

# Examining the phenomenon of brand cancellation

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Research in the *International Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning* has investigated the phenomenon of cancel culture and homed in on the emerging problem for companies of "brand cancellation." The work

sheds light on the motivations and strategies that have led to this trend in the world of social media and beyond.

The work from Christina Kyriakou, Tao Papaioannou, and Marcos Komodromos of the University of Nicosia, Cyprus, alludes to cancel culture in which individuals or entities are, perhaps rightly, held accountable for their actions or statements. The results are based on an analysis of twenty in-depth interviews with communication and marketing professionals. It offers new insights into the nature of [brand cancellation](#).

Offensive advertising content is apparently the primary driver behind brand cancellation. How we define offensive is a moot point as there will always be a proportion of any audience that will be sensitive or triggered by a given advertisement. Nevertheless, there is certain content that can be more obviously defined as offensive, such as sexist, racist, or otherwise discriminatory content, political propaganda, victim-blaming, and other matters.

Additionally, if a brand's ethical stance concerns beauty standards, gender equality, [environmental policies](#), and [health concerns](#), then these too can play a significant role in the cancellation of a brand.

The research has shown that anonymity on [social media](#), [peer pressure](#), and a desire for justice can motivate individuals to participate in a brand cancellation. Seemingly, nothing more sophisticated than unfollowing a brand has become a significant way to express one's disapproval of a problematic brand. It allows consumers to quietly distance themselves from the brand and thus to potentially reduce the brand's reach and ultimately affect its profits.

That said, in some cases, excessive or unjustified hate comments directed at a particular brand can have the reverse effect and even lead

to increased support for that brand.

The research underscores the need for businesses to effectively manage their response to brand cancellation. Inevitably, from the company's perspective, they need to be aware that there is a way back from [cancellation](#). Usually, a sincere public apology and the implementation of corrective action in response to a controversy will help. Brand management and citizen activism can be at odds, but there is space for compromise and acceptance on both sides.

**More information:** Christina Kyriakou et al, Online criticism and cancel culture in digital marketing: a case study of audience perceptions of brand cancellation, *International Journal of Technology Enhanced Learning* (2023). [DOI: 10.1504/IJTEL.2023.133788](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTEL.2023.133788)

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