Mohamed Hussein is a Marketing PhD candidate at Stanford's Graduate School of Business. Advised by Zak Tormala and Christian Wheeler, his dissertation explores the construct of receptiveness to opposing views. Specifically, he explores barriers that prevent people from engaging with others they disagree with and ways to encourage people to consider ideas they oppose. At Stanford, Mohamed is a member of the inaugural cohort of the Knight-Hennessy Scholarship. He was also awarded the Diversifying Academia Recruiting Excellence (DARE) Fellowship. Before Stanford, Mohamed worked in economic consulting at Analysis Group and received a bachelor’s in economics from Middlebury College.

Abstract:

Reputational Costs of Receptiveness: When and Why Being Receptive to Opposing Views Backfires

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Past research has found that receptiveness to opposing political views carries reputational benefits. For example, people who are receptive to opposing political views are perceived to be intelligent and collaborative. Yet opposing political views are typically seen as rooted in bias and propaganda, and those who hold them are seen as evil and immoral. How can we reconcile these findings? In six main studies and four supplemental studies, we find that whom a target is receptive to, above and beyond what they are receptive to, plays a crucial role in determining whether receptiveness carries interpersonal costs or benefits. When targets are receptive to a source whose partisan identity is known and who belongs to the opposing political party, receptiveness carries reputational costs, not benefits. We argue that these costs arise because members of the opposing party are frequently stereotyped as immoral, and thus receptiveness to their ideas is seen negatively. These effects are particularly strong among observers who strongly identify with a political party and for sources who are prototypical of the out-party. Together, these findings resolve a seeming contradiction between the literatures on receptiveness and political polarization, contribute to a rapidly expanding literature on the interpersonal consequences of receptiveness, and advance our understanding of how information consumption influences impression formation.
Khalia Jenkins is a Ph.D. candidate in the Muma College of Business's School of Marketing and Innovation at the University of South Florida. Her research focuses on finding ways that marketing and technology can be combined to help businesses solve issues of inequity. She is currently working on a project assessing race and discrimination's effects on consumer shopping choices.

Before leaping into academia, Khalia worked in various marketing roles for Anthem BlueCross BlueShield, Abbott, Procter and Gamble, and her last position before transitioning as Director of Client Success at MDLIVE (now acquired by Cigna). Khalia holds an MBA from Clark Atlanta University and a dual bachelor's degree from the University of Cincinnati's Lindner Honors-Plus Program in Marketing and International Business.

Abstract:

Please Don't Label Me: An Examination of Black-Owned Labels and How a Positive Consumer Activism Movement May Have a Negative Outcome

The death of George Floyd in 2020 brought to light many of the systemic injustices against African Americans. This event re-ignited the Black Lives Matter movement among U.S. citizens of all races and within corporations (Porter Jr. et al., 2021; Simon, 2020). While some companies pledged to donate to various Black causes, others opted to empower Black businesses economically by supporting the Buy Black Movement. One of the ways they are accomplishing this goal is by adding a Black-owned label to products and businesses. While this is seen as a way to empower Black businesses and correct past injustices, whether this is actually helpful or harmful and why has not been studied.

Prior literature on consumer racism has found that the stereotypes of a particular race can influence the perception of products associated with that group as they become a symbol of the group (Ouellet, 2007). No racial group in the United States carries more negative stereotypes than African Americans; therefore, a Black-owned label may not provide the positive effects the retailers seek to accomplish (Branscombe & Smith, 1990; Brigham, 1971). In this study, the author analyzes the research question of what the psychological effects of Black-owned business labels in retail settings on Black vs. Non-Black consumers are and in what contexts these labels are helpful or harmful. The effects are studied through Nielsen data analyses and empirical experiments. In the conceptual framework for this study, the author tests whether a Black-owned label affects willingness to purchase, product quality judgments, and repeat purchase intentions. In addition, the mediating relationship of identity salience and the moderating impact of the product's category type and consumer's levels of prejudice and guilt are studied.

Study one was an online study to assess the base impact of including a Black-owned label on product judgments and willingness to purchase with the moderator of consumer's prejudice levels. Prejudice levels were measured using the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes scale, which measures an individual's likelihood to believe that race should not and does not matter (Neville et al., 2000). Higher scores are highly correlated with greater racial prejudice as this belief ignores the systemic issues that accompany race in America, and therefore attributes these to flaws within that race (Neville et al., 2013). This study found that race ($\chi^2(1)=9.913, p=.002$) and prejudice
levels ($\chi^2(1)=21.336, p <.001$) had a significant impact on Black-owned labeled product choice. Black participants who were low in prejudice were the most likely to select the Black-owned labeled product (41.6% of total Black participants vs. 17.7% for Non-Black participants). Conversely, non-Black participants high in prejudice chose not to select the Black-owned labeled product 38% of the time (15% for Black participants high in prejudice).

The impact of the Black-owned label on high and low prejudice participants' product quality judgments was also analyzed. The results reveal that the Black-owned label had no statistically significant impact on the product quality judgments. However, the differences were in the predicted direction, as 49% of those in the low prejudice condition believed it was good quality when it was marked as Black-owned (vs. 24% when it was not marked as Black-owned). For those in the high prejudice condition, 60% believed the product was high in quality when it was not marked as Black-owned vs. 25% when it was marked as Black-owned.

The results from these studies provide valuable insights for retail managers and brand owners of firms to decide if they want Black-owned products to be marked with a Black-owned label and in what contexts this is a good or bad idea. Theoretically, this research offers a case where consumer activism may be a detriment to the cause it seeks to aid. This research also updates the consumer racism literature by taking into account implicit prejudice attitudes and providing insights into a real-world situation where items are being marketed by race.

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Abstract:

The Brand Activism Bandwagon: Assessing the Impact of Incongruence on Responses to Brand Activism

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There has been a growing consumer consciousness of sociopolitical issues in the last few years, causing brands to take stands on such issues, a phenomenon described as brand activism. While researchers propose that incorporating moderate incongruence into brand activism will produce more positive responses, the empirical research backing this is scant. Additionally, there is the need to identify the boundary conditions of these effects. Therefore, this research seeks to answer the questions, (1) how does incongruence in the brand’s pairing with a cause affect consumers’ authenticity perceptions of the brand’s activism alongside their evaluations of the brand? and (2) how does acceptance of change moderate the aforementioned relationships? Across four experiments, this research examines the effect of brand-cause incongruence (BCI) on consumers’ brand evaluations using Prolific Academic and Cloud-Research approved MTurk participants.

Two pretests using MTurk participants identified racial injustice, abortion rights, immigrant rights, and gun violence as the most important and controversial sociopolitical issues in the United States. The studies employed one-factor (BCI: high vs. moderate vs. low) between subjects
designs. Studies 1A (102 females, Mage = 34.5) and 1B (64 females, Mage = 38.63) investigated the main effect of BCI on brand attitudes, providing evidence of the effect. Study 2 (142 females, Mage = 39.6) provided support for the mediating role of perceived authenticity. Finally, Study 3 (294 females, Mage =40.29) examined the moderating role of acceptance of change, with the results indicating that the direct effects of BCI on attitudes were not significantly different among participants with varying levels of acceptance of change.

Collectively, the findings indicated that low BCI elicits the most favorable evaluations when that brand-cause pairing is considered as the most relevant. Driving this effect is authenticity, with low BCI being perceived as more authentic than moderate BCI, and moderate BCI being perceived as more authentic than high BCI. These findings augment the literature on responses to incongruence in brand activism. Finally, they indicate that practitioners should communicate the relevance of their causes, and that policymakers should consider developing methods of authenticating brand activism.

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Abstract:

E-commerce and environment
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Using experimental and observational data of an online retail platform, we investigate the causal impact of platforms’ shipping strategies on the environment and propose new ways for the platform to positively impact the environment using its AI-based features.

We causally estimate that distribution centers lead to 16-30% decrease in CO2 emissions through more efficient item consolidation policies. Environmental savings are highest in metropolitan areas where existence of distribution centers decrease average emissions by 11% more compared to the non-urban areas. Next, we show that the platform could further decrease its CO2 emissions via accounting for regional demand when choosing product assortment in distribution centers. Finally, we develop a ranking algorithm that exhibits items closer to consumers' location higher in the product ranking pages without hurting consumer experience. We show that our proposed ranking algorithm saves both platforms’ shipping costs and environmental costs without hurting consumer welfare.