THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING
Departmental Research Seminar

Separating the Artist from the Art:
Social Media Boycotts, Platform Sanctions, and Music Consumption
By

Dr Jura Liaukonyte
Cornell University

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Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon
Venue : M802 & online via Zoom

Abstract

This paper investigates how the consumption of an artist's creative work is impacted when there's a movement to "cancel" the artist on social media due to their misconduct. While human brands face heightened reputation risks compared to product brands, there is limited understanding of how such behaviors affect the consumption of artists' work. Using Synthetic Difference-in-Differences, we examine the demand for an artist's music following interrelated publicity and platform sanction shocks, notably the removal of songs from prominent platform-curated playlists on the largest global streaming platform. A cursory examination of music demand during these scandals would lead one to an erroneous conclusion that consumers are intentionally boycotting the artists. We propose an identification strategy to disentangle the platform curation and intentional listening effects, leveraging the variation in geographic demand and song-level delisting status. Our findings show that the decrease in music consumption is primarily driven by supply-side factors, such as the removal of artists' songs from sponsored playlists, rather than demand-side factors whereby consumers intentionally choose to stop listening to the artists' music. Additionally, we show that media coverage surrounding the scandals had positive promotional demand effects, suggesting that social media boycotts can generate additional publicity and achieve the opposite of some of their intended goals. Overall, we find consistent evidence that consumers can separate the artist from the art—they can condemn the artists for their misconduct but continue to consume their art.

Dr Jura Liaukonyte's current research interests lie in uncovering actionable marketing insights from Big Data, quantifying the impact of advertising, information, or social media movements on consumer choice, understanding the implications of food labels, and integrating behavioral economics into choice models. Her award-winning work has been published in leading quantitative marketing and economics journals such as *Marketing Science*, *Management Science*, and *RAND Journal of Economics*. Additionally, her research has garnered attention from media outlets like *the Wall Street Journal*, *the Washington Post*, *CNN*, *Bloomberg*, and *the New York Times*.

Dr Liaukonyte is an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Marketing Research* and serves on the editorial board for *Marketing Science*. She is a co-organizer of an international conference on the economics of advertising, which draws researchers working on advertising topics at the intersection of marketing and economics. Dr Liaukonyte teaches courses on the economics of advertising and strategic pricing, as well as a Ph.D. class on quantitative methods. She has received multiple teaching awards, including the recent "50 Best Undergraduate Business School Professors" award by Poets & Quants.

All interested are welcome.

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