism: Challenging Companies with Change.org. *New Media & Society* 21 (3): 620–638. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818803373>.
- Mittelstaedt, John D., William E. Kilbourne, and Robert A. Mittelstaedt. 2006. Macromarketing as Agorology: Macromarketing Theory and the Study of the Agora. *Journal of Macromarketing* 26 (2): 131–142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0276146706290921>.
- Mirzaei, Abas, Dean C. Wilkie, and Helen Siuki. 2022. Woke Brand Activism Authenticity or the Lack of It. *Journal of Business Research* 139 (February): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.09.044>.
- Mishan, Ligaya. 2020. The Long and Tortured History of Cancel Culture. *The New York Times*, 3 December 2020, sec. T Magazine. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/03/t-magazine/cancel-culture-history.html>.
- Moorman, Christine. 2020. Commentary: Brand Activism in a Political World. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 39 (4): 388–392. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743915620945260>.
- Mukherjee, Sourjo, and Niek Althuisen. 2020. Brand Activism: Does Courting Controversy Help or Hurt a Brand? *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 37 (4): 772–788. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2020.02.008>.
- Mundt, Marcia, Karen Ross, and Charla M. Burnett. 2018. Scaling Social Movements Through Social Media: The Case of Black Lives Matter. *Social Media + Society* 4 (4): 2056305118807911. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118807911>.
- Nardini, Gia, Tracy Rank-Christman, Melissa G. Bublitz, Samantha N. N. Cross, and Laura A. Peracchio. 2021. Together We Rise: How Social Movements Succeed. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 31 (1): 112–145. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpsy.1201>.
- Navis, Chad, and Mary Ann Glynn. 2010. How New Market Categories Emerge: Temporal Dynamics of Legitimacy, Identity, and Entrepreneurship in Satellite Radio, 1990–2005. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 55 (3): 439–471.
- Nintendo. n.d. Employees: Working to Build an Environment Where Each and Every Employee Can Realize Their Potential. | CSR Information. Nintendo Co., Ltd. Accessed 21 January 2023. <https://www.nintendo.co.jp/csr/en/index.html>.
- Nocera, Joe. 2022. Companies Are Stuck Between Their Workers and Politicians. *The New York Times*, 7 May 2022, sec. Business. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/07/business/dealbook/companies-abortion-florida.html>.



- Odou, Philippe, Graham H. Roberts, and Dominique Roux. 2018. Co-Producing Cyber Protest: Mesomobilization in the Digital Age. *Consumption Markets & Culture* 21 (1): 42–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2017.1343724>.
- Ozkazanc-Pan, Banu. 2018. On Agency and Empowerment in a #MeToo World. *Gender, Work & Organization*,. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12311>.
- Pache, Anne-Claire., and Filipe Santos. 2013. Inside the Hybrid Organization: Selective Coupling as a Response to Competing Institutional Logics. *Academy of Management Journal* 56 (4): 972–1001.
- Pain, Paromita. 2021. “It Took Me Quite a Long Time to Develop a Voice”: Examining Feminist Digital Activism in the Indian# MeToo Movement. *New Media & Society* 23 (11): 3139–3155.
- Parmentier, Marie-Agnès., and Eileen Fischer. 2018. What’s New? Institutional Work in Updating Taste. In *Taste, Consumption and Markets*, ed. Zeynep Arsel and Jonathan Bean, 65–82. London: Routledge.
- Pericherla, Yashu. 2021. Disney’s Brand of Representation Is Cultural Appropriation. *The Hofstra Chronicle*, 25 March 2021. <https://www.thehofstrachronicle.com/category/editorials/2021/3/25/disneys-brand-of-representation-is-cultural-appropriation>.
- Porter, Michael E., and Mark R. Kramer. 2011. The Big Idea: Creating Shared Value. How to Reinvent Capitalism—And Unleash a Wave of Innovation and Growth’. *Harvard Business Review* 89 (1–2).
- Pracejus, John W., and G. Douglas Olsen. 2004. The Role of Brand/Cause Fit in the Effectiveness of Cause-Related Marketing Campaigns. *Journal of Business Research* 57 (6): 635–640. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963\(02\)00306-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(02)00306-5).
- Pratono, Aluisius Hery, and Godo Tjahjono. 2017. How Does Materialistic Attitude Influence the Impact of Corporate Brand on the Customers’ Intention to Donate to Corporates’ Charity? *Humanomics* 33 (4): 484–498. <https://doi.org/10.1108/H-07-2016-0052>.
- Press, Melea, and Eric J. Arnould. 2011. Legitimizing Community Supported Agriculture Through American Pastoralist Ideology. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 11 (2): 168–194.
- Rahman, Mahabubur, M. Ángeles Rodríguez-Serrano, and Mary Lambkin. 2019. Brand Equity and Firm Performance: The Complementary Role of Corporate Social Responsibility. *Journal of Brand Management* 26 (6): 691–704. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-019-00155-9>.
- Rao, Raghunath Singh, Rajesh K. Chandy, and Jaideep C. Prabhu. 2008. The Fruits of Legitimacy: Why Some New Ventures Gain More from Innovation than Others. *Journal of Marketing* 72 (4): 58–75.
- Reay, Diane. 2004. Gendering Bourdieu’s Concepts of Capitals? Emotional Capital, Women and Social Class. *The Sociological Review* 52 (s2): 57–74.
- Regany, Fatima, Ahmed Benmecheddal, Meriam Belkhir, and Souad Djelassi. 2021. Conflicting Coexistence of Legitimation and Delegitimation Logics in a Revived Market: The Case of a Traditional Clothing Market. *Journal of Business Research* 123: 438–449.
- Reitz, Meghan, and John Higgins. 2022. Leading in an Age of Employee Activism. *MIT Sloan Management Review* 63 (2): 1–7.
- Ritson, Mark. 2020. If “Black Lives Matter” to Brands, Where Are Your Black Board Members? *Marketing Week*. 3 June 2020. <https://www.marketingweek.com/mark-ritson-black-lives-matter-brands/>.
- Romani, Simona, Silvia Grappi, Lia Zarantonello, and Richard P. Bagozzi. 2015. The Revenge of the Consumer! How Brand Moral Violations Lead to Consumer Anti-Brand Activism. *Journal of Brand Management* 22 (8): 658–672. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2015.38>.
- Sarkar, Christian, and Philip Kotler. 2018. *Brand Activism: From Purpose to Action*. Idea Bite Press
- Scaraboto, Daiane, and Eileen Fischer. 2012. Frustrated Fatshionistas: An Institutional Theory Perspective on Consumer Quests for Greater Choice in Mainstream Markets. *Journal of Consumer Research* 39 (6): 1234–1257.
- Schild, Darcy. 2020. ‘American Girl History and How Its Dolls Have Changed Through the Years’. 21 September 2020. <https://www.insider.com/american-girl-dolls-history-evolution-brand-2020-1>.
- Schmidt, Holger Joerg, Nicholas Ind, Francisco Guzmán, and Eric Kennedy. 2021. Sociopolitical Activist Brands. *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 31 (1): 40–55. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-03-2020-2805>.
- Schultz, Majken, and Mary Jo Hatch. 2003. The Cycles of Corporate Branding: The Case of the LEGO Company. *California Management Review* 46 (1): 6–26. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41166229>.
- Sesame Workshop Continues Major Commitment to Racial Justice with New “ABCs of Racial Literacy” Content to Help Families Talk to Children About Race and Identity. 2021. Sesame Workshop. 23 March 2021. <https://www.sesameworkshop.org/press-room/press-releases/sesame-workshop-continues-major-commitment-racial-justice-new-abcs-racial>.
- Sibai, Olivier, Mimoun, Laetitia, and Boukis, Achilleas. 2021. Authenticating Brand Activism: Negotiating the Boundaries of Free Speech to Make a Change. *Psychology & Marketing* 38 (10): 1651–1669. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21477>
- Silhouette-Dercourt, Virginie, and Christel de Lassus. 2016. Shopping for Kids’ Luxury Brands: Young Mothers’ Identity Quest in Retail Spaces. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* 44 (11): 1084–1099. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-08-2015-0133>.
- Silverstein, Jason. 2021. The Global Impact of George Floyd: How Black Lives Matter Protests Shaped Movements around the World - CBS News. *CBS News*, 4 June 2021. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-black-lives-matter-impact/>.
- Simon, Bryant. 2011. Not Going to Starbucks: Boycotts and the out-Scouring of Politics in the Branded World. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 11 (2): 145–167.
- Smoth, Haley Vicotry. 2021. Brand Values: Companies That Have Fallen Victim to “cancel Culture” in the Past Year. *Washington Examiner*. 6 March 2021. <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/brands-fallen-victim-cancel-culture>.
- Sørensen, Anders Ravn, Ellen M. Korsager, and Michael Heller. 2021. A Bittersweet Past: The Negative Equity of Corporate Heritage Brands. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 21 (2): 200–218. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540518773803>.
- Spry, Amanda, Bernardo Figueiredo, Lauren Gurrieri, Joya A. Kemper, and Jessica Vredenburg. 2021. Transformative Branding: A Dynamic Capability To Challenge The Dominant Social Paradigm. *Journal of Macromarketing* 41 (4): 531–546. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02761467211043074>.
- Suchman, Mark C. 1995. Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches. *Academy of Management Review* 20 (3): 571–610.
- Thompson, Craig J. 2014. The Politics of Consumer Identity Work. *Journal of Consumer Research* 40 (5): iii–vii.
- Thornton, Patricia H., and William Ocasio. 1999. Institutional Logics and the Historical Contingency of Power in Organizations: Executive Succession in the Higher Education Publishing Industry, 1958–1990. *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (3): 801–843.
- Thornton, Patricia H., and William Ocasio. 2008. Institutional Logics. *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* 840 (2008): 99–128.
- Thornton, Patricia H., William Ocasio, and Michael Lounsbury. 2012. *The Institutional Logics Perspective: A New Approach to Culture, Structure, and Process*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



- Tsai, Wan-Hsiu Sunny. 2012. Political Issues in Advertising Polysemy: The Case of Gay Window Advertising. *Consumption Markets & Culture* 15 (1): 41–62.
- Ulver, Sofia. 2021. The Conflict Market: Polarizing Consumer Culture(s) in Counter-Democracy. *Journal of Consumer Culture*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14695405211026040>.
- Valor, Carmen, Javier Lloveras, and Eleni Papaoikonomou. 2020. The Role of Emotion Discourse and Pathic Stigma in the Delegitimation of Consumer Practices. *Journal of Consumer Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucaa028>.
- Vargo, Stephen L., and Robert F. Lusch. 2004. Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing. *Journal of Marketing* 68 (1): 1–17.
- Veissière, Samuel Paul Louis. 2018. “Toxic Masculinity” in the Age of #MeToo: Ritual, Morality and Gender Archetypes across Cultures. *Society and Business Review* 13 (3): 274–286. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SBR-07-2018-0070>.
- Vredenburg, Jessica, Sommer Kapitan, Amanda Spry, and Joya A. Kemper. 2020. Brands Taking a Stand: Authentic Brand Activism or Woke Washing? *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 39 (4): 444–460. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743915620947359>.
- Walansky, Aly. 2020. People Want to Boycott Costco over the Store's New Mandatory Mask Policy. *Today*, 5 May 2020. <https://www.today.com/food/people-want-boycott-costco-over-store-s-new-mandatory-mask-t181002>.
- Weber Shandwick. 2019. Employee Activism In The Age Of Purpose: Employees (up)Rising. Weber Shandwick. 19 May 2019. <https://www.webershandwick.com/news/employee-activism-age-of-purpose/>.
- Werner, Mirjam D., and Joep P. Cornelissen. 2014. Framing the Change: Switching and Blending Frames and Their Role in Instigating Institutional Change. *Organization Studies* 35 (10): 1449–1472.
- Wilner, Sarah JS., and Aimee Dinnin Huff. 2017. Objects of Desire: The Role of Product Design in Revising Contested Cultural Meanings. *Journal of Marketing Management* 33 (3–4): 244–271.
- Winter, Jerry. 2003. The Development of the Disability Rights Movement as a Social Problem Solver. *Disability Studies Quarterly* 23 (1): 33–61. <https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v23i1.399>.
- Zietsma, Charlene, and Brent McKnight. 2009. Building the Iron Cage: Institutional Creation Work in the Context Of. In *Institutional Work: Actors and Agency in Institutional Studies of Organizations*, ed. Thomas B. Lawrence, Roy Suddaby, and Bernard Leca. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Springer Nature or its licensor (e.g. a society or other partner) holds exclusive rights to this article under a publishing agreement with the author(s) or other rightsholder(s); author self-archiving of the accepted manuscript version of this article is solely governed by the terms of such publishing agreement and applicable law.

Aya Aboelenien is an assistant professor of marketing at HEC Montreal. Her research interests range from ethics and morality in consumption, to interpersonal relations, to market systems, with a sociocultural focus. She has published in *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, and *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research and Consumption, Markets & Culture*. She serves as a reviewer for *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, *Marketing Theory*, and *Consumption, Markets & Culture*.

Chau Minh Nguyen is a PhD candidate at HEC Montreal. Her research interests include social media, Big Data, and ethics. Her professional background covers journalism, communications, and marketing research.

