

New research details negative consumer impacts of BLM support on major companies and brands

March 5 2024



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

New [research](#) in *Marketing Science* has found that companies and brands that have aligned themselves with Black Lives Matter (BLM) suffered a

negative impact at the hands of consumers.

The study, "How Support for Black Lives Matter Impacts Consumer Responses on Social Media," found that the negative impact tied to BLM support included a decline in consumer social media activity, measured in the number of followers and "likes," along with an increase in negative commentary through [social media posts](#).

The authors of the study are Yang Wang, Marco Shaojun Qin, Xueming Luo and Yu (Eric) Kou, all from Temple University's Fox School of Business.

The study sought to investigate how consumers respond to brands taking a stance on social media about racial justice movements in four ways:

1. The researchers studied the relationship between a brand's BLM support and its social media follower growth by analyzing 503 BLM posts over 430 brands from June 1, 2019, to Oct. 31, 2020.
2. To determine causal impact, the researchers also focused on "Blackout Tuesday," which served as a large-scale BLM support event on Instagram, but not on Twitter, which served as the "control platform." Based on data from 435 [major brands](#) in diverse industries, and their 396,988 social media posts on both platforms, the researchers found consistent evidence that BLM support triggered a negative reaction from consumers.
3. Using [natural language](#) processing deep learning tools, the researchers studied the effects across brands by examining historical posts along with concurrent unrelated, self-promotional posts from those brands. This process found that the negative effects of BLM support were significantly moderated when brands posted content unrelated to BLM and self-promotional in nature. They found that these "off-topic" promotional posts exacerbated the negative effects of the brands' BLM support.

4. To address the potential that such negative reaction could be politically or ideologically driven by consumers, the researchers examined how customers' political affiliation moderated their responses to brands' BLM support. That analysis found that mostly Republican consumers who were not supporters of the BLM movement constituted a significant portion of consumers' negative responses. However, another significant consumer segment that reacted negatively was made up largely of Democrat consumers who saw brands as engaging in "slacktivism." This is when a brand voices its support for a cause but does not back it up with financial donations.

"One of the interesting findings is that negative associations were stronger when more brands posted in support of BLM, while concurrently posting self-promotional messages," says Wang. "This suggests that large-scale BLM allyship programs that also included self-promotional posts created a 'bandwagon effect' that had a negative impact on those brands."

"Brands that sought to capitalize by jumping on the bandwagon by allying with salient racial justice movements should have heeded caution," adds Luo. "And they should not have been too quick to resume business as usual with their product promotions while at the same time supporting BLM. Nevertheless, some brands with more historical prosocial posting on social media and with socially oriented missions suffered less from the negative effects and may even benefit from supporting BLM."

The authors note that going forward, brands that do not want to sit on the sidelines when major racial justice issues arise should consider making "prosociality" a core tenet of their social media strategy and brand mission long before the issue trends in the news and on social media. Brands should take care not to appear as though their [support](#) is seen as

an afterthought or driven by "bandwagon" motives.

More information: Yang Wang et al, *Frontiers: How Support for Black Lives Matter Impacts Consumer Responses on Social Media, Marketing Science* (2022). [DOI: 10.1287/mksc.2022.1372](https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.2022.1372)

Provided by Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences

Citation: New research details negative consumer impacts of BLM support on major companies and brands (2024, March 5) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-03-negative-consumer-impacts-blm-major.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.