Brand Activism: A Case Study using Sentiment Analysis

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Abstract

Brand activism has emerged as a powerful yet controversial strategy, allowing companies to take a public stance on socio-political issues. This study examines a real-world case of brand activism in Germany: Rewe's decision to terminate its long-standing partnership with the German Football Association in response to FIFA's stance on the "One Love" armband during the World Cup. Using sentiment analysis and qualitative content analysis, we analyze 3,551 first-level Instagram comments on Rewe's announcement. Findings reveal an overwhelmingly positive response (92%), with integrity and authenticity emerging as key themes. Users assessed Rewe's alignment between corporate values and actions, its consistency in implementing those values, and the clarity of its communication. Notably, while negative reactions were more fragmented, positive responses were unified, underscoring the impact of values and their protection. This study contributes to brand activism research by offering empirical insights based on actual consumer reactions, moving beyond experimental and survey-based approaches.

Keywords: brand activism, authenticity, sentiment analysis, content analysis