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Bud-Lash for Bud Light: The Campaign that Went Wrong

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Synopsis

This case describes the social media backlash followed by the boycott of a prominent beer brand in the US. In 2023, Bud Light, a reckoned brand from Anheuser-Busch InBev, had partnered with Dylan Mulvaney, a transgender influencer for its promotional activities. This short-term campaign was endeavored to broaden the market for the brand and tapping into the Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) marketing. To its dismay, it boomeranged and alienated most of its core customers. The infuriated customers ridiculed the campaign aggressively on social media. The backlash emanated from right-wing conservatives, sports persons, musicians and brand's fans who expressed their outrage on Twitter and Instagram. In the process, Anheuser-Busch had lost US\$6 billion in market capitalization in just four months post the controversy. With this backdrop, the case attempts to help students explore perspectives of unwholesome demandboycott culture, created on Twitter and other social media platforms. The case deliberates the ramifications of such targeted campaigns on companies' reputation, and commercial viability of their offerings. This case story shall facilitate the students to decipher the challenges associated with such social media hysteria, and the public relations (PR) strategies available for containing

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such uproar. The case has been documented to help students understand the nuances of employing PR including drafting of PR plan during crisis.

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