

Retail brand hate: You're everything I need in something I don't want.

Inspired by my supervisor, Prof. Pierre Mostert, I, Julie Brink, conducted my [master's](#) research at the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by looking into consumers' emotions towards brands. As I began to explore the spectrum of emotions that consumers feel towards brands, it became increasingly clear that consumers' negative emotions towards brands have the potential to be extremely detrimental towards a brand's image, equity and continuity. From a personal perspective, having witnessed the rise of 'cancel-culture', 'call-out culture' and 'woke activism' on social media, it became clear to me that there was great value and relevance in understanding consumers' extreme negative emotions towards brands, as they face the scrutiny of the masses.

Upon examination, I discovered that the literature acknowledges that brand hate has unique cultural meanings, differences and attributions. However, brand hate research is sparse in African countries, offering a unique opportunity to study brand hate in South Africa (a country marked by cultural diversity). Thus, the purpose of my research has been to shed light and explore brand hate determinants and outcomes by encompassing constructs that reflect not only self-motives but also societal/environmental influences. This study and its importance are extended by studying brand hate in the retail industry (which exhibits both product and service dimensions); it offers more generalisable insights on the topic of brand hate.

To gather data, an online self-administered questionnaire was distributed, resulting in 150 valid and complete responses for data analysis out of the 485 initial responses collected. From the results of the statistical analysis, it was revealed that in contrast to previous research, brand hate was not determined by a conflict between consumers' self-image and the brands' symbolic image or by the functional failures of the brand. Rather, it was shown that consumers' ideological conflicts with brands were an important predictor of brand hate. It was also revealed that consumers' internalisation of the negative references around them could predict brand hate. This paints a picture of brand hate being cultivated more out of concern for the values, opinions and ideologies of society than self-motives. This theme continued to be revealed when examining the outcomes of brand hate, as hate was shown to be expressed through

negative word-of-mouth in both online and offline settings. Given these results, this study suggests that retail brands must look further than their target market and work towards applying practices that keep their brand in good stead with society and the environment. Furthermore, this research serves as a warning to brands not to overlook the individual consumer harbouring negative emotions, as consumers share their sentiments with others and, by doing so, can turn others against brands, amplifying the problem even further. While on the note of extrinsic forces and influences, I owe a lot of gratitude to the University of Pretoria's Marketing Management department, its Faculty members and my study supervisor, Professor Mostert; your guidance and encouragement have inspired me to grow not only as a marketer but as a scholar of life.

This research was conducted as part of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2024 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Julie Brink under the supervision of [Prof Pierre Mostert](#).