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**Drivers and Mechanisms of Consumer Attitudes towards Global Brand Activists:  
A mediated approach**

Eleni Tsougkou<sup>1</sup>  
Lecturer in Marketing  
Strathclyde Business School, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom  
Email: [eleni.tsougkou@strath.ac.uk](mailto:eleni.tsougkou@strath.ac.uk)

Maria Karampela  
Senior Research Consultant - Innovation Funding & Ecosystem Development  
Uni.systems, Athens, Greece  
Email: [KarampelaM@unisystems.eu](mailto:KarampelaM@unisystems.eu)

George Balabanis  
Professor in Marketing  
Bayes Business School, City University of London, London, United Kingdom  
Email: [g.balabanis@city.ac.uk](mailto:g.balabanis@city.ac.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author

## **Drivers and Mechanisms of Consumer Attitudes towards Global Brand Activists: A mediated approach**

### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – The phenomenon of global brands taking a stance on crucial, yet polarizing, socio-political issues, namely global brand activism, is rising. However, how consumer views on this practice are shaped when global branding elements are factored in remains unclear. Drawing from the functional theory of attitude formation, this study investigates the relationships of consumer characteristics (political ideology, ethnocentrism) and brand factors (global brand attitudes and perceived motivation of global brand activists) with attitudes towards global brand activists.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Using a survey of a UK nationally representative sample (n=439), we test our hypothesized model via structural equation modelling and mediation analysis.

**Findings** – Our findings reveal direct and indirect effects of political ideology on attitudes towards global brand activists (AttGBACTIVs). While consumer ethnocentrism and global brand attitudes do not directly drive AttGBACTIVs, they do influence them indirectly.

Perceived motivation of global brand activists emerges as a key mechanism activating these effects and affecting AttGBACTIVs.

**Originality** – First, this study constitutes a novel examination of consumer views of brand activism through a global branding lens. Second, our investigation uniquely combines important determinants of brand activism outcomes with key international marketing factors (namely consumer ethnocentrism and global brand attitudes). Third, the concurrent exploration of individual and brand factors in our mediated model reveals the complex mechanisms through which attitudes towards global brand activists are formed.

**Keywords** – Global brands; brand activism; political ideology; consumer ethnocentrism; perceived motivation

## 1. Introduction

With rising expectations that brands react to sociopolitical matters (Moorman, 2020), global brands increasingly choose to take a stand on critical, yet divisive issues, such as gender equality or racial injustice (Bhagwat *et al.*, 2020; Key *et al.*, 2021; Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020). This practice is known as brand activism and is an important prosocial marketing tool, as it exerts a transformative impact on society but also triggers opposing consumer reactions (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019), impacting firm value and sales (Bhagwat *et al.*, 2020; Villagra *et al.*, 2021), as well as customer attitudes, loyalty, identification, attachment and choice (Klostermann, *et al.*, 2022; Jain *et al.*, 2021; Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020; Schmidt *et al.*, 2022). Examples of global brand activists (i.e., global brands engaging in brand activism, hereafter GBACTIVs) include the myriad of global brands joining the #BlackLivesMatter movement (e.g., Lego's statement of support, accompanied by a \$4 million donation to organizations promoting racial equality) or opposing the war in Ukraine [e.g., McDonalds halting their operations in Russia (Al-Arshani, 2020; Towey *et al.*, 2022)].

Despite the growing involvement of global brands in divisive socio-political matters, it remains unclear whether and when brand activism is compatible with global branding, as critical knowledge voids exist regarding the factors that influence how consumers view *global brand* activists (Gürhan-Canli *et al.*, 2018). This focus is critical given the impact of attitudes towards brand activism on important performance outcomes, including customer intentions, willingness to pay, and choice (Ketrone *et al.* 2022; Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020). Global brands constitute a distinct brand category that is associated with readily retrievable consumer perceptions and evaluations (Dimofte *et al.*, 2008). Consequently, consumers respond differently to global brands due to their globality, widespread reach, and consistent image (Dimofte *et al.*, 2008; Srivastava and Balaji, 2018), and tend to hold these brands accountable to high standards of responsibility in sociopolitical matters (Özsomer and

Altaras, 2008). As a matter of fact, evidence from the corporate social responsibility (CSR) literature in an international marketing context (Choi *et al.*, 2016; Randrianasolo and Semenov, 2022) suggests that prosocial initiatives help global brand competitiveness. Hence, given that brand activism is a prosocial activity, but is distinct from CSR due to its polarizing nature (Key *et al.*, 2021), focusing on global brands to account for their idiosyncratic nature when assessing how AttGBACTIVs are formed is vital.

Given the relevance of this topic, our work makes important theoretical contributions. First, we shed light on what drives the formation of AttGBRANDs as a separate brand category. Key brand activism studies feature global brands in their investigations (e.g., Hoffmann *et al.*, 2020; Moorman, 2020; Özturan and Grinstein, 2022; Schmidt *et al.*, 2022; Sibai *et al.*, 2021; Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020; Weber *et al.*, 2023). For instance, Hoffmann *et al.* (2020) reveal a mixture of antagonistic and epideictic elements in corporate political advocacy campaigns, such as Nike's Dream Crazy, while Schmidt *et al.* (2022) delve into the importance of authenticity and commitment in consumers' expectations of brands' sociopolitical stances. While these studies include global brands as the subject of their inquiries, they do not focus on the influence that stems from the global brand nature and characteristics (Davvetas *et al.*, 2020), leaving the formation of AttGBACTIVs largely underexplored.

Second, we embark on an expanded exploration of factors that jointly contribute to shaping AttGBRANDs, putting the global brand nature in the spotlight and accounting for the concurrent influence of established determinants of activism and social responsibility outcomes (i.e., political ideology and perceived motivations of GBACTIVs) and important drivers of global branding consequences (i.e., consumer ethnocentrism and AttBRANDs). Initial evidence exists regarding how perceptions of, and attitudes towards, brand activism are formed regardless of the brand category adopting the practice, pointing to gender (Schmidt *et al.*, 2022), consumer agreement (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020), ideology (Ketrone *et al.*,

2022), and brand activism characteristics (Klostermann *et al.*, 2022) as determinants of brand activism outcomes. Political ideology emerges as a key consumer characteristic driving the consequences of brand activism such as stock market effects (Bhagwat *et al.*, 2020), brand relationships, and consumer choice (Hydock *et al.*, 2020). As a belief- and value-based construct, political ideology, ranging from conservative to liberal, can influence consumers' worldviews and expectations regarding key societal issues (Pecot *et al.*, 2021). The literature has touched upon the impact of political ideology on attitudes towards brand activism (e.g., Ketron *et al.*, 2022; Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020), but there is an ongoing requirement to expand our understanding of how it coexists with other factors to shape AttGBACTIVs.

From a broad global branding perspective, political ideology's effect on global branding, remains subject to further investigation, whereas, generally, customer characteristics, as well as brand-related factors, might differentially affect attitudes towards global brands (AttGBRANDs) and the outcomes of their activities (Gürhan-Canli *et al.*, 2018). Consumer ethnocentrism emerges as an individual disposition and cultural orientation reflecting consumer values, leading to a preference for products and services from one's own country owing to beliefs of cultural and national superiority (Prince *et al.*, 2020), which can influence how consumers view value-driven activities such as brand activism (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020). Due to their inherent globality, which can trigger associations with foreignness, global brands and their initiatives may be perceived through the lens of consumer ethnocentrism (Dimofte *et al.*, 2008). In turn AttGBRANDs, constitute salient consumer perceptions of global brands as a brand category (Alden *et al.*, 2006). Both consumer ethnocentrism and AttGBRANDs constitute important drivers of global branding outcomes (e.g., Strizhakova and Coulter, 2015; Özsomer and Altaras, 2008), yet their role in affecting consumer views of GBACTIVs remains unexplored. Additionally, conceptual claims and qualitative findings suggest that consumer perceptions about the motivation of brand activists might differ and are crucial in

shaping their assessments of them (Schmidt et al., 2022; Vredenburg et al., 2020; Sibai et al., 2021). Perceived motivation of brand activism constitutes a consumer perception of brands' activism initiatives associated with whether they are driven by altruism or are profit-oriented (Bigné et al., 2012). When global brands engage in brand activism, consumer perceptions of what drives them can be impacted by the inherent attributes of global brands, including their globalness, global reach and consistency (Davvetas et al., 2020). However, consumer perceptions of the motivations of global brands engaging in brand activism and their influence on AttGBACTIVs are aspects yet to be fully understood.

Finally, as the extant studies investigating attitudes towards brand activism primarily focus on revealing their direct antecedents or consequences (e.g., Ketron et al., 2022; Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020), we address the lingering need to delve into the complex mechanisms shaping their formation. In line with the works that link consumer ethnocentrism with AttGBRANDs (e.g., Alden *et al.*, 2006), we examine how the latter mediates the effect of consumer ethnocentrism on AttGBACTIVs. Accordingly, given the crucial role of consumers' cognitive evaluations on shaping attitudes towards brand initiatives (Riefler, 2012), and adding to the work of Ketron *et al.* (2022) that links political ideology with attitudes towards brand activists, we provide a deeper understanding of how AttGBRANDs and perceived motivation of GBACTIVs mediate the relationships of political ideology and consumer ethnocentrism with AttGBACTIVs from a global branding perspective.

In summary, our study seeks to address the above important knowledge gaps and contribute to theory by: (a) exploring the factors that influence attitudes towards brand activism as a global branding initiative, (b) collectively probing the forces that shape brand activism and global branding outcomes through investigating the influence of individual (political ideology and consumer ethnocentrism) and consumer-brand aspects (AttGBRANDs and perceived motivation of GBACTIVs) on AttGBACTIVs, and (c) delving into the complex role of the

latter (i.e., AttGBRANDs and perceived motivation) as mechanisms shaping AttGBACTIVs. Accordingly, we adopt a functional, value-based, approach to attitude formation (Katz, 1960) and develop our hypotheses, which we test through structural equation modelling using a sample of 439 British consumer survey responses. Beyond our theoretical contributions, our findings offer important insights to global brand managers regarding the consumers who are more likely to form positive AttGBACTIVs, the factors that shape these evaluations, and how to communicate such global brand activism initiatives to target markets.

## **2. Theoretical background**

### *2.1 Brand activism*

Brand activism refers to brands taking a stand on divisive socio-political, economic, and/or environmental issues affecting society (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020). It constitutes firm-side (organizational) activism that takes place at the brand level and encourages or discourages societal change (Sarkar and Kotler, 2018). Hence, brand activism stances are associated with brands' values and purpose, might be progressive or conservative (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020), and can be taken proactively or reactively (Koch, 2020) through several forms of varying intensity, ranging from simple statements to internal reforms, boycotting, donations, and communication campaigns (Moorman, 2020; Villagra *et al.*, 2021).

Brand activism is connected to a generalized societal expectation that companies must exert their authority to influence critical but also polarizing societal matters (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019). Its social angle encompasses a degree of resemblance to CSR practices, such as cause-related and social marketing; yet, it is distinct from them mainly due to its value-based background, controversial nature, and transformational power [(cf. Vredenburg

*et al.* (2020) and Weber *et al.* (2023) for a detailed delineation of brand activism from CSR)]. Indeed, stand-taking is a risky and polarizing activity (Hydock *et al.*, 2020) signaling that a brand is “woke”, that is, aware of, and actively seeking to correct socio-political injustices (Sobande, 2019), deviating from solely profit-seeking behavioral patterns (Bhagwat *et al.*, 2020). Whereas issue controversy is an inherent attribute of brand activism, brand activism’s divisiveness –which distinguishes it from traditional CSR (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020) can vary, with issues like the war in Ukraine being considered less divisive, and others such as making vaccines mandatory for employment more polarizing (Nam *et al.*, 2023). When brands become activists, consumers, in turn, might be convinced or become skeptical and even reject activist brands (Sobande, 2019).

Organizational activism might influence consumer behavior, company and societal outcomes (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019). Brand-specific outcomes examined thus far include loyalty, identification (Jain *et al.*, 2021), choice (Hydock *et al.*, 2020), and attitudes (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020; Schmidt *et al.*, 2022). However, the effects are not always positive (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019), and how companies take a stand is particularly important. In fact, alignment of the stance advocated with the values of the brand, consistent communication of moral competency, sensitivity, and vision, as well as long-term commitment, are crucial to shaping perceptions of brand activism trustworthiness and authenticity (Mirzaei *et al.*, 2022; Schmidt *et al.*, 2022; Sibai *et al.*, 2021).

## *2.2 Consumer reactions to prosocial global brand initiatives*

Global brands constitute a distinct brand category and can act as identification vehicles, enabling consumers to express their global identity (Guo, 2013). Yet, they trigger mixed connotations, such as esteem, trust, and innovativeness (Huaman-Ramirez *et al.*, 2019) but also foreignness (Dimofte *et al.*, 2008). These aspects contribute to differing consumer

reactions to global branding (Gürhan-Canli et al., 2018) and might accordingly shape attitudes on activism practiced by global brands.

Additionally, evidence points to a difference in how consumers respond to other prosocial activities implemented by big multinational enterprises (MNEs) or global brands, shedding light on consumer responses to global brand activism. To demonstrate, studies indicate that CSR initiatives by MNEs may be seen as obligatory or PR-driven, potentially reducing their perceived authenticity (Rahman and Norman, 2016). In contrast, CSR by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) often appears more genuine and locally impactful, enhancing community connections and loyalty. This disparity suggests that global brands face unique challenges when engaging in brand activism, as their efforts might be scrutinized for authenticity due to their scale and visibility. Moreover, the literature notes that global brands often adopt standardized CSR approaches, which may seem less tailored and genuine across diverse markets (Popoli, 2011; Green and Peloza, 2014). This perception could negatively impact consumer attitudes towards their activism. Given the distinction between CSR and brand activism as explained above, and emerging evidence that consumers' engagement with global brand activism differs from their engagement with CSR (Özturan and Grinstein, 2022), it is essential to investigate brand activism separately from CSR in order to understand how both activism and the challenges associated with the scale and visibility of global brands affect consumer attitudes to global brand activists.

### *2.3 A functional approach to attitude formation*

Attitudes constitute (un)favorable evaluative judgements about an object that influence intentions as well as actual behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Our investigation draws from Katz's functional theory of attitude formation (1960), according to which individuals' attitudes are formed to serve one or more different functions: utilitarian, ego-defensive,

value-expressive, or knowledge functions. Previous literature especially identifies utility and value-expression as the major functions underpinning how consumers evaluate certain products or brands (Schlosser, 2003). In this work, we posit that consumer attitudes towards global brand activism, previously recognized as a value-driven activity (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020), perform a *value-expressive* function. This indicates that attitudes towards brand activism allow consumers to express their values and, therefore, self-identity (Katz, 1960).

Accordingly, we expect that AttGBACTIVs may be formed in ways that serve the expression of individuals' own values. These values can be reflected in individual characteristics, such as political ideology (Kidwell *et al.*, 2013) and consumer ethnocentrism (Shimp and Sharma, 1987), and may lead to supporting or opposing the values that are commonly advocated by activism, such as equality, fairness, and justice (Kim *et al.*, 2011), accordingly influencing AttGBACTIVs. Similarly, AttGBACTIVs may be formed to serve the function of expressing consumers' (dis)approval of global brands and what they represent for consumers as an established brand category (Dimofte *et al.*, 2008). Finally, attitudes towards GBACTIVs can reflect consumers' cognitive evaluations of global brand activism initiatives. This is in accordance with the recognition inherent to the functional approach to attitude formation that consumers' cognitive beliefs regarding the attributes of brands and their initiatives –such as motivations behind the activism initiatives– shape their attitudes (Riefler, 2012). Our approach is distinct in applying the functional theory of attitude formation to global brand activism, to explain not only what drives consumer attitudes towards GBACTIVs, but also to build a concrete rationale of how and why AttGBACTIVs are formed due to their value-expressive nature.

### 3. Hypotheses Development

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework and the proposed relationships as they stem from the theoretical underpinnings of our study. Political ideology and consumer ethnocentrism represent individual characteristics, whereas AttGBRANDs and perceived motivations of GBACTIVs stand for consumer-brand factors. Together, these aspects are expected to influence the formation of AttGBACTIVs. The latter (consumer-brand factors) also serve as mechanisms expected to shape AttGBACTIVs. Our research hypotheses are presented in detail in the following sections.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

### *3.1 Political Ideology, AttGBRANDs, and AttGBACTIVs*

Political ideology is related to a set of views, beliefs, values, and ideas that shape expectations of how society should be organized (Pecot *et al.*, 2021). It is often dichotomized as right or left (Jung and Mittal, 2020) or captured on a conservatism-liberalism continuum (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019), as is the approach taken by our study. As an important consumer characteristic, political ideology shapes consumer behavior, including product and brand evaluations (Jung and Mittal, 2020). It also determines consumer (dis)approval of certain socio-political stances (Jung and Mittal, 2020), with liberals believing that companies should stand for important socio-political matters, seeking societal change and supporting activism forms such as boycotts (Jost *et al.*, 2017; Ketron *et al.*, 2022). Conservatives aim to maintain or defend the current system, preferring products that foster stability (Duhachek *et al.*, 2014) and seeking to minimize uncertainty (Jost, 2017), even if sometimes this means accepting injustice (Jung and Mittal, 2020).

As consumers' agreement with the political stance advocated by brand activists affects their attitudes towards them (Ketron *et al.*, 2022), aligning socio-political activism initiatives with consumers' political ideology is found to drive positive firm outcomes through sales growth

(Bhagwat *et al.*, 2020). Sometimes, the influence of political ideology on consumer attitudes towards brand activism is described as asymmetrical, with segments of the literature pointing to a positive impact more pronounced for liberal ideology (Ketron *et al.* 2022) and others finding that a conservative ideology is activating negative effects (Mukherjee and Althuisen, 2020). In line with the functional approach to attitude formation, consumers whose politically-driven values agree with the stances taken may view brand activism favorably (Koch, 2020), and vice versa, as an expression of their own values. This reasoning aligns with the concept of self-congruency, which suggests that when brand actions are congruent with a consumer's own values, views, and personality, they contribute to shaping their self-concept and identity, and as such reap more positive evaluations (Rokeach 1960; Karampela *et al.*, 2018). We argue that when global brands become activists, they tend to advocate progressive rather than conservative matters, for example, social justice and inclusion. Bhagwat *et al.*'s (2020) study of a pool of brand stances, many of which were taken by global brands, such as Starbucks and Amazon, further confirms the liberal inclination of global brand activism. This may lead GBACTIVs to garner more favorable reception among liberal audiences but draw more criticism from conservative consumers, since political ideology, as an indicator of consumer's agreement with a brand stance, is found to positively influence brand attitudes (Ketron *et al.*, 2022). This inclination aligns with the tendency of liberal consumers to view inequalities as systemic outcomes stemming from a lack of opportunities and thus respond better to messages that support structural changes and advocate for others on the basis of values such as fairness (Fernandes, 2020).

Additionally, given the inherent link of activism with change, global brands engaging in activism are portrayed as forces of change (Eilert and Nappier Cherup, 2020). This may be viewed more positively by liberal consumers, that are characterized by higher cognitive flexibility (Buechner *et al.*, 2022). In turn, conservative consumers typically prioritize

stability and economic focus over social activism and tend to believe that inequalities are a product of unequal efforts (Jost et al., 2003). Therefore, they might view global brand activism unfavorably, perceiving it as an unnecessary foray into social issues rather than focusing on the business fundamentals (Friedman, 1970). Since GBACTIVs tend to take more liberal stances and seek to disrupt the preset status quo through promoting societal change, it is expected that the more liberal (less conservative) consumers are, the more (less) favorable their AttGBACTIVs will be. Thus:

*H1. Higher levels of liberal political ideology positively impact AttGBACTIVs, while lower levels (i.e., more conservative ideology) negatively impact them.*

Additionally, we posit that political ideology's effect on AttGBACTIVs passes through AttGBRANDs. Khan *et al.* (2013) demonstrate that conservatives tend to prefer established national brands—rather than generic substitutes—due to their association with tradition and perceived reliability. This preference is indicative of a broader conservative inclination towards familiarity and risk aversion (Jost *et al.*, 2003), which can shape more positive attitudes towards brands that embody these values and less favorable attitudes towards global brands that are typically associated with non-local symbols (Steenkamp, 2019), therefore, bear unfamiliar connotations. Conversely, individuals with liberal-leaning ideologies may be more open to new experiences and change, potentially fostering more favorable attitudes towards less traditional brands, such as global brands (Jost *et al.*, 2003). In turn, AttGBRANDs are critical in driving overall consumer evaluations (Srivastava and Balaji, 2018), and can play a significant role in how consumers respond to the social activities of brands (Choi et al., 2016). Such an evaluation transfer corresponds with a “global brand halo effect”, wherein positive associations related to a brand's globalness successively affect brand evaluations (Davvetas et al., 2020). In an analogous manner, consumers' (un)favorable AttGBRANDs may be transferred to GBACTIVs, serving the function of expressing their

general AttGBRANDs. Accordingly, we posit that AttGBRANDs mediate the effect of political ideology on AttGBACTIVs. Thus:

*H2. Higher levels of liberal political ideology positively impact AttGBRANDs, while lower levels (i.e., more conservative ideology) negatively impact them.*

*H3. AttGBRANDs positively influence AttGBACTIVs.*

*H4. AttGBRANDs mediate the relationship between political ideology and AttGBACTIVs.*

### *3.2 Consumer Ethnocentrism, AttGBRANDs, and AttGBACTIVs*

Consumer ethnocentrism reflects consumers' tendency to favor national products and consider them superior to foreign ones (Guo, 2013). Rooted in sociology, ethnocentrism assumes viewing the world from one's own ethnical group perspective, favoring the in-group (i.e., a group that one identifies with), and rejecting what lies within the out-group (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Ethnocentric tendencies influence consumers' evaluations, product and brand preferences (Akram *et al.*, 2011), whereas studies indicate that consumer ethnocentrism might exert a negative influence on global branding outcomes (e.g., Balabanis and Siamagka, 2017).

GBACTIVs often advocate for marginalized or global out-groups, such as international labor rights, environmental sustainability, and LGBTQ+ rights (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020). These initiatives can be perceived as foreign or antithetical to local traditions and norms, further exacerbating negative attitudes among ethnocentric consumers who prioritize national over global concerns. Additionally, recent research points to a positive association between ethnocentrism and the tendency to perceive group minorities that seek justice or equal rights as a cultural and national threat -a phenomenon known as neo-racism, where in-group favoritism and perceived out-group threat extend beyond one's race or national boundaries (Černigoj, 2022). Therefore, global brands supporting such issues might be viewed negatively

by ethnocentric consumers. Moreover, global brands, whether originating from the consumer's home country or from abroad, embody a global identity that promotes universal values and transcends local cultural and national boundaries (Steenkamp 2014). These brands, when engaged in activism, highlight issues that demand a global perspective and collective action. For ethnocentric consumers, this global focus can appear disconnected from local priorities and identities (Balabanis and Siamagka, 2017), leading to a disconnect and negative perception. With ethnocentric consumers being less concerned with the out-group, their views of GBACTIVs will serve the function of expressing their concern about their in-group. Accordingly, we expect that:

*H5. Consumer ethnocentrism negatively impacts AttGBACTIVs.*

Additionally, research on global branding indicates that ethnocentric consumers show preference for local brands due to global brand associations with foreignness (Siamagka and Balabanis, 2015) and favor brands incorporating national symbols (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Global brands use non-local symbols (Steenkamp, 2019), thus become associated with the out-group, prompting negative evaluations by ethnocentric consumers (Choi *et al.*, 2016), who might even feel that global brands threaten their local economy (Huaman-Ramirez *et al.*, 2019). Accordingly, ethnocentrism negatively affects consumers' AttGBRANDs (Alden *et al.*, 2006), which critically influence the outcomes of global branding initiatives (Srivastava and Balaji 2018). We thus expect that AttGBRANDs will ultimately transfer to GBACTIVs and affect them in a negative manner:

*H6. Consumer ethnocentrism negatively impacts AttGBRANDs.*

*H7. AttGBRANDs mediate the relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and AttGBACTIVs.*

### 3.3 *The critical role of perceived motivation of GBACTIVs*

Perceived motivation of GBACTIVs refers to the perceived cause driving activist brands and can range from self-serving to altruistic motives (Bigné *et al.*, 2012). Consumers are keenly concerned with the reasons behind companies' prosocial activities (Ellen *et al.*, 2006), and motives attributed to these activities affect their attitudes and behavior (Becker-Olsen *et al.*, 2006; Choi *et al.*, 2016). According to motivated reasoning, individuals' evaluations are shaped by their ideology, leading them to believe information that is congruent with their own views (Munro *et al.*, 2010). As such, value-consistent information tends to be viewed more positively because people want to avoid being emotionally and cognitively challenged, which leads to lower information-processing and scrutiny (Schröder, 2022).

We posit that GBACTIVs' initiatives, which promote societal change—a fact positively viewed by liberals as previously stated—and are largely related to self-transcendence values (Schwartz, 1994) such as benevolence, social justice and collective good, align more (less) with liberal (conservative) political ideology. Consequently, global brand activists, acting as agents for social change, will be less (more) scrutinized by liberal (conservative) consumers. Liberals, even if they acknowledge profit-oriented motives behind GBACTIVs' initiatives, can refrain from correcting their motivation attribution due to alignment of the initiative with their personal ideology and values (Munro *et al.*, 2010). In contrast, conservative consumers, who prioritize stability and traditional values (Fernandes and Mandel, 2014), are more likely to scrutinize and oppose the ideologically opposing, liberally leaning, and change-driving actions of global activist brands (Bhagwat *et al.*, 2020). Bridging this with the value-expressive view of attitude formation underpinning our study, we argue that GBACTIVs' stances, being more aligned with liberal values, will be more (less) trusted as altruistically motivated, rather than profit-oriented, by liberal (conservative) consumers:

*H8: Higher levels of liberal political ideology positively impact the perceived altruism of GBACTIVs, while lower levels (i.e., more conservative ideology) lead to perceptions of more profit-oriented motivations.*

Evidence exists connecting firms' motives for engaging in prosocial activities with how consumers evaluate them; for example, within the CSR literature, activities perceived as profit-seeking drive negative consumer attitudes (Becker-Olsen *et al.*, 2006), while more altruistic attributions are linked to more positive perceptions of brand trustworthiness (Ellen *et al.*, 2006). The extent to which a brand engaging in activism initiatives is perceived as sincere rather than egoistical or opportunistic can be related to whether it comes across as 'true' or 'authentic' (Mirzaei *et al.*, 2022; Sibai *et al.*, 2021), an aspect further related with the congruence between the brand's purpose, values, messaging and practice with the controversial sociopolitical issue it chooses to engage with (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020). In this sense, inauthentic brand activists that do not exhibit clear purpose, values, messaging, and demonstrate no or limited evidence of prosocial corporate practice (in sum, those that do not 'practice what they preach') are seen as 'moderately incongruent' and risk eliciting negative consumer reactions and perceptions of woke-washing, with negative consequences for brand equity (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020). Based on this previous literature, we expect that, when the motives of GBACTIVs are perceived as sincere, there will be a positive impact on AttGBACTIVs. Combining H8 with this link, we further expect political ideology will influence AttGBACTIVs indirectly, through perceived motivation. Thus:

*H9: Perceptions of more altruistic motivations of GBACTIVs positively impact AttGBACTIVs, while perceptions of more profit-oriented motivations negatively impact AttGBACTIVs. H10. Perceived motivation of GBACTIVs mediates the link between political ideology and AttGBACTIVs.*

Additionally, positive AttGBRANDs influence how global brand actions are viewed and indicate positive consumer dispositions towards these actions (Keller, 1993). Positive AttGBRANDs elicit trust and come with associating brand globalness with credibility and sincerity (Kim *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, people with positive AttGBRANDs are more likely to consider their intentions as sincere and make altruistic attributions to their activism motivation.

*H11. AttGBRANDs positively influence perceived motivation of GBACTIVs.*

Finally, an additional indirect effect on AttGBACTIVs is anticipated, stemming from the influence of consumer ethnocentrism. As higher levels of consumer ethnocentrism are expected to negatively influence AttGBRANDs (as explained in H6), those unfavorable attitudes are, in turn, expected to negatively influence how the motivations of GBACTIVs are perceived (as outlined in H11), since an effect reverse to “global brand halo” described by Davvetas *et al.* (2020) will occur. This influence means that ethnocentric consumers are expected to perceive GBACTIV’s motives as more self-serving due to viewing global brands more negatively, consequently triggering unfavorable AttGBACTIVs (as detailed in H9).

*H12. The relationship between ethnocentrism and AttGBACTIVs is subject to a serial mediation by AttGBRANDs and perceived motivation of GBACTIVs.*

## **4. Methodology**

### *4.1. Design & sampling*

To test our model, we conducted a large-scale online quantitative survey, focusing on the UK market. We chose the UK because British consumers increasingly agree that action must be taken upon issues such as racial and gender equality (National Centre for Social Research, 2022), while the country’s £813 billion goods and services exports and its £898 imports

render it a dynamic and pertinent context for global brand research (House of Commons Library, 2022). While the UK is home to many global brands and significant export volume, recent findings demonstrate that the level of a country's economic development and globalization does not significantly skew consumer characteristics, such as ethnocentrism, that determine global branding outcomes (Balabanis and Siamagka, 2022). Accordingly, the UK's status does not necessarily predispose its consumers to unique ethnocentrism levels compared to other countries and, thus, the UK remains a suitable context for this study.

Our survey requested no personal information, and all responses were anonymous, hence minimizing social desirability bias (Joinson, 1999). To ensure that participants only focused on global brands, they were provided with the following definition adapted from Strizhakova *et al.* (2012): *“Global brands are present and sold in many countries of the world. They are distributed and promoted under the same brand name in more than one country. As a result, people in different countries of the world can recognize, find and buy the exact same brand.”* as well as some examples (i.e., Google, Coca Cola, Toyota). Participants were then asked to type their own global brand examples (please refer to Web Appendix A for a summary of the global brands mentioned). They were also provided with a definition of brand activism (*“Brand activism refers to the act of publicly taking a stand in order to affect crucial, and often divisive, social and political issues”*) adapted from Kotler and Sarkar (2017), and some examples (e.g. brand activism pertaining to the Black Lives Matter and the Stop Hate for Profit campaigns). Providing respondents with a general global brand definition, several global brand examples, as well as general brand activism scenarios, aimed to eliminate brand-specific biases, directing consumers to think of global brands in general (Guo, 2013), while ensuring that the concept of global brands is sufficiently clear.

We pre-tested the survey with 129 members of the target population and subsequently applied three screening criteria to our main survey: i) made the question requesting for a

global brand example compulsory; ii) added an attention check; and iii) introduced a speeder flag. Applying multiple eligibility and quality screening criteria is essential to address the common data quality risks associated with unmoderated online panels, even if this might mean that a high percentage of the responses obtained –even up to 80% or higher– might have to be deleted (Arndt *et al.*, 2022). We then launched our official survey, recruiting a UK-based, nationally representative sample of British consumers (general population above 18 years old based on latest UK census data for region and gender quotas), from the Qualtrics research panel (total response attempts n=856). Not all response attempts met the aforementioned screening criteria for inclusion into the final sample. Among the 448 that cases that met our criteria and were returned to us by Qualtrics, we eliminated 9 cases that provided irrelevant examples of global brands when prompted (e.g., 'unsure', 'none', 'awesome'), ending up with a final sample of 439 responses (47.8% male, 51.7% female, 0.5% other; 6.2% aged 18-24, 18.5% aged 25-34, 17.8% aged 35-44, 20.5% aged 45-54, 17.3% aged 55-64, 19.8% aged 65 and above).

#### 4.2. Measures

We used established measures to capture our constructs and adapted them as needed to the focus of our study (provided as supplementary material in Web Appendix B). We asked participants to indicate their overall AttGBACTIVs [through a three-item scale adapted from Nan and Heo (2007)], and their perceptions about the motivation of GBACTIVs [using a three-item scale adapted from Bigné *et al.* (2012)]. We also captured respondents' political ideology through their set of opinions about major politically-charged socio-political issues [measured by a five-item scale adapted from Kidwell *et al.* (2013) and adapted to the UK context according to established practices (Marx *et al.*, 2007)], consumer ethnocentrism [measured by a four-item scale adapted from the widely validated CET measures developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987)], and AttGBRANDs [measured by a three-item scale adapted

from Nan and Heo (2007)]. Our controls included measures of perceived importance of social (e.g., racial injustice) and political (e.g., Brexit) issues [adapted from Robin *et al.* (1996)], as the literature indicates that consumers' perception of prosocial activities can be contingent on how important they believe the issues to be (e.g., Brunk and de Boer, 2018). We further captured a series of demographic aspects (namely age, gender, income, education, number of children) to account for response variability stemming from consumer heterogeneity, according to established practice (e.g., Diallo *et al.*, 2018; Ketron *et al.*, 2022).

## 5. Data Analysis and Results

### 5.1 Measurement assessment

To assess our measures, we employed both an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on SPSS Statistics 27 and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on AMOS (Crick, 2023). Despite using pre-established measures for our constructs, we still made adjustments to fit the context of global brand activism (e.g., AttGBACTIVs), thus utilized EFA to establish the factor structure of our data and rule out the possibility of cross-loadings between our scales.

Following reverse coding of negatively worded items, we inserted our scales in a principal axis factoring with an oblique (direct oblimin) rotation (Field, 2013). We obtained a meritorious Keyser-Meyer-Olkin measure ( $KMO=.861$ ) which indicated sampling adequacy. Additionally, Bartlett's test indicated significant correlations between variables ( $\chi^2=8248.90$ ;  $df=276$ ;  $p=.00$ ) and a total of 81.08% total variance explained. We then conducted a CFA using the maximum likelihood estimation procedure to test how the underlying factor structure fits the data. We attained satisfactory model fit heuristics ( $\chi^2=540.77$ ;  $df=316$ ;  $p=.00$ ; relative  $\chi^2=1.71$ ;  $CFI=.97$ ;  $NFI=.94$ ;  $RMSEA=.04$ ).

We proceeded in assessing the reliability and validity of our constructs to ensure their appropriateness for model testing. Convergent validity was confirmed as all factor loadings in the measurement model were significant, ranging from .541 to .953, and all AVE estimates exceeded .5 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Discriminant validity was also confirmed, as the square root of each construct's AVE was greater than the constructs' correlation with other constructs in the model (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). All measures exceeded the accepted threshold for reliability (.6), with composite reliability values all being above .857 (see Table I for an overview of latent construct properties and inter-construct correlations).

INSERT TABLE I ABOUT HERE

### 5.2 Common method variance & multicollinearity checks

We controlled for common method variance (CMV), using a variety of ex-ante (e.g., use of established measures; use of questionnaire sections; controlling participants' progress and ensuring all questions are answered with no option to return back; ensuring anonymity and confidentiality) and ex-post strategies (CFA) (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). First, we modelled all items as indicators of a single latent factor where the model's fit proved unsatisfactory ( $\chi^2=6225.48$ ;  $df=377$ ;  $p=.000$ ;  $CFI=.310$ ;  $NFI=.299$ ;  $SRMR=.0349$ ;  $RMSEA=.188$ ). Second, a theoretically unrelated item adapted from Cleveland and Laroche (2007), namely "*When I have read magazines or watched TV, I have often seen advertising for offers of global brands.*", was included in the implementation of a comprehensive marker variable technique (Williams *et al.*, 2010). The final sensitivity model was not significantly different from the unconstrained method variable model ( $\Delta\chi^2=2.31$ ;  $\Delta df=21$ ;  $p>.05$ ), indicating that CMV is unlikely to distort the relationships in the measurement model.

We further checked for data multicollinearity issues (see Table I) by inspecting the correlations of our variables, which were below .8, and calculating the variance inflation

factors (VIF) of all exogenous and mediating variables, which were all below 1.685 and the recommended cut-off threshold of 10 (Field, 2013). Thus, multicollinearity is not threatening our results.

### 5.3 Results

Next, we tested our model on AMOS 27 using structural equation modelling and the maximum likelihood approach. We ran a sequence of models, starting from Model 1 that only contained the control variables, enhancing it to Model 2 that incorporated the direct effects of political ideology, consumer ethnocentrism and AttGBRANDs on AttGBACTIVs, and then to Model 3 that further included perceived motivation of GBACTIVs on AttGBACTIVs [but no mediating effect (i.e. no links between political ideology and AttGBRANDs, political ideology and perceived motivation of GBACTIVs, consumer ethnocentrism on AttGBRANDs and AttGBRANDs and perceived motivation of GBACTIVs)]. The final model (Model 4) included all hypothesized mediating paths (see comparison in Table II). A chi-squared difference test indicated that our final mediated structural model presents a better fit compared to the unmediated Model 3 ( $\Delta\chi^2=45$ ;  $\Delta df=15$ ;  $p<.001$ ), displays good model fit heuristics ( $\chi^2=585.848$ ;  $df=331$ ;  $p=.00$ ; relative  $\chi^2=1.769$ ; CFI=.970; NFI=.934; AGFI=.892; SRMR=.0468; RMSEA=.042) and explains 58.2% of the variance of AttGBACTIVs, 17.1% of the variance of AttGBRANDs, and 13.8% of the variance of perceived motivation of GBACTIVs. We use Model 4 to evaluate our hypotheses.

INSERT TABLE II ABOUT HERE

As shown in Table III, we find support for the existence of a positive link between political ideology and AttGBACTIVs (H1:  $B=.412$ ;  $t=5.285$ ;  $p<.001$ ), and political ideology and AttGBRANDs (H2:  $B=.136$ ;  $t=2.007$ ;  $p<.050$ ) but not for the AttGBRANDs–AttGBACTIVs relationship (H3:  $B=.008$ ;  $t=.177$ ;  $p=.860$ ). We do not confirm that consumer ethnocentrism

directly impacts AttGBACTIVs (H5:  $B=-.015$ ;  $t=-.366$ ;  $p=.714$ ), but we find it to negatively influence AttGBRANDs (H6:  $B=-.321$ ;  $t=-7.132$ ;  $p<.001$ ). Finally, we find that perceived motivation of AGBACTIVs is positively influenced by political ideology (H8:  $B=.403$ ;  $t=4.962$ ;  $p<.001$ ), positively affects AttGBACTIVs (H9:  $B=.559$ ;  $t=10.891$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and is positively affected by AttGBRANDs (H11:  $B=.189$ ;  $t=3.448$ ;  $p<.001$ ).

INSERT TABLE III ABOUT HERE

We further evaluated the full structural model to assess the existence of mediation and estimated the relevant indirect effects, as described by Zhao *et al.* (2010). Our analysis incorporated a 2,000 bootstrapped-samples solution and 95% confidence intervals (CIs), as is an established practice (e.g., Strizhakova *et al.* 2011). When competing indirect effects existed simultaneously, we ran the model without the competitive mediating path, to isolate the indirect effect of interest. For example, to explore H4 we removed from our model the paths connecting political identity and AttGBRANDs with perceived motivations, to avoid capturing their contribution to the corresponding hypothesized indirect effect. As the range between the unstandardized lower confidence interval (LCI) and the upper confidence interval (UCI) bounds pass through 0, the path from AttGBRANDs to AttGBACTIVs is not significant indicating a lack of support for H4 that posits that AttGBRANDs mediate the political ideology–AttGBACTIVs relationship ( $B=.003$ ;  $LCI=-.011$ ;  $UCI=.027$ ;  $p=.471$ ). Similarly, the hypothesized effect of ethnocentrism on AttGBACTIVs through AttGBRANDs is also not supported (H7:  $B=-.008$ ;  $LCI=-.046$ ;  $UCI=.029$ ;  $p=.669$ ), due to the non-significant effect of AttGBRANDs on AttGBACTIVs. Conversely, support is found for the existence of the mediating role of perceived motivation. First, the political ideology–AttGBACTIVs relationship is partially mediated through perceived motivation (H10:  $B=.225$ ;  $LCI=.136$ ;  $UCI=.364$ ;  $p<.001$ ). Second, AttGBRANDs and perceived motivation fully mediate the link of ethnocentrism with AttGBACTIVs, in support of our serial

mediation hypothesis (H12:  $B=-.034$ ;  $LCI=-.061$ ;  $UCI=-.017$ ;  $p<.001$ ). Among our controls, only perceived importance of social issues was found to exert a positive ( $B=.272$ ,  $t=3.99$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and age a negative ( $B=-.133$ ;  $t=-3.55$ ;  $p<.001$ ) influence on AttGBACTIVs, respectively. An overview of our SEM results can be viewed in Figure 2.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

#### 5.4 Robustness checks

To enhance the robustness of our findings we conducted post hoc analyses. First, we extended our analysis to include an additional independent variable, namely global consumer identity (1<sup>st</sup> robustness check). This factor represents the extent to which consumers perceive that they belong to the global community and is associated with consumers' relationships with global brands (Bartsch *et al.*, 2016). Given that global brands frequently engage in prosocial activities, such as CSR, on a global scale, consumers with global identities tend to hold them in higher regard, recognizing the positive impact of such initiatives on the global community they feel connected to (Magnusson *et al.*, 2015). Accordingly, this effect may extend to the realm of global brand activism, where advocated issues (e.g., diversity and inclusion) transcend national borders, reflecting universal values. Our findings demonstrate satisfactory model fit heuristics, return estimates similar to the ones originally obtained, and reinforce the stability of our model confirming the original assumptions made pertaining to our hypotheses. Additionally, we find that global consumer identity exerts a positive effect on AttGBACTIVs ( $B=.336$ ;  $t=7.206$ ;  $p<.001$ ). We further examined whether AttGBRANDs mediates the link between global identity and AttGBACTIVs, and if, along with perceived motivation, they act as serial mediators in this relationship. However, our results do not provide any evidence of mediation. A detailed comparison of these results with our original model can be found in our Supplementary Materials (Web Appendix C).

Second, whereas our reasoning linking consumer ethnocentrism to motivations passes through AttGBRANDs, one could argue that motivated reasoning (as described in Section 3.3) might extend to connect consumer dispositions, namely consumer ethnocentrism, with perceived motivation of GBACTIVs. Building on this foundation, our second post hoc analysis considers how ethnocentric consumers are likely to engage in a biased information processing pattern, as they might be particularly vigilant and critical of global brands, which they perceive as belonging to an outgroup, thereby enhancing their suspicion and attributing ulterior, self-serving motives to these brands' activities. This is in line with Munro et al.'s (2010) findings demonstrating that individuals tend to attribute more negative motives and exhibit greater suspicion towards outgroup members. Accordingly, we added this link to our original model (2<sup>nd</sup> robustness check). The findings show good model fit heuristics and reveal an unexpected finding, as the direct link between consumer ethnocentrism and perceived motivations of GBACTIVs returns positive ( $B=.227$ ;  $t=4.289$ ;  $p<.001$ ). All remaining relationships remain unchanged, confirming the robustness of our initial findings. A detailed comparison of these results with our original model can be found in Web Appendix D.

We then proceeded in comparing this model (i.e., 2<sup>nd</sup> robustness check) with a model that contains the link between consumer ethnocentrism and perceived motivation but does not include the mediating effect of AttGBRANDs on this relationship (i.e., excludes the consumer ethnocentrism-AttGBRANDs and AttGBRANDs-perceived motivation paths). This comparison allows to capture the mediating effect of AttGBRANDs on the consumer ethnocentrism-perceived motivation relationship, which our original model identifies as a core theoretical and empirical path through which perceptions of motivations of GBACTIVs are shaped. A comparison of the models suggests the superiority of the mediated model ( $\Delta\chi^2=74.901$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p>.001$ ) which includes AttGBRANDs as the path through which MOTIVs are shaped. Given the important negative effect of consumer ethnocentrism on

AttGBRANDs, excluding this link would be a significant omission, as AttGBRANDs emerge as an important mediator that renders the indirect effect of consumer ethnocentrism on perceived motivations ( $B=-.093$ ;  $LCI=-.151$ ;  $UCI=-.052$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and in turn on AttGBACTIVs negative ( $B=-.034$ ;  $LCI=-.061$ ;  $UCI=-.017$ ;  $p<.001$ ). These effects comprise relationships with important managerial implications too (discussed in our manuscript) that would otherwise remain undiscovered. Please review Web Appendix E for an overview of how the robustness models discussed here compare, and the following section for a discussion of these additional findings.

## 6. Discussion & Implications

### 6.1 Theoretical implications and discussion

Our work makes several theoretical contributions to the global branding and socio-political activism literature. First, we add to the evolving discourse of brand activism studies that consider global brands in their investigations (e.g., Berestova *et al.*, 2022; Hydock *et al.*, 2020; Özturan and Grinstein, 2022) and focus on understanding whether and what makes brand activism initiatives appropriate for global brands as a special brand category. Accordingly, we elucidate what shapes consumer attitudes towards global brands that take stances in divisive socio-political issues (GBACTIVs), viewing them as global branding initiatives. Second, our investigation integrates established determinants of activism and social responsibility outcomes, namely political ideology (Ketron *et al.*, 2022) and perceived motivations (e.g., Bigné *et al.*, 2012; Vredenburg *et al.* 2020), with consumer ethnocentrism and AttGBRANDs as factors affecting global branding outcomes. This is particularly important, given that activism is becoming an increasingly popular but risky practice that when adopted by global brands, is evaluated both based on the activism itself and influenced by the global image and reach of those brands. Our comprehensive model provides a nuanced

understanding of how these interconnected factors collectively shape AttGBACTIVs, adding to previous studies that have underscored political ideology, brand alignment, consumer-brand identification and perceived authenticity (Hydock et al., 2020; Mirzaei et al., 2022; Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020) as drivers of attitudes towards brand activism.

Our third main contribution lies in unpacking the role of AttGBRANDs and perceived motivation of GBACTIVs as mechanisms shaping AttGBACTIVs. Accordingly, our investigation extends the existing literature which often explores the effects of individual aspects, like political ideology (e.g. Ketron *et al.*, 2022), or brand-consumer perceptions, such as perceived authenticity (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020), as determinants of brand activism outcomes. Instead, we illustrate the complex concurrent dynamics of these elements in shaping consumer views on GBACTIVs. We demonstrate that AttGBACTIVs are shaped not only by direct consumer ideological aspects and dispositions but also deeper, often subconscious, factors, linked with both the globalness of the activism initiatives and their value-driven nature. Finally, our research extends the application of Katz's (1960) functional approach to attitude formation to the domain of brand activism. Treating consumer attitudes as vehicles for expressing values within social contexts, our work sheds light on the formation of AttGBACTIVs by providing unique insights into how consumers form their attitudes towards these socio-political brand initiatives as expressions of their own value systems, which are reflected in consumer political ideology and ethnocentrism, and pass through their cognitive schemas and beliefs (i.e., AttGBRANDs and perceptions regarding the motives of GBACTIVs).

More specifically, our findings show that higher levels of liberal political ideology are a positive antecedent of AttGBACTIVs (H1), adding to general knowledge that links political ideology with brand activism (Bhagwat *et al.*, 2020; Ketron *et al.*, 2022). Indeed, the most prominent stances taken by GBACTIVs so far revolve around promoting progressive values,

such as equality and diversity (e.g., Black Lives Matter), as well as peace (e.g., war in Ukraine), and supporting change, a message framing that is viewed more positively (negatively) by liberals (conservatives) (Duhachek *et al.*, 2014). This observation is aligned with the finding that corporate activism has a liberal tendency (Bhagwat *et al.*, 2020). For consumers with a more liberal (conservative) political ideology, viewing GBACTIVs positively (negatively) serves the function of expressing support (opposition) to values advocated by brand activism. Our findings further bridge the value-expressive view to attitude formation with the system justification approach (Jost *et al.*, 2017), which highlights conservatives' preference for retaining the status quo (Jung and Mittal, 2020). The negative effect of consumers' conservative ideology on their attitudes, expressing disagreement with the activism's cause, is consistent with extant literature (e.g., Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020), and extends our knowledge by proving that this link stands for global brand activism initiatives too.

In contrast to our theory-based expectations though (e.g., Akram *et al.*, 2011), consumer ethnocentrism is not found to directly drive AttGBACTIVs (H5). This can be due to its indirect effect that, according to our findings, passes through AttGBRANDs and perceived motivations of GBACTIVs. An additional explanation could be due to the responses of ethnocentric consumers being determined by the specific issues being endorsed by global brands (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020). When exploring the role of AttGBRANDs as a direct and indirect influence on AttGBACTIVs (H3), we do not find a direct link between them, or a mediating effect of AttGBRANDs to the political ideology–AttGBACTIVs relationship (H4). The lack of significance in these links could be due to the complexity of consumer attitudes towards global brands and their activism. Consumers might appreciate global brands (AttGBRANDs) for reasons like quality or prestige (Steenkamp *et al.*, 2003), but this does not necessarily translate directly into positive attitudes towards their activism efforts

(AttGBACTIVs). This could be due to skepticism about the genuineness of these efforts (Wagner *et al.*, 2009) or a perceived disconnect between brand image and activism motivations (Chernev and Blair, 2015). As a matter of fact, our findings corroborate this, on the basis of the indirect effect of AttGBRANDs on how global brand activists are evaluated, which passes through how consumers perceive their motivations. This link further activates other indirect links too, such as the one between ethnocentrism and AttGBACTIVs. Yet, AttGBRANDs are positively affected by liberal political ideology (H2). This is an important contribution to the international marketing literature, addressing calls to explore how political ideology affects consumers' views on global brands (Gürhan-Canli *et al.*, 2018).

In accordance with previous findings (e.g., Alden *et al.*, 2006), AttGBRANDs are additionally found to be negatively influenced by consumer ethnocentrism (H6). The support of the link between consumer ethnocentrism and AttGBRANDs is consistent with previous literature (Choi *et al.*, 2016); ethnocentric consumers perceive global brands with their use of non-local symbols as more oriented to the out-group, hence this might trigger negative AttGBRANDs. This effect, however, does not seem to automatically extend to AttGBACTIVs (H7 not supported). This may be due to the fact that consumers' reactions to global brand activism initiatives may be formed in more complex ways – and in fact they are, as our study shows evidence for this – with the consumer focus potentially being on the 'congruence' and authenticity of the activism initiative with the brand's overall purpose, messaging and practices (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020), or on the specific issue that the activism addresses. Indeed, while AttGBRANDs do not seem to directly extend to AttGBACTIVs, they do pass through how their motivations are perceived.

Accordingly, we reveal the prominent direct and indirect role of perceived motivation of GBACTIVs in shaping AttGBACTIVs. Specifically, we find that perceived (altruistic) motivation of GBACTIVs has a positive influence on AttGBACTIVs (H9), a link that aligns

with findings associating altruistic motivations of prosocial activities such as CSR with favorable consumer attitudes (Choi *et al.*, 2016), demonstrating its relevance in the context of global brand activism too. We also show that perceived (altruistic) motivation is positively influenced by (liberal) political ideology (H8), and positively mediates its relationship with AttGBACTIVs (H10). The more liberal consumers are, the more they perceive GBACTIVs' motivations as altruistic, rather than profit-oriented, which positively reinforces their AttGBACTIVs. Our findings expand the socio-psychological perspective on the influence of ideological filters and bias on consumer reasoning and perceptions (Munro *et al.*, 2010), add to existing literature linking political ideology with socio-political activism outcomes (Bhagwat *et al.*, 2020; Hydock *et al.*, 2020), and corroborate its role as a driver of attitudes towards brand activists (Ketrón *et al.*, 2022).

Additionally digging into the indirect influence of perceived motivation of GBACTIVs, we find it is positively affected by AttGBRANDs (H11). Consumers that view global brands favorably are more likely to trust that their intentions are altruistic, and it is through this link that the influence of the globalness of the brands materializes. Favorable motivation attributions also exert a direct positive effect on AttGBACTIVs (H9), forming an overall positive indirect effect of AttGBRANDs to AttGBACTIVs. Conversely, as AttGBRANDs are negatively affected by consumer ethnocentrism (H6), AttGBRANDs and perceived motivation of GBACTIVs jointly mediate the link between consumer ethnocentrism and AttGBACTIVs resulting in an overall negative indirect effect (H12). These findings reveal the divergent paths that lead to consumers' AttGBACTIVs, emphasizing the complexity of their formation. Accordingly, we expand upon the existing notion which suggests that consumers anticipate global brands to exhibit responsible behavior (Özsomer and Altaras, 2008). Our study elucidates favorable attitudes towards GBACTIVs are more visible among

liberal consumers as opposed to conservative or ethnocentric ones, whereas AttGBRANDs and perceptions act as key mechanisms in further enabling/activating these effects.

Our controls also reveal important relationships. First, we find a positive effect of perceived social issue importance on AttGBACTIVs, corroborating results that identify issue involvement as a driver of attitudes towards socio-political advocacy (Li *et al.*, 2022). Second, the inclusion of demographic variable controls in our model reveals a negative influence of age, as the older the consumers are, the less positive their AttGBACTIVs are. This might be because older age is related with higher levels of conservatism (Geys *et al.*, 2022), thus negatively influencing AttGBACTIVs. No additional demographic elements seem to affect AttGBACTIVs.

Finally, our robustness tests reveal important findings too. First, we find a strong positive effect of global identity on AttGBACTIVs, showing that consumers with a global identity positively view GBACTIVs which often support a variety of more universal issues. This finding expands our understanding of the global brand initiatives that are positively viewed by globally-identifying consumers, as well as of what factors drive positive activism evaluations (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020). Our second robustness check reveals an unexpected positive impact of consumer ethnocentrism on perceived motivations of GBACTIVs, that is reversed and turns negative in the presence of AttGBRANDs that are negatively influenced by consumer ethnocentrism. This finding, taken together with the non-significant direct link between consumer ethnocentrism and AttGBACTIVs, highlights that activism initiatives are not necessarily perceived negatively by ethnocentric consumers, and the intentions behind activism might even be viewed positively by them. Consumer ethnocentrism may exhibit a positive relationship with how prosocial behavior is perceived, highlighting that it should not be conflated with selfishness. Given that certain issues advocated by global brand activists might have local implications –even if universal– they

could potentially be perceived as driving support for local communities too. Consequently, the motives of GBACTIVs might not undergo scrutiny unless their global nature and non-local cues and symbols are highlighted. This is when the negative link of consumer ethnocentrism to AttGBRANDs comes into play, and the motivations of GBACTIVs are in turn negatively shaped, creating an overall negative indirect effect and highlighting the complex mechanism shaping the outcomes of global brand activism.

### *6.2 Managerial implications*

We contribute to managerial practice in multiple ways, by delineating targeted strategies for implementing global brand activism. First, our study provides valuable insights regarding how global brand activism can be used to target customer segments based on their political orientation. We find that global brand activism that emphasizes diversity and inclusion effectively resonates better with liberal consumers, thereby enhancing positive evaluations of the brand. Activism campaigns, which promote values such as diversity and inclusion, are indeed an excellent way for global brands to reach out to liberal consumers, and as such reap positive consumer evaluations. For example, Ben & Jerry's has long been an advocate for social justice issues, including racial equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and environmental sustainability (Marketing the Rainbow, 2023). Their clear stance on these issues can resonate deeply with liberal consumers who value inclusivity and sustainability. For instance, their commitment to racial justice through their "Justice Remix'd" flavor and associated campaign highlights how brands can connect their products to broader social causes (Forbes, 2019). On the other hand, as consumers with a conservative political ideology tend to view GBACTIVs more negatively, it is suggested that global brands that want to reach this audience either refrain from brand activism altogether or, when addressing conservative or mass global audiences with diverse ideological backgrounds, dissociate from being characterized as activists and avoid the corresponding change associations that it elicits. Instead, global brands

can emphasize the benefits of their stance-taking on broader societal issues for specific societal groups, such as families. By highlighting the positive impacts of their initiatives on traditionally valued groups, global brands can foster understanding and support from a broader audience base.

Second, it is crucial for marketing practitioners to underscore the altruistic motivations behind their brand activism, particularly when the target audience may be skeptical of the brand's intentions. This can be done by carefully selecting activism causes aligned to the brand purpose, employing credible sources for communicating it (Bigné *et al.*, 2012), or intensifying their commitment (Ellen *et al.*, 2006), for example through concrete rather than abstract initiatives (Ahmad *et al.*, 2024). While this is generally important, our study indicates that the emphasis on altruism can be slightly moderated when addressing liberal consumers, who are naturally predisposed to align with the brand's activism due to shared values. In contrast, conservative consumers, who tend to view activism as profit-driven, require stronger assurances of genuine altruistic intent. Patagonia's dedication to environmental sustainability, for instance, goes beyond mere branding; it's woven into their business model and product life cycles (Alonso, 2023). They have been transparent about their motivations and long-term commitments, such as their "1% for the Planet" initiative where they commit 1% of total sales to environmental groups. This solidifies their altruistic image, particularly important for audiences skeptical of corporate motives in activism (Alonso, 2023).

Third, our findings suggest that the global nature of the brand is placed in the spotlight when communicating activism initiatives to audiences favorable towards global brands, such as less ethnocentric consumers, in order to positively affect their perceptions of the motivations behind the global brand activism initiatives. For instance, a brand's global brand image can be leveraged to appeal to less ethnocentric consumers who are more prone to hold global

identities by using global elements and symbols of global consumer culture and global citizenship (Strizhakova *et al.*, 2011), for example by promoting its commitment to supporting globally relevant issues, like LGBTQ+ rights. Emphasizing the worldwide scale and impact of activism efforts can correspondingly foster a sense of authenticity, which in turn is linked to positive brand activism outcomes (Schmidt *et al.*, 2022). Conversely, we advise that global brand managers either avoid targeting ethnocentric consumers altogether or, if targeting them, de-emphasize the global aspect of their brands, particularly in markets with a strong ethnocentric bias. This strategic adjustment can help mitigate potential backlash and avoid alienating ethnocentric consumers who tend to favor local businesses (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004) by aligning more closely with the local consumer symbols, values and perceptions. Accordingly, global brands can maintain congruency with ethnocentric consumers' local identities (Balabanis and Siamagka, 2017) by appealing to their in-group. In this vein, global brands can support local initiatives, such as local LGBTQ+ Pride events, emphasizing the local relevance of the issue and connecting with the local community, while minimizing their global symbols. For instance, if global brands have partnerships with local entities, like Coca Cola has with Coca-Cola 3 Epsilon, a member of the global Coca-Cola HBC Group, in Greece (Coca Cola Hellenic. 2024), they can highlight these associations.

Additionally, when consumers with ethnocentric tendencies do not focus on their negative attitudes towards global brands, they tend to view the motivation behind GBACTIVs as altruistic. In this context, activism initiatives can serve as effective approaches for brands that follow a glocalised approach that enables local adjustments alongside global elements (Alden *et al.*, 2006), for example adapting their store formats, product offerings, or even brand names to reflect local cultures and preferences.

Finally, our research advises that brand managers should particularly focus on younger demographics, as these groups, which tend to be socially-concerned and more likely to be activist themselves (Carnegie, 2022), have shown a higher propensity to respond positively to global brand activism. Global brands can engage these consumers through digital platforms, utilizing contemporary communication techniques and highlighting the social impact of their activism initiatives.

### *6.3 Limitations and future research directions*

The current study is, inevitably, not free of limitations, which however provide avenues for future research. First, while we focus on investigating the influences on AttGBACTIVs, future research should examine how global brand activism influences a range of other important outcomes, such as consumer choice and loyalty (Gürhan-Canli *et al.*, 2018). Second, our study considers the concept of global brand activism unidimensionally, to gain an overall understanding of how it shapes consumer views as a practice. Future studies could expand beyond this to capture the effects of its different forms and characteristics [e.g., statements versus actions, or abstract versus concrete approaches (Ahmad *et al.*, 2024)]. Further examination is also recommended to investigate the disparities in outcomes resulting from the diverse types of issues that can be advocated by GBACTIVs. We develop some of our hypotheses and recommendations building on evidence and observations regarding the inclination of global brands and brand activists to advocate liberal and universal issues and values. Yet, disparities in consumer responses may be inherent to the issues themselves (e.g., diversity versus peace and anti-conflict activism), the progressive versus conservative nature of the issues (Bhagwat *et al.*, 2020), or their global versus local relevance.

Third, other consumer or brand-level influences of the outcomes of global brand activism can be studied. For instance, individual personality traits (e.g., openness) can act as drivers of

consumer views of GBACTIVs. While we focus on consumer ethnocentrism in our main investigation and include global consumer identity in our post-hoc analysis, we acknowledge that other indicators of global cultural identity exist, such as consumer cosmopolitanism and global identification through global brands, and affect international consumer behavior (Strizhakova and Coulter, 2019; Zeugner-Roth *et al.*, 2015). Thus, they might offer additional insights regarding consumer reactions to GBACTIVs. Other brand-related factors, such as brand authenticity and trust, might also come into play and are worth further exploring. Similarly, as our investigation focuses on global brands, a comparison with how consumer attitudes toward brand activism are shaped when the brand activist is local could offer valuable insights. Fourth, while we argue the formation of AttGBACTIVs acts as a value-expressive vehicle at a theoretical level, future studies can measure the extent to which brand activism enables consumers to express their values and self-concept. Finally, this is a single-country investigation. Yet, previous research on CSR points to sociocultural differences in customers' responses to prosocial activities (e.g., Becker-Olsen *et al.*, 2011). Conducting cross-cultural research and studies that account for cultural diversity within countries, or replicating this study in environments less progressive or economically developed than the UK, is essential to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of brand activism on a global scale.

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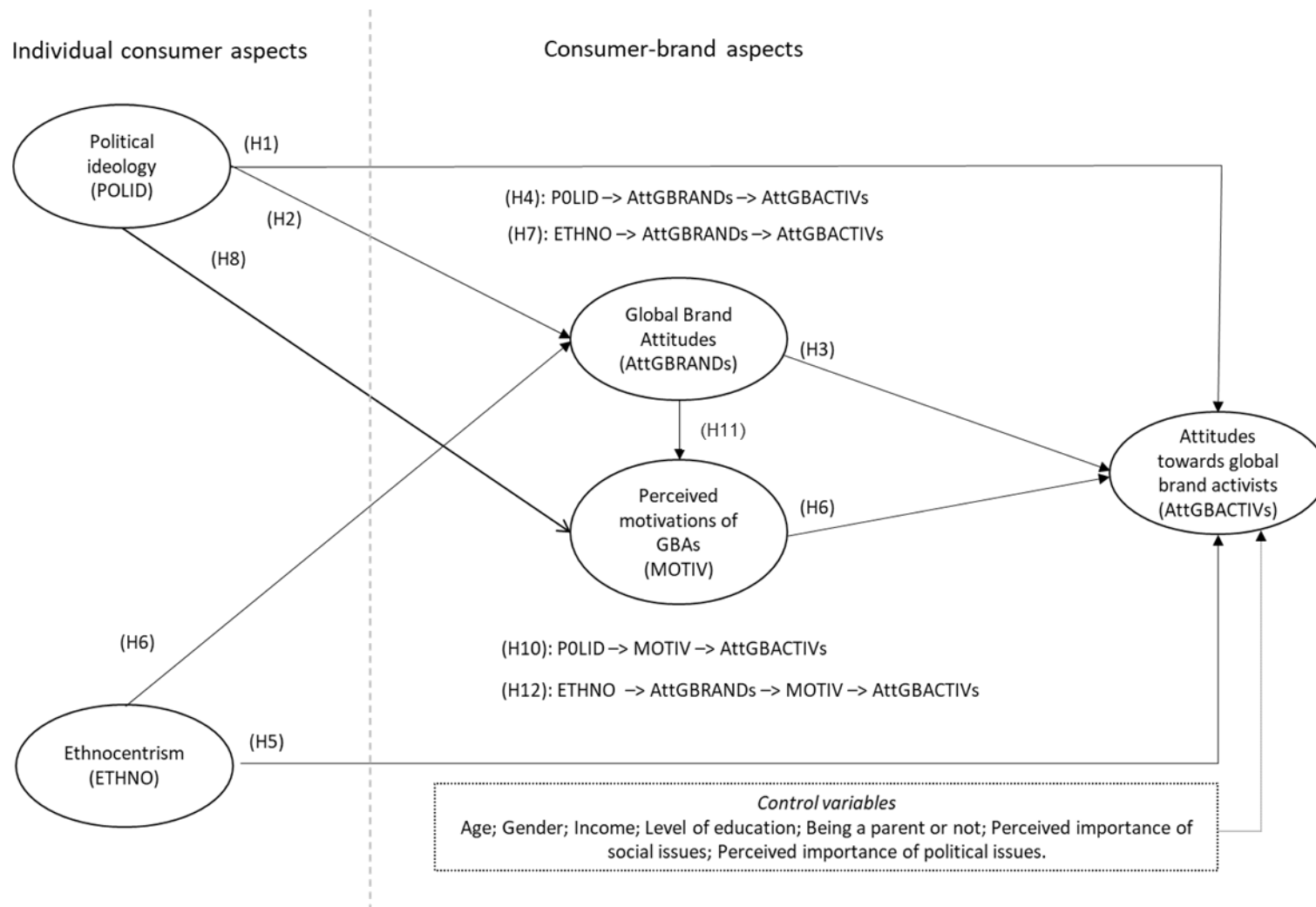
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**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework



Source: The authors

**Table I. Latent construct properties and inter-construct correlations**

Construct	Mean	SD	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>1. POLID</b>	4.73	1.43	.863	.563	<b>.748</b>											
<b>2. AttGBRANDS</b>	4.92	1.20	.932	.821	.329**	<b>.906</b>										
<b>3. ETHNO</b>	3.59	1.44	.910	.717	-.286**	-.262**	<b>.849</b>									
<b>4. MOTIV</b>	3.44	1.50	.857	.667	.270**	.308**	.027	<b>.819</b>								
<b>5. AttGBACTIVS</b>	4.49	1.55	.954	.874	.482**	.377**	-.133**	.574**	<b>.933</b>							
<b>6. SOIMPOR</b>	5.81	1.12	.914	.780	.284**	.205**	-.083	.137**	.371**	<b>.833</b>						
<b>7. POIMPOR</b>	5.85	1.07	.932	.820	.208**	.232**	-.065	.027	.232**	.586**	<b>.906</b>					
<b>8. AGE</b>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	-.234**	-.084	.175**	-.176**	-.286**	-.044	.130**	<b>n.a.</b>				
<b>9. GENDER</b>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	.144**	.002	-.015	.128**	.126**	.139**	-.054	-.276**	<b>n.a.</b>			
<b>10. INCOME</b>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	-.032	.032	-.011	-.009	.009	-.096*	.016	-.023	-.233**	<b>n.a.</b>		
<b>11. EDUC</b>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	.225**	.067	-.131**	.009	.164**	.098*	.096*	-.252**	.061	.319**	<b>n.a.</b>	
<b>12. CHILD</b>	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	.153**	.011	-.141**	-.025	.052	.047	-.002	-.283**	.040	-.106*	.032	<b>n.a.</b>

\*\*correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed); \*correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

**NOTES:** Root of average variance extracted is presented on the diagonal; SD=standard deviation; CR=composite reliability; AVE=average variance extracted; n.a.=not applicable due to single-item measurement; POLID=political ideology; AttGBRANDSs=global brand attitudes; ETHNO=consumer ethnocentrism; MOTIV=perceived motivation; AttGBACTIVS=attitudes towards global brand activists; SOIMPOR=perceived social issue importance; POIMPOR=perceived political issue importance; EDUC=education

**Table II. Sequential model comparison**

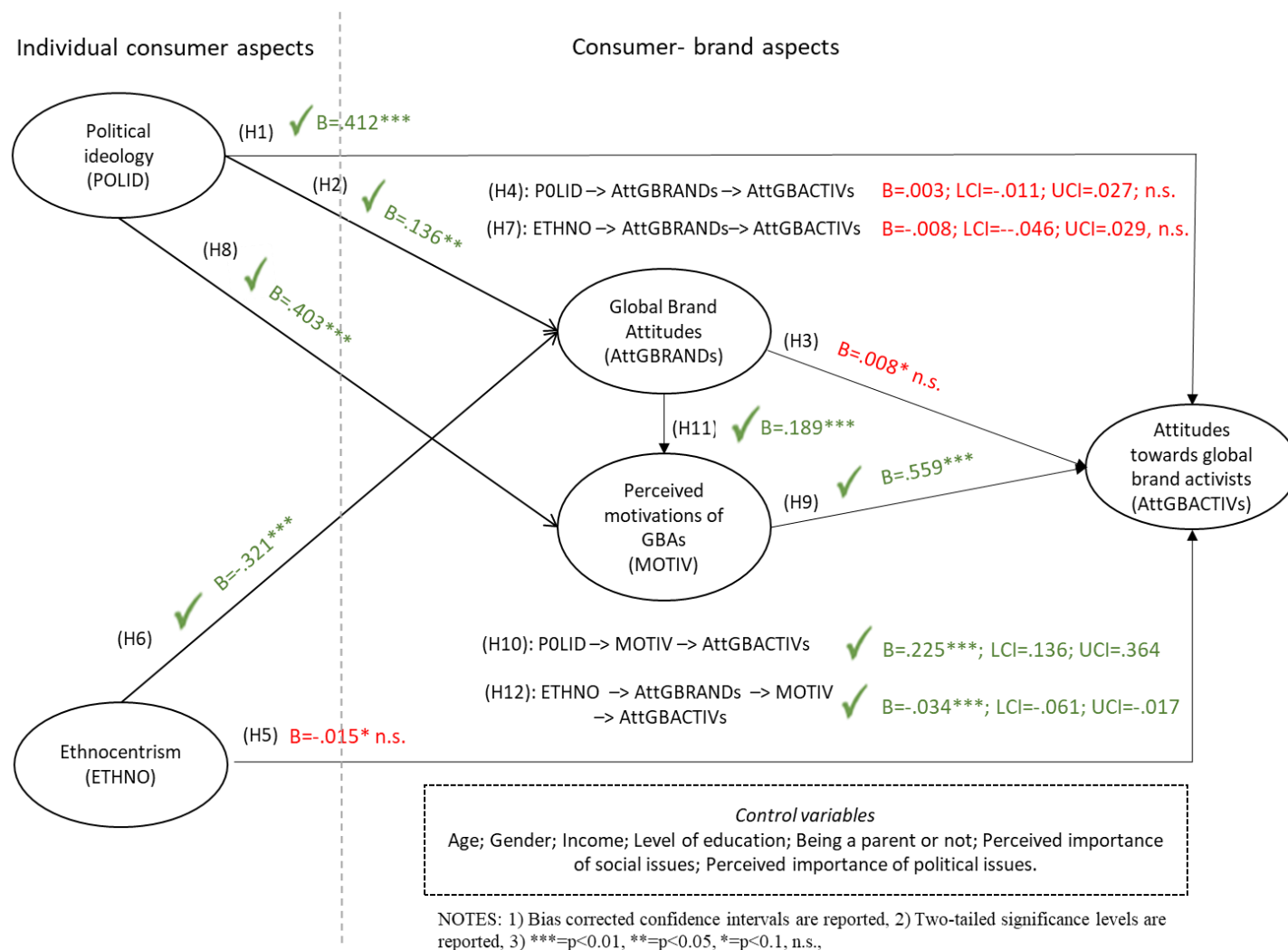
	$\chi^2$	df	p	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta$ df	$\chi^2/df$	R <sup>2</sup>
Model 1	104.798	54	.000	-	-	1.940	.239 (AttGBACTIVs)
Model 2	475.224	249	.000	370.4	195	1.909	.395 (AttGBACTIVs)
Model 3	540.771	316	.000	65.6	67	1.711	.587 (AttGBACTIVs)
Model 4	585.848	331	.000	45	15	1.769	.582 (AttGBACTIVs) .171 (AttGBRANDs) .138 (MOTIV)

**Table III. Structural equation model results (direct & indirect effects)**

	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. <math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>	
<u>Direct control paths</u>					
<b>SOIMPOR</b> →AttGBACTIVs <sup>1</sup>	<b>.272</b>	<b>.200</b>	<b>3.993</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	
POIMPOR→AttGBACTIVs	.070	.052	1.072	.284	
<b>AGE</b> →AttGBACTIVs	<b>-.133</b>	<b>-.143</b>	<b>-3.554</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	
GENDER→AttGBACTIVs	-.119	-.042	-1.112	.267	
INCOME→AttGBACTIVs	.022	.024	.637	.524	
EDUC→AttGBACTIVs	.028	.030	.769	.442	
CHILD→AttGBACTIVs	-.110	-.037	-1.028	.304	
<u>Hypothesized direct relationships</u>					
<b>H1: POLID</b> →AttGBACTIVs	<b>.412</b>	<b>.263</b>	<b>5.285</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	
<b>H2: POLID</b> →AttGBRANDs	<b>.136</b>	<b>.103</b>	<b>2.007</b>	<b>&lt;.050</b>	
H3: AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	.008	.007	.177	.860	
H5: ETHNO→AttGBACTIVs	-.015	-.015	-.366	.714	
<b>H6: ETHNO</b> →AttGBRANDs	<b>-.321</b>	<b>-.372</b>	<b>-7.132</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	
<b>H8: POLID</b> →MOTIV	<b>.403</b>	<b>.289</b>	<b>4.962</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	
<b>H9: MOTIV</b> →AttGBACTIVs	<b>.559</b>	<b>.498</b>	<b>10.891</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	
<b>H11: AttGBRANDs</b> →MOTIV	<b>.189</b>	<b>.179</b>	<b>3.448</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	
<u>Indirect effects</u>					
	<b>Stand. effect</b>	<b>B<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Unst. Lower Bound<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Unst. Upper bound</b>	<b>p-value</b>
H4: POLID→AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	(.100*.022) = .002	.003	-.011	.027	.471
H7: ETHNO→AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	(-.372*.020) = -.007	-.008	-.046	.029	.669
<b>H10: POLID</b> →MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	<b>(.289*.498) = .144</b>	<b>.225</b>	<b>.136</b>	<b>.364</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>
<b>H12:ETHNO</b> →AttGBRANDs→MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	<b>(-.372*.180*.500) = -.033</b>	<b>-.034</b>	<b>-.061</b>	<b>-.017</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>
<u>Model fit heuristics</u>					
$\chi^2=585.848$ ; $df=331$ ; $p=.000$ ; relative $\chi^2=1.769$ ; CFI=.970; NFI=.934; AGFI=.892; SRMR=.0468; RMSEA=.042					

NOTES: <sup>1</sup> Significant paths are presented in bold and two-tailed significance levels are reported; <sup>2</sup>Estimate Mean; <sup>3</sup> Bias corrected unstandardized confidence intervals are reported (95%)

**Figure 2.** SEM results



Source: The authors

## Supplementary materials

### Web Appendix A. Summary of global brands mentioned by participants

Global Brand	N	%	Global Brand	N	%	Global Brand	N	%
Amazon	93	16.1%	Gucci	2	0.3%	Hoover	1	0.2%
Apple	80	13.9%	Guinness	2	0.3%	Ikea	1	0.2%
McDonald's	42	7.3%	HP	2	0.3%	Instagram	1	0.2%
Pepsi	33	5.7%	Land Rover	2	0.3%	Jeep	1	0.2%
Samsung	29	5.0%	Rolls Royce	2	0.3%	Johnson's	1	0.2%
Microsoft	28	4.9%	Shell	2	0.3%	Kellogs	1	0.2%
Ford	27	4.7%	Tesco	2	0.3%	KFC	1	0.2%
Nike	23	4.0%	Toshiba	2	0.3%	L'Oréal	1	0.2%
Adidas	13	2.3%	Twitter	2	0.3%	Lancome	1	0.2%
Facebook	13	2.3%	Vodafone	2	0.3%	Lenor	1	0.2%
Sony	13	2.3%	Yahoo	2	0.3%	Lexus	1	0.2%
BMW	9	1.6%	7up	1	0.2%	Lipton	1	0.2%
Mercedes-Benz	9	1.6%	Alpecin	1	0.2%	Mondelez	1	0.2%
Nestlé	9	1.6%	Asus	1	0.2%	NatWest	1	0.2%
Google	8	1.4%	Barclays	1	0.2%	Nerds	1	0.2%
Coca Cola	7	1.2%	Diagio	1	0.2%	Nescafe	1	0.2%
IBM	5	0.9%	Booking.com	1	0.2%	Nintendo	1	0.2%
Virgin	5	0.9%	Budweiser	1	0.2%	Pepsi Cola	1	0.2%
BP	4	0.7%	Burger King	1	0.2%	Phillips	1	0.2%
Honda	4	0.7%	C&A	1	0.2%	Pizza Hut	1	0.2%
Hyundai	4	0.7%	Cardiff	1	0.2%	Range Rover	1	0.2%
Unilever	4	0.7%	Chanel	1	0.2%	Rolex	1	0.2%
Audi	3	0.5%	Cola Cola	1	0.2%	Sharp	1	0.2%
British Airways	3	0.5%	Dior	1	0.2%	Skoda	1	0.2%
Disney	3	0.5%	Dr Pepper	1	0.2%	Smirnoff	1	0.2%
Fanta	3	0.5%	Esso	1	0.2%	Starbucks	1	0.2%
HSBC	4	0.7%	Fendi	1	0.2%	Subaru	1	0.2%
Jaguar	3	0.5%	Ferarri	1	0.2%	Tik Tok	1	0.2%
Kellogg's	3	0.5%	Gap	1	0.2%	Toluna	1	0.2%
Nissan	3	0.5%	General Motors	1	0.2%	Visa	1	0.2%
Toyota	3	0.5%	Gorilla Glue	1	0.2%			
Volkswagen	3	0.5%	H&M	1	0.2%			
Amex	2	0.3%	Heineken	1	0.2%			
Cadbury	2	0.3%	Heinz	1	0.2%			
DHL	2	0.3%	Hilton	1	0.2%			
Ebay	2	0.3%	Hitachi	1	0.2%			

Note: Participants often mentioned more than one global brand each (Total N=484). Some participants repeated the same brand examples as the ones that we provided, namely Google, Coca Cola, and Toyota, alongside other global brands. Therefore, we kept these cases in our sample.

**Web Appendix B. Measurement items**

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**Political Ideology** adapted from Kidwell et al. (2013),  $\alpha=.859$

What is your opinion about the following matters? (1=Extremely negative, 7=extremely positive)

- Abortion
- Immigration
- Gender Equality
- Welfare Benefits

LGBT adoption rights

---

**Global Brand Attitudes** adapted from Nan and Heo (2007),  $\alpha=.932$

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. (1=Strongly disagree, 7=Strongly agree)

- I think global brands are bad.
  - I have a negative opinion of global brands.
  - I dislike global brands.
- 

**Consumer Ethnocentrism** adapted from Shimp and Sharma (1987),  $\alpha=.909$

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. (1=Strongly disagree, 7=Strongly agree)

- British should not buy foreign products because this harms the local economy and increases unemployment.
- It is not right to purchase foreign products, because jobs are lost in the UK.
- A true British should only buy British-made products.

We should purchase products manufactured in the UK instead of letting other countries get rich off us.

---

**Perceived Motivations of GBACTIVs** adapted from Bigné, Currás-Pérez and Aldás-Manzano (2012),  $\alpha=.857$

Do you think that global brands that take a stand on social/political issues are: (7-point semantic differential scales)

- Motivated by self-interest - Motivated by interest in the issue
  - Profit motivated - Socially motivated
  - Egoistically motivated - Altruistically motivated
- 

**Attitudes Towards Global Brand Activists** adapted from Nan and Heo (2007),  $\alpha=.954$

Thinking broadly about global brand activism (i.e., global brands that take a stand on social/political issues), please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements: (1=Strongly disagree, 7=Strongly agree)

- I think global brands that participate in brand activism are good
  - I have a positive opinion of global brands that take a stand
  - I like global brands that participate in brand activism
- 

**Perceived Importance of Social Issues** adapted from Robin et al. (1996),  $\alpha=.911$

To me, social issues (e.g., abortion, immigration, healthcare, mental health, etc.) are: (1=Strongly agree, 7=Strongly disagree)

- Important
  - Significant
  - Of concern
- 

**Perceived Importance of Political Issues** adapted from Robin et al. (1996),  $\alpha=.929$

To me, political issues (e.g., Brexit, sending troops abroad, nuclear weapon programs, etc.) are: (1=Strongly agree, 7=Strongly disagree)

- Important
  - Significant
  - Of concern
- 

**Age**

What is your age? (18-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55-64/65-older)

---

**Gender**

What is your gender? (Male/Female/Other)

---

**Income**

What is your annual personal income in British Pounds (£)? (less than £10000/£10000-£19,999/£20,000 - £29,999/£30,000 - £39,999/£40,000 - £49,999/£50,000 and above)

---

**Education**

What is your highest level of education? (Less than high school/High school graduate/College degree/Professional degree/Bachelor's degree/Master's degree/Doctorate)

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**Children**

Do you have children? (Yes/No)

---

**Web Appendix C.** Original model vs 1<sup>st</sup> robustness check including global identity (direct & indirect effects)

Direct effects	Original Model			1 <sup>st</sup> Robustness Check <sup>1</sup>			support
	B	t-value	p-value	B	t-value	p-value	
<b>Direct control paths</b>							
SOIMPOR→AttGBACTIVs	.272	3.993	<.001	.209	3.210	<.001	supported
POIMPOR→AttGBACTIVs	.070	1.072	.284	.028	.448	.654	n.s. <sup>2</sup>
AGE→AttGBACTIVs	-.133	-3.554	<.001	-.130	-3.664	<.001	supported
GENDER→AttGBACTIVs	-.119	-1.112	.267	-.094	-.925	.355	n.s.
INCOME→AttGBACTIVs	.022	.637	.524	.015	.451	.652	n.s.
EDUC→AttGBACTIVs	.028	.769	.442	-.007	-.208	.835	n.s.
CHILD→AttGBACTIVs	-.110	-1.028	.304	-.155	-1.526	.127	n.s.
<b>Hypothesized direct relationships</b>							
H1: POLID→AttGBACTIVs	.412	5.285	<.001	.5101	6.457	<.001	supported
H2: POLID→AttGBRANDs	.136	2.007	<.050	.136	2.045	<.050	supported
H3: AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	.008	.177	.860	.002	.045	.964	n.s.
H5: ETHNO→AttGBACTIVs	-.015	-.366	.714	-.033	-.819	.413	n.s.
H6: ETHNO→AttGBRANDs	-.321	-7.132	<.001	-.308	-6.792	<.001	supported
H8: POLID→MOTIV	.403	4.962	<.001	.393	4.913	<.001	supported
H9: MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	.559	10.891	<.001	.497	10.358	<.001	supported
H11: AttGBRANDs→MOTIV	.189	3.448	<.001	.192	3.490	<.001	supported
<b>Additional robustness links</b>							
GLOBID→AttGBRANDs				.082	1.601	.109	
GLOBID→AttGBACTIVs				.336	7.206	<.001	supported

**Indirect effects – Original Model**

Indirect effects	Stand. effect	B <sup>3</sup>	Unst. Lower Bound <sup>4</sup>	Unst. Upper bound	p-value	
H4: POLID→AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	(.100*.022) = .002	.003	-.011	.027	.471	n.s.
H7: ETHNO→AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	(-.372*.020) = -.007	-.008	-.046	.029	.669	n.s.
H10: POLID→MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	(.289*.498) = .144	.225	.136	.364	<.001	supported
H12: ETHNO→AttGBRANDs→MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	(-.372*.180*.500) = -.033	-.034	-.061	-.017	<.001	supported

**Model fit heuristics**

$\chi^2=585.848$ ;  $df=331$ ;  $p=.000$ ; relative  $\chi^2=1.769$ ; CFI=.970; NFI=.934; AGFI=.892; SRMR=.0468; RMSEA=.042

Indirect effects – Robustness Check						
Indirect effects	Stand. effect	B <sup>2</sup>	Unst. Lower Bound <sup>3</sup>	Unst. Upper bound	p-value	
H4: POLID→AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	(.102*.015) = .002	.002	-.012	.023	.542	n.s.
H7: ETHNO→AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	(-.358*.013) = -.004	-.005	-.039	.029	.755	n.s.
H10: POLID→MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	(.286*.450) = .129	.195	.114	.310	<.001	supported
H12: ETHNO→AttGBRANDs→MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	(-.358*.182*.451) = -.065	-.029	-.053	-.014	<.001	supported
<b>Additional indirect effects</b>						
GLOBID→AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	(.072*.013) = -.094	-.001	-.007	.019	.568	n.s.
GLOBID→AttGBRANDs→MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	(.074*.182*.451) = -.060	.008	-.002	.026	.141	n.s.
<b>Model fit heuristics</b>						
$\chi^2=657.683$ ; $df=349$ ; relative $\chi^2=1.884$ ; NFI=.927; GFI=.912; CFI=.964; RMSEA=.045; AGFI=.882; SRMR=.0470						

**NOTES:** <sup>1</sup> Results derived from the robustness check are highlighted in grey; <sup>2</sup> n.s.=This path is statistically non-significant.; <sup>3</sup> Estimate Mean; <sup>4</sup> Bias corrected unstandardized confidence intervals are reported (95%).

**Web Appendix D.** Original model vs 2<sup>nd</sup> robustness check linking consumer ethnocentrism with perceived motivation of AttGBACTIVs (direct & indirect effects)

Direct effects	Original Model			2 <sup>nd</sup> Robustness Check <sup>1</sup>			support
	B	t-value	p-value	B	t-value	p-value	
<b>Direct control paths</b>							
SOIMPOR→AttGBACTIVs	.272	3.993	<.001	.271	3.988	<.001	supported
POIMPOR→AttGBACTIVs	.070	1.072	.284	.070	1.073	.283	n.s. <sup>2</sup>
AGE→AttGBACTIVs	-.133	-3.554	<.001	-.133	-3.545	<.001	supported
GENDER→AttGBACTIVs	-.119	-1.112	.267	.119	-1.112	.266	n.s.
INCOME→AttGBACTIVs	.022	.637	.524	.022	.639	.523	n.s.
EDUC→AttGBACTIVs	.028	.769	.442	.028	.765	.444	n.s.
CHILD→AttGBACTIVs	-.110	-1.028	.304	-.110	-1.031	.303	n.s.
<b>Hypothesized direct relationships</b>							
H1: POLID→AttGBACTIVs	.412	5.285	<.001				supported
H2: POLID→AttGBRANDs	.136	2.007	<.050	.131	1.946	<.050	supported
H3: AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	.008	.177	.860	.000	-.008	.994	n.s.
H5: ETHNO→AttGBACTIVs	-.015	-.366	.714	-.034	-.759	.448	n.s.
H6: ETHNO→AttGBRANDs	-.321	-7.132	<.001	-.323	-7.159	<.001	supported
H8: POLID→MOTIV	.403	4.962	<.001	.488	5.708	<.001	supported
H9: MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	.559	10.891	<.001	.564	10.533	<.001	supported
H11: AttGBRANDs→MOTIV	.189	3.448	<.001	.287	4.870	<.001	supported
<b>Additional robustness link</b>							
ETHNO→MOTIV				.227	4.289	<.001	supported

**Indirect effects – Original Model**

Indirect effects	Stand. effect	B <sup>3</sup>	Unst. Lower Bound <sup>4</sup>	Unst. Upper bound	p-value	
H4: POLID→AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	(.100*.022) = .002	.003	-.011	.027	.471	n.s.
H7: ETHNO→AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	(-.372*.020) = -.007	-.008	-.046	.029	.669	n.s.
H10: POLID→MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	(.289*.498) = .144	.225	.136	.364	<.001	supported
H12: ETHNO→AttGBRANDs→MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	(-.372*.180*.500) = -.033	-.034	-.061	-.017	<.001	supported

**Model fit heuristics**

$\chi^2=585.848$ ;  $df=331$ ;  $p=.000$ ; relative  $\chi^2=1.769$ ; CFI=.970; NFI=.934; AGFI=.892; SRMR=.0468; RMSEA=.042

Indirect effects – Robustness Check						
Indirect effects	Stand. effect	B <sup>2</sup>	Unst. Lower Bound <sup>3</sup>	Unst. Upper bound	p-value	
H4: POLID→AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	(.100*.023) = .002	.003	-.011	.027	.473	n.s.
H7: ETHNO→AttGBRANDs→AttGBACTIVs	(-.372*.020) = -.007	-.008	-.046	.029	.669	n.s.
H10: POLID→MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	(.356*.501) = .178	.277	.184	.424	<.001	supported
H12: ETHNO→AttGBRANDs→MOTIV→AttGBACTIVs	(-.372*.180*.500) = -.033	-.034	-.061	-.017	<.001	supported
<b>Additional indirect effects-</b>						
ETHNO→AttGBRANDs→MOTIV	(-.374*.273) = -.102	-.093	-.151	-.052	<.001	supported

**Model fit heuristics**

$\chi^2=567.063$ ;  $df=330$ ;  $p=.000$ ; relative  $\chi^2=1.718$ ; CFI=.972; NFI=.936; AGFI=.894; SRMR=.0400; RMSEA=.040

**NOTES:** <sup>1</sup> Results derived from the robustness check are highlighted in grey; <sup>2</sup> n.s.=This path is statistically non-significant.; <sup>3</sup> Estimate Mean; <sup>4</sup> Bias corrected unstandardized confidence intervals are reported (95%).

**Web Appendix E.** Additional model comparisons

	<b>x2</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Δx2</b>	<b>pΔx2</b>	<b>Δdf</b>	<b>x2/df</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>
Original Model	585.848	331	.000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1.769	.582 (AttGBACTivs) .171 (AttGBRANDs) .138 (MOTIV)
<i>Original vs. robustness models</i>								
Robustness Model 1 (including global identity and corresponding mediating effects)	657.683	349	.000	71.837	p<.001	18	1.884	.617(AttGBACTivs) .176 (AttGBRANDs) .136 (MOTIV)
Robustness Model 2 (including ETHNO-MOTIV link)	567.063	330	.000	74.901	p<.001	1	1.718	.580 (AttGBACTIVs) .172 (AttGBRANDs) .193 (MOTIV)
<i>Robustness check 2 vs. model without the ETHNO-AttGBRANDs-MOTIV link</i>								
Model without the ETHNO-AttGBRANDs-MOTIV link	641.964	332	.000	56.164	p<.001	2	1.990	.577 (AttGBACTIVs) .130 (AttGBRANDs) .130 (MOTIV)