**Prompt: Apple, Google, Amazon, and Facebook are mega-brands in the technology industry. For one of these two brands, conduct an analysis of its equity based on what you know about this brand. I do not expect you to do any research on the brand in the time that you have, rather I am looking at the types of equity indicators that you use.**

There are numerous ways to quantify and measure brand equity. Whether it be the Aaker’s Brand Identity Model or the Kapferer’s Brand Identity Prism, there are several definitions. One model that we looked at closely in class was the Brand Value chain that delved into several segments including customer mindset, brand performance, and shareholder value. I will utilize the Brand Value chain to take a closer look at and analyze the performance of Amazon.

From the lens of a customer mindset, people are aware of Amazon. In class, while discussing Amazon, everyone raised their hands (indicating ‘yes’) when asked if they know of the company. The consumer associations to the brand have much to do with convenience, ease, and seamlessness. This ties directly into the ‘delight’ factor that Amazon provides. We had talked about the difference between Block Buster and Netflix and how one was able to satisfy whereas the other was able to delight. Similarly, Amazon has been providing delight by way of simplicity and ease. Consumers can think of a product, search it up, drag it to their shopping cart with a click of a button, and have that item arrive at their doorstep within a couple days. The overall awareness, attitude, and delight that the average consumer mindset has towards Amazon is a positive one, indicating the brand equity amount is immense and impactful.

In terms of brand performance, Amazon has been able to secure a stronghold in the technology, retail, and consumer goods portion of the world. When people think of the idea of having items delivered to their doorstep, the first (and sometimes only) word that comes to mind is Amazon. The brand loyalty is there for the same reasons that were mentioned in the ‘consumer mindset’ analysis. Consumers find convenience very valuable, and Amazon provides just that. Also, the convenience that Amazon brings along with the brand prowess they possess allows them to charge a revenue premium (there are no competitors that come close to what Amazon has been able to do). Amazon provides a ‘Prime’ membership, which entails an increased membership fee for a larger amount of convenience. Many have subscribed to this, further inducing brand loyalty through incentivization; Prime users can order items and have them arrive within a day. In addition to consumers, Amazon has garnered loyalty within certain niche manufacturers and creators as well. Many businesses, ranging from small to large, flock to Amazon to have their products sold on the successful platform. This has occurred within several industries, and Amazon has been able to create strong partnerships with manufacturers. Amazon has also cultivated a strong marketing mix by engaging in a diverse range of investments. Whether it be advertising, a new streaming platform, or even an artificial intelligence assistant, Amazon has taken strides in expanding their brand. Prime Video is a streaming service through Amazon that allows users to watch a selection of shows and movies, some of them being Amazon originals. Breaking through into the streaming service means that Amazon provides not only convenience for anything a consumer can possibly imagine (clothes, food, art supplies, chargers, etc.) but also a form of entertainment, all on the same platform and via one source. Amazon has also emerged as an innovation business through its strides in the technology arena, specifically though Alexa, the artificial intelligence virtual assistant. This product allows consumers to book dates, clear calendars, dim the lights in a room, and put on music, just by telling Alexa. The product further contributes to the idea of convenience and ease in association to Amazon. The brand equity is substantially powerful as can be seen through the brand’s performance.

Finally, in terms of shareholder value, Amazon has been excelling through their brand strength. Although the numbers are not in my possession right now, Amazon’s performance in their market capitalization, which accounts for tangible and intangible assets, goodwill, and the total value of the company is beyond successful. This, again, indicates strong brand equity.

**2) It is an unwritten rule that brands do not take a stance on three sensitive topics: sex, politics, and religion. This is embodied in the comment by Michael Jordan “Republicans buy sneakers too.” The recent social movements reflected in #MeToo and Black Lives Matter pose a quandary for brands.** **Should they take a public stance on important social issues?**

Assume that you are a consultant to a leading brand. Using relevant brand principles/ideas/concepts what would you recommend to your brand client regarding this dilemma and why? I am not looking for a listing of multiple brand concepts, but rather the use of your knowledge of brand principles to make a thoughtful recommendation.

If I were a consultant for a leading brand, I would give the recommendation to take a very catered and specific public stance directly based upon the consumer audience.

Brand associations are very important, especially in the eyes of a consumer. Social media is a form of interaction and engagement that can either build, stagnate, or detract from the image of a company. In fact, several models link consumer sentiments on social media with stock price. This means that a very well-thought-out statement can help bolster the company’s image.

Not speaking out is not an option because these issues have to do with heinous crimes against our fellow human beings. Being a bystander is contributing to the problem itself. Many companies have been seeing vocal and public backlash from consumers because of their silence and inactivity. If this leading brand is one that is tied to high intensity associations, then there is more of a reason to push for a statement. When people think of this brand, we want them to associate the brand with qualities of social justice, fairness, social sensitivity, and empathy.

Each brand has their own brand personality which entails a set of characteristics that are associated with the brand. For example, the Hallmark card company can be described to have a brand personality of ‘sincerity’ with qualities such as ‘down-to-earth,’ ‘honest,’ ‘wholesome,’ and ‘cheerful.’ In this case, I would assess the brand personality of the brand in question. Brand personalities can be broken down into humanistic characteristics. If this leading brand was a human, what would they say about the social issues? Would they tweet out supporting victims of sexual assault? Would they donate to causes that support Black Lives? Long term brand building is a challenge, but if done well, can drive business strategy and performance. Speaking out in support of the victims in these social issues would be a positive step-in long-term brand building.

When we were discussing GE’s marketing strategies in class, someone posed the question – “Would the average consumer flying on a plane even care about the brand that manufactured it?” The answer to this question was no. This is important for the analysis of this question. If similar to GE in the sense where this company works behind-the-scenes, maybe a statement would not make much sense. However, if this leading brand is consumer centric, it is important to take a public stance on these kinds of issues to get closer to the customer and to engage in a vested interest of national concerns. Brand equity is assessed not only by its functional benefits, but also its emotional benefits. If this brand can take an interest in speaking out about these social issues, it can cultivate a new empathetic and caring side of the brand, something that will aid in connecting emotionally with existing and potential consumers.

Finally, in a strategic lens, it is important to appeal to a younger target market. In fact, some brands even start introducing themselves to children in hopes that they will attain brand loyalty from earlier on. For example, Old Spice conducted a trial program with children that allowed for early loyalty formation. Younger consumers in this day and age are very sensitive to what is happening in the world and social media plays a big role in this. The youth is interested in how their products are being made, what entities are supporting the companies they are purchasing from, and what the companies they are buying from stand in support of. If this leading brand wants to convey a woke and aware image to younger consumers, speaking out about these social issues would be the right way to do it.