Wokebranding: Social causes as branding strategies. State of the art in Chile

Wokebranding: *Causas sociales como estrategias de marca.*

Un estado del arte en Chile

Sebastián
Goldsack-Trebilcock[1]
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5465-8479

Claudia Labarca[2]
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8003-1576

Constanza Mujica[3]
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7788-4516

Brands have chosen different ways of generating value; from models based on attributes, benefits and value, to taking critical political positions and embracing social causes, known as *Wokebranding*. Based on the collection of primary data and from a qualitative and exploratory perspective, this research helps to understand the state of the art of this trend in Chile. The case study shows the difficulties for a rapid adoption of this type of tendency in the context of a weakened industry. This study tries to contribute to the scarce academic attention that has been put to these topics in Latin America.

KEYWORDS: Branding, WokeBrands, WokeAdvertising, corporate activism, Chile.

Las marcas han escogido diferentes modos de generar adhesión entre los consumidores, desde modelos basados en atributos, beneficios y valor, hasta la toma de posturas políticas críticas y el abrazar causas sociales; esto se conoce como Wokebranding. *Basada en la recopilación de datos primarios y desde una perspectiva cualitativa y exploratoria, esta investigación pretende ayudar a entender el estado del arte de esta tendencia en Chile. El caso de estudio muestra las dificultades que se presentan para la adopción de este tipo de tendencias en el marco de una industria publicitaria debilitada. Este trabajo, intenta contribuir a la escasa atención académica que han recibido estos temas en América Latina.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Branding,* woke brands*, WokeAdvertising, activismo corporativo, Chile.*

INTRODUCTION

Brands have been at the center of the academic marketing debate. Since the 1950s, the dominant view in brand construction processes has focused on goods (Aaker, 2002). This point of view is based on traditional commercial variables, which today are questioned even while preserving one of the staples of traditional marketing: satisfying customer needs (Lars & Kris, 2019). The current marketing perspective is more holistic and considers new variables, focusing on relationships rather than transactions. Thus, with consumer identification (Holt, 1995).

In recent years, brands have adopted new strategic ways to generate loyalty among their consumers and have used social causes to create brand value. As a result, brand communication has evolved from focusing on products' benefits and attributes to one in which the values of companies are expressed through corporate activism. Some works in the field have addressed the general problem of social cause advertising (Kim et al., 2015) and cause-related marketing persuasion (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2019). Still, there is no systematic academic work that specifically addresses the concept of *WokeBrands* (conscious brands), particularly in Latin America.

This research aims to elucidate the state of the art of woke branding in Chile based on fieldwork. Furthermore, we intend to assess the use and conceptualization of woke branding by Chilean marketing and advertising practitioners. Given the topic's novelty, we have chosen to work with a qualitative exploratory methodology based on in-depth interviews, both online and face-to-face, with leading industry professionals, including planners, creatives, and agency directors.

This paper intends to contribute to branding from a theoretical and a practitioner perspective taking Chile as an example, an interesting case study because it has been considered a "poster child" within Latin America regarding innovation, creativity, and efficiency in marketing tools, advertising and brand building. This perception is reflected, for example, in the international rankings of the leading festivals in this field (such as Cannes, Ojo de Iberoamérica, among other prestigious festivals) (Ojo de Iberoamérica, 2020; Redacción Adlatina, 2021; WARC, 2021).

CONSCIOUS BRANDS/WOKEBRANDS

The term *Woke* has a political origin derived from African-American protest movements. It is used as an idiom that refers to having an awareness of social and racial injustice problems in the United States. The concept derives from the expression "Stay woke" within the Black Lives Matter movement. This movement fights against violence and systematic racism towards the African-American population in the United States. It was triggered by police brutality against them, coupled with racial inequalities in the American judicial system. In this context, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter emerged in social networks after the murder of the teenager Trayvon Martin in Florida, followed by similar events in New York. The call to be alert ("Stay woke") in the aftermath of these attacks was highlighted in digital media with a hashtag replicated by top-rank celebrities. As a result, it became an abbreviation (Woke) used in traditional media outlets such as MTV, *Businessweek*, and *The New York Times*.

This branding trend emerges as a response to new consumers empowered by a high level of social awareness, well informed (primarily through social networks), that demand high moral and ethical standards to brands on social issues (Bernard, 2019; Roper & Fill, 2012). The woke trend has a "citizen" point of view and therefore may be confused with related concepts, such as Corporate Social Responsibility[4] or brand activism (Dauvergne, 2017), despite their differences

An alternative understanding of the WokeBrand movement has been endowing brands to a purpose, i.e., providing prominent value orientation and entangling brand work with a determined value (Fromm, 2020). However, the difference with the Woke-type position lies in the political and activist component of a brand takes. While brands endowed with a purpose subsidize or promote an ideology from a transversal value (Sassatelli, 2007), WokeBrands do so from a critical and partisan stance and frame on a particular social-political phenomenon (Beckman & Dalsjö Åström, 2019).

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[4]   See more in Moir (2001).

The emergence of brands endowed with purpose and political conviction understands companies as "great institutions capable of generating social change" (Fyke et al., in Austin et al., 2019) in matters where governments and NGOs fall short.

From this expectation, companies that adopt a Woke posture ascribe –as a corporation– to a social dimension as agents of change (Gaither et al., 2018). Such interest transcends and exceeds the turn and responsibility of the operation itself (Dodd, 2018), as understood from sustainability or environmental mitigation (scope of Social Responsibility), but which also addresses a greater variety of dimensions and complexities (for a good classification, see Garriga & Melé, 2004).

The aforementioned corporate stances related to Woke causes are usually controversial, becoming corporate activism in response to government policies or social issues (Dodd & Supa, 2014). Thus, it has been argued that brands and corporations are then involved in a political dialogue that supports or opposes a particular cause (Clemensen, 2019), such as feminism or discrimination of a minority group.

The previous definitions contrast with previous conceptualizations regarding the corporations' roles within society that advised brands and corporations to maintain a neutral position on controversial issues (Korschun et al., in Austin et al., 2019). While research on these topics is relatively new and there is not yet abundant literature discussing the matter (Austin et al., 2019), some work suggests that companies that adopt a social cause strategy have increased their consumers' respect and their positive valuation (Dodd & Supa, 2014; Korschun et al., 2016).

Taking a political stance implies –by transitivity– having an opinion based on a set of determined values, that is to say, from a cultural and critical studies perspective, to adopt an ideological approach (Holt, 1995, 2002). Under this prism, taking a political stance helps brands insert themselves within society through a story that articulates a symbolic function in the constitution of the subjects inserted in that group (Holt, 1995, 2002).

Accordingly, the political narrative assumed by a corporation operates as a symbolic representation of a particular social group (Hall & du Gay, 1996), arranged in a discourse that psychologically

and socially models a group of individuals in a political and cultural context (van Djik, 1998). Consequently, this narrative affects a social consciousness that transcends the structure of the individual text by normatively establishing a representation, style, and order of a larger discourse (Fairclough, 2003). In other words, political discourse represents a specific group and shapes them in its narrative.

In increasingly global contexts, the possible relationships and associations attributed to a corporation are attached to its brand. Brands are the greatest exponents of a company's symbolic representation. They can be understood as a moderator, a cultural symbol that –through associations of representation and rhetoric– creates frames and meanings to those consumer groups (Cayla & Eckhordt, 2008; Lury, 2004) through a story that gives a sense of time and space. In addition, brands create a social effect (McCraken, 1986), such as supporting or rejecting a cause or a particular social movement.

While understanding brands from particular social values that generate loyalty among customers is not new (Sassatelli, 2007), the originality of an emphasis on woke brands lies in its politicized point of view (Wenger-Trayner, 2017). This political statement is established as a moral position (Salzer-Mörling, 2010) by which brands take a critical stance on aspects of social life in general (such as feminism, racism, etc.).

This position translates into an opinion and thus into communication which is consistent with the brand's vision towards a specific subject. An example is the case of Nike, in which the brand assumes in the person of Colin Kaepernick not only a position against racism in the United States but the affiliation to the Black Lives Matter movement (ND J, 2018). This brand alignment triggered a great social debate, which ultimately resulted in increasing the company's value by nearly six billion dollars post-Kaepernick campaign ("Nike is embroiled in a doping scandal", 2019). According to Nike CEO Mark Parker, the campaign has generated record engagement (a way of measuring people's involvement with a message) both in North America and the rest of the world (Salpini, 2019).

Following Nike, another global brand followed a similar strategy. Gillette changed its traditional slogan "The best men you can get"

–used for the last 30 years– to "The best men you can be". The company launched a commercial that placed the brand against bullying, violence among children and women's abuse, adhering to the demands of the Me Too movement. This shift leaves behind years of investing in successful athletes and famous male models, taking a stand against toxic masculinity, leaving behind the "macho tradition" within the brand values. On the contrary, the campaign calls for attention and awareness to leave male stereotypes behind, redefining masculinity as a social value when it can stop injustice and modify threatening social behaviors. The campaign calls to enter Gillette's website, making a manifesto about the cause, and calls for nonprofit organizations to join forces around this matter.[5]

To the extent of our knowledge, there is no academic research regarding this topic in Chile. However, in the realm of advertising campaigns, it is worth highlighting the case of WOM; a domestic telecommunications company that entered the market with a brand proposal based on the appropriation of social trends that have impacted brand communications beyond its industry.

In 2015, a new competitor in the telecommunications industry entered Chile, mounted on the ruins of Nextel, which was never a success in Chile. The new brand had an aggressive campaign, offering the lowest price in the market and a disruptive communication and advertising strategy, which positioned WOM as a fighter against social injustices ("WOM, a case study", 2018). Bannister, one of the main WOM's investment partners, based the social analysis behind the brand strategy on the concept of social injustice, mainly supported by a sense of abuse of power by the government, politicians and business people.

WOM finally entered the market with a tariff of 40% less than the industry average, forcing the rest of its competitors to react and even modify their product and service offerings (Burgos, 2017). In conclusion, WOM had a brand discourse based on a controversial, rebellious and revolutionary image, using national contingency to elaborate subversive messages through non-traditional means that provided immediate brand awareness (Álvarez, 2018).

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5   See https://gillette.com/en-us/the-best-men-can-be

For example, WOM projected its logo on the corporate buildings of their competitors (Entel and Movistar) and asked people to upload photos to social networks to participate for the most original one. This action was the kickoff campaign of *#tuladowom* (#yourwomside) as a social expression willing to report abuses on the socio-political system ("Chris Bannister, CEO de WOM", 2017), which positioned WOM as a *Challenging Brand* (Equipo de corresponsales, 2018).

WokeBrands as an identity position

As explained, WokeBrands take a political position on issues of social interest, with the expectation that their agency is similar to activists on that matter (Roper & Fill, 2012). This new type of relationship between a brand and its consumers implies assuming a cause as its own, taking the role of an opinion leader within a specific community, and risking a disconnection between the created expectation and actual corporate practices (Johnston & Pieczka, 2019). The cases of Nike and Gillette show successful post-campaign metrics in their markets, in topics related to the legitimacy of joining a cause (Pisani, 2019) and being favored by consumers and willing to pay a premium for them (Porter Novelli/CONE, 2018).

The brand creation process moves from models in which the company imposed the brand value on one based on the cultural meaning and people's lifestyles (Holt, 2002). This change has allowed new dialogues, based no longer on the products' benefits but instead on evaluating the brand's sociopolitical and ideological principles, which opens the debate on the role of the brand as a social agent.

Arguably, brand value has now conditioned a company's business model and, thus, can no longer be understood as only adding value to products and services (Rao et al., 2004). Instead, they are entirely capable of generating trust and being considered legitimate in society.

Additionally, it has been argued that brands help to build consumers' self-identity (Holt, 2004). Brands also supply –from iconic and symbolic levels– the psychological and social needs held by individuals through the generation of a story that communicates a self-concept

(Aaker, 2002; Askegaard et al., 2002; de Chernatony, 1999; Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Brands are used to channel people's concerns, value representation, and create a sense of belonging to a community that transcends the individuals (Halliday, 1978; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). It is not about products with a logo; instead, it is about social causes and ideas embraced by brands ad shared and expressed by consumers.

The social causes promoted by Nike and Gillette may be operating as identity identifiers, which Bauman (2007) stated causes individuals to be in search of a "we" to which they can access. Identification generates safe links and social relations and allows for a solid and lasting group identity.

This identity is negotiated within a social and cultural environment. It is endowing the cause with a meaning of self-representation (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015) expressed in the purchase and possession of a product.

CRITICISMS AND CAVEATS WHEN USING SOCIAL CAUSES AS A BRANDING STRATEGY

One of the criticisms raised against companies that are becoming WokeBrands derives from their economic success, which raises concerns regarding whether their actions are more related to *Woke-Washing* (image washing) instead of responding to more profound beliefs (Wise, 2018).

Moreover, some organizations act as watchdogs and activists, acting as a social control based on the belief that having a political stance within corporations is merely persuasion and deception that must be unraveled and arranged in the form of protest against companies that seek to profit from the naivety of the markets (Harold, 2007). One of these organizations is AdBuster, which aims to undermine multinational companies' rhetoric through sabotage that frees consumers from "corporate lies".

Marketing professionals have pointed out that brand depth and consistency regarding social and political topics will be critical for consumers in the future. WokeBrands feed an expectation and

parameter of future judgment (Austin et al., 2019) towards the market. Therefore, limitations and even damage may happen to those business not aligned with a particular policy choice if not followed.

However, it is worth noting that not all causes are valid for corporations, and previous social capital is required (Carrol, 2018). This capital is referred to as *Woke Capital* (Gaither et al., 2018) and relates to the credibility when taking a political stance on a particular cause. Without this capital, there is a lack of credibility, and instead, it may appear as opportunism or illegitimate appropriation. Brand activism, therefore, needs to be preceded by a consistent communication campaign that allows the corporation to take a stance on socio-political matters without risking a boomerang effect.

For instance, it is suggested that consumers perceive a gap between the campaign proposition and its corporate practices. They tend to move away from the brand, even when they adhere to its ideological position. Brands are perceived then as having a lack of authenticity, co-opting the movements they claim to support (Gensehues, 2018), and doing Woke-Washing through the appropriation of the struggles of specific communities (Vredenburg et al., 2020) rather than honest brand activism.

BRAND ACTIVISM IN CHILE

There is some evidence that consumer behavior in Chile may be conditioned by ideological variables (Chilescopio, 2017) and there is still the need to have more academic research on the matter. Nevertheless, some international examples, such as Gillette o Nike, may guide Chilean advertising practitioners towards adopting Wokebranding. In addition, the success of the telecom company WOM already discussed in this paper may be an example for other Chilean companies.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate Chilean marketing and advertising professionals' perceptions of Woke-type strategies in Chile, we used two data collection methods. On the one hand, we conducted five in-depth

interviews with General managers and Planning directors of advertising agencies. Following McIntosh and Morse (2015), interviews constitute a methodology and a data collection strategy. As suggested by Kvale (2011), the interview allows developing a conversation with the subject. They can express their ideas and opinions in-depth, which is relevant in exploratory research. In fact, for this paper, it was essential to analyze each interviewee's perspective (McIntosh & Morse, 2015), given their gravitation within the local advertising industry. Therefore, the recruitment of subjects was carried out under the criterion sample strategy that seeks subjects considering specific criteria aligned with the research objectives (Tracy, 2013), allowing richness data analysis (Patton, 1990).

In this case, the criteria for sampling were:

1) To be or have been a Manager or Director of an advertising agency in Chile.
2) To be or have been in charge of brand building processes of medium and large local companies.
3) To have more than 15 years of experience in the Chilean advertising industry.

After conducting these in-depth interviews and, based on their perspectives, we completed an in-depth online questionnaire with industry professionals to get a broader picture of the current state of the Woke trend in Chile. We sent a total of 61 invitations, and we obtained 20 responses. Interviews were conducted between March and April 2019.

The entire analysis was carried out through open coding, based on grounded theory (Glaser, 1978), emphasizing an inductive perspective. Codes are understood as a way of representing the data through a statement (Charmaz, 2014). Additionally, we analyze the data using the interpretative perspective to describe the phenomenon's different complexities and meanings (Black, 2006). Initially, we carried out two independent codifications, but given the similarities among them, they were blended.

RESULTS

A total of 95 units (paragraphs) were analyzed, from which nine main categories emerged (listed in order of importance: the precariousness of the advertising industry (17 mentions); current trends in advertising (16); Woke as a derivation of previous trends (14); period of change (transition) (12); Woke as a brand strategy (12); Woke as brand position (12); Woke as brand building (6); corporate leadership to adopt new trends (4); stability (1). Table 1 summarizes the final coding, which includes the additional categories. For reasons of space, we will analyze the most relevant.

TABLE 1

RESULTS FOR THE OPEN CODIFICATION

Coding	Recurrence
Period of change (transition)	12
Change	2
Consumer and social changes	4
Digitization	4
Increased competition	1
Value synchrony	1
Stability	1
(Blank)	1
Corporate leadership to adopt new trends	4
Difficulty	1
Loss of power	1
(Blank)	2
The precariousness of the advertising industry	17
Overdue	4
Lack of strategic vision of the advertising industry	2
Working conditions	4
Loss of power	6
(Blank)	1
Current trends in advertising	16
(Blank)	16

Coding	Recurrence
Woke as brand building	6
(Blank)	6
Woke as derivation of previous trends	14
Generic	2
Ideology	2
Brands whith purpose	5
CSR	4
(Blank)	1
Woke as brand strategy	12
Adaptation	6
Differentation	4
Result-orientated	2
Woke as brand position	12
Engagement	5
Ethics	2
Social	5
(Blank)	1
(Blank)	1
Total	95

Precariousness of the industry

The informants describe the advertising industry as precarious in different dimensions. The most relevant refers to an imbalance of power between advertising agencies and their advertisers, which results in the agencies' loss of innovation, independence, and creativity:

> Getting involved in this issue is complex; these are debates deeply rooted in the main decision-makers (advertisers). Yet, we get the tactical downgrade, and we remain in a discourse that lacks depth, warning that they may fall into a brutal inconsistency (Interviewee 12, Strategy director).

This quote infers a theme that will be recurrent in the online and face-to-face interviews: decision making and leadership are processes carried out by corporations, leaving out the advertising industry as a generator of ideological change and adopter of new trends:

I don't see it as very possible for a brand to stick to an ideology in Chile... We are more functional, and we look for specificity, like exclusivity. Besides, Chilean executives are afraid of changing when tested formulas are already successful. Adopting a brand strategy with an ideology or a purpose requires a more profound act in the business models themselves. That is a matter of corporate governance and not necessarily to a particular area (Interviewee 21, Advertising agency partner).

In addition, the industry is described as having difficulties in terms of working conditions, with few incentives, low salaries, and heavy workloads. Precariousness also encompasses the difficulties faced by the advertising industry in an environment where the market is becoming more complex, and consumers are unwilling to listen to messages:

In a context where advertising is invasive, it ceases to be preponderant, and brand value lies in a new relationship parameter. That is where brands with a position that integrates people may have a place (Informant 24, Market research agency manager).

This last quote introduces the second relevant result: the diversity of new advertising trends that distinguish brands whose value no longer lies in a differentiation based on the product but socially relevant issues attractive to consumers. Here, the answers are varied and range from technological changes that allow new formats and digitalization of content and trends associated with what is understood as brands with purpose, new economy, and new ways of communicating. As expressed by this respondent:

Some brands have democratized the use of the Internet, bringing connection to places with fewer resources. However, I have also seen the concern from brands and specifically Influencer Marketing. Brands are solving in various ways how to show people that what is done in influencer MKT is Advertising too. It is more organic, but it is still advertising (Informant 19, Deputy manager of digital marketing).

This category also includes environmental awareness, gender identity issues, anti-consumer trends, and digital disconnection.

Change in the industry and the environment

Interviewees agree that the industry is going through a period of dizzying change. Change is happening in terms of the social issues they are in charge of (directly derived from Chilean and global social changes) and in the advertising industry itself. The industry is facing radical technological changes, such as digitalization, that influence the work of advertisers, defines generations and makes their daily work more complex. Words such as transformation, evolution, and change are the concepts used to describe the advertising moment:

> [There is a change] Digital platforms now concentrate more advertising expenditures than TV, which used to be the leader, and this responds to the new consumption trends, in which people stay connected all day long. The industry is also trying to reach consumers through credible individuals, hence the success of influencers (Interviewee 19, Assistant manager of digital marketing).

This period demands a constant evolution of brands –and those who manage them– to understand and adapt to the new social environment. It also requires an adaptation of strategy, given the more competitive and atomized market that works as an incentive to differentiate by anchoring with the new social trends:

> I think advertising is an industry facing an increasingly competitive scenario. There's a reduction of fees. The significant differentiation lies on the in agencies' creative capacity and their capability to advise strategically, based on the use of data and new forms of research, to build socially relevant brands (Interviewee 12, Strategy director).

In this competitive context, in which strategy, creativity, and socially relevant brands are needed, informants see Wokebranding as a way to face a complex market and be concerned with those issues important for consumers' identification. Thus, they understand Wokebranding as

an extension or mutation of two previous brand trends: brands with purpose and corporate social responsibility.

> The truth is that I didn't know it (Wokebranding) by name. But I was aware that today there are campaigns focused on social responsibility, which are controversial since they touch upon moral issues. I think it is a good trend because brands concerned with social issues and larger audiences may help society evolve. I think this trend is a consequence of the new generation evolution, technology, etc. Today, we are more equal in terms of information access, which allows consumers to be more demanding towards brands (Interviewee 4, Planner's assistant).

Moreover, the interviewees perceive that this type of trend dates back to the 20th century and constitutes an inherent debate within modern advertising:

> Brands are aware their core is to be corporate citizens. This is an issue for brands; since the 1920s, it is not a new thing. They used to be called *insights* that inspired communication; today, they guide a brand's discourse and actions. Advertising has always been called to be a mirror of society, and it evolves and matures in social issues, which is reflected in the brands themselves. Therefore, the debate on brand ideology is typical of this century (Interviewee 23, VP strategic planning).

Strategic and ethical dimensions of Wokebranding
The interviewees identify the Woke trend in two complementary but distinct dimensions that eventually constitute an essential part of brand building within the current consumer market and advertising industry.

A first dimension refers to Wokebranding as a strategic brand response to environmental changes, addressed by adaptation (to the new environment, consumer, and social changes), and differentiation (necessary due to the homogeneity provided by technological advances). Therefore, interviewees perceive the adoption of this trend as a strategic process: "I think it has been a process, like everything in communication and marketing. This is the result of a path of changes and searches for effectiveness" (Interviewee 13, Commercial executive). For example, it is seen as "another way of seeking relevance in the face of an audience

that is increasingly resistant to conventional advertising" (Interviewee 20, General account manager).

Therefore, adaptation translates into a better connection and engagement with these new consumers, based on a better understanding:

> It is the best way for brands to connect with new consumers... I think it is necessary for brands to understand their consumers and imitate this way of communicating... this trend means that advertising has to join more disciplines to communicate better and understand the market better (Interviewee 11, Creative director).

Moreover, they believe brands need to adjust to these new trends to achieve sustainability on a long-term basis:

> The consistency of a brand ideology should be measured in its business consequences. In my experience, it (brand ideology) is the main reason for the growth of the brands in my portfolio. Having a clear definition of the brand's social position makes all the difference when managing a brand (Interviewee 22, Advertising agency partner).

The second group of respondents privileges the ethical mandate of adopting these trends. From this perspective, Wokebranding is understood as a brand's ethical duty to face social changes. For example, one of the informants expresses that:

> I think it is a very relevant issue to address; it should become a basic moral principle for each brand... I think it may be due to the increasingly relevant social responsibility… New generations are more concerned (with the socio-political environment) and take care of social actions. Today, we see how young people are supporting the Cop 25 to improve the world; Generation Z is the most socially committed; the new generations are showing us that we must improve as a human race… Therefore, woke advertising makes more sense than ever (Interviewee 19, Deputy manager of digital marketing).

Discussion

The debate on the ethical dimension of brands is established as a source of competitive advantage that meets the expectations of the new generations of consumers, who assume that corporate responsibility is more relevant than the product or the service they sell.

The literature warns that adopting this type of strategy implies a previous social capital –in the form of Woke Capital– that makes the corporation legitimate and with less risk of being rejected as an opportunist. The vital issue in adopting a WokeBrand stance goes beyond the mere communication of a company's concern about a particular issue. Instead, the company legitimizes itself by recognizing an ideological position that limits its actions and thus affects its own business model. Therefore, organizations become valuable because they are perceived as able to dialogue with the community surrounding it, to take part in a collective social agency, and perceived as contributing to the consumers' identity building process.

In agreement with previous research, this study shows that WokeBrand strategies seem to be beneficial for immediate productivity. However, it is necessary to evaluate whether this asset can be projected over a longer-term and proves more efficient than other formulas. This analysis needs to be diachronic, and it may suggest a path for future research in this area.

In Chile, there are indications that this form of brand building can be presented as an alternative, especially in a context of growing social revolts in which citizens are demanding new deals in equality, subsidiarity, and inclusion. The case of WOM opens the road to channel the expectation about the agency of a company from a critical and politicized stance on social issues, primarily when governments and other social actors do not provide suitable solutions to citizens' demands.

Despite its apparent maturity in the brand industry, this trend does not seem to be deeply rooted in the Chilean case. Wokebrand is merely perceived as a derivation of previous trends such as brand purpose or corporate social responsibility. According to the literature, these strategies are born from the company's aspiration to provide

value to a third party but differ from Wokebranding in that they lack an ideological statement and are expressed more as activism that gathers a community around it than as a traditional advertising communication. Unfortunately, this difference is not recognized by some of the interviewees.

It can be assumed that the Chilean advertising industry is in a deep process of transformation. A functionalist vision on the role of advertising agencies prevails. This stagnation goes against the need for a strategic role in brand building processes, and could explain a lack of innovation capacity in advertising proposals and the relevance that these have on the business model of the brands they serve. In this sense, the Chilean advertising industry depends on the personal convictions shown by the general managers of advertising companies to generate proposals for strategy changes in the construction of WokeBrands, limiting itself to replicating proven formulas, with the risk of ignoring the real social environment.

Despite the confusion about the concept and the limitations established by the power of advertisers concerning advertising messages, informants recognize the value of WokeBrand-type strategies. Furthermore, they consider that they would facilitate the role and contribution of an advertising agency since the ideological statement of a brand makes for better management decisions.

It seems particularly interesting how the interviewees conceive their professional role defined as precarious but relevant. The publicist appears to be conceived as a misunderstood innovator who can perceive the communicational trends necessary for companies in a changing environment.

Although they do not always accept the conceptual definitions provided by the literature, some interviewees seem to be part of the modern debate on the role of brands in our society and assign them an ethical meaning.

This study suggests the need to move towards approaches that integrate new tools for understanding consumers inserted in dynamic and complex cultural contexts, which superimpose ideological and functional reasons when understanding consumption. How brands attract their markets must then be adapted to this new reality, and it

is precisely the advertising agencies that must propose and lead the formulation of these new ways to meet new demands. In the Chilean case, changes in the advertising industry seem to be coming late concerning the strategic role they are expected to fulfill.

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