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Research Title

The Age of Trump:

The Conscious Consumer and Social Responsibility - Paving the Way

Forward

I, Savannah Steenkamp, hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Bachelor of Arts Honours in Strategic Brand Communication Management degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Abstract

In the generation of the millennials, making a large consumer impact, there seems to be a peak of interest in the concern of social responsibility. In the context of a turbulent political situation in the United States, with controversial policies and ideologies that have shaken the world, brands and corporations. This study has examined the extent to which brands who have adopted a strong Corporate Social Responsibility are perceived or interpreted by mindful consumers in the political context of the newly elected United States President. Data was generated using interviews of ten people and 70 surveys. Through this interactive approach the study was able to illustrate the complexities and the subjective nature of the topic. The increased use of Corporate Social Responsibility voice of the brand adds to the brand identity, and growth whereas brands who have not acknowledged the turbulent times are viewed in a negative mindset of the conscious consumer and negative market share for a period of time however brand loyalty may still occur in some instances. Showing a casual loop between the voice of the brands as a response to the political context and the growth and perceptions of the consumers. Thus Corporate Social Responsibility can be used as a guideline for brands and consumers in the context of turbulent political environments.

Keywords

Corporate Social Responsibility, mindful consumer, turbulent political situation.

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction

This research paper has look into the extent to which brands who have adopted a strong Corporate Social Responsibility are perceived or interpreted by mindful consumers in the political context of the newly elected United States President The aim of this study was to understand if a Corporate Social Responsibility approach of the brand adds to the brand identity, growth and brand loyalty in the mind-set of the conscious consumer.

1.1 Background and Orientation

In the generation of the millennials, making a large consumer impact, there seems to be a peak of interest in the concern of social responsibility (Ames, 2017). This critical awareness of the mindful consumer places itself at the forefront of brand strategies. In the context of a turbulent political situation in the United States, echoing further from American soil, Donald Trump the newly elected President with controversial policies and ideologies has shaken the world, brands and corporations that infiltrate daily lives (Fleishman, 2017). With Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the minds of consumers, this could be a way for brands to differentiate themselves as well as they continually speak out regarding social concerns (Fleishman, 2017). In this politically charged milieu and brands with a big following, customers are looking for brands they support to take a stance on current social issues (Gibbs, 2017). Yet those brands who endorse the importance of brand purpose face difficult times to navigate through alarming policies and ideologies of Trump who has managed to gain support from not only almost half the American population but others around the world (Ritson, 2017).

1.2 Rationale

In the politically charged context as discussed, the already conscious supporter is looking for brands that have a clear and authentic position. This becomes essential for brands to demonstrate to their audiences their core values (Gibbs, 2017). Brands continually need to differentiate themselves and gain an understanding as to the importance of social responsibility through the study, potentially helping the brand as well as the mindful consumer by gaining further insight. The implication of Trump's policies is highly relevant and have the potential to unravel and develop over time making the research adaptable and current. Exploring how brands which have adopted a strong Corporate Social Responsibility will be perceived or interpreted by mindful consumers in the political context of the newly elected President Donald Trump in order to understand what role CSR plays in relation to brand identity and brand loyalty from the conscious consumer. The research aimed to understand how brands have positioned themselves in the era of Trump and how the conscious consumer

perceives brands who actively engage with Corporate Social Responsibility as a response to the political atmosphere.

1.3 Problem statement

The purpose of the study was to explore how brands which have adopted a strong Corporate Social Responsibility are perceived or interpreted by mindful consumers in the political context of the newly elected United States President. Further, it assessed to what extent Corporate Social Responsibility adds or detracts from the brand identity and growth as well as the influence on brand loyalty from the perspective of the conscious consumer.

1.4 Research Question

In the Trump Era, categorised by some as a time of turmoil and uncertainty, how will Corporate Social Responsibility play a significant role in how brands are perceived by the conscious consumer?

1.5 Sub Questions

- In the age of Trump how have brands positioned themselves as a response to the political atmosphere?
- Where purpose transcends politics and brands are able to use corporate social responsibility to highlight social and environmental issues that are at the forefront of cultural space and thought, does this translate into growing support and loyalty?
- How does the mindful consumer adapt its expectations as well as loyalty in the turbulent era?
- Do the values of the brand align with the social cause and responsibility?
- Can the success or failure be linked to the political stance of the brand?

1.6 Objectives

- Understand the relation between the political atmosphere and CSR policies
- To gain new insights into brand loyalty linked to aligned values and beliefs of a brand of conscious consumers
- To explore what constitutes favourable brands amongst conscious consumers
- To become familiar with perceptions of how CSR can help differentiate brands in the market.

1.7 Structure of Paper

The research report is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: In this chapter is the contextualization of the research providing a frame work to the reader, introduces key objectives the main research question as well as a rationale for why this study should be conducted.

Chapter 2: The Literature Review is an outline of the research paradigm, setting the theoretical foundation of previous literature which is important to the study.

Chapter 3: This chapter is an explanation and justification for the research methodology including the research design and data collection and analysis methods. The population and sampling are discussed. Further limitations as delimitations of the study.

Chapter 4: The findings from the primary research are evaluated and analysed.

Chapter 5: The final chapter provided concluding insights as well as implications for future studies and ethical considerations.

2. Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review focuses on major themes which have emerged as fundamental throughout the proposed research problem. The study explored how brands which have adopted a strong Corporate Social Responsibility are perceived or interpreted by mindful consumers in the political context of the newly elected United States President, Donald Trump. Further, it assessed to what extent Corporate Social Responsibility adds or detracts from the brand identity and growth as well as the influence on brand loyalty from the perspective of the conscious consumer. The main themes which were focused on include Corporate Social Responsibility, Brand Identity, and the Conscious Consumer. The literature has created a platform for the research problem and has allowed for a holistic understanding of previously established theories, highlighting gaps in the research and further constructing the research problem.

2.2 Paradigm

The research problem has undertaken an anti-positivist stance as the content can be subjective and people's opinions may differ depending on a multiplicity of variables (Maree, 2016;33). Looking through an interpretative lens, the research uses qualitative methods based on the outlook that people are essentially different from objects and cannot be simply represented solely based on quantitative research (Cronje, 2014). Solely, quantitative research can have a dehumanisation effect on the social and cultural aspects which play a key role in the research problem (Cronje, 2014). Instead of this dehumanising effect, the research seeks to understand the individuals from a holistic point of view (Cronje, 2014). A subjective worldview during the research paper was essential as the topic of President Donald Trump is highly contentious and emotive. Consumers' perceptions surrounding Corporate Social Responsibility can be dependent on their personal values and social beliefs which further made this study take on an anti-positivist stance.

The qualitative research included interviews, and observations to understand individual's opinions concerning brands in the age of Trump. Quantitative research was incorporated to provide a form of tangible knowledge as well as to add depth and detail to the research (Maree, 2016:42). Quantitative data was collected in the form of online surveys and previous statistics. In using this mixed method approach of both qualitative and quantitative provided a platform for multiple voices with varying and interactive understandings in order to coordinate crystallization, creating a holistic and integrated perspective (Maree, 2016:42). The literature

review has also adopted an anti-positivist outlook regarding the literature, as the main themes were addressed through theories which have used an interpretive lens in the studies.

2.3 Theoretical Foundation

2.3.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility is a key theory for the research problem and needs to be understood. It can be traced as far back 1917 where some may say the seed for the theory was planted by Henry Ford when he announced that the aim of the company was about more than purely making a profit. He wanted the motor company “To do as much as possible for everybody concerned, to make money and use it, give employment, and send out the car where the people can use it and incidentally to make money” (Lee, 2008: 54). Ford’s idea of business as a service to society can be considered as the first steps and thoughts concerning Corporate Social Responsibility (Lee, 2008: 54).

In the following decades the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility went through an enlightened restructuring of various viewpoints (Lee, 2008: 54). One theorist Bowen produced a book which resulted in the first rationalized and systematic interpretation of Corporate Social Responsibility (Lee, 2008: 57). He conceived CSR as a vision for a better society where economic goals as well as social goals came together to strengthen one another (1953:14). Further he suggests that in a *laissez-faire* economy CSR can act as a balancing and counteractive measure for some social failures which may appear (Bowen, 1953:14). Bowen discusses that in order to achieve long term top performance, firms need to be thoughtful of business ethics (Bowen, 1953:21).

“To pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society” (Bowen, 1953:6). This social obligation outlook of CSR is highly present in the work of Bowen and begins to form the groundwork of future of the concept. Bowen’s theory of CSR as a measure against social failures could still be applicable in the Trump Era which for some has and continues to cause social disappointments. The massive Medicaid cuts of Trumpcare which would result in the elimination of health insurance coverage for 23 million Americans (Levitz, 2017), has resulted in outrage and can be considered a social disappointment. A further disappointment could prove to be Trump averting catastrophic climate change (Levitz, 2017). Many feminists have found disappointment with the election of Trump as his previous actions speak to the inequality of women such as the controversy of “grabbing [women] by the pussy” (Levitz, 2017). Further

disappointments based on bills and actions of Trump will be noted as the paper develops using more specific examples.

Further Bowen argues that businesses have such influence and far reaching capacity followed by consequences of their choices (Bowen, 1953). As a result of this, it becomes obligated for business to consider social consequences and responsibilities (Bowen, 1953). Corporate Social Responsibility participation becomes an essential component of business strategy as its activities can increase corporate competitive advantage and sustainable development (Werther and Chandler 2006). This idea can become further enhanced in the Trump Era as those corporations that successfully comment on political policies or actions through CSR will be highly differentiated in the market gaining attention of the consumer.

Criticism of Corporate Social Responsibility arose creating some bitter controversy (Lee, 2008: 58). One of the main theorists surrounding the criticism was economist, Milton Friedman, posing an objection to CSR through a classical economic perspective (Lee, 2008: 58). He argued that the social responsibility of a firm is to make money for its shareholders and internal stakeholders, as activities with the purpose of profit maximization (Friedman, 1962). Friedman considered CSR as a 'subversive doctrine' that loomed over the basis of a free enterprise society (1962). In the research problem set in the context of the Trump Era, businesses may be perceived as capitalizing on the turmoil through CSR as a means to purely maximize profit.

Further theories throughout the decades have made effort to elaborate on either the social or economic perspectives of Corporate Social Responsibility or, in some cases, make the effort to reconcile the differences between the two perspectives (Lee, 2008: 59). Prompted by changes in the environment institutionally and socially, CSR has been increasingly rationalized by focusing on organizational concerns at the managerial level (Lee, 2008: 63). The scope of CSR has been expanded to cover the multidimensional activities that intersect with the interests of the stakeholders as well as the corporation. (Lee, 2008: 63).

2.3.2 Political Influence on Corporate Social Responsibility

Detomasi proposes an extension in Corporate Social Responsibility into the domain of politics, theorizing that the essence of politics and political institutions within a corporation's home market may be useful in determining whether and the manner in which a company might pursue CSR (Detomasi, 2008:808). Detomasi discusses the rising attention Corporate Social Responsibility has received, further highlighting that the CSR efforts or lack of has a significant influence on the external social and political environment (2008:808). Impacting not only the environment in which they find themselves but the employees and communities which they

ascribe to (Detomasi, 2008:808). In the Trump Era, political movements are highly observed by the public as well as corporations and may have a significant impact in how CSR is perceived as well as implemented.

Companies not investing significantly in CSR, often incur the wrath of activist groups who claim that they should, be forming a large amount of public disapproval which can inevitably hurt the company in more than one way (Detomasi, 2008:808). This form of private politics can have large repercussions for the companies - firstly, consumers may select a competitor's products as a result of the socially responsible manner in which the competitor conducts their proceedings (Detomasi, 2008:808). Secondly, citizens may also call for more regulation to halt or change production practices, of which they disapprove (Detomasi, 2008:808). With the large amounts of controversy surrounding the political context of Donald Trump and governmental policies, consumers are critical of the actions of corporations and will continue to be.

In the age of globalization, there has been an increase of Multinational Corporations and with it controversial practices allowing room for private politics to arise (Detomasi, 2008:809). By not relying on law or legislation for change, private politics attempts to adjust or challenge corporate behaviour through processes of consumer choice and public protest (Detomasi, 2008:809). Through the mechanisms of private politics such as consumer boycotts, as a response to this form of politics, the companies Corporate Social Responsibility is bought to review (Detomasi, 2008:809).

Detomasi discusses that companies practice Corporate Social Responsibility for different reasons and motivations. Some exercise CSR from a fear of negative ramifications from consumers and, if they do not, this is a reactive strategy (Detomasi, 2008:810). For other companies, the motivation arises from a tactical perspective within the market place creating a competitive advantage, resulting in a growing reputation capital, customer loyalty, which will further improve employee recruitment and retention (Detomasi, 2008:810). Additionally it is argued that the political environment can hold a position in determining how and if companies may pursue CSR (Detomasi, 2008:811). It is discussed that societal norms and ideological predispositions play a role in how managers navigate CSR, (Detomasi, 2008:811).

The political conditions of a country can act as a potential factor in the decision making process regarding CSR. (Detomasi, 2008:813). In the evaluation of CSR activity, firms take note of policy preferences as well as policy decisions which may be taken by the government (Detomasi, 2008:813). Detomasi has offered the idea that CSR activities form a part of the

companies' political strategy and that the ideological tendencies of the government as well as societal complex have an influence on how and if firms exercise CSR (Detomasi, 2008:816). In the turmoil of the Trump Era, corporations will have to be highly observant of the political environment as well as societal views when making decisions concerning CSR. In further research it could be extended to look at how corporations react to policies and actions of government from an opposing stance, what the repercussions following this stance could possibly be and the impact on brand identity.

2.3.3 Brand Identity

Aaker and Joachimsthaler discuss brand identity to be understood as a set of associations through which a brand implies a promise to the consumer (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009). The relationship between the consumer and brand is furthered through the establishment of a brand identity (2009). Through the creation of a strong brand identity, it can be suggested that the relationship built encourages a customer loyalty. Aaker and Joachimsthaler discuss that the different elements that construct the brand identity of a brand - build a narrative, developing a story for consumers of who and what the brand is (2009).

A connection between the ideas presented by Aaker and Joachimsthaler and the argument provided by Schrembri *et al*, that brands contribute toward a narrative that the consumer builds with the intention of constructing the self (2010). It can be suggested that the narratives created give the brands actions sustenance and meaning (Schrembri *et al*, 2010). The consumers constructed "self" can play a role in what brands individuals choose to align with as the brands can be seen as a reflection of a narrative similar to that of their own (Click *et al* 2013:363).

Self-expressive benefits are said to aid the development of the consumer-brand relationship (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2009:43). A self-expressive benefit is described by Aaker & Joachimsthaler as "when the brand provides a vehicle by which a person can proclaim a particular image" (2009:49). Linking to the idea that a brand identity can attract consumers that aspire toward a desired identity as presented by a brand. Further the idea of the consumer aligning with a brand that emulates a certain image/voice that the consumer wishes to reflect in their own lives. In the Age of Trump, it could be further suggested that consumers associate with brands who align their values and ideals with regard to multiple spheres of their lives, political, social and personal.

Thompson *et al* argue that brands create a narrative through emotional branding which empathises with the needs of the consumer and connects the feelings of a like-minded society, propose the idea that the brand can construct its own narrative and it attracts consumers who share or desire for that narrative (Thompson *et al*, 2006). Emotional branding becomes a strategic tool for forging strong attachments to the brand (Thompson *et al* 2006). In a highly emotive context which surrounds the research problem, it is important to understand how brands use these emotive strategies to unite people of a like mindedness and as a representation of the values they ascribe to.

2.3.4 Socially Conscious Consumer

Consumers bringing their political and ethical concerns to the market place is known as Political Consumerism which further involves the use of the market as a space for politics (Micheletti and Stolle, 2008). A certain mindfulness reveals itself which has the potential for improving the well-being of the consumer as well as society in an intersection of the marketplace and social problems (Bahl, 2016).

Practices and products that are objectionable are enabling consumers to express their power through consumer choice (Micheletti and Stolle, 2008). Consumers are becoming increasingly more aware of their political power beyond the traditional roles and are able to deliver social comments, or attempt to make changes in market practices that they ethically, politically or environmentally question (Scammell, 2000).

Micheletti and Stolle discuss how consumer power has extended to a level of consciousness that it has the ability to effectively place pressure on corporations to adopt a socially responsible stance regarding procedures and policies (2008). This belief is further echoed by Jacobsen and Dulsrud in saying, the active conscious consumer can be considered the “celebrated new hero and hope for an ethically improved capitalism” (2007: 469). A cosmopolitan social consciousness and a mindfulness of the evident need for global justice are factors that encompass social consumers (Jacobsen and Dulsrud, 2007).

There has been a shift in the understanding of consumers as they are no longer perceived as “brainwashed” slaves of capitalism, but rather that consumers are viewed as “potentially sovereign, morally responsible political actors” (Jacobsen and Dulsrud, 2007: 470). New spaces for responsibility taking are opened through political consumerism which has resulted in the development of new ethical and political identities (Lyon, 2006) With regard to the research question, the concept of the conscious consumer or the political consumer becomes

highly relevant as to gain an understanding of consumer perceptions towards Corporate Social Responsibility in the controversial age of Trump.

2.3.5 Millennials

The theory of millennials will play a role in the research as conscious consumers often are from this age group and will be key in evaluating Corporate Social Responsibility in the age of Trump. Landrum discusses millennials as having distinct and clear values, likings and fears linked to their earning and purchasing habits (2017). Patterns have been noted in the buying habits of millennials as they are seen to prefer to part with their money on brands and corporations who have ethical standards, pro-social notions and sustainable production methods (Landrum, 2017). Millennials want companies that are socially responsible who are vigorously invested in society and are committed to making society better (Landrum, 2017). A priority for companies should be on making an impact on the world in the eyes of millennials (Landrum, 2017). Honesty and transparency are important and further millennials want to be able to be involved in the corporate social responsibility initiatives (Landrum, 2017).

Researchers often disagree on when exactly the millennial generation starts and ends, however for the main part they all agree that it falls roughly between 1984 and 2004; thus, individuals aged between 13 and 35 years in 2017 are the age group that may be considered millennials (Bump, 2017). Unlike the Baby Boomer generation, Millennials prefer to spend their money on experiences rather than stuff, they tend to embrace a minimalist lifestyle often described as, “less stuff, more stories”, (Weinswig, 2016). When Millennials do make a materialistic purchase, they opt for brands supporting ethical and fair trade agreements and offering products that also falls within the minimalist sphere.

2.3.6 Political Consumer

The “Political Consumer” discusses that younger generations seem to be much more aware of brands that take a political stance and appear to be more interested in buying or supporting brands that align with their own personal values (Cass, 2017). Many consumers appear to be supportive of brands taking a stance on issues as 78% of Americans agree that companies need to take action in addressing important issues that affect society (Cass, 2017:5). A further 88% feel that corporations have a powerful influence and can impact social change (Cass, 2017:5). However, it can prove to be difficult territory for brands to navigate in such a social media saturated climate as brands can often be perceived as inauthentic or insensitive to pressing issues (Cass, 2017). Running the risk of being called out by consumers may damage

their brand image and following (Cass, 2017).

Yet on the other hand with the increase in conscious consumers paying attention to the actions of brands, those who successfully weigh in on the diverging concerns and issues have a great prospect of grabbing the attention of the public as well as gaining public spotlight for the brand (Cass, 2017). “For brands, identity politics are a minefield. But how long can brands stay quiet? As various consumer groups become more vocal, it will be imperative to explore how to intersect those issues” (Cass, 2017). With regards to the research, the concept of the political consumer is interesting in how brands will navigate the Trump era in a response to the issues that affect society and how consumers will view those who do weigh in on the polarizing issues.

2.3.7 Celebrities as Brands

“Celebrities as human brands: An inquiry on stakeholder-actor co-creation of brand identities” findings show that socio cultural codes and human brand identities are formed along with key stakeholder-actors' participation. Showing the importance of consumer brand relation and the large influence the consumer is able to place on the brand (Centeno & Wang, 2017). Within this research paper this concept of celebrities as brands and their relation to stakeholders becomes interesting in terms of Donald Trump. Before being elected as President, Donald Trump was a large brand in himself with his empire, as well as brands under the Trump name. Now under his presidency, Trump as a brand evolves and the Trump brands face a turbulent time. “Trump's personal brand got a huge boost from “The Apprentice,” the reality TV show in which Trump came off as a straight-talking truth-teller – “a decider who insisted on standards in a country that had somehow slipped into handing out trophies just for showing up,” (Swanson, 2016). Trump known as a public figure for many years growing and developing his brand as well as wealth is now the newly elected President. This research will look at how Trump's brand has evolved from that of “The Apprentice” to the brand of Donald Trump as a President and the consequences that follow (Swanson, 2016).

2.3.8 Meaningful Brands

Building brands has evolved into more than just selling products and services but a deeper captivating need to contribute and invest in the development of communities and economies (Enslin and de Beer, 2015). This is what can be considered a ‘meaningful brand’, it adds value through mindful leadership with a reciprocal nature and continually invests in community conversations (Enslin and de Beer, 2015). As conscious consumers look to connect with

brands that align with their personal values and beliefs it is important to note what these consumers look for in brands especially in this turbulent time, where brands are making strong stances that speak to their value and beliefs as a brand.

2.4 Conclusion

The literature as discussed above paved the way forward for the research problem, in exploring the fundamental concepts which aid in understanding how brands which have adopted a strong Corporate Social Responsibility are perceived or interpreted by mindful consumers in the political context of the newly elected United States President Donald Trump. The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility in this literature review was analysed from its early roots to fundamental theorists of Bowen and Friedman. The theory of CSR from both perspectives was useful in the research as Bowens social outlook can still be applicable in the Trump Era, which for some has and continues to cause social disappointments. Freidman's economic perspective on CSR has been considered as some corporations will base their strategies on profit maximization.

The corporate competitive advantage as disused by Werther and Chandler is analysed in relation to corporations in the Trump Era, with corporations that have successfully or unsuccessfully reacted towards political policies or actions. In the context of the research, the political institutions and policies can be said to have an impact on how corporations conduct CSR strategies making Detomasi's political roots of Corporate Social Responsibility an important aspect of the literature. The literature review discussed the theory of brand identity in the Age of Trump, which could be further suggested that consumers associate with brands who align their values and ideals with regard to multiple spheres of their lives - political, social and personal.

The main themes which were discussed, Corporate Social Responsibility, Brand Identity and the Conscious Consumer lay the foundations for the research as understanding CSR and how political aspects affect corporation's decisions of CSR. Brand identity will aid in understanding how consumers align with different brands and more specifically the research focused on how a conscious consumer who is aware of the Corporate Social Responsibility as well as the political and social environment and what brands they identify with. The research uses all these themes in order to understand how brands have positioned themselves in the era of trump and how the conscious consumer perceives brands who actively engage with Corporate Social Responsibility as a response to the political atmosphere.

3. Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The research used an anti – positivist stance throughout the paper, and conducted research in mixed method structure with interactive studies as a main theme through qualitative data and as well as the use of quantitative data. Data was collected by means of structured individual interviews and surveys and analysed using inductive approach. This chapter will elaborate on the methodology in order to explain how the research was conducted in order to answer the research questions. To explore how brands which have adopted a strong Corporate Social Responsibility are perceived or interpreted by mindful consumers in the political context of the newly elected United States President. Further, it assessed to what extent Corporate Social Responsibility adds or detracts from the brand identity and growth as well as the influence on brand loyalty from the perspective of the conscious consumer

3.1 Research Paradigm

This research paper has taken an anti-positivists stance as the content can be subjective and people's opinions may differ depending on a multiplicity of variables (Maree, 2016). Looking through an interpretative lens, the research uses qualitative methods such as, interviews, based on the outlook that people are essentially different from objects and cannot be simply represented solely based on quantitative research which can have a dehumanisation effect on the social and cultural aspects which play a key role and instead seeks to understand the individuals from a holistic point of view (Cronje, 2014). The qualitative research included observations as well as interviews to understand individual's opinions concerning brands in the age of Trump.

With an idiographic approach by emphasising the individuals and gaining an understanding of the individual behaviour without placing a focus on general laws (Maree, 2016). Through this lens an understanding of CSR and its importance has been understood through a multiplicity of views from the consumers, although common trends may present themselves. Quantitative research was incorporated to provide a form of tangible knowledge as well as adding depth and detail to the research (Maree, 2016). Quantitative data was collected in the form of surveys and previous statistics. Using a mixed method approach of both qualitative and quantitative provided a platform for multiple voices with varying and interactive understandings in order to coordinate crystallization, which aimed to create a holistic and integrated perspective (Maree, 2016).

3.2 Research Approach

Looking specifically at two brands, Airbnb and Uber, who have intentionally or unintentionally taken a stance during controversial matters in the age of Trump thus far, such as the immigration ban. "Travel and tourism now account for almost 10 percent of global GDP with \$7.2 trillion in revenue, making the sector bigger than the oil industry. As the travel and hospitality market continues to expand, Millennials and Generation Z have been quicker to embrace home sharing." (AirbnbCitizen.com, 2017). Millennials often account for the conscious consumer making Airbnb a relatable brand to trace and observe this can also be said for Uber. This research has looked into how their stance has impacted their brand image and brand loyalty.

It looked at the growth or decline in social media followers after their actions as a response to the tumultuous times. The research further looked at the brand image and values to gain insight into their action as to whether or not they align. Quantitative research of surveys was conducted to narrow the scope of the study has focused on the conscious consumer. Qualitative research in the form of interviews were conducted to understand the views of millennials on the actions of these two brands in relation to themes such as brand loyalty and brand image. Additionally, Donald Trump as a brand himself was discussed following his newly elected position as, President of the United States, to understand the impact the controversial environment has and the impact on the Trump brand and business empire.

3.3 Sampling and Population

The sample participants were selected based on the interest in the generation of millennials who would generally fall between the ages of 18-34, as that is relevant and directly linked to the research paper. Both male and female, the population and sample was from South Africa and for the interviews that were conducted in Cape Town. Through the survey in the form of survey monkey this group can be narrowed down based on questions relating to the importance of CSR as well as interest in the political context and further specific consumers who show a strong loyalty to a brand who either support or speak out against Donald Trump.

Ten interviews were conducted with a multiplicity of people to gain further and deeper insight into the consumers understanding and perceptions of brands in this context. Social media groups on Facebook, which show a strong alliance with one of the brands in discussion was observed in order to engage with common trends, expectations and perceptions of the consumer. The unit of analysis will fall between the ages of 18-34 male and female. Access to the target population was gained via personal contact or social media.

The sampling that was used in the research was non-probability sampling. As was difficult to gain access to the entire population with limited resources as well as difficulty in determining who the whole population is. The study did not randomly select participants from a sample frame but rather on the premise that the researcher was able to make contact with respondents. (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al*, 2014:137). The methods that were adopted to conduct the non- probability sampling included purposive, snowball and convenience sampling. Snowballing occurred when asking respondents for further suggestions of other people who fit into the population parameters and were willing to participate, for example, other conscious millennial consumers (Maree, 2016:198).

The research had a specific purpose in mind, in uncovering the opinions of conscious consumers and therefore needed to sample people within this framework leading to purposive sampling (Maree, 2016:198). Lastly convenience sampling was used as the population was easily and conveniently available through channels such as colleagues or students (Maree, 2016:197). A sample size of 70 respondents for the online survey was aimed for and interviews included ten participants. The sample of 70 respondents for the survey were gained through accessibility via online platforms as an easy method of communication and contact. The ten participants selected for the interview were selected from participants that answered the online survey and that have identified themselves as a millennial conscious consumer.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection was based on interactive studies as a main method through structured interviews. In the form of Survey Monkey via social media the quantitative data was collected. Structured interviews with open ended questions based on interactive conversations was essential in looking at the research through an interpretative lens. Further through the observation of online groups supporting the brand, documentation of consumer opinions and trends provided further useful information in how brands with strong or increasing CSR are projected and perceived by conscious consumers. Quantitative research in the form of the statistics regarding the support and loyalty specific brands have, was tracked alongside their CSR strength or increasing CSR strategies through the influence of the Trump era.

3.5 Data Analysis

In the analysis of the data, an inductive approach was conducted which allows for themes and trends to emerge from within the data itself (Maree, 2016; 39). Allowing for multiple realities to emerge from the data, this further embodied a holistic integrated stance for the research. Survey Monkey was used to collect survey data from respondents, and these forms have an analytical component included in the data base. The structured interviews will have combined data collection methods of observation as well as taking notes during the interviews proceedings. A transcript was drawn up for each interview after it was completed. (Maree, 2016; 97).

3.6 Limitations

Limitations occurred in the form of limited budget as there was no funding for the study. As a result, there was restricted access to certain information and larger data bases which contain useful information. Therefore, the research was based on information that is easily and freely available. Access to respondents based on geographical positioning and funding was a limitation when conducting the study.

3.7 Delimitations

It was not asked which brands consumers are loyal to as this may vary highly and does not directly correlate to those brands who do or do not respond to Trump policies or have an active Corporate Social Responsibility. Further not every brand that has responded, or not, to the political turmoil will be discussed due to time frame of the study, therefore a focus was narrowed to a general perception and a two brands which a majority of millennials are likely to have knowledge about. Millennials will be the focus of this study, as based on secondary research discussed in the contextualization millennials form a large part of the buying power and there is an increase in a conscious awareness within this age group.

3.8 Anticipated Contribution

In exploring how brands have embraced a strong Corporate Social Responsibility in response to controversial policies and operations under the newly elected president, Donald Trump, it provided a deeper understanding into how brands are perceived or interpreted by conscious consumers. Further, in assessing the extent to which Corporate Social Responsibility adds or detracts from the brand identity and growth as well as brand loyalty from the conscious consumer, guidelines can be found as to whether or not CSR is the way forward in the context of turbulent political environments

4. Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This chapter details the findings from the data collection described in Chapter 3. Data was analysed using inductive approach and the findings are discussed below. This chapter is an evaluation of the findings that were uncovered after the data collection that will provide insights into the research questions and objectives of understanding the relationship between the conscious consumer and how brands which have adopted a strong Corporate Social Responsibility are perceived or interpreted within the turbulent era of Donald Trump.

4.1 Observational Research Findings

In observing the actions of Uber and Airbnb online the following was noted. In the beginning of 2017 there was and still is political uncertainty when it comes to the policies and decisions of the President of the United States. The Immigration ban was one of the larger policies that caused an undeniable uproar from the public, while some brands expressed their support with the public others did not. Uber had a slow response to the immigration ban as well as an ill-advised tweet which saw a lack of support for its own internal stakeholders.

Consumers soon adopted the #DeleteUber as a response to this on social media in an attempt to denounce their actions with more than 200 000 people deleting the app. As a result of consumers deleting the app and supplying screenshots of this action it can be further noted that the brands twitter following in the month of January when the controversy occurred that the following decreased slightly toward the end of the month when the tweets and lack of support was seen (Image 2).

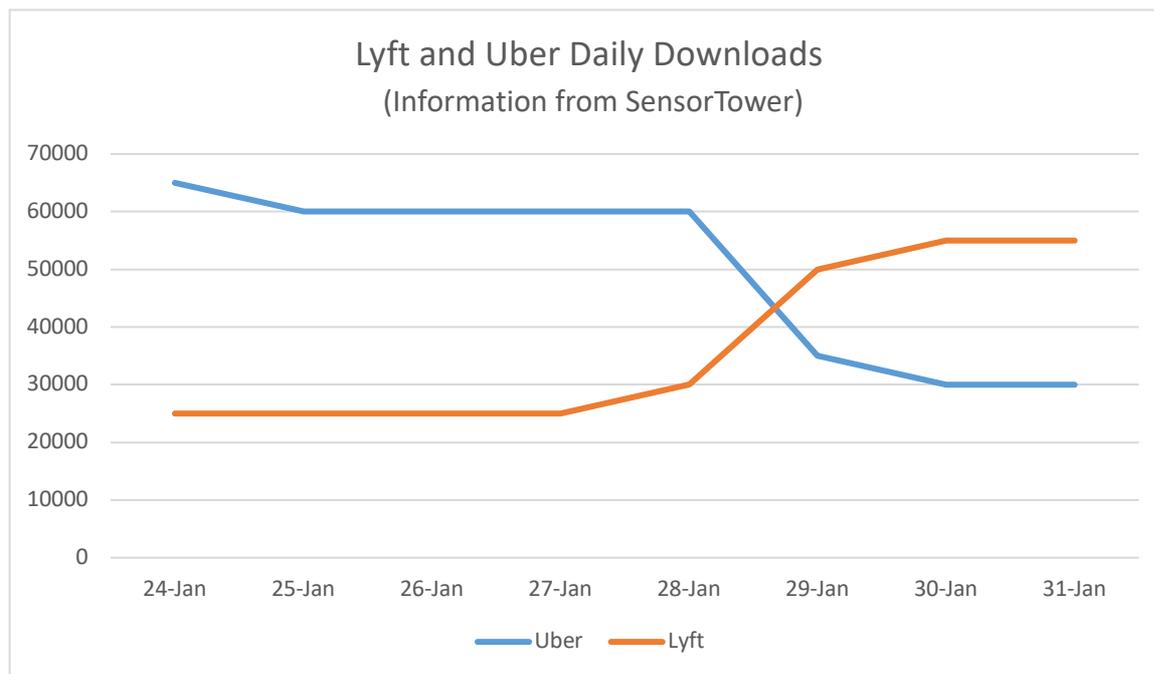
Image 2

Follower growth for Uber



With the slight decrease in followers it can also be seen that the download statistics for uber decreased whilst their competitors Lyft increased (Image 3). SensorTower, a mobile data insights provider shows an estimate of the daily download numbers for both the Uber and Lyft apps for the last week of January and the first few days of February (Williams, 2017).

Image 3



Taking a stand in this way is taking brands into uncharted territory. In an opposite effect to that of uber Airbnb took to Twitter breaking through the clutter and delivering a clear message to its employees, consumers and the community at large. The Chief executive Brian Chesky denounced the message of Donald Trump and took a strong stance offering free housing for refugees and anyone not allowed in the US. A shift which prompted a significant uplift in followers according to data from Socialbakers as seen in Image 4.

Image 4

Follower growth for Airbnb

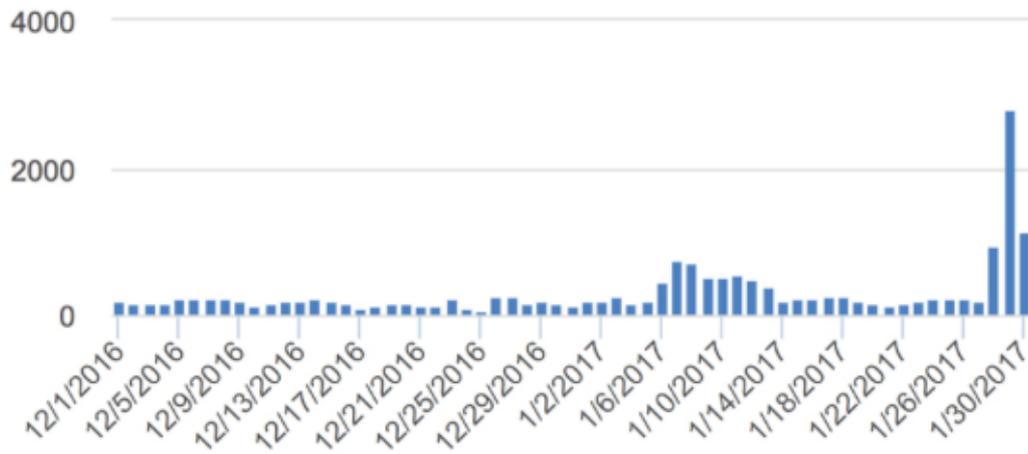


Image 5



This personal and more authentic response to the immigration ban (Image 5) as well as the response from consumers in support or disagreement highlights that brands and their leaders are being called to take a stance for something bigger than merely the product or service being sold.

4.2 Quantitative Findings

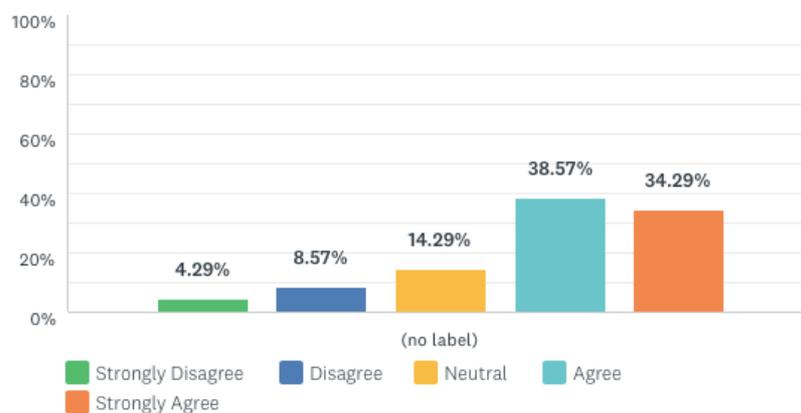
The quantitative data was collected in the form of surveys through Survey Monkey as a tool to gather this data. Survey Monkey was used to collect survey data from respondents, and these forms have an analytical component included in the data base. The quantitative data was used as method to gain a general understanding of how consumers more specifically millennial consumers feel toward Corporate Social Responsibility and its relation to the turbulent atmosphere. Further questions were asked to respondents in order to assess the general impression and relationship with concepts such as brand loyalty and political consumerism in relation to purchasing and perceptions of brands.

In order to gain an understanding into how important Corporate Social Responsibility as well as the response of brands to political controversies it is important to understand the consumer behaviour and psychographics on these terms in a broad sense through the survey thus the survey asked respondents to respond to the statement “I am conscious and aware of world politics” on a Likert agreement scale to gage an understanding into how conscious they are as consumers and how aware they are of world politics and concerns. 34,3% strongly agreed that they are conscious of world concerns paired with 38,6% who felt they agreed with the statement showing a large percentage of the respondents have an interest and curiosity over politics (Image 6).

Image 6

I am conscious and aware of world politics

Answered: 70 Skipped: 0



The question was asked if respondents think political issues have an impact on how brands project and represent themselves. 68,6% of the respondents said felt that political issues impact how brands represent themselves (Image 7). This paired with the finding that 88,6 % of the respondents think it is important that brands take a stand and speak out during political controversies could indicate that consumers feel brands ought to take a stance through their Corporate Social Responsibility policies to respond in an authentic manner to these political controversies (Image 8).

Image 7

Do you feel political issues have an impact on how brands project themselves?

Answered: 70 Skipped: 0

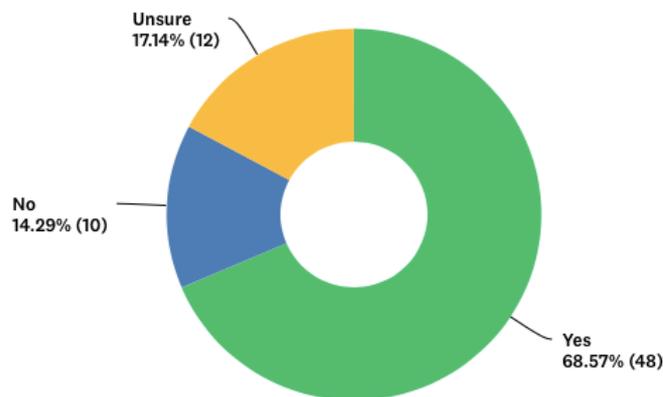
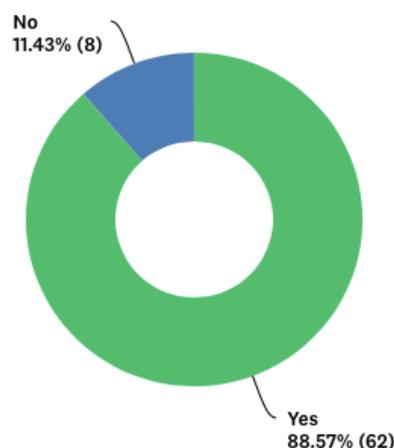


Image 8

In political tensions/ controversy (such as climate change or immigration policies) do you feel it is important for brands to speak out?

Answered: 70 Skipped: 0

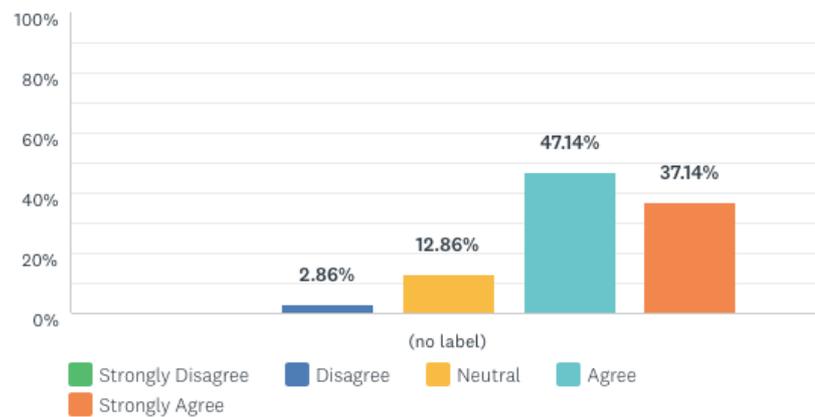


When asking respondents if they felt Corporate Social Responsibility affects a brands image based on the Likert agreement scale majority of the respondents agreed to strongly agreed that it does impact a brands image (Image 9).

Image 9

Corporate Social Responsibility affects a brands image?

Answered: 70 Skipped: 0



Therefore, it could be deduced from all the above that Corporate Social Responsibility in the eyes of consumers impacts a brands image and with the insight that consumers are aware of the political atmosphere surrounding not only them but the world. The respondents further allow insight into the idea that political occurrences and the political environment impact how brands project themselves and that these consumers feel brands ought to speak out regarding certain political controversies such as the immigration ban and climate change. Generating a causal reaction based from how brands respond to these times of political turmoil and their brand image in the eyes of conscious consumers.

4.3 Qualitative Findings

In the analysis of the data, an inductive approach was conducted which allows for themes and trends to emerge from within the data itself (Maree, 2016; 39). Allowing for multiple realities to emerge from the data, this further embodies a holistic integrated stance for the research. Therefore, common and prominent themes that appeared and that were relevant to the study will be analysed further below.

Based on the one to one surveys that were conducted, a common theme appeared that there is a certain influence on brands from politics and specific policies as well as a particular outlook the respondents feel regarding how brands ought to respond in times of political controversy. The questions “Do you feel brands should respond in any way to these controversial circumstances?” and what their perceptions of these brands would be if they spoke out and the impact it would have on their brand image. These questions were put forward as a way to start an open ended dialogue to further gauge an in-depth understanding of how these consumer’s choices and opinions of brands would be impacted by the Corporate Social Responsibility responses.

There was a common thread in the responses that the respondents felt it was important for brands to take a stand in controversial political era. As well as political policies having an influence on how they portray themselves due to the ever evolving environment we live in as well as the global world where information is easily accessed. One respondent explained why brands are becoming more politically involved and responsive in their own words “I do not think a time of turmoil such as Donald Trump era can go unnoticed or overlooked with the information age we are living in it will become increasingly difficult to bury your head in the sand. Brands are going to have to take pick a lane on certain issues that impact them.”

However, another respondent who similarly felt brand ought to take a stand for what the brands believe is right it was further stipulated that they “should do it for the right reasons not for popular culture or to sell products to increase profits but it should be genuine and lie at the heart of the brand.” This can point to the authenticity and brand identity, that brands should they speak out should do so as a reflection of what they stand for not for a differentiating factor.

The point was raised that brands should tread with caution when responding to these tumultuous times. “I think it depends in how they speak out, if for example brands are insensitive to the issue it can create discontent amongst the groups affected and can damage the image of the brand. For example, Pepsi’s campaign with Kendall Jenner that used protest

culture in the USA. Its suggestion that Kendall Jenner could end a protest by giving the police a Pepsi caused outrage amongst African American and tarnished the Pepsi brand, especially in the context of current police brutality in the United States of America.”

It was further discussed that politics should not be separated from the branding realm in that respondents felt it can be extremely beneficial to all not just the brand itself. It was stated that the influence of politics brands will be able to “promote certain political issues which can have a causal effect in promoting the wellness of everyone”. When discussing the particular example of Uber and the bad coverage they received when they did not explicitly denounce Trump for the immigration ban how would this impact their view of the brand.

Interesting reflections were provided in that most acknowledged that brands should speak out against policies as an ethical responsibility yet their views on Uber were different as they would still use the taxi service despite the negative stance. Another respondent linked the neutral perception of Uber after their lack of response to policies as “I do not associate Uber as the sort of brand that stands for ethical and “right”, I am not even sure if they have any social responsibility.” But “I would have been more surprised if it was a brand such as Coca Cola because they have a strong social responsibility ad campaign that they promote”. This shows a link to brands responding based on an authentic and brand identity basis.

Donald Trump as a brand himself has evolved and developed over the years from his reality television shows to his Presidency, respondents were asked how they think his presidency has impacted his personal brand as well as his brand “empire”. There was a general consensus based from the respondents, Donald Trump’s personal brand received mainly negative comments “His Presidency has created a negative image of his brand on the international stage, as it reveals the misogynistic of his ideals” . although his personal brand received negative brand image responses, respondents felt his brand “empire” has benefited in some regards. As his role as president has enabled him to “push business motives”. Further it was recorded that respondents felt his election to Presidency provided Trump with a larger platform for his own brand development.

When the question was asked if as a consumer would the respondents still support a brand that associates with Donald Trump and his policies there were mixed responses. One respondent expressed their personal distain for Trump “He does not support the interests of the people who are suffering so I do not think I would want to be associated with anything to do with him.”. However, another expressed a very liberal view on the question explaining that purchases could or would still be made from these brands but dependent on what policies

these brands were supporting the reason for her answer was that “everyone is entitled to freedom of association and if they still offer a service or product I need or use I would still consider the purchase”.

4.4 Link to Previous Literature

Detomasi discussed how political conditions act as a factor in the decision making process of brands and that CSR has evolved and become a part of the companies’ political strategy. Further he stated that the ideologies of the government as well as society have an influence on how brands exercise their CSR. Through the findings in both qualitative and quantitative studies, it was found that consumers do feel it is important for brands to take a stand in response to political conditions. It was found that politics should not be separated from the branding realm, as brands have a social responsibility in the eyes of consumers as in tumultuous times such as the Trump Era it can be extremely beneficial to all not just the brand itself to have a say. Thus, In the turmoil of the Trump Era, corporations have become more observant of the political environment as well as societal views when making decisions concerning CSR.

Jacobsen and Dulsrud explained a shift in consumers from the slaves of capitalism to consumers as “potentially sovereign, morally responsible political actors” (Jacobsen and Dulsrud, 2007: 470). New spaces for responsibility are opened through political consumerism which can be seen in the Trump Era and the highly interconnectedness of the world. In the quantitative findings it was seen that a large percentage of respondents who assert themselves as being conscious and aware of world affairs and further resonated with the statement that brands ought to respond and be involved with political controversies and aware of the social environment. This finding links to the literature of Cass, in stating “For brands, identity politics are a minefield. But how long can brands stay quiet? As various consumer groups become more vocal, it will be imperative to explore how to intersect those issues” (Cass, 2017). In alliance with literature this the theme from the qualitative findings relates as respondents agreed brands cannot avoid these controversies’ as political policies have an influence on how brands portray themselves due to the ever evolving environment we live in as well as the global world where information is easily accessed.

A self-expressive benefit is described by Aaker & Joachimsthaler as “when the brand provides a vehicle by which a person can proclaim a particular image” (2009:49). Further Aaker & Joachimsthaler elaborated that the idea of the consumer aligning with a brand that emulates a certain image/voice that the consumer wishes to reflect in their own lives. In the Age of

Trump, it could be further suggested that consumers associate with brands who align their values and ideals with regard to multiple spheres of their lives, political, social and personal. As uncovered in the findings consumers are still likely to use some of the brands that do not align with their own values however there is an underlying dissatisfaction for those brands who do not.

There is further a call for brands to show consumers who they are and what they stand for. In a highly emotive context it can be seen that brands use emotive strategies to unite people of a like mindedness and as a representation of the values they ascribe to as seen in the example of Airbnb. As discussed by Enslin and De Beer building brands has evolved into more than just selling products and services it is about making brands meaningful. This desire for brands to be meaningful and connect with consumers runs deep in the findings as consumer deem it important for brands to acknowledge social issues and take a stand for what they believe in.

Bowen's theory of CSR as a measure against social failures could still be applicable in the Trump Era which for some has and continues to cause social disappointments. As seen with the immigration ban example as brands such as Airbnb spoke out and exercise CSR in providing free accommodation to immigrant this was a backlash to the social failures of the political system. This further promoted their brand image and support from consumers.

The corporate competitive advantage as disused by Werther and Chandler this idea of CSR as a competitive advantage is denounced by consumers as when respondents discussed they want brands to speak out from an authentic place and not for economic gain. However as seen through social media observations that a competitive advantage can be gained is analysed in relation to corporations in the Trump Era, with corporations that have successfully or unsuccessfully reacted towards political policies or actions. Detomasi's ideas can be linked to this theory as well as the findings as he explained how some brands exercise CSR from a fear of negative ramifications from consumers. For other brands the motivation arises from a tactical perspective within the market place creating a competitive advantage, resulting in a growing reputation capital, customer loyalty.

4.5 Validity, Reliability and trustworthiness

Validity is the likelihood to which the survey and interview actually replicated the reality of the theories and ideologies that were being investigated in order to gain an insightful understanding (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al*, 2014:256). The survey as well as the interview guide that were implemented for the research study asked questions which were related to the

constructs that were measured such as brand image, political controversies and Corporate Social Responsibility and thus measured what was required.

If the study was replicated by a different researcher within a different setting of time, with the same research instruments and the same results were produced that is what can be described as reliability (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al*, 2014:254). This research paper is based on a highly subjective topic and is studying different peoples' perspectives and preferences which may be subject to change over time and changing of social and political environment. If the study was to be repeated, it is unlikely that it would be identical due to varying factors and the subjective nature of the study but there could be similar results or themes that appear in future studies.

If the research findings are credible, transferable and dependable this would then refer to the trustworthiness of the research study. (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al*, 2014:258). With the use of focus groups and surveys, identical results are not likely to be achieved if the study was repeated as the respondents' answer based on subjective and personal views.

5. Chapter 5: Conclusion

The final chapter and provides a conclusion of all the findings whilst providing a holistic understanding and insight into the research questions which will be attempted to be answered. This chapter will further address the ethical considerations which were regarded throughout the research and finally implications and ways forward further studies.

5.1 Concluding Answers to the Research Questions

5.1.1 Research Question

In the Trump Era, categorised by some as a time of turmoil and uncertainty, how will Corporate Social Responsibility play a significant role in how brands are perceived by the conscious consumer?

The increased use of Corporate Social Responsibility in terms of taking a stand in political controversies and turbulent circumstances, adds to the brand identity, and growth whereas brands who have not acknowledged the turbulent times are viewed in a negative mind-set of the conscious consumer and negative market share for a period of time however brand loyalty may still occur in some instances. However political consumers display a critical eye for what is deemed as an appropriate response and this can affect the negative or positive perception of the brand. Showing a casual loop between the voice of the brands as a response to the political context, the growth and perceptions of the consumers. Thus Corporate Social Responsibility can be used as a guideline for brands and conscious consumers in the context of turbulent political environments. The turbulent era of Trump is new territory for brands and consumers and through Corporate Responsibility as a voice and stance taken by brands in an authentic manner can aid in the navigation of this time. In these unprecedented times of uncertainty it is a can be viewed that Corporate Social Responsibility leads the way with conscious consumers.

5.1.2 Sub Questions

In the age of Trump how have brands positioned themselves as a response to the political atmosphere?

Brands have taken a multiplicity of stances from remaining neutral, to taking a strong stance as a response to the political controversies. However, the responses are viewed by the

consumers to be of importance and evaluate then extent to which they feel they are appropriate or not this will further have repercussions on the perceptions on their brand image.

Where purpose transcends politics and brands are able to use Corporate Social Responsibility to highlight social and environmental issues that are at the forefront of cultural space and thought, does this translate into growing support and loyalty?

As it is such a subjective matter of political views and brand loyalty which waver from consumer to consumer but gaging from the findings in chapter 4. There is a want for brands to be authentic and respond to political controversies but not for economic means. In terms of economic gain and support social media sparked insight in terms of how consumers are willing to denounce or support brands who speak out or they feel their response inadequate as seen with #DeleteUber. However, consumers are still willing to use Uber thus the brand image is more likely to be damaged than the decrease of brand loyalty. It was noted in the findings that support for those brands that use Corporate Social Responsibility to highlight social issues has grown.

How does the mindful consumer adapt its expectations as well as loyalty in the turbulent era?

From the findings it is clear that the conscious consumer or the political consumer has not adapted their expectations in terms of what they are willing to put up with rather that the turbulent era has generate a space for these controversial matters to arise more frequently. Combined with the technological age we live in these incidences are becoming more increasingly difficult for brands to avoid. Thus consumers are still wanting transparency and authenticity however, based on the findings there is a demand in wanting brands to stand to highlight social and environmental issues that are present in the cultural space of the Trump Era.

Can the success or failure be linked to the political stance of the brand?

The success or failure of a brand based on the findings comes down to more than their political stance on social issues that present themselves within the Trump Era. Yet it can be deduced that the political stance can have an impact on the success or failure of a brand in terms of the stakeholders' perspectives. It may not be detrimental but the negative impact or positive impact it can have on a brand image as well as consumer perceptions for a period of time can prove to be highly damaging or rewarding.

5.2 Conclusion

The research study set out to uncover insights into the turbulent era initiated by Donald Trump the President of the United States, with controversial policies and ideologies that have shaken the world, brands and corporations. The research question which drove the study was, In the Trump Era, categorised by some as a time of turmoil and uncertainty, how will Corporate Social Responsibility play a significant role in how brands are perceived by the conscious consumer? Exploring how brands which have adopted a strong Corporate Social Responsibility will be perceived or interpreted by mindful consumers in the political context of the newly elected President Donald Trump in order to understand what role CSR plays in relation to brand identity and brand loyalty from the conscious consumer.

With the triangulation from the observations, quantitative and qualitative research as well as previous literature which can all be drawn together to evaluate and gain insight. It can be deduced that CSR has an impact the brands image, further there is a leaning towards a political influence within branding as consumers feel it is important to speak out against controversial policies. Showing a casual loop between the voice of the brands as a response to the political context and the growth and perceptions of the consumers. However this is new territory for brands and it appears that there is a multiplicity of factors that will contribute toward how brands will navigate this era.

Through the research and previous literature there seems to be an increased call for Corporate Social Responsibility as well as brands that are authentically invested in societal concerns. An increased use of the social responsibility in an era of turmoil and uncertainty of Trump finds political consumers highly observant and critical of the actions of brands and this will impact how the brands are perceived thus impacting their brand image and possibly the growth of the brand. The research was seemingly successful in uncovering the opinions of conscious consumers, it could however have been expanded to gain a wider view of conscious consumers. The brands selected for examples of CSR could have possibly included a brand that sells a tangible product other than the two service brands of Uber and Airbnb. The research could possibly produce more insightful responses if the study was conducted in the United States of America where consumers are directly affected by the Trump era, however this is not to say that consumers all over the world are impacted indirectly due to the interconnected and globalized world. Out of my respondents none were pro-Trump and further studies could investigate the polarised view that would possibly present itself from Trump supporters.

5.3 Implications of findings for future studies

In the future this study can be used as a point of departure for other researchers or studies inquiring into similar concepts. Research relating to the brands who have adopted a strong Corporate Social Responsibility as a result of political tensions and how conscious consumers are responding to these brands in terms of brand loyalty and brand image, these findings can act as the foundation for future studies. This study looked at a broad view of how millennial conscious consumer view the relating themes of political turmoil, branding and their brand loyalty, in future studies this could be either narrowed down to a specific brand. Further the study looked into how Donald Trump's tumultuous policies and persona has impacted the face of branding and their Corporate Social Responsibility, it can be suggested that further studies look into other political turmoil's and the effects they may have.

5.4 Ethical considerations

The following ethical concerns were considered throughout the research paper. It is essential to acknowledge others when using their material based on previously conduct research to support the research paper. As the research progressed had there been any further ethical issues appearing throughout the research, they would have been highlighted and addressed accordingly through alternative procedures. When the research was conducted through engaging with others, it was fundamental to ensure the participants were not put in any physical or psychological harm. Informed consent was addressed when implementing the interviews and this was done by participants signing consent forms before any research was conducted.

Respondents were informed that by completing the surveys or participating in the interviews, they were consenting to be a part of the study. The surveys and interview participants remained anonymous to ensure their identities are protected. Further, before commencing with the surveys or interview, participants were informed of what is required from them and if they wish to at any point during the research they were able withdraw from the study.

The survey was concise and as simple as possible to avoid wasting the time of participants. No incentives were offered and the survey was optional for people to fill in or not. When the participants for the interviews were selected, the researcher ensured that the full information and the purpose of the study was shared and what the use of their contributions were. Participants were not pressured to speak during the interviews. Sensitive material such as personal opinions were handled in an appropriate manner and confidentiality was maintained

throughout the study. Honesty in communication, reporting and publication was carried out in the data collection process to avoid any harm to the respondents. In the analysing the results an objective view point was used to ensure no biased opinions of information arose. Information was presented accurately and not distorted in any way.

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