

Political climate creates unfamiliar territory for brands like Uber, Starbucks, marketing scholar says

February 1 2017

The political climate has created unfamiliar territory for some of the most well-recognized global brands, said a University of Kansas researcher of marketing and consumer behavior.

The #DeleteUber hashtag began [trending on social media](#) last weekend after Uber continued driver services at New York's Kennedy Airport when a taxi union gave its drivers a break in the middle of protests on President Donald Trump's executive order on immigration. Even though Uber CEO Travis Kalanick had written a Facebook post critical of the executive order, the ride-sharing company has had to deal with the negative publicity.

Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz also has faced praise and criticism from [both ends of the spectrum](#) after, in response to Trump's order, announcing the coffee giant would hire 10,000 refugees worldwide over the next five year. The move has spurred wide praise but also a hashtag #BoycottStarbucks among those who supported Trump's order.

Noelle Nelson, assistant professor of marketing and [consumer behavior](#) in the School of Business, can address how brands and consumers are approaching and navigating issues in this political climate. Nelson's broad research portfolio includes studying working memory and negative effect in consumer behavior.

"It's unusual in that consumers are demanding that companies have a 'position' on all things political right now," Nelson said. "So people are paying close attention to every action or communication a company makes, and even a misinterpretation of information—like perhaps what happened with Uber—can be detrimental. Companies are having to navigate this heightened consumer attention environment, and they need to more closely analyze all public communication."

Provided by University of Kansas

Citation: Political climate creates unfamiliar territory for brands like Uber, Starbucks, marketing scholar says (2017, February 1) retrieved 8 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-02-political-climate-unfamiliar-territory-brands.html>

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