"An investigation into Cancel Culture's effect on brand reputation and future collaborations and partnerships in the Irish advertising and broadcasting industry"

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Submitted to the National College of Ireland, August 2022

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Title of Thesis: "An investigation into Cancel Culture's effect on brand reputation and future collaborations and partnerships in the Irish advertising and broadcasting industry"

Date: 17 August 2022

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Abstract

Cancel Culture has become a social phenomenon and gained major attention within the last few years in the media and social media. The surge of social media has resulted in traditional boycotting to take place in new age on social media and adopting the phenomenon of Cancel Culture. Social media has allowed users to become more aware of the activity brands take part in online and perceptions of a brand on social media have shaped to be important in the digital age. Cancel Culture is a collective strategy using social pressures to achieve cultural ostracism of individuals who are suspected of being offensive (Norris, 2021). Many brands have been a victim of Cancel Culture and been exposed to scrutiny online which can jeopardize their reputation and future activities as a brand. Cancel culture is a form of public shaming on social media which aims to deprive someone of their customary clout or attention in order to spread public debate and make it less monopolized by those in positions of power (Velasco, 2020). In the event of being cancelled it can be difficult for a brand to rectify the scrutiny they are facing online and hard to control threads and discussions that are taking place on social media as users have the power to cancel a brand, they perceived of wrongdoing.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect Cancel Culture has on a brands reputation and in future collaborations and partnerships in the Irish advertising and broadcasting industry. This dissertation aims to explore the thoughts and feelings of hiring managers in the advertising and broadcasting industry to understand their perceptions of Cancel Culture. This dissertation aims to develop an understanding of how the perceptions of a brand are on social media in the aftermath of being cancelled and how it influences their decisions. Additionally, the research aims to explore the actions brands can take in the aftermath of Cancel Culture to rectify their perceptions amongst upset social media users. Existing academia provides a foundation for researchers providing in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon of Cancel Culture. The existing research also highlighted gaps in research regarding the aftermath of Cancel culture and its effect on brands future activities which the researcher aims to tackle.

The primary source of consideration for this study was determined to be qualitative primary research using an inductive technique, with academic secondary research serving as a foundation. An interview process of five semi structured interviews which was then analyzed through an inductive approach which allowed the researcher to collect and analyze data to draw

up efficient findings for the dissertation. The findings highlighted how Cancel Culture affects a brand's reputation and accountability is demanded from individuals who belief the brand in question has done wrong. In relation to partnerships and collaborations in the advertising and broadcasting industry it was evident that brands need to change their ethos and clearly show they have taken the correct steps to rectify their wrongdoing. Further in-depth research took place in the findings and discussion chapter of the dissertation and areas of potential research in the conclusion and recommendations chapter.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all participants and supporters of my dissertation who aided me in completing this difficult assignment. I would sincerely like to thank my supervisor Robert McDonald who guided me through the research process and valuable advice helped in stay in the right direction. Your constant support and belief in my topic and me is something I will forever be grateful for.

To the amazing participants who fit me into their busy work schedules I want to thank you for providing me with such a valuable tool for my research.

To my amazing classmates thank you so much for all your guidance and being there for me and providing support when I needed it. I would also like to thank my family and friends for being there for me and pushing me on this difficult journey, their patience and guidance were thoroughly appreciated.

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1.1 Introduction

Cancel Culture is the new age of calling out or boycotting a brand or an individual on social media in which usually an unethical or controversial opinion has been shared (J.E. Bromwich, 2018). Social media usage and how young adults closely interacts with their favourite celebrities' brands and friends has created a virtual world (Kim & Kim, 2022). As a result, there has been an increase in the phenomenon of Cancel Culture online. Norris (2021) describes Cancel Culture as a collective strategy using social pressures to achieve cultural ostracism of individuals who are suspected of being offensive. This proposes challenges for individuals and brands who have been cancelled and how they can recover from it. The ideology behind Cancel Culture is a form of ostracism in which a person or a brand is thrust out of social or professional circles either online, social media or in person (Hardie, 2022).

Cancel Culture has resulted in individuals being called out on social media platforms with the intent to blacklist them. Individuals and brands can be cancelled for various reasons although, certain topics increase a brand risk including Covid-19, race, sexual orientation and privilege (Fielden et al, 2018). Twitter is a popular social media platform where social media users try to cancel individuals or brands. Bouvier and Machin, (2021) explain how Twitter campaigns attacking those who make racist or xenophobic addressing how major institutions are failing to address important matters of social injustice, but concerns lie as Twitter tends to extremes and there is a lack of nuance and incivility which is shaping how issues are being addressed and represented. Due to virality aspect that Twitter has the capabilities of this can cause a brand to be quickly cancelled even if there is no truth behind it. This can cause detrimental effects to a brand and can jeopardize their reputation and brand image. Although, Allen, (2021) discusses how individuals who are cancelled often find themselves back in the public good graces within a matter of either months or in some cases weeks. This identifies that Cancel Culture is recoverable and is not always permanent. Nishimura, (2020) identified how organisations advocate against systemic and over racism and this is done though provide educational resources and direct donations to the causes. There has been a noticeable trend in brands advocating for social issues. Schmidt, (2018) describes how consumers perceptions of a brand regarding brand image and purchase intention are influenced in brand activist efforts. Jones (1991) researched how moral intensity can affect the consumer decision making process in choosing ethical retailers. Raj and Roy, (2015) manifest how customers develop trust on brands that are reputable.

This indicates how social injustice promotion in brand campaigns can provide business success and the risk of being a victim of cancel culture. This suggests how brands who are advocators for social issues can reduce the risk of them being cancelled. In an online setting it can be hard to maintain online reputation management as in terms of viral marketing can lead to unsatisfied customers who can spread negative feedback about the brand very quickly (Bryant, 2010). This indicates a relationship between Cancel Culture and having a negative impact on a brand's reputation. Although there lacks research as to the effect it does have and how brands can recover from Cancel Culture. The aim of this research is to determine the effect Cancel Culture has on a brand's reputation. This study aims to explores the phenomenon of Cancel Culture and the aftermath for brands following being cancelled in the advertising and broadcasting industry. As previous literature demonstrates that brands can find themselves back in the public good graces in a matter of time this research wishes to explore this. This research aims to explore secondary and primary research sources around the phenomenon of Cancel Culture and the effect is has on a brands reputation. This research will also identify how it effects brands future actions following on from being cancelled in future bookings, partnerships and collaborations. Cancel Culture will be examined through secondary research and the primary research in developing a knowledge of how Cancel Culture is perceived in the advertising and broadcasting industry from hiring managers. Chapter one will provide a foundation and outline the research aim and research objectives. Chapter two will then investigate and explore existing academia around the phenomenon of Cancel Culture and its effect on individuals who have been cancelled. It will also provide the influence of brand values and reputation, with an analysis on social media and perceptions of brands on social media. Chapter three with then identify the methodological and research approach and philosophy for the study. Chapter four and five will follow with discussion of the data obtained from the research and existing academia.

The research aims to identify and examine the phenomenon of Cancel Culture and provide an insight through the lens of hiring managers of how this effects a brand's reputation and future activities.

1.2 Research Aim

This research aims to explore the effect Cancel Culture has on a brand's reputation. The research will explore the phenomenon in how Cancel Culture effects a brand in future activities in bookings, partnerships and collaborations. There is a gap in research in how Cancel Culture effects a brand in future activities and the process a brand needs to obtain the event of being cancelled. This study aims to be able to understand the effect Cancel Culture has on a brand and the influence it has in future activities in working in partnerships and collaborations with advertising and broadcasting agencies. The study will also examine how important the perception of a brand is on social media and the expectance of the promotion of social issues and corporate social responsibility. The research aims to expand and develop knowledge of the events leading from brand's being cancelled and the influence it has in choosing to work with brands. As a result of the creation of this study insights into the perceptions of brands being cancelled by hiring managers may provide evidence how a brand is perceived following from the event of being cancelled. Insights also hope to achieve how this effects brands and actions they can take to rectify their altered brand reputation.

1.3 Research Title

"An investigation into Cancel Culture's effect on brand reputation and future collaborations and partnerships in the Irish advertising and broadcasting industry"

The research title was carefully considered after a number of considerations. Firstly, the researcher aimed to identify the effect Cancel Culture has on a brands reputation. Although this is still included in the title the researcher concluded this may be difficult and a too broad of a topic. In narrowing the primary research into the effect in the advertising and broadcasting industry the research can gain more valuable insights from professionals. While the initial topic is still included in expanding the knowledge to a specific industry the researcher can reach a more desired aim and more in-depth findings.

1.4 Research Objectives

This section will identify and outline certain points of the study that will aid in achieving the overall research objective. These objectives may provide further findings which will then be analysed further in the findings and discussion section.

Research Objective 1

Determine the relationship of the effect of cancel culture on a brand and its reputation in future activities. This will aid in determining the overall theme of the research title. It will also be a pinpoint for discussion in the research process and aid in the secondary research section of the study. This objective is considered essential in developing a foundation for the research aim.

Research Objective 2

To examine the perceptions of brands through social media and how their actions influence individuals' perceptions of the brand. This objective allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the importance of social media and perceptions online along with the initial research aim. This objective will determine how hiring managers perceive social media in the hiring process and how it affects partnerships and collaborations with brands. It will also illustrate the characteristics of brand's social media that hiring managers deem acceptable and will not jeopardize their company's reputation.

Research Objective 3

To determine if Cancel Culture affects brands in the long-term and if their actions can aid in individuals forgiving a brand. This objective allows the researcher to explore the aftermath of a brand being cancelled and how their actions can affect their altered brand reputation. This objective algins with the study as in determining when a brand can be forgiven can provide insight into how it effects partnerships and collaborations within the advertising and broadcasting industry in Ireland. It will also provide knowledge of what actions brands can take and the action

hiring managers will influence their decision whether to work with a brand following cancellation.

2.1 Literature Review

To understand the concept of Cancel culture and it effect existing academia will be explored alongside the research aim. These will be commented on and compared to and then will build a foundation for the research to identify and research potential gaps in literature.

2.2 Social media as marketing tool

Social media usage and how young adults closely interacts with their favourite celebrities' brands and friends has created a virtual world (Kim & Kim, 2022). Technological advancements have resulted in a surge in social media usage and how individuals communicate (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Social media has challenged communication practices and has resulted in a new communicative culture (Lovari and Valentini, 2020). Social media can be used as a marketing channel to communicate with customers (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Although not all information online is accurate, and individual can be influenced by a false narrative. This can be fake news or controversial topics which can become viral on social media platforms which will be further investigated in this research as the effect this can happen when it is in reference to a brand. As news that is shared on social media is not regulated and viral threads of controversial topics that can be unfair allegations can create a challenge for a brand. Social media has altered how individuals communicate in an online realm. Lee and Kwak, (2012) identified how brands reaching out to individuals through social media platforms is widely accepted as a result of this culture. This presents a new environment for individuals and brands in how they do business and other activities. Lovari and Materassi, (2021) indicated how people trust social media now rather than in the beginning this has influenced users to be more engaged on social media platforms. Social media users are more willingly to partake in online discussions and also believe social media is a viable tool for information and communication. Social media and the technological advancements have users engaging in social media and being an important aspect of their lives.

As social media has become an online virtual world it has changed the way companies approach their business and also how individuals communicate. Sony and Dell are testimony of how social media can have a positive impact on a brand (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). This is a result of being able to communicate marketing practices to consumers at a much larger scale in comparison to traditional marketing. Brands can advertise new products on social media but also convey their brand image and messaging they wish to reach a wider audience and existing audiences'. Authors also highlight how the viral nature of social media results in negative comments spreading at a quicker rate and that firms must monitor online word of mouth and react in an efficient time to do damage control. In terms of online marketing, social media has resulted in being the fastest growing communication medium for brands (Buhalis and Law, 2008). As indicated previously social media and the technological capabilities provide brands with an effective reach to the desired market. Although this comes with cautions as the viral nature that negative word of mouth can spread at a rapid rate and have a negative impact on a brand as user generated content can be hard to monitor and keep track of. As a result, a false narrative can be reciprocated from social media users online and generate backlash for a brand. Alternatively, if a brand is facing scrutiny for accusations that they are rightfully accused of it can be hard to maintain a positive image. Gretzel and Lee, (2008) identify how social media and consumer generated content through the sharing option can result in a low-cost alternative to marketing. A brand can also announce a new product or event through social media sites and users can learn about it rapidly and also have the option to interact with it before trying out the product or attending the event (Ayman et al., 2019). As a marketing tool social media is a process in which brands and individuals can obtain what they need and want through co creation and exchanging value in their products with others (Kotler et al, 2006). Social media at present is one of the most important technologies and it is used by millions of people all over the world (Appel, 2019). Social media and the capabilities can result in a high impact on consumers in addition to the overall business environment (Paurova et al, 2020). The viral aspect of social media also results in its role in dubious content (Ralston et al, 2018). This is as it's hard to control the narrative that is being shared and through the sharing option it is out of control of the individual who is at the forefront. The anonymity of users also proposes challenges as many accounts under fake names can take part in sharing of dubious content. This can be fake news or controversial topics which can become viral on social media platforms which will be further

investigated in this research as the effect this can happen when it is in reference to a brand. Fielden et al, (2018) identify how social media and media proposes negative effects for organizations when fake news occurs and the prevalence of manipulation tactics on social media. For instance, this can be a group of individuals on social media with similar views on a topic purposely trying to boycott or cancel a brand which can propose negative effects for a brand and is not always done ethically as can be altered truth.

2.3 Cancel culture

Cancel Culture is the new age of calling out or boycotting a brand or an individual on social media in which usually an unethical or controversial opinion has been shared (J.E. Bromwich, 2018). Social media can “cancel” individuals instantly and with this new phenomenon it is important to understand the effects it can have on society. The protagonists of Western culture and history are struck by the phrase "cancel culture" (Romanellie, 2021). Duque et al, (2021) investigated how Cancel Culture can spark disparate movement such as Black Lives Matter in calling out social injustice on social media. Cancel Culture can end careers, destroy legacies and severely effect individuals which can often be due to exaggerate accusations (Dershowitz, 2020). Norris (2021) describes Cancel Culture as a collective strategy using social pressures to achieve cultural ostracism of individuals who are suspected of being offensive. While the term "cancel culture" has gained popularity on social media, scholarly research into the phenomena is still in its early stages (Tandoc et al, 2022). Cancel culture can be examined in crisis communication, however, is antithetical to effective crisis management (Sellnow et al, 2017). Despite its paradox, erasure is a valuable conceptual framework for analyzing and unpacking a crisis of dialectical tensions in the age of cancel culture (Veil and Waymer, 2021). As identified social media has become an essential marketing tool, but this proposes a dark side as cancel culture which can deemed as a form of ostracism in which a person or a brand is thrust out of social or professional circles either online, social media or in person (Hardie, 2022). Although every brand is at risk of being a victim of cancel culture, certain topics increase a brand risk including Covid-19, race, sexual orientation and privilege (Fielden et al, 2018). Brands can even be cancelled for trying to promote social responsibility of these topics in awareness, but individuals can misinterpret this and use social media to boycott or cancel a brand. Hardie, (2022) indicates how there is also a

challenge if brands do not take a stand in these issues, they risk getting attacked but in addition if they do take a stand and consumers are not in favor they are also at risk. Cancel culture is a form of public shaming on social media which aims to deprive someone of their customary clout or attention in order to spread public debate and make it less monopolized by those in positions of power (Velasco, 2020). This has been a resulted of the power that lies with individuals due to their voice on social media. With the advent of social media, customers can now use this instrument against celebrities and corporations in the aftermath of a negative experience, such as an undesirable and contentious incident Cancel culture aims at to cancel an individual the process of cancel culture using various tactics such as social media content aiming at exploiting an individual and the sharing of this content (Saldanha et al, 2022). A viral thread surfaced when individuals shared their thoughts on the beauty pageant Miss Universe having an eligibility rule that mothers and married women are not able to compete. Following this backlash Miss Universe responded by update its rules and taking effect in 2023 mothers and married women will be able to compete. Individuals may unfollow and individual or brand and choose to further boycott this brand. Those who choose to 'cancel' expect an apology, from those who perform immoral, unlawful, or unethical acts will be judged on their own character. For example, syrup brand Aunt Jemima was cancelled due to its name and logo being deemed racially offensive (savage, 2021). This resulted in Aunt Jemima to rebrand and progress to portray an image of racial equality. Accountability is being demanded, with the idea that society requires a collective consensus on moral behavior (Mueller, 2021). Although cancel culture can provide positive results in movements such as the #MeToo movement in exposing the scope of sexual harassment and assault. Cancel culture is an example of how content circulation on digital platforms circulates fast and large-scale responses to situations that are deemed problematic (Ng, 2020).

2.4 Brand reputation

Brand reputation is defined as the entire impression of how stakeholders think, feel, and talk about a brand (Hewett et al, 2016). E-WOM is the spontaneity with which information is conveyed from one person to another that has a negative or good impact on the views of a company and/or its products (Dellarocas, 2003). In relation to brand reputation brands need to be

cautious about the media and media strategy they use when communicating marketing communications to consumers (Lekhanya, 2014). In an online setting it can be hard to maintain online reputation management as in terms of viral marketing can lead to unsatisfied customers who can spread negative feedback about the brand very quickly (Bryant, 2010). Although viral marketing can have a positive impact it can result in negative as well and spread quickly due to E-WOM. Baker, (2003) finds that management need to approach online branding different to traditional branding as it lies with the consumer and the viral aspect it can have. This can result in brands needing to approach certain topics and campaigns differently to not affect their brand value or in terms of this research to avoid being cancelled. Although this is not a new phenomenon as it would be traditionally called boycotting this is of a result of technological advancements changing the way we communicate. Coke faced boycotting as a result of rebranding its recipe to "New Coke" Coke consumers were not happy with this new flavor. This led to extensive media coverage of the customers who were upset about the change and did not like the new Coke. Old Coke supporters organized protest marches and boycotts in several places, garnering a lot of media attention (Schindler, 1992). Due to the negative feedback Coca Cola offered Coca-Coca Classic alongside New Coke with it being discounted years later due to its unpopularity. Bradly and Honey, (2007) stress that there is no possible indicator of the cost of damage to a company's reputation or in measurement of a risk. Rice, (2010) provides guidance of the importance of monitoring what is said about a company online in order to implement necessary reputation management. This suggests that online reputation management should be used as a key business strategy when social media or online public relations is used by a company or a brand. Greyser, (2009) describes how brand reputation is also concerned with how consumers trust a brand, and this can decrease the reputation with a brand. For example, Nike faced backlash in terms of social responsibility with the non-US labor and questionable working conditions. In terms of present day these decreased brand reputations can be amplified through social media. Rust et al, (2021) identifies the online environment as uncontrollable and marketers need to be accountable at managing a brands reputation and to track the reputation online for risk and crisis management. Proserpio and Zervas, (2017) identify how unsatisfied consumers are less likely to leave short negative reviews if hotels are likely to scrutinize them. This can validate how companies need online reputation management and further research in this study as if online reputation management can help in risk management in avoiding being cancelled. In today's era

brands tend to be more connected to the reputation and brand values rather than the individual product or service and it associated with the brand credibility (Newell and Goldsmith, 2001). This results in brand needing strategies revolving a positive image and putting more emphasis on brand values and image on social media to build a reputable reputation and resonate popularity with social media users. Alwi and Ismail, (2013) argue that trust and credibility is the most important aspect of internet reputation, because it explains customer confidence in products and also in advertising claims. Consumers need to trust brands and believe they are credible, Nike can be deemed as uncredible due to social responsibility issues this can result in reputation being tarnished and heightened in the online era. Nike receive backlash due to production methods and unethical working conditions. Busy et al, (2000) established how an investigation of new technology and instruments available for developing new dynamics of social interaction is required to comprehend the development in online consumer power. Furthermore, this concludes that there continues a need an investigation of how brands need to manage reputation as Busy et al's, (2000) research was first of its kind as it was the beginning of the digital age and in today's age technological advancement continues. O'Reilly, (2005) identifies how the value for consumers online lies in the aspect they can create and exchange content online. In engaging in this content consumers become active and no longer passive recipients of a firm's communications (Stewart and Pavlou, 2002). The ability of consumers being able to engage in the content proposes a new strategy of risk management of the communication that a company is producing. Online reputation management is not influenced by what companies are campaign but what others perceive and how they respond online to the company (Bunting and Lipski, 2000). Brands need to monitor the perception of the brand itself and the content it produces in an online setting but as stated by previous scholars an online setting can be considered and uncontrollable environment. Social media provides users with the platform to damage a brand image and reputation (Melewar and Smith, 2003). This further identifies how the power lies with consumers in an online setting. Siano and Vollero, (2011) stress how companies traditionally can protect their image in media but addressing these problems on the internet or social media can be more problematic and riskier. For example, Netflix received scrutiny for its film "Cuties" which consumers did not like the marketing of the seem as it was deemed to be sexualising children due to provocative dance movements. Netflix responded by altering their promotional materials and publicly apologizing, but there was still Tweets mentioning "Cancel Netflix".

2.5 Twitter Cancel Culture

The social media site Twitter is a popular medium for consumers in attempting to cancel individuals or a brand. Bouvier and Machin, (2021) explain how Twitter campaigns attacking those who make racist or xenophobic addressing how major institutions are failing to address important matters of social injustice, but concerns lie as Twitter tends to extremes and there is a lack of nuance and incivility which is shaping how issues are being addressed and represented. Twitter users who also engage in cancel culture endure an affective flow of outrage as well as fun and enjoyment but this as at an expense of others (Bouvier, 2020). Individuals can cancel individuals and have sufficient power, but this proposes issues, for example 1.7 million Game of Thrones fans signed a petitioning demanding new writers and an alternative ending for the last season (Mccluskey, 2019). This symbiotic interaction between artists, audiences, and critics can either help or hinder the success of shows and films (Anderson- Lopez at al, 2021). Organizations face the risk of cancel culture for addressing issues or for not addressing them they are still at risk. The Sci-Fi series *100,* received backlash and fans creating online petitions calling for recognition for LGBTQ characters and trending hashtags on Twitter of #BuryYourGays and #LGBTQDeservesBetter (Adalian, 2012). Social media users try to cancel the series and in attempting to cancel they demand accountability. This causes brands a need to address these issues to resonate positive narratives amongst the public. Twitter seems to be a popular medium for cancel culture due to it being easily accessible for users and high popularity (Jackson, 2012). Tweets are effective in cancel culture as they drive multiple actions across different platforms this includes searching and engagement, the authors suggest marketers need to learn how to integrate Tweet messages, hashtags and calls to actions with campaigns on other media (Nagy and Midha, 2015). Twitter and the engagement options cause tweets and threads to become viral rapidly which spread across platforms which can be hard to control, and false allegations can be spread without any truth behind it. The sharing optio and being able to share tweets across other platforms the discussion can reach a high amount of social media users at a rapid rate. As indicated previously this can cause difficulties for brands because these Tweets can be a false narrative or unlawful allegations and be hard to control and manage their

reputation. There appears to be no clear solution in how to deal with cancel culture campaigns. Twitter allows voices who previously has no platform allows to speak and be heard by coming together with individuals with shared ideas and interests (Castells, 2015). The hashtags on Twitter such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatters have the capability of bringing public injustice issues to light. Cancel culture also aims to cancel individuals or celebrities, JK Rowling received backlash and faced cancel culture due to being deemed as transphobic. Allen, (2021) discusses how individuals who are cancelled often find themselves back in the public good graces within a matter of either months or in some cases weeks. This suggests that cancel culture can be trending on sites such as Twitter but not be a prolonged effect on the individual. Due to the viral spread of Twitter hate campaigns there lies an investigation of the role of social media in spreading hate and misinformation (Ng, 2020). The internet has a tremendous reach that is difficult to manage, thus this creates a space for what is known as online trolls, who attempt to subvert internet debates, disrupt a factual dialogue, or sway public opinion (Machova et al, 2021). Trolls try to increase or decrease popular support for a person, an idea, or a project. Trolls can be defined as an act of online harassment but have diverse online behaviors which vary with motivations and current events, thus not all trolls or trolling behavior can be deemed as negative (Lopez et al, 2021). Hardaker, (2010) defines online trolling internet users for their own entertainment, who purposely cause interruptions and/or disagreements with their communicative conduct. Online trolls may wish to cancel someone for their own enjoyment and take pleasure in seeing their Tweets or threads go viral. Trolls are also notorious for wishing to remain anonymous so they cannot receive backlash for what they are doing is unethical/ Trolls of this type have a long and tumultuous history in the social media world's online subcultures (Phillips, 2015). Trolls of this type may not be trying to promote moral issues but for personal gain this is becomes difficult as this can affect a brand image and trolls often do not receive backlash due to fake accounts or the anonymous aspect.

2.6 Cancel Culture effect on brands

Bouvier and Machin, (2021) examine how major institutions are failing to address important matters involving social injustices and using their voice to fight social injustices issues. Strossen, (2020) identified how brands can stay silent on such matters as the fear of inadvertently saying something may result in it being insensitive or offensive. O'Toole, (2020) describes cancel culture as the new age of boycotting but results in a rapid growth due to social media. Cancel culture isn't about seeking truth it is about shaping the information battlefield to coerce conformity (Gillespie, 2021). In certain aspects this applies for movements such as Black Lives Matters and the MeToo Movement, but not in all scenarios and can wrongfully cancel an individual. Cancel Culture can be effective in promoting such movements but there lies a side of dubious and unethical content that is shared f. Silva, (2021) identifies cancel culture is an attempt to cancel an individual on focus exclusively or excessively on the negative aspects of the individuals and completely ignoring the positive aspects. In relation to brands and companies this can propose a difficult situation in the promotion of social injustice issues as even if the campaign or action taken is to give light to an issue they can be cancelled if done incorrectly. More importantly if a brand wishes to say nothing it appears the fear being cancelled can also result in cancellation. Bakhtari, (2022) describes that brand can no longer afford to remain neutral because neutral is now viewed as complicit. Laud, (2020) describes how cancel culture is an intolerant climate for free speech and inhibits business practices. It is evident there is a collective agreement amongst authors that cancel culture can propose difficult effects for a brand. It is unclear for a brand to speak up or stay neutral as both can result in cancellation. For example, the Pepsi commercial received severe backlash due to insensitive nature in the Black Live Matters Movement. Cancel culture can provide difficulty for a brand regarding marketing practices and business practices also. In conjunction does help in certain movements such as the Black Lives Matter or the Me-Too Movement, (Norris, 2021). Pasquarelli, (2022) identified how 55% of US online adults are willing to boycott a brand over unethical business relation. This can propose detrimental effects to brands and how they do their business.

2.7 Social medias influence on communication practices

Social media has shifted how we communicate and has provided relationships and communities online and different practices of standard communication (Burbules, 2016). Social media has aided online communities to form with shared interests or ideologies. Social media also has provided individuals which a platform in which they feel they can freely speak which they feel comfortable in comparison to an in person setting (Wang, 2022). A drawback of social media and networking is the data available to individuals they may propose dangers to them and be of a negative influence (Akram and Kumar, 2017). The online communities and views individuals may be exposed to in an online setting can be unsocial behaviour and online bullying is a major problem. Tariq et al, (2012) identify how the anonymously and no repercussions of online bullying has facilitated in social media users partaking. This could be a result in a high number of individuals and groups partaking in this as there are no consequences in many cases. Informational social influence and eWOM Informational Social Influence (Social Proof) Theory asserts that people imitate other people's activities in order to reflect appropriate behavior in a specific setting (Cialdini, 2001). This causes customers, particularly in the setting of social media, to converge on one specific choice based on informational social influence (Wooten and Reed, 1998). Other users' comments can influence a consumer's judgment of a product on an informational basis if the consumer considers it as proof of the product's features, according to studies (Petrescu, 2020). This can result in a collective view of individuals that would not be influenced without an online setting and can cause individuals to adopt view of other individuals in terms of social proofing. This theory suggests that social media has resulted in a shift in individuals views due to social media and speaking up on topics or areas they normally would not speak up on offline and not on social media.

2.8 Promotion of Social Injustice

In the review of bodies of literature there is no clear formula for brands to avoid being cancelled. There has noticeable been a trend of an increase of brands promoting social injustice issues. Nishimura, (2020) investigated the trend and highlighted how organizations advocate against

systemic and over racism and this is done though provide educational resources and direct donations to the causes. Schmidt, (2018) describes how consumers perceptions of a brand regarding brand image and purchase intention are influenced in brand activist efforts using Microsoft as a prime example. The author evidence that promoting social injustices issues can have positive effects on a brand. In addition to the topic of cancel culture social injustice promotion in brand campaigns can provide business success and the risk of being a victim of cancel culture. Brands such as Microsoft have notorious campaigns promoting diversity but for such a high scale brand this can be done. It is desirable for brands to adopt a philanthropic approach to business. Philanthropic attitudes in the workplace not only help to further a good cause, but they also help to improve attitudes, which in turn enhances behavioral intention (Hwang et.al, 2020). Companies must now consider how their decisions and practices affect society, as well as how they are regarded by the general public (Chung and Kinsey, 2019). Philanthropic responsibility refers to a company's plan for doing good for the environment, which might include education funding, charitable donations, and community project support (Liu et al, 2017). Philanthropic practices refer to a company's voluntary commitment to selecting and minting these activities (Kotler and Lee, 2008). Society now adays expects brands to partake in philanthropic practices and this can be done by promoting social injustices issues. The public expects companies to be involved in philanthropic actions (Grigore, 2010). Carroll and Shabana, (2010) identify how companies aim to achieve improvements for society but also receive competitive advantages for themselves also. Bögel, (2019) analyses how there is a positive relationship between companies adopting philanthropic approaches and corporate financial performance. This provides an overarching question as if companies are doing this for the greater good or financial gain or in this era of cancel culture are they doing it to avoid cancel culture. Upham, (2006) identifies a significant increase in companies being involved in strategic philanthropy or cause marketing. Rashid et al, (2014) determines how companies who are philanthropic effects the brand image and customer affective attitudes. The attitudes of consumers tend to be more favorable to brands who are deemed philanthropic and do good for society. Firm-serving motives, public-serving motives, and reactive motives can all be found in philanthropy (Pertiwi and Balqiah, 2016). As companies are aware of strategic benefits of philanthropic approached and promotion of social injustices issues this can propose issues as if they are seemed distasteful cancel culture can result in backlash. For example, Pepsi’s infamous

commercial with Kendal Jenner promotion Black Lives Matter was not concerned sincere. Anderson Lopez et al, (2021) provides evidence how this era shouldn't be solely concerned as a culture war but a possible symptom as big tech dominance over the modes of communication and dissemination of information. The author's body of literature identifies how cancel culture is heightened through the rise of big tech and in this scenario the influence of social media. In living in the digital age, it is evident business can be under a lot more scrutiny and has resulted in business using their platforms to promote social injustice issues to avoid being cancelled.

2.9 Consumer Decision Making Process

Jones (1991) researched how moral intensity can affect the consumer decision making process in choosing ethical retailers. As classified previous brands can be cancelled due to cancel culture but what does the cancellation do for brand reputation in the consumer decision making process? Consumers brand themselves by the brands they use, the consumption of brands allows consumers to belong to certain groups (Iivarinen, 2017). Consumers want to be affiliated with brands that values align with theirs. Chen et al, (2021) describes how the more positive the brand image the more significant the impact for consumers in purchase intention. Subconsciously consumers may steer away from brands who reputation has be diminished possibly from cancel culture. This may lead to consumers shifting their preferences to brands that have a congruent brand image (Banerjee, 2016). In synthesizing the authors research, it is evident consumers purchase retention is altered by the brand itself and not the quality of a brand. Resulting in brands possibly forever being cancelled if their image is distorted. This can be as a result of unethical practices or not supporting such movements and is ever so relevant in an era of a cancel culture. Tan, (2002) how moral intensity and the moral judgement are all contributing factors that influencer consumers purchase decision. This is evident in individuals purchasing or be affiliated with blacklisted brands and is relevant in influencer marketing especially as they are subjected to cancel culture to a great extent. Kumaravel and Kandasarny, (2012) describe how brand image plays a significant role in the consumer purchase decision and influencing consumers in the overall decision process. In analyzing it is evident there is an extensive body of literature that identifies brand image alters the consumers decision making process and in

purchase intention. Cancel culture can alter a whole brands reputation and the widespread of social media can cause this boycotting to rapidly occur. Raj and Roy, (2015) manifest how customers develop trust on brands that are reputable. In orders for brands to be trust they need brand reputation which is at risk of cancel culture.

2.10 Literature Review Conclusion

In analyzing literature, the assumption can be made cancel culture is a growing theme of the digital age. Cancel culture can have a major impact on a brand as is different to boycotting as social media allows cancel culture to widespread cancellation. Allow there is negative aspects of cancel culture as it isn't always in a good light. It is evident this effects brand image and reputation. Although it is not classified if all brands should be activists or what business practices lead to the avoidance of being cancelled. Certain brands in trying to promote social injustice issues have been cancelled as a result. There is unclarity to how brands need to approach cancel culture.

3.1 Methodology

Research is any activity in which a person or group of researchers seeks to learn more about a certain area of critical interest. Research may be summed up as an activity people engage in to increase their knowledge by systematically learning new information (Saunders et al, 2009). The researcher employed a technique developed by Saunders et al. (2012) known as the research onion to provide a systematic approach to this dissertation in order to accomplish the goals of this study in a structured manner. This method helped the researcher's various study techniques while also giving readers a clear structure to follow. It consists of data from academic studies. To acquire effective data, six different sections are required. These levels lead to the last phase data, where the research will compile the investigation's findings and draw conclusions.

3.2 Research philosophy

The phrase "research philosophy," which is used to describe a set of views and presumptions about the advancement of knowledge in a specific discipline, is used to refer to a system of beliefs and assumptions about philosophy in the outer layer of the research onion (Saunders et al., 2016). Research can be defined as an activity people engage in to learn more about things methodically and broaden their knowledge (Saunders et al., 2016). This thesis will follow an interpretivism philosophy through qualitative methods of study to give an insight into how cancel culture effects a brands reputation. To understand such events in terms of what they mean to people or how people make meaning of such experiences, qualitative research is used (Howson, 2021). A research philosophy is a collection of fundamental principles that direct the planning and conduct of a research project. Various research philosophies provide various perspectives on how to comprehend scientific research (Tamminen and Poucher, 2020). A reflection on research philosophies allows researchers to critically consider their choices and possibly consider other choices (Brinkmann, 2013). Three main research philosophy ideas are as follows: Epistemology, Ontology and Axiology.

Epistemology can be defined as the theory or science underlying the foundational principles of human knowledge (Hofer, 2001). Theoretical viewpoints are informed by epistemology, these perspectives influence research methodology, and methodology then directs and selects the research methodologies (Al-Ababneh 2020). Epistemology can be defined as the researcher's perspective on what knowledge is appropriate (Singh, 2017). Personal epistemology examines how a person's beliefs affect cognitive functions, such as how they reason and think (Hofer and Pintrich, 2002). Different epistemological beliefs can differ for individuals. When academics address abstract epistemological concerns like the nature of knowledge, they address these belief systems (Moon and Blackman, 2014). In the researcher being aware of personal epistemology this can and can navigate any negative influence on the research. The researcher must accept epistemology as personal beliefs will be shared as part of the interviews and also relates to the phenomenon of Cancel Culture. The literature review examined how certain individuals take part in cancelling someone for the fun and enjoyment, but this is at an expense of others (Bouvier, 2020). The author must accept epistemology as individuals' personal beliefs influence why individuals find behaviour offensive or disagree with them and this in terms results in them being cancelled.

The study of what is, the types and structures of things, qualities, events, processes, and relationships in every domain of reality, is known as ontology (Smith, 2012). The philosophical study of existence known as ontology seeks to identify the categories of things that are genuinely real. Ontology is a subfield of metaphysics, which is the study of the essential characteristics of reality and existence (Sheposh, 2019). This provides justification of the researcher accepting epistemology as personal beliefs need to be collected in the research process to achieve research aims. Ontology is considered the nature of reality the researcher accepts ontology as social media is the nature of reality within this research. Accepting ontology aids in retrieving and analysing the nature of reality that exists amongst social media platforms such as discussion and threads.

The axiological perspective of a research paradigm is intended to illustrate the degree of consistency, reliability, or to reconstruct or extend the constructions or hypotheses that have previously been believed (Aliyu et al., 2015). This reflects and shapes how one views the world and, as a result, how they behave in practice and inquiry within the ontological and

epistemological orientations. To put it another way, axiology encourages the congruence of ontological and epistemological premises (Mittman, 2001). Axiology is concerned with individuals' personal values this concerns the researcher values and also the participants own values. The researchers' values effect their findings and as their own personal beliefs and what they find valuable in research will affect the research findings.

In the gathering and analysis of data, the focus of qualitative research is typically on words rather than quantitative. it is an inductive, constructionist, and interpretivist research strategy (Bryman, 2008). This will aid the research objective as it is subjective and will take into account the subjective meaning of social action. Approaches that place a strong focus on the significance of people's personalities and involvement in both social and cultural life are known as interpretivist (Elster, 2007). It indicates that study methods that take the stance that people's perceptions of reality are social constructions made by human actors are not acceptable, and this clearly excludes natural science research methods (Eliaeson, 2002).

The philosophical position of interpretivism will be used because it is thought to be the most suited for its particular point of view. Using interpretivism philosophy in this research will help to integrate human interest into this study, therefore giving an understanding of individuals beliefs in the process. Interpretive research is an effort to make sense of social reality by using the varying perspectives of participants who have been embedded inside the setting in which the reality is situated. By looking for experiences and perceptions of a specific social context, researchers might acquire deeper insight using the interpretivist paradigm (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). Social interaction is crucial to the concept and technique of interpretivism (Packard, 2017). This will be adopted through the use of interviews in the research design. In using an interpretivism approach the researcher will be able to understand beliefs, motivations and the reasoning behind individuals and being able to decode the data around the phenomenon of Cancel Culture. In using an interpretivism approach the researcher will be able to gain an

understanding of the reality that exists of individuals beliefs on Cancel Culture in order to gain more of an understanding. Qualitative research will use social interaction through the research method to adopt the concept and technique of interpretivism. Epistemology can be defined as the theory or science underlying the foundational principles of human knowledge (Hofer, 2001). Theoretical viewpoints are informed by epistemology, these perspectives influence research methodology, and methodology then directs and selects the research methodologies (Al-Ababneh 2020). Epistemology can be defined as the researcher's perspective on what knowledge is appropriate (Singh, 2017). Personal epistemology examines how a person's beliefs affect cognitive functions, such as how they reason and think (Hofer and Pintrich, 2002). Different epistemological beliefs can differ for individuals. When academics address abstract epistemological concerns like the nature of knowledge, they address these belief systems (Moon and Blackman, 2014). In the researcher being aware of personal epistemology this can and can navigate any negative influence on the research.

3.3 Research Approach

As an interpretivism method is required to comprehend the person's intentions, the researcher thinks an inductive technique would be appropriate for the study (Saunders, 2012). As this allows the researcher to derive meaning and create themes from the data obtained in the research. It will allow the researcher to reach and develop empirical generalisations and ideas from the data. The inductivist approach is based on gathering data from a wide range of individual events and using it to forecast outcomes. An inductive strategy presupposes a "bottom-up" process of reasoning that advances from a specific or unique premise to a general conclusion (Bluedorn, 1995). This approach will allow for effective data analysis for the researcher and to reach a conclusion to the research title. It provides a strategy of the researcher piecing together beliefs about Cancel Culture and reach to objective of how it effect brand's reputation future activities in partnerships and collaborations. An inductive approach uses an outcome measurement tool's individual items are created by first comprehending or seeing the specific outcomes the program seeks to attain, and then deriving logical questions from these result constructions (Janzen, 2015). A deductive strategy, in contrast, presupposes a "top-down" process of reasoning that

proceeds from a broad premise to a precise conclusion (Bluedorn, 1995). A deductive strategy, in contrast, presupposes a "top-down" process of reasoning that proceeds from a broad premise to a precise conclusion. Popper, (1935) identified this approach is more effective for known data. Through understanding the research philosophy and how Cancel Culture can be considered a new phenomenon the most efficient method to use would be an inductive approach to achieve a new outcome and develop empirical generalisations. The justification in using an inductive approach will allow the researcher to adopt an exploratory data analysis and use descriptive narrative to try to draw to a conclusion on the effect of Cancel Culture on a brand's reputation. This approach will allow the research to gain knowledge and observe individuals in the industries that work closely with brand to determine their thought on knowledge on Cancel Culture and how it can alter a brands reputation. An inductive approach will allow the author to consider relevant theories and how opinions effect industry employees of their relationship with Cancel Culture and its connection to brands.

3.4 Chosen Approach

In choosing a methodology approach how successfully the researcher interprets and uses the data to achieve insightful conclusions depends on the study approach they have chosen (Blanche et al., 2006). In choosing an approach quantitative research was first considered by the researcher. Quantitative research refers to a variety of approaches that use numerical or statistical data to systematically examine social phenomena (Watson 2015). For the purpose of describing and interpreting the phenomena that those data reflect, quantitative research involves the numerical representation and manipulation of observations (Sukamolson, 2007). Creswell (1994). Identifies how quantitative research is explaining phenomena by gathering numerical data and utilizing mathematically based analysis techniques. Quantitative data can be done through data tools such as surveys and then using statistical analysis to evaluate the information. Quantitative data can have advantages for the researcher due to the wide scale of data a researcher can analyse and the easy distribution of the surveys also 9bloomfield and Fisher, (2019). However, because certain factors and data comparisons may be missed throughout the collection process, quantitative data can frequently provide predetermined results (Vásquez-Colina et al., 2022).

The researcher then considered a qualitative research approach. The phrase "qualitative research" refers to a broad range of methodologies and approaches for the investigation of natural social life (Saldana, Leavy and Beretvas, 2011). The technique of observation and gathering of spoken data is referred to as qualitative data (Walle et al,2015). This is typically done through interviews and categorized by coming up with reoccurring themes. In the gathering and analysis of data, the focus of qualitative research is typically on words rather than quantitative. It is an inductive, constructionist, and interpretivist research technique, albeit qualitative researchers may not always adhere to all three of these characteristics (Bryman, 2008). Qualitative research aims to comprehend how objects function in certain circumstances (Kopf et al., 2016). The researcher has opted to adopt a qualitative research approach to understand views and perceptions. In business and marketing research, qualitative methods are becoming more and more common. They often use in-depth unstructured data to learn more about consumers (Bathmanathan et al., 2018). In the gathering and analysis of data, the focus of qualitative research is typically on words rather than quantitative. it is an inductive, constructionist, and interpretivist research strategy (Bryman, 2008). This will aid the research objective as it is subjective and will consider the subjective meaning of social action. Approaches that place a strong focus on the significance of people's personalities and involvement in both social and cultural life are known as interpretivist (Elster, 2007). It indicates that study methods that take the stance that people's perceptions of reality are social constructions made by human actors are not acceptable, and this clearly excludes natural science research methods (Eliaeson, 2002). The rigor of the study and the calibre of papers submitted for publication or submission play a crucial part in deciding qualitative research because it covers such a wide range of subjective processes (Fawcett et al., 2014). This highlights why the researcher adopting Saunders research onion and understanding research philosophy is imperial in developing the methodological approach, also identifies the important of the literature review and gaining a foundation of knowledge of Cancel Culture.

3.5 Qualitative approach –semi structured interviews

In research interviews can be performed in three styles structured, unstructured and semi-structured (Longhurst 2003). A one-on-one interview is a conversation between the interviewer and the subject intended to elicit information on a predetermined range of subjects. Interviews can be conducted over the phone or in person (Harrell and Bradley, 2009). Semi-structured and unstructured formats allow for an open response rather than "yes" or "no" responses, whereas structured follows a formulaic manner. The researcher chose to use semi-structured interviews to explore the phenomenon of Cancel Culture. Semi-structured interviews allow respondents to respond to open-ended questions during in-depth interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Semi-structured interviews are advantageous for the interviewer since they stay on topic and enable the participant to provide the most information possible in the allotted time (Mitchell et al,2010). Semi-structured interviews have the capacity for an abundance of thoughts to come from them (Saunders et al., 2015). As opposed to focus groups one-on-one interviews produce better outcomes since the subject is more at ease revealing their own personal viewpoints. Understanding what they are saying and what it means is the major task (Alasuutari, 1998). The interview questions will be based upon trying to convey participants impression on Cancel Culture and the develop an understanding of the phenomenon of Cancel Culture and social media also. The questions will be open ended allowing interviewees to expand and give person experience from answers, the questions designed will be catered to individuals following on from researching sampling. The interviewer will develop themes from the interviews to gain an understanding of participants responses. Interviews took place on Microsoft teams. This was chosen due to accessibility and flexibility of online interviewees and participants and researcher fears of Covid-19 pandemic and ensuring participants are comfortable and a safe relaxed environment to gauge conversations.

3.6 Research Sampling

As this study aims to convey perceptions of brands it aids the researcher in choosing the correct sampling. Due of the problems that might result from improper sampling, it is thought to be vital in research design (Saunder et al., 2008). Sampling is the process of selecting a certain group of people who are relevant to a study while taking into account their backgrounds, worldviews, and other factors that can show up in their data (Mitchell et al., 2010). For this research the researcher chose to interview individuals in the advertising and broadcasting industry. This was chosen as these individuals work closely with brands. Interviewees were chosen on the basis of their experience working with brand and ranged from adverting and broadcasting sales executives to client executives. Through both negative and positive experiences, knowledge may greatly influence how people view the world (Bullard, 2019). Consideration was adopted to choosing the correct participants in order to interview individuals with industry knowledge and identify the processes they follow when booking brands for advertising deals and how Cancel Culture can affect this process. The researcher chose to interview 5 individuals, although Eugene et al, (2020) argued this smaller number may come with additional restrictions, it allows participants to have more time allotted to them. Instead of using huge numbers where information may be lost, examine common themes at a deeper, more flexible level when choosing a smaller number of interviewees (Mitchell et al., 2010). The researcher will compose a core set of questions and using semi structure approach questions will change depending on the interviewees job title and area of expertise. Each participant was sent a consent form prior to the interview taking place.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics relates to a researcher's ability to develop and clarify a research topic, plan and secure access, gather, process, and preserve data, analyse its findings, and report those findings in a moral and accountable manner (Saunders et al., 2015). By removing bias and other unanticipated variables, ethical concerns in research enable the researcher to think about the best and most suitable approach to do study (Mitchell et al., 2015). This researcher followed National

College of Ireland's code of ethics. All data was recorded on the researchers iPhone with consent of participants. Blanche et al., (2006), describes how ethical guidelines ensures the validity and safety of all participants involved. Each participant was sent a consent form prior to the interview taking place. As this study involved employee participant following in line with data protection regulations was essential (Quinlan, 2015). All participants name and workplace remained anonymous for the research this ensured their safety in the industry with their employer and also the relationship with brands they work with which may be discussed in the interviews. Saunders, (2009) highlights how this also allows participants to feel comfortable in the entire interview process. Participants were also informed at any point they can withdraw from the study and all data will be deleted. A lettering process of participants was used in the data collection and analysis in order to the continuity of anonymous procedure of participants. In the case of participants sharing their workplace or personal information this will be removed for the transcript and not exposed in this study.

3.8 Research Limitations

Limitations occurred for the researcher in choosing participants as it is considered a small sample size it revealed difficulties in choosing and finding participants. This also proposed challenges as other individuals were willing to participate but due to busy work schedule, they couldn't commit to agreeing to the interview as lack of time. The remote setting of interviews also proposed challenges as poor internet connection hindered some participants interviews. Due to this the researcher had to adopt a smaller sample size of 5 rather than 8 which was firstly considered. Another limitation the researcher faced was lack of previous study on the topic as it can be considered a new phenomenon. The researcher then examined the history of Cancel Culture and had to consider similar phenomenon such as boycotting in order to gain an understanding and provide a foundation for the study.

3.9 Methodology Conclusion

The researcher chose to adopt Saunders research onion and consider other academia in order to choose the correct methodological approach. The researcher chose to decide to follow a qualitative approach underpinned by an inductive and interpretivism approach. This allowed a conversational approach and open-minded discussion in interviews and allowed insights to be taken from interviews. Adopting a semi-structured style interview the researcher was able to collect data efficiently and ain an understanding of participants thoughts and perceptions of the phenomenon of Cancel Culture. Sampling also allowed the researcher to choose the most effective individuals that would be valuable to the study. While challenges were faced in choosing participants the author was able to collect sufficient data despite the limitations.

4.1 Findings and Analysis

This chapter will review the results of the major research technique selected to critically assess the participant data. The data will be analyzed with an explanation of the formed opinions that were received while assigning often occurring topics. A thematic inductive approach was adopted due to the open nature and its allowance for expressions to be successfully gathered, reviewed, and analyzed (Quinlan, 2015). The following themes were selected after the researchers evaluated their coding throughout the data analysis. To do this, the transcripts had to be examined for recurring themes in the language the participants were using. The author organized the language into themes using this code. The researcher then chose to present the findings using an inductive technique because it also allows the main study to serve as the discussion's foundation (Mitchell et al., 2010). The interviews were conducted by Microsoft Teams interviewing 5 participants who worked in advertising and broadcasting sales. This included employees from media agencies and broadcasters. The interviews were designed to determine how participants view Cancel Culture. It also indicated how it affects their decision in hiring and working with brands who may be victims of Cancel Culture. There was also an overarching understanding of the process of hiring brands and how it affects the participant's company. The literature review that was previously evaluated will serve as a foundation and a way of comparison for this analysis as the author discusses topics from this primary study.

4.2 Importance of brand values

Chen et al, (2021) argue how consumers want to be affiliated with brands that values align with theirs the more positive the brand image the more significant the impact for consumers in purchase intention. Newell and Goldsmith (2001) highlighted similarly that, in today's era brands tend to be more connected to the reputation and brand values rather than the individual product or service and it associated with the brand credibility (Newell and Goldsmith, 2001). Brands who instill their brand values through philanthropic practices positively effects the brand

image and customer affective attitudes. Upham, (2006) identifies a significant increase in companies being involved in strategic philanthropy or cause marketing. This could identify the growing importance to individuals of a concern on a brand's values. In observing the research, it was evident that brand values are important to individuals. They are also evident to be importance in the industry and is vital that a brand's values who intends to work with the media agency or broadcaster, they must algin with the hiring company. 5 out of 5 participants agreed of the importance of a brands values. The participants mentioned for themselves as individuals also in the decision-making process in working or hiring companies.

Participant A stated, "*you always want to ensure that their values and their kind of key messaging is in line with the company is in line with the company I work for".*

Participant B stated *"I like to work with a brand that's well known, so, you know, kind of strong brands that have a really good reputation, um, you know, that are reliable, that you really kind of feel that you can trust them and trust what they're saying to you. Um, and really a brand that kind of, I suppose, shows that they care about their customers".*

Participant C similarly stated *"Yeah. I suppose, listen, I, I suppose we always do have an underlying look at what the perception of the public will be when we do take a brand on board for certain elements of, of activity. Um, we wouldn't take a brand that would be perceived to be not, uh, conforming to whatever regulation or whatever is there. So we would be quite careful about that".*

It can be evident that this is an important factor for participants, participant D stated *"every company needs to probably put their brand values, um, out there. And I think, you know, transparency is like a word that probably people say is very important for all brands".* It is also apparent that companies wish to hire brands that represent their values and have similar attributes.

Participant E stated *"Yeah, that's actually extremely important to our company and they always kind of instill that in us as employees, just to always kind of like go back to our company policies and our more morals and our values and stuff".* All participants agreed that brand values are significantly important to themselves and the company they work for. This holds similar view to

Jones (1991), where moral intensity affects consumers in the consumer decision making process and in this case participants in the industry must consider this.

4.3 Reluctance to work with brands facing scrutiny as it can jeopardize the hiring companies' reputation

Brand reputation can be defined as the entire impression of how stakeholders think, feel, and talk about a brand (Hewett et al, 2016). In an online setting it can be hard to maintain online reputation management as in terms of viral marketing can lead to unsatisfied customers who can spread negative feedback about the brand very quickly (Bryant, 2010). In this research it is concerned with the brand who faces scrutiny and then in return can affect the brand booking in with the desired agencies or broadcasters. Bradly and Honey, (2007) stress that there is no possible indicator of the cost of damage to a company's reputation or in measurement of a risk. This is evident in the reoccurring theme amongst participants being reluctant to work with brands who are facing scrutiny. Rice, (2010) provides guidance of the importance of monitoring what is said about a company online in order to implement necessary reputation management. Companies factor in how their reputation is perceived or going to be perceived in future activities 3 out of 5 participants commented on how another brand who is looking to get hired can possibly affect their company.

Participant A stated that "*we can't, we can't control what brands do like direct brands do on their own platforms, but we can absolutely control what they put up on ours.*"

Participant B announced how the public *"can say very negative things about a particular brand for various different reasons that blows up. Um, and as you know, a company ourself, we have to protect our reputation. Um, we have to protect, you know, our own customers."*

Participant D stated *"you know, because if they are guilty, it's just very important and, and same with brands. So I think we do definitely need to, you know, research people and brands, um, and just you'd want to be confident with who you're working with because you want to make sure it affects us positively and yeah. Yeah. And we're not taking too big risks".*

Participants displayed how they are conscious of how other brands promote themselves and this in turn can reflect badly on themselves. Even though they may have different values or ways of doing business, the affiliation with brands can jeopardize the company they work with. In hiring brands their reputation by association with brands who are getting criticized on social media. As highlighted in the literature review and by participants what brands do on social media is highly monitored and participants are conscious of within their own business that being linked to a problematic issue as perceived by the public can affect their business. Brands who are being criticized by a suspected wrongdoing can affect a brand in future bookings, partnerships and collaborations. The participants indicate that they cannot control what other brands do but they can protect themselves and be apprehensive from working with these brands as it can affect their future business activities. There appears to be an enhanced awareness of what brands do and partake on social media and results in effecting hiring managers to work with brands.

4.4 The apology and statements of brands do not always result in them being hired and further actions are required

It is suggested that a brand facing scrutiny or a victim of Cancel Culture an apology or further actions is required. Accountability is being demanded, with the idea that society requires a collective consensus on moral behavior (Mueller, 2021). Siano and Vollero, (2011) stress how companies traditionally are able to protect their image in media but addressing these problems on the internet or social media can be more problematic and riskier. Although apologies and statements can work in the brand's favor it can still be a risk as the author explains it can be problematic and riskier. Alwi and Ismail, (2013) highlight how consumers must trust and find brands credible and in the case of them being scrutinized online for issues that seem to me morally insensitive this can jeopardize their trust. Pasquarelli, (2022) identified how 55% of US online adults are willing to boycott a brand over unethical business relation. This can propose a challenge for brands as the next step in a brand as an apology or statement is expected, in addition this doesn't always guarantee acceptance.

In relation to a brand being scrutinized over a sensitive issue participant A stated *"Yeah this would affect working with them. And the gravity of what they, um, like we're not going to put anything on air that's going to stir up, you know."* Although an apology could work in certain situations participant A highlighted how it could still be risky in hiring the brand.

Participant B stated that *"So I think like if they have put steps in place and they've really worked on it and they've come out and they've explained, you know, what they're trying to do now, and they've changed their own ethos and their own values then. Yeah. I think I would probably be more inclined to work with them now."* This indicated how a brand may need to partake in further actions to recover from Cancel Culture.

Participant C indicated that *"I view actions over words, actions speak louder than words, in my opinion. And anyone can come out and say, sorry for something. Even if they don't mean it."* It is evident from participant C's response that for them in hiring a brand they would need further actions and an apology cannot always be considered in their decision to work with a brand prior to their actions.

Participants indicated how apologies and statements need to be followed on with further consideration of accountability when a brand has been criticized of a wrongdoing by the public. The literature review indicated the virality and how Twitter can easily cause a campaign to cancel someone to happen instantly due to the sharing option and vast spread of news on social media. Although there is no exact timeframe when a brand is cancelled, if individuals are truly upset or lose trust in a brand, they have the power to cancel them by taking to social media. Participants indicated that brands could get themselves back in good grace by firstly apologizing and then showing an attempt to change their ethos and highlight they are combating to rectify their actions. If a brand has shown an attempt and is deemed empathetic this can result in a brand being uncancelled and increases the chances of bookings, partnerships and collaborations with hiring companies.

4.5 Brands are being held responsible for promotion of social issues and corporate social responsibility

Chung and Kinsey, (2019) argue that companies must now consider how their decisions and practices affect society, as well as how they are regarded by the general public. The public expects companies to be involved in philanthropic actions (Grigore, 2010). Carroll and Shabana, (2010) identify how companies aim to achieve improvements for society but also receive competitive advantages for themselves also. Rashid et al, (2014) determines how companies who are philanthropic affect the brand image and customer affective attitudes. In evaluation of the academia, it is evident of an expectance of brands to partake in these practices. 5 out of 5 participants held similar views in the promotion of social issues, corporate responsibility and philanthropic activities.

Participant A stated "Like if they have something to say, and if there's a voice there and they can do good, why wouldn't they? Yeah. I mean, I mean the, like we all give them money and buy into their products to make them so successful. So why should they not try better to our, our environment?"

Participant B mentioned *"if it's in the media, I think it's something that, and especially if it's getting a lot of traction, it's something that everyone is very interested in. And I suppose from the perspective of where I work, it's important to, to be definitely involved in those conversations."*

Participant C asserted that *"I do think there, I think there's a lot of decisions now being made regarding what people see online regarding brands. So I suppose that in general, people are a lot more aware of what brands are doing and what brands are not doing so well. Um, and they do take that into consideration".*

Participants shared similar views on this topic with participant D stating "So *brands have corporate social responsibility and some, sometimes there's like really good examples. I can't think of one on the spot, but, you know, brands, um, leaning into these things and like doing great work and then you, you do see that or people share it around and it goes viral and you're like, oh yeah, I didn't know they were doing that or whatever. So a hundred percent can work in brands favors."*

In addition, participant E mentioned that *"Definitely social media and has had a huge impact on everything and definitely on who brands decided to work with and who they don't decide to work with. Because again, that's just where everyone is. Everyone's on social media, all their consumers and viewers are going to be on social media. Everyone sees what the brands are doing and we would, it definitely has a huge impact".* Participants shared similar views aligning with the literature review's investigation of academia on the effect of promotion of social issues and corporate social responsibility.

Brands are held on a higher platform due to the surge of social media and individuals being more aware of actions they participate in on social media. With a quick search social media users can see a brand effort in the promotion of social issues and corporate social responsibility. Individuals can pinpoint which brands are not making the effort to promote such issues. The public expects companies to be involved in philanthropic actions (Grigore, 2010). Participants have indicated an expectance for brands to use the variety of audiences they have to promote issues; this can also be a factor in working and collaborating with brands and affect them in getting hired.

4.6 Cancel Culture issues effects organizations hiring brands but not individuals purchase intentions

Kumaravel and Kandasarny, (2012) describe how brand image plays a significant role in the consumer purchase decision and influencing consumers in the overall decision process. This may lead to consumers shifting their preferences to brands that have a congruent brand image (Banerjee, 2016). These authors suggest the importance of brand image on consumers, as stated above this is evident in the hiring of these brands as it effects the participants workplaces image if their reputation can be jeopardised. Alternatively, there was a reoccurrence of this conflicting their personal intentions as they may not hire these brands but may still purchase from them. 3 out of 5 participants indicated they may still purchase from brands who have faced backlash online due to social issues.

Participant A revealed that *"if I saw someone had a good deal, I don't think that would really come into my thinking."*

Participant B stated that *"if I see that company X has a 50% sale and there's something on there that I want, I suppose, I'm not going to really take that too much into consideration."*

Participant D mentioned that *"even though fast fashion brands such as like Nike have received backlash for their working conditions I still purchase from them but might be reluctant to hire them as it could result in negative ways for the company and possible backlash."*

Hiring companies indicate how they can protect themselves and disassociate themselves from brands who are not in the good graces of the public. As they can control what they put out and can't control the content brands share and how they are perceived on social media. Hiring companies are apprehensive in working with brands due to potential backlash they will receive. As individuals' values and attitudes differ to their companies this could indicate they are not using this same rationale when they make purchasing decisions. Individuals also may not share the brands they choose to purchase from but hiring companies in producing partnerships and content it is evidential they are working with companies that are potentially unethical.

5.1 Discussion

In this chapter, the author will discuss the results and themes of the interviews conducted as part of the primary research. While the primary study was developed through semi-structured interviews, the secondary research was carried out by examining existing academic literature. The interviews took place over 3 weeks with 5 participants being interviewed. The interviews were conducted, and participants were chosen through sampling, participants were employees in the advertising and broadcasting industry. The interviews took place remotely through Microsoft Teams and were recorded and then transcribed by the author. The author adopted Saunders, (2009) thematic viewpoint in analyzing the data and observing themes that were revealed by interview participants. An inductive approach was adopted in the examination of the data obtained from the interviews, while the author synthesizes with the secondary research that was previously conducted in the literature review. The findings section discussed themes and observations in the interviews, while this discussion section will present overall findings in conjunction with the research aims.

Research Objectives-

1. Determine the relationship of the effect of cancel culture on a brand and its reputation in future activities.
2. To examine the perceptions of brands through social media and how their actions influence individuals' perceptions of the brand.
3. To determine if Cancel Culture affects brands in the long-term and if their actions can aid in individuals forgiving a brand.

5.2 Research Objective 1- Determine the relationship of the effect of cancel culture on a brand and its reputation in future activities.

The overall objective of this research is to determine the relationship between Cancel Culture and the effect it has on a brand's reputation. The preliminary results showed that there was a correlation of a negative impact to a brand's reputation due to Cancel Culture. The existing academia previously investigated in the literature review suggests that Cancel Culture has a negative impact but using data from the interview the author measured the impacts this can have on a brand in future activities. Dershowitz, (2020) argues how Cancel Culture end careers, destroy legacies and severely effect individuals which can often be due to exaggerate accusations. This effect was highlighted as Participant B argued how the public *"can say very negative things about a particular brand for various different reasons that blows up. Um, and as you know, a company ourself, we have to protect our reputation. Um, we have to protect, you know, our own customers."*

Reputation

A key insight found in the secondary research in the literature review was the effect Cancel Culture has on an individual's or band's reputation. It was evident that Cancel Culture proposes a challenge for a brand and the outcome it has on its reputation. In understanding the overarching question how Cancel Culture effects a brand's reputation the findings of the interviews gained insights of how this would affect brands in relation to advertising and broadcasters. As these elements help brands in growth and maintain a brand image through marketing, it indicated how this can be difficult in the events surrounding Cancel Culture. Participant A stated *"Yeah this would effect working with them. And the gravity of what they, um, like we're not going to put anything on air that's going to stir up, you know.* In the event of a brand being cancelled their reputation has a strong possibility of being diminished. This suggests Participant A is concerned with their company's reputation and wishes to maintain it and not hire a brand that could potentially affect it. 5 out of 5 participants supported this in highlighting a reluctance to work with brands who are facing scrutiny online. Participant C indicated that *"I view actions over*

words, actions speak louder than words, in my opinion. And anyone can come out and say, sorry for something. Even if they don't mean it." In terms of future activities, the reluctance to work with this brand can hinder future activities as it can prove difficult for this brand to grow. As a brand reputation has been criticized in the media or social media brand' may find it hard to work with advertisers or broadcasters as indicated by all the participants. This can provide difficulty in the brand altering their reputation and overcoming it as they are limited in future growth and activities due to the restrictions hiring companies may have. The hiring companies' reputation is in jeopardy too of hiring a brand in these circumstances as their reputation too can be affected. This results in the brand facing difficulties in future activities.

Accountability

Mueller, (2021) declared accountability is being demanded, with the idea that society requires a collective consensus on moral behavior (Mueller, 2021). Tan, (2002) highlight how moral intensity and moral judgement are all contributing factors that influence consumers purchase decision. Consumers align themselves with brands they believe have valuing morals and social media has been a medium of expression for individuals who belief brands are acting immorally. Thus, if brands are being scrutinized for such issues individuals are seeking for brands to be accountable for their actions. Participant D stated that brands *"need to be accountable for your actions and like be able to trace back any actions".* Accountability requires a brand owing to their previous actions, this can be in the form of an apology or statement. Participant C mentioned that "*people are a lot more aware of what brands are doing and what brands are not doing so well".* The surge of social media has resulted in brands being targeted from Cancel Culture but also monitored by individuals of what brands do online. Individuals will be aware if a brand has raised some harmful comments or posts and expect an apology in return. Individuals expect this apology or statement and 5 out of 5 participants indicated how this would be needed for them to consider working with a brand of such. The future activities of brands are reliant on the public apology or statement to try and alter their public appearance following an event that has resulted in online scrutiny.

5.3 Research Objective 2- To examine the perceptions of brands through social media and how their actions influence individuals' perceptions of the brand.

Lovari and Materassi, (2021) indicated how people trust social media now rather than in the beginning this has influenced users to be more engaged on social media platforms. The surge of social media has changed how brands carry out activities and interact with their customers and potential customers. Social media at present is one of the most important technologies and it is used by millions of people all over the world (Appel, 2019). Brands have the capabilities to connect with a wider audience on social media and possibly target new consumers and reach new audiences. Social media can be used as a marketing channel to communicate with customers (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Alternatively social media has the opportunity to raise awareness for important social issues and in particular social injustice issues. Duque et al, (2021) investigated how Cancel Culture can spark disparate movement such as Black Lives Matter in calling out social injustice on social media. Brands can use social media to raise awareness and promote social issues as identified this can be favorable for a brand in terms of their image and reputation. Carroll and Shabana, (2010) identify how companies aim to achieve improvements for society but also receive competitive advantages for themselves also. In doing the greater good for society brands can also achieve advantages for themselves. Nishimura, (2020) investigated the trend and highlighted how organisations advocate against systemic and over racism and this is done though provide educational resources and direct donations to the causes. The increase in this trend has resulted in individuals believing brands hold responsibility in showcasing these issues. Participant A stated “Like if they have something to say, and if there's a voice there and they can do good, why wouldn't they? Yeah. I mean, I mean the, like we all give them money and buy into their products to make them so successful. So why should they not try better to our, our environment?” Highlighting an expectance of brands partaking in this activity and how it can effect brands being hired in partnerships and collaborations.

Brands responsibility in the promotion of social issues

5 out of 5 participants mentioned how they believed brands should be using their voice to promote social issues and philanthropic ideologies. Participant C asserted that *" I do think there, I think there's a lot of decisions now being made regarding what people see online regarding brands. So I suppose that in general, people are a lot more aware of what brands are doing and what brands are not doing so well. Um, and they do take that into consideration".* Chueng and Kinsey, (2019) highlighted how brands must consider how their decisions affect society as well as how they are regarded by society and the general public. Participant B mentioned *"if it's in the media, I think it's something that, and especially if it's getting a lot of traction, it's something that everyone is very interested in. And I suppose from the perspective of where I work, it's important to, to be definitely involved in those conversations."* The perceptions of brands are being monitored by the public and also in the case of the interview participants who are involved in the hiring process of brands. It is evident there is a correlation between brands using social media to promote issues and an expectation of them doing so. This coincides with the view of Bakhrati, (2022) who highlighted those brands can no longer afford to remain neutral because neutral is now viewed as complicit. Although this proposes a challenge as Strossen, (2020) identified how brands can stay silent on such matters as the fear of inadvertently saying something may result in it being insensitive or offensive. It is evident that brands cannot stay silent as a responsibility lies brands to use their voice. Participant D stated "So *brands have corporate social responsibility".* Perceptions of a brand are highly monitored on social media. Thus, this can affect them in future activities as it has an impact on being considered in the advertising and broadcasting industry as indicated by interview participants.

The Scrutiny of brands online effects perceptions of individuals

Silva, (2021) identifies cancel culture is an attempt to cancel an individual on focus exclusively or excessively on the negative aspects of the individuals and completely ignoring the positive

aspects. This can be done through social media as mean in the attempt to boycott a brand or individual. Bouvier and Machin, (2021) explain how Twitter campaigns attacking those who make racist or xenophobic addressing how major institutions are failing to address important matters of social injustice. When a brand is being cancelled or scrutinized on social media this alters perceptions of a brand and can have a negative impact. Participant B mentioned "*we have to protect our reputation. Um, we have to protect, you know, our own customers."* This highlights how it can propose difficulties for a brand as companies may refuse to work with them as they don't want to be associated with them or their reputation to be tampered with. Participant D stated *"you know, because if they are guilty, it's just very important and, and same with brands. So I think we do definitely need to, you know, research people and brands".* Bouvier, (2020) highlighted how Twitter users who also engage in cancel culture endure an affective flow of outrage as well as fun and enjoyment, but this is at the expense of others. Even if a brand can be proven innocent until this is proven this can result in individuals boycotting the brand or in the case of this research hiring managers reluctant to work with brand. Hiring managers in the advertising and broadcasting industries shows reluctance as their reputation is on the line.

5.4 Research Objective 3- To determine if Cancel Culture affects brands in the long-term and if their actions can aid in individuals forgiving a brand.

Cancel Culture is the new age of boycotting taking place on social media as the most popular medium. Tweets are effective in cancel culture as they drive multiple actions across different platforms this includes searching and engagement, the authors suggest marketers need to learn how to integrate Tweet messages, hashtags and calls to actions with campaigns on other media (Nagy and Midha, 2015). Allen, (2021) discusses how individuals who are cancelled often find themselves back in the public good graces within a matter of either months or in some cases weeks. It is difficult to determine how long the effect of Cancel Culture is for a brand and it is evident it is subjective to the case. As argued prior a brand needs to take accountability for their actions. Brands need to take action in events following from being cancelled.

Importance of a brand's values

Chen et al., (2021) highlights how consumers want to be affiliated with brands that values align with theirs. Iivarinen, (2017) identifies that consumers brand themselves by the brands they use. The consumption of brands allows consumers to belong to certain groups. Brand values are important to consumers and 5 out of 5 interview participants highlighted how it is essential their brand values match with the companies they work with. Participant D stated that brands *"need to be accountable for your actions and like be able to trace back any actions".* Brands must take accountability following their actions from being cancelled. As determined previously, an apology or statement can work in their favor but not in all cases and further action may be required. Participant B stated that *"So I think like if they have put steps in place and they've really worked on it and they've come out and they've explained, you know, what they're trying to do now, and they've changed their own ethos and their own values then".* Participant B highlights how it takes more than an apology and a change of their ethos and values can help rectify a mistake that is being made. Participant C indicated that *"I view actions over words, actions speak louder than words, in my opinion. And anyone can come out and say, sorry for something. Even if they don't mean it."* This indicates how Cancel Culture can affect brands in the long term if they have not tried to rectify previous views of a brand. Brands who may have been securitized can overcome long term effects of Cancel Culture in changing their ethos and perhaps promoting social issues or corporate social responsibility. In changing their perceptions by showing an effort of a change this can aid in individuals forgiving a brand. Brands are accountable for their actions and if they take the steps necessary it can shape perceptions online. Participant C mentioned that *"I do think there, I think there's a lot of decisions now being made regarding what people see online regarding brands.* As decisions are being made by taking into account how brands are being viewed online brands need to build a positive presence on social media. Chueng and Kinsey, (2019) identify how brands must consider how their decisions affect society. To conclude brands can potentially overcome the long-term effects of Cancel Culture by promoting a philanthropic presence on social media.

Companies who are affiliated with brands that are victims of Cancel Culture are more hesitant than individuals.

Brands who are a victim of Cancel Culture often find themselves back in the public good graces within a matter of either months or in some cases weeks (Allen, 2021). 3 out of 5 participants argued how their decisions to purchase from a brand personally are not altered or considered in the consumer decision making process. Participant A revealed that *"if I saw someone had a good deal, I don't think that would really come into my thinking."* Participant B stated that *"if I see that company X has a 50% sale and there's something on there that I want, I suppose, I'm not gonna really take that too much into consideration."* Participant D mentioned that *"even though fast fashion brands such as like (company X) have received backlash for their working conditions I still purchase from them but might be reluctant to hire them as it could result in negative ways for the company and possible backlash."* These participants highlighted how the effects of Cancel Culture don't shape their decision to purchase from their brands and as stated by participant B if a sale is offered, they wouldn't consider a brands previous actions. As anonymity is used for ethical reasons the brands participants mentioned are fast fashion brands who have been scrutinized and convicted of moral injustice issues. Alternatively, 5 out of 5 participants asserted that they would either not work with brands who have been guilty of such or an apology or change of ethos is in order. As a hiring company's reputation is more at stake and in the public eye and there is a risk of them getting cancelled themselves. Companies consider the social media presence of brands more important than individuals. Although this is positive for brands it can be difficult for brands to partake in their usual activities in partnerships and collaborations. As brands hire advertising and broadcasting agencies to grow and for marketing purposes this can have implications as not getting hired. Thus, although a group of consumers are not concerned with brands who have been cancelled a change of ethos or an apology is needed to work with companies who can aid in their marketing practices.

6.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to examine the impact of Cancel Culture on a brand's reputation. The study took the perspective of hiring managers in the advertising and broadcasting industry. The main initial findings suggested how Cancel Culture can negatively impact a brand's reputation due to the nature of social media and how discussions and topics can go viral quickly. It was apparent that it is subjective to the backlash a brand will face to the nature of the reason they are cancelled. This could be an indicator that further research is needed to establish and indicate why certain brands are permanently cancelled and how others recover. It was evident that an apology or statement can work in brands aiding for forgiveness and protecting their image.

As the author investigated how brands are perceived from hiring managers these results may be different if the approach was taken using a different sampling technique. The research showed that all participants demonstrated how they must hire brands that coincide with their values, and their view perceptions of a brand online and their appearance on social media. The research suggests that for the hiring companies their reputation is at stake and shows a reluctance to hire brands who are being scrutinized on social media. Interview participants who work with brands highlighted how important perceptions of brands on social media are and how they can influence them in the decision to work with brands. Accountability was mentioned amongst participants and indicated that brands need to be accountable for their actions following on from being cancelled and in term forgiven. Brand values were also a recurrence amongst participants, they mentioned how their company values need to be reciprocated through the brands they hire. This highlights how a brand needs to instill company values that are evident for consumers and will not negatively affect a brand. This can result in difficulties for brands, in their perceptions of consumers and also in marketing practices when they must hire advertising agencies or broadcasters. As brands rely on such medium for growth this is a contributing factor to how their reputation can be affected in the aftermath of Cancel Culture. Social media marketing is an ever-growing marketing practice but in certain circumstances and for certain brands different avenues such as promotions and sponsorships on broadcasting stations can be more effect. This can inhibit brands from exploring such avenues after Cancel Culture. The research indicated this can be overcome by taking accountability.

Social media is a key practice in how companies communicate with their customers and potential customers. This has resulted in decisions being made under the influence of social media. Social media marketing has grown due to the surge of social media and how individuals communicate. Companies have the capabilities to communicate and target consumers on a much wider scale. Alternatively, this presents social media users with the power to scrutinize brands and attempt to cancel them online. This identifies that brands need to be cautious of what they put online as they are easily a target for a group of individuals who disagree with statements or posts online. The author also investigated how participants agree that brands hold responsibility in using their voice to promote social issues. Brands no longer have the option to stay silent on issues and this can also result in them being cancelled in choosing to stay silent. This demonstrates how individuals expect a brand to promote social issues and how they are considered expected to. The author highlighted how the promotion of these social issues and having philanthropic qualities can help a brand avoid being cancelled. In contrast certain brands have been cancelled for the promotion of social issues, for example the infamous Pepsi commercial with Kendall Jenner. Pepsi tried to promote the Black Lives Matter project and due to it being distasteful. This suggests that brands need to promote social issues for the intent of helping society and not just the corporate advantages they will receive in the promotions of these issues. Although individuals expect these promotions of brands it should also be considered that it must be done correctly in order to not receive backlash.

The research in the literature review indicated that Cancel Culture is not a permanent state and victims of Cancel Culture can be forgiven. Allen, (2021) discusses how individuals who are cancelled often find themselves back in the public good graces within a matter of either months or in some cases weeks. The authors findings suggested that brands need to take accountability and apology for their actions. Although the research also suggested that in certain situations more must be done. The findings suggested that brands must show transparency and it must be apparent that their ethos has changed, or they have taken relevant steps to counteract the accusations and show they have valuable brands values that individuals can align themselves with. As social media perception is taken in the decision-making process this must be reciprocated online. The author intended to explore how a brand's reputation is affected when being cancelled and how it effects future partnerships and collaborations. The research suggested that social media results in their reputation being negatively impacted. Although by apologizing

and demonstrating a thrive for change this can conquer their altered reputation. The research indicated that brands could take steps to prevent the aftermath of being cancelled and they have the opportunity to overcome it.

The author tried to determine the effect Cancel Culture has on a brand's reputation. The author designed interviews in order to gain insights from participants to indicate their perceptions of a brand and how Cancel Culture affects a brand's reputation. Although this proposed certain challenges. As in asking interview participants if they would hire a brand after being scrutinized or after apology afterwards some answers were subjective. Participants could not give a yes or no answer as it depended on the gravity of the situation. The author was able to still get results initially aimed in the research objective but potentially could have gotten more valuable insights. The author suggests that if further scholars want to research this topic to potentially interview participants who may have had more experience in challenging brands and being faced with brands looking to be hired who have faced more scrutiny. This could be done by perhaps an even more niche research sampling.

The author also discovered how companies show more of a reluctance to associate with brands who may have been correlated with moral issues rather than individual consumers. Due to companies having more at stake in being associated with these brands and potentially themselves being cancelled for it. All participants indicated they would need an apology, or it was noticeable a brand has changed their values in the aftermath of allegations when working with a brand. Although, 3 out of 5 participants highlighted how they do not take into account the same ideologies when they are purchasing from such brands. This could potentially indicate that individuals are quick to call out brands, but their own purchasing habits do not take into account a brand's value if they have for example a sale or is a popular brand. This could suggest further research is needed as to why so many companies are being cancelled for associating with brands, but consumers still purchase from them. This could highlight how companies are held accountable at a higher level than individuals who purchase from them. This could be due to the anonymity element of social media and the online trolls that exist on social media who take enjoyment in the power they have of cancelling a brand. This could indicate that Cancel Culture is possibly a result of social media rather than the sole actions of a brand or individuals. As social media and online trolls can remain anonymous, they may have never spoken out before

social media. Further research could indicate the reasoning behind this and possible measures to overcome this. Participants of the research also indicated that Cancel Culture has gone too far and can be done and have detrimental effects to an individual for the wrong reasons even if proven innocent.

This author was able to provide insights to how marketers evaluate brands and considerations taken into account when hiring and the perceptions of social media. The researcher could perhaps of had more knowledge if another research sample had been conducted in addition. Another research sample of interview could have highlighted why individuals cancel a brand and determine if they are truly offended or if they enjoy the process of cancelling online. This research sample could be done by interviewing social media users who engage in such practices. Although this could be difficult due to the anonymity of individuals who cancel online and ethical considerations. In further research this could aid progression in researching Cancel Culture.

The research impact concludes that Cancel Culture has a negative impact on a brands reputation, but it is possible for them to overcome it and highlighted suggested measures of how they can. The research indicated how brands may face difficulties in working with brands rather than individuals purchasing from them. The research indicated the importance of the promotion of social issues and how they are a key business practice in society and social media. It is evident that Cancel Culture is a topic that has the opportunity to be understood more and offers a realm of possible further researchers

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7.1 Appendix

Participant name:

Job Position/title:

Date of Interview:

Consent form submitted : y/n

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me how you got into the industry?
2. When choosing to work with a brand are they any underlying factors that are considered?
3. Do you consider brand values important?
4. If a brand faced scrutiny/ backlash over social issues or a victim of cancel culture would this affect your decision to work with this brand?
5. Are there concerns about perceptions of the business when there is a lot of public discussion about an issue?
6. Would a previous brand's action impact you working with a brand?
7. If a brand has been criticized in the media, would a public apology or statement work in the brands favour in being hired?
8. In the context of cancel culture How important are checks on Brand history when working with a client
9. Would you look at how they are portrayed in the media or on social media (i.e through discussion, tweets or hashtags)?
10. What are your opinions on the phenomena of cancel culture online?
11. How do you navigate popular opinion that emerges on social media and is it something that affects decisions?
12. In your opinion do you feel that social issues raised online are beginning to have more impact on decisions being made?