

# Brand activism triggers negative moral emotions and shrinks conservative's moral circle

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## **Abstract**

Brand activism conveys moral values that may align or not with consumers. Past research shows that brand activism can backfire by triggering negative reactions toward the brand. What about its impact on consumers' morality? Experiment 1 (N=749) reveals that consumers believe that brand activism can shift people's moral values and moral behaviors in the intended direction. Contrary to these lay beliefs, Experiment 2 (N=524) suggests that brand activism has limited impact on consumers' morality and can even have the opposite intended effect: while an ad against black discrimination increases consumers' moral value of care, it also i) triggers strong negative moral emotions among social conservatives, which in turn ii) decreases their intention to vote for laws or sign petitions against discrimination, and iii) shrinks (instead of expands) their moral circle. Our findings advance the literature on brand activism by examining its effect on morality and in seeding hatred toward the outgroup. Keywords: brand activism; moral emotions; political ideology

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