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The Impacts of Cancel Culture on Brands and Celebrities

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Resumo

A cultura do cancelamento é um termo e um fenómeno cuja popularidade tem crescido exponencialmente nos últimos anos e que pode provocar impactos reais nas reputações das marcas e das celebridades. A literatura sobre este tópico ainda está na sua fase inicial e existe ainda muita confusão acerca deste fenómeno e das consequências que pode causar.

Por essas razões, decidiu-se estudar a cultura do cancelamento, tendo como foco principal os impactos que este fenómeno pode causar tanto nas marcas como nas celebridades, analisando não só as consequências, mas também os fatores que podem levar à tentativa de cancelamento e aos diferentes resultados. Para além disso, analisam-se também os resultados positivos que podem surgir como consequência deste fenómeno e comparam-se os impactos que pode ter nas marcas face às celebridades.

De forma a analisar os impactos deste fenómeno, foram selecionadas duas marcas e duas celebridades que já teriam sido canceladas previamente e foi desenvolvida uma análise de conteúdo qualitativa, com recurso a dados secundários da plataforma X. Estes dados foram analisados através de um software de análise de dados qualitativos, o Leximancer. Os resultados da análise revelaram que os impactos negativos na reputação são mais duradouros no caso das celebridades do que nas marcas, no geral, os resultados indicaram que as marcas sofrem menos impactos negativos que as celebridades. Além disso, é possível atingir resultados positivos na sequência de uma tentativa de cancelamento, como um aumento nas vendas, que decorre graças a um aumento do reconhecimento da marca. Adicionalmente, nos casos selecionados não se registaram impactos financeiros significativos provenientes das tentativas de cancelamento.

Palavras-chave: cultura do cancelamento; marcas; celebridades; impactos

Classificação JEL: M31 - Marketing

Abstract

Cancel culture is both a term and a phenomenon that has been growing in popularity in the last few years and that can have real impacts on the careers of brands and celebrities. The literature on cancel culture is still in its early stages and there is still a lot of confusion associated with this phenomenon and the consequences it can have.

For those reasons, I decided to study cancel culture, focusing on the impacts of this phenomenon on both brands and celebrities, analyzing not only the consequences, but also the factors that can lead to the cancellation attempt and to the different outcomes. Moreover, I also analyze the positive outcomes that can come from this phenomenon and compare the impacts it can have on brands versus celebrities.

In order to analyze cancel culture's impacts, two brands and celebrities that had previously been canceled were selected, and a qualitative content analysis was developed, using a secondary data from the social media platform, X. This data was then analyzed using a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, Leximancer. The analysis' results indicated that negative impacts on reputation are longer lasting for celebrities than for brands and that brands suffer fewer negative outcomes than celebrities. Furthermore, it is possible to have positive outcomes following a cancellation attempt, such as a sales increase, due to increases in brand awareness. Additionally, in the selected cases, there were no significant financial impacts that came from the cancellation attempts.

Keywords: cancel culture; brands; celebrities; impacts

JEL Classification: M31 - Marketing

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1. Introduction

In the last few years, cancel culture has become a very controversial topic, gaining attention from researchers because of its role in changing the dynamics between customers and brands (Mohsen, 2022). Nowadays, with the access to social media, consumers are perceived to be “equal if not more powerful” than celebrities and brands, which were previously the ones who held the power (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022, p.1073). However, this power that consumers now detain does not mean that they have greater strength or resources, it is the perception that they can take action to cancel brands and celebrities on social media, therefore, it is this power asymmetry that allows consumers to employ power tactics in order to influence celebrities and brands on social media. (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022)

Cancel culture is both a term and a phenomenon that has gained great prevalence on social media, having become a topic of discussion and public debate across media, culture, and politics (Demsar *et al.*, 2023). It is a socio-political movement that works towards punishing financially and ostracizing a single person or a company as a consequence of a transgression committed by these entities (Hobbs & O’Keefe). These transgressions can range from the expression of controversial opinions to legal violations, such as criminal offenses (Hobbs & O’Keefe, 2023)

Cancel culture thrives in an environment cultivated by Millennials and Gen Z, generations characterized for their need for social change, and that now hold immense power with the help of the internet (Pušić & Vojvodić, 2021; Costa & Azevedo, 2023). These generations are digital natives, and, because of that, they feel free to express their emotions online. Unlike the previous generations, and with the rise of the global pandemic COVID-19, the time spent on the internet increased significantly, which contributed to the acceleration of cancel culture (Pušić & Vojvodić, 2021).

Today consumers can, without much effort, become aggressive and determined to harm the offending party, moved by their negative experiences allied to the power technology gives them (Arruda & Barcelos, 2021). That being said, it is increasingly important to have a deeper understanding about this concept since both celebrities and brands are becoming progressively vulnerable to its effects (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022).

The literature on the topic of cancel culture is still in its early stages, with some authors focusing on the perceptions and motivations that lead consumers to engage in cancelling behaviors (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022; Tandoc *et al.*, 2022), others exploring the way in which the cancellations unfold on different social media platforms (Bouvier, 2020; Bouvier & Machin, 2021; Lewis & Christin, 2022) and as a form of social and institutional change (Demsar *et al.*, 2023). There is also literature about cancel culture’s origins and mainstream appropriation (Clark, 2020), cancel culture in the context of digital

media participation (Ng, 2020) in the context of brand management (Pušić and Vojvodić, 2021; Reyes-Fournier *et al.*, 2023), political science (Norris, 2021) and social psychology (Traversa *et al.*, 2023).

Although some of cancel culture's possible implications have been addressed in the literature, there's still a lot of confusion about the outcomes of this phenomenon and their duration (Ng, 2020; Saldanha *et al.*, 2022; Lewis & Christin, 2022; Karg *et al.*, 2022). Specifically, regarding cancel culture's potential positive outcomes, there have been calls for further research about this topic (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022). That being said, the purpose of this dissertation is to address this gap in the literature by focusing solely on the impacts of cancel culture. The research problem that motivates this study is to investigate deeply the impacts cancel culture can have on brands and celebrities, assessing the potential positive outcomes, and differential effects it can have for brands versus celebrities. In this sense, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: How lasting are cancel culture's impacts on brands and celebrities' careers?

RQ2: What are the potential positive outcomes of cancellation for brands and celebrities?

RQ3: How do the outcomes of cancel culture differ for brands and celebrities?

In order to answer these questions, two celebrities and brands that had previously suffered cancellation attempts were chosen, and a qualitative analysis was conducted using secondary data retrieved from the social media platform, X. This data was then analyzed using Leximancer, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, which resulted in two concept maps for each celebrity and brand chosen. The concept maps reveal the themes and concepts most present in the tweets about the celebrities and brands, which were key for the analysis of the impacts the cancellation attempt had on these individuals and organizations and, consequently, to answer the proposed research questions.

The findings of this study may represent valuable theoretical and practical contributions for both organizations and managers since the phenomenon of cancel culture threatens both brands and celebrities. Furthermore, these findings provide a better understanding of the impacts of cancel culture while also considering the factors that lead to the cancellation attempt, and consequently, impact the outcomes for celebrities and brands. Therefore, it provides managers with knowledge that can help them be more prepared and craft successful repair strategies for future cancellation attempts, in order to mitigate the negative effects of cancel culture.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cancel Culture

Cancel Culture is a phenomenon that originated in queer communities of color (Clark, 2020), gaining more popularity among African American Twitter users who used the term jokingly in 2015, making it into an internet meme (Tandoc *et al.*, 2022; Clark, 2020). This term was then magnified by the #MeToo movement, responsible for exposing sexual harassment and assault involving public figures such as Harvey Weinstein, James Franco, Louis C. K., and R. Kelly (Ng, 2020), and later prompted by other movements that demanded accountability from public figures (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022).

Cancelling shares some conceptual overlaps with already established concepts such as calling out, online shaming, trolling, doxing, and boycotting (Tandoc *et al.*, 2022; Clark, 2020). However, Clark (2020) argues that “call-out culture” begat cancel culture and while these terms have been used synonymously, cancel culture involves the target’s past actions while call-out culture tends to focus on the present actions. Some conceptualize cancelling as a form of active consumer resistance that attempts to delegitimize a brand completely by withdrawing the support and encouraging others to do the same, although it is a more punitive form of active consumer resistance because it is a very unpredictable and unmediated phenomenon (Demsar *et al.*, 2023).

Clark (2020) defines cancelling as “an expression of agency, a choice to withdraw one’s attention from someone or something whose values, (in)action, or speech are so offensive, one no longer wishes to grace them with their presence, time and money” (p. 88). Cancel culture involves groups of traditionally marginalized voices condemning powerful public figures (Ng, 2020). It is the total withdraw of support, that can take many forms such as social media follows, viewership and so on, from those who have done or said something deemed highly problematic or even unacceptable, usually from a social justice perspective (Ng, 2020). It can involve rejecting the cancelled target, ignoring them, publicly opposing to their actions or views, depriving them from all time and attention, and sometimes even their ability to make a living (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022).

Cancelling aims to respond against behaviors deemed socially unacceptable and it attempts to punish these behaviors by publicly shaming and withdrawal of support (Tandoc *et al.*, 2022), with the ultimate goal of causing permanent damage to the cancellation target (Demsar *et al.*, 2023). Besides making the cancellation targets suffer consequences for their actions or words and holding them accountable, the broader and more indirect goals of cancel culture are to mobilize the public opinion, demand actions from decision makers and share collective expressions of moral outrage (Norris, 2021).

There are a lot of different views and debate surrounding the topic of cancel culture in recent years. On one hand, critics argue about its dangers for suppressing free speech and open debate

between conflicting parties or even disregard completely the existence of such concept (Norris, 2021; Mohsen, 2022; Phelan, 2023). They claim that the practice has gone too far because while it may start with criticism of cases that spark general moral disapproval, it can also lead to the silencing of a collection of unpopular perspectives such as racist, antisemitic, xenophobic views and so on (Norris, 2021). On the other hand, supporters claim it is a technique of civil resistance that holds powerful people accountable, while also empowering and giving a voice to previously voiceless marginalized groups (Norris, 2021; Mohsen, 2022; Phelan, 2023).

The nature of cancel culture, which has been driven predominantly by Twitter, has also raised concerns about the brutality of the campaigns, which may not be proportionate to the transgressions that originated it in the first place (Bouvier & Machin, 2021). As previously said, cancel culture was originally intended to combat social injustices (Tandoc *et al.*, 2022). It is an emergent form of consumer activism facilitated by social media (Demsar *et al.*, 2023), but while it may be aimed at doing good, it may also help maintain the problems it targets, since cancelling can focus more on the individual or institution it is targeting rather than its actions (Bouvier, 2020; Bouvier & Machin, 2021). Therefore, running the risk of obscuring the nature of the very things they seek to challenge and miss some of their most critical aspects (Bouvier, 2020; Bouvier & Machin, 2021).

Clark (2020) criticizes the way cancel culture has been appropriated by social elites to refer to any form of online public criticism. She claims that this misappropriated use of the term serves to silence marginalized groups, while also creating panic around the baseless fear of censorship and silencing. Norris (2021) also argues that the media speculation regarding cancel culture has generated more “political heat than intellectual light” (p.169). However, Bouvier and Machin (2021) claim that while it may have its problematic aspects, cancel culture’s existence implies the failure to address real pressing issues of social injustice by the existing institutions.

Regarding the motivations beyond cancel culture, Saldanha *et al.* (2022) claim that “cancelling is an expression of power” and that it is a power imbalance or asymmetry between consumers and brands or celebrities that causes them to engage in cancel culture behaviors, since power imbalances create a state of powerlessness which consumers seek to relieve (p.1072). Additionally, Tandoc *et al.* (2022) found that users are motivated to partake in cancel culture by a number of factors, such as the desire to hold people in places of power and influence accountable, the desire to educate others on particular issues, the desire to protect marginalized groups and to express their own moral values. However, there are also users who participate because it gives them a sense of power and control (Tandoc *et al.*, 2022).

Power is a recurring theme around this topic, in specific power imbalances, since the subject of cancellation is usually perceived as being in a place of power and influence who has abused it in some

way, therefore cancel culture can be seen as a way to correct those imbalances by giving common social media users a platform where they can have a voice (Tandoc *et al.*, 2022).

Till this moment, there is very little empirical research about cancel culture. Bouvier (2020), and Bouvier and Machin (2021) investigate the limitations of X (previously known as Twitter) cancel culture campaigns that aim to call out racism using hashtags; Costa and Azevedo (2023) explore cancel culture's antecedents and consequences, analyzing the whole journey of brand cancellation. In addition, Demsar *et al.* (2023) explore the phenomenon of cancellations as a form of social and institutional change, with the aim of understanding how these unfold and impact markets, public relations strategies, and consumer resistance; and Hobbs and O'Keefe (2023) study cancel culture through the lens of public relations' reputation management and deviance theory from sociology and media studies.

Moreover, Lewis and Christin (2021) analyze the rise of cancel culture through a study on YouTube drama, exploring the concept of accountability and the power dynamics between creators, celebrities, and audiences. Additionally, Norris (2021) analyzes cancel culture in the context of political science, she tackles the myth that the phenomenon of cancel culture doesn't actually exist and explores cancel culture within the academia. Furthermore, Pušić and Vojvodić (2021) explore the phenomenon of cancel culture in the context of brand management; Reyes-Fournier *et al.* (2023) investigate the relationship between the spread of information in a cancel culture environment and the financial indicators of success of an organization, using the case study of the company Abercrombie & Fitch. Lastly, Tandoc *et al.* (2022) explore the perceptions and motivations of Singaporeans towards cancel culture and Traversa *et al.* (2023) investigate cancel culture in the context of social psychology, exploring the potential positive impacts of cancel culture, particularly its ability to provide collective validation for the harmed groups.

I provide a table with a synthesis of the eleven empirical studies on cancel culture I mentioned previously with the following columns: reference, research context, research design, sample size and research methods.

Table 2.1 - Cancel culture's empirical studies

Reference	Research Context	Research design	Sample size	Research methods
Bouvier (2020)	Global, Twitter, Celebrities	Content analysis	8000 tweets	Qualitative method
Bouvier and Machin (2021)	Global, Twitter, Celebrities	Content analysis	3000 tweets	Qualitative method
Costa and Azevedo (2023)	Global	Quasi-experiment study, online Survey	178 respondents	Quantitative method
Demsar <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Global, brands and celebrities	Content analysis	63,515 tweets from 45,855 unique users; 2,597 articles.	Qualitative method
Hobbs and O'Keefe (2023)	Global, Twitter, Celebrities	Multiple case studies, sentiment analysis	24,000 tweets	Qualitative method
Lewis and Christin (2022)	Global, Youtube, Celebrities	Digital ethnography, content analysis, semi structured interviews	44 Youtube drama channels; 15 interviewees	Qualitative methods
Norris (2021)	Global	Survey	2446 respondents	Quantitative method
Pušić and Vojvodić (2021)	Global, Celebrities and brands	Content analysis, In-depth interview	9 scholarly articles, 1 independent study; 1 interviewee	Qualitative methods
Reyes-Fournier <i>et al.</i> (2023)	United States, Abercrombie & Fitch	Correlational analysis	Tweets; Financial statements from the brand	Quantitative method
Tandoc <i>et al.</i> (2022)	Singapore, Celebrities	Online survey, In-depth interviews	20 interviewees; 786 respondents	Mixed methods

Traversa <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Global	Experimental studies	520 university women; 237 East-Asian Canadian and American participants	Quantitative method
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2.2 The Role of social media in Cancel Culture

Cancelling generally occurs publicly, and it is made easier by social media platforms, which offer users some sense of anonymity, facilitating the initiation or participation in the cancelling, while also expanding the reach to a bigger audience. (Tandoc *et al.*, 2022). Digital platforms play a big role in cancel culture since they can empower traditionally marginalized groups by facilitating large scale responses to content depicting acts deemed problematic, therefore amplifying and accelerating the spread of negative information, while also highlighting the lack of debate and assessment, which can make it harder for people to recover from their transgressions (Ng, 2020).

The nature of debate on social media, with a special focus on X, can lead to simplification of issues, ideological extremes, incivility, and moral rages rather than careful deliberation and consideration of issues, since these discussions tend to simplify narratives, involving only good and evil and are based widely on buzzwords and symbolism (Bouvier & Machin, 2021). In addition to that, the short-lived nature of tweeting allows users to engage without long planning or reflection, therefore, users don't necessarily have a deep commitment level to what they are tweeting, which can create some distance between them and the person whom the cancellation is targeted at, lowering the fear of consequences (Bouvier & Machin, 2021).

Social media has given a place for previously voiceless groups to voice their dissatisfaction and have an influence and power that they didn't possess (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022). These platforms provide a space for regular people to demand accountability from powerful figures, both individuals and institutions, due to the platforms' collectivity and immediacy (Clark, 2020).

2.3 The Outcomes of Cancel Culture

The outcomes of cancel culture and cancelling itself aren't well understood, since cancel culture doesn't have a reasonable scale of transgression, it can give the same treatment to targets that only have one problematic incident or behavior, that it gives to people with an already established pattern of problematic behaviors (Ng, 2020; Saldanha *et al.*, 2022). With instances of consumers being more

forgiving and other instances where consumers are not forgiving at all and engage immediately in cancelling behaviors (Ng, 2020; Saldanha *et al.*, 2022).

Cancellations can have temporary consequences and more permanent ones. Temporary consequences can be online public condemnation and shame, while more permanent outcomes can be harmed reputations and damages to brand positioning, cancelled contracts and loss of revenue (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022).

A cancellation represents a violation of relationship norms between the consumer and the brand or celebrity, it is an exercise of power that entails a two-way relationship (Pereira de Sá & Pereira Alberto). However, Saldanha *et al.* (2022) found that the presence of certain qualities, such as warmth or competence in the cancellation target can make consumers refrain from engaging in the cancelling behaviors and even forgive the celebrity or brand in question, given that the incident doesn't exceed a certain threshold. Nevertheless, if the cancel threshold is crossed, consumers will 'exit' the relationship, which is an extreme negative outcome (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022).

When consumers attempt to cancel large, established corporate brands, they are less likely to succeed. Demsar *et al.* (2023) argue that in those cases consumers target their efforts to "transgressive products, services, marketing campaigns, or events" instead of the brand in general, since these attempts are more likely to have a real effect (p.334). Consumers realize that if a brand is powerful and well established in its field, complete delegitimization will be unlikely (Demsar *et al.*, 2023)

On the contrary, regarding personal brands, consumers find it easier to invalidate these brands by withdrawing all support and encouraging others to do the same, which makes them more vulnerable to successful cancellation attempts (Demsar *et al.*, 2023). However, the negative effects it has on people have been somewhat exaggerated, Ng (2020) gives the example of comedian Louis C. K. who was back doing shows just after one year of his sexual harassment accusations, showing that these previously silenced groups that participate in cancelling can make only a small dent on the power of the privileged people they are targeting. Additionally, Lewis and Christin (2022) found that "individual celebrities rarely faced any significant career consequences" after a cancellation, which can also spark doubt about it being a reliable process to demand accountability on social media (p.1650).

Cancel culture can be a confusing phenomenon since its consequences can be varied and, although cancelling involves the withdrawal of support, as previously said, sometimes it can ultimately have other effects. Lewis and Christin (2022) give an example of the cancellation of YouTube creator James Charles that after initially suffering a loss of subscribers, ended up regaining and even surpassing the subscriber count he had prior to the cancellation. Moreover, Karg *et al.* (2022) give the example of Logan Paul, which is a celebrity that faced a major scandal when he recorded a body from a person who had committed suicide in a forest in Japan, having even made fun of the situation. This was the first in many scandals involving the celebrity and he was highly criticized and cancelled on different

platforms, even losing sponsors and a movie arrangement. However, his brand and followership kept growing throughout all of this (Karg *et al.*, 2022).

From these examples we can see that positive outcomes can come from cancel culture after the initial backlash. However, mostly negative outcomes have been studied by researchers.

2.4 Cancellation of Celebrities

The cancellation of celebrities by consumers has been rising, giving light to innumerable celebrity scandals, and while the reasons for cancellation may vary it is usually related to celebrities' involvement in highly controversial, problematic, or unacceptable behaviors in the present or past (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022). Celebrities have always been associated with scandals and, today, these can even add to their status. However, the type of scandal, the image repair strategies employed, racial aspects and the cultural sector in question are some factors that influence if the scandal will enhance or diminish the celebrity's public image (Mortensen & Kristensen, 2020).

Celebrity transgressions are violations of societal behavioral expectations, usually moral behaviors (Rifon *et al.*, 2023). They can pose as a dilemma specially for individuals that have developed strong attachments to these figures, because on one hand it can result in conflicts with their own moral beliefs, and on the other hand, they cannot detach themselves from these celebrities just to defend their moral beliefs (Lee *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, when the transgression compromises moral standards, people tend to develop moral reasoning strategies to cope, which will be dictated by the individuals' level of attachment, as will the outcome of the cancellation (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022).

Moreover, blaming a celebrity for a transgression is intrinsically related to the consumer's belief about the celebrity's culpability for said transgression (Rifon *et al.*, 2023). However, forgiveness is related to other factors that allow consumers to look past the transgression and give the celebrity another chance, therefore, consumer knowledge about the celebrity's past behavior influences the decision to blame or forgive the celebrity for the transgression (Rifon *et al.*, 2023).

Facilitated by social media, consumers can get attached to a celebrity and perceive as if they are close to said celebrity and, because of that perceived closeness, when a transgression occurs, they may see themselves as victims, even though they are not affected by it nor have any involvement in said transgression (Finsterwalder *et al.*, 2017). They can perceive threats to that celebrity as threats to their own identity, making them more compelled to defend the celebrity, they might also have a hard time changing their prior view of the celebrity in light of transgression because of their past commitment to them (Karg *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, we see that even when transgressions are very severe, consumers who identify firmly with the transgressor might not withdraw their support.

Individuals that are highly committed and attached to a certain celebrity might suffer from cognitive dissonance, when presented with the celebrity's transgression (Karg *et al.*, 2022). Because of that, these individuals may attempt to reduce cognitive dissonance by maintaining their support and showing compassion towards the transgressor, instead of experiencing the negative feelings associated with the transgression. Finsterwalder *et al.* (2017) also show that compassion for the transgressing celebrity is a common response among fans. Conversely, celebrity transgressions can also influence negatively not only the celebrity's own endorsement potential, but also brands endorsed by the celebrity (Rifon *et al.*, 2023). Wang and Kim (2020) found in their study that high severity transgressions result in more negative attitudes and perceptions from consumers towards the celebrity, and also generates less favorable reactions regarding purchase intention and brand attitude towards endorsed brands.

Moreover, Mortensen and Kristensen (2020) introduce the term 'de-celebrification' to designate when celebrities lose their legitimacy, their public image, positive media visibility and status. This can be an extreme negative consequence of celebrity cancellation. Because de-celebrification is often triggered by severe transgressions, such as charges of sexual crimes and criminal offenses, and it results in the loss of public recognition, status, and marketability (Mortensen & Kristensen, 2020).

2.5 Cancellation of Brands

Even though there are many cases of celebrities getting canceled, products are not immune to it either (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022). Many brands fail to access the potential impacts that being cancelled can have on their business. Cancellations can have several damaging consequences for brands that can be hard to recover from, especially if it involves third parties (Demsar *et al.*, 2023), therefore it is critical for marketers to study and understand this phenomenon.

Today consumers increasingly expect brands to take a stance on issues and to support their point of view by taking actions that will generate change. Therefore, when consumers cancel brands, it creates a difficult and challenging climate for marketers, since people expect them to maintain the positioning of the brand by taking a stand on social issues, while at the same time not risking offending a portion of their target who may not agree with the brands stance on the issue (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022). Because of that, cancel culture has become a controversial topic in the field of marketing because of the detrimental effects that brand cancellation can have on brands' reputation and equity (Mohsen, 2022).

The changes in customer-brand dynamics and the rise of social media are two factors that enabled cancel culture (Mohsen, 2022). As consumers now have gained more control in their relationships with brands, social media empowers them and gives them a platform where they can stand up for their

demands and be heard, which allows consumers to share their opinions and express their anger against specific companies, while also encouraging others to do the same (Mohsen, 2022). That being said, consumer's online participation can be a challenge for companies as it can pose risks to brands' images, since it can influence positively or negatively online corporate image and reputation, which is a measure of trust for consumers (Arruda & Barcelos, 2021).

As previously said, cancellations arise after a transgression has been committed, which is an act deemed unacceptable by consumers. Regarding brand transgressions specifically, consumers evaluate them and determine if they are irreparable or not, this evaluation usually considers the brand's profile, size, history, values, type, and the transgression type and severity (Demsar *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, Fetscherin and Sampedro (2019) argue that the type and severity of brand transgressions impacts brand forgiveness. Finding that value-related transgressions, such as corporate wrongdoings and image-related transgressions are more unlikely to get consumers' forgiveness than performance-related transgressions.

When the transgression is perceived as irreparable, consumers mobilize to attempt to delegitimize the brand. However, when a brand has history of repeated transgressions, a new transgression is more likely to be seen as irreparable, therefore the call for cancellation is validated and consumers mobilize quickly and, in some cases, more aggressively (Demsar *et al.*, 2023). In the case of brands, they can not only be affected by their own behaviors and transgressions, but also by their celebrity endorsers', although the extent of the effect on the endorsed brand depends on the severity of the transgression (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022).

When consumers' expectations are not met by the brand, it affects the perceptions they have about the brand's honesty, integrity, and credibility, leading to perceptions that the brand is irresponsible or imprudent (Arruda & Barcelos, 2021), which can ultimately lead to the cancellation of the brand. When consumers engage in brand cancellation, the spread of negative eWOM, and subsequently the bad publicity and outrage that exists on multiple networking websites, can trigger other users to form negative perceptions about the brand being cancelled, which in consequence can lead to a lower propensity to purchase or repurchase anything from the company in question (Mohsen, 2022). However, Saldanha *et al.* (2022) found that consumers with strong emotional attachments to a product are less probable of engaging in negative activities towards the brand, which decreases even more when there's an absence of replacements for the product of the brand being boycotted.

After an irreparable transgression occurs and calls for cancellation arise, brands might attempt to preserve their legitimacy through apology (Demsar *et al.*, 2023). However, these apologies need to be interpreted as sincere or else they could further validate the cancellation attempt. Costa and Azevedo (2023) found in their study that, after a transgression has been committed, if the brand apologizes, it leads to brand forgiveness, a reduction in the public's intention to cancel the brand, and an increase

in word of mouth and purchase intention. Which means that an apology by the company has the power to diminish and mitigate some of the effects of the cancellation attempt.

Brand cancellation has increased quickly in the last few years and because of that, companies need to change and respond quicker to avoid becoming a cancellation target themselves (Mohsen, 2022). Since no brand has immunity over being cancelled, it is crucial for companies that desire to maintain their reputation and achieve sustainable growth to understand customers new needs, expectations and demands (Mohsen, 2022). Brands are now aware of the power consumers hold and when brands commit a transgression, they should focus on brand recovery management, since the survival of the brand not only depends on consumer power but also on the brand's recovery strategy (Pušić & Vojvodić, 2021). Moreover, Abbasi *et al.*, (2023) argue about the importance of recognizing that cancel culture exists to hold brands accountable, and that its implications pose a great risk to brands, therefore disregarding this phenomenon can lead to financial costs and loss.

3. Conceptual Framework

In this study we focus on the impacts cancel culture has on the reputations of celebrities and brands. Therefore, we provide a conceptual framework of cancel culture that gives a clearer view of the whole process that leads us to the outcomes of this phenomenon.

The process is initiated by the brand or celebrity transgression, which is an act deemed unacceptable by consumers, a violation of societal behavioral expectations (Rifon *et al.*, 2023). Factors such as the type and severity of the transgression will affect public response. Regarding the first one, the type of transgression, cultural sector in question and racial aspects are some factors that can influence public response (Mortensen & Kristensen, 2020). The various severity levels of transgression are also an important determinant of how individuals perceive if the behavior of the celebrity or brand was harmful or harmless (Wang & Kim, 2020). The severity of the incident shouldn't exceed a certain threshold, otherwise public response can be extremely negative, with consumers exiting the relationship with the brand or celebrity in question (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022).

Moreover, there are other factors related to the celebrity or brand that can influence the public's response, such as the prior history of transgression, the consistency of transgression, and the popularity of the brand or celebrity in question among the public.

Regarding to the prior history of transgression, if the celebrity or brand has a history of repeated transgressions, the new transgression is more likely to be seen as irreparable and the call for cancellation is validated, with consumers mobilizing quickly and, at times, even more aggressively (Demsar *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, the transgression consistency refers to how consistent the transgression is with the celebrity or brand's past behaviors (Matthews & Luebke, 2023). When a transgression is viewed by the public as a sincere, one time only mistake, rather than a mistake that is perceived as characteristic and central to the identity of the individual in question, the public response is more likely to be weaker (Matthews & Luebke, 2023), leaning towards forgiveness instead of cancelling.

The last factor is the popularity of the brand or celebrity in question among the public. In the case of celebrities, consumers can identify firmly with them, get very attached and get a sense of perceived closeness to the celebrity in question, which can make them perceive threats to the celebrity as threats to their own identity, causing them to be more compelled to defend and not withdraw support even when transgressions are severe (Finsterwalder *et al.*, 2017; Karg *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, consumers who identify themselves as fans of a celebrity, are more likely to demonstrate forgiveness and tolerance for the celebrity's transgressive behavior (Wang & Kim, 2020). Furthermore, In the case of brands, consumers with a strong attachment to the brand's products are less likely to engage in the cancellation

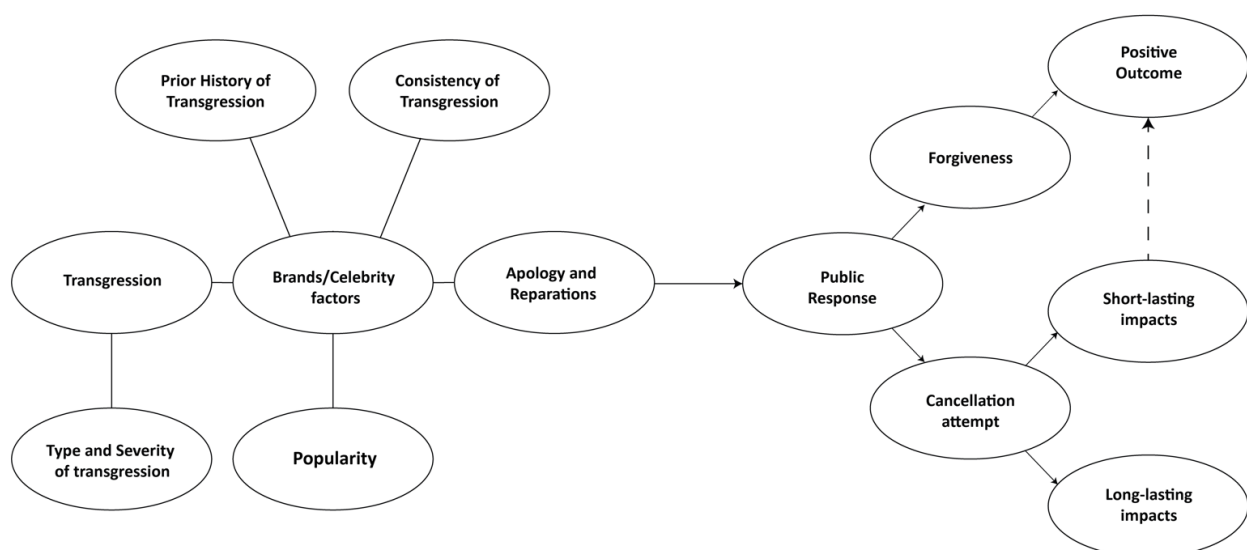
attempt towards the brand, which decreases even more when there's a lack of replacements for the products in question (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022).

Another factor that can influence the public's response is the brand or celebrity response to their own transgression. This is, the existence of an attempt to apologize and repair the damage (Demsar *et al.*, 2023). However, these apologies have to be deemed sincere by the public, or it could further legitimize the cancellation attempt.

Considering the factors mentioned before, the public responds and, if the public response is positive, the celebrity or brand will be forgiven, which is a possible positive outcome. However, if the transgression is deemed irreparable, the public will mobilize quickly to cancel the celebrity or brand in question, which is the cancellation attempt.

The cancellation is the total withdraw of support from those whose actions or sayings can be deemed highly problematic or even unacceptable, with the goal of making the cancellation targets accountable for their wrongdoings and punishing them through public shaming and rejection, with the ultimate purpose of causing permanent damage to the cancellation targets (Ng, 2020; Saldanha *et al.*, 2022; Tandoc *et al.*, 2022; Demsar *et al.*, 2023; Norris, 2021). It can lead to long lasting impacts such as harmed reputations, cancelled contracts, loss of revenue, damages to brand positioning, loss of legitimacy, public image and status (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022; Mortensen & Kristensen, 2020). Or short-lasting impacts, such as loss of followers, online public condemnation, and shame (Ng, 2022; Saldanha *et al.*, 2022). These short-lasting impacts can also lead to a positive outcome, the celebrity or brand in question can experience a temporary loss of viewers or followers but, the publicity and attention generated by the cancellation attempt can lead to positive outcomes for these entities (Ng, 2022) with some even gaining more fame and attention than they had before the cancelling event took place.

Figure 3.1 – Proposed Conceptual Framework



4. Contextualization

In this study, we will use two cases of celebrities and two cases of brands that have been cancelled previously, in order to study the impacts of these cancellations through the analysis of tweets about these entities. The celebrities chosen are rapper Kanye West and author J.K. Rowling, and the brands are H&M and Goya. In this section some context will be given regarding the celebrities and brands chosen, in order to explain the cancellation events they were involved in.

Rapper Kanye West, who now goes by Ye, has been involved in various controversies throughout the years that sparked cancellation attempts on social media platforms multiple times. His first big controversy was in September 2009 at the MTV Video Music Awards, when Kanye invaded the stage during Taylor Swift's acceptance speech for the Video of the Year award and declared that Beyoncé was more deserving (Rose, 2023). From there, the artist has been involved in multiple controversial moments but, the specific transgression we will focus on took place in May of 2018. Kanye visited TMZ's office, accompanied by Candace Owens, a conservative commentator, and in that visit, he made a statement about slavery being a choice (Ihaza, 2023). In his words, "We've been hearing about slavery for 400 years. For 400 years? That sounds like a choice" (Ihaza, 2023). Besides the controversial statement, this was also around the same time that the artist was seen multiple times wearing MAGA (Make America Great Again) hats, showing his support for former United States President, Donald Trump, which also caused some public outrage (Rose, 2023). More recently, the artist has stirred up more controversy by wearing a "White Lives Matter" shirt and sharing his antisemitic views on X, which led to companies like Balenciaga and Adidas to sever ties with the rapper. (Tumin, 2022).

J.K. Rowling, the author of the book series *Harry Potter*, received major backlash in December of 2019 after tweets expressing her support for a woman that had history of making transphobic comments (Aviles, 2019). This was the first time the author voiced her views on trans people, although being accused of transphobia before in October of 2017 and March of 2018 for liking tweets that promoted transphobic views (Aviles, 2019). When criticized, the author reinforced her ideological stance and continued to post allegedly transphobic comments, with each occurrence adding weight to the cancellation attempt (Demsar, 2023). The author is also one of the public figures that signed the letter criticizing cancel culture published on Harper's Magazine in 2020 (Ackerman et al., 2020).

In early January of 2018, the brand H&M sparked controversy online for an ad that featured a black child wearing a sweatshirt with the phrase "coolest monkey in the jungle" on the front. The public deemed this as a racist and inconsiderable action from the company, condemning it online (West, 2018). This wasn't the only controversy that the brand has been involved in, but it was one of the most debated online by both social media users and media outlets, having also reached artists such as The Weeknd and G-Eazy, who cut ties with the brand in light of the scandal (West, 2018).

Goya is a Latin food brand that suffered significant backlash in July of 2020, when its CEO praised the former United States president, Donald Trump, during a White house meeting, which triggered a boycott and a buycott movement, with the hashtags #Goyaway and #BoycottGoya trending on Twitter shortly after (Liaukonytė et al., 2022). Simultaneously, a counter buycott movement started gaining attention amongst Trump supporters and days later, the former president and his daughter posed with Goya products, which created a second wave of calls for boycotts and buycotts (Liaukonytė et al., 2022). The buycott social media posts and coverage in the media dominated the boycott one, and unexpectedly, Goya sales increased by 22%, although this effect was only temporary and disappeared completely in three weeks (Liaukonytė et al., 2022).

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Context

The present research aims to understand cancel culture and assess the impacts it has on brands and celebrities. It is increasingly important to understand the consequences and impacts cancel culture can have on both brands and celebrities, since it is a phenomenon that is growing in popularity and that can have serious implications in the careers of these entities. Moreover, the literature on this topic is still very scarce, leaving some research gaps to be filled. In that sense, three research questions were formulated:

RQ1: How lasting are cancel culture's impacts on brands and celebrities' careers?

RQ2: What are the potential positive outcomes of cancellation for brands and celebrities?

RQ3: How do the outcomes of cancel culture differ for brands and celebrities?

5.2 Research Design

In order to answer the research questions mentioned previously, the method chosen was a qualitative content analysis, using secondary data from the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

Content analysis is a method that seeks to reduce and interpret a substantial amount of qualitative data by identifying its key consistencies and meanings (Patton, 2015). It is a research technique that allows researchers to make valid replicable inferences from content such as: text, images, art, sounds, symbols, and so on (Krippendorff, 2019). It increases researchers understanding of a specific phenomenon and gives new insights that help researchers recognize meanings, which is the ultimate goal in content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019).

X was the social media platform chosen for data collection for this study, because of the platform's prominent role in shaping public discourse, in empowering social mobilization and the social justice dialogues it displays, which makes it central for participation in activities such as cancellations (Demsar *et al.*, 2023). X allows researchers to gather data about people's feelings and opinions about certain issues, their interactions, and their behaviors, therefore providing a suitable way for researchers to develop a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes and activities of a certain population (McCormick *et al.*, 2017). This platform has also been used in previous cancel culture studies (e.g. Bouvier, 2020; Bouvier & Machin, 2021; Demsar *et al.*, 2023; Reyes Fournier *et al.*, 2023).

Additionally, simultaneously to the Leximancer analysis, we analyzed magazine articles related to the outcomes of the cancellation event for each of the celebrities and brands chosen. This was done in order to further explore the impacts cancel culture can have on the careers of these entities, specifically

to get more insights on the impacts on the sales numbers post cancellation event, and the overall impacts on their reputations.

5.3 Data Collection

In the data collection process, we collected tweets written in English, Portuguese, Spanish, French and Dutch that were related to the two celebrities and two brands that have been cancelled previously. As mentioned before, the two celebrities are: Kanye West and J.K. Rowling, and the two brands are: H&M and Goya.

The collection of data was done by scrapping tweets from the time of the cancellation incident, up to 6 months after the transgression, in order to analyze the impacts the cancellation has over time. It was done using specific keywords, which were mainly the names and usernames of the chosen celebrities and brands.

Regarding Kanye West, the data collection period was from 1/05/2018 to 1/11/2018, using the keywords “Kanye” and “kanyewest”. For J.K Rowling the data collection period was from 19/12/2019 to 19/06/2020 using the keywords “JK Rowling”, “jk_rowling” and “J.K. Rowling”.

Regarding the brands, for H&M the data collection period chosen was from 8/01/2018 to 8/07/2018, using the keywords “H&M”, “hm”, “H&M” and “h&m”. Finally, for Goya, the data collection period was from 9/07/2020 to 9/01/2021, using the keywords “Goya” and “GoyaFoods”.

With this process, we collected a total of 378 328 tweets, 263 374 are related to Kanye West, 54 832 are related to J.K Rowling, 25 465 are related to H&M and 34 657 are related to Goya.

5.4 Data Analysis

To analyze the content collected from X, an automated text analysis was conducted using Leximancer. Text contains information about the individuals that generated it, it reflects information about the contexts of its creation, and causes an impact on the behaviors, preferences, or attitudes of its consumers (Berger et al., 2019). Therefore, text analysis acts as an invaluable tool by enabling researchers to monitor changes over time, to compare groups and to quantify qualitative data (Berger et al., 2019).

An automated text analysis, or computer-assisted analysis is an approach that utilizes computing power to answer questions related to different fields in which language is fundamental (Humphreys & Wang, 2018). Computers analyze text and provide systematic comparisons, measure the variables of interest, and at times, find patterns in the text that human researchers cannot detect (Humphreys & Wang, 2018).

Academic researchers are increasingly using Leximancer to analyze social media content (Morgan *et al.*, 2021). Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), such as Leximancer, has been used in recent studies that explored large qualitative data, in order to reduce the researcher's bias that is frequently present in techniques that involve data being handled manually (Wilk *et al.*, 2021).

Leximancer uses an iterative process to identify concept seeds from frequencies of words within the text. These concept seeds are the starting point for the definition of concepts, which are then grouped into themes and represented visually in a Concept Map (Leximancer, 2021). Leximancer's Concept Map represents the main concepts from the text, and the relationships between these concepts (Biroscak *et al.*, 2017) Leximancer offers various advantages, such as saving researcher's a huge amount of time, since content analysis can be a very time-consuming process, and it also reduces the common concern associated with this research method, which is unreliability (Biroscak *et al.*, 2017). The program automatically generates a concept list from the text itself, which makes it more reliable, reproducible, and more likely for unexpected or uncommon relationships to appear (Angus *et al.*, 2013).

Wilk *et al.* 2019, found that Leximancer's process impartiality is "very useful" in exploratory studies because it enables a more efficient and objective analysis of the data, since it is the program who identifies the concepts and themes within the data, rather than the researcher. In this same study, Wilk *et al.* 2019 also found that the Leximancer analysis revealed information that was not possible to be obtained in their QSR NVivo analysis.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Kanye West

In the case of Kanye West, the transgression committed was offensive speech during a visit to TMZ's office in May 2018 (Rose, 2023; Ihaza, 2023). During his visit, Kanye made the controversial statement that "slavery was a choice" (Rose, 2023). The artist's remarks can be considered offensive, racially insensitive, and also a misrepresentation of history, in that sense, Kanye's transgression is a moral transgression of high severity level.

As previously mentioned in the contextualization chapter, Kanye West has a prior history of transgression, having been involved in multiple controversies over the years. His long, explosive rants filled with conspiratorial and conservative rhetoric during interviews are known by many (Ihaza, 2023). From his 2005 "George Bush doesn't care about black people" statement on live television, to his very controversial moment at the 2009 VMA's, to his public support of former US President Donald Trump (Rose, 2023), Kanye has always been involved in controversy and has a history of multiple transgressions. Because of his history of outrageous remarks and conservative and conspiratorial speech over the years, we consider his offensive statement about slavery consistent with his past behaviors, able to be perceived as characteristic and central to his identity.

In order to assess the popularity of the celebrities and brands among the consumers, we will use different metrics that adapt to the celebrity or brand in question. Therefore, in the case of Kanye West we will assess his popularity through social media followers. Despite the fact that the rapper has already been banned from Instagram and X previously, as of the time of writing, he accounts for a total of 50.6 million followers in the two platforms, with 18.6 million followers on Instagram and 32 million followers on X. Besides the number of followers, we can also consider the number of tweets collected during the six-month period, which was 263 374 tweets, with the first and last month of collection being the months with most tweets. This is the largest number of tweets in this study by far so, for this and the aforementioned reasons, we can consider that his popularity is very high among the public.

Regarding the existence of apology and reparations attempts, Kanye apologized for his remarks and also for wearing the Donald Trump MAGA hat on a Chicago radio station, three months after the transgression occurred (Rose, 2023). During the emotional interview, the rapper eventually blamed his controversial statement on his bipolar disorder, which he had disclosed just months prior (Izadi, 2018).

Using Leximancer, we generated a concept map that shows the most recurring themes and concepts present in the tweets regarding Kanye West. Leximancer identified twelve themes with relevancies ranging from 2% to 100%. The theme with most hits is the artist's name, "Kanye" (100% relevance), followed by his X username "kanyewest" (60% relevance), "people" (8% relevance), "black"

(6% relevance), “Trump” (7% relevance), “hat” (3% relevance), “album” (9% relevance), “feel” (4% relevance), “Drake” (4% relevance), “Kim” (2% relevance), “Snl” (2% relevance) and “free” (2% relevance).

After analyzing the concept map, four groups were created: the transgression group, the public response group, the work group and the personal life group.

Starting with the transgression group, this group contains one theme, “black”, that is intrinsically connected to the transgression itself. Regarding the theme “black”, Leximancer found nine concepts within that theme, as we can observe in the map. This theme is very connected to the transgression, and it contains both words used by Kanye in his offensive statement where he stated that “slavery was a choice” for the black community. This theme overlaps with the theme “trump” and “Kanye” from the public response group and with theme “Kim” from the personal life group, with some people bringing up Kim Kardashian, Kanye’s now ex-wife to the conversation and even blaming her for his actions.

Some examples of tweets from the transgression group are:

“kanye west really said slavery was a choice omg someone save this man from himself”

“Kanye with the worst take yet “You hear about slavery for 400 years. 400 years?! That sounds like a choice.”

“Kanye just said that in the 400 years of slavery, it was a CHOICE of the black people.... I tried to justify all the other shit he’s done in the past few days but this has gone overboard, kanye you need some help my friend @kanyewest”

“Wait, wait, wait, wait. WAIT! Press Pause. HTFU! Did @kanyewest just say that the enslavement of Black people was our CHOICE?? <https://t.co/16xm84Zw7o> via @TMZ”

The public response group contains eight themes that are related to the public’s response towards Kanye’s transgression, which are: “Kanye”, “kanyewest”, “people”, “Trump”, “hat”, “feel”, “Snl” and “free”.

Regarding the theme “Kanye”, Leximancer found ten concepts within it, and it relates to the public reaction towards the transgression. It is also very related to the public’s response towards Kanye’s support of former United States President, Donald Trump, and to a meeting between the two. This meeting happened in early October of 2018, when Kanye was invited to go to the White House and meet with Trump to discuss prison reform (Cillizza, 2018). The meeting sparked some controversy, and it also brought the topic of the transgression again, with Kanye talking to the then president about

abolishing the 13th Amendment of the United States Constitution, which prohibits slavery (Cillizza, 2018). This also explains the concepts “Donald Trump”, “meeting” and “White House”.

Moreover, the theme “kanyewest” has six concepts within and the artist’s name is written without any spaces because that is his username on the platform X, it is also one of the themes with most hits because people mention Kanye’s username on their tweets very frequently.

The theme “people” contains twelve concepts within, and it is also very related to the public response after the transgression. The concepts within this theme contain some reactionary words used by the public in the discussion about the artist’s transgressions. Furthermore, the theme “Trump” has nine concepts within, and not only relates to the public’s response towards the transgression, but also to Kanye’s support of Donald Trump as we can see clearly with the concepts “Trump” and “support”. This theme also has connections to Kanye’s mental illness history, with people mentioning his disorder while also reacting to his transgressions.

Regarding the theme “hat”, Leximancer found eight concepts within it, and it relates deeply not only to the public’s response towards the main transgression but also other transgressions, in this case, Kanye’s support of Donald Trump. The concept “hat” refers to the Make America Great Again (MAGA) hat that Kanye wore in different occasions in support of the former president. In this theme we also see the concept “Realcandaceo”, which is the username of Candace Owens. She is a conservative political commentator, also a Trump supporter, that accompanied Kanye on the TMZ interview where the main transgression was committed. This concept appears often with people mentioning Candace Owens in their tweets reacting to the transgression. Moreover, the theme “feel” has three concepts within and, in this theme, we can see people discussing Kanye’s relationship and support of Donald Trump, hence the “Realdonaldtrump” concept, that is Trump’s username on X. Additionally, theme “Snl” has two concepts within, and it refers to Saturday Night Live, a late-night comedy program, where Kanye made a guest appearance at the end of August 2018. In this appearance he was wearing the MAGA hat and, after performing, made a speech in support of Donald Trump as the show was coming off air.

Lastly, the theme “free” has only one concept within and it is also very related to the public’s response, with people discussing free speech after Kanye’s offensive remarks at TMZ’s offices.

Some examples of tweets from the public response group are:

“But on the real, Kanye cancelled until he seeks mental help.”

“@Reuters @reuterspictures Kanye may feel like superman with a Maga hat, but it just makes him look like he's off his meds”

"Kanye wearing his MAGA hat is the best joke of tonight. What a fucking fool. #SNLPremiere"

*"@kanyewest so, when you said slavery was a choice, and then showed up at the white house to kiss trump's racist a**, that was you being used? man, you are one privileged dope."*

The work group contains two themes, "album" and "Drake", which are both deeply tied to Kanye's work as an artist.

Regarding the theme "album", Leximancer found three concepts within that theme. This theme relates deeply to Kanye's albums, specifically, it relates to the album *Ye*, which Kanye launched just a month after the original transgression. Moreover, the theme "Drake" contains one concept within. This theme is very connected to Kanye's work life, more specifically to his relationship with other artists, in this case, with Drake. It all started when Kanye produced a song for another artist, where the latter attacked Drake in the lyrics. This started a feud between Kanye and Drake which went on for several years (Saponara, 2024).

Some examples of tweets that illustrate this group are:

"Now time to wait for this Kanye album to drop"

"When you see the same people that 'cancelled' Kanye a few weeks ago, popping up in Wyoming for the album"

"Drake Disses Kanye West 'Yeezy 350' Shoes in his new song & tells women not to wear them around him"

The personal life group contains only one theme, Kim, and it is intrinsically connected to Kanye's personal life. Kim refers to Kim Kardashian, Kanye's now ex-wife. In this theme, users tweet about Kanye's personal life with Kim and there's even people blaming Kanye's actions on Kim.

Some examples of tweets that illustrate this group are:

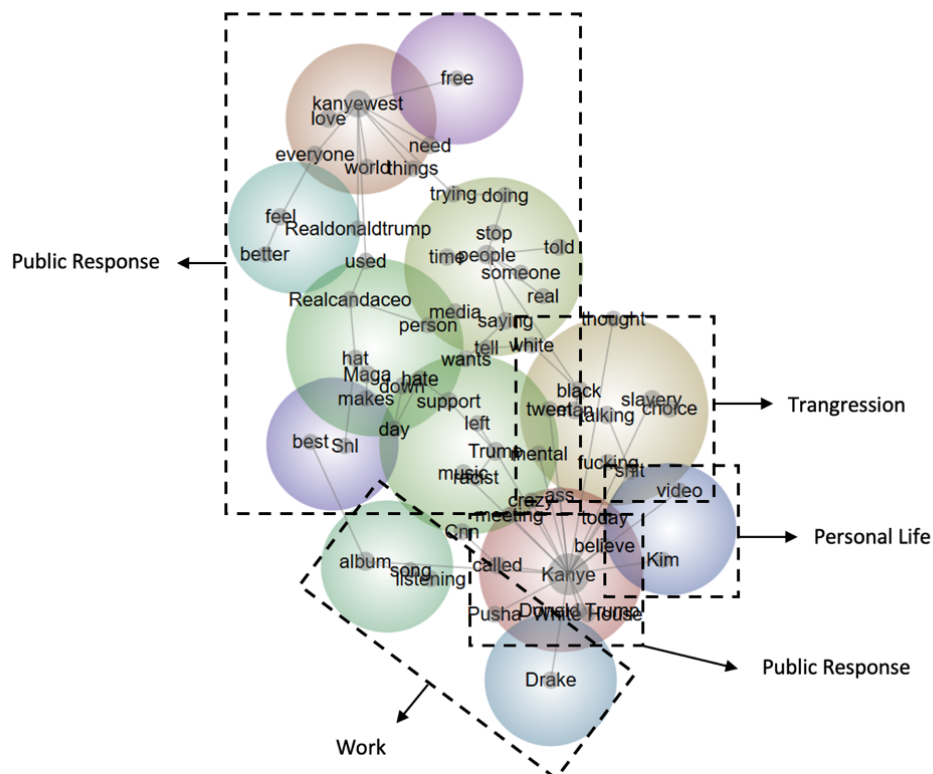
"Okay for real you guys have got to stop blaming Kanye's actions on Kim."

"I'm curious to know if Kim Kardashian agree's with Kanye on slavery being a 'choice'."

"What does Kim feed Kanye abeg... How does he get so much energy to be Politically wrong all the time?"

"That's why Kanye needed to marry black. Kim can't relate to this shit nor set him back on straight"

Figure 6.1 - Kanye West's concept map grouped



In the concept map we have six tags that identify the month of the collection period, labeled “months_m1” which is the first month of the data collection period, until “months_m6” which is the last month of the collection period. The month with the most relevance is the first month (58%), followed by the last month (57%), the second month (35%), the fifth month (27%), the fourth month (20%) and lastly, the third month (14%).

As we can see in the concept map, the transgression topic was very discussed within the first month, with concepts “choice” and “slavery” being the most debated. In opposition, in the second month of collection, the topic most discussed was Kanye’s work, mainly is new album Ye which was launched in the beginning of that month, as previously said.

Although the main transgression kept being discussed throughout all the months of collection, it had a big decrease after the first month not only because of Kanye's album launch, but also because of the other transgressions committed by the artist during the period of data collection. We can see that clearly in the fifth month of collection, which corresponds to September of 2018, where the concepts "Snl" and "Maga" get some emphasis, because of Kanye's transgression on Saturday Night Live, which happened in the last days of August. In addition to that, in the sixth month of collection, which corresponds to October of 2018, concepts like "White House", "Cnn" and "Maga" are more prominent. This is because of yet another transgression, which refers to the White House meeting between Donald Trump and Kanye, that happened in the beginning of that month. Moreover, the topic of transgression also had an increase in the last month of collection, with central concepts like "slavery" and "choice" getting an increase in hits. This can be due to the fact that Kanye brought up this topic once again in the White House meeting, as previously mentioned, when he discussed the abolishing of the 13th amendment, which prohibits slavery.

In the case of Kanye West, it is hard to analyze how long the cancelation effects last because he keeps committing new transgressions, that lead to new cancellation attempts. However, even though he keeps getting cancelled by the public, each cancellation attempt has short lasting impacts, because the public moves on to discussing the next transgression. Furthermore, this cancellation attempts do not affect his sales and plays on streaming platforms. We can see that clearly with the album *Ye* that was launched just a month after the transgression and quickly reached the number one on the Billboard's chart, having 180 million streams and selling 85 thousand copies in its first week in the United States (Sisario, 2018). This is not the only example of how his cancellation attempts do not affect his sales at all, more recently, after his latest transgression in 2022, that involved antisemitic speech and that lead major brands to sever ties with the artist, Kanye launched yet another album, *Vultures 1*, in February of 2024. This album also topped the Billboard's charts in its first week, with 168 million streams and 18 thousand copies sold (Sisario, 2024).

Moreover, it is also possible to assess that Kanye has a very loyal fanbase that keeps supporting the artist transgression after transgression. As mentioned in previous chapters, when presented with the celebrity's transgression, people that are highly attached and committed to a celebrity may attempt to reduce cognitive dissonance by maintaining their support towards the celebrity, instead of experiencing the negative feelings that come associated with it (Karg *et al.*, 2022). Besides that, the constant transgressions have become on brand for Kanye, there is a lot of consistency of transgression, and it is not that unexpected for the public, therefore, although it gives Kanye a temporary increase in public attention, we cannot assess if it has any positive outcomes.

Figure 6.2 - Kanye West's concept map with months tag

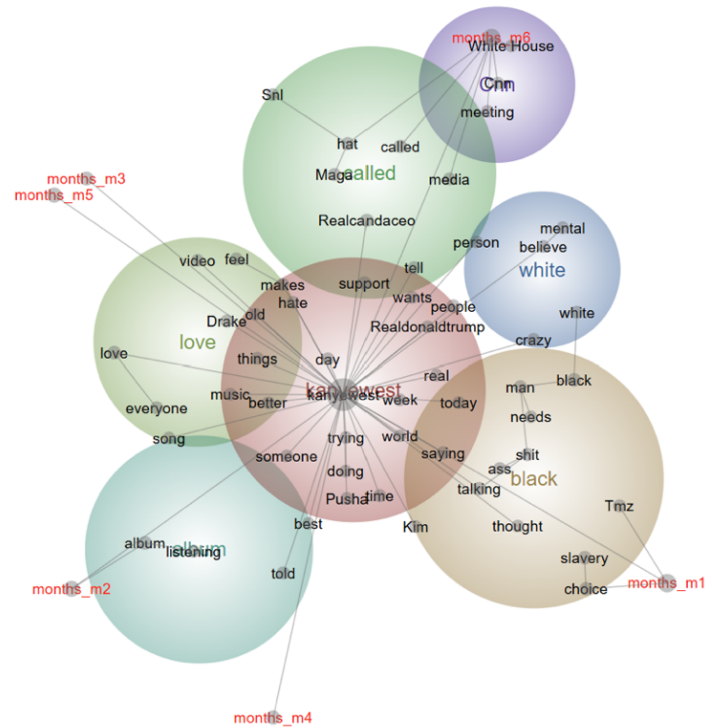
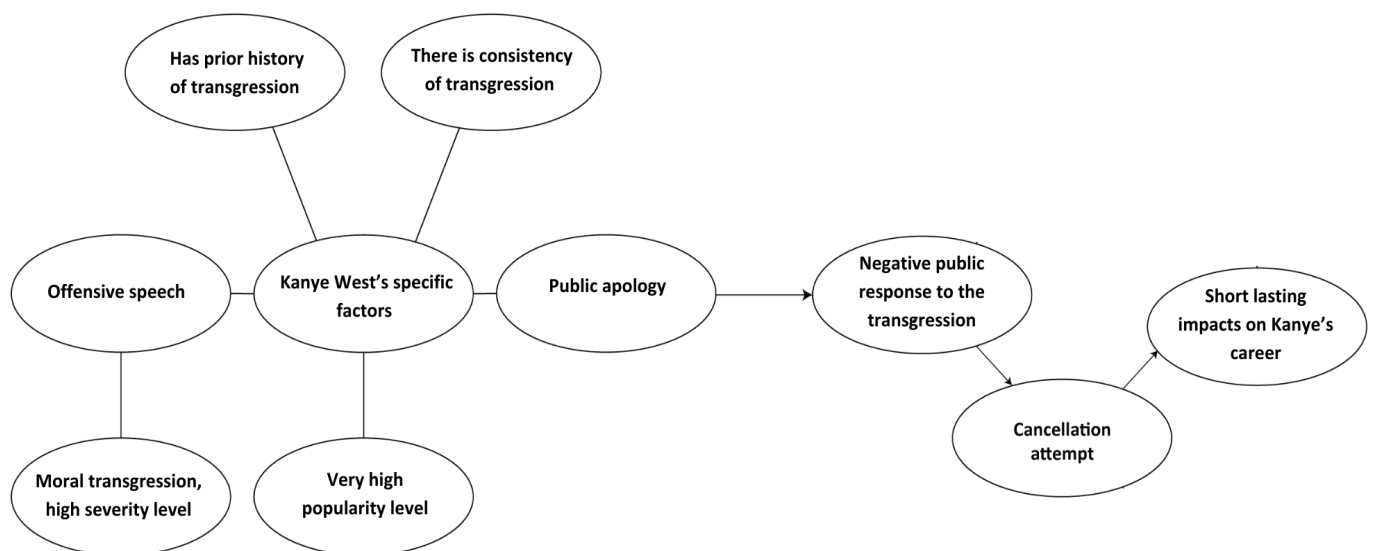


Figure 6.3 – Kanye West's conceptual framework



6.2 J.K. Rowling

Regarding the case of J.K. Rowling, the transgression the author committed was transphobic speech. The issue started in December of 2019, when the author voiced her support for a woman with history of making transphobic comments, and it continued throughout the following years, with her sharing her transphobic views through tweets, on interviews in a lengthy manifesto posted on her website and even on her new podcast *The Witch Trials of J.K. Rowling* (Romano, 2023).

Transphobia is an “irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against transgender people” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), therefore, J.K. Rowling’s transgression is a moral and ideological transgression, with high severity level since it discriminates and compromises the safety of an already marginalized group.

Although this transgression was the first time the author voiced her views about transgender people, she had previously been accused of transphobia for liking transphobic tweets between the years of 2017 and 2018 (Romano, 2023; Aviles, 2019), therefore, we consider this as prior history of transgression. Furthermore, besides the “liking” of tweets in the past, after the main transgression, J.K. Rowling kept voicing her transphobic views publicly, so we consider there is consistency of transgression. Because it wasn’t a one-time only mistake, it is consistent with her past behaviors and can be perceived as characteristic and central to the identity of the individual in question (Matthews & Luebke, 2023).

To assess J.K. Rowling’s popularity among the public we will also consider social media followers. In this case, the author has only one social media account, on X, with 13.9 million followers. Therefore, we can consider that her popularity among the public is quite high. Besides the number of followers, we can also consider the number of tweets collected during the six-month period, which was 54 832 tweets, with the last month of collection being the month with the most tweets, followed by the first month of collection. This is a quite large number of tweets mentioning the author, which can lead to the conclusion that her popularity is high.

Regarding the existence of apology and reparations attempts, as of the time of writing, the author hasn’t issued an apology, on the contrary, she has reinforced her ideological stance and kept sharing her anti-trans views publicly in the years following the main transgression.

The content analysis using Leximancer produced a concept map that shows the most recurring themes and concepts present in the tweets about J.K. Rowling. Leximancer identified twelve themes with relevancies ranging from 5% to 100%. The theme with the most hits is “trans” (100% relevance); followed by “need” (31% relevance); “books” (34% relevance); “potter” (76% relevance); “time” (24% relevance); “transphobic” (45% relevance); “sex” (38% relevance); “children” (15% relevance); “stop”

(10% relevance); “Daniel Radcliffe” (13% relevance); “explain” (8% relevance) and “case” (5% relevance).

After analyzing each theme, three groups were created: the transgression group, the public response group and the work group.

The transgression group contains four themes that are very connected to the transgression itself, which are “trans”, “transphobic”, “sex” and “case”.

Regarding the theme “trans”, Leximancer identified seventeen concepts within that theme, as we can observe in the concept map. This theme is part of the transgression group because it is strongly related to the transgression committed by the author. Moreover, within the theme “transphobic” Leximancer found six concept and, as the previous theme, this theme is also central to the transgression.

Furthermore, the theme “sex” has five concepts inside. This theme is very related to the transgression and the discussions about gender identity and sex issues that came as a consequence of J.K Rowling’s tweets. Lastly, the theme “case” also relates closely to the transgression and to the case of Maya Forstater, which is the woman J.K Rowling voiced her support for in the initial tweets. Maya Forstater is a tax expert that did not have her contract renewed after sharing tweets with gender-critical views, she lost the original case against her employee, appealed, and won two years later (BBC, 2023).

Some tweets from this group:

“@jk_rowling okay, wow. it's very upsetting and disappointing to see you supporting transphobia, but at least this time you were very clear about it.”

*“J.K Rowling just tweeted in support of a woman who *lost her case* arguing for the right to continue abusing trans people as and when under freedom of religion TLDR: A) JKR is a T*rf B) abusing trans people is not protected as a religious or philosophical practice.”*

“Trans women are women. Trans men are men. Non-binary people are non-binary. CC: JK Rowling”

The public response group contains five themes that are related to the public’s response to J.K Rowling’s transgression, which are “need”, “time”, “stop”, “Daniel Radcliffe”, and “explain”.

Regarding the theme “need”, Leximancer identified nine concepts. This theme is very related to the public’s response after the transgression and it is the first time in the concept map where we see the word “Terf”, which means trans-exclusionary radical feminist (Merriam-Webster, n.d), that was what the public was calling J.K Rowling after she shared her transphobic views. Moreover, within the

theme “time”, Leximancer identified eight concepts. As we can see in the concept map, this theme has a lot of reactionary words, that show the public reaction towards J.K Rowling’s transgression, while also mentioning her work and profession.

Furthermore, the theme “stop” has four concepts associated with it, it’s also very related to the public response against the author and it includes the concept “happy”, that displays frequently with people tweeting about Pride Month and against J.K Rowling’s views on transgender people. Lastly, the theme “Daniel Radcliffe” only shares boundaries with the themes “transphobic” and “case”, from the transgression group. Daniel Radcliffe is the actor that plays Harry Potter in the movies based on J.K Rowling’s books and, in the beginning of June 2020, the actor published an open letter speaking out against J.K. Rowling’s transphobic views (Sharf, 2022). Lastly, the theme “explain” is also connected to the public response, with people reacting to the author’s transgression, while also mentioning her lifelong work. This can also explain why this theme only overlaps with the theme “children”, that is part of the work group.

Some tweets that illustrate this group:

“@jk_rowling How does someone who touched a generation, who is in a position to know BETTER, get it so wrong? You could be a beacon of light to a better world and instead doubled down on the kind of petty intolerance that GETS PEOPLE KILLED JUST FOR BEING”

“@jk_rowling Fucking TERF... Watching you be transphobic hurts because I adored your books as a kid. It's such a shame you're like this.”

“Really wish JK Rowling would stop tweeting, or at least LEARN something. Anyway Trans Rights and happy #PrideMonth “

“JK Rowling should just stop tweeting.”

In the last group, the work group, we have three themes which are all related to J.K Rowling’s work as an author. These themes are “books”, “potter” and “children”.

The theme “books” has eight concepts within, and it is mostly very related to the author’s work. In this theme we can also see that, at times, the public demonstrates love for her books while also reacting to the transgression, in order to show their disappointment with the author. That can also explain the overlaps with themes “time” and “transphobic”. Moreover, the theme “potter” has four concepts associated with it and it is clearly very connected to the author’s most known work, which is

the Harry Potter series. Lastly, the theme “children” has five concepts within, and it relates heavily to J.K Rowling’s work for children.

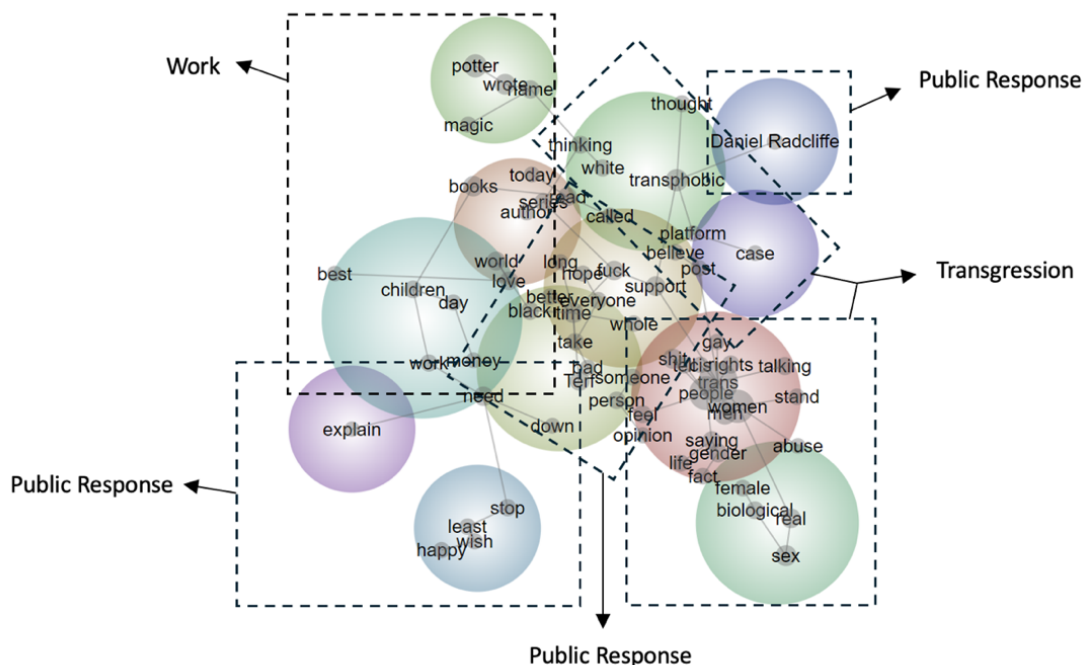
Some tweets that better illustrate this group:

"Deeply disappointed in @jk_rowling As a proud cousin to a beautiful trans man who sought inspiration from your books when he was first coming to terms with who he is, I simply can not take these sort of things silently. Check your privilege immediately!"

"I knew jk rowling was trash but it still hurts in my heart to know that she created a whole magical world that so many children took refuge in, and for lgbtq children the person who created that escape for them would not welcome them in their refuge because of who they are"

"The best thing on Twitter in recent days? In, what had been a difficult 2020 for many, @jk_rowling giving glowing praise to many children for their illustrations of #TheIckabog."

Figure 6.4 – J.K. Rowling's concept map grouped



In the concept map we have six tags that identify the month of the collection period, labeled “months_m1” which is the first month of the data collection period, until “months_m6” which is the last month of the collection period. The month with the most relevance is the last month (100%), followed by the first month (27%), the fifth month (11%), the fourth month (11%), the second month (3%) and lastly, the third month (3%).

As we can see, in the case of J.K Rowling, most of the themes were talked about during the whole six months, with the exception of “Daniel Radcliffe” that only starts being talked about in the fourth month of the collection period, and it is highly talked about in the sixth month, which goes from 19th of May until 18th of June. As previously mentioned, Daniel is the actor that plays Harry Potter in the movie series and, in the beginning of June 2020, the actor published an open letter speaking out against J.K. Rowling’s transphobic views (Sharf, 2022).

Additionally, we can also observe that the conversation about the transgression has not only lasted the six months, but also increased in the last month, with the concept “Terf” having a 71% likelihood in that month and the concept “transphobic” with a 74% likelihood. This can relate to the non-existence of apology and reparations attempts, instead the author kept reinforcing her ideological stance and kept sharing her trans views. This led to the public response, and consequently to the cancellation attempt that, in this case, we can observe had long lasting impacts on her reputation online. However, although the lasting impacts on reputation that still pursue J.K. Rowling to this day, the impact of the cancellation attempt on the author’s sales was short lasting. In June 2020, just six months after the initial transgression, when the overall sales in print books rose in the United States, J.K Rowling’s sales had a minimum increase that wasn’t consistent with her sales for the rest of the year (Vary, 2020). This didn’t last long with reports of her sales rising 35% in the first half of 2022 alone (Warrington, 2022).

Figure 6.5 – J.K. Rowling's concept map with months tag

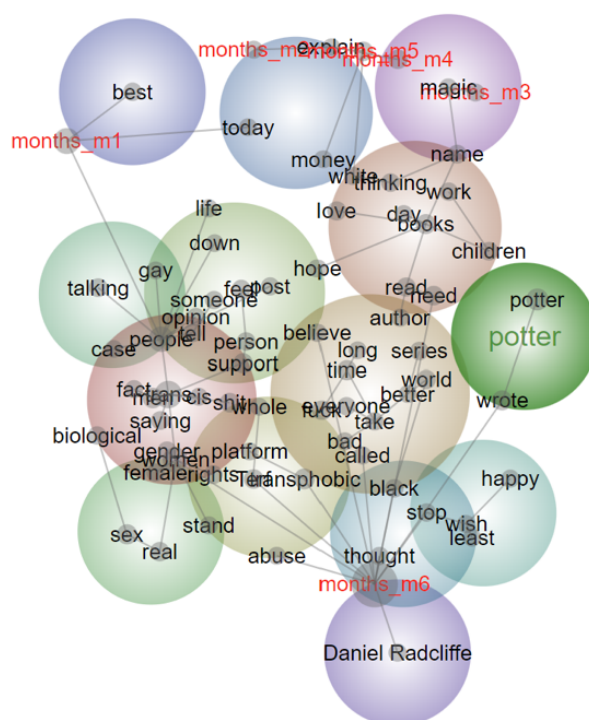
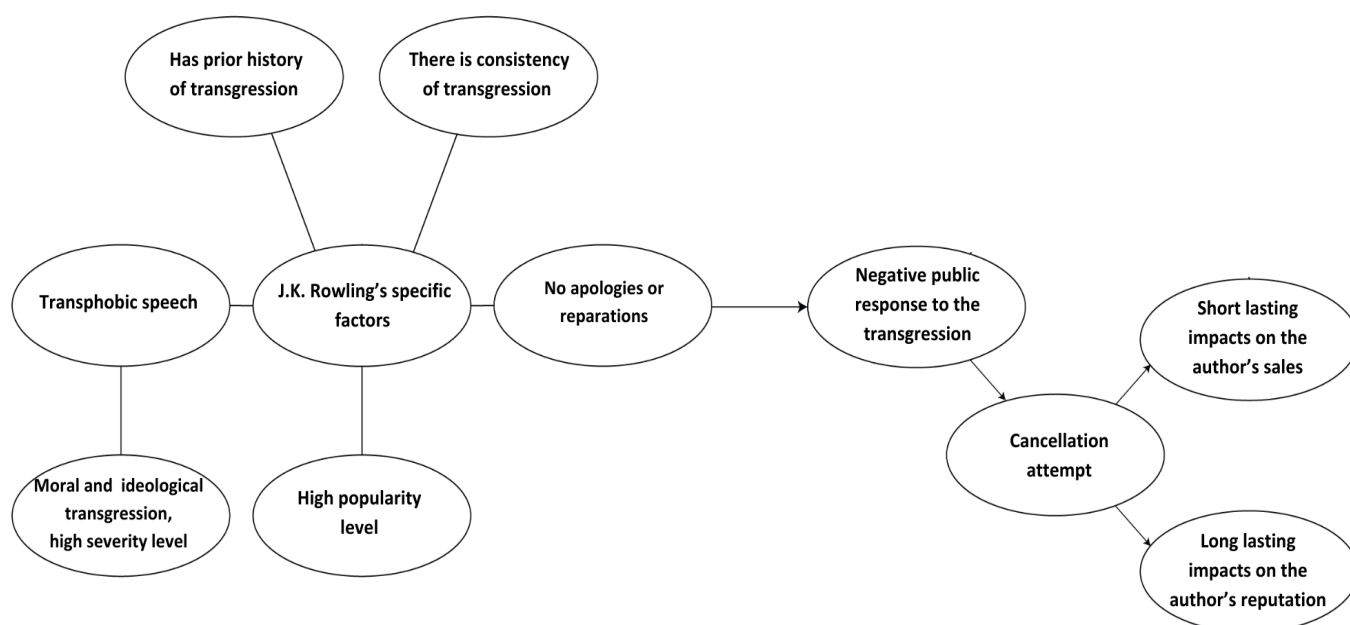


Figure 6.6 – J.K. Rowling's conceptual framework



6.3 H&M

Regarding the case of H&M, the brand's transgression was offensive advertisement. The brand released an ad that featured a black child wearing a sweatshirt with the phrase "coolest monkey in the jungle" written on its front (West, 2018). H&M was heavily condemned by the public, who accused the brand of racism.

This transgression is a racial transgression of high severity level since it offends and targets people based on race. As previously mentioned, this isn't the only transgression of the brand. H&M has been involved in multiple controversies over the years, such as: cultural appropriation in 2013, racial insensitivity regarding H&M South Africa in 2015, clothing waste, bad conditions and wages regarding H&M factories in Cambodia and Bangladesh, greenwashing, allegations of labor abuse at factories in Myanmar, and so on (West, 2018; Doherty and Toh, 2023). Therefore, we can consider that H&M has, in fact, a prior history of transgression, and that the transgression is consistent with past behaviors of the brand.

Regarding the popularity of H&M, we are going to assess it by considering the followers of the brands' social media profiles. At the time of writing, H&M has 7.7 million followers on X, 38.4 million followers on Instagram, and almost 429 thousand followers on Tik Tok. This sums up to around 46.5 million followers in total. Besides those metrics, we can also consider the number of tweets collected in the six-month period of data collection in order to assess the brand's popularity. We collected a total of 25 465 tweets, with the first and last month of collection being the months with the highest number of tweets respectively. Although the number of tweets collected is the smallest in this study, H&M still has a pretty big following on social media, as previously mentioned, so we can consider that the brand's popularity is high.

Following the incident, H&M took several actions to try to repair the damage, such as issuing a public apology and hiring a diversity leader (West, 2018).

The content analysis using Leximancer produced a concept map that shows the most recurring themes and concepts present in the tweets about H&M. Leximancer identified eight themes with relevancies ranging from 1% to 100%. The theme with the most hits is "black" (7% relevance); followed by "H&m" (100% relevance); "racist" (11% relevance); "clothes" (6% relevance); "need" (8% relevance); "playing" (4% relevance); "today" (5% relevance) and "work" (1% relevance).

After carefully analyzing each theme, three groups were created: the transgression group, the public response group and the brand group.

The transgression group contains only one theme, "black" that relates deeply to the transgression itself. Regarding this theme, Leximancer found fifteen concepts within it, that are all intrinsically connected to the transgression committed by the brand. The concepts inside the theme clearly

describe the advertisement itself, that is the main transgression, with words such as “ad”, “black”, “child”, “boy”, “wearing”, “hoodie” appearing. Moreover, the words on the hoodie the black boy was wearing in the advertisement, “coolest monkey in the jungle” also appear as concepts. This theme overlaps with two other themes from the public response group.

Some tweets from this group:

“H&M is canceled. No company will get my black ass dollars in 2018 and beyond who can’t respect my race.”

“So the black kid gets to wear the H&M sweater with “Coolest monkey in the jungle” and the white kid with “Survival expert”...”

“This hoodie by H&M is unacceptable. <https://t.co/P5q2EBZPRy> I need answers H&M <https://t.co/CJtOk3wOk2>”

“Who approved this!? Where is his mom, did she bump her head!? #notcool #h&m #hm #disgusted <https://t.co/Ya0Wx8qdRt>”

The public response group contains five themes that are related and display the public’s response towards H&M’s transgression. These themes are: “H&M”, “racist”, “clothes”, “today” and “work”.

Regarding the theme “H&m”, Leximancer found ten concepts within that theme. It relates deeply to the public’s response to the brand’s transgression, and it even contains some reactionary words used by the public to express their dissatisfaction with H&M, such as “boycott” and “mad”. This theme overlaps with themes from every group. Moreover, the theme “racist” only contains three concepts and it is very connected to the public’s response. The concept “racist” is a central concept in this transgression, it is a reactionary word used by the public towards H&M following the transgression, which was indeed a racial transgression. This theme also contains two other concepts “shopping” and “ass”, with users calling out other X users for shopping at the brand after the transgression.

Furthermore, the theme “clothes” contains four concepts within, and it also displays the public’s reaction towards the transgression. This theme contains a central concept to the transgression, “racism”, and other concepts such as “clothes”, “stores” and “fashion”, with users using these concepts to react to the fashion brand’s transgression. Moreover, the concept “stores” also refers the South African stores H&M had to close temporarily, just a few days after the transgression, because of protests that left several stores damaged (Fortin, 2018).

The theme “today” contains just one concept, and it is more prominent around the time of transgression, with users calling for the cancellation of the brand and discussing the transgression and the brand itself on the day it happened and the following days. Finally, the theme “work” has one concept within, and it relates to the public’s response following the transgression. This theme also refers to artist The Weeknd cutting ties with H&M and refusing to work with the brand following the offensive advertisement.

Some tweets that illustrate this group:

“The H&M “mistake” was purposeful. You big platforms are giving them free advertising. There's NO WAY these companies keep making racist ads are mistakes.”

“The Weeknd ends his partnership with H&M over controversial photo”

“#H&M I will never buy your clothes or set in your store again. #Pitiful #racist #insane”

*“Wake up guys!! Translation for non Swedish speakers; if you’re going to boycott h&m you should also boycott the other stores h&m owns; all these stores are part of the h&m group.
<https://t.co/xWF16DqNkD>”*

The brand group contains two themes, and it relates to the conversation about the brand itself, their products and stores. These themes are: “need” and “playing”.

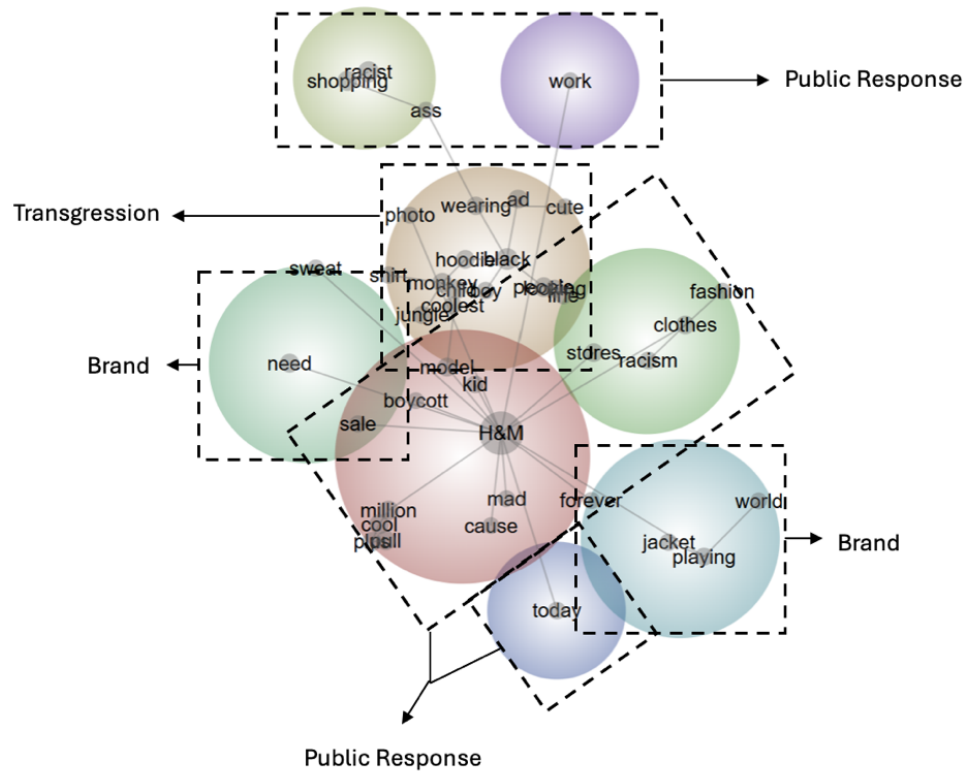
Regarding the theme “need”, Leximancer found three concepts within that theme, and it relates deeply to the conversation about the brand itself. This theme has concepts such as “need”, “sale” and “sweat” which refer to the brand’s products, sales, the users’ needs for those products and so on. Furthermore, the theme “playing” has four concepts within and it is also connected to the conversation around the brand itself, its products and stores. The theme “playing” also appears frequently with fans of South Korean boy band Exo talking about their songs being played on H&M stores around the globe. Some tweets that better illustrate this group:

“Are we still boycotting H&M? Because I need some new jeans”

“H&M have a nice lil winter sale I need some winter clothes”

“I just entered h&m playing exo oh my god I'm so proud right now”

Figure 6.7 – H&M's concept map grouped



In the concept map we have six tags that identify the month of the collection period, labeled “months_m1” which is the first month of the data collection period, until “months_m6” which is the last month of the collection period. The month with the most relevance is the first month of data collection (100%), followed by the last month (11%), the fourth month (10%), the third month (7%), the fifth month (6%) and lastly the second month (5%).

In the case of H&M, the topic of transgression was discussed heavily on the first month, the month of the transgression, and then lowered significantly in the following months. In the first month concepts like “racist”, “racism”, “child” and other concepts intrinsically related to the transgression had great prominence, with likelihoods over 90%, which then dropped significantly in the second month of collection and kept dropping until the last month of collection. Therefore, we can observe that the discussion around the transgression started to fade, and, in the sixth month of collection, it was almost nonexistent, there was very little discussion about it. Besides the short-lasting impacts on reputation, we can also assess that there was no impact on the brand’s sales. According to H&M’s annual report of that year, their sales increased in comparison to the prior year and so did their store number.

Figure 6.8 – H&M's concept map with months tag

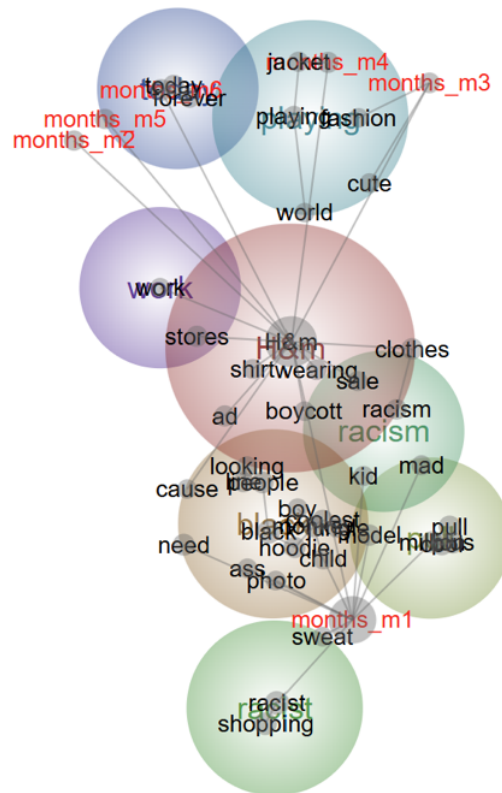
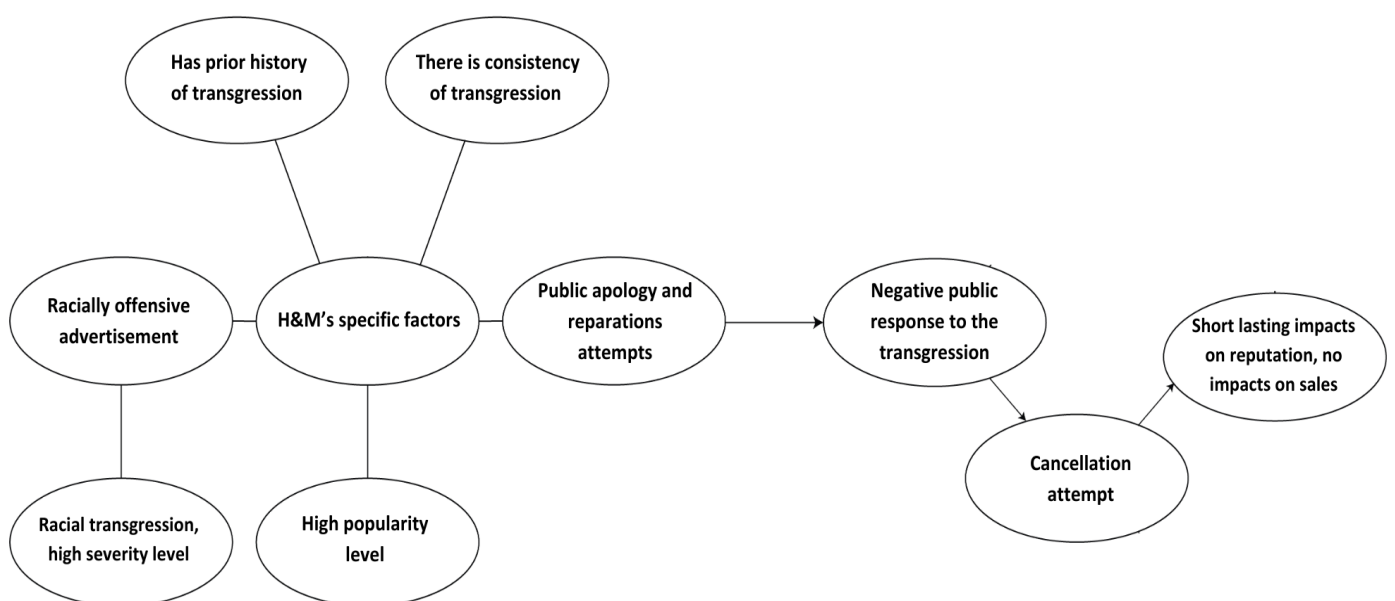


Figure 6.9 – H&M's conceptual framework



6.4 Goya

In the case of Goya, the transgression was committed by its CEO, in 2020, when he praised former United States President, Donald Trump, during a White House meeting. Goya is a Latin food brand therefore, the Latin community took to X to express their disappointment with the CEO of the brand because of Trump's previous offenses to Latin immigrants and citizens, resulting in a boycott movement (Liaukonytė et al., 2022).

This transgression can be considered a relational transgression (Miczo *et al.*, 2018) because the CEO's actions can be perceived as a betrayal to the relationship with Goya's key customer base, the Latin community, and to the implicit trust that the brand had cultivated with these customers for years. The severity of this transgression is quite difficult to classify because it is very subjective, so we will classify it as medium severity, taking into consideration the transgressions presented previously and their severity level. Goya doesn't have a prior history of transgression therefore, there is also no consistency of transgression.

Regarding the popularity of the brand among the public, we will consider the number of followers of Goya's social media profiles. At the time of writing, the brand has an official Instagram profile and an X profile, with 150 thousand followers and 57 thousand followers respectively. This sums up to a total of 207 thousand followers. Besides the number of followers, we can also consider the number of tweets collected in the six-month period of data collection in order to assess the brand's popularity. We collected a total of 34 657 tweets about the brand, with the majority of tweets, 30 590, being from the first month of collection. Although this is not the smallest number of tweets in the study, most of them belong to the first month, so we can see that the brand wasn't talked about much during the five other months of collection. Taking this into account, and the number of followers, we can conclude that Goya's popularity is quite low.

Goya's CEO, Robert Unanue, appeared on Fox News the week after the transgression and defended his remarks, stating that he was not going to apologize for his comments about President Donald Trump (Taylor, 2020).

The content analysis using Leximancer produced a concept map that shows the most recurring themes and concepts present in the tweets about Goya. Leximancer identified eleven themes with relevancies ranging from 1% to 100%. The theme with the most hits is "Goya" (100% relevance), followed by "products" (21% relevance), "Goyafoods" (33% relevance), "boycott" (19% relevance), "CEO" (13% relevance), "beans" (17% relevance), "Ivankatrump" (6% relevance), "love" (3% relevance), "speech" (3% relevance), "CNN" (2% relevance) and "Goya Beans" (1% relevance).

After carefully analyzing each theme, two groups were created: the transgression group and the public response group. In this case, there is no brand related group, since the public only mentions the brand and the products in response to the transgression.

The transgression group contains two themes, “Goyafoods” and “CEO”, that are intrinsically related to the transgression itself.

Regarding the theme “Goyafoods”, Leximancer found five concepts within it, and it is very related to the transgression. The name of the brand is written without any spaces because it is the brand’s username on X, which appears often with people mentioning the brand in the discussion about the transgression. The concepts within this theme are very connected to the transgression, which explains concepts like “President”, “Trump” and “support”. This theme only overlaps with theme “CEO” from the same group, and it shares a border with theme “boycott” from the public response group.

Moreover, the theme “CEO” has ten concepts within, and it is also intrinsically connected to the transgression. We can observe this in concepts such as “CEO”, “praising”, “President Trump”, which are almost descriptive of the transgression itself. In this theme we can also see concepts such as “Juliancastro” and “Igorvolsy”, which are the names of a former democratic presidential candidate and an author respectively. Both these people shared their opinions on the transgression, boycotting Goya and advising their followers to think before they shop for the brand’s products (McClay, 2020).

Some tweets that illustrate this group are:

“The CEO of @GoyaFoods is at a White House event saying we're "blessed to have a leader" like Trump. Make your shopping decisions accordingly.”

“No more @GoyaFoods in our house.”

“@GoyaFoods You guys! Your CEO just flushed your entire, loyal market, right down the toilet.”

“I can live without Adobo if #GOYA's CEO thinks 134,000 deaths from Covid makes a "blessed leader”. ”

The public response group contains nine themes, “Goya”, “products”, “boycott”, “beans”, “Ivankatrump”, “love”, “speech”, “CNN” and “Goya Beans”, that are intrinsically related to the public response towards the transgression.

Regarding the theme “Goya”, Leximancer found seven concepts within it that are very related to the public’s response to the transgression. In this theme we can see the concept “BUYGOYA”, which

was a counter movement that started getting attention amongst Trump supporters in order to oppose to the boycott movement happening against the brand (Liaukonytė et al., 2022). Moreover, the theme “products” has twelve concepts within it that are connected to the public response. In this theme we can see users discussing and talking about the brand’s products in light of the transgression. We can see both sides of the discussion, with users boycotting the brand’s products because of the transgression and other users, Trump supporters, encouraging people to buy the products.

The theme “boycott” has thirteen concepts within it, and it is intrinsically related to the public response towards the transgression. In this theme we can see some reactionary concepts such as “boycott” and “cancel”, with users encouraging others to boycott and cancel the brand following the transgression. It’s also the first time we see the concept “Aoc”, which stands for Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a United States congresswoman, that reacted to the transgression on X, tweeting about finding alternatives for a signature Goya product (Andrew & Ebrahimji, 2020). Still in this theme, we can also observe concepts such as “Hispanic”, “community”, “racist”, and so on, with users calling Donald Trump a racist and discussing his impact on the Hispanic community and also the brand’s impact on the same community.

The theme “beans” has eleven concepts within it, and it is also very connected to the public response following the transgression. In this theme we can observe concepts such as “black”, “beans”, “rice” and “cans”, with people mentioning these products while also reacting negatively or positively to the transgression. We can also see the concept “tedcruz”, which is a senator from Texas, that, in light of the transgression, tweeted in support of Goya, claiming that the Democrats were trying to suppress free speech and cancel the Hispanic culture (Brewster, 2020). Furthermore, the theme “Ivankatrump” has four concepts within, and it is very connected to the public’s response as well. Ivanka Trump is Donald Trump’s daughter, who posed for photos with her dad and Goya products, just a few days after the transgression, in order to encourage their supporters to buy the brands’ products (Liaukonytė et al., 2022).

The theme “love” has seven concepts within it, and it relates to the public response to the transgression. In this theme, users discuss their love for Goya products while reacting to the transgression, showing that the brand has disappointed them and, sometimes, even urging others to join the boycott movement. This theme overlaps with theme “Goyafoods” from the transgression group. Moreover, the theme “speech” is also very related to the public response to the transgression, and it contains two concepts inside. In this theme we have the opposite sides, with people reacting to the speech made by Goya’s CEO, Robert Unanue, in support of Donald Trump and, on the other hand, people discussing free speech and opposing to the boycott.

Regarding the theme “CNN”, Leximancer found only two concepts inside this theme, and it relates deeply to the public response to the transgression. In this theme we can see the concept “CNN” which

is a news channel that also reported the transgression, with people mentioning CNN's X account and responding to the news channel both in support of the boycott or opposing to it. Finally, the theme "Goya Beans" has only one concept within and its show's users reacting to the transgression committed by the brand while also mentioning one of their most popular products, the beans. There are also users sharing alternatives for this product in light of the boycott.

Some tweets that illustrate this group:

"Goodbye #Goya Beans. Saddest day of my life. #Goyaway"

"#BoycottGoyaFoods @GoyaFoods We vote with our dollars. You will never see another of mine...and I loved your products."

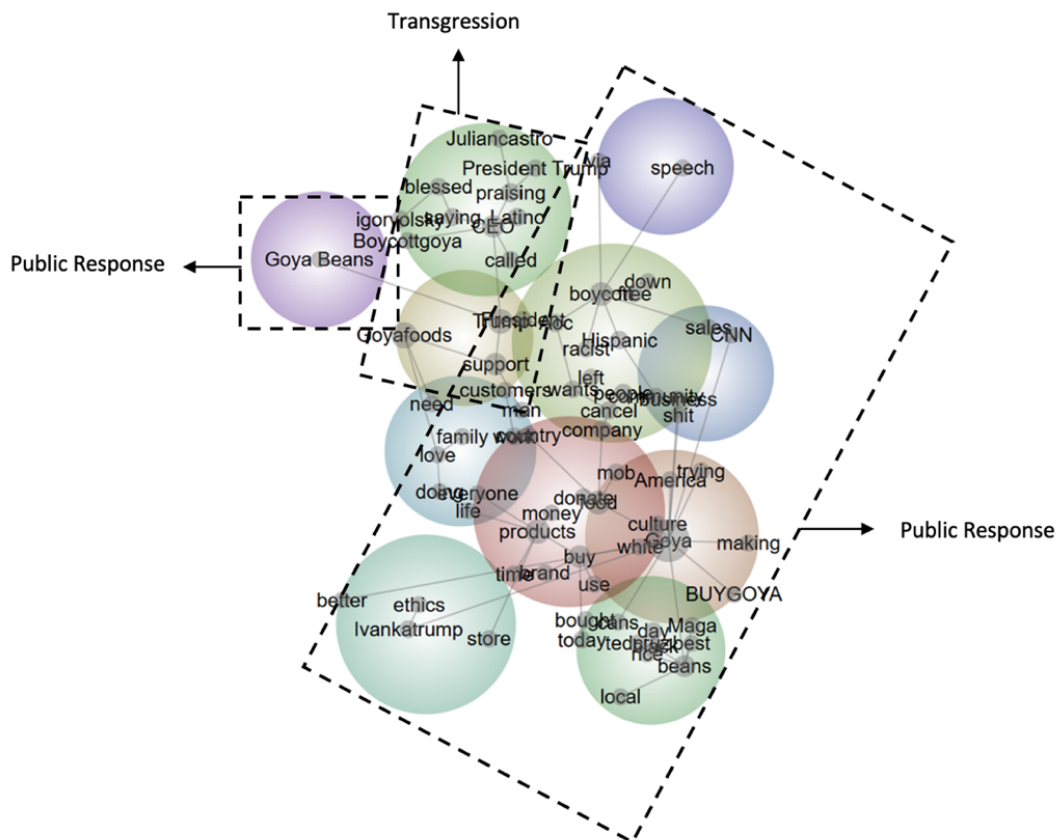
"Goya Foods has just been CANCELLED!!! #GoyaCancelled"

"@igorvolsky @GoyaFoods I don't believe I've ever purchased a Goya product before, but I will starting today. I admire courage and the CEO of Goya certainly exhibited his by boldly exercising his First Amendment Right. #BuyGoya"

"@JulianCastro @GoyaFoods To counter I plan on buying twice as much from Goya Foods. Free speech is free speech!!!"

"@GoyaFoods @QueensBP2020 That speech supporting a draft dodging, adulterous, lying, child caging, murderous traitor was disgusting! You've received the last penny from me you will EVER see You can Join Trump in Hell #BoycottGoya #BoycottGoyaFoods"

Figure 6.10 – Goya's concept map grouped



In the concept map we have six tags that identify the month of the collection period, labeled “months_m1” which is the first month of the data collection period, until “months_m6” which is the last month of the collection period. The month with the most relevance is the first month of data collection (100%), followed by the second month (5%), the fifth month (3%) and the third month, fourth month and sixth month (3%).

In the case of Goya, the topic of transgression was heavily discussed during the first month of collection and significantly decreased in the following months. In the first month of transgression, concepts intrinsically related to the transgression like “BUYGOYA” and “Boycottgoya”, had a big prominence, with likelihoods of 100% and 99% respectively. This quickly changes in the second month, where the discussion is minimum, and the topics of transgression are almost not mentioned. It keeps on decreasing the following months until it is almost nonexistent. Therefore, we can observe that there were no long-lasting impacts on the brands’ reputation.

Besides the short-lasting impacts on reputation, there were no negative impacts on sales, on the contrary, sales increased by 22% with the counter movement and the endorsement of the United States President at that time, Donald Trump (Liaukonytė et al., 2022). This effect was temporary, lasting only

6.5 Discussion

After a careful analysis of the results presented in this chapter, we can answer the three research questions that motivated this study. Regarding RQ1, *how lasting are cancel culture's impacts on brands and celebrities' careers?* The results of this study suggest that the impacts on reputation can be longer lasting, especially for celebrities but, the overall impacts and success of the cancellation attempts are short lived.

There's a lot of factors that play into how lasting the impacts of the cancellation attempt are, as we've seen previously in the literature and the conceptual framework, factors such as the type and severity of the transgression, the brand or celebrity's prior history of transgression, the consistency of transgression, the popularity of the celebrity or brand in question and, the existence of an apology and attempts to repair the damage.

Regarding the celebrities, there were long-lasting impacts on reputation for both, because of some of the factors mentioned. In the case of Kanye West, the constant new transgressions and the consistency of transgression have become on brand for the artist, which in turn makes the public more used to it and the cancellation attempt loses power. His popularity is also a factor in this because Kanye has a very high popularity and a very loyal fanbase that keeps supporting him transgression after transgression. In the case of J.K. Rowling, the impacts on her reputation were long lasting because she kept reinforcing her controversial ideological stance and never issued any apology or tried to repair the damage. However, in both of these cases there was little to no impacts on the way these celebrities make a living. Even in a more extreme case as the case of Kanye West, where the impacts have been more extensive in the last few years, with brands even ending their relationship with the artist, the impacts on the sales of his albums are little to none. These findings are consistent with the existing literature where it highlights that the negative impacts cancel culture has on people are exaggerated and that these celebrities hardly ever faced any serious consequences to their careers (Ng, 2020; Lewis & Christin, 2022).

Regarding the brands, we can state that the impacts on reputation were short lived in both cases, the discussion around the transgression didn't last the whole six months of data collection, it was very prominent on the first month of collection and then it started decreasing till it was almost non-existent. Besides the short-lasting impacts on reputation, there were no financial impacts for any of the brands.

Furthermore, in the case of Goya, not only there were no negative impacts on sales but, on the contrary, sales increased temporarily because of the counter movement led by Donald Trump and his supporters. This takes us to RQ2, *what are the potential positive outcomes of cancellation for brands and celebrities?* Regarding this research question, the findings of this study are consistent with previous

literature that states the existence of positive outcomes following the cancellation attempt (Lewis & Christin, 2022; Karg *et al.*, 2022)

There was only one case in this study that had a potential positive outcome after the cancellation attempt, which was an increase in sales, that was provoked by the big increase in brand awareness that the brand got from the endorsement of the then sitting president. In the other cases present in this study we can also observe that, although there were no proven positive outcomes, there was an increase in awareness subsequent to the discussion online. Furthermore, the results suggest that a potential positive outcome for the cancellation attempt can be an increase in sales, as we've seen in the case of Goya, however this positive outcome is very rooted in the increase in awareness that comes from the cancellation attempt. Therefore, although the increase in awareness itself is hard to be considered a potential positive outcome because it is very difficult to measure without any action from the consumers, it is a factor that can lead to positive outcomes, such as an increase in sales.

Regarding RQ3, *how do the outcomes of cancel culture differ for brands and celebrities?* the results suggest that brands have fewer negative outcomes than celebrities and the outcomes for brands are short lived when compared to celebrities' outcomes. In the case of celebrities, we observed longer lasting impacts on reputation for both cases, with the discussion about the transgression lasting the whole six months of the data collection period. Additionally, the public response towards the transgression also involves the celebrities' private life and their work, with people discussing these topics alongside the transgression. On the other hand, in the case of brands, we observed that the discussion was very strong in the first month of the data collection period, and then it decreases significantly in the following months, being almost non-existent at the end of the data collection period. The impacts on brands' reputations are short-lasting, which helps the existence of positive outcomes, that were not possible in the celebrity cases analyzed.

Besides that, regarding the financial impacts, the results showed that there were no significant impacts financially for both brands and celebrities. Therefore, the cancellation attempts were not very successful, since the aim is to cause permanent damage to the cancellation target, which was not the case in the cases analyzed in this study.

This difference in the outcomes for brands and celebrities that were analyzed in the results are consistent with previous literature that states that consumers are less likely to succeed when they are cancelling brands in comparison to cancelling celebrities. This is because brands are less vulnerable than celebrities, the complete delegitimization of a powerful and established corporate brand is very unlikely. Whilst in the case of celebrities, it is easier for consumers to invalidate these public figures by removing all their support and encouraging others to do the same (Demsar *et al.*, 2022).

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study's findings represent potentially valuable theoretical contributions to the existing literature about the topic of cancel culture. They provide a deeper understanding about cancel culture's impacts on both brands and celebrities' careers.

Cancel culture is both a term and a phenomenon that has been rising in the last few years, it has become a topic of discussion, and it poses as a threat to both celebrities and brands' careers. The literature on this topic is still in its early stages, but it is increasingly important to have a deeper understanding about how this phenomenon can impact these corporations and entities, to be prepared for future cancellations. Therefore, this dissertation fulfilled its intent by focusing deeply on the impacts this phenomenon has on brands and celebrities and analyzing the differences in the impacts for both subjects, which contributed to the knowledge in this field, as there is a lack of research focused solely on the impacts of cancel culture.

Previous studies on this topic have discussed some of the potential impacts of cancel culture (Ng, 2020; Saldanha *et al.*, 2022; Lewis & Christin, 2022; Karg *et al.*, 2022), but there is still a lot of confusion around the outcomes of this phenomenon and how durable they are. Additionally, this study further extends previous' findings about the potential positive outcomes that can come from cancel culture (Saldanha *et al.*, 2022).

Moreover, the findings of this study contribute to the literature on cancel culture by showing that the complete delegitimization of the brands and celebrities is unlikely, although reputation impacts may be longer lasting, financial impacts are short lasting, and the brand awareness that comes from the cancellation attempt can lead to positive outcomes for the cancellation targets. In addition, the results further extend previous findings (Demsar *et al.*, 2022), suggesting that celebrities are more vulnerable to cancellation attempts and that both the discussion about the topic and the reputation impacts are longer lasting when compared to brands.

Furthermore, this study uses data from the social media platform, X, a source chosen by other researchers on the existing literature about cancel culture (e.g. Bouvier, 2020; Bouvier & Machin, 2021; Demsar *et al.*, 2023; Reyes Fournier *et al.*, 2023), further exploring the use of this platform as a data source in cancel culture studies. Cancel culture is very prominent in this platform, which has proven to be invaluable for this study, providing us with a deeper understanding in how this phenomenon unfolds.

7.2 Managerial Contributions

This study reveals some practical and managerial contributions for corporations and both brand and celebrity managers. By gaining deeper understanding about the impacts of cancel culture, managers can better comprehend the phenomenon and how it can affect the brands or celebrities they represent, in order to be able to mitigate the worst outcomes of this phenomenon and restore their image.

Through a qualitative content analysis using data from X, this study was able to shed light on cancel culture's impacts for brands and celebrities. The findings showed that the cancellation attempt lasts longer when the cancellation target is a celebrity rather than a corporation. Furthermore, the financial impacts of cancel culture are short lasting, although the reputation impacts can be longer lasting for celebrities. These findings are extremely important for managers, because it shows that the image repair strategies employed for celebrities shouldn't be the same for brands in the case of a cancellation attempt. Although complete delegitimization is unlikely in both cases, managers should attempt to repair the damage by considering the factors that lead to the cancellation attempt, both present in the brand or celebrity or in the transgression itself. In addition, managers should also consider the potential positive results that can come from the increase in brand awareness, especially in the cases of brands, and take that factor into account in their repair strategy.

In summary, the findings of this study can help managers be more prepared for future cancellation attempts, it can enable managers to craft a successful image repair strategy for the cancellation target, be able to mitigate the negative impacts and reach positive outcomes.

7.1 Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

Although this study was able to contribute to the literature on cancel culture, and more specifically to the literature about the impacts of this phenomenon, some limitations were identified throughout the process that can serve as a foundation for future research.

For this study secondary data from X was used in order to analyze the discussion about the cancellation attempts for the brands and celebrities chosen. Although X is a central platform for cancel culture, a platform where the discussion unfolds and it proved to be an invaluable tool for this study, the data from this platform is very hard to collect. After Elon Musk bought Twitter, which is now named X, he made it much harder for researchers to collect data from the platform, which limited this study because data couldn't be collected after November of 2022. Therefore, we couldn't use the most recent cancellation incidents in some cases, such as Kanye West, as it took place in late 2022. Moreover, future research could use a different method of data collection that is allowed by the platform, or even analyze the discussion on other social media platforms.

For this research, the choice of the celebrities and brands to analyze was made based on only one factor, that these entities had suffered cancellation attempts previously. Although it provided interesting results that allowed to make different conclusions about the impacts of cancel culture for these entities, future research could make the choice of celebrities and brands based on the factors that lead to the cancellation attempt, in order to further extend the study on the impacts of this phenomenon. Because, as seen in the results of this study, the celebrities chosen have different levels of popularity, which in this case proved to be a very important factor that impacted the outcomes of the cancellation attempt. It was the same case for brands with factors such as popularity and prior history of transgression, for example. A future research avenue could focus on choosing the celebrities and brands with the same factors and similar transgression factors, in order to analyze the differences in the outcomes of the cancellation attempt.

It should also be considered that, for this research, it was opted for studying both brands and celebrities, in order to be able to compare the impacts cancel culture has between the two. Although this choice can be considered enriching for this study, it can also represent a limitation because it decreased the number of cases that could be studied for both celebrities and brands. Therefore, future research could focus deeply on one of these subjects, utilizing more study cases in order to learn more about the impacts of cancel culture on the different subjects.

Lastly, this study's research context was shaped mostly by American culture, future research can choose celebrities or brands from different countries and focus on how cancel culture happens in those countries, since the study of this phenomenon is so concentrated in the United States.

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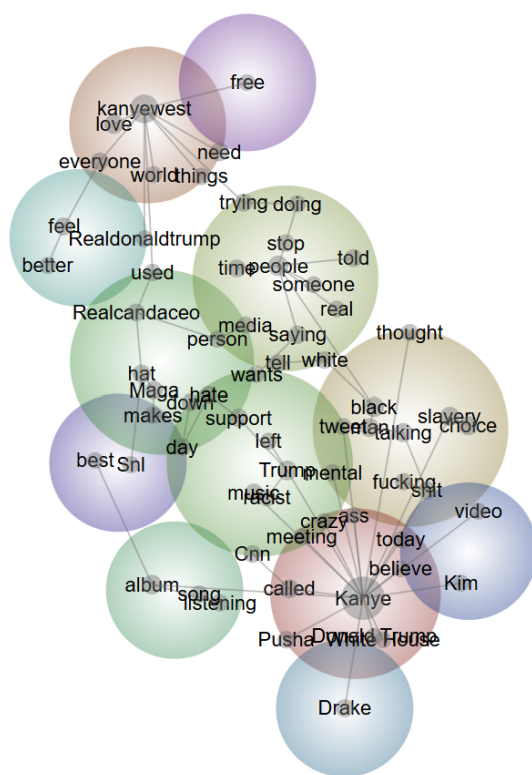
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Annexes

Annex A. Kanye West's concept map and theme summary



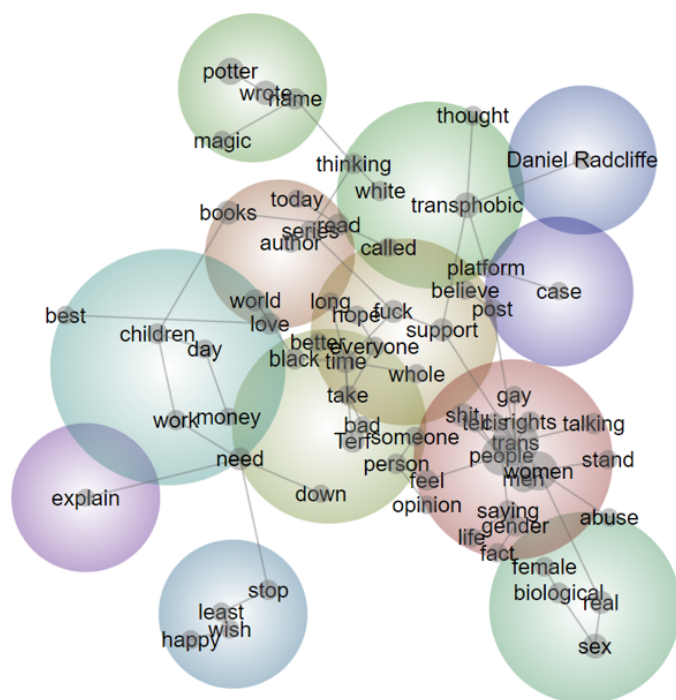
Theme	Hits	
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kanyewest	107776	
people	46666	
black	40678	
Trump	33164	
hat	24151	
album	20148	
feel	10819	
Drake	6681	
Kim	5560	
SnI	4895	
free	2451	

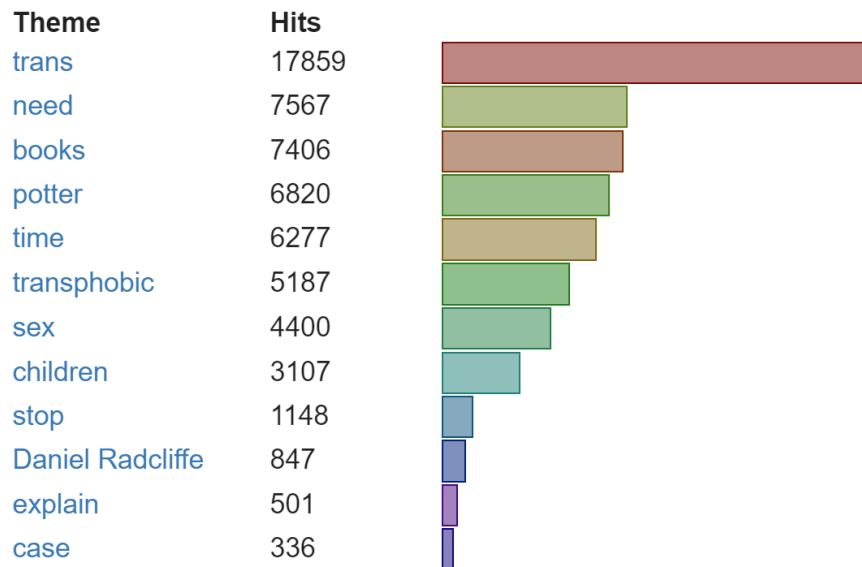
Annex B. Synthesis table of Kanye West's Leximancer results

Theme	Hits	Concepts	Count	Relevance
Kanye	164682	Kanye	156739	100%
		called	7881	5%
		Pusha	4139	3%
		today	3441	2%
		believe	2976	2%
		meeting	2086	1%
		ass	1812	1%
		crazy	1525	1%
		White House	1434	1%
		Donald Trump	1472	1%
kanyewest	107776	kanyewest	94046	60%
		love	13008	8%
		need	8356	5%
		everyone	4278	3%
		things	3086	2%
		world	1883	1%
people	46666	people	12267	8%
		saying	5653	4%
		trying	5690	4%
		time	5701	4%
		told	5694	4%
		stop	2972	2%
		tell	3527	2%
		white	2889	2%
		doing	3248	2%
		media	2434	2%
		someone	1887	1%
		real	1392	1%
black	40678	black	9387	6%
		slavery	8024	5%
		talking	7883	5%
		choice	7629	5%
		man	5737	4%
		shit	5764	4%
		fucking	3617	2%
		tweet	2753	2%
		thought	2924	2%
Trump	33164	Trump	10486	7%
		support	5912	4%
		music	4657	3%
		Cnn	3926	3%
		day	3809	2%
		wants	2649	2%
		racist	2044	1%
		mental	2794	2%
		left	1587	1%

hat	24151	hat	4476	3%
		Maga	3761	2%
		Realcandaceo	4661	3%
		makes	3380	2%
		used	4184	3%
		hate	2502	2%
		down	3226	2%
		person	2353	2%
album	20148	album	14192	9%
		listening	3924	3%
		song	3710	2%
feel	10819	feel	6124	4%
		better	2613	2%
		Realdonaldtrump	2410	2%
Drake	6681	Drake	6681	4%
Kim	5560	Kim	2827	2%
		video	2751	2%
Snl	4895	Snl	3099	2%
		best	1810	1%
free	2451	free	2451	2%

Annex C. J.K. Rowling's concept map and theme summary



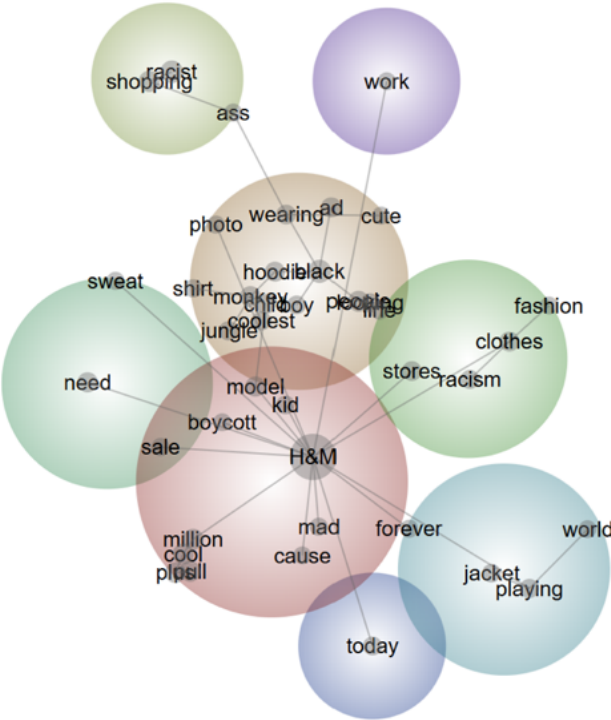


Annex D. Synthesis table of J.K. Rowling's Leximancer results

Theme	Hits	Concepts	Count	Relevance
trans	17859	trans	6284	100%
		people	5237	83%
		women	5269	84%
		men	1796	29%
		shit	951	15%
		gender	964	15%
		saying	830	13%
		rights	921	15%
		talking	1342	21%
		feel	1051	17%
		tell	610	10%
		life	607	10%
		fact	583	9%
		cis	340	5%
		stand	729	12%
		opinion	431	7%
		gay	387	6%
need	7567	need	1924	31%
		Terf	1884	30%
		black	796	13%
		person	947	15%
		take	687	11%

		someone	637	10%
		better	479	8%
		bad	336	5%
		down	391	6%
books	7406	books	2110	34%
		read	1497	24%
		world	1318	21%
		love	1429	23%
		series	638	10%
		author	467	7%
		long	364	6%
		today	437	7%
potter	6820	potter	4780	76%
		wrote	2017	32%
		name	1154	18%
		magic	443	7%
time	6277	time	1504	24%
		support	1195	19%
		fuck	1217	19%
		everyone	655	10%
		post	694	11%
		believe	681	11%
		whole	360	6%
		hope	489	8%
transphobic	5187	transphobic	2800	45%
		thinking	831	13%
		white	618	10%
		thought	922	15%
		called	624	10%
		platform	390	6%
sex	4400	sex	2359	38%
		real	1648	26%
		biological	698	11%
		female	519	8%
		abuse	450	7%
children	3107	children	974	15%
		work	810	13%
		day	598	10%
		best	803	13%
		money	342	5%
stop	1148	stop	650	10%
		least	351	6%
		wish	353	6%
		happy	386	6%
Daniel Radcliffe	847	Daniel Radcliffe	847	13%
explain	501	explain	501	8%
case	336	case	336	5%

Annex E. H&M’s concept map and theme summary

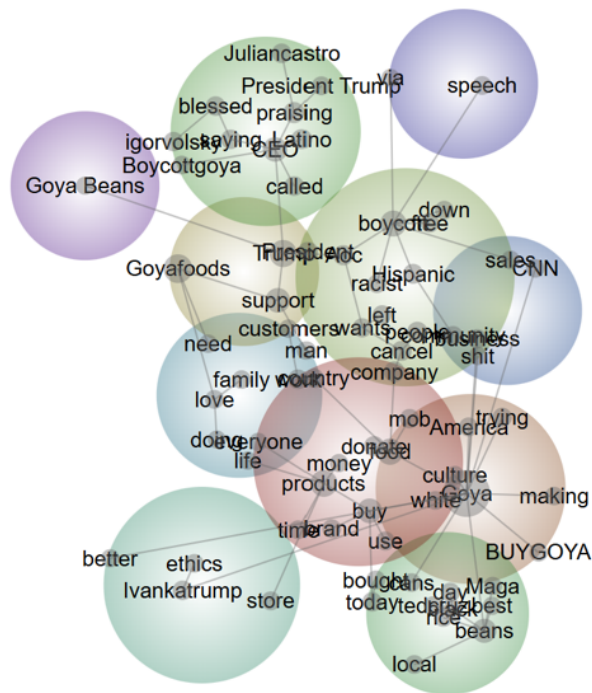


Theme	Hits	
black	4996	
H&m	3320	
racist	3049	
clothes	2607	
need	2271	
playing	1350	
today	972	
work	294	

Annex F. Synthesis table of H&M's Leximancer results

Theme	Hits	Concepts	Count	Relevance
black	4996	black	1454	7%
		monkey	796	4%
		people	856	4%
		hoodie	633	3%
		child	479	2%
		ad	1022	5%
		wearing	646	3%
		jungle	359	2%
		looking	431	2%
		coolest	336	2%
		line	345	2%
		boy	335	2%
		shirt	358	2%
		photo	241	1%
		cute	192	1%
H&M	3320	H&M	21152	100%
		million	687	3%
		cool	744	4%
		pull	927	4%
		plus	709	3%
		model	803	4%
		kid	474	2%
		mad	414	2%
		boycott	212	1%
		cause	184	1%
racist	3049	racist	2255	11%
		shopping	2010	10%
		ass	254	1%
clothes	2607	clothes	1243	6%
		stores	1060	5%
		racism	544	3%
		fashion	188	1%
need	2271	need	1588	8%
		sale	472	2%
		sweat	231	1%
playing	1350	playing	836	4%
		jacket	430	2%
		forever	332	2%
		world	172	1%
today	972	today	972	5%
work	294	work	294	1%

Annex D. Goya's concept map and theme summary



Theme	Hits	
Goya	19670	
products	10670	
Goyafoods	10637	
boycott	8068	
CEO	5900	
beans	5654	
Ivankatrump	2247	
love	1869	
speech	836	
CNN	744	
Goya Beans	252	

Annex H. Synthesis table of Goya's Leximancer results

Theme	Hits	Concepts	Count	Relevance
Goya	19670	Goya	18620	100%
		trying	705	4%
		America	470	3%
		culture	402	2%
		white	328	8%
		making	415	2%
		BUYGOYA	503	3%
products	10670	products	3820	21%
		food	2885	15%
		buy	3110	17%
		company	1053	6%
		donate	780	4%
		work	785	4%
		country	531	3%
		mob	587	3%
		use	586	3%
		time	492	3%
		brand	398	2%
		money	198	1%
Goyafoods	10637	Goyafoods	6184	33%
		Trump	3610	19%
		support	2935	16%
		President	650	3%
		customers	231	1%
boycott	8068	boycott	3529	19%
		people	1216	7%
		Aoc	930	5%
		Hispanic	870	5%
		cancel	810	4%
		business	701	4%
		wants	394	2%
		left	467	3%
		community	452	2%
		free	343	2%
		racist	294	2%
		sales	434	2%
		down	422	2%
CEO	5900	CEO	2367	13%
		praising	1177	6%
		Latino	952	5%
		called	665	4%
		blessed	620	3%
		Juliancastro	1031	6%
		saying	538	3%
		igorvolsky	741	4%
		President Trump	509	3%

		Boycottgoya	540	3%
beans	5654	beans	3094	17%
		black	513	3%
		tedcruz	712	4%
		day	595	3%
		today	623	3%
		bought	461	2%
		local	525	3%
		rice	303	2%
		cans	346	2%
		Maga	316	2%
		best	252	1%
Ivankatrump	2247	Ivankatrump	1173	6%
		store	554	3%
		ethics	384	2%
		better	315	2%
love	1869	love	572	3%
		family	334	2%
		need	297	2%
		man	221	1%
		life	231	1%
		everyone	163	1%
		doing	129	1%
speech	836	speech	639	3%
		via	199	1%
CNN	744	CNN	453	2%
		shit	291	2%
Goya Beans	252	Goya Beans	252	1%