

# Private Beliefs, Public Brands: Navigating the Backlash to Brand Activism

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## **Abstract**

The past decade has seen an increase in the number of brands taking a stance on controversial social issues, a phenomenon known as ‘brand activism’. Given the political nature of these issues, consumer responses to brands’ stances have been shown to vary as a function of consumers’ political beliefs, in addition to other factors. This research sheds a light on how the consumption context of the brand, public or private, might influence consumer reactions to brand stances. A series of five studies show that conservative consumers show greater sensitivity to consumption context, compared to liberal consumers. Further, we find evidence for the underlying mechanism such that the effect of political ideology and activism on consumer responses for a publicly consumed brand is mediated by consumers’ moral identity.

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour